V. F. ODOEVSKIJ AND NOVALIS: THE HERITAGE OF THE GERMAN *FRÜHROMANTIK* IN ODOEVSKIJ'S THOUGHT AND *RUSSIAN NIGHTS*.

by

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Abstract

Despite the significant influence of German thought and literature on Russian romanticism, the Jena variety of early German romanticism (*Frühromantik*) never fully resonated in Russia. An exception to this rule is V. F. Odoevskij (1804-1869), who immersed himself in a life-long study of German romantic philosophy (Kant, Fichte, Oken, Schelling). While Odoevskij's philosophical affinity to German idealism is well-known and well-studied, the heritage of the literary *Frühromantik* in Odoevskij's thought and its impact on his literary creativity has largely gone unnoticed. A consideration of Odoevskij's poetics and fiction in terms of early German romanticism suggests a more suitable context for critical reappraisal that challenges this writer's image of an outdated, somewhat dilettantish romantic eccentric.

The dissertation uses the Jena romantic Novalis (F. von Hardenberg, 1772-1801) and his novel fragment *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) as a yardstick for a comparative analysis of Odoevskij's philosophical theories, poetics and their literary application in his work *Russian Nights* (*Russkie Nochi*; 1844). Chapter I examines the Russian reception of German romanticism for a proper literary-historical context; Chapter II compares Novalis's and Odoevskij's background, general body of works and their literary reception; Chapter III provides a comparative analysis of the two writers' philosophical investigations and literary theories, which culminate in a concept of a "universal poetry" for which the romantic novel became the literary vehicle; and Chapter IV isolates the main features in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as a romantic novel, which also appear as the underlying principles in *Russian Nights*, where they are productively applied to offer a

romantic novel of the Jena variety that is relevant to Russia in the modern age.

The comparison of Novalis's theories and their application in his chief novel to Odoevskij's poetics and *Russian Nights* reveals the German *Frühromantik* as Odoevskij's true literary roots, thus linking him to a progressive, innovative and solution-oriented literary movement. As a result, he emerges as a romantic fundamentalist dedicated to the core concepts of transcendental poetics. The thesis thus demonstrates that any future consideration of Odoevskij's fiction and other writings can no longer ignore the heritage of the literary *Frühromantik* contained therein.

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INTRODUCTION

The writings of Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772-1801), a chief literary representative of early German romantic idealism (*Frühromantik*), were not received with much interest by Russian literary circles when they were first published in Germany at the end of the 18th century. Only some two decades later did Russian writers begin taking note of them. In 1817, Vasilij Andreevich Zhukovskij (1783-1852), one of the most important mediators between German and Russian literature in the 19th century, appraised Novalis very positively and intended to include him in an anthology on German literature (Engel-Braunschmidt 207). Overall, however, initial evaluations betray a rather critical attitude toward Novalis, as can be seen, for example, in Vil'gel'm Karlovich Kjukhel'beker's (1797-1846) conversation with Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) in 1820 and in an article in *The Russian Herald* (*Русский вестник*) of 1818, where Novalis and the whole concept of "nature philosophy" (*Naturphilosophie*) is said to "ruin poetry"[1] (Kuleshov, 1977 35).

Nevertheless, the fledgling Russian romantic movement at the beginning of the 1820s received important impulses from German romanticism, which entered into Russian culture with a significant time lag and a number of misunderstandings. For instance, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) and Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805) were considered major romantics due to their *Sturm-und-Drang* phase. As a result, German romanticism, in the Russian reception, was not considered in the context of its

[1] Translations from Russian and German sources throughout this dissertation are mine unless indicated otherwise.

theoretical roots, the Jena *Frühromantik*, and the latter thus wielded little impact on the development of Russian romanticism. Consequently, despite extensive influence from Germany, Russian romanticism differs from German romanticism in important ways. While German romanticism has at its roots a philosophical system that revolutionized the perception of reality, leading to a radically new understanding of the task of literature and its formal requirements, Russian romanticism displays a general Byronesque type of romantic fervour, while adhering in form to classicism and in thought to enlightened rationalism. In particular, Decembrist romanticism, which briefly dominated the early 1820s, was imbued with civic pathos and political concerns and was not interested in the metaphysical speculations of the early German romantics.

These differences notwithstanding, a more wide-spread Russian reception of German romantic idealism took place in the mid-1820s and early 1830s, after the Decembrist uprising of 1825, when Russian writers and intellectuals in general retreated from socio-political commentary to a more introspective search for human values. This included a discovery of the works of the early German romantic writers and theoreticians from Tieck, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773-1798), Jean Paul (1763-1825) and Novalis to August (1767-1845) and Friedrich (1772-1829) Schlegel and Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854). However, this variety of German romanticism based in Jena never fully resonated in Russian literary circles, which reacted to it with temporary curiosity, but overall puzzlement, and frequently rejection. Certainly, from the late 1830s, the metaphysical thrust of the Jena romantics was no longer of interest to leading literary figures in Russia.

An important exception to this general reception of German idealism is V. F. Odoevskij (1804-1869), who as a member of the Wisdom Lover circle (любомудры, 1823-1825), immersed himself in the study of German romantic philosophy, including Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), Lorenz Oken (1779-1851), Joseph von Görres (1776-1848) and, above all, Schelling, espousing their philosophical concepts throughout his life. Odoevskij's affinity to German romantic philosophy and romantic idealism in general is well-documented and well-researched (for example Sakulin 1913; Kovalevskij 1915b; Setschkareff 1939; Karlinsky 1966; Majmin 1975b; Sakharov 1978; Walicki 1979). However, the heritage of the literary *Frühromantik* in Odoevskij's thought and its impact on his literary creativity has largely gone unnoticed. At the same time, an appropriate reception of Odoevskij's thoughts and works is still outstanding. A consideration of this writer in terms of early German romanticism suggests a more suitable context for critical reappraisal.

The present thesis contends that Odoevskij's philosophical development, poetics and their literary application in his most prolific work *Russian Nights*[2] (*Russkie Nochi*; 1844) are deeply rooted in early German romanticism. The most appropriate yardstick for a comparative analysis that would elucidate this affinity in detail is undoubtedly Novalis. In this representative of early German romanticism one finds both a serious theorist and

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[2] Quotes from *Russian Nights* in Russian are taken from the most recent collection of Odoevskij's works of 1981 (I: 31-246) and are identified with the abbreviation *RN*. English quotes are taken from the translation by Koshansky-Olienikov/Matlaw (1965) and marked *rn*. A complete collection of Odoevskij's theoretical writings and fiction has yet to appear.

a gifted writer, whose novel fragment *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*[3] (1802) is generally considered to be the romantic novel *par excellence*. A comparison of Novalis's theories and their application in his chief novel to Odoevskij's theories and *Russian Nights* reveals the German *Frühromantik* as the true roots of this notoriously misunderstood Russian romantic, who needs to be reconsidered in light of these new findings.

Despite Engel-Braunschmidt's general conclusion that Russia does not provide a good habitat for Novalis's works (309), numerous studies on German-Russian literary relations as well as specific studies on Odoevskij observe in passing either isolated similarities or general affinities with respect to Novalis, occasionally even mentioning Odoevskij's personal interest in the early German romantics and their poetics (for example, Zelinsky, 1975 250, 276; Cornwell, 1983 27, 43; Cornwell, 1986a 67). However, the absence in these studies of full documentation of sources or short discussions that explore this link seems to belittle the significance of this affinity, and, thus has discouraged further scholarly explorations of this issue. A prime example is Sakharov's reference to Odoevskij as a "translator of ideas" from German thinkers, including "the Schlegels, Schelling and Novalis" (1984 6). While the critic draws attention to Odoevskij's role as mediator of early German romantic thought, he neither documents it nor considers it in his discussion of Odoevskij's fiction and *Russian Nights* in particular.

In view of obvious general commonalities and affinities, such as the "night motif,"

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[3] Original German quotes are taken from the historical-critical edition of Novalis's work (I: 193-334) and marked *HVO*. Unless otherwise indicated, English quotes were obtained from the translation by Hilty (1964) and marked *hvo*. A list of the major other editions of Novalis's works is found in the bibliography of this dissertation.

the attention to language, encyclopedic ambitions and the propensity for philosophical speculation, it is quite astonishing that no textual comparative study of Novalis and Odoevskij has been launched to date. Scholarly attention in this matter has been hindered in numerous ways. The Soviet era of officially imposed Socialist Realism in literature and art discouraged an investigation of Russia's literary heritage in a "bourgeois romantic" light, the inevitable result, so it would appear, of a comparison to Novalis. Symptomatic of this attitude is the Odoevskij-entry in a Soviet literary encyclopedia, which grants only a cursory influence of German romantics such as Novalis, after which Odoevskij is said to have reached "his own brand of positivism" (Chertkov 396). In this context, the international cliché of Novalis as the escapist, dreamy poet of the blue flower[4] has only been deconstructed fairly recently and has presumably blocked many fruitful avenues of comparison. Further, the limited availability of Novalis-translations into Russian poses a hurdle. Similarly, in the West Odoevskij remains a little-known figure whose works and related secondary materials have only recently and selectively been accessible in translation. Even in Russia, a proper rediscovery of Odoevskij is both fairly recent and relatively superficial, and certainly far from exhausted, since much of his material still remains unpublished.[5]

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[4] The blue flower in Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* symbolizes the pursuit of an ideal world. When it became popular as a general designation of romantic longing in literature, it lost much of its more specific original meaning, which reflected poorly on Novalis himself.

[5] The lion's share of Odoevskij's manuscripts are located in the archives of the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg (formerly the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library). The present study is based on published material only, since written inquiries did not yield any results.

Both writers have been subjected to comparative examinations. A number of comparisons of Novalis to writers of other literatures are available, such as to John Keats (Bonarius 1950) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Freedman 1970) and to the French symbolists (Braak 1922; Vortriede 1963; Kesting 1974), to name but a few. There are also comparisons to various Russian writers, especially to Fedor Ivanonich Tjut'chev (Gresnych 1981; Zelinsky 1975), as well as Nikolaj Mikhajlovich Karamzin (Schneider 1984), Petr Jakovlevich Chaadaev (Setschkareff 1935), Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok (Byrns 1976) and to Vjacheslav Ivanov[6] (Etkind 1990; Wachtel 1991). Existing comparative Odoevskij-research focuses heavily on Schellingian philosophy (see page 3) and Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (1776-1822) (for example, Botnikova 1977; Sakharov 1982a), while superficial links to Goethe have also been established (for instance Gronicka 1963; Ilgner 1978). An American dissertation on Odoevskij as a Faustian writer takes a biographical approach to his work (Linburn 1970). Gippius's article of 1915 establishes the works of the Jena romantics, and specifically Novalis, as a possible yardstick for Odoevskij's romanticism. However, due to a lack of deeper knowledge of transcendental poetics and a superficial biographical approach to the writer's works, Gippius was led to conclude that Odoevskij's romanticism differed quite fundamentally from the literary views of Novalis.

Odoevskij's *Russian Nights* has frequently been described as his culminating work,

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[6] Further, Holthusen's study of 1957 on Russian symbolism mentions Novalis as the forefather of symbolism, who influenced a number of Russian writers, including V. Ivanov, Andrej Belyj and Valerij Jakovlevich Brjusov (24, 29).

summing up his entire philosophical and aesthetic outlook. Moreover, it can be understood as the most poignant symbol of Odoevskij's controversial status within Russian romanticism. Indeed, the lack of understanding brought to this work by critics and readers is symptomatic of the author's critical fortunes in general: initially branded as incomprehensible, dilettantish and outdated by contemporary readers, *Russian Nights* has more recently been reevaluated as an erudite, if eccentric, rendition of an ill-defined philosophical romanticism generally believed to be alien to Russian romanticism as a whole. Novalis's poetics, as those of his Jena colleagues, including F. Schlegel, developed a concept of universal poetry (*Universalpoesie*[7]) that became synonymous with the theory of the romantic novel. *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* was specifically designed as a romantic novel in this sense, as transcendental poetry guided by a central philosophical task. It therefore represents the final application of Novalis's poetics. By the same token, Odoevskij's *Russian Nights* was the final grand presentation of its author's philosophical and aesthetic concepts in fiction. However, its genre has not been conclusively determined. A comparison of Odoevskij's theories and their practical application to those of Novalis reveals *Russian Nights* as a romantic novel, written by a Russian writer who,

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[7] Universal poetry designates a romantic concept of literature that combines all forms of literary expression, and various branches of human activity, including the arts and the sciences, to express a universal understanding of the world with the aim of totality. Formally, it is characterized by a mixing of genres. Its goal is the depiction of infinite progressive, transcendental thinking, and as a "poetry of poetry" ("Poesie der Poesie") it should contain an explanation of its internal workings and objectives (metafictional remarks). While it does not provide a definitive ending, it affords an occasion for self-reflective thinking in both author and reader. Throughout this dissertation, the term "poetry" refers to this all-embracing concept of romantic universal writing, not to lyrical poetry.

deeply influenced by German idealist philosophy, came also to espouse the literary concepts it engendered.

Clearly, the goal of the thesis is not to celebrate parallels and declare *Russian Nights* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* to be similar in all their aspects. The attempt in *Russian Nights* to gain a measure of romantic synthesis is placed in the context of a positivistic age that analyzes and criticizes, rather than blindly accepts, the solutions offered by idealism. The very tone of the work is less poetic and seductive, while the final quasi-slavophile solution adds a romantic twist that is uniquely Russian, yet still also rooted in the general romantic concept of history. Primarily, the comparison of texts examines the similar use of certain patterns and devices, which are rooted in the theory of the romantic novel.

At the time of its publication in 1844, Odoevskij's *Russian Nights* was criticized for dealing with an old subject and regurgitating the outdated debate surrounding the role of Schellingian thought in the revitalization of Russian society. Many rejected its seemingly chaotic form, in fact, the critic Vissarion Grigorevich Belinskij (1811-1848) did not really consider it as a unit (VIII: 315). *Russian Nights* has been misunderstood to such an extent that "contemporary puzzlement and criticism gave way to years of neglect" (Cornwell, 1986a 69). Critical opinions on *Russian Nights* vary so much as to be completely contradictory. For example, the history of Russian romanticism by Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij finds that *Russian Nights* renders Odoevskij's thoughts on universal harmony "in a form that is clearer and more accessible to a wider circle of readers" (298), while - Čiževskij observes that "his ideas are more clearly defined in his early writings and in

the earlier editions of his novellas" (98). The Soviet academy edition on Russian literature sees *Russian Nights* as an "encyclopedia of the ideas of Russian romanticism" (Petrunina, 1981c 519), whereas many others, especially non-Soviet sources, see the cycle as a document of the reception of Schelling and German idealism in Russia, and a representative of a general type of romantic universalism in Russian literature (for example, Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij 299-300; Setschkareff, 1939 139-44; Cornwell, 1986a 67), but not, more specifically, as an example of universal poetry as developed by F. Schlegel and Novalis during the Jena *Frühromantik*.

The inadequate reception of *Russian Nights* is, indeed, symbolic of the way in which its author has been misunderstood. This problem of reception has not been alleviated in the comparative studies that attempted to define Odoevskij's brand of romanticism by pursuing an affinity to Hoffmann. Already in the late 1820s, Petr Andreevich Vjazemskij (1792-1878) rejected such a comparison, finding that "Odoyevsky's genre is not the fantastic, at least in the Hoffmannian sense. He has a more observant and reflective mind and his imagination is not at all whimsical and playful" (Cornwell, 1986a 39). In a preface to *Russian Nights* Odoevskij denied any influence by Hoffmann on the stories in his cycle (*RN* 311). In 1963, Passage concluded with convincing evidence, especially with regard to *Russian Nights*, that Odoevskij cannot be considered a Russian Hoffmannist (114), and Ingham in 1974 likewise found Odoevskij's similarities to Hoffmann to be mostly superficial. Yet, some critics insist on a literary kinship (Zelinsky, 1975 254; Botnikova 1977; Sakharov 1982a). Il'inskij's dissertation of 1970 attempts to analyze Odoevskij's fiction from a German romantic point of view,

distinguishing an ill-defined "parallelism" as the main German romantic device and interpreting many features in Odoevskij's works as indebted to Hoffmann; therefore, especially Il'inskij's section on *Russian Nights* fails to capture either the essence of the work or its deeper links to German romantic poetics, which would, in fact, reveal this work as an experimentation with the principles of the romantic novel.

Certainly, Odoevskij conceived of *Russian Nights* in the general context of the philosophical novel. In the late 1820s and early 1830s, Odoevskij experimented with and then abandoned several philosophical novel projects, including one entitled *Giordano Bruno and Pietro Aretino*. In 1913, Zamotin considered this project to be a literary parallel to works by Wackenroder, Tieck and Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (410), but did not elaborate. In 1986, Cornwell maintained that *Russian Nights* is one of few works in which the ambitions of such earlier novel projects as *Giordano Bruno* have been realized (Cornwell, 1986a 36). Yet, *Russian Nights* is a strikingly heterogeneous work, to which one would at first glance not assign any conventional genre, including "novel." The work integrates into a new narrative frame individual stories, most of them published at an earlier time (between 1831 and 1839). However, the act of taking previously published individual stories written in the general romantic spirit and integrating them into a new artistic unit could be considered a retrospective application of early romantic poetic principles that lie at the heart of the theory of the romantic novel as espoused by F. Schlegel in theory and by Novalis in both theory and practice. Moreover, the stories are set in a contemporary narrative main frame specifically meant to represent the 1840s in Russia. The work effectively discusses the continued relevance and validity of

romantic idealism in a contemporary era. Consequently, Odoevskij renders the principles of the romantic novel productive for the modern age.

The history of criticism on *Russian Nights* shows an interesting development that points in the direction of the present comparative analysis. Misunderstood and forgotten as a literary curiosity, *Russian Nights* was first interpreted as being either Hoffmannian or Faustian in nature (from about 1870 to well into the Soviet period), or frequently was seen as simply a string of tales in the Schellingian spirit, but generally, attention to ideas outweighed an interest in formal aspects or poetics. In 1915, Gippius first raised the possibility of an affinity between Odoevskij and Jena romanticism. Of course, Soviet critics had trouble legitimizing an "extreme" romantic such as Odoevskij as part of a marxist heritage. In the late 1960s, Mann first examined *Russian Nights* from a comprehensive philosophical aesthetic point of view, admitting a Schellingian influence, but, overall, maintaining a Russo-centric angle. Majmin in passing established a relation between *Russian Nights* and Schlegel's definition of the novel as a "Socratic Dialogue" (1975b 262). Subsequent studies have zeroed in on several ways of interpreting the polyphonous, fragmented character of the work, for instance, as a continuation of other existing "cycle" narratives in literary history, or as displaying a "musical leitmotif character" (for example, Shtern 1979). Western commentators also stress Schellingian indebtedness, distinguish modern aspects and generally muse on the hybrid character of the work (Virginskij 1970; Baumann 1980; Cornwell, 1983 27-35; Cornwell, 1984b; Best 1984).

A fresh look at the poetic genre of *Russian Nights* was taken in 1985 by Koschmal,

who traced the literary development of genre synthesis in Odoevskij and Brjusov, offering a descriptive analysis of the structure of *Russian Nights* and its different epic, lyrical and dramatic layers. He did not, however, draw any conclusions about the origin of these features (i.e., their obvious affinity to early German romantic theory). Cornwell's two articles of 1983 and 1986 finally spell out the possibility of *Russian Nights* as being rooted in early romantic poetics, and short references are made to F. Schlegel and Novalis. Several isolated points of comparison are listed, for example, the role of language and the opposition of internal and external phenomena. Both articles contain references to the possibility of a fruitful comparison of Odoevskij's poetics and his *Russian Nights* to early German romanticism and its texts, and, guardedly, to Novalis. Cornwell, in his survey of the reception of *Russian Nights* concludes: "The impact of German romanticism as a whole on the thought and fiction of Odoyevsky was perhaps rather more considerable than is generally acknowledged, extending somewhat beyond merely the theory of Schelling and the practice of Hoffmann. However, below these layers of theme, idea and symbol there lies the vital substratum of romantic poetics" (Cornwell, 1983 43). The critic suggests that "detailed study and further research may well, [...] throw up new prospective models" (41) for this controversial work, if one pursued a comparison to early German romantics. This thesis thus takes the next logical step in Odoevskij-research with a detailed comparison of Odoevskij's literary theories to the poetics of the German *Frühromantik*, and especially the theory of the romantic novel. Novalis's poetics and his most pronounced application of these in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* can serve as a good yardstick against which Odoevskij's poetics

and *Russian Nights* can be evaluated and profiled with respect to their affinity to early German romanticism.

As concerns the methodological approach, the basic premise of this dissertation is that a comparative investigation of similarities between Odoevskij's theories and early German romantic poetics can remedy the hitherto insufficient appreciation of Odoevskij and his *Russian Nights*, both of which have remained somewhat of a literary enigma. By the same token, a comparative analysis to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* will illustrate the continuation and modification of Novalis's applied theory of the romantic novel in a Russian text. Due to the fact that some pertinent secondary material by Odoevskij may still be buried in Russian archives, one cannot be sure what specific readings may have influenced either the writing of the individual stories or their subsequent arrangement in the work of 1844. In any case, this study is not in pursuit of evidence which could prove that Odoevskij was directly influenced by Novalis when he created *Russian Nights* although Cornwell, a major Western Odoevskij-expert, seems to hint that a direct influence of Novalis's "Magic Idealism" is possible (Cornwell, 1983 43). Like many a writer, Odoevskij kept his cards close to his chest. But to quote Odoevskij himself in a commentary to *Russian Nights*:

> [...] еще не было на свете сочинителя от мала до велика, в котором бы волею или неволею не отозвались чужая мысль, чужое слово, чужой прием и проч. т. п.; это неизбежно уже по гармонической связи, естественно существующей между людьми всех эпох и всех народов; никакая мысль не родится без участия в этом зарождении другой, предшествующей мысли, своей или чужой (*RN* 310).
>
> There has not been a writer, great or small, in this world in whom someone else's thought, word, method, and so on, is not reflected, independently of his own will.

> It is inevitable even because of a harmonious connection which naturally exists between people of all epochs and all nations. No idea is born without another preceding idea, one's own or someone else's, participating in its conception (*rn* 27).

Odoevskij probably did not have *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* specifically in mind when he wrote *Russian Nights* and this issue is of little concern here. The important point is that *Russian Nights* is by its very nature an experiment with (and by virtue of the time lag a reevaluation of) the method by which universal insight is reached in works such as Novalis's novel fragment. However, even if *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* cannot be convincingly established as a direct pattern for *Russian Nights*, the similarities found must be regarded as more than typological, due to the similar sources the two writers drew upon, ranging from Plato to Fichte and Schelling. Further, one can state with confidence that Odoevskij was acquainted with the literary discourse kindled by the Schlegels, Tieck, Novalis and their entourage through theoretical and literary works that were in circulation among Russia's literary elite of the time. A general influence in this sense can surely be asserted, resulting in an affinity of spirit between Novalis and Odoevskij that finds reflection in their creative works. The comparative approach that cites concrete external evidence of influence is at once more definitive and somewhat less sophisticated, whereas a comparative investigation based on internal evidence of a theoretical or textual nature as undertaken here can pose more of a challenge, and can also yield the reward of deeper insights into the workings of literary creativity.

In 1975, Leighton deplores the approach of most comparative studies on Russian romanticism, finding that "while there is a great deal of factual information about purely literary influences, less is known about the comparative aspects of criticism, theory and

all other areas of intellectual exchange [...]" (23). Further, he contends that while the link between such "European giants as Kant, Schelling and Hegel" and Russian romanticism has been studied extensively, "far too little is known about the roles of such European theorists as August and Friedrich Schlegel [...]" (24), and one could add Novalis to this list. There can be no doubt that Odoevskij was heavily involved in the reception of German idealist philosophy. Nevertheless, we still know very little about how the details of his theories and poetics measure up to those espoused by the German romantic writers, and how this affected his literary creativity. In 1983, Cornwell still observed that Odoevskij's links to early German romantics remain unexplored. More recent studies in the 1990s have moved further away from such an approach, preoccupying themselves with Odoevskij's contribution to various aspects of Russian culture (Ayers 1994; Kiely 1998; Workman 1998) and gender issues (Bohrman 1997).

This development is typical of recent shifts in the field of comparative literature, as it is being taken over more and more by cultural studies (see Bernheimer 1995), thus shying away from an examination of the actual text. Recently, many scholars and students have come to see comparative literary criticism as a dinosaur operating under the premises and biases of a Eurocentric criticism with all the limitations this entails, and have turned instead to post-colonial studies, gender studies, and finally, translation studies. However, despite these attempts at overcoming the crisis of comparative literature, as Bassnett points out, the "comparative practice is alive and well and thriving under other nomenclatura" (138), so that the "study of themes and movements still takes place under the heading of 'post-colonial studies' and 'gender studies'" (116). This is all

the more dangerous, since the usual comparative approach still operates quietly, yet without significant reflection on its methods or modes of existence, which in the long run cannot ensure continued standards. In the present thesis, an effort is made to move beyond a simple enumeration of similarities and to make both literary similarities and differences relevant, by demonstrating, how ideas and their poetic shapes are productively transformed and absorbed into their new literary context. Hence, it is advisable to heed Remak's warning advice that

> in a good many influence studies, the location of sources has been given too much attention, rather than such questions as: what was *retained*, and what was *rejected*, and why and how was the material absorbed and integrated, and with *what success*? If conducted in this fashion, influence studies contribute not only to our knowledge of literary history but to our understanding of the creative process and of the literary work of art (3).

Comparative literature has always been centred upon the quest for national identity, be it to assert cultural hegemony (the French view), enrich a budding national literature (the Russian view), foster trans-national harmony (comparative literature as the history of world literature) or to move away from a Eurocentric or male-dominated view, as is the case with the post-colonial and gender studies approach. For this very reason, once "divorced from key questions of national culture and identity, comparative literature loses its way" (Bassnett 41). Therefore, similarities of theory and artistic execution must be understood in the context of national and historical circumstances.

Fundamentally, the comparison of Odoevskij to Novalis helps to solve a specific problem: the unsatisfactory reception of Odoevskij and his *Russian Nights* as the result of an insufficient determination of this writer's literary roots. In order to analyze the affinity of Odoevskij to Novalis in a comprehensive fashion, the following aspects will

be examined: chapter I will explain the unique circumstances of the Russian reception of German romanticism from roughly 1800 to the 1840s, which contributed to Odoevskij's isolated position in literary Russia. Chapter II introduces and compares Novalis's and Odoevskij's backgrounds, general body of works and their literary reception, thus establishing similar goals and fates of reception. Chapter III provides a comparative analysis of the two writers' philosophical investigations and literary theories, which culminate in a concept of universal poetry for which the romantic novel became the literary vehicle. Finally, Chapter IV isolates the main features in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as a romantic novel, which refer to universality, progressivity, reflexivity, structure and the portrayal of synthesis. These main aspects, which shape the romantic novel artistically, likewise emerge as the underlying principles in *Russian Nights*, where they are productively applied to offer a new romantic novel relevant to the modern age. Consequently, Odoevskij's affinity to German romanticism is not limited to the philosophy of idealism and Schelling, but extends to his literary practice, and therefore, to Novalis and the Jena *Frühromantik*.

CHAPTER I

GERMAN AND RUSSIAN ROMANTICISM. LITERARY RELATIONS AND RECEPTION

Preliminary Notes

It must be remembered that Western European romanticism in general did not force itself upon the Russian scene, but was, rather, sought out by a nation eager and ready for the reception of the concepts and ideas it had to offer. In the early 1820s, the literary discussions that gave shape to the rising romantic movement in Russia were embedded in the general search for a distinctive independent Russian culture and national identity. For this and other reasons, the reception of European, and especially German romanticism, was quite selective, adopting some aspects, while either rejecting or significantly reinterpreting others to suit the Russian circumstances. This fact needs to be taken into account in a comparison of Odoevskij's romanticism to the German *Frühromantik*. The 1820s as the formative years of Russian romanticism are of particular interest in the context of the present study, because they represent a peak in the influence of German literature and thought in Russia to which Odoevskij proved to be particularly susceptible. Specifically, the unique phenomenon of the Wisdom Lovers, a group over which Odoevskij presided and which can be considered a counterpart to Novalis' romantic circle in Jena, can be fully appreciated in contrast to the more "main-stream" Russian romanticism during the 1820s and 1830s. In addition, these decades also provide the context for the discussions in Odoevskij's *Russian Nights* (*RN* 314), and the

philosophical searchings contained therein cannot be fully understood without some idea of the general intellectual atmosphere of that period.

Historical Survey

As with any survey of relations between Russia and the West, it is important to bear in mind that Russia's historical roots are found in the culture of Eastern Christian Byzantium. Russia did not participate in the intellectual and scientific achievements of the late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation that were so significant for Western Europe and Germany in particular. The first Western cultural influence to really penetrate into Russia was the Baroque in the 17th century. For example, Mikhajl Vasilevich Lomonosov (1711-1765) was influenced by the late German Baroque poets Johann Christian Günther (1695-1723) and Berthold Heinrich Brockes (1680-1747). The efforts of Peter the Great (1672-1725) to recruit foreign technical experts brought with them the introduction of French and German philosophy, acquainting the Russian elite with René Descartes' (1596-1650) metaphysics and the natural-law doctrines of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694) and Christian Wolff (1679-1754). German Pietism and Freemasonry also made their way into Russian thought, the latter achieving a lasting impact. Freemasonry, originating in England in the Middle Ages and penetrating mainland Europe from about 1725, reached its acme in Russia during the reign of Catherine II (1763-1796), but due to its concept of social equality, it was soon driven underground by various Russian rulers. Nevertheless, the education of the major poets and writers of the romantic period was in the hands of

teachers and professors who were, for all intents and purposes, Freemasons, and this influence extends as far as to Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoj's (1828-1910) work (Kovalevskij 1915a). Furthermore, mysticism in Russia owes its existence chiefly to masonic influences (Walicki, 1979 72-74). The mystical interests of a few Russian writers in the late 1820s and 1830s, including Odoevskij, can likewise be traced back to this source.[1]

Catherine II, who entertained a private correspondence with Voltaire (1694-1778), personally fostered the introduction of enlightened French philosophy and literature into Russian society, until its republican ideas became a threat to her enlightened despotism. Under her rule, French literature became widely available in translation, introducing Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Guillaume Raynal (1713-1796), Claude Adrien Helvétius (1715-1751) and many more representatives of French and European enlightenment. All these Western influences provided the basis for the eventual redefinition of the Russian elite from servant of the state to servant of the people, whose task it became to advance Russian society as a whole. As a result, Russia's phases of enlightenment and romanticism became particularly concerned with social progress and the individual's responsibility within such process, a concern which found its climax in the aristocratic insurrection of the Decembrist revolt in 1825.

The Russian victory over France in 1812 under Alexander I (1777-1825) played a significant role in introducing current Western theories and debates into Russia. The newly attained status of equality within European politics contributed to an awakening

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[1] Also, the instigators of the Decembrist rebellion were mostly sons of Freemasons.

of Russia's cultural self-esteem, making it more susceptible to the romantic conviction of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and his proponents that each national literature arises out of and is defined by its own literary and cultural roots. Further, between 1813 and 1817, in the wake of Napoleon's retreat, many young Russian officers were stationed in Europe and Germany, where they became immersed in the current culture as well as literary and political discussions of the time, absorbing and bringing back home many of these concepts, in particular the views on history and literature. These new principles were discussed primarily in literary circles, which cultivated a general sort of romantic enthusiasm in their discussions on national and literary independence (*narodnost'*)[2]. The predecembrist period of the early 1820s saw the emergence of various literary groups, whose emphasis ranged from the more philosophical orientation of the Wisdom Lovers ("любомудры") to the politically driven so-called "decembrist" writers such as Kondratij Fedorovich Ryleev (1797-1826), Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Bestuzhev (1797-1837), Kjukhel'beker and others, whose writings were invested with an urgent demand for political reform. The poorly organized attempt at rebellion in December of 1825, which was immediately suppressed, led also to a speedy disbandment of these groups. Henceforth, due to their democratic connotations, the literary discussions surrounding romanticism became highly suspect to the government and needed to be toned down at least publicly. After 1825, the reactionary climate under Nicholas I (1825-1855) fostered a turn toward the introspective and personal in Russian literary circles, encouraging a

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[2] The term *narodnost'* literally translates as "peopleness" and refers to the national Russian character or quality displayed in a work of art, be it in theme, form, description of local colour or language.

delayed reception of German idealism.

The Rise of Romanticism in Russia

Russia's romantic period is usually said to encompass roughly the first forty years of the nineteenth century, with the first fifteen years as a pre-romantic phase dominated by the Karamzin School of sentimentalism (Brown I: 21; Čiževskij 3). Soviet studies frequently minimize the importance of romanticism in Russian literature. For instance, the academy edition on the history of Russian literature of 1981 portrays romanticism as a stepping stone between sentimentalism and realism, while the outlines of romanticism as a self-contained phenomenon remain foggy. Romantic principles are said to coexist briefly with realistic principles, the latter developing into the new Natural School ("натуральная школа"), obliterating romanticism by around 1840 (Kuprejanova, 1981a 345), so that Nikolaj Vasil'evich Gogol' (1809-1852) becomes a pre-realist. Any dealings with romanticism itself are limited to a skewed presentation of Decembrist prose as "the history of the romantic novella" (Petrunina, 1981b 179).

Whichever way Russia's romantic period is demarcated, it represents the first and probably most intense Russian reception of German literature and thought, which was welcomed as an opportunity to move beyond classicist French models, triggering a rediscovery and investigation of Russian literary roots. Compared to the classical period, the reception of German romanticism was far less imitative, emulating literary approaches rather than literary products in a quest to establish a distinctive national literature. Nevertheless, Soviet surveys of Russian romanticism never tire to stress its

virtual independence from German influences, preemptively rejecting the notion that Russian romanticism be reduced to a "history of assimilation" (Shatalov 12). They point to a variety of factors that make up a unique and separate habitat for romanticism in Russia, the experience of 1812 topping the list. While not providing a complete picture, this view does have some merit, since there are indeed home-grown as well as external factors that shape Russian romanticism in all its distinctiveness.

While European romanticism did not reach a wider audience in Russia until after the Napoleonic Wars (Hoffmeister 58), there existed important preconditions for the reception of romanticism in Russia that predate the events of 1812. The relationship with French classicist literature from the second half of the 18th century was largely imitative, an exercise in becoming acquainted with Western literary patterns. This led to a few advancements in Russian poetry, for example the introduction of the syllabo-tonic metric system, but did not produce any remarkable literary achievements. It is symptomatic for the superficial assimilation of French classicism that the two dominant native Russian poets of the time, Lomonosov and Gavrila Romanovich Derzhavin (1743-1816), were not classicists and were influenced more by German Baroque poetry. It is sometimes argued that classical literary trends did, overall, not take very deep roots in the Russian literary landscape, so that Russian writers did not react to classicism with the fierce romantic challenge brought against it by Western romantics (Čiževskij vii-xii). At the same time, some scholars contend that Russian romanticism was driven by an impulse against literary neoclassicism (Mersereau, 1971-72 138), but not necessarily linked to the usual resentment against enlightened values (Walicki, 1979 71). Whatever the reasons may be,

the fact remains that, when at the turn of the century Western Europe was swept by a romantic rebellion in literature and culture, Russia was embroiled in linguistic debates on the renewal of literary language, and did not take much notice of developments in the West. Certainly, when early German romanticism (*Frühromantik*) was in full swing around the turn of the century, Emperor Paul (1796-1801) had all but prohibited the dissemination in Russia of foreign material, leaving Russian society little option but to cultivate a look inward. In that period, trends toward a modernization and simplification of the Russian prose language reached their culmination in the sentimental tales of Karamzin (1766-1826) (Brown I: 25). Due in large part to his literary efforts, the following two decades saw the crystallization of two camps, the so-called "innovators" and "archaists," whose language dispute monopolized public literary discussions. Although the language dispute is situated outside the classicist-romanticist dichotomy,[3] it did help develop the literary language that the romantic writers worked with and shaped further. While Karamzin's stylistic innovations in his sentimental tales and 12 volume scholarly historical work *A History of the Russian State* (*Исторія государства Россійскаго*; 1816-1829) advanced the literary language, perhaps his most important contribution to the reception of European romanticism is the introduction of Russians to Western European culture in his *Letters of a Russian Traveller in the Years 1789-90* (*Письма русскаго путешественника в 1789-90 гг.*) published in 1791-92 after his extensive travels through Germany, Switzerland, France and England. In these travel notes, he reported on visits with, among others, Kant, Herder, Christoph

[3] See Tynjanov 1960 for the role of the language dispute in Russian literary history.

Martin Wieland (1733-1813) and Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801).

Generally, one can observe from the turn of the century a distancing from classical principles, not so much out of protest, but rather due to a gradual shift in interest. The publication of the ancient text *The Lay of the Host of Igor* (*Слово о полку Игореве*; rediscovered in the 1780s) and the avid reception of Ossian and Shakespeare in various journals refocused the interests of the readership (Kurilov 163-168) and made it more susceptible to subsequent romantic influences. The intellectual exchange that took place in the many journals in the first two decades advanced the critical understanding of literature and, eventually, romantic developments, and furthermore, as Zhukovskij once noted, prepared the Russian language for the "idea-novels" of the decades to come (Petrunina, 1981a 65).

The gradual digestion, absorption and appropriation of Western literature and thought in Russia from the turn of the century was greatly assisted by various journals, periodicals and almanacs. Kuleshov characterizes journalism as the vital artery between the literatures of Russia and the West (1977 17). *The European Herald* (*Вестник Европы*; 1802-1830), dedicated to introducing Russia to European cultural standards and edited by Karamzin from 1802-1803 and Zhukovskij from 1808-1810, dealt with current Russian and foreign news items of a political and cultural nature, with the goal of narrowing the cultural gulf between Russia and Europe (Iezuitova 36-37). It provided a regular flow of information on Western European political and literary life and reprinted various articles from foreign journals, especially French ones. In this way, the Russian reader was presented with an ongoing documentation of the development from

sentimentalism to romanticism in Western European literature. After a period of enchantment with several French romantics, notably Francois René Chateaubriand (1768-1848), the journal shifted its attention to German literature, when Zhukovskij became editor in 1808, thus preparing the ground for the reception of German romanticism (Kuleshov, 1977 18-22). In 1808, *The European Herald* published a favourable article on Kant as a preromantic force, as well as a translation by Vladimir Vasil'evich Izmajlov (1773-1830) of an article dealing with Fichte and German philosophy in comparison to French philosophy. The year 1808 also saw the appearance in the same journal of an article on Goethe, from which time it would seem that Zhukovskij's understanding of European romanticism somewhat atrophied to the two literary giants of Weimar (Kuleshov, 1977 22-23). The journal ceased to be a venue for liberal discussion in 1815, when editorship changed hands yet again (Brown II: 134).

The victory of 1812 over Napoleon had a considerable impact on Russian consciousness, initiating both a celebration of Russian cultural self-awareness, capturing the imagination of the artist (Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij 63) and opening the gates to a flood of Western European ideas and concepts. The new-found sense of national glory, the return to a Russian heritage and the wish for cultural independence provided favourable conditions for the introduction of Western European romanticism, so that from this time, one can speak of an active and eager reception of European romantic thought. However, European romanticism had at that point already moved beyond its first phase, hence, Russia's first encounters were actually with later romantics, such as Byron (1788-1824), Walter Scott (1771-1832), Hoffmann and Adalbert von Chamisso (1781-1838). In other

words, European romanticism was not retraced by Russian in its chronological development. Texts were therefore not only frequently absorbed out of context, but were considered to be important with respect to the creation of a national Russian literature, not with regard to the role these texts played in the development of romantic thought in the West (Leighton, 1975 25, 28). The fundamental time-lag in the Russian reception of romanticism thus contributed to a very idiosyncratic interpretation of German romanticism. Its reception in Russia begins in earnest with the literary activities of Zhukovskij.

Zhukovskij's most important contribution to Russia's reception of European romanticism are his translations, which span several decades, beginning with Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (*Сельское кладбище*; 1802). The selection of Zhukovskij's translations wielded a lasting impact on what Russian readers perceived German romanticism to be. Zhukovskij, known as the Schiller translator *par excellence*, introduced the reading public to the *Sturm-und-Drang* literature of Germany in the 1810s, when Russia experienced a phase of liberation and renewal. This timing likely contributed to the Russian interpretation of Goethe and Schiller as "romantic," because their *Sturm-and-Drang* works seemed to burst the confines of the classical conventions that still dominated literary Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As a result, in Russia, works such as *The Robbers* (*Die Räuber*) by Schiller and Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, "Erlkönig," *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*) and *Faust* to this day are considered to be representatives of German romantic literature (Hoffmeister 88). Zhukovskij also translated works by Ludwig Uhland

(1787-1862), Wieland and Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803), as well as Friedrich von Fouqué's (1777-1843) *Undine* and Gottfried August Bürger's (1747-1794) "Lenore," frequently paraphrasing quite liberally, in order to capture the spirit of the work in uniquely Russian terms. This approach increased the accessibility of Zhukovskij's translations to the Russian reader, prompting Fedor Mikhajlovich Dostoevskij (1821-1881) to remark that thanks to Zhukovskij, Russians virtually consider Schiller to be a Russian poet. Even though professionally Zhukovskij devoted most of his attention to Goethe and Schiller, he also knew Tieck, Hoffmann, Jean Paul, Novalis and the Schlegels (Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij 286; Lettenbauer 85), and translated A. Schlegel and Schelling (Leighton, 1975 26). Zhukovskij and a few others, such as Aleksandr Ivanovich Turgenev (1784-1846), already began studying the earlier German romantics before 1810, but did not, at that point, attempt to acquaint a wider readership with this type of literature (Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij 282).

A further contribution to the peculiar understanding in Russia of German romanticism is the fact that its influence was not always direct. Despite anti-French tendencies, Russian literary circles in the romantic period still received a fair amount of information through French sources. Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin (1799-1837), for instance, read most German literary works of the time in French translation (Hoffmeister 88). Mme de Stael's widely known *De L'Allemagne* (1813) perpetuated the general European view of Goethe and Schiller as the epicentre of German romanticism (Hoffmeister 92). In 1823, a three-part article by Orest Mikhajlovich Somov (1793-1833), which ended with an appeal to Russian writers to create their own, distinctive romanticism (Mersereau/Lopeza

288), is based largely on de Stael's study. As these examples indicate, many of the features and qualities adopted as vantage points or catalysts for Russian romanticism did not really reflect the essence of the purported source, that is, German romanticism. Indeed, as early as 1805, an article on Schiller in the journal *Aurora* defined the philosophical reception of Schiller in Russia as romantic.[4] Kuleshov in his study on literary relations between Russia and Western Europe interprets this article as one of the most "programmatic documents of early *Russian* romanticism" (1977 23; italics mine), which adhered largely to Zhukovskij's romantic understanding. Kuleshov's evaluation of this article demonstrates how much Russian romanticism is defined through its reception of other literatures, particularly German.

While German romanticism announced itself with a romantic manifesto in the form of F. Schlegel's *Dialogue on Poetry* (*Gesprāch über die Poesie*) in 1800, one can observe in Russia a gradual emergence of an idiosyncratic understanding of romanticism in the course of intense literary debates from roughly 1815 to the 1830s, with a definite peak in the early 1820s. Since the earlier phase of Russian romanticism became the arena for the development of Russia's first national literature, it comes as no surprise that these formative years hosted the most heated, emotional and sometimes irrational debates in the history of Russian literature (Leighton, 1975 19), which were largely devoid of any theoretical base or binding definition. Before 1820, literary feuds were waged largely over the rejection of neoclassical principles in favour of the Karamzinian salon style, but

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[4] The influence of Schiller on Russia has been studied in detail, notably by Peterson in 1934 and 1939, as well as by the Soviet critic Danilevskij in 1972.

debates soon shifted to an as yet poorly defined romantic approach in literature (Leighton, 1975 19-20). True, Vjazemskij's attempt in 1817 to interpret Vladislav Aleksandrovich Ozerov's (1770-1816) tragedies in the light of A. Schlegel's definition of the romantic drama seems to have been the first incident in Russian literary criticism of the use of the term "romantic" as a Schlegelian neologism.[5] However, this use was but an isolated forerunner that soon became drowned out in subsequent debates, after it had become apparent that the understanding of romanticism in Russia was far from homogeneous, and that it transcended Zhukovskij's interpretation of it (Lettenbauer 84).

Polemics were initiated with the so-called "battle of the ballads," which divided literary circles on issues such as level of speech, genre and authenticity of depiction. It was triggered by Zhukovskij's translation of Bürger's "Lenore" in 1815, to which Pavel Aleksandrovich Katenin (1792-1853) responded critically with his russified imitation entitled "Ol'ga." In 1818, Kjukhel'beker sided with Katenin, whose ballads he considered to be Russia's only true romantic poetry. Subsequently, Bestuzhev waded into the ballad issue, dismissing Katenin's views on language and genre theory. Simultaneously, discussions continued on neoclassical principles, fuelled by Pushkin's first important verse work published in 1820, *Ruslan and Ljudmila* (*Руслан и Людмила*). And once again, a translation by Zhukovskij from German, Schiller's "Der Fischer," sparked a

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[5] Vjazemskij writes:

[Трагедии Озерова] уже несколько принадлежат к новейшему драматическому роду, так называемому романтическому, который принят немцами от испанцев и англичан (Neuhäuser 88).

[Ozerov's tragedies] already belong somewhat to the newest dramatical type, the so-called romantic, which the Germans have taken from the Spanish and English.

debate, with Somov, Bestuzhev, Faddej Venediktovich Bulgarin (1789-1859) and Aleksandr Fedorovich Voejkov (1779-1839) as chief participants. In 1821-1822, Zhukovskij's translation of Byron's "The Prisoner of Chillion" and Pushkin's "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" ("Кавказский пленник") firmly established the topic of romanticism in public debate, giving it an initial Byronic slant (Leighton, 1975 20). The debates on romanticism in Russia are frequently said to be so confusing "as to defy coherent treatment" (Leighton, 1975 20). This confusion is to some degree conditioned by the peculiar reception of European romanticism. Due to Zhukovskij's translations, English and German romantic works were made accessible to the Russian reader well before 1820, while their theoretical roots remained either unknown or undigested. The questions surrounding romantic theory and philosophy raised after 1820 were therefore not approached unbiasedly. They were coloured (and thus complicated) by, on the one hand, the "dreamy-meditative" romantic versions offered by Zhukovskij's mediation, and, on the other hand, by the historical context of the national exuberance after 1812 (Leighton, 1975 26). Indeed, between these two poles are found a variety of understandings of romanticism. For instance, Vjazemskij used the idea of "native pride" ("народная гордость") as a weapon against neoclassicism (Leighton, 1975 51). The Decembrist Ryleev and other writers of his ilk called for and wrote civic poetry to incite democratic ambitions, while Bestuzhev's concern (despite his political alliance with decembrism) was chiefly for a modern literary language, as can be observed in his annual "Glances" at the state of Russian literature in the journal *Polar Star* (*Полярная звезда*) between 1823-1825. Semen Egorovich Raich's (1792-1855) salon of

metaphysically inclined poets operated in the spirit of German Romantic idealism, as did the circle of Wisdom Lovers, who became the ambassadors of Schelling and romantic philosophy in Russia. Pushkin's "true romanticism" advocated a truthful expression of national character and formal experimentation intended to burst the confines of accepted traditional genres (Brown III: 65). The members of the Pushkin Pleiad, Anton Antonovich Del'vig (1798-1831), Kjukhel'beker, Evgenij Abramovich Baratynskij (1800-1844), Nikolaj Mikhajlovich Jazykov (1803-1846), Dmitrij Vladimirovich Venevitinov (1805- 1827) and others, did not cultivate a "school" as such, but worked, each in unique and different ways, in the romantic spirit of originality and individualism (Čiževskij 76) and under the premise of *l'art pour l'art*. The rising critic Belinskij favoured the cultivation of a sophisticated literature along Western Europe lines that would move beyond mere "slavish imitation," and he sneered at the understanding of romantic *narodnost'* as displayed in Bestuzhev's "beststeller" tales. All these and more literary opinions, groupings and interests rallied under the flag of romanticism.

Narodnost' and its German Sources

Despite the different voices and objectives in the discussions on romanticism in Russia in the 1820s, there was, indeed, a concept that pervaded every camp and viewpoint. The concept of *narodnost'* was claimed as their own by the civic poets, Pushkin and his circle, the metaphysical poets, and the Schellingists alike. While the Soviets predictably misappropriated the term to their own ends, it fell prey to government distortion well before that. Soon after it came into circulation, it was adopted as a

nationalistic propaganda tool by Nicholas I in the ideological trinity of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and *Narodnost'*. This is particularly ironic, since national originality was championed also by none other than Schelling, whose philosophical system was considered to be a threat to Russian orthodoxy by officials and became virtually prohibited (Setschkareff, 1939 16-18). Indeed, the concept of *narodnost'*, despite its predominantly socio-political interpretation by Russians as "national Russian character," is a purely philosophical idea. It arose out of European philosophical romantic thought, which defined literature as the unique expression of a nation in its historical context. This concept can be traced back to the historian, philosopher and literary theorist Herder, who first advanced the idea that literature is written in a historical context and that, consequently, contemporary literature can no longer find meaningful models in the literature of the ancients (Winter 202). His treatise of 1772, *On the Origin of Language* (*Über den Ursprung der Sprache*), portrays literature as inseparably linked to human history. The more society becomes civilized, artificial and dominated by reason, the more language becomes an abstract, lifeless tool. Herder, who found that the process of modern human alienation is reflected in a de-poeticized language, considered poetry to be the original language ("Ursprache") of humankind, which encapsulated and preserved a nation's true identity (Winter 207-208). Even though Herder was associated with the *Sturm-und-Drang* movement in the 1770s and 1780s, his ideas on literature and national identity wielded a lasting impact on both romantic thought and the direction of German scholarship ("Germanistik"), as illustrated, for example, by the preoccupation of Jakob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) Grimm with folk literature and historical

linguistics.

A. and F. Schlegel were instrumental in developing these ideas further, using them in order to legitimize a new romantic literature that, contrary to classicism, "was imperfect in form, but had unlimited aspirations and possibilities" (Eichner, 1965 219). While A. Schlegel remained more dispassionate and academic on these issues, his brother Friedrich fiercely defended the concept of national originality as a tradition found in Dante (1265-1321), Calderon (1600-1681) and others, which was lost due to the unfortunate and, it was felt, unnatural rise of neo-classicism in 18th century literature. While the ancients expressed beauty and harmony in their literature as a reflection of their "natural yet dignified style of living" (Eichner, 1965 215), such a mode had become unfeasible in the modern age of disharmony. The Schlegelian idea that a romantic approach could foster a literature congenial to the time and place in which a nation existed found great resonance with literary Russia as it undertook to establish an independent national literature. Thus, as part of the umbrella-term *narodnost'*, this romantic notion of literature quickly became a central concept of Russian romanticism. Russian commentary on *narodnost'* is peppered with uncredited paraphrasings and ideas from German theorists. For instance, Vjazemskij's foreword to Pushkin's *Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (*Бахчисарайский фонтан*; 1824) defines *narodnost'* as an authenticity that the ancients possessed and that Russia itself must attain in its own way, rather than through an imitation of the ancients, who lived in an altogether different world (Brown II: 65). This, then, is the philosophical origin of the *narodnost'* concept adopted by Russia, a nation which after 1812 felt a surge of national pride and parity to the West,

but which found, in its cultural field, little to be proud of. Soviet scholars prefer to ignore its European provenance and present the *narodnost'* of any poet, including Pushkin, as excessively political. Worse, "when Russian Romantics, for example Pushkin, make statements on *narodnost'*, which are obviously taken from European sources, they are still treated, as if they were his own ideas," so that "there is a need [...] to examine and re-examine the origins of the concept of *narodnost'* in Romantic thought" (Leighton, 1975 45). Indeed, this need for reexamination extends in particular to the thinking of the *Frühromantik* as it relates to Russian romanticism.

Narodnost' as a concept originating from German thought thus described a general theory of the relationship between literature and the cultural life of a nation, but became more narrowly defined in its service to the cause of establishing a distinctly Russian literature. In this sense, it also naturally lent itself to the support of the slavophile cause. However, Odoevskij's romantic views on the future of Russian culture must be seen in light of their original source rather than the "main-stream" Russian concept of *narodnost'*. It would seem that, inevitably, Odoevskij's tendency to go to the very roots of a phenomenon would bring this romantic writer and thinker much closer to the romantic pioneers in Jena, but also alienate him from his own Russian literary habitat.

The Society of Wisdom Lovers

The 1820s were characterized by a lack of a single authoritative theory on romanticism in Russia. The common denominator for romanticism was primarily thematic, occasionally formalistic and virtually never philosophically or theoretically

corroborated. The Society of Wisdom Lovers tried to move beyond this state of Russian romanticism by attempting to establish a theoretical base for romanticism with assistance from German thought.

Founded in 1823, the Society of Wisdom Lovers (кружок любомудров) consisted of a few inquisitive young writers interested in the German philosophy of idealism and, especially, Schelling. They attempted to grasp romanticism in its philosophical origins, with specific regard to the question of aesthetic perception, while paying less attention to practical literary concerns. Frequently referred to as the "Russian Schellingists," or "philosophical romantics," they included Odoevskij, Venevitinov, Nikolaj Matveevich Rozhalin (1805-1834), Ivan Vasil'evich Kireevskij (1806-1856) and Aleksandr Ivanovich Koshelev (1806-1883), the latter two joining the ranks of the Slavophiles in later years. Meeting secretly, they nevertheless operated in close contact with Raich's literary salon, so that the ideas of the Wisdom Lovers indirectly reached a wider audience (Walicki, 1979 74). Their almanac, *Mnemosyne* (*Мнемозина*), was published in the years 1824-25 under the editorship of Odoevskij.

The impulse to consult German philosophical sources was primarily a reaction to the existing "romantic chaos" and its lack of literary theory, which Odoevskij in particular lamented. Thus, the Wisdom Lovers attempted to systematize and provide a unifying theory for the phenomenon of "early Russian romanticism" (Sakharov, 1979 45-46), or, at the very least, nudge the development of Russian romanticism in this direction. For the first time, and with the help of German sources such as Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Oken, Görres and the Schlegels, the Wisdom Lovers cultivated an entire romantic world

view, with such goals as changing the conscience of society and championing an absolute idea of art. In this way, they were very much retracing the philosophical origins of German romanticism in the 1790s, which defined a general outlook on life that went far beyond a few assorted literary concepts. The Jena romantics, at the centre of this new impulse, developed, as Hoffmeister phrased it, an entire "program for life and culture" ("ein Lebens- und Kulturprogramm;" 33), so that German romanticism manifested itself not just as a literary but as a cultural and socio-political phenomenon (Ribbat 95). By contrast, the *Sturm-und-Drang* phenomenon, which had provided the initial life-blood to the Russian reception of German romanticism, was by and large limited to the literary field, and, while creating a new atmosphere in literature, neither attempted to alter the manner in which reality was to be perceived, nor resulted in any serious implications for the field of philosophy and philosophical aesthetics.

The word "любомудры," "Wisdom Lovers," was selected from mystical Masonic terminology to stress emancipation from the French philosophical tradition of strict rationalism (Walicki, 1979 75). In *Mnemosyne*, Odoevskij deplored the fact that "to this day, nobody can imagine a philosopher to resemble anybody but one of those 18th century French blabbermouths" (Walicki, 1979 75; *Mnemosyne* IV: 163; Sakulin I/1: 138-39) and wondered, whether people would ever appreciate the enormous difference between "a truly divine philosophy" and that of "the Voltaires and Helvetiuses" (Sakulin I/1: 138). Indeed, the objective of the Wisdom Lovers was to change the entire philosophical outlook from primarily rational-enlightened to idealistic-romantic, a development that had not taken place despite all the discussions about romanticism in

previous years. Predecembrist romanticism, for reasons discussed above, represented a mixed bag of thematic romantic viewpoints still rendered frequently in a classical manner and in the spirit of enlightenment.[6] As enlightened rationalism no longer provided tools for a meaningful investigation of life, the Wisdom Lovers sought to revive and relive the impulse of the early German romantics. The deferential relationship of the Wisdom Lovers to German philosophy is best reflected in one of Odoevskij's notes from the 1820s: "Land of ancient Teutons! land of noble ideas! To you I turn my worshipful gaze!" (Sakulin I/1: 139). Under the spell of Schelling's philosophy and philosophy of art, the Wisdom Lovers understood poetry as an organ for intuitive world knowledge, an indispensable ingredient to formulate philosophical ideas that logic could not achieve on its own (Sakharov, 1979 50).

The development of Russian thought is indebted to the Russian Schellingists for introducing the concept of artistic intuition as a philosophical tool (Walicki, 1979 76). By the same token, literature was redefined as a medium through which higher insights into the workings of the world could be obtained, leading to the emergence of an absolute theory. The Russian Schellingists viewed all worldly manifestations as containing a second, hidden symbolic meaning, which needed to be accessed for a true understanding

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[6] Mersereau's definition of the romantic movement in Russia is primarily thematic. He cites various different poets "whose choice and treatment of themes leaves no doubt about their romantic orientation" (Mersereau, 1971-72 138), whereas their form may not be romantic at all. For instance, "Baratynskij's views on nature and the isolation of the poet define his lyrics as romantic, irrespective of their apparent 'Classical' style" (Mersereau, 1971-72 137), which means that they lacked the formal experimentation and irreverence displayed by many other European romantics who broke with previous neoclassical patterns. By the same token, whereas Germans defined the ode and the elegy with formal classical criteria, the Russian distinction was strictly thematic.

of the world in its essence (speculative philosophy). Setschkareff credits Odoevskij as the driving force behind the Wisdom Lovers, who almost single-handedly presented the Russian readership with Schelling's system of transcendental idealism and identity (1939 33), focusing heavily on its aesthetic implications. Odoevskij's philosophical activities are duly reflected in his literary works, especially in *Russian Nights*, in which he investigates the act of aesthetic perception as generating genuine insight. According to Setschkareff, *Russian Nights* signifies an attempt at poeticizing Schelling's philosophy (1939 37-38), and thus contains Odoevskij's entire aesthetic theory.

In the spirit of early German romanticism, the Wisdom Lovers were interested in a revolution of the perception of reality that would ultimately alter people's consciousness; this, it was hoped, would then change society at large and lead to a regeneration of Russian culture and society. A survey work on German literature offers the following as a basic common conviction of German romanticism proper (i.e., *Frühromantik*), which such later romantics as Eichendorff, Hoffmann, Uhland and others no longer shared:

> Die Überzeugung nämlich, daß durch eine "romantische" Erneuerung der Literatur und der Künste -- und nur durch sie -- eine Überwindung der seit der Französischen Revolution manifest gewordenen globalen Krise der Gesellschaftsordnung zu erreichen sei; daß die Aufgabe und darum auch die einzigartige Freiheit der Poesie sich darin erweise, einer zutiefst erschütterten und ziellosen Epoche Orientierung, ja geschichtliche Identität zu verleihen (Ribbat 93).
>
> Namely, the conviction, that the global crisis of social order, which had become apparent since the French revolution, could be overcome through a renewal of literature and the arts -- and only through this; so that the task and therefore also the unique freedom of poetry consists in giving a deeply shaken and disoriented era new direction, indeed, historical identity.

The Russian critics' failure to acknowledge this basis of German romanticism proper (as rooted in the philosophy of an idealism that was not simply dissociated from reality), has

led them to label the Schellingian movement within Russian Romanticism as "escapist," "regressive" or even "conservative," when in reality it provided a tool to achieve, ultimately, the same thing that so-called "active" or "progressive" romanticism in the sense of *littérature engageé* pursues. It is true that literary idealism failed to solve the problem of modern dissonance with aesthetic means, but this is quite another matter.

Explaining the genesis of the Wisdom Lovers, Koshelev recalls how his conversations with Odoevskij on German philosophy received their nourishment from Odoevskij's contact with Professors Mikhail Grigor'evich Pavlov (1793-1840) and Ivan Ivanovich Davydov (1794-1863) upon their return from Western Europe (Brown III: 341). This points again to the considerable role individual travel abroad played in the reception of romanticism and the direction literary discussions took in Russia. Setschkareff gives a survey of the nature of the absorption and dissemination of Schellingian philosophy by Russian professors, such as Davydov, Pavlov, Nikolaj Ivanovich Nadezhdin (1804-1856), Danil Vellanskij (1774-1847) and Aleksandr Ivanovich Galich (1783-1848). They had either attended Schelling's lectures in Germany or were introduced to his philosophy by German professors staying in Russia. While they were not all Schellingists, they did play important roles as mediators. Davydov, for instance, taught at the Moscow preparatory school *Blagorodnyj Pansion* for the young aristocratic elite, where he made a lasting impression on the young Odoevskij. Many Russian writers and thinkers, especially from the circle of Wisdom Lovers, subsequently paid visits to Schelling and conversations with him were referred to constantly in correspondence between the writers.

As founders of a philosophical school of Russian romanticism, the Wisdom Lovers firmly established in Russia a poetry of ideas and generally, an inclination for philosophical inquiry in literature. Stepan Petrovich Shevyrev's (1806-1864) poetry, for instance, experimented openly with the new theories that arose out of the Wisdom Lovers' philosophical studies. His poem "Thought" ("Мысль;" 1828) was hailed by Pushkin as "one of the most astounding poems of current literature" (Sakharov, 1979 54-55). Further instances of influence from the Russian Schellingists can be found in F. Tjut'chev's (1803-1873) metaphysical poetry, as well as in that of Aleksej Stepanovich Khomjakov (1804-1860) and Baratynskij, whom Brown considers to be "unquestionably the greatest Russian poet of the so-called 'Pushkin Pleiad'" (III: 311). The great critic Belinskij himself went through a Schellingian phase in the mid 1830s. In short, by the 1830s "Schelling was so well-known that one could read his name in virtually every journal" (Setschkareff, 1939 85).

Following the Decembrist revolt, which cast suspicion on anyone even remotely engaged in liberal activities, the Wisdom Lovers decided to terminate their journal and disband, while nevertheless continuing to meet informally. In the late 1820s, their writings found a home in the *Moscow Herald* (*Московский вестник*; 1827-1830), at which time their interests shifted from a philosophy of nature to a philosophy of history, and therefore, to the fundamental problem of Russia and the West. In this regard, the Wisdom Lovers provided the life-blood for the subsequent Slavophile movement, which became an important part of public discourse in the 1830s and 1840s.

Major Russian Romantics and their relation to German thought

Periodically, the theory is advanced that "minor figures in the world of the arts are often far more accurate indicators of the nature of their period than are the giants their contemporaries, whose very genius sets them apart from their age" (Brown I: 19). While many minor poets and writers did indeed play important roles as critics in the debate on romanticism, the central literary event of the 1820s was the rise of Pushkin's genius. His poignant literary criticism was well-respected, but especially Pushkin's original poetry was hailed as the new yardstick, breaking all literary conventions, thus putting into practice the romantic principles under discussion. His works between 1820 and 1824 were "used by critics as an opportunity to define romanticism in Russian literature" (Mersereau, 1971-72 135-136), much as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*; 1795-96) was used by both F. Schlegel and Novalis to illustrate their concept of the romantic novel. Even though he is usually referred to as having been influenced by Byron and English romanticism, Pushkin also expressed great admiration for Zhukovskij's translations of German romantic works (Leighton, 1975 26), and wrote critically on romantic theory and German idealism. In the 1820s, Pushkin was favourably inclined toward German philosophy, which "rescued our youth from the cold scepticism of French philosophy" (Setschkareff, 1939 49), although he is also said to have scorned German metaphysics for their "pretentious incomprehensibility" (Brown III: 341). Pushkin joined the debate on romanticism and literary theory in numerous articles which clearly reveal his acquaintance with German romantic thought. For example, an unpublished article of 1825, "On classical and romantic poetry," echoes the theories of

the Schlegels with respect to the origins of romantic poetry and its formalistic qualities (Mersereau, 1971-72 136; see also Pushkin 69-72).

Besides leaving its mark on both the exploratory and philosophical phases of Russian romanticism, the influence of German romanticism extended into the later stages of the romantic period in Russia. Čiževskij refers to these stages as the period of "reflective pessimism" represented by M. Ju. Lermontov (1814-1841), followed by the Natural School, which developed some features from Gogol, and attempted "to portray only the natural world and to portray it in all its ugliness" in order to "awaken a desire for the other world, the supernatural world [...]" (Čiževskij 132). While Lermontov drew his inspiration mainly from Byron, Schiller and Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), Gogol's metaphysically oriented fantastical tales owe much to German romanticism and Schelling's philosophy, with which the writer likely became acquainted through his colleagues, for instance, Somov (Lettenbauer 114). In 1852, the critic Apollon Grigor'ev (1822-1864) observed:

> [...] гоголевские произведения верны не действительности, а общему смыслу действительности в противоречии с идеалом [...] (45).
>
> [...] Gogol's works are true not to reality, but to the general sense of reality in contradiction to the ideal [...].

In other words, Gogol's literature is still fundamentally romantic,[7] even though many critics, especially in the Soviet Union, view Gogol as the father of Russian realism.

While in literature romanticism and idealism in Russia survived well into the 1840s,

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[7] See also Jenness 1995.

as can be observed, for instance, in Gogol's style, Hegelian philosophy came to pervade Russian thinking by the mid 1830s. Certainly, Hegelianism ran counter to romanticism, nevertheless many Russian Hegelians "were willing to overlook Hegel's criticism of romanticism" (Čiževskij 26-27), or at least, as the philosophical discussions and Faust's position in *Russian Nights* bear out, still flirted with idealism despite the new Hegelian context. The academy history of Russian literature confirms this state for the entire literary generation of Gogol:

> Для Гоголя, как и для его литературного поколения в целом, немецкая классическая философия была последним и непререкаемым словом научного и прежде всего исторического знания, о чем, в частности, свидетельствует и отзыв писателя о Канте, Шеллинге и Гегеле [...] (Kuprejanova, 1981b 535).
>
> For Gogol, as for his literary generation in general, German classical philosophy was the final and indisputable word of scientific and above all historical knowledge, which is demonstrated particularly in the references of the writer to Kant, Schelling and Hegel [...].

However, as Walicki explains, eventually, Hegelian philosophy was welcomed by most as an "antidote to romanticism" and an action-centred "reconciliation with reality" that could overcome the *de facto* passivity that resulted from romantic thinking, since "Hegelianism was above all a philosophy of reintegration," of a way to overcome the individual's alienation from reality (Walicki, 1979 116). These concepts were largely debated in the Stankevich circle of the 1830s, many members of which, such as Nikolaj Vladimirovich Stankevich (1813-1840), Belinskij, Timofej Nikolaevich Granovskij (1813-1855), Vasilij Petrovich Botkin (1810-1869) and Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin (1814-1876), had previously studied romantic philosophy, especially Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* (Walicki, 1979 117). This group effectively spearheaded the transition

from idealism to positivism in Russian thought, which is also reflected in the development of Belinskij's understanding of literature: "For the early Belinskij, the principle criteria were 'universal realism, objectivity and *narodnost'* in art and the uniqueness of the artist and his divine inspiration;' these principles were intensified in the Hegelian period (1838-41) [...]" (Cornwell, 1984a 10). By the 1840s, Belinskij declared the Russian writer's task to be the socio-political advancement of society. Therefore, in his 1844 review of Odoevskij's collected works, Belinskij could no longer endorse *Russian Nights* because of its failure "to see any progress in science" and its view of "history as mere chaos of facts," and decided that "the time of scepticism is past and any type of simple, honest conviction [...] now is more valued" (VIII: 318). This attitude typifies the luke-warm reception of *Russian Nights* in 1844, when romantic idealism no longer seemed convincing. It is arguably the key to the only tentative and somewhat contradictory reception of *Russian Nights*. Cornwell speculates that "had Odoyevsky's collection [of 1844] appeared four or five years earlier, Belinsky would probably have welcomed it unreservedly" (1986b 171).

Evaluation: The Russian Reception of German Romanticism

As F. Schlegel stated repeatedly, the German *Frühromantik* defined itself in relation to the social upheaval caused by the French Revolution, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and Fichte's *Doctrine of Science* (1794), in other words, it was concerned with the global course of humanity, the creation of a new literature and speculative philosophy. It was essentially an aesthetic response to a perceived social crisis of international, indeed,

universal dimensions. And it defined itself against enlightened thought, which allowed this crisis to come to pass, and the classical literature that could no longer provide guidance out of this crisis. By contrast, Russia's romantic beginnings were dominated by a search for national identity and the creation of Russian distinctiveness in the arts. Even when Russian romanticism entered its speculative philosophical phase, questions raised were mostly related to national matters, social issues and eventually, to the relationship between Russia and the West (the Slavophile debate). A 1910 survey of Russian romanticism concludes that compared to European romanticism, it was "less of an all-encompassing world view, selective in its borrowings, eclectic and redefined in uniquely Russian terms" (Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij 284). Resistance to rational enlightened thought in Russia has traditionally been rather nationalistic in perspective. For instance, Russian mysticism was coupled with the idea of Russia as a chosen nation "destined to effect the rebirth of Christianity" (Walicki, 1979 72), a conviction that resurfaced in the Slavophile movement.

It would seem that while early German romantic theory was to some extent studied in the 1820s and 1830s, its overall theoretical position was not really adopted and many of its core aesthetic concepts, such as the notion of *Universalpoesie* as a transcendental poetry with all its formal implications were never put into practice in concrete literary works in Russia. With the exception of *Russian Nights*, one does not find ambitious experiments in the spirit of Schlegel's *Lucinde* and Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Secondary literature continually affirms that in the 1830s there existed a keen interest in romantic universalism. However, few if any examples of literary products in this vein

are cited. Rather, universalism was discussed as a topic within public debates on social questions and principles of human interaction (Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij 284). This type of discussion led to the neglect of the literary theory behind idealism as it grew out of romanticism in Germany. The transcendental impulse was simply regarded as escapist (Hoffmeister 93). Despite the "great resonance" of Schlegel's theories (Hoffmeister 95), neither other European nor Russian romantics were inspired to embark on a consistent transcendental quest through poetry, concentrating instead on romantic topics and themes. The philosophical investigations of the Wisdom Lovers notwithstanding, the Russian romantics generally either adhered to a thematic understanding of romanticism, or went directly to its philosophy, while largely neglecting literary theory and formal concerns. It must be stressed again that the early German romantics strove to change reality through the power of the word. Novalis understood poetry as a powerful tool to "break the spell" of objects in our environment, freeing their true spirit, and thus transforming the world (Volkmann-Schluck 48). This understanding of poetry and the resulting creative approach are all but absent in Russian romanticism. Fundamentally, the Jena romantics combined the power of imagination with specific philosophical goals. By contrast, as has been noted, "the primacy of the imagination over the depiction of reality [...] never held full sway in Russia" (Cornwell, 1986b 195), an observation which also rings true for the transcendental-philosophical orientation in Russian literature.

Russian Nights in the Context of Russia's Reception of German Romanticism

The circumstances of romantic reception in Russia ultimately translate, it would seem, into an atrophied view of romanticism, despite the fact that most impulses came from Western Europe, especially Germany. For the most part, the concept of *narodnost'* as "national Russian character" limited the scope of romanticism to the point were the terms *narodnost'* and romantic principle were virtually interchangeable. This view, of course, excludes vast, indeed, defining features of German romanticism proper. It is symptomatic of the difference between German and Russian romanticism that while the German romantics considered Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* to be the pinnacle of romantic poetry, the Russians hailed his *Werther* as an example of "early" German romanticism, because it was anti-classical in a general thematic sense (Hoffmeister 92). This also shows that by "early" German romanticism Russian critics by and large refer to the first German writers whom they embraced as romantics, not the initial romantic phenomenon in Jena that offered a specific and new aesthetic doctrine (i.e., *Frühromantik*). It becomes evident that any universal poetic experiment close in spirit to the German *Frühromantik* could not hope to receive a warm welcome by either "main-stream" romanticism or positivism in the Russian literary environment.

Despite the general shift toward positivism in the 1840s, Odoevskij stayed true to his philosophical roots of the Wisdom Lover period and the task of literature that they defined. Odoevskij, combining a quest for philosophical inquiry with formal literary experimentation, believed that poetic intuition could wield "power in the real world" and

"create a living social bond" (Walicki, 1979 79). One could argue that in 1844 with *Russian Nights*, Odoevskij reiterated this view not despite the end of a general belief in idealism, but because of it. He was against the concept of "rational social engineering" (Walicki, 1979 79) championed by the positivists in the 1830s and 1840s and wanted to remind people of an alternative that had seemed quite plausible only a decade or two ago.

Russian Nights stands apart as an expression of the romantic idea developed by the Jena romantics that one does not generally encounter in Russian romantic works. Consequently, Odoevskij's experimentation in the early romantic vein was not recognized as such, even by a critic such as Belinskij. Cornwell's distinction of three levels of romanticism clearly separates Odoevskij's romanticism (a tentative "level three") from the usual Russian variety (levels one and two), which merely displays romantic themes, devices and a formal deviation from the classical doctrine (1986b 193). Especially through intermittent references to the Jena romantics and Novalis, Cornwell suggests that Odoevskij, in at least some of his works, attained a "higher" romanticism than most other Russian romantics (1986b 186-187). This, in turn, effected both his relative isolation within Russian letters and an inadequate reception of his works by critics who did not, overall, possess appropriate analytical tools. Both Belinskij and Grigor'ev came to define romanticism simply as the portrayal of the "inner world of man" so that romanticism "loses its status as a definite theory" once and for all (Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij 325). Taken out of the context of its historical genesis, it was reduced to a general idealistic mood in poetry and prose. Consequently, even in recent times, critics determined the status of *Russian Nights* within Russian romanticism as peripheral and somehow alien to its native

literary habitat (Mann, 1976 370). In a socio-political context, *Russian Nights*, published during the polarization of Slavophiles and Westernizers, "simply did not fit some of the most cherished notions of either camp" (Karlinsky 174), and, certainly, also did not cater to the Soviet camp.

Evidently, misconceptions about German romantic literary theory could only obscure the poetic objectives of *Russian Nights*. Both Soviet-Russian and Western scholarship have pursued links to Goethe's Faust-figure and, particularly, to Hoffmann and his *Serapions-Brothers* cycle (*Serapions-Brüder*; 1819-1821). However, Hoffmann was not concerned with overcoming a socio-cultural crisis through poetry. Rather, as a representative of the later *Spätromantik*, Hoffmann portrayed reality as grotesque in its flaws and alienating to the individual. For this reason, comparisons to Hoffmann's works can only distinguish superficial parallels and reveal little about the essence of *Russian Nights* and its underlying poetics (Passage 1963; Ingham 1974). In conclusion, the problematic Russian reception of German romanticism and, particularly, the literary *Frühromantik*, must be taken into account for the comparison of *Russian Nights* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. It becomes necessary, to some extent, to dispense with the existing "conventional" evaluations of *Russian Nights* and take a fresh look at the context of poetics in which this cycle functions.

CHAPTER II

NOVALIS AND ODOEVSKIJ: WORKS AND RECEPTION

THE QUEST FOR THE TOTAL CULTURE

Biographical Notes on Novalis

Georg Friedrich Philipp von Hardenberg was born on May 2, 1772 into a family of ancient saxon lineage. The name Novalis had already been used by his ancestors in medieval times and, with its meaning of "tiller of new soil" ("der Neuland Rodende"), expressed Hardenberg's most basic intellectual objectives of transcending boundaries and stimulating renewal. Raised in a pietistic environment as the son of a chief administrator in the local salt-mines in Weißenfels, Novalis entered the university of Jena in 1790 to study law. Fledgling poetic attempts in imitation of various poets from Wieland to Klopstock and several translations of ancient texts by Virgil, Theokrit, Pindar and Horace, attest to his precocious interest in literature. The intellectual atmosphere in Jena, dominated by Kantian philosophy, Fichte's idealism, Schelling's philosophy of identity and the presence of Schiller as a history professor, was a defining circumstance of Novalis's development as a poet and thinker. For the period of 1791-1792, Novalis transferred to Leipzig, where he began a life-long friendship with F. Schlegel, who encouraged him to study Kant and, in particular, Fichte. He graduated from law in Wittenberg in 1793 and the following year accepted a post as administrator for a salt-mine in Tennstedt. During a business trip to Grüningen in 1794, Novalis made the acquaintance of Sophie von Kühn, a mere 13 year old, to whom he became engaged in

1795. Her death three years later and Novalis's diary entry describing a mystical experience of sorts at her grave have frequently been interpreted as providing the key to an understanding of Novalis's work, although in recent decades it has been sufficiently documented that this view is far too restrictive and denies Novalis his rightful place as a serious literary theorist and thinker. Indeed, from about 1795, Novalis plunged into a thorough study of Fichte's *Doctrine of Science* (*Wissenschaftslehre*), undoubtedly the single most consequential intellectual influence on Novalis and his literary creativity.

During his Freiburg period at the *Bergakademie* from 1797-1799, Novalis studied mathematics, chemistry, geology, mineralogy and mining, fields of knowledge that affected the development of his philosophical and aesthetic views in important ways. This period also sees Novalis in frequent contact with the Schlegel brothers in Dresden, Weimar, and particularly in Jena, where they briefly cohabitated during the heyday of the Jena romantic period in an atmosphere of congenial intellectual exchange ("Symphilosophie"). In 1799, Novalis returned to his home in Weißenfels to resume his career as a mining engineer in an administrative position. Around the same time, he established a friendship with Tieck and maintained fruitful contact with Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Schelling. Most of Novalis's publications fall into the last three years of his life, which was ended by consumption on March 25, 1801, preventing the completion of his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. F. Schlegel and Tieck became his literary executors and published many of his works, including *Heinrich von*

Ofterdingen, posthumously.[1]

Novalis's Works

Novalis's extensive juvenilia testify to a poetic gift that was in early use (see *Schriften* I)[2]. Nevertheless, his initial interests, encouraged by F. Schlegel, were of a predominantly philosophical nature. Novalis's systematic and rigorous study of Fichte's *Doctrine of Science* are preserved in his extensive notes known as the *Fichte-Studies* (*Fichte-Studien*; 1795-97; II: 104-296). These studies document the origin and development of Novalis's concept of transcendental poetry, his quest for an organic world view and life experience (see Molnar 1970).

In 1797, his first year as a student of the sciences and mining, Novalis wrote his first collection of fragments ("Vermischte Bemerkungen"), which were published as *Pollen* (*Blüthenstaub*; II: 412-470) in the first edition of Schlegel's journal *Athenäum* (1798-1800). This collection attempted to "intertwine philosophical, religious, aesthetic, scientific and political topics so that the reader, in following these thoughts, may experience a universal connection" (Uerlings 218). Even though this collection is formally divided into numerous separate parts, it does not, as traditionally claimed, evidence fragmentary thinking (Uerlings 221). Rather, it documents a systematically

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[1] For an excellent short survey of Novalis's biography in relation to his literary activities see Mähl 1971.

[2] All references to material by Novalis and all quotes are based on the historical-critical edition of his works (*Schriften*).

formulated notion of transcendental poetry (Mähl, 1971 200). Further, Novalis began working on his novel project *The Novices of Sais* (*Lehrlinge zu Sais*; I: 79-109), an examination of the relationship between nature and individual self-knowledge. It is based on his study of the sciences and Schelling's nature philosophy and concept of a "world-soul" ("Weltseele"), according to which the spirit as part of nature, by gaining consciousness out of a state of unconsciousness, reveals the soul of the world (Kohlschmidt 49). *The Novices of Sais* contains the famous fairy tale of *Hyazinth und Rosenblütchen*, which was probably written independently from the *Sais*-project and inserted retrospectively.

A further collection of fragments which develop a philosophical romantic understanding of the state was published in 1798 under the title *Faith and Love* (*Glauben und Liebe*; II: 485-498). Novalis's quest for comprehensive knowledge is reflected in an ambitious plan for a universal encyclopedia, which he worked on in 1798/99 (*Das Allgemeine Brouillon*; III: 242-478). It seeks to perfect philosophy as a proper scientific discipline by integrating all types of human knowledge into a system -- a plan that ultimately defies clear description and to which Uerlings refers as a "frühromantische Universalutopie" (135). This material first became available in volume III of the historical-critical edition in 1960, as have many extensive additional notes, studies and reflections from the years 1798-1801. They cover a wide thematic area, including, besides philosophy and literature, religion, science, mathematics, medicine and history.

In 1799, Novalis wrote his essay *Christendom or Europe* (*Die Christenheit oder Europa*; III: 507-524), a controversial interpretation of history and vision of the future,

which he worked on concurrently with his research into the historical sources for *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. In this essay, against the backdrop of the irretrievable loss of the Hellenic golden age, Novalis describes an idealized European Christian medieval period, with which humanity must reconnect for spiritual renewal. First published in 1826, it was interpreted strictly as an historical essay with a conservative message. Only in 1962 did Samuel's study draw attention to the poetical-rhetorical structure of the text, thus moving beyond its usual evaluation as a distorted religious interpretation of history. He established it as an "interpretation of history as a teleological process," so that henceforth, it has been understood as a metaphorical portrayal of European spiritual history and a plea for the reversal of contemporary spiritual decline (Uerlings 569-570).

Novalis's collection of lyrical poems *Spiritual Songs* (*Geistliche Lieder*; I: 159-177) was only published posthumously in 1802, although individual poems were read by Novalis to an enthusiastic audience of friends in Jena in 1799. They are frequently seen to stand in the tradition of the German church song (*Kirchenlied*) and have been used as such especially in protestant religious worship. At the end of 1799, Novalis began working on his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. At the same time, as Novalis turned his attention to the late medieval mystic J. Böhme (1575-1624), first drafts were made of *Hymns to the Night* (*Hymnen an die Nacht*; I: 130-157), a mixture of prose and verse in six parts of different lengths, which was published in *Athenäum* in 1800. This highly esoteric work develops a vision of a glorious future that emerges out of a reversal of the valorization of light and darkness and points to a mystical transcendence of death.

The brief survey of Novalis's literary activities reveals his consistent pursuit of an

organic world view, of generating higher insights through a synthesis of all areas of human knowledge and of human perceptual faculties. The variety and breadth of Novalis's interest, while they may strike one as somewhat scattered, are held together by the overall desire to discover a unifying principle that underlies all external phenomena as they relate to the individual. Novalis's oeuvre is singularly focused and limited to a specific task.

Biographical Notes on Odoevskij

The Odoevskij family, into which Prince Vladimir Fjodorovich was born in Moscow in 1804, claimed descent from no less a personage than Rurik, the Varangian ruler of Rus'. The bulk of the family fortune, however, did not survive into the 19th century. As a result, despite his title of "senior nobleman" of Russia, Odoevskij depended upon his civil servant's salary, as did his father before him (Cornwell, 1986a 3-4). The constitutionally weak child lost his father very early, but the influence of his peasant-born mother was curtailed by various educated family members, who acted as guardians. He graduated from the elite Moscow University preparatory school (*Blagorodnyj pansion*) in 1822 as the highest ranking student. He became fluent in French, German, Italian, English and Spanish, and knew Old Slavonic, Latin and Greek (Cornwell, 1986a 293). Already as a student, he acquainted himself with romantic philosophy, wrote first literary pieces and attended meetings by the Society for the Lovers of Russian Philology (Общество любителей русской словесности; 1811-1837), the major literary circle of the time. After graduation, Odoevskij spent four years establishing his name as

a participant in the literary and cultural scene in Russia. He associated with, among others, Raich's salon of metaphysical poets, and immersed himself in questions of philosophy and aesthetics at the meetings of the Wisdom Lovers from 1823-1825, which he hosted, chaired, and frequently guided, co-editing their journal *Mnemosyne*. In 1826, Odoevskij entered government service, married and moved to St. Petersburg, where he occupied various official posts in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, including a seat on the Censorship Committee, served as an educational consultant, and held directorships at the Imperial Public Library and the Rumjantsev Museum. In the 1830s, he participated in the furthering of Russian literary journalism, working and associating with, among others, Vjazemskij, Gogol, Zhukovskij, Pushkin, Lermontov and members of the Pushkin Pleiad. This most productive, but also very hectic phase in the 1830s saw the publication of most of his creative works. Civil service duties were kept in a delicate balance with his literary and cultural activities and the hosting of his own salon, which attracted the most prominent cultural figures of the time. In 1842, Odoevskij undertook his first travel to Western Europe, which included a meeting with Schelling in Munich.

After the first publication of his collected works in 1844, Odoevskij redirected his attention away from literature to public education and philanthropy, and various assorted, sometimes eccentric interests such as gastronomy, botany, galvanism, the laws of acoustics, the sciences in general, mathematics, medicine and pedagogy. Chronically overworked due to extreme conscientiousness, a scattered and over-ambitious field of activity, and financial insecurity, Odoevskij came to detest both St. Petersburg and his government duties, and a tone of resignation is noticeable at least by the late 1830s. The

peculiar "Odoevskij personality" described by Cornwell isolated the writer from many of his contemporaries, who saw him as a "dilettante encyclopedist," and as a hybrid poet-philosopher *cum* prince, who could not be taken seriously as an artist (Cornwell, 1986a 24-25). In 1856-1857, Odoevskij travelled to various cities in Germany, including Jena and Weimar, after which he resettled in Moscow to accept an appointment to the Moscow Senate. Here, he became a law expert and vocal supporter of various reforms. Moreover, he resumed his activities as a music critic and, once again, frequented and hosted literary circles. He died in February 1869 from a rapidly developing inflammation of the brain.[3]

Odoevskij's Works

Odoevskij's literary activity began early at the preparatory school, where he wrote essays, translations and first attempts at creative works, some of which were published in journals. Already noticeable is the desire for "free expression and at the same time confluence with the world" through "aesthetic activity" (Cornwell, 1986a 31-32). Odoevskij's literary output of the 1820s peaked in the years 1824-1825, when he published stories and articles on issues of philosophy and aesthetics as they arose out of the inquiries into German philosophy undertaken by the Wisdom Lovers. Most of these appeared either in *Mnemosyne* or *The Moscow Telegraph*, and bespeak Odoevskij's interest in defining a transcendental aesthetic theory and unifying the sciences and arts

[3] This section is based on Cornwell's biographical sketch (1986a 1-28).

in order to reach a higher form of insight into both nature and human society.[4] Odoevskij experimented with the form of the apologue, a short allegorical or parable-like text, some of which were published in *Mnemosyne* in 1824 (*Four Apologues*; *Четыре апологa*). His society tale *Elladij* (*Елладий*; 1824) also appeared here, and Belinskij considered it to be the first real povest' dealing with Russian reality (Cornwell, 1986a 33). His pre-decembrist phase also sees the rudimentary development of the "superfluous man" ("лишний человек"), which other Russian romantics, such as Pushkin and Lermontov, fleshed out fully. In this context, Sakulin considered *Days of Vexation* (*Дни досад*; 1823) to be the most astute and artistically noteworthy observation on the alienated individual in philistine society (Cornwell, 1986a 35). After the failed Decembrist coup, Odoevskij continued to publish in *The Moscow Herald*, the new forum for writers interested in idealism. Toward the end of the decade, Odoevskij concentrated on larger, more ambitious novel and drama projects, including a novel situated in the Italian renaissance entitled *Giordano Bruno and Pietro Aretino*, which, like countless other endeavours, remained unfinished. Generally, his projects of this time are highly experimental, combining the didactic with the fantastic, and an interest in history appears alongside a penchant toward science fiction (Cornwell, 1986a 36-37). Virtually none of the works of the 1820s have been republished and they were not included in his first collected works of 1844, since they are more or less prose experiments and sketches.

The years from 1830 to 1844 mark Odoevskij's mature period, in which his works "by universal critical consent" are "superior to the earlier and later periods in both

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[4] A more detailed treatment of his philosophical treatises is contained in Chapter III.

quality and diversity" (Cornwell, 1986a 37). The first highlight of this period was the publication of his cycle of stories *Variegated Tales* (*Пестрые сказки*; 1833). It elicited first critical comparisons to Hoffmann, and it was greeted favourably by some of his peers, including Gogol. Davydov hailed it as the "first attempt in Russian literature at the philosophical tale" (Cornwell, 1986a 39). Overall, however, it gave rise to the lack of understanding that was to become typical of Odoevskij's reception. The stories in this cycle intertwine society tale and fairy tale, fantastical occurrences and satires on social hypocrisy, but also offer first glimpses at Odoevskij's application of romantic principles, including romantic irony. Sakharov understands these tales as allegories in the romantic sense, suggesting that Odoevskij tried to "unite pre-romantic prose with the recently studied rules of romantic poetics," which likely confused his readership (1982a 175).

Odoevskij received the highest critical acclaim for his artist tales, which develop various versions of the tormented and alienated genius. All four tales mentioned in the following were later integrated into *Russian Nights*. *Beethoven's Last Quartet* (*Последний квартет Бетховена*; 1830) examines the isolated, misunderstood genius, who suffers from the impossibility of a complete expression of his thoughts in their totality. *Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi* (1831) portrays a man who thinks he is the Italian architect Piranesi, and, taking his grandiose ambitions and creative imagination to insane extremes, amplifies the torments of a thwarted creative personality. Superficial parallels to Hoffmann's *Ritter Gluck* suggest themselves readily. In *The Improvvisatore* (*Импровизатор*; 1833), the formerly unproductive poet Cypriano derives no satisfaction or happiness from a sudden ability to produce poetry, given to him

by the Mephistophelean doctor Segeliel, who attached a fatal condition to his gift: total comprehension of all that surrounds him. Such an understanding of the world turns out to divest life of all its mysterious charms, and, ultimately, true meaning. This story in particular was meant as a slight against rational enlightened philosophy and scientific positivism. In *Sebastian Bach* (*Себастиан Бах*; 1835), a researcher embarks on an imaginative biography of the composer in order to understand the artist's spirit. Cornwell links this story to Wackenroder's reflections on artists (1986a 48).

In Odoevskij's numerous society tales, which take place mostly in a salon or ball-room setting, the writer wags his finger at social intrigue, hypocrisy and the moral shortcomings of aristocratic society. Again, satire and didacticism are frequently combined with the fantastical. Of note are, among the many others, *The Brigadier* (*Бригардир*; 1833), *The Ball* (*Бал*; 1833) and *The Mockery of a Corpse* (*Насмешка мертвеца*; 1834), which reappear in *Russian Nights*. The short story *New Year* (*Новый год*; 1837), stands somewhat apart, looking "back with nostalgia on the high ideals, the literary and philosophical activities and the bruising literary polemics of the early 1820s" (Cornwell, 1986a 51), giving a taste of a lost period of fruitful discourse reminiscent of the Jena period of "Symphilosophie." However, his most acclaimed society tales were achieved with *Princess Mimi* (*Княжна Мими*; 1834) and *Princess Zizi* (*Княжна Зизи*; 1839), which deal with the vacuous life of society women, the ruthlessness of social intrigue, deception and fraud. However, Cornwell warns that the apparent "realism" of these stories is "undercut by the deliberate literariness which permeates character and text," (1986a 53) and thus must be understood as more than just satirical mirrors of

society. Generally, these society tales are characterized by a "certain element of ambiguity [...] by the employment of irony, eccentric modes of narration, schematic characterization, pastiche and other devices of romantic prose" (Cornwell, 1986a 55). Plots and relationships are convoluted, and the stories are overshadowed by an irritatingly didactic, mannered and contrived narrator, who frequently takes away from these stories as works of art.

Of Odoevskij's three science fiction tales, the two completed ones, *A City Without Name* (*Город без имени*; 1839) and *The Last Suicide* (*Последнее самоубийство*; 1844) were incorporated into *Russian Nights*. They deal polemically with the economic theories of the English thinkers Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) as representatives of a dehumanizing materialism and enlightened rationalism. In *The Year 4338* (*4338 год*; 1840) one finds the only positive utopia developed by Odoevskij, but it is not devoid of a certain irony. It was published in fragmentary form in 1835 and 1840, and again in 1926. Here, harmonious social order is safeguarded through a balanced reign of technology and art, and poets, historians and philosophers are placed in ministerial positions. Odoevskij thus develops his organic world view in a science-fiction setting (Cornwell, 1986a 66).

Odoevskij wrote a number of "philosophical-romantic" tales, including one in the style of a folk-legend, *The Uninhabited House* (*Необыденный дом*; 1842) and a romantic adventure tale, *Imbroglio* (1844). *The Peasant Girl from Orlakh* (*Орлахская крестянка*; 1842), offers an interpretation of diamonds as reminders of humankind's primeval origins (reminiscent of the miner's view in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*), and in

a sub-story narrates a supernatural occurrence said to be based on an actual event in Germany in the 1830s (Cornwell, 1986a 57). The most significant works in the romantic-mystical vein are *The Sylph* (*Сильфида*; 1837), *Kosmorama* (*Косморама*; 1840) and *Salamandra* (*Саламандра*; 1841). *The Sylph* and *Salamandra* feature alchemical and cabbalistic protagonists, who are attracted to the "other world" of the fantastical and irrational. Thus, the stories convey the sense of a dual world ("двоемирие"). In *Salamandra*, values of European enlightenment and progress are placed in a dialectical relationship with the fantastical and folkloristic. Sakharov considers it to reflect Odoevskij's understanding of the romantic concept of history (1982b 13). In *Kosmorama*, the main protagonist cultivates clairvoyant abilities and a higher vision of reality, which in the end, however, lead him into madness. In this context, Cornwell points to the option of considering insanity as a "higher or alternative consciousness" (1986a 61). A further story, *The Live Corpse* (*Живой мертвец*; 1844), combines the usual features of the fantastical, didactical and philosophical. In Cornwell's view, this is the most successful of Odoevskij's attempts to combine these features, since together they express the central idea of the direct consequences of words and actions in a person's life. Interesting in the context of romantic poetics is a fragment entitled *Segeliel'. A Don Quixote of the XIX Century: A Fairy-Tale for Old Children* (*Сегелиель. Дон-кихот XIX столетия. Сказка для старых детей*; 1838). It seems to have been planned as a poetic drama with a liberal mixture of genres, in which Segeliel, rejected by Lucifer, takes sides with the forces of good and develops into an ideal citizen on earth (Cornwell, 1986a 63-64). Sakulin distinguished in this project the intention to "portray

the entire mystical conception of human history" (Sakulin I/2: 56). *Russian Nights*, published in 1844, signifies both the culmination and end of Odoevskij's literary creative output. Combining various stories into a unique frame, it is indeed an "artistic organism - a 'novel of ideas,' a poem in prose without a hero" (Sakharov, 1982b 21), and as such provides the single most interesting object of comparison to the poetics of Novalis and the Jena romantics.

In the remaining 25 years of his life after 1844, Odoevskij wrote virtually no more creative fiction, and even his non-fictional publications are relatively few in number. They include mostly articles on technical matters or social observations. Noteworthy is his participation in a popular educational publication entitled *Rural Readings* (*Сельское чтение*; 1844-1847). There is a fairly long list of posthumously published material, including correspondences, articles and notes, which appeared in various publications, but have never, thus far, been organized as a volume of a "collected works" edition or similar format (see Cornwell, 1986a 381-384). This material contains a major portion of Odoevskij's writings on philosophy, aesthetics and poetic theory.

Odoevskij's first collected works appeared in three volumes in 1844, including the first publication of *Russian Nights*. Typically, however, Odoevskij's stories have been published selectively under rather generic titles: as "romantic tales" (*Romanticheskie povesti*) in 1929 (with an Oxford reprint in 1975), as "nine tales" (*Devjat' povestej*) in 1954, "tales and stories" (*Povesti i rasskazy*) in 1959, and as part of an anthology on the "Russian romantic tale" (*Russkaja romanticheskaja povest'*) in 1980, thus not always preserving the integrity of the original publication as a specifically arranged unified

work. A two-volume edition of collected works appeared in 1981, containing the most recent edition of *Russian Nights*, which otherwise has been reprinted as an entity in Moscow in 1913, in Germany in 1967 and in Leningrad in 1975. Interestingly, *Variegated Tales* has been republished as a unit in Moscow in 1993 (together with a collection of children's tales and the Segeliel-fragment) and again in St. Petersburg in 1996.

Discussion

The surveys of biographical data and the sum of literary activities reveal interesting parallels. Both writers had aristocratic backgrounds, an outstandingly rounded education and precocious literary ambitions. Neither Novalis nor Odoevskij held the title of writer as principle profession, they were not *Berufsschriftsteller*, but individuals who occupied practical posts as administrators and waged a continuous battle against the encroachment of every-day professional duties on their philosophical and literary pursuits. Indeed, they fought eagerly for their own metaphysical "space" that would elevate life to a higher meaning, attempting, it would seem, a synthesis of opposite spheres in their own lives. Thus, Novalis wanted to perceive the daily world he lived in in a romantic, new and unjaded manner. Similarly, Odoevskij wished to maintain a fresh view of reality, and preserve a sense of wonder, mystery and above all humanism, despite the "demystifying" advances made in the sciences and the dawning hegemony of materialism and capitalism as new societal values.

Novalis and Odoevskij both made their appearance on the literary scene at a time of

literary-aesthetic renewal, during the formative period of romanticism in Germany (1790s) and Russia (1820s). The short but intense period of "symphilosophy" in Jena (1798-1800), as the centre of philosophical and aesthetic fermentation, is echoed to an astounding degree in the equally short Wisdom Lover period (1823-1825), situated in the midst of the tumultuous formation of Russian romanticism. The milieu of the Wisdom Lovers in Russia mirrors quite closely the Jena spirit of symphilosophy. If Schelling was a key participant in Jena romanticism, he became the new revered spiritual figurehead of the Wisdom Lovers, who regarded him as the "Columbus of the soul" (see also *RN* 41). In fact, one of the main things that the Wisdom Lovers celebrated as a new principle was the concept of self-reflective thinking, of investigating oneself in relation to the world, thus perceiving reality in a new light.

Generally, the pre-decembrist period in Russia was characterized by a mixture of perceived social crisis and hope for a socio-political liberalization under a more moderate government. A comparable sense of crisis and enthusiasm for overcoming this crisis resided at the heart of the romantic movement in Jena, as it defined itself above all through its search for philosophical and aesthetic means of transcending the modern social crisis which the French revolution had brought out in full force. The fact that Novalis and Odoevskij began their literary careers with an intense study of transcendental philosophy must be understood in this context, when art was defined not just as the organ for truth, but the means toward attaining truth, a reconciliation of opposites and, ultimately, inner as well as social peace as reflections of each other.

Both writers established themselves as serious thinkers, albeit without much

recognition until recent times. At a minimum, they have been known for reacting against both an exaggerated rationalism in society and French philosophy, and for advocating a reversal of modern spiritual decline, a decline they considered to be the result of the dominance of rationalism and materialism. The formative philosophical period in both instances prepared the ground for literary productivity, in the course of which literary theories and convictions were formed.

Novalis's and Odoevskij's encyclopedic interests, ranging as they did from the sciences, mathematics and medicine to history, philosophy and music, must not be misunderstood as just signs of some general eclecticism, erudite ambition, or as frequently also assumed in Odoevskij's case, a symptom of eccentricity. Rather, the varied intellectual pursuits stemmed directly from the initial romantic impulse which Schlegel located in Fichte's *Doctrine of Science* of 1794. Most basically, Fichte offered a new unified scientific principle seen as underlying all areas of nature and consequently, also all human inquiry into this nature. As a result, all the branches of the sciences and the arts were brought together. According to Fichte's doctrine, as the transcendental operation of the spirit (ego) created nature (non-ego), so nature now had to be examined as a unified phenomenon, and all objects within it as sharing the same basic spirit that can be related back to the subject (the ego, in which alone subjectivity and objectivity were united, so that it was capable of a transcendental act). This notion was further developed in the romantic understanding of a correspondence between the internal and the external, the subjective and the objective, the individual and the universal, whose synthesis into a higher level of meaning (the transcendental) became the goal of romantic

poetry. This concept of romantic art received significant impetus from Schelling. In this spirit, both Novalis and Odoevskij viewed the different branches of human knowledge as parts that could illuminate the nature of the whole and vice versa, and saw it as their task to reestablish this reciprocal relationship in their various studies in a quest to gain universal knowledge and insight into the absolute. Both writers worked on encyclopedic projects intended to express this general spirit through a variety of entries related to a philosophical centre. As the article *The Idealistic-Eleatic Sect (excerpt from the "Dictionary of the History of Philosophy")* of 1825 shows, Odoevskij had planned an encyclopedia based on the conviction that philosophy was the underlying science of all sciences, and thus, the "basis of all human knowledge" (Mann, 1969 113). It represents a strong echo of Novalis's encyclopedic project *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, in which, in Tieck's wording, "experiences and ideas from various sciences were designed to illuminate, support and vitalize each other" (Frenzel 216).

Novalis distinguished between the mere collector of facts ("Sammler") and the true transcendental erudite who brings out the universal connection of all the facts, thus reaching a higher level of meaning (III: 404, No. 707; 405, No. 716). In the romantic understanding, as Novalis defines it, encyclopedism entails an "application of the system to the parts - and of the parts to the system, and of the parts to the parts" (III: 333, No. 460), thus signifying a synthesis of the subjective and the universal in the transcendental romantic sense. In a letter to F. Schlegel at the end of 1797, Novalis stated that he was studying the different branches of sciences to better understand philosophy, adding that he was also interested in theosophy and alchemy, and in the philosopher Schelling (IV:

242). Elsewhere he mentioned the mystical thinker and sociologist Franz Baader (1765-1841) (IV 263). These are just some of the many topics and names that also formed part of Odoevskij's reading list of especially the 1830s. His various studies must likewise be considered as efforts to obtain transcendental knowledge, and, ultimately, to define his theory of romantic poetry.

On the subject of the romantic poet, Novalis made a clear distinction between the versatile eclectic, who investigates a multitude of parts and possesses artistic skills, and the transcendental poet-philosopher, who is able to perceive and convey the universal dimension in the different parts (II: 524-525, No. 13). Odoevskij's philosophical intents must equally be understood in this context. Hence, Stammler's reference to Odoevskij as a "philosophical eclectic" (Cornwell, 1986a 90) does not offer an altogether adequate characterization of the quality of Odoevskij's philosophical searchings. To give an example, Goethe's Faust figure shares many features with the romantic impulse of seeking and combining, and it is certainly due to this quality that Odoevskij chose the name Faust for the main protagonist of the frame tale in *Russian Nights*. But Odoevskij's Faust is clearly intended to be more than an eclectic, since he attempts to synthesize opposites and to perceive the universal in all things. Interestingly, according to Schulz, it was one of Novalis's contentions that Goethe remained a "practical poet" who, similar to the eclectic, possessed the talent of artistic execution and thematic versatility, but lacked transcendental genius (1968 90-91). This attitude toward Goethe is also expressed in a fragment Novalis wrote on the link between philology and philosophy. Here, he seemed to view the "Goethean philosopher or thinker" as a preparatory step in the

evolution of humankind toward the transcendental genius. Only the latter, combining philosophical inquiry and a universal outlook, reaches the status of "true poet" in the romantic sense (III: 406, No.717). It would appear that both Novalis and Odoevskij, while sharing Goethe's multiplicity of interests, strove to surpass Goethe with their distinctly transcendental romantic understanding of literature. Odoevskij, according to Sakharov, could not agree with the attitude of Goethe's Faust who is tormented by the pursuit of general knowledge, and found a resigned sadness in the ultimate impossibility of transcending limits to be more appropriate (1982b 215). This stance, perhaps, echoes Novalis's surrender to the inevitable state of "not-knowing" ("Nichterkenntnis") and the emphasis in his poetics on the *process* of seeking knowledge.

In pursuit of the ideal of a total culture, Odoevskij became one of the most versatile and gifted men of his generation, reaching a high degree of expertise in a variety of fields beyond literature, including pedagogy, library science and musicology, as well as physics, chemistry and physiognomy, the latter inspired in part by Schelling's and C. G. Carus's (1789-1869) concepts of the link between external appearance and inner human qualities. Odoevskij in particular revered Carus as a culturally rounded personality, since in his works "he found scientific knowledge masterfully combined with that poetic element, thanks to which Carus was able to emerge as a talented physiologist and physician, and as an original painter and *littérateur*" (Heier 55). Similarly, Matlaw all but grants Odoevskij himself the status of a Renaissance Man (7). Although Novalis was not blessed with ripe old age, he was no less ambitious and productive in his striving for that totality of being and encyclopedic knowledge, thus equally holding the candidacy for

the title of Renaissance Man. His quest for cultural totality, aside from his philosophical and literary investigations, is reflected in his numerous commentaries on his studies of physics, chemistry, mathematics, law, history, art and religion, and to a lesser degree, music.[5] The study of these fields of knowledge in an attempt at synthesis was greatly encouraged in the intellectual climate in Jena at the time. It comes as no surprise that Odoevskij, influenced by the same thinkers with whom Novalis associated several decades earlier, developed a similar aesthetic foundation on which he launched his career as a romantic theorist and writer.

In terms of their creative and critical legacy, both writers were young literary prodigies, whose works were highly experimental and fragmentary, consisting of numerous unfinished projects and études. Novalis and Odoevskij abandoned the classical rules of genre, mixing different genres liberally to further the task of literature as they understood it. In particular, both advanced the status of prose and redefined its poetic capabilities: Novalis's *Hymns to the Night* thus offered an irregularly structured prose poem, and Odoevskij's apologues (which appeared in *Mnemosyne*) experimented with short, allegorical poetic snippets in prose, the likes of which had never been seen in Russian letters before, as Belinskij conceded with considerable admiration (VIII: 300, 304). Their literary debuts were closely associated with key journals, the *Athenäum* in Jena between 1798-1800 and the Wisdom Lovers' *Mnemosyne* in Moscow from 1823-

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[5] Novalis did not possess the same depth of knowledge in the field of music as did Odoevskij. Nevertheless, Tieck praised his ability to express the most original ideas on both music and the visual arts (Novalis IV: 559). Also, aware of the musical qualities of language, Novalis emerged as a "master of a musically imbued language" (Kayser 438).

1825. These forums are important in that they were direct mouthpieces of the romantic groups and sought to disseminate new views on literature in an attempt to overcome neoclassical principles and redefine the task of literature. As such they influenced mainly other literary men and women, thus consciously impacting the course of literary history.

Many of Novalis's and Odoevskij's literary texts evidence a marked focus on the artist and his development, and the means by which artistic genius is awakened, nourished, and expressed. However, also on a metaliterary level, their texts investigate the nature and conditions of their own existence as works of art. Cornwell rightly points to the "deliberate literariness" of the text in even the more didactic society tales by Odoevskij (Cornwell, 1986a 53). Indeed, metatextual references can be found in both *Russian Nights* in the discussions on art and literature of the frame tale, and in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* in the discussions that the poet Klingsohr and Heinrich hold on matters of literary method. This aspect again points to the quality of romantic reflexivity, of continual self-examination of literary creativity and method, which harks back to the Schlegelian postulate of creating a "poetry of poetry," a literature that comments on itself, thus taking up the impulse of transcendental philosophy.

The body of Odoevskij's work as it stretches over two decades shows much more thematic and stylistic variance than Novalis's oeuvre, which, when surveyed as a whole, is confined quite narrowly to transmitting a transcendental experience as a solution to crisis, be it in his lyrical poetry, his *Hymns to the Night*, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, or, indeed, his two major cultural essays. Odoevskij's works, by contrast, display a quixotic mixture of fantasy, social satire, romantic irony and didacticism in a multi-pronged

attempt to influence his readership. Thus, he strove to seduce the reader into a new way of experiencing reality in his magical-fantastical tales, and points out deficiencies in social morals and customs in his society tales. At first glance, it may seem appropriate to distinguish completely different phases in Odoevskij's works. However, as Majmin argues convincingly, both mystical and fantastical elements, and social commentary have the function of expressing "the highest strivings of the human soul and the discrepancy of these strivings with that which man finds in daily reality" (1975b 258). He concludes that "on his literary journey, Odoevskij changed his manner of writing, but he never changed his romantic belief," so that there "exists an internal continuous link not just between the stories of the 1830s and the earlier belletristic and philosophical experiments of Odoevskij, but also, between these stories and *Russian Nights*" (1975b 259-260). Overall, however, romantic poetics exist more latently in Odoevskij's works than they do in Novalis's, and in his work as a whole they are obscured by his multi-pronged and somewhat scattered approach to surmounting crisis. And yet, this apparent scatteredness ultimately was overcome in his last attempt at synthesis in *Russian Nights*, the final word in his creative statement. The underlying organic unity of Odoevskij's entire creative output, as the author himself confessed, revealed itself to him only in hindsight (Odoevskij, 1975a[6] 203, 216), which he then expressed in *Russian Nights*. However, it would seem that when Odoevskij's philosophical and poetic convictions were finally gathered together and coherently revealed in *Russian Nights*, critics had reached a state

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[6] This edition, besides containing *Russian Nights*, includes a number of additional fragments and philosophical articles by Odoevskij. Quotations from these articles are taken from this edition.

of confusion about this writer's oeuvre that was not only not reversed, but exacerbated by the heterogeneous artistic rendition of *Russian Nights*, which was considered, unhelpfully, in light of Hoffmann's work, rather than in terms of early German romantic theory. Certainly, *Russian Nights* seems to have been intended as a climax of Odoevskij's poetics comparable to Novalis's attempt at achieving an "apotheosis of poetry" in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (IV: 322). An authentic reception of Novalis's attempt almost failed to materialize due to the atrophied interpretation of him as the "poet of the blue flower," but was finally achieved thanks to the reevaluation of his theories since the 1960s. By the same token, *Russian Nights* has been teetering on the edge of permanent misinterpretation because it has not been recognized as conveying the essence of the writer's literary theories as they relate to the poetics of the *Frühromantik*. The comparison to Novalis may rescue this important work from the fate of final critical displacement.

THE CURSE OF RECEPTION

Novalis's Reception

Novalis's *Hymns to the Night*, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, *Christendom or Europe* and the tale of *Hyazinth und Rosenblütchen* have become part of the canon of German literature and to some extent world literature. However, many portions of his theoretical works have not been fully evaluated by scholarship, because they either existed only in inadequate earlier editions (such as *Pollen*, *Christendom or Europe* and *Faith and Love*) or were not published at all until the historical-critical edition appeared (for example *Das*

Allgemeine Brouillon). Moreover, the persistent image of Novalis as the dreamy, otherworldly and constitutionally weak romantic, who willingly joined his lost love in death has distorted Novalis's literary reputation to this day. This image of Novalis was first cultivated by Tieck and F. Schlegel to an extent that in retrospect can seem almost as libellous, since it provided ample ammunition to polemicists of romanticism from Heine to G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831). Tieck's biographical account of 1815, which is contained in Novalis's *Schriften*, elevates the death of Novalis' fiancée Sophie von Kühn and an apparent mystical vision at her grave to become the defining principles underlying Novalis as a person and writer, who henceforth is said to have moved in a cloud of grief and otherworldliness, consuming only vegetables and milk (IV: 554-556). Due in large part to the historical-critical edition (from 1960), more precise knowledge of Novalis's theoretical writings and his professional life has debunked this myth. In 1795/96, Novalis had already immersed himself in a thorough study of Fichte's *Doctrine of Science*, which nourished his understanding of transcendental thinking and poetry. Mähl argues convincingly that Novalis's mystical experience at his fiancée's grave was already prepared in his previous philosophical studies and must be evaluated as more of a culmination or validation of these, rather than a watershed event that redirected his attention to the otherworldly (1971 198-199). The very diary entry of May 13, 1797 describing the so-called *Sophienerlebnis* ("Sophie-experience") is notable for its brevity and restraint, and is followed by the observation that "otherwise, I was in very good spirits all day" (IV: 35). Novalis's subsequent professional activities as a mining engineer and civil servant, and his varied intellectual pursuits, as well as his second engagement

in Freiburg, reveal a determined, competent and productive person, who had clearly come to terms with his loss by the end of 1797. An unbiased look at his poetics and theories bears this out. Nevertheless, the *Sophienerlebnis* eroded the credence of Novalis as a romantic thinker and poetic theorist and contributed to a distorted reception well into the 20th century.

As is explained in detail in Uerlings's substantial survey of Novalis's reception history,[7] Novalis's works were first edited by Tieck and Schlegel, who rearranged and selected portions of his theoretical writings, including *Pollen* and *Faith and Love*, to perpetuate the image of Novalis as mystical dreamer and fragmentary thinker[8] (Uerlings 15-27). The canonization of Novalis by his peers provoked a mushrooming of third-rate imitators offering completed versions of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. The view of early romanticism as revolutionary in an aesthetic sense soon gave way to a more conservative reinterpretation. In fact, F. Schlegel himself became disillusioned with his own earlier views. Having converted to Catholicism, he shifted his interest from philosophy to religion by 1808, and in so doing, reinterpreted Novalis as a religious dogmatic. This falsification of literary history had lasting implications for the reception of Novalis, who henceforth was either lauded or maligned as the romantic messiah. His supposedly Christian impulse was positively interpreted by those who saw him as a vanguard of

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[7] For the following section, I am indebted in particular to the first chapter of Uerlings's study of 1991, "Novalis-Rezeption, 1800-1945."

[8] See also O'Brien 1992.

spirituality against materialism, for example A. Müller (1779-1829) and Görres. By contrast, liberal voices perceived it as a renunciation of cosmopolitanism and an anachronistic medieval "Deutschtümelei." The latter position was taken by Heine, supporters of the Junges Deutschland and leftist Hegelian criticism. Hegel condemned in Novalis's writings a stagnant romantic longing that was mired in subjectivity and lacked determined action. Heine's influential study "The Romantic School" ("Die romantische Schule;" 1835) firmly entrenched the understanding of romanticism as conservatism. Matters were made worse yet, when Eichendorff claimed Novalis for the conservative Catholic camp (Uerlings 49-51).

Until the 1860s, the majority of critics saw Novalis as a religious poet, ignoring most of the available writings on philosophy, poetics and aesthetics, as well as biographical information that did not validate this view. W. Dilthey's essay ("Novalis;" 1865) first shifted the focus of Novalis-research, providing a more accurate criticism, which, however, did not take proper root until the 20th century (Uerlings 67). He payed close attention to Novalis's theoretical writings and evaluated his role in the development of German literature. However, his approach is still based on a relationship of biography and work, celebrating the "authenticity" of Novalis as the romantic poet *par excellence*. A further break with the traditional religious-conservative interpretation of Novalis takes place in R. Haym's "Die romantische Schule" (1870), which attempts a historical, objective evaluation.

At the end of the 19th century, a veritable explosion of Novalis-editions contributed to his further popularization. The first critical edition appeared in 1929 as a result of

which his philosophical texts were now studied more attentively, although not yet liberated from the *Sophienerlebnis*. The term "magical idealism" ("magischer Idealismus") became routinely attached to Novalis's name. In a reaction against materialism, industrialization and naturalistic aesthetics, neoromanticism and symbolism at the turn of the century sought guidance from earlier romantic values of spirituality and representation through symbols. From this general period, Maurice Maeterlink (1862-1949), Hugo von Hoffmannsthal (1874-1929), Ernst Jünger (1895-1998), Georg Trakl (1887-1914), Stefan George (1868-1933), Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), Robert Musil (1880-1942), Thomas Mann (1875-1955) and Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) have all been linked to Novalis in various comparative studies.

A truly modern and unbiased reception of Novalis as thinker and poetical theorist was made possible in large part by the more authentic edition of Novalis's theoretical works in the historical-critical edition, from which emerged a picture of Novalis as a consistent, disciplined thinker, who was neither fragmentary, nor irrational and otherworldly (Haering 1952; Schanze 1976; Dick 1967; Frank 1969). In recent decades, Novalis has been dealt with in relation to modernism, language theory and a wide range of modern critical approaches.

The reception history of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* roughly reflects this development in the Novalis reception. Mahoney in his recent study on the reception history of this novel defines the roots of its reception as determined by "the double burden of being an unfinished novel in an edition providing a severely truncated and often distorted record of its deceased author's reflections on poetry, science, and philosophy" (1). In the 19th

century, the search for the "blue flower" and the biographical connection to the *Sophienerlebnis* dominate the interest in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which is more paraphrased than analyzed by critics. The focus on the "message" of poetry as saviour of the world could not but alienate many readers, so that the novel has never been the most popular or studied of Novalis's works. The neoromantic period saw above all a perpetuation of the "otherworldly" image of Novalis, which was extended to his novel. Nevertheless, in 1901, Heilborn suggested that criticizing the lack of convincingly developed individual characters in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* applies an inappropriate yardstick for this novel in light of the poetic theories espoused by its creator (Mahoney 32). Walzel's attention to the formal structure of the work in 1919 marks a new beginning, but nevertheless, it took rather a long time before knowledge of Novalis's poetics and other writings were applied to a more objective, non-biographical analysis of the novel as text. This is finally done in Link's study of 1971, which Mahoney considers to be "paradigmatic for the new directions in Novalis scholarship during the 1970s, in which insights derived from critical methodologies such as reception history, interdisciplinary studies, semiotics, neo-Marxism, and poststructuralism would help bring about some radically new approaches to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* [...]" (83). Most recent studies on the novel link it to modernism (Hörisch 1982; Behler/Hörisch 1987), to recent chaos theories (Walker 1993) and gender issues (Kuzniar 1992), generally focusing on the text as an early manifestation of "self-reflective European modernism" (Mahoney xi).

Foreign reception of Novalis began in England between 1830 and 1860 with Thomas

Carlyle (1795-1881), who was both deeply impressed and puzzled by Novalis, whom he studied as a typical German metaphysicist with emphasis on his philosophical ideas. Interestingly, it is also Carlyle, who in 1829 first questioned the importance of the *Sophienerlebnis* for Novalis's work (Mahoney 5-6). In France, Mme de Stael mentioned Novalis only fleetingly as a religious poet in *De l'Allemagne* (1813). The international surge of neoromanticism around the turn of the century further popularized the "blue flower" as an international symbol of German romanticism and defining attribute for Novalis. Particularly, the French symbolists sought inspiration in German romanticism, especially *Frühromantik*. However, generally, foreign opinions on Novalis display a mixture of respectful interest and puzzlement.

Russian Reception of Novalis

The somewhat sceptical attitude toward Novalis can likewise be found in Russian commentaries on Novalis and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, among which Zhukovskij's high estimation is rather less typical. In Russia, generally a negative understanding of the writer as escapist, mystical and conservative asserted itself in no small part thanks to Tieck's idealized Novalis-biography, which, by many Russian readers, was seen to approach the ridiculous. The biographical angle in the treatment of Novalis was perpetuated, albeit with more positive overtones, by symbolists and neoromantics from the 1890s. The Soviets used Novalis to illustrate the nature of a harmful and no longer acceptable aristocratic and elitist romanticism. Judgements on Novalis softened in the wake of the "Great Soviet Debate Over Romanticism" between 1957-1964 (see Leighton

1983), thus opening the doors to an appreciation of Novalis as poetic theorist and philosopher with a new focus on *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* in the following decades.

The decembrist Kjukhel'beker, a vocal literary critic, seems to have played a role in establishing a highly critical view of Novalis's work following a visit with Tieck in Dresden in 1820. While acknowledging his general talent, Kjukhel'beker criticized Novalis for his "lack of clarity" and his "drowning in details." Tieck is reported to have reacted somewhat amusedly, finding Novalis clarity self-evident and in no need of proof (Kjukhel'beker, 1954 420). Nevertheless, in 1824, A. I. Turgenev expressed his disappointment at the lack of understanding Kjukhel'beker brought to Novalis[9] (Kjukhel'beker, 1979 652), whose poetics he seemed to hold in high esteem. Interestingly, in a letter to a contemporary in 1833, an exiled Kjukhel'beker compiled a list of book requests to be submitted to Odoevskij, including, specifically, "anything on literary theory" and, among numerous other writers, unspecified material by Tieck and Novalis (Kjukhel'beker, 1954 418). Evidently, at that time, Novalis's works were still of interest, and, possibly, were reconsidered in connection with literary theory. This hypothesis would be supported by the fact that F. Schlegel was only really studied in Russia after his death, when a biography on him was published in Russian in 1829. His 1812 lecture series "The History of Ancient and Modern Literature" ("Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur") became available in Russian in 1829-30, with a second edition in 1834 indicating an interested Russian readership (Engel-Braunschmidt 208),

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[9] An account of his conversation with Tieck is contained in Kjukhel'beker's travel notes from Germany published in *Mnemosyne* I in 1825.

albeit with regard to material of his later conservative phase. Overall, however, the biographical evaluation of Novalis in Russia dominated, and was even coined into a "syndrome" of sorts: Venevitinov's premature death in 1827 was met with a canonization by his peers (including Odoevskij) that was consciously felt to mirror the Novalis-cult in Germany at the turn of the century (Danilevskij 1969 144).

In 1826, a translation appeared of Wackenroder and Tieck's *Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar* (*Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*; 1797) under the title *On Art and Artists. Reflections of an Art-loving Hermit* (*Об искусстве и художниках. Размышления отшельника, любителя изящного*), which also contained a piece by Tieck on Rafael from his *Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst* of 1799 (see Kuleshov, 1973 305-306; Vatsuro 366). The latter text, according to Sakulin, also influenced Odoevskij's aesthetic development (I/1: 156-157 n.2). Overall, however, the availability of these rather intuitive, even devotional impressions on art could only steer the Russian understanding of early German romanticism away from Novalis's more sober and philosophically grounded poetic concepts. In fact, the negative reception of Tieck as "gothic," for example by A. I. Herzen (1812-1870), and even "nonsensical" by Kireevskij in 1834 (Kuleshov, 1973 305, n.2) contributed to the negative Russian view of Novalis, because Russian scholarship usually treats Tieck and Novalis collectively. Certainly, from the 1830s, there was not much sympathy for Novalis, as the slavophile question shifted the attention of writers and critics to current social issues. Belinskij also came to think poorly of German romanticism, and by the mid-1840s carefully distanced Goethe and Schiller from the "real" romantics such as the

Schlegels, Tieck and Novalis, "who bend over backwards trying to propagate the revival of the medieval life-style in a new world" (Zhirmunskij, 1981 254).

Heine's polemical view of Novalis as escapist dreamer was translated into Russian in 1852 and intensified the overall negative reception of Novalis, since it was probably the only means by which most Russian readers acquainted themselves with both Novalis and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (Engel-Braunschmidt 207). Heine's treatment of the early romantics was echoed by important literary figures such as Herzen, who characterized the members of the romantic period as the "mysterious Jean Paul, the naive Novalis and the gothic Tieck" (Zhirmunskij, 1981 376; see also Danilevskij, 1969 105).

The 1877 anthology *Nemetskie poety* (*German Poets*) by N. V. Gerbel' marks the next milestone in the reception of Novalis in Russia. It contains first selected translations of his poetry, but, overall, perpetuates a somewhat depreciative assessment of his work. In the preface, scholarly efforts by the early romantics in the areas of literary history, linguistics and translation are commended, but most original works are criticized as anti-classicist excesses of the imagination. This underscores again the primarily thematic evaluation of Novalis and his peers, who are labelled religious, anachronistic and antiliberal, and as a group are demoted to players in a preparatory literary phase for the "Freiheitsdichtung" ("Freedom-poetry") said to assert itself around 1813 (Engel-Braunschmidt 44-45). The section on Novalis significantly affected his future reception in Russia for a number of reasons. The samples chosen of Novalis's poetry ("Wenn in bangen trüben Stunden" and the fifth of the *Hymns to the Night*) are neither particularly representative, nor translated authentically. For instance, the translator misunderstood the

concept of "night" as a trap of isolation rather than as a backdrop for finding self-knowledge in nature (Engel-Braunschmidt 107). Such translations could only reinforce the image of Novalis and the early romantics as helpless, passive and yearning for salvation in death.

In the course of the 19th century, of the romantics, only Hoffmann had a lasting impact in Russia, while romanticism in general was discussed only as the epitome of a "mystical-foggy Germania" ("tumannaja Germanija;" Engel-Braunschmidt 238). Thus, Russian writers defined German romanticism as diametrically opposed to their own perceived social function as "the parliament of the Russians" (Brang 383). Not surprisingly, Russian writers found more of a kindred spirit in Heine and Junges Deutschland. Engel-Braunschmidt concludes even in 1973:

> Bis heute hat sich dieser von der Ideologie her verengte Romantik-Begriff [in Russland] nicht erschüttern lassen, und es ist keine Grundlage da, auf der die Dichtung eines Novalis aufblühen könnte (309).
>
> To this day the ideologically-driven reductive concept of romanticism [in Russia] has proven indestructible, and there is no basis on which the poetry of a Novalis could flourish.

Nevertheless, a surge of interest in Novalis took place when the Russian symbolists returned to earlier romantic literature. This trend is reflected in the appearance in translation of selected poems in 1910 (by V. Ivanov), *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Fragments* in 1914 and *The Novices of Sais* in 1920, as well as two articles on the centennial of Novalis's death, and several short critical studies on "the poet of the blue flower" (Eishiskina 113). In 1922, Lunacharskij could still openly appreciate Novalis's "pantheism" as being influenced by Spinoza (1632-1677), thus relating Novalis's work,

including *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, to philosophical principles (Berkovskij, 1973 195-196). Such more unbiased critical approaches became impossible during the darkest days of the Soviet period in the 1930s and 1940s. The purpose of the Novalis entry by Eishiskina in the Soviet literary encyclopedia of 1934 was solely to spread propaganda against any supposed deviations from a socialist realist or ideologically motivated literature. In this spirit, Novalis, as the main representative of German romanticism, is characterized as "naive" and "irrational," as a staunch defender of his aristocratic privileges and opponent of the French revolution. *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is considered his major work, but is discussed as propagating the ideology of "aristocratic romanticism." It is concluded that the romantic portrayal of Novalis as poet-philosopher failed to stand up to the criticism of Junges Deutschland, which recognized Novalis for the conservative that he was. In short, Novalis became off-limits, so that no separate studies on the writer appear until 1973, following the critical self-examination of Soviet scholarship on romanticism during the Thaw.

The anthology of German romanticism published by the academy in 1935, likewise does not pursue any understanding of actual romantic texts, but seeks, rather, to make an ideological point. The introductory article by Berkovskij vilifies Novalis as having rallied the various members of the promising new romantic school of Jena around the aristocratic cause (1935 XXIV), speaking even of the "times of Novalis's hegemony," which corrupted a movement that was liberal and progressive in its early stages. In a complete reversal of historical fact, Berkovskij accuses Novalis of having effected Schlegel's conversion to catholicism, so that Schlegel now becomes the victim of

Novalis's conservatism, not vice versa, as indeed was the case (XXV-XXVI). Further, odd bedfellows are made of Heine and Maeterlink, whose legend of the "quiet, tubercular lyrical poet Novalis" is branded for glossing over Novalis's "political devotion to the memory of feudalism and the catholic church" (XXXI-XXXII). Berkovskij concludes that *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* does not contain "any particular goals of philosophical argument" (1935 437), simply painstakingly reconstructs the medieval world and its social structures in order to present it as the only "authentic" era and, therefore, depicts "the German future as the German past" (1935 446).

In comparison to Berkovskij's criticism of 1935, post-war Soviet misconceptions about Novalis seem rather mild, and reflect the official consensus on romanticism following the debates on romanticism from 1957-1964. This consensus exhibits a less aggressive attitude toward the Jena romantics that frequently is as laconic as it is reductive. The segment on Novalis in the 1966 history of German literature by Balashov contains prejudices which Engel-Braunschmidt traces back to the 1877 anthology by Gerbel' (208). Not surprisingly, Soviet comparative scholarship concentrates on Junges Deutschland or the Schiller of *The Robbers* and "Ode to Joy" ("An die Freude"). Novalis usually compares rather unfavourably in such a context. Danilevskij's study on *Junges Deutschland* and Russian literature views Novalis as a representative of the "usual normative romantic concept of the artistic creation as an unconscious act" (1969 48). In Levin's study (1972) of romantic influence on Zhukovskij's translations, Novalis's "irrationalism" is taken for granted to the extent that polemics are no longer even seen as necessary to defend this view (230). In evidence is also a peculiar understanding of

Novalis concept of mythology: Novalis is said to have interpreted Greek mythology as a "loose" translation of "popular religion" ("narodnaja religija;" Levin 230).

In the 1973 survey of Russian romanticism, Novalis's concept of nature is reduced to a literary device that uses landscape descriptions to "underline the emotional tensions of an action and its symbolic expression" (Stepanov 194). In 1977, Kuleshov's comparative study maintains that throughout Europe, "progressive movements" had to assert themselves in a "struggle" with reactionary forces, comparable to the tug-of-war between the Decembrists and Zhukovskij. Similarly, the German "progressive romantics" had to "fight against" Novalis and the Jena romantics (Kuleshov, 1977 12-13). Here, a subtle ideologically-driven criticism of the Jena romantics is made in their negative juxtaposition to the Decembrists. In 1979, Zhirmunskij, a Soviet authority on comparative literature, groups Novalis with W. Wordsworth (1770-1850) and S. T. Coleridge (1772-1834) (142-143), declaring German and English romanticism to be similar in spirit, referring in particular to *The Novices of Sais* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (153). Two years later, the same critic, in his study of Goethe in Russian literature, refers to Novalis as a bourgeois elitist, probably in order to legitimize his own subject (Goethe) with help of this negative contrast (449).

Nevertheless, the strikingly objective Novalis-entry in the state-issued *Kratkaja literaturnaja entsiklopedija* of 1968 reveals a more relaxed policy with regard to Novalis and representatives of the *Frühromantik*, especially since it was written by the same Berkovskij, who in 1935 branded Novalis as harmful and subversive. It begins with an appreciation of Novalis's philosophical acumen as it is displayed in his *Fragments* and

Fichte-Studies. Berkovskij emphasizes Novalis's affinity to Schelling, placing his "irrational" side in a philosophical context. He considers *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* his masterpiece in the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, contending that it surpassed the "prosaic compromise" reached in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. Surprisingly, the novel is seen as the summary of Novalis's aesthetic and "social philosophy." An awareness is shown that the traditional idealized Novalis-biography is inaccurate and Novalis is respected as a key to the understanding of "early German romanticism in literature and philosophy." Berkovskij's *Romantizm v Germanii*[10] (1973) finally offered a thorough and more evenhanded survey of German romanticism and its philosophical roots, including a lengthy treatment of Novalis. Frequently quoting from Novalis's theoretical writings and German scholarship, Berkovskij devotes much attention to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which he sees as a lyrical description of the self-realization of a poet and his relation to the world (Berkovskij, 1973 182-183). Rather than "naive," he considers Novalis's simple style to be part of his artistic method (185-186) and demonstrates some understanding of applied early romantic poetics, when he relates Klingsohr's[11] postulate of "ordered chaos" to the entire novel (185). Berkovskij recognizes the central role of Novalis's magical idealism in part II of the novel (195). Despite a number of questionable observations and simplifications, Berkovskij reestablishes Novalis and his novel as serious objects for scholarly investigation in Soviet Russia.

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[10] A German translation of Berkovskij's study was published in 1979.

[11] Klingsohr appears as one of Heinrich's mentors. He narrates an intricate, highly symbolic fairy tale to Heinrich in order to illustrate his concept of poetry.

By the 1970s, Soviet-Russian scholarship becomes attentive to Novalis's *Naturphilosophie*, his poetics and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, especially smaller studies unaffiliated with major state publishers, thus somewhat catching up with developments in the West. In 1973, Dimitriev examines aesthetic ideals in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, and Khanmurzaev (1975) describes features of modern individualism in the novel. In the following decade, Karabegova offers a short analysis of the function of the fairy tale in Novalis's prose (1982), but, rather than considering its function in the larger context of the novel, merely seems to rehabilitate the fairy tale as a legitimate element in "high literature." Two years later the same critic concentrates on the evolution of the romantic hero in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and Hoffmann's works, this time showing evidence of a sophisticated reading of Novalis's work in light of the theory of the romantic novel, without, however, making a new contribution to world scholarship. Similarly, Krasnobaeva examines the poetics of *Naturphilosophie* in Novalis' lyrical poetry (1985), and Lagutina (1990) studies portrayals of the artist in Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* and Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen.*

Odoevskij's Reception

The contemporary Russian layperson will likely only know Odoevskij as the creator of children's tales, which form part of the collection *Tales of Grandfather Irinej* (*Сказки дедушки Иринея*; 1840). In the early 1820s, according to I. I. Panaev (1812-1862), Odoevskij promised to be a significant actor on the literary scene (Cornwell, 1986a 10), and Belinskij found his activities as editor and contributor to *Mnemosyne* to

be of lasting significance for the future development of Russian letters. However, as early as the 1830s, Odoevskij became somewhat of an underdog of Russian literature, who was frequently criticized as excessively didactic and outlandishly fantastical. For example, in 1839 Panaev complained that Odoevskij had gone completely out of his mind and was a displeasure to read (Cornwell, 1986a 310, n. 97). Belinskij, overall, was quite critical of Odoevskij,[12] but nevertheless did admire his artist tales and the three stories *The Brigadier*, *The Ball* and *The Mockery of a Corpse*, finding them to be highly original and mature masterpieces (VIII: 305-306). While Odoevskij may not have satisfied prevailing critical tastes, many of his stories did enjoy a measure of general popularity. In the early 1860s, Odoevskij found it necessary to prepare a new edition of his works, because he had been the victim of repeated plagiarism. In his foreword to this edition, which was never published, Odoevskij also took the opportunity to fend off accusations of heavy indebtedness to Hoffmann (*RN* 311).

Odoevskij's reputation as the "forgotten" Russian writer is reflected in the fact that between his death and the large study by Sakulin in 1913 only one three-volume edition of his stories entitled *Tales* (*Повести*; 1890) appeared, as did a handful of mostly biographical treatments (Cornwell, 1986a 385-386). However, in 1907, Zamotin integrated Odoevskij into the history of Russian romanticism, establishing him as a representative of universalism and stressing the metaphysical aspects of his works. Sakulin provided the first comprehensive, large-scale examination of Odoevskij as a representative of romantic idealism in Russian literature, and the scope of this work has

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[12] See Cornwell 1984a.

yet to be surpassed. However, he also initiated a popular view of Odoevskij's literary career as containing three separate phases dominated by, respectively, Schellingianism (1820s), philosophical-mystical idealism (1830s) and finally "scientific realism" (i.e., positivism), a simplification which has since been called into question (for example Majmin 1975b), but nonetheless flourished with slight modifications in various scholarly examinations, especially Soviet ones. Cornwell demonstrated that in this spirit scholars have divided Odoevskij's work into "realistic stories" of merit and "fantastical" abberations (1986b 170-177). It would seem that this apparent dichotomy has frequently been interpreted as an inconsistency and sign of literary immaturity that reveal Odoevskij as, ultimately, a secondary writer. Gippius took an extreme approach to Odoevskij as otherworldly, escapist, tragic, and even misanthropic, thus, interestingly, echoing somewhat the distorted Novalis-image fostered by F. Schlegel and Tieck (2-3). Due to a heavy reliance on so-called biographical evidence, Gippius concluded that whereas Novalis and Schelling wanted a synthesis of spirit and matter, Odoevskij wanted to "tear himself away from matter" (12). A diametrically opposed view on the perceived difference between the Jena romantics and Odoevskij was expressed in 1929 by Tsekhnovitser, who, for ideological reasons, presented Odoevskij's affinity to the "religious romantics" in Jena as a short-lived phase (10).

Generally, Soviet scholarship marginalized Odoevskij in its concentration on the Decembrist writers, with whom he did not have any significant contact (whereas his cousin A. I. Odoevskij [1802-1839] was an active member). Until the 1960s, when judgments on romanticism softened, Soviet criticism considered romantic aspects in

Odoevskij's works weaknesses on the path to literary realism. In 1950, Mejlakh thus observed that, despite his considerable talent, Odoevskij's fantastical stories evidence a "lifeless content," "artificiality of the sujet" and consequently amount to "a dull, uninteresting narration" (XXXI). In a treatment of the typology of the romantic tale in 1973, this view is overcome and Odoevskij is appreciated as a romantic thinker and an independent and unique writer. Here, his tales are referred to as "original" and "distinctive" ("самобытное;" Nikoljukin 266). Odoevskij's "distinctiveness" is reiterated, among others, by Petrunina in 1981 ("самобытность;" 1981c 517), who refers to *Russian Nights* only briefly and after mentioning how Odoevskij's earlier philosophical outlook gave way to a positivistic faith in the sciences (519). A survey of the Russian novella in the 19th century deals with Odoevskij's tales predominantly as "fantastical" and "society tales," but nevertheless does consider the fantastical in Odoevskij to be calculated, goal-oriented, and unique in thought, thus exceeding the works of the lighter entertainment variety of many secondary writers of the 1820s and 1830s (Izmajlov, 1973 164). Overall, however, he is never seen as being truly on par with Pushkin, Gogol or Dostoevskij. Odoevskij is praised as an important, if somewhat peripheral or even exclusive contributor to Russian letters, whose intermediate position between the giants of Russian literature and its minor writers is usually not sufficiently investigated and explained. An exception to this is Sakharov, who considers Odoevskij as a literary vanguard and an astute, even visionary, literary critic (1982b, 192, 209).

Since Sakulin's study, Odoevskij has been evaluated with a strong focus on his philosophical beliefs. He has been examined as a representative of Russian

Schellingianism (Sakharov 1978; Kamenskij 1980) and, more specifically, as a player in the Wisdom Lover period (Usok 1973; Sakharov 1979; Nosov 1981), and therefore, as a significant participant in the development of early Russian romanticism (Sakharov 1973). Both Odoevskij and *Russian Nights* are discussed in the context of Russian philosophy (Zenkovskij I: 141-157; Khudushina 1982) and "philosophical aesthetics" (Mann, 1969 104-148). The encyclopedic entry of 1968 by Chertkov mentions the influence of the early German romantics on Odoevskij as only temporary, a widely held critical opinion that may have detracted from investigating the specific poetics underlying works such as *Russian Nights*. Odoevskij's prose is thus considered to be philosophical in a more general romantic sense (Majmin 1975a; Levina 1990). Sakharov attempted to shift the predominantly philosophical emphasis in his study of Odoevskij's "literary-aesthetic views" (1982b), but generally, the focus on ideas outweighs the attention to the details of his poetics and artistic method. A reason for this may well rest in the fact that Odoevskij's ideas by themselves pose much less of a dilemma than their expression in his complex works, particularly *Russian Nights*. Sakharov comes to a similar conclusion in 1984, when he suggests that scholarship finds Odoevskij's writings inaccessible, because they do not seem to fit into a given system or theory (1984 203). He contends that Odoevskij is still neglected as a writer and philosopher. In an article of 1977, Khodanen devotes himself primarily to a consideration of *Russian Nights* in the context of the Jena romantic novel. However, while suggesting an important new comparative approach to Odoevskij's work, the critic only scratches the surface of the issue, and does not venture into an in-depth textual analysis.

The German reception generally considers Odoevskij as a Schellingist, Hoffmannist and as the Wisdom Lover, who wrote *Russian Nights* (Schanze, 1994 161-162). A biographical reference work (see Steininger 1958) praises Odoevskij as one of the most erudite men of his times, an important disseminator of Schelling's philosophy and knowledgable music critic. He is seen as a romantic "in the style of Hoffmann," who wrote mostly "fantastical-philosophical tales of a mystical bend," notably *Russian Nights* (Steininger 489-490). Due to a number of friendly personal relations between German and Russian writers, German translations of individual stories became available as early as 1831 (*Sebastian Bach*; also in 1947), and include *Princess Mimi* (1839) and *The Sylph* (1839). In 1924, six stories by Odoevskij appeared in translation under the title *Magische Novellen* (*Magical Tales*), a representative selection including *Salamandra*, *The Mockery of a Corpse* and two artist tales. The title of this edition clearly emphasizes the German reception of these works as "magical," which could well be understood as hinting at affinities to Novalis's concept of "magical idealism." *Russian Nights* appeared in German translation in 1970, as did a collection of "haunted tales" in 1974. Interestingly, Zelinsky's work on Russian romanticism (1975) accords Odoevskij a considerable role in literary history: he dominates the section on epic narratives in five out of seven chapters. Overall, however, in German scholarship on Odoevskij, respect and neglect go hand in hand.

Western scholarship in general has shown increased interest in Odoevskij over the years, but it is also in many ways reductive in its appraisal of his literary works. Odoevskij takes his due place in studies of Russian thought (Walicki 1979), and is

discussed in terms of the ideas in his works (Karlinsky 1966; Ilgner 1978; Stammler 1979). However, much of literary scholarship mentions him as a minor writer, such as Brown (III: 339-346). In the 1980s, Cornwell devoted a number of substantial studies to Odoevskij, thus also rendering him more accessible to English speaking scholarship. As a result, recently, a number of interesting dissertations have been written on Odoevskij as a social thinker and public figure.

Only in 1944 did a first English translation of a work by Odoevskij, *The Improvvisatore*, appear, followed by *Russian Nights* in 1965. *The Sylph* and *Princess Mimi* were translated three times (1974, 1979 and 1984), and *The Year 4338* and *The Mockery of a Corpse* twice (1979 and 1984). These and other translations appeared either in anthologies on Russian romantic fiction or in literary journals, hence catering to a learned and specialized readership (Cornwell, 1986a 384-385).

In the 1980s, the scholarly focus shifted to an investigation of Odoevskij's poetics and genre questions (Cornwell 1983; Koschmal 1985), as well as to his artist tales (Mersereau 1983), society tales (Bagby 1985) and general utopianism (Virginskij 1970; Baumann 1980; Best 1984; Cornwell 1984b). Western scholarship especially has rejected the usefulness of a comparison to Hoffmann, finding Odoevskij's affinities to the German writer to be only thematic (Čiževskij 98), overall "elusive" (Passage 114) and restricted to certain fantastical artistic devices (Ingham 193). At the same time, beyond scattered and undocumented references made by Cornwell to Novalis (1986a 67; 1983 43) and Khodanen's cursory attempt to link *Russian Nights* to the Jena romantic novel, no new alternatives to the traditional comparative approach to Hoffmann have been pursued by

Odoevskij-scholarship. Cornwell, however, expressed the hope that the revival of interest in romantic poetics in recent decades would shed more light on the deeper mechanism at work in Odoevskij's fiction (Cornwell, 1986b 38). An intuitive observer on this matter, Osip Mandel'shtam (1891-1938) recognized the vital link between Odoevskij and not only German philosophy but applied romantic poetics in an article of 1922:

> More than once in Russian society there have been periods when the moving spirit of Western literature was read with genius. Thus did Pushkin and his entire generation read Chénier. Thus did the following generation, the generation of Odoevsky, read Schelling, E.T.A. Hoffmann and Novalis (Mandel'shtam 131).

Here, the chronological placement of Odoevskij after Pushkin (who died in 1837) seems to refer to the Odoevskij of the mature phase, the creator of *Russian Nights*.

Discussion

Both Novalis and Odoevskij suffered from distorted receptions characterized by insufficient theoretical appraisals and consequently, a heavy-handed interpretation of their writings as somehow conservative, old-fashioned, removed from daily-life, lost in flights of fancy and escapism. Novalis's image was deliberately distorted in the cultivation of the *Sophienerlebnis*, which fashioned him into an otherworldly and conservative "arch-romantic," conservative, because the Novalis of the blue flower could not be interpreted as socio-politically interested. This traditional reception clouded his progressive traits, his social concern and modernist aspects. By the same token, Odoevskij's "early romantic" qualities were not appreciated during the rise of positivism and the slavophile movement in the 1840s, and certainly not understood as inherently related to social reality. Since Belinskij, literary scholarship has attempted to denigrate a seemingly

"medieval-style," escapist romanticism as less meritorious than the "new" romanticism that strove to integrate the ideal into a new reality and promote historical progress (Neuhäuser 85). Belinskij's distinction of "progressive" versus "medieval" romanticism was strictly thematic, missing the inherent progressiveness of romantic literary theory underlying these "medieval" texts. He failed to understand Odoevskij's romanticism as pursuing a social ideal by means that differed from those of a more blatant "progressive romanticism." Even in his critical, but overall rather favourable review of 1844, Belinskij labelled Odoevskij's resort to the magical, mysterious, fantastical, as well as his scepticism, as outdated (VIII: 314, 316, 318, 320), out of step with the times, thus encouraging a reception of Odoevskij as generally conservative. This matter was compounded by the fact that Odoevskij, during his time, was well-known less for his actual works than for his general reputation (Belinskij VIII: 297), a circumstance that is probably valid to this day.

Belinskij's distinction between a progressive and an "outdated" romanticism found an echo, and indeed an amplification in the Soviet doctrine of Socialist Realism, which also did not show much enthusiasm for Odoevskij's works. The undeserved reputation of both Odoevskij (as outdated conservative) and Novalis (as dreamy poet of the blue flower) could only be challenged in an unbiased reading of their actual texts in the context of their poetics. While this task has been performed in Novalis's case in recent decades, a similar undertaking with regard to Odoevskij is still outstanding.

Novalis's reception in Russia is in many ways not unlike that of Odoevskij, since they both suffered from a lack of consideration in light of early romantic theory. Engel-

Braunschmidt's observation that there was no fertile ground in Russia for the prospering of Novalis's poetry (309) is perhaps equally true for Odoevskij's writing, and for roughly the same reasons. Critics missed the impulse toward a change of reality that underlies their romantic poetics, and consequently, in light of their thematic features, Novalis and Odoevskij were branded as ideologically and literarily conservative. In fact, as with regard to Novalis, there is on record at least one Soviet attempt to establish Odoevskij as a "conservative aristocrat" (Vinogradov 522). This view ignores the fact that the emergence of a socially committed literature was in many ways prepared by the ground-breaking shifts in literary attitude effected by romanticism, which drew attention to the gap between reality and a more desirable ideal state of human affairs. Nevertheless, both Novalis and Odoevskij became victims of ideological needling by literary camps eager to establish themselves as progressive. In this fashion, critics from Heine and Belinskij to the Soviets used Novalis and Odoevskij as negative examples against which they could define their own literary values.

The stories that form part of *Russian Nights* have frequently been published as separate entities in collections of Odoevskij's stories, even though their integration into the work of 1844 must be considered the final context in which their author wished them to be understood. The practice of not respecting the integrity of *Russian Nights* as a unit can be, at least partially, attributed to the primarily thematic understanding of romanticism in Russia that failed to discern the underlying romantic poetics in the work. Moreover, *Russian Nights* was likely treated with less respect as a unit, because it was simply a less acclaimed work. By contrast, it would have been considered quite absurd

to rearrange or render only portions of, for instance, Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* (*Герой нашего времени*; 1838/39). Taken out of the context of *Russian Nights*, the stories, ultimately, could not fully reflect the aesthetics that Odoevskij came to express artistically toward the end of his literary career. Similarly, a distorted view of Novalis's aesthetics came into circulation, when Schlegel and Tieck rearranged Novalis's fragments thematically, thus disturbing the sequence and progression of his thought. By the same token, Novalis was introduced into Russia in 1877 with a translation of the fifth hymn only of the *Hymns to the Night*, which surely distorts the true nature of both the part and the whole. In Odoevskij's case, *Russian Nights* as an organic unit was not favourably greeted from the beginning (for example by Belinskij), so that the metaphysical thrust of the work as a whole is lost and, moreover, formal characteristics of the entire work no longer factor into a critical appraisal. However, in early romantic poetics, formal characteristics are a vital aspect of internal textual motivation. Interestingly, due to the neglect of formal features and their relation to the general thrust of the work as an organic whole, *Russian Nights* was frequently somewhat frowned upon as an attempt to peddle old material in new packaging, while in Germany, this practice was recognized as a romantic method of reflective rendition, if one thinks, for instance, of Tieck's *Phantasus* (1812-1816).

It would seem that the virtual denial of the deeper significance of Jena romanticism in Russian aesthetics has thus far prevented a detailed study of Odoevskij's poetics (in particular *Russian Nights*) to take place. The literal understanding of the medieval trope in the works of Novalis and his colleagues has even been perpetuated in a specialized

article on Russian romantic aesthetics, where "Jena romanticism" is diagnosed as being "contradictory" due to its simultaneous rootedness in the French revolution and its orientation "on the ideals of the middle ages" (Kamenskij, 1974 12-25). By contrast, Gippius, the only critic, beside Khodanen, who really used the Jena romantics as an appropriate yardstick for an appraisal of Odoevskij's works, also portrayed the Russian writer as not measuring up to this standard due to his supposedly "tragical nature." Scholarship on Odoevskij is generally characterized by the failure to establish an appropriate set of parameters for a fruitful study that would do justice to all aspects of this writer's outlook on literature and life.

While from the 1960s in Germany Novalis came into his own as a "real thinker," and his texts and theories were reevaluated accordingly, Odoevskij was somewhat rehabilitated as being "unique" and "original" in terms of the heterogeneous nature of his body of works and as important in the history of Russian thought; but especially against the backdrop of the relaxed policy on romanticism after the debates in the 1960s and considering the types of recent studies on his works in Russia, it would seem that the increased tolerance toward Odoevskij was more of a superficial gesture of open-mindedness rather than a genuine effort to grasp the essence of his texts.[13] But mostly, many clichés about Odoevskij have persisted in the scholarship of even recent decades, emphasizing his "mystical" and "fantastical" phases. In 1984, Sakharov found that in

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[13] In a crass example, Khudushina in 1982 glosses over the mostly negative reception history and critical reputation of *Russian Nights* by generally linking Odoevskij to decembrism, misquoting Belinskij as approving of *Russian Nights* as a unit, and observing a "concordance of the ideas [in *Russian Nights*] with the ideas of the time," (61) which is simply not the case.

light of all the newly available material on Odoevskij, a time for "calm and objective" analysis has come. In the critic's estimation, intended to dismiss existing bias, Odoevskij was neither a "stormy romantic genius, nor a delicate dreamer-lyricist nor even an ironic sceptic," but a clear thinker, pragmatist and "all-encompassing mind" in search of comprehensive knowledge (1984 203-204). In this fashion, Sakharov called for a sober reevaluation of Odoevskij, similar to the recent treatment of Novalis in German scholarship. However, unlike the reevaluation of Novalis in Germany, Odoevskij's rehabilitation in Russia is far from fully launched, and has yet to include the examination of possible links to literary modernism and recent literary theories. Odoevskij and *Russian Nights* have thus far only been partially rescued from the fate of permanent misinterpretation. Scholarship, familiar only with the general thrust of Schelling's philosophy, but not well-versed in the details of early German romantic poetics, by and large, has neglected to examine in *Russian Nights* the specifics of Odoevskij's philosophical theories and poetics as echoes and elaborations of the views heralded by the Jena *Frühromantik*.

CHAPTER III

NOVALIS AND ODOEVSKIJ:

PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS AND POETICS

"SYMPHILOSOPHIES"

Frühromantik

The actual phenomenon of the German *Frühromantik* spanned only five years, from 1796-1801. In this short period, it consciously engineered a radical break with neoclassical patterns based on the artistic principles held by the Ancients, whereby art and literature confined themselves to a mimetic depiction of reality according to well-established rules of representation. This neoclassical approach corresponded to an understanding of reality as a fixed entity to be depicted by the artist in the only objective way in which it was seen to exist. This assumption was first questioned by transcendental philosophy from around 1790, especially by Kant, who examined the circumstances of human cognition and judgment, thus introducing the concept of subjectivity as a viable yardstick for an appraisal of the surrounding world. Fichte's theory of the ego defined reality as created by consciousness, thus placing individual perception at the centre of all existence. In the political sphere, the French Revolution (1789) and its aftermath shattered previously held assumptions on social structure and ushered in the era of continual social conflict and crisis. The literary-aesthetic theories developed by the Jena romantics at the end of the 18th century were nourished by these developments in the philosophical and socio-political realms, leading to a veritable revolution of norms and

basic assumptions in the literary field that had a lasting impact on the course of world literature. When romanticism was temporarily discredited in Germany from the 1830s as reactionary (especially by Heine) and irresponsible (by Hegel), these negative evaluations did not distinguish between members of the *Frühromantik* and later romantics such as Hoffmann or Eichendorff (E. Behler, 1992 22-26). However, toward the end of the 19th century, the realization that the aesthetic innovations of the early romantics must be viewed as a separate phenomenon found reflection in the term *Frühromantik*.

The life-blood of early German romanticism was provided by the pursuits of the Schlegel brothers and their collaboration and intellectual exchange with the most promising personalities in literature and philosophy of the time. Important participants, besides Novalis, included Schiller temporarily, Tieck, Wackenroder, Fichte, Schelling and Schleiermacher. The journal *Horae* (*Horen*; 1795-97) under the editorship of Schiller in Jena offered an initial forum for early romantic writings, enabling a temporary productive association of Schiller with the Schlegel brothers until the permanent rift of 1797. Schiller's distinction of ancient and modern literature in *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* (*Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*; 1795-96) up-staged F. Schlegel's initial observations on this matter, which were considerably less decisive on the significance and future value of modern literature. Tieck's influence began around 1795/96 with his novels (*Abdallah*, 1795; *Peter Lebrecht*, 1795; *William Lovell*, 1795-96) which conveyed a modern, angst-ridden sense of crisis and alienation, uncovering the contradictions of reality with no pretence of overcoming or transcending them (Ribbat

99-103). Frequently cited as one of the first representatives of romanticism,[1] Tieck's is a predominantly practical, creative contribution which is weak on theory, but rich in imagination and use of folk traditions. Tieck and his friend Wackenroder were deeply impressed by the art of Southern Germany. Their aesthetic experiences are captured in a collection of worshipful reflections on art, *Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar* (*Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*; 1797). Authored mainly by Wackenroder, it refashions the artist biography of the renaissance to convey the spirit of art and its immediate effect. The romantic renewal of poetry was inextricably linked to a renewal of philosophy. Fichte's ego-centred philosophy, Schelling's absolute idealism and philosophy of identity, and Schleiermacher's examination of philosophy and morality greatly impacted the formation of early romantic theory in Jena. The details of the philosophical systems constructed by these thinkers cannot be mentioned here. Generally speaking, the philosophy of idealism speculated on the existence of a hidden layer of meaning behind physical appearance, and it was especially Fichte and Schelling who sought to determine the relationship of this metaphysical sphere to the individual and the role art could play in the process.

Friedrich Schlegel

The close friendship of Schlegel and Novalis[2] significantly affected the development

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[1] For example Ribbat (99) and *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte* (Lüthi 584).

[2] See Preitz 1957.

of German romantic poetics. In the course of their "symphilosophizing," they developed a new understanding of literature, for which Schlegel was the more vocal if slightly provocative disseminator. In his essay of 1795 entitled *On the Study of Greek Poetry* (*Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie*; 1795), Schlegel was still ambivalent about the merits of modern literature compared to ancient literary values. Upon reflection, however, Schlegel soon affirmed many inferior qualities of modern literature (such as subjectivity, individualism, conflict and didacticism) as its most interesting attributes and incorporated them into his theory of romantic poetry, proposing that romantic poetry was capable of providing a new, rich and meaningful literature of the future (Eichner, 1965 216-17). Schlegel's review "On Goethe's *Meister*" ("Über Goethes *Meister*;" 1798) and his *Dialogue on Poetry* (*Gespräch über die Poesie*; 1800) represent the two major defining texts of early romantic literary theory in Germany. At the core of these texts is the new understanding of poetry as transcendental, as elevation of reality to a higher level through its synthesis with the ideal.

During his scholarly investigations into classical and renaissance literature, Schlegel distinguished self-reflective thinking as an essential element of modern poetry and concluded that Fichte's philosophical terms could therefore be used in fruitful analogy for modern poetics (*Athenäumsfragment 238*[3]). In analogy to Fichtean philosophy, poetry must include the producer along with the product and must be poetry of poetry. In other words, it must continually transcend itself (E. Behler, 1993a 138-139). Thus, poetry

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[3] The collection of fragments "Athenäums-Fragmente" are located in vol. II of the critical Schlegel edition (1967b).

becomes the preferred tool for philosophy, understood as the pursuit of knowledge. The idea of art as a vehicle to truth was brought into currency especially by Kant (Frank, 1989 14-17), who nevertheless was received very critically by the early romantics because of the rational thrust of his philosophy in general (Eichner, 1965 220-221). In an extreme reaction to the values of enlightenment, the Jena romantics redefined the task of poetry: it was to cancel the laws of rational thinking and return to the imagination as a means of attaining knowledge about a higher level of existence (E. Behler, 1993a 78-79). In *Dialogue on Poetry*, Schlegel contended that imagination can grasp the mysterious essence of this higher level, but it can only portray it once again as a mystery, due to the limited ability of the human language to convey the divine (also referred to as "das rein Geistige;" 1967a 334). The only way to describe the divine indirectly, he argued, is through romantic "wit" ("Witz"), an ingenious and free association of elements. However, ultimate insights could only be continually sought, never attained.

In order to convey the authorial consciousness of this open-ended, process-oriented nature of transcendental philosophical thinking, Schlegel introduced the concept of romantic irony which would present "thought and counterthought as a progressive movement of thinking" (E. Behler, 1993a 147). This principle was derived from Plato's dialogues, in which Plato's philosophy is not presented as a system, but as a history of the progression of his mind, rendered in the form of the dialogue as an artistic device (Schlegel, 1958 120). It was conveyed in a constant alternation of self-creation and self-annihilation, of making a statement and then taking it back again, thus symbolizing a striving toward something, not despite the inattainability of the goal, but because of it,

since poetry, like philosophy, was regarded as the continual search for truth.

Poetry no longer simply referred to rhymed verse, but designated the effort to generate higher truths, to point to some higher level of meaning, a quality that both Schlegels had distinguished as commonly held by Greek poetry, as well as by Dante (1265-1321) and Shakespeare (1564-1616). Similarly, all methods of inquiry, be they philosophical, historical or scientific, were seen as artificially separated mental activities that were to be reunited in Schlegel's concept of universal poetry as a quest for truth, for which classical formal rules became irrelevant (*Universalpoesie*; *Athenäumsfragment 116*). Universal poetry thus pursued an organic, more authentic experience of the world. This amounted to a recapturing, in highly artificial and conscious ways, of a knowledge of the world and a harmony that humankind had formerly enjoyed when it lived in a state of natural, sparkling chaos, as reflected in ancient mythology (Schlegel, 1967a 313). Ultimately, Schlegel called for a new mythology relevant to modern times, that would offer a vital system of reference for communication, a new frame of meaning capable of "projecting a more authentic image of the world than modern empiricism and its belief in dead matter" (Eichner, 1968 15).[4]

The relationship between the ideal and the real is a defining characteristic of

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[4] So far, Schlegel contended, only the medieval era of chivalry, love and fairy tale had provided the means for the creation of a romantic poetry worthy as a counterpart to classical literature (1967a 335), as evidenced in the works of Shakespeare, Cervantes and the Italian poets. Consequently, the medieval period was frequently chosen as a historical setting in romantic works, because it allowed the writer to operate in a different, highly idealized world. Such texts must not be understood as incidences of historical distortion, but as a conscious creation of a specific, alternative world view with the help of medieval subject-matter.

romantic poetry (see, for example, *Athenäumsfragment 238*). In a work of art, the ideal could be achieved in a complete interpenetration of letter and spirit, form and matter (E. Behler, 1993a 80-83), thus creating a beauty that is symbolic of the harmony in nature, which is, in turn, a reflection of the divine. The ideal in art thus refers simply to viewing and rendering something as an organic whole and harmonious entity comparable to the harmony, lawfulness and self-sufficiency of nature.

The new understanding of poetry as quest for synthesis rather than fulfilment of accepted poetic rules allowed for maximal artistic freedom. The novel recommended itself as the most suitable romantic medium, since it allowed for an infinite combination of different elements and could present diverse matter in a coherent, unified way. However, the novel was not seen as a successor of epic narration, but as a continuation of the dramatic narration of Greek tragedy, insofar as different voices are held together by a uniting principle. But contrary to drama, a novel becomes an organic work of art "through the relation of its entire composition to a higher unity than the literal one" (Schlegel, 1967a 336). The romantic novel is not just understood as a simple epic narrative, but as a mixture of narrative, dialogue, poetry, song and other artistic forms of representation united by a principle that refers to a higher level of meaning, thus creating true romantic poetry. According to Schlegel, as a "poem of poems" and "entire fabric of poems" it could provide a new mythology for the modern age (1958 160).

Despite Schlegel's rave review of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* as the vanguard of modern literature, he did not, overall, consider that novel to express pure romantic poetry. One could indeed question to what degree Schlegel was justified in using

Goethe's novel as an illustration of romantic principles. Novalis, in particular, came to read Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* much more critically, but also more productively for his own formulation of a theory of the novel. Novalis's essential contribution to early romanticism rests in refining the theory of transcendental poetry with a marked accentuation on its practical application, and providing the actual prototype of the romantic novel: his *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* was specifically written to outstrip Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, which even Schlegel admitted it accomplished by successfully making the "transition from the novel to mythology" (E. Behler, 1993a 179).

Even though Schlegel and Novalis developed their basic notion of a transcendental philosophy in virtual collaboration, there are also important differences in both general emphasis and details of their respective poetics. Nivelle considers Novalis's thinking to be much more systematic than Schlegel's (182). Certainly, Novalis found Schlegel's *Athenäumsfragmente* to be too dogmatic, unclear, and generally did not consider them to be fragments understood as "Denkaufgaben," as seeds for further pondering and development by the reader (II: 518). Particularly, Novalis criticized Schlegel's famous *Athenäumsfragment 116* for being contradictory (II: 623). While Schlegel extolled the subjectivity of the genius[5], Novalis was concerned with a subordination of the poet's freedoms in the service of generating insights (Haslinger 131-133). Novalis was concerned with wide-sweeping cultural changes, viewing romanticism as a tool that could transform all aspects of life. This difference becomes salient in a comparison of the two

[5] Fichte's conscious ego is characterized by freedom, thus an individual who acts freely is considered to be identical with him/herself (Kohlschmidt 46).

writers' definitions of "romantic." Schlegel demanded that the romantic writer must "portray emotional subject-matter in a fantastical-imaginative form" ("sentimentalen Stoff in einer fantastischen Form;" 1967a 333). By contrast, Novalis focused on the act of "romanticizing" ("romantisieren"), of experiencing life itself as romantic, turning it into a discipline that requires practice and a honing of skills to achieve controlled, effective artistic expression of the transcendental idea. As a result, Novalis did not understand imagination in the Schlegelian sense as a whimsical, intellectual display of "wit" and unbridled spirited combinatory impulse, but as a goal-oriented vehicle to attain the transcendental objectives of romantic poetry (Kohlschmidt 114). Thus, whereas Schlegel's novel experiment *Lucinde* (1799) can be characterized as an "individual expression of a progressive personality," Novalis in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* strove to "illustrate the execution of a poetic idea" (Nivelle 156-157).

The Milieu of the Wisdom Lovers: Influences and Goals

During the formative period of Russian romanticism in the early 1820s, the idea of a distinction between the literature of the Ancients and the Moderns was widely in circulation. For literary Russia, part of the appeal of romanticism lay precisely in its rejection of neoclassical principles, which smoothed the way for the establishment of an independent national modern Russian literature. The issue of a national literature was generally tied to socio-cultural concerns. But whereas many contemporaries, notably those of Decembrist persuasion, looked for more immediate and tangible forms of change in the political arena, the Wisdom Lovers more than any other group placed their hopes

for change in a transcendental philosophy. Applied to real life, this philosophy, in their view, could assist Russia in engaging in self-reflective thinking, in order to emerge from this act or process as a renewed, refined and more authentic cultural entity. Transcendental poetry, the Wisdom Lovers argued, could meet the needs of Russian society on the brink of modernity by introducing the idea of a synthesis as an elevated outlook on life, thus ushering in a new era of harmony.

The activities of the Wisdom Lovers during their brief existence (1823-1825) is very close in spirit to the symphilosophy practised by the Jena romantics between 1798 and 1800. Both consisted of a small group of young people interested in redefining the relationship between philosophy and art, and art and reality. If Schlegel, Novalis, Schelling and their colleagues rejected a mimetic depiction of reality in art in favour of developing a progressive, transcendental poetry characterized by a striving toward an ideal, so Odoevskij, Venevitinov and their small entourage engaged in redefining aesthetics in terms of transcendental philosophy, thus drawing attention to the vital philosophical impulse of idealism that underlies a truly romantic work of art in the original sense. Indeed, while all members were literary men first, the founding impulse for the society was the fact that the meetings in Raich's salon were focused more narrowly on literary concerns at the expense of philosophical questions. The meetings of the Wisdom Lovers afforded the members the opportunity to discuss their readings of recent German philosophy, including the works of Kant, Fichte, Oken, Görres, and in particular Schelling. Schelling's ideas on absolute knowledge via a realization of the identical relationship between microcosm and macrocosm, self and nature, became the

centre of focus for the Wisdom Lovers' views on aesthetics and the role of poetry.

According to the recollection of Koshelev, the new interest in philosophy was seen as an effort to replace conventional Christian religion, as a new path toward discovering the all-pervasive principle of existence freed from the constraints of the religious concept of providence (Sakulin I/1: 105-106). Similarly, Schlegel and Novalis elevated transcendental poetry to the status of a new religion, albeit perhaps in a slightly ironical sense, as a means of describing their idea of a new mythology (E. Behler, 1993a 158); Fichte was even an outspoken atheist. As with the German romantics, it is always important to scrutinize the so-called "religious" dimensions in the thinking of the Russian metaphysicists, who, like Schlegel and Novalis, availed themselves of religious (and mystical) terminology and concepts in order to express an idea, but may not, in so doing, have been professing personal religious convictions.

In Odoevskij one finds, by and large, the main philosophical force of the Wisdom Lovers, and many of his philosophical works, including *The Essential, or the Existent* and *Attempt at a Theory of Fine Arts*, suggest that he could be called a philosopher in his own right. While Odoevskij is generally seen to have provided the bulk of the philosophical impetus for the circle of the Wisdom Lovers, and certainly played a key role in the propagation of German idealism through his participation in *Mnemosyne*, Venevitinov's contribution to the furthering of the enterprise was just as important. A gifted lyrical poet who died at the age of 22, he did not write any strictly philosophical treatises, but produced many poetical explanations (in both verse and prose) of Schelling's transcendental idealism and, moreover, fuelled the enthusiasm of the group

with his captivating contributions to the discussions (Setschkareff, 1939 51-54). Koshelev, who was predominantly interested in political science, was more a peripheral figure in the group, as was Kireevskij, who was fascinated by Schelling from the point of view of religion and history, and Rozhalin, whose general interest in Schelling is only preserved in his correspondence (Setschkareff, 1939 46, 57-66). Besides the five core founding members, the group came to include Tjut'chev, M. Pogodin (1800-1875), Shevyrev, P. Mel'gunov, A. S. Khomjakov (1804-1860) and many others, even the decembrist Kjukhel'beker, who played a role in the group's journal *Mnemosyne* (Brown III: 340).

When the Wisdom Lovers disbanded after the events of 1825, Odoevskij, fearing persecution as the result of a general crack-down on liberalism, burned all the papers of the group, so that the four volumes of *Mnemosyne* provide one of the few unified sources of the circle's philosophical investigations and aesthetic convictions. The main concept adopted and reformulated from German transcendental idealism, and based largely on Schelling, is the need to engage in general, indeed, universal scientific thinking that would eventually lead to absolute knowledge (Setschkareff, 1939 34-35; *Mnemosyne* II: 76). This interest, going as it does to the roots of the nature of future scientific investigation, was the original trigger for the activities of the Jena romantics, which they found initially in Fichte's *Doctrine of Science*, admired not so much for the details of its system as for the new, dynamic flexibility of thinking that it propagated. Similarly, the Wisdom Lovers used Schelling's philosophy as a means to define their aesthetic views, frequently disregarding the details of his thought, although Odoevskij may be an

exception to this (Setschkareff, 1939 9). Of course, it is one of the chief characteristics of Schelling's philosophy that he accords art the central role as the synthesizing force of the world (Todorov 209). The Wisdom Lovers, in choosing Schelling as their main influence, by and large, worked with an existing system in which art and philosophy were already inextricably linked. Schelling seems to have appealed to the Russian poets and writers above all other German romantics due to his image as an "intuitive philosopher," who was also himself a poet. Cornwell, quoting the historian N. Rjazanovskij, suggests that Schelling's general anthropocentrism was welcomed by Russia as it was caught, since the 18th century, between the less tangible concepts of L. C. de Saint-Martin (1743-1803) and Voltaire (1986a 94-95). In marked contrast to the Kantian focus on a comprehensive philosophical system, Schelling frequently produced rather self-contained philosophical works that could not easily be integrated into a larger system. This may have appealed to many of his Russian readers, who were not primarily interested in a system, selecting, instead, isolated aspects of Schelling's philosophy that fitted into the development of their own aesthetics and poetics (Brown III: 341-343). The degree to which Fichte's philosophy was studied by the Wisdom Lovers is rather less well-known, but it was likely considered as necessary general background knowledge to the investigation into transcendental idealism.[6]

Brown points out that the general "poetry of feeling" that arose in Russia as a romantic reaction to rationalism in the arts under the influence of neoclassicism, was, in

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[6] Sakulin's detailed study on the activities of Odoevskij and the Wisdom Lovers does not mention the reading and discussion of original texts by Fichte, or evidence thereof in their philosophical writings.

turn, followed by a demand for a "poetry of thought," which espoused not a rationalistic outlook, but reflected a new way of thinking altogether (III: 344). In fact, the Wisdom Lovers sought to reach a new type of synthesis, whereby art could be both "free" and associated with an idea. Sakulin's detailed study on the aesthetics of the Wisdom Lovers and Odoevskij in particular concludes:

> Поэзия должна быть свободной, самобытной, но и идейной - вот господствующий тезис в эстетике русских любомудров (I/1: 170).
>
> Poetry must be free, autonomous, but also ideational -- that is the dominant thesis in the aesthetics of the Russian Wisdom Lovers.

It becomes evident that this romantic group was not, overall, interested in a simple doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*, but shared with the Jena romantics a humanistic concern for reality and the ways in which the gap between reality and ideality could be narrowed -- an aspect that has been continually overlooked in the literary criticism since the realist period. Brown goes to the heart of the matter when he finds that the Wisdom Lovers'

> "poetry of thought" which their spokesmen envisaged was one in which more fundamental and more abstract questions than the transitory ones of politics and economics should be dealt with. The Marxist denigration of this trend toward metaphysical speculation as obscurantist and reactionary is ridiculous and inadmissible. There is nothing inherently "progressive" about a political and social thematic, or essentially "regressive" about a metaphysical one (III: 345).

This observation, of course, holds equally true for the metaphysical orientation of Novalis and the Jena romantics in relation to subsequent literary schools in Germany.

The seeds that the philosophical groundwork of the Wisdom Lovers sowed did not really bear crop in the wider field of Russian letters until after the group dissolved in 1825, and the entire generation of writers moved from politics to metaphysics. *The Moscow Herald* provided a forum for contributions in this vein, especially in the years

1827-1828. These years saw the publication of numerous critical articles on romanticism and idealism, and translations of works by the German romantics from Tieck and Hoffmann to the Schlegels, as well as Goethe, who was admired particularly for his *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meister* (Brown III: 345-346), and thus reinterpreted romantically in a similar way as had been done by Schlegel in his famous critique of 1798.

Interestingly, Odoevskij in the 1820s considered the idea of synthesis to be a trend of his times, and felt himself to be on the brink of the birth of a new world (Sakulin I/1: 77). This view reflects an optimistic attitude in a period of mixed prospects before the events of 1825, when many young aristocrats perceived the acute necessity for socio-political reform. Odoevskij nourished this optimism throughout his career, and came to think of it simply as "faith," which he considered to be the necessary binding force for the future synthesis. The Jena romantics also considered themselves to live in a period of social crisis, and were equally enthusiastic about the future, especially Novalis. It would seem that both groups greeted crisis as an opportunity and a fertile ground for change and improvement.

The Wisdom Lovers' new frame of mind must be understood as a backlash against the self-declared success of the empirical sciences and their understanding of nature. The Russian metaphysicists, like their counterparts in Jena, subscribed to the view that the empirical sciences failed to penetrate the essence of natural phenomena: they could observe matter, but they could not provide true insights into essence. Thus, imagination needed to come to the aide of rational empiricism to attain truthful, complete knowledge. More specifically, poetry needed to complement science to attain a genuine understanding

of nature. Like the early German romantics, Odoevskij understood poetry as transcendental poetry, as a combination of idealist philosophy and poetic expression. The basic idea of poetry as the search for truth became the single goal of literature in his romantic aesthetics. It becomes clear from this short summary of objectives that the ultimate thrust of the Wisdom Lovers was to create a new cultural paradigm relevant to Russian society on the threshold of a new age. Their efforts echo Schlegel's call for a new mythology, understood as a system of meaning that could provide a new centre for the self-definition of the modern individual in its environment. The philosophical discussions undertaken by Odoevskij and the Wisdom Lovers closely mirror the efforts at "symphilosophy" by Novalis and the Jena romantics in both content and overall goals. The curious lack of attention bestowed on the deeper affinities of the Wisdom Lovers to the Jena romantics is, again, attributable to the distorted understanding of Jena romanticism as conservative and regressive. Thus, one Soviet scholar drew a parallel between the Wisdom Lovers and "the conservative side of Jena romanticism" associated with Schelling, considering this aesthetic trend as marginal and not in step with the general development of leading Russian aesthetics (Kamenskij, 1974 4748), by which he meant Decembrism and the slavophile movement.

PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES

Novalis's *Magical Idealism*

By the 1960s, as scholarship reassessed its treatment of Novalis and his works, the term "magical idealism" displaced the previously customary attribute "blue flower."

Magical idealism generally refers to the philosophical principles underlying Novalis's understanding of poetry as an instrument for the pursuit of knowledge and the generation of a modern paradigm of meaning.

Volkmann-Schluck explains how Novalis constructed his concept of magical idealism as the next logical step in transcendental idealism developed by Kant and furthered by Fichte (45), arriving at a view of poetry as metaphysics, as a means toward reaching knowledge of the truth of all being (52). Kant lays the foundation of transcendental philosophy by locating the conditions for the perception of nature (an object, physical matter, reality) in the subject, the individual viewing it. Fichte elevates this Kantian condition to a "transcendental operation of the spirit," in which the subject attains its own consciousness (ego) by projecting a contrastive "non-ego" (an "other," i.e. nature) (Volkmann-Schluck 45-46), therefore creating nature in this process. According to Fichte, nature thus is a product of the transcendental operation of the spirit. After his extensive studies of Fichte's philosophy, Novalis sought to understand what spirit and nature are. He assumed that because spirit created nature, spirit must also still be contained in nature, so that in any given object, spirit manifests itself as non-spirit, as physical matter. In other words, rather than define itself against nature, spirit enters a "mysterious" state of non-spirit. Novalis therefore considered nature to be a "versteinerte Zauberstadt," a magical state of "spirit-turned-matter". He argued that while the physical sciences seek to understand the physical qualities of an object (its matter), magical idealism strives to understand the spirit. The poetic word becomes the tool with which to access the spirit in matter. It is "magical" in the sense that it transforms nature into

its real appearance by revealing its spiritual essence (Volkmann-Schluck 46-47).

In Novalis's concept of magical idealism, philosophical questions and poetic function are brought together in an attempt to attain ultimate knowledge and reconcile the individual with its environment and itself. For it is art, and in particular poetry, that, according to Novalis, enables the subject to experience itself in its original unity (Volkmann-Schluck 47).[7] Poetry understood as "magical" poetry reveals nature's spirit. But more importantly, poetry also enables the individual to encounter further recesses of its own spirit, because nature was created by the ego in its process of gaining consciousness, and thus nature contains part of the ego's spirit. As Volkmann-Schluck concludes, in the concept of magical idealism, poetry provides the individual with unlimited and enriching self-encounters by transforming objective nature into spirit (48), so that the individual gains a sense of inner "wholeness" and identity. To this end, the poet needs to be equipped with a "magical" view of nature, which Novalis calls a "sense for mysticism" ("Sinn für Mystizismus;" Volkmann-Schluck 49). His goal must be to convey this perception artistically though a revelation that the reader or listener of his poetry can witness and experience in his own right. A revelation can be effected by simply describing an object as a subjective entity (Volkmann-Schluck 49). Thus,

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[7] This function of art goes back to Kantian aesthetics, according to which our aesthetic experience of the beautiful is achieved by the power of our imagination ("Einbildungskraft"), which is based on a balanced interaction of an emotional perception ("Anschauung") and thinking. The ability to perceive beauty is seen as unique to human beings, because it unifies two notorious opposites: perception and thinking, senses and spirit ("Sinne und Geist"). As a result, in the presence of beauty, the individual experiences itself in its original oneness, and the task of art is to create beauty to this end (Volkmann-Schluck 47).

Novalis's famous statement that "poetry is the *depiction* of *spirit*" ("Poesie ist *Darstellung* des *Gemüths*; III: 650, No. 553) means that poetry must transform an object into subjectivity ("Gemüth" understood as "spirit").

It must be stressed that Novalis did not consider the experience of renewed oneness to be a return to an original state. The "unseparatedness" ("Ungeschiedenheit") of subject and object before the act of asserting consciousness is not seen as a historical fact[8], but as a "lingering memory" ("bleibende Erinnerung") that is reflected in the well-known phrase at the beginning of fairy tales, "Once upon a time" ("Es war einmal"). But whereas in fairy tales the described state of oneness (of nature and spirit) is unreflected, Novalis's magical idealism proposes to reach a synthesis of opposites that allows for an infinite reflective encounter of the self with its spirit (Volkmann-Schluck 51-52).

R. Heine emphasizes the fact that Novalis left Fichte behind, when he considered the origin of subject and object to be ultimately simultaneous and identical ("Gleichursprünglichkeit;" 65). Rejecting Fichte's postulate of a supreme ego as too arbitrary, Novalis imagined an original ego, which he termed a "practical ego" that was at the same time non-ego, and understood it as characterized by infinite productivity and as aspiring to a universal quality. In depicting reality ideally, its free subjectivity becomes objectivized (Heine 56-60). The depicting ego transforms the object (reality) thus making it *its product*, so that the work of art becomes a "visible product of the ego" (II: 282, No. 633). Ultimately, therefore, Novalis's practical ego surrenders its

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[8] Before a separation of subject and object, no consciousness existed that could experience this unseparatedness, so that this unseparatedness was never experienced as a state.

subjectivity to universality by "creating a world out of itself" (II: 288, No. 647); it becomes a universal, indeed, ontological principle. Thus, Novalis transforms a philosophical principle into an aesthetic principle: the ego must assert itself as depicting and creating, thus assuming an aesthetic function. Fundamentally, Novalis's ego emerges as a "synthetic force of mediation" between subject and object which alone can make the absolute visible (Heine 61-64).

Samuel notes in his introduction to the collection of fragments containing Novalis's concept of magical idealism, "Teplitzer-Fragmente" (II: 596-622), that Novalis's theories are very much rooted in daily life, which must be invested with meaning through a "magical" perception of it. Reality becomes a symbol of spirit, of the ideal:

> Die Welt ist ein Universaltropus des Geistes - Ein symbolisches Bild desselben (II: 600, No. 30).
>
> The world is a universal trope of the spirit - A symbolic image of it.

It is precisely reality that needs to be examined as symbol of the spirit. The "Teplitzer Fragmente" are interspersed with accounts of various trivial daily events which are taken as occasions to engage in reflective thinking. Indeed, Novalis defines realists as idealists who do not understand anything about themselves, so that the very distinction between ideal and real, is really one of self-reflective versus non-reflective thinking (II: 605, No. 55) applied to objects of reality. It is through poetry that the familiar, subjective or personal is revealed in a foreign object or nature, and, by extension, the universe, which means that the individual becomes reintegrated into the universe, wherein it finds its true identity. As a result, poetry reflects the individual in its totality, therefore, in its "real" reality. It is in this sense that Novalis's famous dictum must be understood:

> Die Poesie ist das ächt absolut Reele. Die ist der Kern meiner Phil[osophie]. Je poetischer, je wahrer (II: 647, No. 473).
>
> Poetry is the truly absolute real. This is the core of my philosophy. The more poetic, the truer.

Novalis's theory of magical idealism clearly rejects the main values of rational enlightenment and the modes of its scientific investigations. It expresses his desire to unite all phenomena in order to obtain an organic view of the world that would once again, though on a higher, more conscious level, lead to harmony among people and within the individual itself.

Despite Novalis's fundamental indebtedness to Fichte for a new type of thinking, Novalis' theories were, in terms of philosophical content, much closer in spirit to Schelling's notion of *Naturphilosophie* and "world-soul" ("Weltseele"), although he took issue with some of the details. Schelling's first publication, *Ideas on a Philosophy of Nature* (*Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*; 1797), in the tradition of speculative philosophy proposed rather intuitively derived ideas on nature. Novalis, who knew him personally, detected in Schelling's writings a "true universal rendering," and in the man himself "much poetic sense," considering him a natural genius (IV: 242; Roder 541). Novalis made extensive study notes on Schelling's *On the World-Soul* (*Von der Weltseele*; 1798) during the Freiburg period (III: 102-114). Here, Novalis particularly appreciated the inclusion of the newest discoveries in the empirical sciences, and the thrust toward a reconciliation of opposing fields. Schelling developed a theory of nature as being in a process of continually perfecting itself toward an ideal. He determined this process to be dialectic in nature: nature divides itself into two opposites, which can then

be reunited in a second step and on a higher level. He understood this process to be the fundamental principle of nature, an inner law underlying all being to which he assigned the term "Weltseele." While the idea of a progressive dialectic development toward perfection appealed to Novalis and became a central feature of his poetics, he could not agree with Schelling's belief in the historical attainment of the absolute, stated in his philosophy of identity (Roder 242). E. Behler concludes that "whereas Schelling confidently saw in the interaction of his two 'basic sciences' a progressive generation of absolute knowledge, Novalis, adopting a more reflective and critical attitude, concentrates on the incomprehensibility and 'infinity' in this interrelationship" (1993a 200). The same critical attitude can be discerned in Odoevskij's thinking.

Odoevskij's Philosophical-Aesthetic Studies

Odoevskij's studies of the Wisdom Lover years were intensely philosophical, yet his interest was from the outset geared toward the formulation of a new transcendental aesthetics. His views on philosophical aesthetics, as he developed them during these years, served as the foundation for his subsequent aesthetic pronouncements in the 1830s and 1840s, and in his understanding and practice of romantic poetics. Nevertheless, his earlier philosophical writings have not been studied in detail, and many critics failed to appreciate their impact on Odoevskij's so-called "later phases" as a writer.[9]

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[9] Khudushina goes straight to an investigation of Odoevskij's philosophical concepts in the 1850s and 1860s, as if the earlier writings have already been analyzed exhaustively. More to the point, the philosophical texts of the 1820s and 1830s have likely been ignored because they do not fit into the Soviet image of Odoevskij as a writer who quickly reached a post-idealistic phase.

Odoevskij's philosophical inquiries began with the reception of first Oken and then Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, initially through mediators at the preparatory school, followed by a direct reading of texts from roughly 1823 (Sakulin I/1: 132). Odoevskij's idealism thus unfolded from a basic redefinition of nature and the cognitive methods by which it could be examined and understood, that is, from an examination of gnoseological questions, leading to a call for a new science of knowledge that would combine observation and speculation. As a result of both the gnoseological value placed on speculative inquiry and the concept of the absolute as a synthesis of opposites (inspired by Schelling's philosophy of identity and concept of "world-soul"), Odoevskij came to espouse a transcendental poetry. The formulation of his romantic aesthetics and their literary application remained his central concern in the 1830s and 1840s.

While one can observe a shift in emphasis of Odoevskij's pursuits in the 1830s compared to the previous decade, this shift is characterized by a continuity of development rather than an abrupt change of direction.[10] While Odoevskij's studies of the 1820s were more or less dominated by Schelling, he significantly broadened his interests and sources for inspiration when in the 1830s he investigated the very roots of the idealistic philosophical tradition and life-blood of romantic aesthetics. His study of the historical predecessors of more recent transcendental philosophy drew a straight line from Plato, Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), Böhme, Saint-Martin, Spinoza and John

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[10] While most Soviet-Russian scholars, including Sakulin and Mann (1969), contend that one can perceive a break with Schellingianism and idealism following Odoevskij's Wisdom Lover phase, most Western criticism contradicts this view (Setschkareff, 1939 39-40; Walicki, 1975 71; Stammler 155; Cornwell, 1986a 89-90).

Pordage (1607-1681) to Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel (Cornwell, 1986a 95-96). While studying the history of metaphysical thought, Odoevskij became intrigued with various representatives of theosophy (including cabalism) and speculative mysticism. However, these were purely scholarly investigations that indicated neither an escape into mysticism as a personal belief, nor a "religious phase" in Odoevskij's literary development. By the same token, his renewed concern with cultural synthesis through a new science and art in the 1840s did not signal a new phase of positivism, but rather, continued to pursue the same goal of the previous decades: the creation of a new harmonious vision of reality through a synthesis of art and science leading to individual happiness and social peace. In Russia, these goals were clearly incited by Schelling, and even though Odoevskij broadened his sources and interests, his entire literary career was in the service of pursuing these basic Schellingian goals, or at least, exploring both their viability and necessity, as the example of *Russian Nights* demonstrates. Overall, it would appear that Odoevskij's use of Schellingian thought was pragmatic, serving as a general guideline for various types of syntheses, of art and philosophy (1820s), of instinct and rationality (1830s) and of the sciences and arts into a new belief (mid 1830s to 1840s). Additionally, Sakharov distinguished in Odoevskij's thought of the 1830s a new historical perspective on literature as a "history of the spiritual life of a nation in artistic images" as it raises itself to an ever higher cultural level (1982b 204). Nevertheless, this cannot be considered a change in philosophical outlook, but merely a shift in emphasis toward

history that is but an echo of Schelling's development.[11] However, similar to Novalis, while Odoevskij appreciated the general principles developed in Schelling's thought, he did not agree with his positivistic conviction that absolute truth could be reached historically.

A brief survey of those philosophical texts by Odoevskij that are available shows (particularly in the Wisdom Lover period) a swift and enthusiastic digestion, appropriation and application of newly encountered philosophical principles. In 1824, Odoevskij published his *Aphorisms From Various Writers, Partly of Contemporary German Philosophy* (*Aforizmy iz razlichnykh pisatelej, po chasti sovremennogo germanskogo Ljubomudrija*) in *Mnemosyne*, which deals with mathematical and philosophical principles in relation to Schelling's philosophy of identity. In 1825, the first part of a projected philosophical encyclopedia appeared in the same journal under the title *The Idealistic-Eleatic Sect (excerpt from the "Dictionary of the History of Philosophy")* (*Sekta idealistiko-eleaticheskaja [otryvok iz "Slovarja istorii filosofii"]*). Three further unfinished philosophical treatises are considered by Sakulin to contain vital factual information on Odoevskij's views on gnoseology, aesthetics and the expression of the absolute (Sakulin I/1: 144). *Attempt at a Theory of Fine Arts with its Particular Application to Music* (*Opyt teorii izjashchnykh iskusstv s osobennym primeneniem onoj k musyke*), written between 1823-1825, was intended to acquaint the reader with the

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[11] See Walicki, 1975 71. Interestingly, in Odoevskij's conversation with Schelling in 1842, the German philosopher himself considered Russia as culturally "destined to something important" (Odoevskij, 1982 140), a view that Odoevskij elaborates in the Epilogue of *Russian Nights*.

transcendental idealism of the Schellingian variety (Kamenskij, 1974 599). *Aphorisms of the XIXth Century* (*Gnomy XIX stoletija*) and *The Essential, or the Existent* (*Sushchee, ili sushchestvujushchee*) were likely written in the mid-1820s, around the end of the Wisdom Lover period (Kamenskij, 1974 600). The three latter texts were only published posthumously in an anthology of Russian aesthetic treatises by Ovsjannikov (see Odoevskij 1974). However, Sakulin's study, its datedness notwithstanding, provides otherwise unobtainable important additional factual information on all of Odoevskij's treatises of the 1820s, and to this date remains an invaluable source to the student interested in Odoevskij's idealism (see in particular I/1: 103-176).

Further previously unpublished material has been gathered in a fragment collection entitled *From the Notebook* (*Iz zapisnoj knizhki*) and included in Ovsjannikov's anthology. It mostly contains short treatments on, for instance, the relationship of poetry and philosophy, art and science, the problem of verbal expression and the nature of music, dating predominantly from the early 1830s. From the mid-1830s, it would seem that Odoevskij's main writings already concern themselves more or less with the *Russian Nights* project. For example, the article *Who Are the Madmen?* (*Kto sumasshedshie?*), which appeared in 1836, is later reworked to form the larger part of the second night of *Russian Nights*. A short article of the same year deals with the poetics of the novel (*How We Write Novels*; *Kak pishutsja u nas romany*). A posthumously published undated piece of roughly the same period discusses the concepts which reappear at the core of *Russian Nights*. The title speaks for itself: *Russian Nights, or On the Necessity of a New Science and a New Art* (Odoevskij, 1975a 192-198).

An additional posthumously published document of Odoevskij's philosophical mind-set are the minutes of his conversation with Schelling in Munich in 1842 (Odoevskij, 1982 138-141). The only collection of notes on Odoevskij's philosophical, aesthetic and sociological views published in his life-time are the *Psychological Notes* of 1843 (*Psikhologicheskie zametki*; Odoevskij, 1975a 203-230). Here, Odoevskij continues to explore issues based on the principles of romantic synthesis and the Schellingian concept of identity, integrating poetry, the sciences and religion into a system that is further related to sociological problems, notably Russia's role in achieving a higher cultural synthesis. The continued preoccupation with these questions comes to light in the foreword to the 1844 edition of *Russian Nights*, and the preface notes ("примечания") for a planned second edition for 1862 (*RN* 304-314). Considered together, the foreword, notes and *Russian Nights* itself are the most eloquent proof that throughout his creative literary career Odoevskij continued to explore the basic Schellingian principles formulated during the Wisdom Lover years. In *Russian Nights* he thus brought to artistic fruition the transcendental aesthetics of the 1820s that were inspired by the very philosophical sources which accompanied Novalis's development.

Philosophical Foundations

Odoevskij came to transcendental philosophy via the general Russian reception of Oken's and Schelling's concept of *Naturphilosophie* in relation to the state of science. This concept first questioned the omnipotence of empirical science and raised the

possibility that a knowable metaphysical essence underlies all objects of nature.[12] Therefore, the initial goal of Odoevskij's philosophical pursuits was to formulate a general scientific-philosophical *Weltanschauung*, a universal formula or theory that could integrate and unite every aspect of nature and, by analogy, human society.

Odoevskij's two fragments, *The Essential, or the Existent* and *Aphorisms of the XIXth Century*,[13] develop a comprehensive theory in order to pave a path toward truth. *Aphorisms* in particular contains the main philosophical principles behind Odoevskij's poetic theory. Here, Odoevskij investigates the fundamental relationship between appearance and spirit, object and subjectivity, a relationship that poetry must express in its quest for truth. Strongly influenced by the nature-centred concepts of *Naturphilosophie* and by Schelling's philosophy of identity, Odoevskij divided "appearance" (i.e., nature) into two aspects: its actual appearance ("явление") and its observer ("наблюдатель;"

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[12] Odoevskij's mentor Pavlov disseminated the view that the empirical sciences alone could not offer a unified truth because they were in a state of "disarray, structurelessness and dissociation," lacking a "unity of principle" despite the fact that the most brilliant minds in human history have worked in this field. It was precisely empiricism's shortcoming that it could not formulate a unifying theory to describe the basic principle or process of nature. Pavlov considered the sciences to be espousing an "atomizing theory" that could explain only matter, but could not account for the "productivity of nature," in other words, could not explain how the same substance could transform itself into a variety of forms. Pavlov came to the conclusion that as empiricism studied phenomenon or matter, so speculation ("умозрение") could invest phenomena with meaning, and advocated a synthesis of the two types of human cognition for a rounded study of nature. Pavlov, who was a scientist, first acquainted Odoevskij with the idea of an underlying principle in nature. However, Pavlov himself held clearly positivistic goals and did not endorse the metaphysical and aesthetical deductions made by the Wisdom Lovers, even openly speaking out against them (Sakulin I/1: 125-127).

[13] Quotes from these and other theoretical texts are taken from the anthology by Ovsjannikov (see Odoevskij 1974), and are marked "*Traktaty*."

Traktaty 171). Further, he determined that to perceive an object means to liken oneself to an object, and moreover, to see oneself in the object, so that, integrating this into his initial definition of "appearance," the following holds true:

> Условия всякого явления суть две стороны -- *дух* и *дух в предмете* (*Traktaty* 172).
>
> The conditions of any appearance are comprised of two sides: *spirit* and *spirit in the object*.

In other words, Odoevskij suggests that the object contains spirit with which the observer needs to identify. This corresponds to Novalis's concept of magical idealism which views natural objects as "ossified spirits," with which the subject must identify.

However, Odoevskij goes into further detail with regard to the mechanism of the relationship between subject and object:

> Следственно, всякое явление есть беспрерывное противоборство между сими двумя сторонами: дух стремится сделать себя предметом и вместе пребыть и духом. Так что в каждом явлении три момента: 1) дух устремляется к предмету, 2) дух становится тождествен с предметом, 3) предмет возвышается к духу (*Traktaty* 172).
>
> Consequently, each appearance is a continuous antagonism between these two sides: the spirit strives to become object, while also remaining spirit. Each appearance is thus characterized by 3 aspects: 1) the spirit strives toward the object, 2) the spirit becomes identical with the object, 3) the object raises itself to the spirit.

In *The Essential*, Odoevskij more overtly determines that this antagonism comprises the basis of all existence, and, thus, constitutes the theory. In *Aphorisms*, he identifies poetry as the only human activity that can portray this eternal process as striving toward truth (*Traktaty* 174). Poetry must thus depict the subjective as becoming objective and vice versa, which corresponds to Novalis's concept of the magical word as liberating the spirit

from its existence as mere physical matter. Moreover, Novalis and Odoevskij posited a merely hypothetical identity or simultaneous origin ("Gleichursprünglichkeit") of subject and object (i.e., the absolute). The spirit as mediating force between these two principles can strive toward a restoration of this identity (absolute), but it can never be fully realized. Both Odoevskij and Novalis adhered to the latter view throughout their literary careers, while Schelling came to consider the absolute as a positivistic goal, thus effectively spelling the end of idealism (see Snow 1996).

Odoevskij understands poetry as a higher synthesis of the qualities of philosophy and art, and ultimately, the only method by which truth can be reached. For in *Aphorisms of the XIXth Century*, he determines that the first aspect of subject-object interaction (the spirit becomes objects; unity becomes diversity) describes an expansive force represented by Imagination (=art; i.e., the spirit is expressed in objects), and the third aspect (objects become spirit; diversity becomes unity) describes an intensive force represented by the Idea (=philosophy; i.e., the spirit must be revealed as underlying all objects). While Odoevskij relates sculpture to the first aspect and music to the third, poetry alone can express the identity of spirit and object (the second aspect) insofar as it can portray that eternal antagonism. Poetry is therefore a synthesis of imagination and idea, art and philosophy. Odoevskij contends that the goal of human activity is to create oneself in the object, but in doing so, also to "at the same time remain spirit" (*Traktaty* 172), so that one can speak of a spirit that synthesizes remaining opposites, continually mediates between the subjective and the objective. This is a self-reflective, conscious effort at synthesis of remaining opposites, so that the absolute remains a concept, not a

historically achievable entity. This type of synthesizing activity is also contained in Novalis's hypothetical "practical ego," which replaces Fichte's supreme ego to embody an original state of oneness of the two opposites, which nevertheless does not end in absolute synthesis, but only in a constant mediation of opposites toward synthesis.

As explained by R. Heine, Novalis's practical ego has a synthesizing function, but ultimately, it uses its subjectivity to create universality (56-60). It has been said earlier that, contrary to F. Schlegel and Fichte, Novalis's emphasis was on synthesis in the face of diversity. Odoevskij likewise understood his "spirit" as the mediator between two opposites, but, especially in *The Essential*, diversity is a principle that the spirit needs to continually try to overcome in favour of unity (the general, the universal). In this treatise, the general is equated to genus ("род") and the particular to species ("вид"), and it is concluded that "the striving toward happiness is the striving to integrate oneself into the genus [...]. Everything that hinders man to become genus is the evil, ugly and untruthful" (*Traktaty* 171), so that on the path toward absolute truth, diversity is the resistance that must be overcome. Similar to Novalis, Odoevskij thus goes beyond the ego-centred principles of subjectivity present in Fichte's system, and emphasizes the general or universal as a reflection of the spirit.

Just as in Novalis's theory of magical idealism, Odoevskij's subject discovers its own spirit in the object, thereby gaining further insights into its own soul via the other, the exterior world. This conviction forms the basis of Odoevskij's philosophical aesthetics: "Природа есть беспрестанное зрелище человеческого духа" ("Nature is the interminable spectacle of the soul;" *Traktaty* 172). This is a clear echo of Novalis's

view of the world as a universal trope of the spirit, and as such underlines the ultimate rootedness in reality of both writers' philosophical abstractions: reality cannot be changed without a true understanding of its conditions. From the earliest, supposedly "pure" philosophical beginnings of Odoevskij, one can note a combination of metaphysical and social concerns that is equally at play in the formation of the Jena *Frühromantik*, which defined its aesthetics out of both Fichte's theories and the sense of social crisis following the French revolution. This social concern did not just establish itself in Odoevskij's thinking of the 1830s and 1840s. Already in *The Essential* from around 1825, Odoevskij's opening lines immediately relate the conditions of nature to that of society as a whole, when he states that "the opinions of all people contradict one another. In nature we observe a corresponding antagonism, which is governed by order. Such order must also exist among people" (*Traktaty* 168), by which he meant society. Similarly, Novalis considered society as governed by the same conditions of an "indivisible, thinking and feeling person," an entity of order that accommodates diversity (III: 430, No. 42). The combination of metaphysical and social concerns, which rests at the basis of Novalis's philosophical standpoint, is perhaps also the single red thread that runs through all of Odoevskij's thought. In the final issue of *Mnemosyne*, Odoevskij retrospectively summed up the two goals of the publication: to attract attention to German transcendental philosophy and its new ideas, and to encourage a reexamination and redefinition of Russian values, and thus, in conjunction, not only to foster an original and independent Russian literary-philosophical heritage, but to heal society through the pursuit of progressive synthesis (*Mnemosyne* IV: 232-233; Sakulin I/1: 110). These are

the very same concerns to which Odoevskij gave voice in later decades, and especially in the Epilogue of *Russian Nights*.

The need to disseminate and educate may certainly be part of the reason why, once captivated by the basic philosophical ideas and new ways of thinking that he encountered via various mediators of German idealism, Odoevskij immediately wanted to see them planted on Russia's cultural soil, rather than dwell on the details of this or that philosophical exposition. Thus, such commentators as Sakulin find Odoevskij's philosophy to be rather "home-grown" and, all things considered, dilettantish (I/1: 134, 149-159; see also Kamenskij, 1974 600). Odoevskij, in surveying developments in the field of German philosophy, expressed deep concern at the lack of such discussions in Russia, attributing this directly to the harmful influence of French rational philosophy. By inoculating Russian society with German idealism, Odoevskij hoped to stimulate the growth of a Russian "ljubomudrija," an appetite for true wisdom and understanding of the meaning of life, so that it could be changed for the better. In this sense, the philosophical foundations of both Novalis and Odoevskij are "radically" realistic, for they "go to the roots" of reality understood as an entity consisting of an observer ("Geist;" "дух") and his environment ("Natur;" "явления"). Both Odoevskij and Novalis understood transcendental poetry as the only true reconciler of opposites, only poetry could express the existence of a higher reality and present it, once again, as a value to strive for.

POETICS

Novalis's Poetics

Novalis's concept of magical idealism provides the philosophical skeleton of his poetics, which he fleshes out in his studies of the sciences, philosophy and literature, and in the course of his own creative literary practice as a member of the Jena circle.

The basis of Novalis's poetics is contained mainly in his fragments entitled "Poesie," "Poeticismen," (both part of the *Logologische Fragmente*; II), as well as the "Fragmente oder Denkaufgaben" ("Fragments or problems for thought"), "Anekdoten" ("Anecdotes"), and generally, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon* (III). Novalis considered his own fragments to be incomplete and in need of further revision,[14] however, D. Behler observes that as a whole, they represent a consistent pursuit of a central point: "They are fragments in the sense of a microcosm mirroring the universe of an individual's thought, a succinct and compressed expression of a central idea" (95). The examination of outer reality as a means of gaining insights into the individual's self, and the continual engagement in this act as a progressive and continually deepening understanding of both self and world, constitute Novalis's "great perception-altering idea" ("grosse, *alles verändernde* Idee;" II: 595, No. 318) that defines his poetics as *transcendental.*

Novalis's concept of transcendental poetry ultimately pursues a synthesis of external and internal phenomena, of the subjective and the universal, of the ideal and reality into

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[14] According to Novalis, the rendition of his ideas as constant "works in progress" is "still most bearable" as fragment (II: 595, No. 318). But Novalis's concept of fragment does not entail fragmented thinking. Rather, it is seen to offer the only possible representation of transcendental thinking, which continually moves forward.

a higher state, so that his poetics are indeed strikingly goal-oriented. Therefore, his understanding of the producer of transcendental poetry as "poet-philosopher" becomes important. The transcendental philosopher is seen to have a similar approach to reality as the poet (III: 563, No. 56). But by studying transcendental philosophy, the poet can further train his "intellect in the art of lively reflection" (D. Behler 100). Thus, in his fragments, Novalis speaks of the need to philosophize "artistically" in the Fichtean vein ("es können wunderbare Kunstwercke hier entstehn - wenn man das Fichtisiren erst artistisch zu treiben beginnt;" II: 524, No. 11). However, Novalis does not advocate a fusion of poetry and philosophy, but rather a goal-oriented, dynamic interaction, in which philosophical discipline and poetic creativity join forces to *perceive and convey* the transcendental progression toward an ideal. The poet who can nurture this synthesis in himself is seen to stand at the end of an evolution which began with the "raw discursive thinker," and "raw discursive poet," was followed by the talented "eclectic" (who lacks the transcendental idea), and finally crowned by the "artist, who is tool and genius in one" (II: 524-526, No. 13). Novalis considers such a poet to be a "genuine erudite," who can combine critical reflection with artistic representation on a sweeping variety of topics and phenomena:

> Der ächte Gelehrte ist der vollständig gebildete Mensch - der allem, was er berührt und thut eine wissenschaftliche, idealische, synkritistische Form giebt (III: 339, No. 470).
>
> The genuine erudite is the completely cultured human being - who gives a scientific, ideal, syncretistic form to everything that he touches and undertakes.

The transcendental poet, realizing his organic link to the universe, becomes conscious of the fact that all external contradictions are already solved in his own existence as a

unified microcosm of the world. He needs only to tap into this to solve the riddle of life (II 527-528, No. 19). This new type of poet is fully cognizant of his dialectical method. Contrary to organic poetry (such as fairy tales) that is unreflected and naive in Schiller's sense, the new romantic poetry represents a higher level, because it reaches a state of harmony through conscious reflection. Therefore, Novalis's envisioned new Golden Age does not simply entail a return to the past, but designates the impulse to reach a heretofore unattained height of human consciousness.

As D. Behler points out, a "poetical sense" ("poetischer Sinn") is defined by Novalis as the individual's ability to relate his individual experiences to the external world, to understand his subjectivity in relation to reality (83). Thus, the dialectic process of discovering self and universe depends vitally upon the reference to reality. Novalis makes this very clear:

> Der erste Schritt wird Blick nach innen, absondernde Beschauung unseres Selbst - Wer hier stehn bleibt gerät nur halb. Der 2te Schritt muß wircksamer Blick nach außen - selbstthätige, gehaltne Beobachtung der Außenwelt seyn" (II: 422, No. 26).
>
> The first step will be an examination of our inner being - Whoever stops here, will only succeed in part. The second step has to be an effective examination of the external, a practical, sober observation of the external world.

To this end, the poet must study a multitude of objects and phenomena, must endeavour to discover a universal approach to life that integrates and reconciles various branches of human knowledge. During his scientific training as a mining engineer in Freiburg, Novalis makes a personal resolution to this end in a letter to A. Schlegel in February 1798:

> Künftig treibe ich nichts als Poesie - die Wissenschaften müssen alle poetisirt werden [...] (IV: 252).

In future, I will only engage in poetry - the sciences must all be poeticized [...]. The romantic poet must diligently study life in its entirety in order to reveal the spirit therein through the craft of his poetry (II: 466, No. 1073). Novalis considers the mere chronicler of events as providing an incomplete and limited factual rendition of reality that neglects the individual-subjective aspects. By contrast, the poet reveals the spirit hidden behind mere facts, thus gaining a more encompassing and complete understanding of reality (II: 591, No. 281). Novalis therefore concludes that "the poet understands nature better than the scientific mind" (III: 468, No. 1093).

But how does the poet convey his insights and pass them on in his poetry? Novalis himself concludes:

> Der Sinn für Poesie hat viel mit dem Sinn für Mystizismus gemein. Er ist der Sinn für das Eigenthümliche, Personelle, Unbekannte, Geheimnißvolle, zu *Offenbarende*, das Notwendigzufällige. Er stellt das Undarstellbare dar" (III: 685, No. 671).
>
> The sense for poetry has a lot in common with the sense for mysticism. It is the sense for the peculiar, personal, unknown, mysterious, that which needs to be *revealed*, the necessary-coincidental. It depicts the undepictable.

In the final analysis, the poet has to transmit his own experience of revelation ("Offenbarung"), but he cannot fully represent what he has glimpsed. The ultimate goal can be hinted at, the path toward it can be shown, but it cannot itself be described. In fact, true insight leads only to a further stage of "not-knowing" ("Nichterkennen;" III: 302), albeit informed and reconciled (Immerwahr 163). A true attainment of knowledge would mean the end of the searching process, and thus, would spell the end of romantic art. Novalis accepts the continual reaching of a state of "not-knowing" ("Nichterkenntnis"), so that we do not encounter in his poetics a "nihilism of perception"

("Nihilismus des Erkennens;" Mähl, 1971 217). Since truth is not a graspable entity, the symbol must hint at its essence.

Todorov, whose study on the symbol relies quite heavily on Novalis in the section on romanticism, sees the symbol as the quintessence of romantic aesthetics and the underlying principle of romantic poetics. Since truth as such is not an objective, graspable entity, it can only be revealed indirectly through various tropes, including the symbol. This means that symbols represent something that is not by itself representable (Todorov 193-194). Therefore, and this is mainly Schelling's contribution to romantic aesthetics, the symbol not only is the signifier, but also has to show the nature of that which it signifies, i.e., it has to *be* that thing (Todorov 209). Unlike allegory, which only expresses, the symbol at once expresses and produces that which is inexpressible. For romantic poetry, which seeks to reveal what is hidden, symbolism is not an element or device, but its fundamental principle (Todorov 221). The symbol in Novalis's poetics is thus equal to the inexpressible idea as synthesis of antithesis. Nivelle concludes that of all early German romantics, Novalis develops the notion of symbolism the furthest (76).

Due to the ultimate impossibility of true insight, the process of pursuing knowledge becomes the focus of attention. Novalis offers practical advice on how transcendental poetry might be created. Firstly, Novalis considered poetry as an art involving all human capacities. He recommends a balanced control over both one's emotional-sensory capacity ("Empfindungsorgan") and one's thinking capacity ("Denkorgan"), thus advocating a synthesis of human faculties in the creative process (II: 606, No. 64). Restraint must keep enthusiasm and inspiration in check, since "complete intoxication dissolves the work

of art" (II: 462, No. 105). Complete technical mastery of the poet's craft remains essential. Secondly, the transcendental poet must, as D. Behler notes, "form a variety into unity, a large scope of material into totality" through both "his intellect, freedom and poetic execution" (91). To this end, he must not engage in a mimetic depiction of reality, but rather, must describe the workings of the spirit ("Gemüth") as similar to the internal workings of nature, since one is a reflection of the other:

> Die Darstellung des Gemüths muß, wie die Darstellung der Natur, selbstätig, eigenthümlich allgemein, verknüpfend und schöpferisch seyn. Nicht wie es ist, sondern wie es seyn könnte, und seyn muß (III: 650 No. 557).
>
> The portrayal of the spirit, like the portrayal of nature, must be active, peculiarly general, combinatory and productive. Not the way it is, but the way it could be and ought to be.

Poetry, as it depicts spirit, must appear as governed by the same laws of nature, as a living, organic, vital force within which thrive various opposing principles in a harmonious relationship with each other. From here, Novalis arrives at a symbolic understanding of poetry as "an outward and tangible representation of an inner and intangible sphere," taking his lead in part from Böhme, who saw the existence of opposites in the world as a dynamic force and man as a microcosm or symbol of God (D. Behler 80, 90).

Thirdly, the poet must find a way of depicting the two spheres of spirit and matter, the subjective and the objective, the individual and the general as reflections of each other, thus, as ultimately the same qualitatively, so that all notion of difference or opposition is suspended. In Novalis's poetics, this process is referred to as "romanticizing" ("romantisieren"), and as such is considered to be the romantic device

par excellence:

> Die Welt muß romantisirt werden. So findet man den ursprünglichen Sinn wieder. Romantisieren ist nichts, als eine qualitative Potenzirung. Das niedre Selbst wird mit einem bessern Selbst in dieser Operation identificirt. [...] Indem ich dem Gemeinen eine hohen Sinn, dem Gewöhnlichen ein geheimnißvolles Ansehn, dem Bekannten die Würde des Unbekannten, dem Endlichen einen unendlichen Schein gebe so romantisire ich es - Umgekehrt ist die Operation für das Höhere, Unbekannte, Mystische, Unendliche - dies wird durch diese Verknüpfung logarythmisirt - Es bekommt einen geläufigen Ausdruck. Romantische Philosophie. *Lingua romana*. Wechselerhöhung und Erniedrigung (II: 545, No. 105).
>
> The world must be romanticised. So its original meaning will again be found. To romanticise is nothing other than an exponential heightening. In this process the lower self becomes identified with a better self. [...] By investing the commonplace with a lofty significance, the ordinary with a mysterious aspect, the familiar with the prestige of the unfamiliar, the finite with the semblance of infinite, thereby I romanticise it (Fürst 3). The process is the reverse for the higher, unknown, mystical, infinite - it becomes logarithmicized through this combination. It receives a commonplace expression. Romantic philosophy. *Lingua romana*. Alternating elevation and lowering (translation mine).

The poet must render the familiar as strange and the strange as familiar, so that the two spheres may appear as reflections of each other, and the reader may abandon his previous view of reality as only restricted to one sphere. The rendition of the "strange" clearly is not a free play of the imagination, but, a "stylistic device in the service of formulating a cognitive theory" (Haslinger 134).

Novalis's Theory of the Novel

In keeping with the doctrine of a progressive universal poetry, the Jena romantics no longer subscribed to the concept of established literary genre. In pursuing its transcendental task, universal poetry sought, in terms of form, to mingle and unite all separate genres, and in terms of content, to fuse all separate spheres of knowledge.

While the creative works by Novalis, Schlegel and Tieck were incomplete, and fragments in this open-ended sense, they were still rounded units that reflected a concept of a new art form -- the romantic novel.

The more authentic presentation of Novalis's fragments in the critical editions of the 1960s, which includes *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, reveals an incremental formation of his poetics of the novel. Schulz shows that these poetics are formed in conjunction with a continued critical examination of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, in which Novalis discovered considerable merits alongside fundamental shortcomings (1968 82-95). In *Wilhelm Meister*, Novalis observed that all characters are variations of one complete individual ("die schöne Seele und Natalie" - "the beautiful soul and Natalie;" II: 647), but came to redefine this phenomenon as the depiction of the transcendental idea, and understood this expression of the interaction between the subjective and the universal as the sole purpose of the novel. If Goethe's "Lehrjahre" ("apprentice years") portrayed the finite development of the hero in the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, Novalis was interested in describing the nature of the process as it referred to a higher level, thus concentrating on the "*transitional years* from infinity to the finite" ("*Übergangs Jahre* vom Unendlichen zum Endlichen;" IV: 281), on the process of integrating the ideal into reality.

Novalis understood poetry in the widest sense as a "depiction of the spirit - the internal world in its entirety ("Poesie ist *Darstellung des Gemüths* - der *inneren Welt in ihrer Gesamtheit;*" III: 650, No. 553). The novel becomes the most suitable medium for this, because it is larger in format, "more elastic" (Schulz, 1968 87), and capable of

integrating a variety of text forms and genres for different subjects. The novel is thus not seen as a genre, but simply as a work of art, which can combine the epic, lyrical and dramatic in different measures as seen fit by the poet to express "spirit" (II: 564, No. 197). Fundamentally, Novalis understands the novel as a means by which the poet can fully understand himself during the creative process. Novalis applies to poetry his premise derived from Franz Hemsterhuis (1721-1790) that "we only know, in so far as we create" (II: 378). Already in 1796, he defined poetry as a "practical work" ("Machwerk"), through which the poet reaches understanding by creating the object of his understanding (Mähl, 1971 215). In this spirit, Novalis argues that "a novel is a life in bookform" ("Ein Roman ist ein *Leben*, als Buch;" II: 599, No. 341) and as such it depicts the transcendental relationships seen to exist in real life, so that they be better understood by poet and reader alike. However, in the final analysis, it is unclear whether Novalis's notion of poetry as tangible transformation of reality is meant literally. Haslinger notes that *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* can be understood as either a progressive creation of the ideal world through poetry, or as an appeal to the reader to work toward such transformation (120-121).

As the poet views all phenomena in their true existence as both individual and general, the novel must portray this higher synthesis of synthetic and analytic impulses. In this regard, Novalis understands the workings of the novel to be quite mechanical, speaking of a "centripetal force" ("Zentripetalkraft") and a centrifugal force ("Centrifugalkraft"), which together must create the impression of synthesis, of the higher truth that "all [is] in one and one in all" (II: 589, No. 274). However, this idea

cannot simply be shown as result of fact. Rather, since it is an idea (understood as an imagined synthesis of antitheses), it can only be described as a series of theorems, as successive principles ("Sätze"), as a process toward an absolute state. Novalis explains:

> Der Roman, als solcher, enthält kein bestimmtes Resultat - er ist nicht Bild und Factum eines *Satzes*. Er ist anschauliche Ausführung - Realisirung einer Idee. Aber eine Idee läßt sich nicht in einen Satz fassen. Eine Idee ist eine unendliche Reihe von Sätzen - eine irrationale Größe - unsetzbar [...]. Das Gesetz ihrer Fortschreitung läßt sich aber aufstellen - und nach diesem ist ein Roman zu kritisiren (II: 570, No. 212).
>
> The novel as such does not have a definitive result - it is not an image or fact of a *principle*. It is an illustrative execution - a realization of an idea. But an idea cannot be contained in one principle. An idea is an infinite series of principles - an irrational entity - inexpressible [...]. But the rules of its progression can be established - and according to this one must evaluate a novel.

In his analysis of Novalis's poetics of the novel, Schulz concludes that the romantic novel offers "an approximate depiction of the infinite" (1968 87). More precisely, it describes the path on which to travel to reach the absolute. This path is the progressive realization that the individual is part of the whole, and vice versa. To realize this even in the trivial, for example in daily events, becomes the object of the novel. In this sense, Novalis also refers to it as a "bürgerlicher Roman" (III: 649, No. 550), which can even treat business activities poetically. Such transformation of the mundane requires "deep poetical reflection," "an old-fashioned quality of style" and, generally, a rendition of the familiar as strange, allegorical and wondrous (III: 654, No. 579).

Since the romantic novel as defined by Novalis reveals "real" reality and the true condition of all existence, it surpasses history. Novalis maintains:

> Der Roman ist aus Mangel an Geschichte entstanden. Er sezt für den Dichter und Leser divinatorischen, oder historischen Sinn und Lust voraus (III: 668, No. 607).

> The novel arose out of a lack of history. It requires of the poet and the reader a divinatory or historical sense and enthusiasm.

The novel provides "true" history that does not receive comprehensiveness through an accumulation of facts, but through a symbolic sort of freely invented "mythology of history" (III: 668, No. 607).

The basic artistic method necessary to convey the transcendental process is contained in a few words:

> Die Kunst auf eine *angenehme* Art zu *befremden*, einen Gegenstand fremd zu machen und doch bekannt und anziehend, das ist die romantische Poetik (III: 685, No. 668).
>
> The art to *estrange* in a *pleasant* manner, to make an object seem strange yet familiar and attractive, that is romantic poetics (Fürst 3-4).

The pursuit of this single goal in the novel leads to a number of consequences in the realm of artistic depiction and devices. The imagination is restricted to serve this single goal (Schulz, 1968 94), not unleashed in a free display of itself. Further, due to the need to create poetry out of the prosaic, the novelist combines various text and narrative types to create poetry (such as events, dialogues, reflections and depictions) rather than resorting to sentiments, ideas and metaphors, as does the lyrical poet (III: 649, No. 549). Moreover, protagonists are only fleshed out to the extent that this is necessary for their role as "representatives of the infinite" (Schulz, 1968 98). Indeed, since the novel is seen as the mouthpiece of the poet, the hero can be little more than a vehicle for the expression of the poet's central idea. Hence, the romantic novelist is interested in collecting types and basic human situations, not in developing individual characters and events (Schulz, 1968 97).

Novalis sees the unity of the novel in the central idea of the quest for synthesis. Nevertheless, he stresses the importance of distinct, individual, even autonomous parts, a "dramatic depiction in individual, independent chapters" (III: 645, No. 532), which relate to each other through their relationship to a higher level, thus again demonstrating the principle of unity in variety, of subjectivity in the general. Therefore, the novel is not considered to be a continuous flowing entity:

> [...] es muß ein in jeden Perioden gegliederter Bau seyn. Jedes kleine Stück muß etwas abgeschnittenes - begränztes - ein eigenes Ganze seyn (III: 562, No. 42).
>
> [...] in every period it must be an organized structure. Each little piece must be something detached - limited - an independent entity.

Schulz contends that Novalis here questions the very necessity of a coherent plot (1968 101). As long as the individual units contribute to the poetic expression of the whole, other literary conventions, indeed, sink into irrelevance. Reflections on events and digressions into sub-stories take the place of a description by events (plot). This approach marks the "delaying nature" ("retardirende Natur;" III: 310, No. 384) that Novalis deems necessary for true poetry, and also characterizes his poetics of the novel as distinctly non-epic. The story within the story is therefore a basic expression of reflexivity and eternal progression (Haslinger 139).

As a further result of the central idea in the novel, the subject-matter ("Stoff") is not used to reflect reality, but to depict the infinite (Schulz, 1968 100), and it is this depiction which constitutes the "interesting subject-matter of the novel" (II: 580, No. 242). Subject-matter must therefore not be taken as the face-value objective of the novel. By the same token, Novalis's frequent recourse to the medieval period must not be

understood as strictly historical. Schulz contends that the medieval period offered an atmosphere of "internationality" (1968 98) more congenial to the depiction of the universal. This is true in the sense that the "pre-national" chaos of the Middle Ages can be interpreted as the fermentation preceding an eventual synthesis. Furthermore, stories set in this and other periods also fulfil Novalis's postulate to "combine the most distant and various legends and events" (III: 676, No. 625) in an attempt to create a sense of universality.

As demonstrated, all aspects of literary production and devices are subjugated to the conveyance of a new understanding of the world:

> Es scheint in einem ächt poetischen Buche, [...] als habe man nur bisher in der Welt geschlummert - und gehe einem nun erst der rechte Sinn für die Welt auf (III: 558, No. 21).
>
> In a truly poetic book [it] seems, [...] as if one had been dozing in the world and were only now awakening to a true sense of the world (Fürst 134).

This new "sense" of the world describes an organic view of all phenomena as part of a universal principle. Although Novalis's concept of the novel generally concurs with F. Schlegel's notion of universal poetry and the expression of the entire spiritual development and life of an ingenious individual, it is perhaps distinct in its employment of the fairy-tale as the most effective means of conveying a synthetic world view. Indeed, it is precisely in the fairy-tale that inanimate objects come to life and the most unusual relationships, causes and effects are portrayed as completely natural. Novalis initially considered the fairy tale as an ingredient of the novel, but later, came to see it as a "deeper extension of the novel," not a replacement of it, but a new dimension (D. Behler 111). In order to access this dimension, a "magical occurrence" becomes necessary (III:

255, No. 80), which defines the fairy tale that takes the coexistence and interpenetration of nature and spirit for granted. Since for a transcendental perspective the world had to be viewed as a fairy tale land ("Feenwelt;" II: 564, No. 196), the fairy tale fulfils the objectives of the romantic novel by its very nature, and perhaps more fully. Novalis considered the fairy tale to be a dramatic form of narration in which the struggle of opposites is resolved and the world redeemed (D. Behler 112). Further, the fairy tale is inherently more associative, musical and dream-like, qualities that make it similar to a product of nature, and thus it embraces the basic premise of romantic aesthetics that "art brings to fulfilment in a purer or denser fashion the principles that are seen to be at work in nature" (Todorov 168). However, Novalis discriminates between two types of fairy tales. The first represents an anarchical, non-reflective state, the "natural state of nature - the time before the *world* (state)" (III: 280, No. 234), thus corresponding to the magical folk tale. The second type, which is more properly designated as *Kunstmärchen* (the creative result of one writer's efforts), presents the challenge to the romantic writer, who, by introducing order and meaning, can achieve a higher form of the fairy tale. By relating the fairy tale to the central transcendental idea without destroying its appeal as a fairy tale (III: 455, No. 986), the romantic poet can effect a further synthesis of rationality and chaos (D. Behler 113). This idea leads Novalis to the ultimate prophesy:

> Die *künftige* Welt ist das *Vernünftige* Chaos - das Chaos, das sich selbst durchdrang (III: 281, No. 234).
>
> The *future* world is the *rational* chaos - the chaos that penetrated itself.

Odoevskij's Poetics

Odoevskij's interest in a transcendental concept of poetry already becomes evident in his polemical discussion of Aleksej Fedorovich Merzljakov's aesthetics, which rejected the notion of immutable laws of art.[15] In a critical article of 1823, Odoevskij challenged what he considered to be the defeatist view in current aesthetics under the general influence of romanticism, which, in rejecting the classical doctrine, seemed to reject the possibility of lawfulness altogether. Odoevskij argued that "if the laws of nature never change, then why should the laws of art, if both one and the other have the same basis?" (Sakulin I/1: 153-154), a fact that he subsequently demonstrated in his philosophical fragments. In this same article, Odoevskij openly identified himself as a proponent of transcendental idealism ("трансцендентальнаго идеализма"), and promised the reader a full exposé of this principle as the basis of a new literary trend. Unfortunately, he never completed a unified treatise on this matter. Nevertheless, the fragments available clearly reveal the objective he had in mind, namely to establish the same governing principles at work in poetry as he had distinguished in nature, and in fact,

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[15] Merzljakov (1778-1830), a professor of Russian literature and poetics, was associated with the Karamzin School and was receptive to Western European influences in Russian literature. Odoevskij was critical of Merzljakov's contention that there is no lawfulness to art, but that a "critique of taste" was still capable of commenting on art. Odoevskij pounced on this contradiction, demanding to know the principles on which such critique could be based, if no laws for art existed. Odoevskij then invited his readers to help search for a theory of art that may prove more accurate, and would, by implication, provide a yardstick for criticizing art (Sakulin I/1: 159). Considering the fact that Odoevskij subsequently propagated a speculative approach to poetry redefined as gnoseological tool, it would seem that if he had developed his thoughts on a critique of art fully, he may have arrived at the necessity of a "divinatory criticism" suggested by Schlegel as the only suitable method of criticizing a romantic work of art.

define poetry as the only artistic medium that inherently reflected the antagonism in nature. In *The Essential*, he thus concluded:

> Жизнь всякого предмета есть беспрестанное противоборство между родом и видом. Сие противоборство есть *сущее* [...]. Отсюда [...] поэзия [отвечает] -- *сущему* (*Traktaty* 171).
>
> The life of every object is the interminable antagonism between genus and species. This antagonism is the *essential* [...]. Therefore [...]. poetry [corresponds] to the *essential*.

Aphorisms of the XIXth Century contains the clearest definition of poetry as transcendental, as the only means by which the antagonistic principle underlying nature can be revealed, with an attempt at overcoming it, transcending it:

> Наконец должен быть момент, составляющий совокупность двух предыдущих моментов, в котором дух делается тождественным с предметом, где конечное борется с бесконечным, определенное с неопределенным, - это есть поэзия (*Traktaty* 174).
>
> Finally, there should be a moment, which represents the totality of the two previous principles, in which the spirit makes itself identical to the object, where the finite battles with the infinite, the particular with the general, - that is poetry.

The wording is interesting: Odoevskij considers identity as antagonism ("battle"). In becoming identical, the spirit does not fuse with the object, but maintains an antagonistic interaction. In other words, the antagonism is not overcome, the absolute is not reached, but the synthesis is attempted. Thus, the task of poetry becomes the depiction of the transcendental idea, the transcendental process, or the gnoseological thrust toward absolute truth.

Hand in hand with such a view of poetry comes the final rejection of the neoclassical tradition in favour of an expression of modern reflexivity. Sakulin explains that Odoevskij considered transcendental poetry to be a reflection of the current state of

human development toward perfection, a development in human culture that was interrupted by neoclassicism in the 16th century (I/1: 160-162; *Traktaty* 163). This is of course the century that gave birth to Cervantes and Shakespeare, and which was also considered by the Jena romantics as a time in which romanticism already flourished. In *The Idealistic-Eleatic Sect*, Odoevskij held the view that the general Russian contempt for philosophical speculation ("ljubomudrie") was delaying the independent development of both the Russian sciences and the arts on a level more appropriate to the times. He sharply criticized the continued adherence to the Aristotelian concept of mimesis. As a result of this state of Russian aesthetics, the Russian artist "remained on the surface, if he does not have guidance toward a median, from which all appearances would present themselves to him in a harmonious, lively whole" (*Traktaty* 188). Odoevskij thus considered a transcendental philosophical viewpoint as essential for the new poet, since the current level of human development necessitated a conscious attempt at striving toward the absolute (*Traktaty* 163-164). Similarly to Novalis, Odoevskij imagined the poet to be a prophet, who during inspiration can capture the signature of his times and refer it to the goal that humanity must pursue. Hence, he saw him as clearly future-oriented. But on the whole, he considered even the ideal poet as not reaching historical fact, at least not in this era, when he muses that "in the future religious era of humanity the two [poet and philosopher] will merge, but we cannot [...] attain this" (*Traktaty* 178). Thus, the idealist poet is a forerunner of humanity, and as such is only poised to grasp "the universal imprint of the Divine" (Sakulin I/1: 162-163).

The entire deliberations in *The Essential* culminate in the conclusion that poetry

corresponds to the essential, while philosophy is the theory of the essential: "Поэзия [отвечает] - Сущему. Философия есть Теория Сущего" (*Traktaty* 171). The theory and its artistic expression are only a reflection of process, not of result. In other words, poetry depicts the process of antagonism between the general principle and diversity. Therefore, philosophy appears as the theory of this mechanism, which is in essence transcendental, so that a poetry that describes this mechanism can be none other than transcendental poetry. In this way, the basic relationship between the two spheres to sustain a romantic work of art, as elaborated in *Aphorisms of the XIXth Century*, is already indicated here: while idealistic philosophy must provide an understanding of the unity, the general aspect of all appearances (the idea), art must express it in condensed images, and in this sense, Odoevskij, like Novalis, arrives at a romantic aesthetics that is by its very definition symbolistic.

Odoevskij defined the basic drive of human activity as the attempt to create oneself in the object (*Traktaty* 172), considering this fact a basic law of perception. The question arises, to what extent the activity of the poet differs from this general human activity. Like Novalis, when Odoevskij speaks of art, he speaks of it as both a gnoseological and ontological principle, as a view of life and way of life in its more authentic, ideal way. The poet is thus principally characterized by a sharpened, organic perception of reality, in fact, of reality as ideality. Odoevskij, in *Attempt at a Theory of Fine Arts* contended that beauty results from the act of the spirit perceiving itself in the object, the aim being to become equal to the absolute (God) in the object ("бог в предмете"). He cited the experience of revelation as the closest possible approximation of such equalization: "This

truth [...] is fully present *alongside revelation* [...]" ("Это истина [...] в полном свете предстает в *сторону откровения* [...];" *Traktaty* 164). It thus follows that the poet must access such a view of the world. In fact, in Odoevskij's concept of the combined poet-philosopher, the transcendental philosopher assumes the status of a mystic:

> Так в природе все сливается в одно неизмеримое для простолюдина созвучие. Тот лишь внимает ему, чей слух духовный возвышен созерцанием, тот лишь наслаждается гармоническим спокойствием, -- это философ. Он -- слушатель, судья божественной музыки, поэт -- исполнительной. Там высшая степень совершенства, где слушатель есть вместе судия, где поэзия сливается с философиею! (*Traktaty* 161).
>
> In nature everything flows into a harmony that remains unfathomable to the average person. Only the person whose spiritual hearing is elevated by cognition, only the person who enjoys harmonious peace -- is a philosopher. He is the listener, the judge of the divine music, the poet is the executor. The highest degree of perfection is attained, where the listener and the judge are brought together, where poetry flows together with philosophy!

The "mystical philosopher" who can express himself poetically, the transcendental "poet-philosopher," emerges as an ideal human being, who can both *perceive* and *express* his transcendental views. A similar concept of the poet-philosopher has been noted in Novalis's poetics, which contain the following line: "Der transcendentale Dichter ist der transcendentale Mensch überhaupt" ("The transcendental poet is the transcendental person *par excellence*;" II: 536). The poet as transcendental creature reaches and expresses a higher view of reality than the average person. Odoevskij continued this thought by observing that calmness ("спокойствие") is the realm of the philosopher, while agitation and carnal activity ("плотская деятельность"), a rootedness in physical human reality, characterizes the realm of the poet. This corresponds to Novalis's demand

for a rootedness in reality, in fact, the need to relate the subjective and personal back to the larger reality that surrounds the poet. Ultimately, however, Odoevskij held that truth, since it is not accessible in one object, can only be found in the general, but that the human spirit, being a reflection of the general, can find truth immediately within himself, in his idea of synthesis (*Traktaty* 170). One is reminded here of Novalis's observation on the transcendental poet, for whom all riddles of life are already solved in his own being. All he needs to do is to tap into this inner knowledge and express it, and thus create a universe out of his own being.

Odoevskij's fascination with mysticism in the 1830s, rather than a break or new phase in his development, marks a shift toward a more detailed study of the mystical persona, whom he had singled out as inherently possessing a transcendental perspective on the world necessary to the new poet. In fact, Cornwell suggests that Odoevskij had already read Saint-Martin and Pordage in the 1820s, while his interest in Bruno had already peaked by 1830 (1986a 103-104). Odoevskij became intrigued with mystics such as Bruno precisely because they embodied those qualities which Odoevskij considered to be vital to the new romantic poet. Hence, Odoevskij valued the mystical tradition not so much for its obscurantist features, as for its "positive and even radical aspects" and the new modes of thinking it afforded (Cornwell, 1986a 100-106). For instance, he mused that the "cabbalistic sciences" are but an "attempt to discover the new science" that would integrate all aspects of human life (Odoevskij, 1975a 197). It is also from this point of view of mysticism as a speculative, instinctual form of higher insight that Schelling appealed to both Odoevskij and Novalis. Novalis, like Odoevskij (*RN* 41) used

the example of the discovery of America (by Columbus) to extol the method of hypothetical speculation (II: 668-669), which, he contended, is ultimately dependant on a person's instinct. Novalis speaks of instinct as a speculative force that can bridge the chasm between reality and ideality, thus expediting the search for higher insight (III: 302). Consequently, Odoevskij's *Science of Instinct. An Answer to Rozhalin* (*Nauka instinkta. Otvet Rozhalinu*; Odoevskij, 1975a 198-203) of 1843 is still closely tied to German idealism and the Jena *Frühromantik*. Here, Odoevskij postulated a synthesis of instinct and reason, in other words, again a synthesis of art and science, speculation and empirical inquiry, as a new outlook on life, held together by faith, faith understood as a general optimism or hopefulness in the face of the ultimate impossibility of absolute synthesis as historical fact.

In the last analysis, Odoevskij found that the poet's activity cannot be defined, because it represents an individual act based on a vision of unity that is obtained in unspecified ways from the depths of the poet's soul, for "in vain you will try to translate into human language the life of the poet" (Odoevskij, 1939 257). The poet's activity can be explained only as a quasi-mystical "sense" similar to Novalis's "sense for mysticism." This sense permits a glimpse into eternity, and therefore, makes possible an artistic expression of eternity. This eternity, however, cannot be further grasped or circumscribed in ordinary language beyond its poetic expression. It is for this reason that we do not find in Odoevskij's theories any specific guidelines for creating romantic poetry beyond the fact that the poet must fulfil the single task of poetry by depicting the transcendental idea. The only admissible rule was to portray the infinite antagonism in

whatever way the artist seemed fit. While there were no poetic rules to fulfil in the classical sense, both Novalis and Odoevskij set definitive goals for the creation of transcendental poetry. The basic objective was to express modern reflexivity itself, the conscious recapturing of an original and intuitive state of harmony in ways appropriate to modern life. Odoevskij states:

> Из никакого поэта нельзя вывести правил изящного, как думали французы или Аристотель; каждый из них должен иметь свою поэтику (столь же отличную от других, как могут быть отдалены одна точка от другой на периферии, то есть бесконечно), которая все-таки должна примыкать к одной центральной теории (*Traktaty* 161).
>
> One cannot deduct any rules of art from any one poet, as the French or Aristotle thought possible; each one should have his own poetics (as different from the other, as one point on the periphery can be away from the other in distance, that is infinitely), which nevertheless must relate to one central theory.

The poet must relate his material ("точка на периферии") to a universal idea ("центр"). As Novalis had outlined in his theory, the poet must form variety into unity, create the universal out of the particular; however, in Odoevskij's thinking, the serene harmony that the philosopher possesses must be expressed by the restless imagination of the poet (*Traktaty* 160-161). By ultimately advocating a synthesis of the two, he implies that the imagination of the modern poet needs to be kept in check by the calm philosopher's view of nature. Odoevskij arrives, indirectly, but quite clearly, at an endorsement of imagination as limited to the task of conveying the transcendental process, rather than as a literary value in and of itself. In the 1830s, Odoevskij warned that "strict and natural order" was necessary to safeguard the conveyance of ideas, thus emphasizing the need for a methodological and disciplined approach in romantic

creativity. Neither Odoevskij nor Novalis espoused an arabesque or "wit"-related concept of imagination as a pure expression of subjectivity, as did F. Schlegel, but subordinated imagination to the immediate task of transcendental poetry.

It becomes evident that Odoevskij, like Novalis, hinges his poetics on the basic principle of unity in diversity, of targeting an approximate depiction of the two principles as reflections of one unit, a synthesis, however fleeting, of notoriously persistent opposites. Novalis considered truth as perceivable at the precise moment when one realizes that the two spheres of individual and universal, of the familiar and the unfamiliar, really reflect each other. The acceptance of this mysterious link (mysterious, because it can never be fully comprehended) leads to a greater degree of insight than scientific observation. Novalis's artistic device of "romanticizing" ("romantisieren"), of rendering the familiar as strange and the unknown as familiar, provided a way of conveying this mysterious view of reality, which describes a superior, more satisfying comprehension of reality in all its facets. Perhaps the greatest testimony to Odoevskij's very similar concept of truth in mystery is contained in his story *The Improvvisatore*, which became a component of *Russian Nights*. Here, the hero, Cypriano, holds complete command of both poetic expression and a total material understanding of nature, but the two spheres are no longer mysterious reflections of each other. Consequently, the mystery underlying the world is lost, and nature becomes meaningless because it is fully, starkly known to Cypriano. He sinks into unhappiness, because his poetry does not reflect a sense of higher insight into truth. It is, by implication, not romantic, but dead art, art in the wake of positivistic victory, when the quest for synthesis is traded for a

crude material understanding.

For Novalis and Odoevskij, truth lies in the mirroring of the two spheres, in a glimpse at fusion, and a sudden, maybe only fleeting awareness both of the mysterious interconnectedness of all, and of the mysterious fact of ultimate "not-knowing," to which each level of insight must necessarily lead. In *The Essential*, Odoevskij constructs a theory of poetry, in which the act of striving toward perfect cognition is defined as the impulse underlying poetry. By implication, therefore, the following definition for a romantic view of cognition would also apply to its artistic expression:

> **Познавать или соединять познающее с познаваемым значит переносить незнаемую сферу в сферу знаемую, или накладывать неизвестное на известное, по известному находить неизвестное. Совершеннейшее познание есть совершеннейшее соответствие между сферою известного и неизвестного** (*Traktaty* 169).
>
> To perceive or to combine the perceiver with the object of perception means to transfer the unknown sphere into the known sphere, or to place the unknown into the known, find the unknown by way of the known. The most perfect perception is the perfect correspondence between the sphere of the known to the unknown.

One cannot imagine a more direct echo, albeit in more abstract terms, of Novalis's poetic principle of "romanticizing," of rendering the familiar as unknown and vice versa, in order to obtain an approximation of synthesis (II: 545, No. 105). Odoevskij's quest for perfect cognition, for a perfect correspondence of the spheres delineates nothing else but Novalis's central principle of "romanticizing."

The main argument in *The Essential* refers to the basic problem of expressing infinity by what must necessarily be finite means. While this problem led Odoevskij to the concept of literary symbolism, he particularly focused on the impossibility of expressing an idea completely with the aid of human language. Odoevskij demonstrated in a quasi-

mathematical formulaic fashion that the impossibility of completely communicating the insights of human cognition amounts to an intrinsic law of human nature, and that, ultimately, knowledge is never fully in our possession. Odoevskij determined that for full cognition, the known would have to equal the unknown, in other words diversity (species) would have to equal entity (genus). He defined entity as equal to all objects and concluded that if entity equals *all* objects, then entity could not equal a *single* object. If one sphere cannot fully express the other, then the observer cannot fully express the essence of a single object. Having determined entity as equalling cognition and perfect expression of cognition as truth, truth itself therefore cannot be fully obtained, let alone be expressed (*Traktaty* 168-169; Cornwell, 1986a 77-79). Odoevskij thus painted the picture of a continual antagonism between the general and the particular, which he considered to comprise the Essential. As Cornwell explains, "projections of this 'system' may be seen in the artistic processes and in the make-up of society (by use of Schellingian methods of analogy)" (1986a 78). In other words, art can describe this process, but it cannot fully obtain and express truth.

Even though Odoevskij does not explicitly refer to symbolism as such, his deductions regarding the capability of the word in the face of the impossibility of perfect representation are fundamentally symbolistic, and as such, reveal a further affinity to Jena romanticism, in which Todorov has observed symbolism to be the single underlying aesthetic principle (221); indeed, Novalis defined poetry as the "symbolic construction of the transcendental world" (II: 536). Odoevskij realized that to express the Idea (=unity) we would need all objects of nature, which is a perceptual impossibility

(*Traktaty* 169), so that the symbol logically suggests itself as the representational device for the totality of all objects that make up nature.[16] Odoevskij stated that just as perfect cognition could only be achieved if all objects could be viewed together, so man could only express truth if he knew the opinion of all people, both of which is impossible. He thus concludes:

> **Мы постигаем порядок природы в ее общности, постигаем истину только внутри себя -- в идее (*Traktaty* 170).**
>
> We can only obtain the order of nature in its generality [universality], we reach truth only within ourselves -- in the idea.

In other words, the individual can synthesize truth in the idea, i.e., the idea in its artistic rendition symbolizes the truth than can never be fully obtained. The idea is here understood in the fundamentally romantic definition of F. Schlegel and Novalis as a conscious synthesis of remaining opposites, as a wilful suspension of the antagonism between eternally antagonistic principles. These findings substantiate Cornwell's passing observation on the fact that, as concerns Odoevskij, "there is an obvious ideational parallel with Novalis, who also strove to reconcile through symbol, in a process of quest leading to revelation by stages" (1986a 67). Moreover, poetry is the only means for obtaining this approximate revelation precisely due to its material, the word, which is inherently symbolic, as is explained in *Aphorisms of the XIXth Century*:

> **[...] здесь [в поэзии] материал произведения, и дух, и фигура, и внешность, и выражение материи -- слово (*Traktaty* 174).**
>
> [...] here [in poetry] the material of the work is both spirit and figure, both

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[16] Thus, in 1843, Odoevskij refers to "symbols" as an "approximate language" (Odoevskij, 1975a 199).

appearance and expression of matter -- the word.

Odoevskij here indirectly refers to the quality of the word as both signifier and signified, thus representing an idea (spirit) while also being that idea (matter), a quality which corresponds to Schelling's concept of the romantic symbol (Todorov 209). But it is also the musical quality of the word that may contribute to its capability of expressing infinity. In *Attempt at a Theory of the Fine Arts*,[17] Odoevskij advocated a fusion of poetry and music to preserve an element of infinity in poetry:

> **Когда поэт проявляет свою идею, он *неопределенность*, *бесконечность*, *необъятность* оной вмещает в *определенной*, *конечной*, *вещественной* оболочке, как бы утрачивает духовность своего идеала, но музыка, соединяясь с поэзиею, сообщает ей свой неопределенный духовный характер, как бы снова возвышает художественное произведение к идеалу -- здесь вещественное уравновешивается с духовным, -- и вот причина необыкновенного действия на нас поэзии, соединенной с музыкой, действия, которого отдельно ни поэзия, ни музыка производить не могут** (*Traktaty* 160).
>
> When the poet develops his idea, he has to cloak its *indefiniteness*, *infinity* and *boundlessness* in a *definite*, *finite*, *material* garb, thus losing the spirituality of his ideal, but music, joined with poetry, lends it an indefinite, spiritual character and again elevates the work of art toward the ideal - here the material becomes equal to the spiritual - and hence the reason for the unusual effect on us of poetry joined with music, an effect which neither poetry nor music can achieve alone.

Music for Odoevskij represented the only purely spiritual art form, because it is pure sound, it is spirit without physical appearance, whereas the word combines both

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[17] In this fragment, Odoevskij constructs basic (and at times rather arbitrary sounding) laws of music, and applies them to poetry, as a means to define and describe poetry as transcendental. Poetry here emerges as a higher synthesis of the visual arts and acoustic art, since it can render both sound and image.

appearance and spirit, image and sound, and thus is capable of referring to a higher synthesis. This again underscores an important aspect of Odoevskij's thinking, which he also shares with Novalis: the necessity of the "real" as part of the synthesis.

Odoevskij went beyond the narrow Russian reception and development of romanticism, as either decembrist "civicness" or simply a license to practice unrestrained flights of fancy. Rather, he advocated a synthesis of ancient and modern principles. In fact, he pleaded for a new median ("средоточие;" *Traktaty* 188), thus echoing F. Schlegel's call for a new median ("Mittelpunkt;" 1967a 312) that could provide a new mythology to replace the ancient one, and allow for diverse manifestations in art that would, nevertheless, all be subjugated to the central idea of poetry understood as transcendental poetry: the conscious striving toward a state of the absolute, toward an identity of subject and object. The ancients were said to enjoy this state naturally; consequently, they could identify with a mimetic depiction of life, and their "poetry was their religion" (*Traktaty* 174). Therefore, the opening pages of *The Idealistic-Eleatic Sect* read very much like Schlegel's declaration in his romantic manifesto: "We do not have a mythology" ("Wir haben keine Mythologie;" 1967a 312).

The resemblance between Novalis's concept of "romanticizing" and Odoevskij's definition of the process underlying perfect cognition illustrates how Odoevskij's theories, inspired by the same circle of transcendental philosophers with which Novalis exchanged views, led him to the formulation of similar poetic theories, even though he almost certainly did not have access to Novalis's fragments, which in any case were not adequately edited at the time. Odoevskij's insistence on the process of cognition, which

he still harboured in 1843 (*Psychological Notes*), corresponds to Novalis's ultimate view of "romanticizing" as cultivating a particular perception of reality that would ultimately change that reality (Immerwahr 164-165). Interestingly, Odoevskij, much like Novalis, hardly ever used the word "romantic." This underscores their view of the transcendental principle in literature as not simply marking the advent of yet another literary movement, but as furnishing the only valid method by which a more authentic experience of life can be gained that would naturally overcome social crisis. This new goal of poetry prompted Novalis to determine specifically the romantic novel as the most flexible literary entity, best suited to express the transcendental idea.

Toward a Theory of the Romantic Novel

Odoevskij's philosophical basis and his general poetics define poetry in terms of its gnoseological function. Its artistic execution becomes important strictly with regard to the successful fulfilment of this function, which is to generate progressive insight. Odoevskij's concept of romantic poetry is, similar to Novalis's, clearly beyond genre. But more importantly, Odoevskij, like Novalis, designated specifically the novel as a vehicle for romantic poetry in this non-generic sense. The short journal article *How We Write Novels* of 1836 represents the only document by Odoevskij that is devoted exclusively to the novel. On the surface, this article comprises a critical examination of the current production of novels, in which the novelist is seen merely to string together characters and events in order to indulge in the airing of various assorted ideas and pet-peeves. However, profiled against Odoevskij's own theories and their similarities to

Novalis's concepts, the article reveals the outlines of a theory of the romantic novel as ultimately transcendental.[18]

With respect to the writer of novels, Odoevskij stressed the need for poetic calling. Odoevskij contended that it was not enough to be "an intelligent person" ("умный человек;" Odoevskij, 1982 48), who craftily brings his own views into circulation by means of a given narrative of events and characters. Rather, Odoevskij coined the term "романист-поэт" ("novelist-poet;" 48), which is a virtual verbatim translation of Novalis's "Romandichter" ("novel-poet;" II: 580; III: 649), who spontaneously finds the object of his novel within himself and whose ideas develop organically with the protagonists. But most importantly, Odoevskij considered the novel to encompass a lively organic expression of an idea, while he dismissed a mimetic depiction of events and characters as closer in spirit to the factual narration found in historical chronicles (Odoevskij, 1982 48-49). He condemned the simple rendering of mundane events and dissociated ideas by observing:

> Таким образом нельзя произвести живого органического произведения, каким должен быть роман: ибо для романа нужно -- знаете ли что? -- нужно немного *поэзии* (48).
>
> In this manner one cannot create a lively organic work, which the novel should be: for to write a novel one needs -- guess what? -- one needs a little bit of *poetry*.

Odoevskij argued that rather than airing various views and observations on reality, the

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[18] Contrary to Novalis's theory of the novel, which is located to some degree in personal mental notes and deliberate fragments, Odoevskij's article is written to cater to the average reader in order to educate. Hence, the vocabulary is more accessible and does not apply any specific literary or philosophical terminology. Nevertheless, its content does describe a theory of sorts.

writer of novels should develop an idea "in a lively way" ("живым образом;" 49), which he saw achieved particularly in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, a novel much revered by the Jena romantics (see, for example, E. Behler, 1993a 169). In this work, Odoevskij particularly valued the profound effect on the reader that resulted from the lively way in which ideas are presented by means of the protagonists, who are not just mouthpieces of the author, but form part of an organic whole.

Fundamentally, Odoevskij proposed that the real novel was located beyond the many events of the subject-matter and the various ideas contained therein. Interestingly, he actually credited the reader with searching in the novel for some higher reference, some unity of thought, which, unfortunately, most contemporary novelists failed to offer:

> Знаете ли, как большая часть читателей читает ваши романы? Они перескакивают чрез самые ваши дорогие мысли, опыты и наблюдения, и ищут в вашем романе именно того, что вам казалось второстепенным, т.е. романа (Odoevskij, 1982 49).
>
> Do you know how the majority of readers reads your novels? They skip over your most cherished thoughts, experiences and observations, and look in your novel for precisely that, which you considered as secondary, i.e the novel.

The article ends by declaring most contemporary novels as "boring, predictable and dull," like the "words of a mechanical doll," whereas the true novel expresses the "words of a living human being" (50).

As becomes obvious, *How We Write Novels* contains the basic ingredients that reside at the core of Novalis's theory of the novel. The novel is considered as the expression of a "lively" idea, not as a genre to be fulfilled, it is not considered as a prosaic style of writing, but as a vehicle for poetry, and its creator as a true poet, not simply a novelist. Novalis also preferred the term "novel-poet" and understood the novel as the highest

form of poetry. Odoevskij's rejection of the novel as simply a prosaic genre is perhaps closest to F. Schlegel's declaration that he "despised the novel inasmuch as it wants to be a particular genre" ("daß [ich] den Roman aber insofern er eine besondere Gattung sein will, verabscheue;" 1967a 335). For Odoevskij and the Jena romantics alike, the progressive expression of a unified idea by means of the protagonists comprises the main objective of the novel. Its main goal should be to refer to a higher level of unity, not to elaborate on the factual details of the subject-matter. The idea of a depiction of progressive character ("the words of a living human being") point to Odoevskij's understanding of the novel as the development of an unfolding mind, which is ultimately that of the transcendental poet. This, coupled with the aspect of engaging the reader in a way that he may follow the developments described, is also a key ingredient of Novalis' aesthetics, displaying a keen interest in aesthetic effect and reader response (Haslinger 128-131).

In conclusion, in *How We Write Novels*, the basic contours of Odoevskij's concept of the novel correspond quite closely to Novalis's theory of the novel of some forty years earlier. In his many comments on literature and poetry of the 1820s, Odoevskij already defines poetry as a gnoseological tool for striving toward absolute knowledge, but also distinguishes certain features that are key elements of the romantic novel. For instance, Novalis's understanding of the novel as a "life-book" ("Lebensbuch"), a progressive development of an individual toward universality, is matched by Odoevskij's observation that "every true work of art" is a "development of character," in fact, a "description of character as eternal progression" ("беспрестанная прогрессия;" *Traktaty* 162).

Both the artistic creation and its perception by the reader (or viewer) become an act of self-encounter as part of a universal principle (*Traktaty* 163), so that when Mann refers to *Russian Nights* as a "book of life" ("книга жизни;" 1969 104), this is actually a significant echo of Novalis's theory of the novel. Further, the initial impulse of Odoevskij's thought was inextricably linked to his belief in the need for a universal science and a universal art that unitedly would pursue a transcendental purpose (Sakulin I/1: 139). This notion corresponds to F. Schlegel's and Novalis's concept of *Universalpoesie*, a universal poetry yielding universal insight.

In more concrete terms, formulated especially in the 1830s, Odoevskij understood poetry as a means to generate a social harmony that would also guarantee the happiness of each individual.[19] Some details of Novalis's theory of the novel find an echo even in Odoevskij's more socially oriented writings, in particular, in *Science of Instinct*. Here, Odoevskij extolled the value of intuition as a catalyst for transcendental inquiry, as a method of accessing those dimensions of the soul that were lost in the progressive rationalization of modern life (1975a 199-200). However, Odoevskij did not simply advocate a return to a previous naive state of harmony, he called for a synthesis of instinct and rationality in a conscious effort to return to harmony (1975a 199). The underlying idea here is close in spirit to Novalis's theory of the fairy tale, in which a conscious effort is synthesized with an intuitive organic world view to achieve a natural harmony of opposites that is ordered and controlled. Novalis also considered instinct as

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[19] He elaborated on this idea especially in *Russian Nights, or on the Necessity of a New Science and New Art* (Odoevskij, 1975a 197).

a way to access insight, an insight which reason will always once again turn into "not-knowing" (III: 302). He understood instinct as a "sense of connectedness" ("Gefühl des Zusammenhangs;" III: 442, No. 904), and furthermore, saw the genesis of Greek mythology as the product of instinct (III: 686), so that a new mythology, if considered as a higher synthesis of ancient and modern principles, would have to be a synthesis of instinct and reflexivity. Novalis found these requirements fulfilled in the romantic *Kunstmärchen*. Quite similarly, Odoevskij concluded in his *Psychological Notes* of 1843:

> Человек должен окончить тем, чем он начал, он должен свои прежние инстинктуальные познания найти рациональным образом; словом, ум возвысится до инстинкта (1975a 217).
>
> Man should finish in the state in which he began, he should find his previously instinctual insights in a rational manner; in a word, the rational mind must elevate itself to the instinct.

In other words, the unconscious state of harmony must be reached in modern times by conscious means. The following words thus remind one of Novalis's statement on the higher, reflective form of the fairy tale as a "reasonable chaos" ("vernünftiges Chaos"): "It is a great thing to understand one's instinct and to feel one's reason ("Великое дело -- понять свой инстинкт и чувствовать свой разум;" Odoevskij, 1975a 203).[20] Odoevskij's ideas on instinct relate, if not explicitly, then still in their general thrust, to Novalis's concept of the fairy tale as the quintessential transcendental poetry. Both writers defined the synthesis of the unconsciously harmonic principle with conscious

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[20] Further, in Odoevskij's view art has a dream-like effect on us, which fosters our instinctual perception of the world (1975a 200). One could perhaps establish links to Novalis's concept of "wakeful dreaming" ("Träumen und Nichtträumen;" III: 63), as a conscious way of accessing the intuitive realm, of which the genius avails himself.

reason as underlying the new poetry, i.e., the romantic novel. In his *Notes to My Great-great-grandson on Russian Literature* (*Записки для моего праправнука о русской литературе*; 1840), in which he advocated a closer relationship between literature and society, Odoevskij spoke of a return to a conscious type of ancient naiveté, when he announced that "we are approaching an historical antiquity" in the same way "as the poet accesses the feelings of his infancy" (Odoevskij, 1982 63). In essence, the anticipated state of human affairs expressed here parallels the dawn of a new mythology envisioned by Schlegel and Novalis. For Odoevskij and the Jena romantics alike, the romantic novel was seen as best suited to develop this new mythology.

Odoevskij did not really use the term "romantic novel" in his theoretical writings, and it certainly is absent in his preface to *Russian Nights*. Nevertheless, his definition of poetry as the tool for gaining universal knowledge contains concepts similar to those espoused in Novalis's theory of the novel, without, however, referring to them explicitly as describing a "theory of the romantic novel." Interestingly, many Soviet-Russian commentators refer to *Russian Nights* as a "novel," even a "romantic novel," with an ease that seems to be the result of a complete ignorance of the deeper links this work has to the theory of the romantic novel espoused by Novalis and Schlegel. These commentaries thus offer examples of a face-value description of *Russian Nights* that, while completely free of a bias for the German *Frühromantik*, unwittingly use descriptive attributes that could have been taken directly out of Novalis's fragments pertaining to the romantic novel.

Novalis did not mention the term "romantic novel" very frequently, since he did not

understand it as a genre category, but as the manifestation of transcendental poetry in general, as a vehicle toward universal truth. In fact, in both Schlegel's and Novalis's thinking, "poetry" came to be synonymous with the "romantic novel." Moreover, Novalis's theory of the novel did not appear in a separate, dedicated treatment, but emerged comprehensively from numerous detailed scholarly investigations, which verified the theories contained in his fragments (fully available since the 1960s) against their application in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (for example Schulz 1968). The same task needs to be performed with regard to Odoevskij's theories and his *Russian Nights*, viewed in the context of the Jena *Frühromantik* and measured against Novalis's prototypic novel.

CHAPTER IV

THEORIES APPLIED:

RUSSIAN NIGHTS AND HEINRICH VON OFTERDINGEN

RUSSIAN NIGHTS AND THE QUESTION OF GENRE

Critical History

In Novalis's fragments, written in the dense space of a few years, one can follow his desire to flesh out a concept of a transcendental poetry. He made this concept come to life in his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen.* As the application of his transcendental poetics, this work was intended to refer to a higher ideality, thus achieving a "higher poetry" than Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister.* By contrast, in surveying Odoevskij's development as it spanned several decades, with its different phases and variety of interests, one can easily lose sight of the underlying task and purpose which the writer ascribed to poetry throughout his life. Majmin is one of the few commentators who stresses this underlying continuity. He argues that *Russian Nights* was foreshadowed in Odoevskij's thinking and literary activities of the 1820s and 1830s, that it was a logical culmination of his continual thrust toward universality and synthesis leading to absolute knowledge (1975b 259-260). Overall, however, it has become customary in criticism since Belinskij to declare *Russian Nights* as "unique" both within the context of Russian letters and Russian romanticism, and in Odoevskij's oeuvre itself. At the same time and in curious contradiction to this, a tacit consensus seems to have been formed that the work "sums up" Odoevskij's entire *Weltanschauung* ("книга итогов;" for example,

Petrunina, 1981c 519; Sakharov, 1984 241), and as such represents his "main book" ("главная книга;" Sakharov, 1984 222; Levina 31), reflecting his philosophical convictions and constituting "a beautiful farewell of an entire generation" (Kotljarevskij 26-27). As a result, most studies on *Russian Nights* are largely descriptive, containing such usual romantic "buzz-words" as "encyclopedism," "universalism" and "philosophical aesthetics." However, they lack a detailed investigation of the literary theories that engendered these terms, and, therefore, fail to assess in what way these theories define the text of *Russian Nights*.

Not surprisingly, then, the question of the genre of *Russian Nights* continues to be an enigma, even though it is sometimes seemingly settled without supporting evidence in a sentence or two. Interestingly, German-based scholarship has been least inclined to consider this work a novel: Setschkareff and Lettenbauer referred to it as a "collection of philosophical stories" ("Sammlung philosophischer Erzählungen;" 40; 103), Čiževskij as a "collection of novellas" (98), while Zelinskij's survey of the Russian novel (1979) did not make any mention of Odoevskij at all. By contrast, Koschmal's designation of *Russian Nights* as a "romantic-symbolic hybrid genre" and "lyrical novel-drama" (258) came closest to understanding this work in early German romantic terms. British and North American critics referred to *Russian Nights* as not merely a "collection of tales" (Karlinsky 169), but also a "curious hybrid between drama and novel" or even simply a "novel" (Ilgner 174; 175). In 1983, Cornwell considered the "novel form" as a "possible designation" (22-23), but three years later this possibility did not turn into conviction when he found the work to be "in basic form a collection of fragments"

similar in spirit to the fragment cultivated in Jena (1986b 185), thus deemphasizing the unity of the work. In prerevolutionary Russia, Zamotin considered it a drama with little similarity to the Hoffmannian narrative (400-401). Gippius referred to *Russian Nights* as "romantic novel" and "universal novel" (16), even as he concluded (based on arbitrarily interpreted biographical information) that it did not live up to the standards of the novel developed by the Jena romantics.

In Soviet Russia, the question of genre was frequently side-stepped, most radically by Tsekhnovitser, who solved the problem by arguing for a separate reading of the individual stories (referred to as "рассказы"), which he deemed permissible due to their previous publication as separate entities (13-14). Predominantly, however, one encounters references to *Russian Nights* as simply a "book," usually in conjunction with a qualifying adjective, such as "main," "astounding" or "many-layered" (for example, Kotljarevskij 26-27; Sakharov, 1984 14; Nikoljukin 217). Petrunina spoke of *Russian Nights* as a "summary, grandiose project" and an "encyclopedia of ideas" (1981c 519), while Nikoljukin defined the work variously as a "collection of stories" ("повести"), as "framed novellas" (265) and as the "quintessence of Odoevskij's romantic world view" (269). Sakharov saw it first as a unique "romantic novel" in quotation marks (1973 418), then (retracting the designation "romantic") as an "interesting attempt at a Russian novel" (1982b 213) and as "novel of ideas" (1984 235). Some critics were bolder: Majmin referred to the work as "novel" in the very title of his article (1975b), as did Levina, who qualified it as a "philosophical novel." Filin also referred to it as a "novel" and a "novel of ideas" (30), the latter being generally a popular characterization, as are terms

such as "book of life" and "book of searches" (Mann, 1969 104, 112). Khodanen, who came closest to conducting an analysis of *Russian Nights* in light of the poetics of the novel of the *Frühromantik*, defined the work as a "universal novel" by genre. However, the critic understood this genre as epic in nature (112), a view that does not apply to either Novalis's or Odoevskij's concept of romantic poetics. Khodanen's point of departure thus promised little with regard to an elucidation of early German romantic features in *Russian Nights*, and indeed, at the end of the article, having remarked on a number of "universal" themes, the critic found the work to belong to a "transitory genre" located between the "cycle and the novel" (119).

Even Mann, in the most detailed and most recent separate study of *Russian Nights* (in his book on Russian aesthetics in the 1820s-1830s) hesitates to be specific with regard to its genre, despite the fact that in a different section of his book he credits German idealist philosophy as the basis of the Russian novel. However, he rejects F. Schlegel's and Novalis's theories of the novel as being too vague and for placing this genre on too high a pedestal (1969 249). Nevertheless, his characterization of their concept of the novel as a "boundless poem of universal poetry" would arguably have provided a fitting description of *Russian Nights*. Mann points out that in the 1820s and 1830s the concept of the novel as a mixture of epic, lyric and dramatic qualities was widely discussed, including by Belinskij as late as 1847, but this "synthetic nature of novel-poetry" no longer referred to a higher level of ideality (1969 263-264). Thus, neither Belinskij in the nineteenth century, nor Mann in the twentieth, relate Odoevskij's work to the romantic novel, even when understood as a synthetic work displaying a mixing of genres.

The assumption of all of these treatments of *Russian Nights* seems to be that Odoevskij did not put any great thought into genre in general, and into the form of *Russian Nights* in particular, as if its form was simply an outgrowth or natural by-product of its complex philosophical content. However, nothing could be further from the truth. In his preface notes, Odoevskij outlined in some detail the dramatic component ("chorus;" "хор") and its function in *Russian Nights*, for which he himself did not offer a definitive genre designation (*RN* 312). While many commentators refer to Odoevskij's concept of "dramatic chorus" in *Russian Nights*, they do not really use it for an analysis of either genre or structure of the work. Most scholars have come up with their own solutions about the form, and these are mostly descriptive, discerning different "layers" or "levels" (for example, Mann, 1969 123-137; Zelinsky 1975; Koschmal 1985; Cornwell 1983). All these approaches lack a detailed comparison of Odoevskij's poetics with an appropriate yardstick, in the course of which his understanding of romantic poetry would reveal itself as embracing the novel as a vehicle for transcendental insight. Partial exceptions are Levina (34-35) and Sakharov (1984 235), who rely on archival material, in which Odoevskij made statements on the mixing of genres in relation to the novel and with regard to *Russian Nights*.

Especially Soviet references to *Russian Nights* as "novel" must be taken with a grain of salt and be considered as not fully cognizant of the wider implications of this term in relation to the German *Frühromantik*. This observation extends even to such more insightful scholarship on this matter as produced by Levina and Sakharov (1984). Perhaps the most forceful illustration of the point is found in Majmin's passing comparison of

Odoevskij's work with F. Schlegel's concept of the novel, a comparison which seems to be based more on a hunch than on concrete investigation. Majmin defined *Russian Nights* as "a unique work as concerns idea, the character of its composition, the nature of its genre. It is at the same time a novel, drama, philosophical treatise and didactic book. Perhaps 'Russian Nights' is closest to the definition of the novel that was offered by early German romanticism" and by F. Schlegel in particular (1975b 261-262). Unfortunately, the critic does not elaborate on precisely what features in Odoevskij's work make it a romantic novel in this sense. Nevertheless, many of Majmin's observations unknowingly touch upon important similarities to the theory of the romantic novel espoused by Novalis and his entourage. For instance, he observes in Odoevskij's works in general the technique of "combining the incombinable," which effectively "renders strange" what was previously considered familiar (1975b 254), a point that in fact echoes Novalis's concept of "romanticizing." He finds that in *Russian Nights*, poetry is considered the essence of life and the vehicle for attaining higher knowledge (1975b 268), thus discerning the central transcendental idea. But most importantly, the critic contends that *Russian Nights* as a novel presents "the process of a struggle of ideas" (262), the subject-matter being "the search for answers" itself (1975b 265), and even unwittingly draws a parallel to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, when he notes that the revelation by stages takes place in the absence of true dialectic conflict (1975b 264).

Further scholarly observations on *Russian Nights*, which either intentionally or unwittingly echo aspects of Novalis's theory of the novel, predominantly deal with architectonic structure, progressive movement and emphasis on process. For example,

Sakharov discerns the aspect of unity in chaos as a structural principle (1984 42), while pointing out that the chaos of existence remains "eternally unknowable" (1984 44), in both instances using quotes from none other than Novalis himself to illustrate the points made. Further, the critic draws attention to the fact that the individual sub-stories transcend the dimension of the entire "book" (1984 234). Elsewhere he elaborates on the structure by finding that each character in the sub-stories is both subjugated to the central idea and at the same time can stand alone within an independent unit (1982b 215), which was indeed one of Novalis's structural postulates for the novel. Sakharov also touches upon several similarities of theme and device when he mentions Odoevskij's self-reflective qualities as a romantic writer, and notes that the author's concept of "dramatic chorus" in *Russian Nights* renders the subjective as objective (1984 233), again a close echo of Novalis's principle of "romanticizing."

Levina observes fittingly, but without realizing the truth of her statement in terms of Jena romanticism, that the idea of an overall unity of seemingly disparate parts is not just expressed in the novel as a topic, but defines the very structure of *Russian Nights* (31). Further, she distinguishes a "mirrored" structure in the artist stories and the "economical" stories respectively (34), thus inadvertently referring to the device of "mirroring" espoused by F. Schlegel and Novalis. The critic also suggests that the work, reflecting its author's search for a new genre, synthesizes the novel and the drama to obtain a "broader form" in which to express universality (35). This was, of course, the whole purpose of Novalis's search for romantic expression in a wider, "more elastic" form that in fact transcended the notion of genre itself. Despite these insights, which are

validated in their affinity to the tenets of Jena romanticism, Levina discloses her *de facto* lack of understanding with respect to the Jena concept of the romantic novel, when she understands the sub-stories ("novellas") as the "novel"-part of *Russian Nights*, and the frame tale as the "drama"-component, rather than considering the entire work as a mixture of forms constituting one organic unit of transcendental poetry (36). Nevertheless, she discerns the emphasis in the work on the value of process rather than result (39), which a number of other Soviet commentators consider to be a flaw or evidence of "crisis" or "contradiction." The latter view is adopted to a degree by Mann, who accurately finds that Odoevskij wrote *Russian Nights*, a "book of life" containing a "philosophy of revelation" (1969 104, 110), to solve the riddle of life in the full knowledge of the impossibility of this endeavour. But nevertheless the critic concludes that the work strives "toward a broadening of the system [i.e., universality] while at the same time rejecting it," thus expressing a "crisis of aesthetics" (1969 114) in this "contradictory" approach.

With considerably more awareness, Cornwell links the struggle of opposing ideas in *Russian Nights* to the "simultaneous validity of conflicting ideas" that permeates early German romanticism (1986b 185). This amounts in essence to the romantic synthesis of perpetual antitheses in the "idea," and thus, in the symbol, in the romantic thinking of the *Frühromantik* in particular. Cornwell specifically compares Heinrich's hope in Novalis's novel to rediscover a higher state of being in the simple clothing of the medieval period to Odoevskij's frequent use of the metaphor "veil" (also "layer") to indicate that something needs to be removed to perceive some ultimate truth (1986b 189).

Cornwell identifies these and other mostly thematic affinities of Odoevskij to Novalis in order to illustrate the unique contours and shades of Odoevskij's romanticism, but he does not apply his findings systematically to *Russian Nights* as a structural unit, and fails to consider the parallels as related to the theory of the romantic novel as such.

In conclusion, the designation "novel" has provided a convenient label especially for Soviet critics vaguely aware of some general features of the romantic novel, but does not reflect the result of a methodical inquiry into the formal features of *Russian Nights* that would justify its use. Consequently, the form of *Russian Nights* has mostly been explained, either directly, or indirectly, as a symptom of Odoevskij's originality, if not eccentricity. However, compared to the details of Novalis's theories, it emerges, on the scale of European romanticism, as somewhat less unique, but also as more purposefully structured and imbued with symbolic significance. Most importantly, Odoevskij's own comments on *Russian Nights* and on the type of literary creation he targeted in writing it, point to an understanding of the romantic novel as a vehicle for transcendental poetry. He gave shape to this transcendental poetry in *Russian Nights* by employing similar principles as Novalis had used in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* to achieve a similar effect, albeit in a different overall context.

Odoevskij on Genre, Form and his *Russian Nights*

In the Wisdom Lover period, Odoevskij considered the drama as a higher synthesis of lyrical poetry and epic narration. He assigned to lyrical poetry the indicator "minus" expressing "observer-spirit," while to the epic he assigned the indicator "plus,"

expressing "executor-spirit." The synthesis of the two described the absolute (o), since the two indicators "+" and "-" would cancel each other out, and the antagonism of the spiritual and the material would be suspended, thus offering a "complete world" (Sakulin I/1: 170-171). Even though the two activities of "observing" and "doing" in synthesis can be understood to designate the type of self-reflective thinking and creating (or thinking *through* creating, according to Novalis's understanding of poetry as "Machwerk") that is so typical of the poetics of the *Frühromantik*, at this stage Odoevskij still uses the genre category "drama" as a designation for what he in fact describes as transcendental poetry.

Interestingly, Novalis also harboured a notion of "plus-poetry" and "minus-poetry." However, he considered prose as "minus-poetry" and poetry ("Gedicht") as "plus-poetry," thus evidencing, compared to Odoevskij, a reversed valorization of epic narration (i.e., prose) as "minus" and lyrical poetry (i.e., "Gedicht") as "plus." Fundamentally, Novalis also argued for a synthesis of the two factors into "true life." He determined that prose equalled philosophy (i.e., minus-poetry), but when he observed that "distant philosophy sounds like poetry" (III: 302), he really already characterizes transcendental poetry as a combination or interpenetration of philosophy and poetry, of prose and lyrical poetry, of critical reflection and lyrical expression. It is true that Novalis generally considered the novel (understood as being above genre) as the future synthesis of prose and poetry into "true life" (II: 536). Nevertheless, one can also find in Novalis's fragments the idea of drama as a synthesis of epic and lyric elements, when he determines that "epic poetry is phlegmatic" and "lyrical poetry is irritable," while

dramatic poetry is both "choleric and melancholic," and consequently "dramatic [poetry] is the completely healthy, the truly mingled" (II: 573). Novalis also concludes that "truly romantic prose -- [is] [...] quite dramatic" ("Eigentliche romantische Prosa -- [ist] [...] durchaus dramatisch;" III: 654, No. 576). Overall, Novalis saw all three genres as needing to be mixed in various measure in order to create transcendental poetry, a blend of philosophy and poetry. He considered this transcendental poetry as a synthesis of epic, lyric and dramatic elements, for he noted that "the epic, lyric and the drama [are] inseparable elements which in any free work of art are united" (II: 565; see also II: 589-590, N. 276 and 592, No. 294). Therefore, in his search for absolute poetry he considered various combinations and emphases of the three main genres permissible, but an argument could be made that for him the dialogic aspect was particularly important for the creation of romantic poetry. Novalis speaks, for instance, of the possibility of a "dialogic novel" ("dialogirter Roman;" III: 682) as well as a "dialogic theater" ("dialogisches Theater;" III 681-682, No. 642), characterizing the latter in the same way that he did the novel: "The theater is the active reflection of people on themselves" ("Das Theater ist die thätige Reflexion der Menschen über sich selbst;" III: 681, No. 642). As this short sketch of Novalis's thoughts on the three genres reveals, he believed that various combinations and emphases contribute to the creation of transcendental poetry, which he understood not as a synthesis of genre, but of two types of mental activities, of philosophical thinking and creative expression. These two activities make up the romantic novel, in which the dialogic element can assume an augmentative function.

In the 1820s, Odoevskij designated a specific genre category, the drama, as the

product of his synthesis of critical observation and artistic execution. However, during the writing of *Russian Nights* Odoevskij seems to have modified his understanding of "drama" with regard to his work. In particular, in his commentaries on the genre of *Russian Nights*, formulated with the wisdom of hindsight in the 1860s, the author comes closer to Novalis's understanding of the novel as a free mixture of forms with the "dialogic" principle as an important romantic ingredient. Moreover, he emphasizes that these formal aspects serve to express the thrust toward transcendental insight.

The foreword to the first edition of *Russian Nights* in 1844 reads like a manifesto of transcendental poetry. The author finds the search for truth to be a universal human impulse followed by every generation. He defines this impulse as the general urge to explore those "mysterious elements which form and unite spiritual and material life" (*rn* 32/*RN* 31). Odoevskij likens poetry to other methods of investigation into the natural world, which through symbols try to attain truth (*RN* 31-32/*rn* 32). The poet inquires "into the live symbols of his own soul," which he finds "in the depth of his inner life" (*rn* 32/*RN* 32). These symbols are, however, not subjective "insights, hopes or sufferings," but rather reflect "the laws and conditions of his [the poet's] world" (*rn* 33/*RN* 32), so that objective reality is reflected and communicated through the subjectivity of the poet. Notable further is Odoevskij's emphasis on the process of search. The search for truth cannot end in definite results, it can never uncover "the secret that is perhaps inaccessible to man in his life but that he is permitted to approach" (*rn* 33/*RN* 32). Odoevskij rejects any blame for not providing clear-cut answers, but rather, in a striking echo of Novalis's concept of continually reaching a state of "not-

knowing," the author muses: "Do not blame the artist if under one layer he finds another layer" (*rn* 33/*RN* 32). This short characterization of what *de facto* amounts to transcendental poetry is concluded with the following statement:

> Вот теория автора; ложная или истинная - это не его дело (*RN* 33).
>
> That is the author's theory, whether it is true or false is not his concern (*rn* 33).

In other words, the author's aim is to depict, illustrate a theory or an idea, not to defend, discuss or systematize it.

In the short paragraph devoted to the question of form toward the end of the introduction, Odoevskij anticipates criticism of the formal features of his work. Here, he clearly designates *Russian Nights* as a drama of a "fate of a feeling," -- that is to say, the feeling that ultimate truth is obtainable:

> [...] автор почитал возможным существование такой драмы, которой предметом была бы не участь одного человека, но участь общего всему человечеству ощущения, проявляющегося разнообразно в историко-символических лицах; словом, такой драмы, где бы не речь, подчиненная минутным впечатлениям, но целая жизнь одного лица служила бы вопросом или ответом на жизнь другого (*RN* 33).
>
> The author thought possible the existence of a drama the subject of which would be not the fate of one man, but the fate of a feeling common to all mankind, which manifests itself differently in historic-symbolic persons. In a word, of a drama where not a speech, the subject of momentary impressions, but the entire life of one person would act as a question or an answer to the life of another person (*rn* 33).

Yet in previous passages, he referred to himself (the author of *Russian Nights*) as a poet, not dramatist. Odoevskij really considered his "drama" as the expression of transcendental poetry, the concepts of which he so eloquently circumscribed in this introduction. Therefore the "drama" element really refers to the architectonic structure

of the work, the relationship of the different parts to each other, which fundamentally corresponds to Novalis's concept of a construction of distinct parts in the novel that refer to each other and symbolically to the whole, thus working toward a progressive unity and harmony.

In Odoevskij's foreword and notes to *Russian Nights* written in the 1860s for a second edition that never materialized, one encounters a more defensive, perhaps even exasperated tone with regard to the criticism of both the form and the content of his work. Especially in the notes, Odoevskij fends off accusations of indebtedness to Hoffmann, and it is perhaps no coincidence that he chose this particular occasion to elaborate in a more detailed manner on the theory and purpose behind the form of *Russian Nights*. With respect to the supposedly Hoffmannian nature of his work, Odoevskij observes:

> Не только мой исходный пункт был другой, но и диалогическая форма пришла ко мне иным путем (*RN* 311).
>
> Not only was my point of departure different, but the dialogue form came to me in another way (*rn* 28).

It came, he explains, from the deeply felt lack of an element of chorus, which "expressed the audience's own perception" (*rn* 28/*RN* 311). He defines this chorus as the "advocate of ideas" seen to be dominating at the time, as a perspective from which to reflect upon the material presented, which was considered an indispensable element in ancient drama. In other words, Odoevskij postulates a reflective element alongside a narrative element, so that the development of the narrative progressively engages the reader in successive stages. The same is true for Novalis, who comments on the "delaying" nature of the

novel ("retardirende Natur;" III: 310, 326) in which epic "narration and reflection are interwoven" (III: 326).

Odoevskij clearly defines *Russian Nights* as pursuing a transcendental goal, as presenting an idea "not only from an *objective*, but also from a *subjective* point of view," which would lead to complete expression and a "full satisfaction of aesthetic feeling" (*rn* 29/*RN* 312). He discloses that he derived the concept of describing through dialogue the fate of an idea from none other than Plato (*rn* 29-30/*RN* 313). It was precisely Plato, in whom the Jena romantics had found the precursor of transcendental thinking expressed by literary means. F. Schlegel had noted that "Plato had no system, but only a philosophy. The philosophy of a human being is the history, the becoming, the progression of his mind, the gradual formation and development of his thoughts," which "is never finished" (1958 118-120; see also E. Behler, 1993a 140). Odoevskij's reference to Plato as an inspiration for the "dialogue form" (*rn* 28/*RN* 311) in *Russian Nights* (he here no longer speaks of the genre of drama!) must be understood in this context, especially when one thinks of Odoevskij's aim to portray the fate of an idea or feeling. In the 1860s, Odoevskij actually retracts the label "drama" as valid for *Russian Nights*, speaking only of the chorus as a "dramatic element" and of the general "dialogic" form of his work. Clearly, Odoevskij's understanding of the dialogic element is no longer linked to the concept of dramatic genre, but rather to the intent of expressing a type of progressive philosophical thinking. The same understanding of "dialogic" emerges from Novalis's fragments.

In concluding his notes to *Russian Nights* of the 1860s, Odoevskij refers to his work

more hesitatingly as "this new, if you wish, drama" (*rn* 31/*RN* 314), thus using the term "drama" more for lack of a better word than as distinct genre in the narrow conventional sense. Odoevskij's "quasi-drama" thus designates an expression of transcendental thinking, and by "dramatic" element he referred more to the illustration of the progressive development of an idea in its lively artistic rendition which the reader could follow more easily than in the "compressed formulas" (*rn* 30/*RN* 314) of an abstract philosophical treatise. Indeed, the central concern of both *Russian Nights* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is to illustrate by artistic means a fundamentally philosophical, and anthropological as well as social idea: the need to reconnect with a balanced view of the world leading to individual and collective harmony.

Further archival notes[1] on the matter of genre reveal that Odoevskij, having perhaps given up on his earlier attempt in 1836 to define his concept of poetry in the context of the novel (in the article *How We Write Novels*), in the end confined the term "novel" to a straightforward narration of events and development of characters. Here, Odoevskij's search for genre emerges as mirroring his quest for a synthesis of different branches of knowledge (Levina 34). As a result of the divisions of literature into the genres of drama and novel, Odoevskij observed the following condition in contemporary literature, which he specifically intended to remedy in his *Russian Nights*:

> [...] высшее значение лица в общей жизни остается непонятным значением и для Автора и для Читателей. Эти наблюдения привели

[1] Samples from this archival material, which has not been published, were obtained from Levina and Sakharov (1984), who quote verbatim from this material. It is located in the following sections of the archival holdings on Odoevskij: ОР ГПБ, ф. 539, оп. 1, пер. 13, лл. 11, 14-15.

> меня к мысли, что роман отдельно от драмы и драма отдельно от романа суть издания неполные, что тот и другой могут соединяться в одном высшем синтезе, что формы такой романтической драмы могут быть обширнее форм обыкновенной драмы и обыкновенного романа [...] (Levina 35; Sakharov, 1984 235).

> [...] the higher meaning of a character in life in general remains incomprehensible in meaning for both the Author and the Readers. These observations led me to the idea that the novel separated from the drama and the drama separated from the novel constitute an incomplete rendition, that one and the other could unite into one higher synthesis, that the form of such a romantic drama could be a broader form of the common drama and the common novel [...].

In other words, Odoevskij here clarifies that by the "romantic drama" which he created in *Russian Nights* he means a synthesis of the novel (understood as common epic-prosaic narration) and the common drama into a "broader," higher, indeed, a transcendental poetic entity, even though he does not call it either a "novel," "romantic novel" or "transcendental poetry." In such a work, a central idea must develop and unfold in "numerous and manifold persons" (Levina 35). The interpenetration of dramatic and novelistic principles is achieved insofar as, to paraphrase Odoevskij, the dramatic conversation could take place not in a few exchanges of words, but in the very existence of people both real and imagined, who, having no external connection, nevertheless are linked by spirit internally, while the various narrators were designed to illustrate "the motion of the drama of the ancients" (Levina 35; Sakharov, 1984 233). Therefore, Levina concludes that in *Russian Nights*, events (i.e., the epic) and words (i.e., the drama) have exchanged their traditional roles, and "utterances fulfil the function of an act, while events exist in the form of utterances" (40), which is just another way of describing the interpenetration of epic and dramatic principles.

As becomes clear from the views expressed in the archival material, Odoevskij saw *Russian Nights* as neither a conventional novel, nor a conventional drama, but as a mixture referring to a higher level, and expressing a central idea ("главная мысль;" Levina 35) in its progression, features which characterize transcendental poetry. This, in turn, is nothing else but the concept of the romantic novel espoused by F. Schlegel and Novalis. However, authorial commentary notwithstanding, it is, in the last analysis, the work itself which must stand up to scrutiny in terms of its underlying theoretical basis, in terms of what theories were applied and with what success, effect or result. Odoevskij himself mused in an unpublished commentary on *Russian Nights*:

> Более всего я ожидаю нападений на форму, мною избранную [...]. Соединение частей моей книги будет ли для них [читателей] представляться в виде того живого организма, в котором мне оно представлялось? (Sakharov, 1984 232)
>
> Above all I expect attacks on the form that I have chosen [...]. Will the combination of parts in my book appear to them [the readers] as the same lively organism as it appeared to me?

Odoevskij perhaps realized that for a full understanding, the reader of his *Russian Nights* needed to be equipped with the appropriate transcendental receptors, derived either from a familiarity with transcendental poetics or simply from an unspoiled, open mind, in order to find its form to be natural, organic and, indeed, necessary.

RUSSIAN NIGHTS COMPARED TO *HEINRICH VON OFTERDINGEN*

This second portion of Chapter IV focuses on tracing and comparing how Novalis and Odoevskij applied the main features of their theories of the romantic novel. Therefore, a number of more general romantic aspects, many of which have already been

discerned by other scholars, will not be considered. Most importantly, the theory of the romantic novel developed in Jena distinguishes itself from all other literary theories in its understanding of structure, its emphasis on progressive thought toward a central idea of synthesis, and its constant postponement of reaching the goal of synthesis. These general axioms can lead to (or rather allow for) the most varied practical applications. This is already illustrated in the vast thematic and overall difference between, for instance, Novalis's novel and F. Schlegel's *Lucinde*. Therefore, when comparing, for example, the structures of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights*, one cannot expect to uncover an identity of structure, but a similar use of certain structural principles to similar ends. For instance, in both works structure is used to illustrate the progressive, reflective type of thinking central to the romantic novel. However, before conducting a comparative analysis of these basic features of the romantic novel in their literary applications, it becomes expedient to offer short summaries and a brief discussion of the basic content of the two works in question.

Heinrich von Ofterdingen

Novalis's novel, which remained unfinished due to the author's early death, was designed to be the great "apotheosis of poetry" (IV: 322), the transcendental spirit fully expressed. The overall intention is described in two remarks by Novalis on his work in progress: as a whole, it was to evolve into a fairy tale (IV: 330) and the second part was intended to be a poetic commentary on the first part (IV: 333). The author thus mentions both the synthetic outlook to be developed and the self-reflective quality of the novel as

poetry of poetry.

Content Overview of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*:

Part I ("Expectation")

Dedication (poem)
First Chapter: Dream of the blue flower (parental home in Eisenach).
Second Chapter: *Arion Legend* (narrated by merchants on Heinrich's journey)
Third Chapter: *Atlantis Tale* (narrated by merchants on Heinrich's journey)
Fourth Chapter: Encounter with Zulima and the culture of the crusades.
Fifth Chapter: The miner; the hermit's cave and Heinrich's "book of life."
Sixth Chapter: Arrival in Augsburg; Heinrich meets Klingsohr and Mathilde.
Seventh Chapter: Conversation with Klingsohr about poetry; declaration of love between Heinrich and Mathilde.
Eighth Chapter: Further conversation with Klingsohr and Mathilde.
Ninth Chapter: *Klingsohr's Fairy Tale*

Part II ("Fulfilment")

"The Cloister or the Forecourt" ("Astralis")
Heinrich as pilgrim; his conversation with Sylvester.

Summary

The first part, entitled "Expectation" ("Erwartung"), traces the self-discovery of the young hero Heinrich as poet. This development, triggered by the appearance of a mysterious blue flower in a dream, begins as a journey from Eisenach to the southern city of Augsburg, which constitutes the narrative main frame. During this journey, merchant fellow-travellers tell Heinrich several stories which introduce him to poetry. The Arion Legend (Arionsage) unfolds the tale of a poet, whose art saves his life and restores his wealth. A group of seafarers, who take him across the sea, conspire to steal his valuables, but before throwing him overboard, they grant him his last wish of performing a swan song. While the seafarers, well aware of the power of poetry, cover their ears, the song is nevertheless heard by the sea creatures, who subsequently rescue

the poet from drowning. Later, when the seafarers have quarrelled over the loot and perished, the sea creatures return the poet's belongings to him. He rejoices over their recovery not due to their material value, but because of the personal significance they hold for him. In the Atlantis Tale, a king's daughter, who represents the spirit of poetry, elopes with a youth, who is dedicated to the study of nature. The girl augments the young man's understanding of nature by introducing him to the world of poetry. After some time has passed, a baby is born and the three return to ask the king's blessing of their union. The king is moved to mercy and convinced of the rightfulness of the union by the youth's song, which is described as expressing universal understanding. The young man, who emerges as possessing a balanced, poetic view of life, is invited to live at court as the king's son.

Continuing his journey in the main frame, Heinrich encounters Zulima, a war prisoner from the crusades. She introduces Heinrich to the arabic world, which is stylized as a paradise culture permeated with poetry and a complete, harmonious understanding of nature. Further, he makes the acquaintance of a miner, who introduces him to the world of minerals and the deeper, mysterious meaning of nature beyond its physical existence. An erudite hermit speaks to Heinrich on the necessity of both self-reflection and real-life experience. He also explains the need for a poetic attitude toward history, which must uncover the common link among events and search for truth in essence, not fact. In the hermit's cave, Heinrich finds a mysterious book that depicts his own life as future poet, but the book does not have an ending. In Augsburg, he meets the poet Klingsohr and his daughter Mathilde, who turns out to be the face in the blue

flower of his earlier dream, and thus, his soul mate. Klingsohr reveals further insights into the nature of romantic poetry in a complex and intricate fairy tale, in which the battle of poetry and non-poetry ends in harmony and synthesis, and the fable (i.e., poetic imagination) is revealed as the creative force of the world.

The second part, entitled "Fulfilment" ("Erfüllung"), begins with a poem celebrating the experience of transcendental revelation as the result of the union between Heinrich and Mathilde ("Astralis"). Then Heinrich reappears as a wandering pilgrim in an estranged world. He moves from a period of grieving over Mathilde's death to a sudden experience of revelation, when she speaks to him from beyond the grave. As a result of this experience, Heinrich accesses a new dimension, a heightened perception of reality. His maturation as a poet is indicated when he composes his first poetic song. The world he now moves in operates under different laws. Everything seems to be alive and connected. Death itself seems to have been transcended, so that the atmosphere created is reminiscent of life in the beyond. Further, he meets Mathilde's spirit again in another girl, Zyane, who helps him comprehend his new situation, which is essentially a journey to the heart of his own being. His new insights are discussed, deepened and further exemplified in his conversation with the physician Sylvester. The novel ends abruptly just as Sylvester begins to narrate his own life story.

Heinrich's physical journey to Augsburg in the first part increasingly becomes a spiritual journey into the world of stories and symbols, culminating, first, in Klingsohr's expansive fairy tale, then being condensed into the short poem "Astralis." In the second

part, a transcendental leap of sorts is portrayed as accomplished, and some measure of universal insight is reached and discussed in the conversation with Sylvester. Heinrich functions mainly as the vehicle to describe a growing transcendental awareness. Similarly, descriptions of external circumstances and events in the main frame are kept to a minimum in order to concentrate on the dialogues between Heinrich and other characters, and on the narration of sub-stories that educate Heinrich as a poet. On an authorial level, Heinrich's evolution into a transcendental poet really represents the writer's self-realization as a transcendental being through the act of writing the novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, so that the entire novel can be seen as an allegory on transcendental thinking, on leading a transcendental life. The idea of deciphering one's own life as a book is portrayed in Heinrich's finding his own "book of life" in the hermit's cave, for which he still has to discover the ending. The fulfilment of the hero's transcendental destiny hinted at in the mysterious book is indicated in the second part of the novel. Here, Heinrich's conversation with Sylvester shows that he has internalized transcendental concepts and is now "living" them. Novalis's conviction that one can only understand what one can create, finds symbolic expression in a hero who has found his creative ability to express his transcendental view when he creates his first poem (*HVO* 323-324). In his conversation with Sylvester, Heinrich begins to realize that one can only understand truth by creating it. He expresses this new insight in the following rhetorical questions:

> Also wäre der Sinn ein Antheil an der neuen durch ihn eröffneten Welt selbst? Man verstünde die Sache nur, wenn man sie hätte?" (*HVO* 331)

Thus, the meaning is part of the new world which it opened up? One could only

understand the whole thing, if one had it? (translation mine; see also *hvo* 165)

Similarly, the creator of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* gains an understanding of the transcendental by creating it in his novel, and the reader, in turn, is encouraged to retrace this experience.

The entire novel works toward the one goal of "all in one, and one in all" (*HVO* 318), as a constant synthesis of the particular and the general. This principle of unity in diversity is represented through the way in which protagonists are identified as each other, as variations of one person, for example the miner, Klingsohr and Sylvester. Their successive appearance marks the progressive identification of individual parts as part of a universal whole, reflecting Heinrich's quest for a universal world view, in which individual identity or self receives an aura of universality.

The "romanticizing" principle of rendering the familiar strange and vice versa begins from the very first page, setting a mysterious tone for the entire novel: the blue flower, while mysterious and inexplicable in its significance, is referred to with the definite article ("*die* blaue Blume"), thus designating the known within the unknown (Seyhan 117). The exchangeability of the internal and external world is expressed both generally in the reflection of the physical journey as spiritual development and in various details. For instance, the turbulence of the festivities in Augsburg mirror the inner fermentation underway in Heinrich as he recognizes Mathilde as the essence of his dream and vocation (Kohlschmidt 128).

The world of the medieval period is explored to show the universality and breadth of Heinrich's maturation as a transcendental poet. The medieval outlook of wonder and

curiosity, not yet jaded by modern cosmopolitan knowledge, allows Novalis to depict Heinrich's spiritual awakening more forcefully. He is described as receptive to the ever-expanding world as it appears to the novice traveller, and deeply affected by accounts of foreign lands, the world of the orient and the crusades.

Perhaps the most striking romantic technique used in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is the enlisting of structural devices to depict the progressive unfolding of an idea via the consciousness of the central hero as he attempts to reach a transcendental perspective.[2] The structure of the novel reveals separate, autonomous units in the form of sub-stories, which, however, also refer back to the entire novel. For example, the story of Atlantis, narrated by the merchants, and standing quite independently in the text, receives a deeper meaning through its reference to Heinrich's own development, which this story indeed foreshadows. Likewise, Klingsohr's fairy tale is most significant in the way that it reflects Heinrich's maturation as a poet and constitutes an overture to the transformation projected to take place in the second part of the novel. By itself, the fairy tale illustrates the power of poetry to overcome periods of darkness, but in the context of the entire novel, it is both an educative force on Heinrich and symbolizes his insights into poetry.

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[2] The progressive stages of insight have been variously described by numerous critics. The first analysis of structure as rhythmical and forward bound was taken by Walzel (esp. 60-64). In a more recent example, Roder discerns in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* "stages of initiation" (739-743), which describe symbolically the approaching of a completely spiritual world (756-757). R. Heine even goes as far as referring to the work as a "Stationenroman" (128).

Russian Nights

Odoevskij's *Russian Nights* is both longer, more detailed and somewhat more cumbersome than Novalis's novel. Its main frame consists of four protagonists engaged in pure dialogue rendered in dramatic form (as it is done in plays). As the author himself states, the main frame situation gives a more or less accurate picture of the philosophical debates that raged in Russia in the 1820s and 1830s (*RN* 314). The reader is confronted with a multitude of topics stretching from history and aesthetics to economic theory and basic chemistry. Numerous footnotes furnished by the author refer to sources and provide additional factual information and commentary on the main frame dialogue. All this information together with the numerous protagonists of the sub-stories make the task of providing a summary of this work a challenge. In order to supply an overview useful to the present study, it is necessary to distil from the maze of theories and opinions the basic structure and sequence of the stories, as well as their main content and significance for the overall work.

Content Overview of *Russian Nights*:

Foreword
The First Night: Beginning of main frame discussion.
The Second Night: Faust reads "Desiderata" from the manuscript.
The Third Night: *Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi*
The Fourth Night: "The Economist"
- *The Brigadier*
- *The Ball*
- *The Avenger*
- *The Mockery of a Corpse*
- *The Last Suicide*
- *Cecilia*

The Fifth Night: *A City Without Name*
The Sixth Night: *Beethoven's Last Quartet*
The Seventh Night: *The Improvvisatore*

The Eighth Night: *Sebastian Bach*
The Ninth Night: Main frame discussion. Faust reads the "court scene" from the manuscript.
Epilogue: Main frame discussion. Faust reads the two manuscript writers' concluding observations on their manuscript.

Summary

Russian Nights consists of a foreword, nine chapters of differing lengths, referred to as "nights," and an epilogue which occupies a good third of the total text. The entire work is held together by a narrative main frame formed by the conversations and readings of four protagonists: the elder Faust[3], who endorses a combination of empiricism and idealism, and three younger friends named Victor, Vyacheslav and Rostislav. Victor represents the voice of rationalism and utilitarianism, while Vyacheslav and Rostislav only play supporting roles to, respectively, Victor's and Faust's positions (see also Matlaw 15-16). The main frame discussions are constantly interrupted by Faust's reading of an old manuscript, which contains stories compiled by two young idealists who have since died.

The first night renders an inner monologue by Rostislav as he weighs the benefits of enlightenment against its failure to provide human beings with a true understanding of nature and themselves. A subsequent conversation with his friends throws open the question of the essence of life, and they resolve to consult with the eccentric Faust on this matter. The second night contains the first meeting of the three young friends in Faust's study. Here, they debate the value of philosophical inquiry, the feasibility of

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[3] There is a general consensus among scholars that Faust is a mouthpiece of the author.

attaining truth and the need for higher spiritual values, which prompts Faust to point out that these questions have been raised in a previous period by two young friends of his who are now deceased. He proposes to read portions from the manuscript they left behind as a way to fuel and enrich the discussion. The manuscript records the stories accumulated by the two friends during a journey they undertook to understand themselves through an understanding of others. Faust elaborates on the two friends' desire for truth and a fullness of life, their intent to investigate life from both a scientific and an artistic point of view in order to solve the "task of life," which is to understand life and oneself fully. Faust reads first excerpts from the manuscript ("Desiderata"), which criticize and refute the purported advances made by various branches of the sciences and even poetry during the age of enlightenment. The pessimism of the two friends displayed here is offset by a vision of a harmonious past of universal understanding which holds out the potential for a return to such a state. Realizing the inadequacy of an ordinary world view and the inefficiencies of communication through language, the two young friends embarked on a journey in order to investigate the nature of geniuses and madmen. Through a vicarious experience of the heightened perception of these individuals, the two friends hoped to find answers to their questions about life. Faust concludes the meeting by pointing out that the manuscript remained fragmentary and unfinished, but represents an important document of a previous idealistic period.

In the third night, Faust commences the actual reading of the manuscript. It begins with an account by the two friends of how, before setting out on their journey, they visited their uncle, whose story about a deranged person who believes himself to be the

architect Piranesi forms the first illustrative story of the manuscript (*Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi*). In the subsequent discussion in the main frame, Faust focuses on Piranesi's frustration over the impossibility of actually building the excesses of his imagination. He considers the depiction of Piranesi's torments to be a hyperbolic statement on the need to meet the spiritual demands of people, even if they lack practical use. Faust observes that the poetic spirit of human nature can never be completely eradicated, not even in the new age of specialization and usefulness that is no longer interested in the rounded individual.

The fourth night contains the reading of a series of stories written by a young economist, which an unidentified editor passed on to the two friends. The stories illustrate how the economist's progressive dissatisfaction with a purely positivistic outlook causes him to long in vain for a more spiritual life, resulting in his early death. In his first story, *The Brigadier*, the economist explores the issue of social conventions as they stifle the urges of the human soul to reach a higher, fuller life, and the tragedy of never fully understanding one's true self. *The Ball* deals with high society's frivolous use of music, and contrasts the atmosphere of the ball room with the quiet voice of a priest in a church, who, unheard by the masses, speaks of harmony and human brotherhood. *The Avenger*, an example of "romanticizing" style in its mysterious vagueness, identifies the poet as the spiritually superior outsider, who through his poetry can make people realize hypocrisy and moral baseness. *The Mockery of a Corpse* describes what happens when true love is rejected in favour of social convention, a fate which the economist-narrator likely suffered himself. Following this story, the unknown editor suggests that at this

point in the economist's development, his heart and his reason were no longer in harmony, leading to a loss of faith, and hence, mental decline. This psychological state finds expression in his next story, *The Last Suicide*, which is based on the theories of the English thinker Malthus, who contended that the continual population growth needed to be kept in check, because it could eventually not be sustained by the planet. This story depicts the reversal of human values and spiritual decline in a population fighting for physical survival on a planet that can no longer support it, so that the birth of a child or the expression of love toward others become crimes. In the end, the only option for mankind is to commit collective suicide, since human values seem to have become irrelevant. The last fragment, entitled *Cecilia*, expresses the economist's longing for inner harmony and a guarded hope for a better life in the beyond. The last pages are illegible. The economist "sub-cycle" is then briefly discussed by the four protagonists of the main frame. While Rostislav is deeply moved, Victor and Vyacheslav dismiss the economist's despair as the product of mental instability. Faust, as always, tries to remain fair and objective, despite obvious sympathy for the quest of the two young idealists who wrote the manuscript.

The fifth night contains the story *A City Without Name*, which the two friends recorded from a hermit whom they encountered on their travels. The story of this mentally deranged social outcast conjures up the vision of a city which operated exclusively on the English economist Bentham's principles of free capitalist enterprise and the supremacy of usefulness. The resulting lack of affinity among people and the inevitable dominance of egoism lead to the disintegration of the city and a return of the

few survivors to a primitive, savage stage of human development. The ensuing discussion in the main frame debates the meaning of this story, and more generally, the limitations of empirical evidence and the need for its synthesis with spiritual-speculative forms of inquiry for a rounded knowledge that satisfies the human soul.

The sixth night begins with a brief discussion of the significance and symbolism of the night. Faust suggests that night time lends itself to introspection and self-encounter because it makes people insecure. Rostislav identifies the attempt to rise above the earth without leaving it as the main challenge for mankind, thus expressing the problem of reaching a sustainable synthesis of the ideal and the real. Faust then proceeds with the next story in the manuscript, *Beethoven's Last Quartet*, which portrays the aging, deaf composer's last creation as no longer comprehensible to his contemporaries, and expresses the artist's eternally unsuccessful quest to transmit completely the inner symphony of his soul. In the main frame discussion, Victor immediately questions the historical truth of the story, which leads to an examination of the value of interpretive imagination compared to fact-based biography and, more generally, to the issue of poeticizing history.

The story from the manuscript read in the seventh night speculates on the consequences of perfect artistic expression when it is linked to complete positivistic knowledge of the material world. In *The Improvvisatore*, the poet Cypriano obtains just such a combination of abilities through a pact with the devil (Doctor Segeliel), so that he may avoid the demoralizing failure to express himself easily and fully. However, devoid of any remaining mystery, due to his complete insight into the mechanism of

nature, the world has lost its spirit and magic for Cypriano. While able to compose poetry at the snap of a finger, he loses his affinity to nature and fellow human beings alike. His knowledge of the material world is complete, but nothing is united in his soul, so that he becomes insane. The discussion in the main frame moves from the thematic connection of the two last stories about Beethoven and Cypriano (the issue of perfect artistic expression) to the general question of the relationship between nature and art, touching upon several literary romantic concepts, which are, indeed, scattered throughout the entire work. Faust fends off Victor's accusations of being an idealist mystic by defining himself as an empiricist, who also takes into account spiritual facts, thus pleading for a synthesis of empiricism with speculation. Further, he argues that idealists are most likely to achieve some sort of agreement in the future, because, contrary to positivists, they share a common centre of thought. Faust concludes the night by warning that it is not only important to obtain knowledge of the world, but to also examine how knowledge is obtained.

The eighth night deals with the next story of the manuscript, entitled *Sebastian Bach*, which opens with the two young friends in conversation with an "investigator" who strives for encyclopedic knowledge. He is interested in reconstructing the spiritual biography of musicians through an analysis of their works, which can, in turn, reveal their inner language. His story about the composer and organist J. S. Bach is one such attempt at penetrating the essence of that artist by giving life to his creative development. In this story, Bach moves through various stages of development, including first organ lessons with his schoolmasterly older brother, an experience of revelation inside a church

organ and an apprenticeship with the maverick organ builder Albrecht. As a mature productive composer he lives completely in the world of music. Toward the end of his life, however, it becomes evident that Bach's existence was not sufficiently rooted in reality and that he had failed to find any affinity or harmony among people in the real world, as opposed to the spiritual world of music. He dies with the realization that fullness of life and love have evaded him.

The ninth night opens with Faust sitting alone in his study, surrounded by his old books. Reflecting on a passage he is reading, he tries to grasp in vain a temporary glimpse at truth and meaning. He is then joined by his three young friends, who begin to evaluate the fruitfulness of their previous nocturnal readings and discussions. Faust points to the limits of philosophy when he questions whether ultimate knowledge is possible, and thus hints at an understanding of philosophy not as the art of reasoning and constructing a system, but as the quest for higher truth as continual seeking. Linked to this is the question of perfect communication, which Faust suggests is possible not through logic, but through the cultivation of an inner affinity between interlocutors. Sincerity must be the basis of such dialogue, which then creates a harmony that may lead to new thought and its expression. Faust credits none other than Schelling for having recognized that inner feeling must be the basis of philosophy, and for determining that the first act of knowledge is self-knowledge, and thus transcendental. Faust advocates an eternal quest for truth that integrates the self with the other, leading to a spiritual elevation that can best be stimulated and expressed by aesthetic means.

When the discussion returns to the manuscript and its purpose and meaning, Faust

offers an additional passage as an epilogue of sorts. This short passage systematizes the relationship between the manuscript parts which the two friends understood as an organic unit. It offers a rather cryptic court trial of all the protagonists of the manuscript stories, of whom the court asks the question: "Did you understand yourself?" Each defendant, including Piranesi, the economist, *A City Without Name*, Beethoven, Cypriano and Bach offer a short interpretation of their own life, which in each case is reversed by the court into the exact opposite, so that the relationship between self and other is continually inverted. Only the defendant Segeliel objects to the court's method and declares the supremacy of the self (the "I"). The last defendant, who appears to be the absolute, eludes the scrutiny of the court, and can only be recognized by his symbols. It would appear that none of the defendants recognized the need to synthesize the self with the other, opting instead for one or the other, and therefore failing to attain a fullness of life.

The lengthy epilogue returns to the main frame, and offers further discussion on the problem of reaching full knowledge, the inability of complete communication, and the need for a synthesis of empiricism and speculation. The issue regarding the result of the search undertaken in the manuscript is raised again, prompting Faust to read additional material by the two friends, which could serve as a conclusion. In this text, scepticism and syncretism (the latter understood as a jumbling of views without inner connection) are identified as the main threat to the achievement of human harmony which is particularly prevalent in the West. From here, the two young manuscript authors advance the theory that the West is dying and that it is Russia who must revitalize it in a higher synthesis. This new idea is discussed in the main frame and provides an occasion for

Faust to condemn current social hypocrisy and corruption, especially in the West. Further, he notes that industrial activity in the West has not lead to any true progress in the quality of human life, and argues that ancient scientists and medieval alchemists already knew all the things that recent science claims as breakthroughs because they were conducting their experiments in a quest for higher truth. Again, Faust criticizes, among other things, the specialization of the sciences and historical scholarship's failure to yield a universal formula. Faust and Victor come to agree more and more on the impossibility of attaining ultimate truth and perfect communication, and discuss this issue in further detail. Faust then identifies poetry as the medium that can teach how the task of life should be approached. In his view, poetry can point the way to a better understanding of life, it can show progression toward truth, but it cannot offer results or reach goals. The quest for truth is further equated to reaching a general fullness of life, which all figures in the manuscript stories, including Beethoven and Bach, failed to attain. Faust then presents Russia as the new habitat for what appears to be basic Schellingian thought, and Russian literature as the perfect medium for its propagation. While he also mentions Leibniz, Goethe and Carus, Faust holds up in particular Lomonosov as the universalistic forefather of Russia, and contends that Russia is naturally inclined toward universality, whereas the West tries to attain it artificially. Finally, Faust suggests that, inoculated with these new ideas from the manuscript, the three young friends, like Russians in general, must reestablish an inner harmony and balance in order to help form a cultural synthesis with the West that will lead to an attainment of human harmony ("fullness of life") in the future.

As can be seen, *Russian Nights* contains an abundance of topics related to Odoevskij's romantic views. They are scattered throughout the work and are repeatedly discussed. Many of Faust's utterances, which dominate the main frame, tend to be rambling and seemingly vent some of the author's pet-peeves, occasionally as clumsy non sequiturs. It would be futile and tedious to go through the details of the discussions and positions taken, but clearly, when surveyed as a whole, the statements regarding the sciences, philosophy, poetry and language all correspond to the theories advanced by Odoevskij throughout his life. These include the importance of instinct, the need for a balance of empiricism and speculation, the impossibility of perfect communication and artistic expression, and last but not least, the stress on the continued relevance of Schellingian thought -- aspects, which have been dealt with at length in Chapter III of this thesis. Much more significant for the textual comparison with *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* in the context of the romantic novel are the general features of *Russian Nights*, in particular the structure and internal movement, as well as the symbolic meaning of the stories in their relation to each other and the whole, in other words, the work's basic transcendental thrust.

Similarities of Basic Patterns

The two works in question reveal a number of basic similar patterns which point to their deeper poetic relatedness. Both *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights* are composed of narrative main frames and sub-stories. However, while Novalis's novel has one main frame dealing with Heinrich's journey, in *Russian Nights*, one actually

encounters two frame tales: that of the main frame discussion, and the travel frame of the two young friends, whose reflections are captured in the stories of their manuscript. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the blue flower becomes a symbol of the search for the complementary other and for transcendental insight. Consequently, the act of reading the novel becomes a search of a search. In *Russian Nights*, the main frame comprises an investigation (or search) of the "manuscript search" conducted by the two deceased friends, in which the reader can participate. In both works the different narrative layers thus represent different levels of reflection. Further, in both works the inner searchings (by Heinrich and the two manuscript authors respectively) are described as physical journeys, whose external circumstances are kept to a minimum. This underlines the status of the journeys as symbolic of inner developments and reflections of mental activity; indeed, in the main frame discussions of *Russian Nights*, intellectual development replaces plot completely.

A further common feature is the youthfulness of the searchers. They try to reach a heightened perception of the world in its true essence in order to stimulate a general rejuvenation of humanity. This heightened perception is symbolized in the various mysterious stories they hear and record (sub-stories), adding progressively more and varied insights to their inner development. The successive sub-stories, each of which develops the idea of harmony and synthesis (or loss thereof) from a different angle, signify symbolic depictions of the accumulation of insights made by the young searchers in *Russian Nights* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* on how to achieve such synthesis. Similarly, metafictional commentary in both works explains that the role of poetry is to

point the way toward harmony by showing a progressive attainment of insights. This is, indeed, exactly what both works attempt to accomplish through an interaction of the sub-stories, in which ideas are developed, with the main frame, in which insights are discussed. The stories become symbols not only of these ideas, but of the incorporation of these ideas into the outlook or thought process of the searchers (Heinrich and the two manuscript writers), the main frame protagonists (in the case of *Russian Nights*), the authors of the entire works and, finally, potentially, the readers. However, in both works, ultimate knowledge or synthesis is never completely reached. While the path toward synthesis, the means of progressing toward it, is shown, the attainment of synthesis is continually postponed to the future. The task of poetry (and indeed, of life itself) becomes the pursuit of synthesis, the depiction of progressive searching. The task of poetry is thus indicated to be transcendental, as is the nature of the two works as romantic novels.

The Shaping of Universality

The two summaries of the novels reveal a number of similar themes, structures and artistic devices which accumulatively contribute to the creation of a universal outlook. This outlook is characterized fundamentally by a need for a synthesis of spirit and matter. In more concrete terms, this means that history, poetry and the sciences need to be synthesized into an organic understanding of the world in its true essence. This, then, is the gnoseological method by which a transcendental consciousness can be reached, which is in fact the goal of the romantic novel.

Heinrich von Ofterdingen, by depicting the stages of insights into poetry and nature reached by the hero Heinrich, traces the unfolding of just such a transcendental consciousness. In *Russian Nights*, Odoevskij, as he himself explained in his introduction, intended to depict not the fate of a central hero, but of an idea, of a "feeling common to all mankind" (*rn* 33/*RN* 33), which is none other than a yearning for harmony and "fullness of life" (*rn* 254; "полнота жизни," *RN* 245). The search for this universal idea is expressed artistically in a series of stories. In Novalis's novel the central hero is only a symbol of the idea of a universal outlook, which the reader is encouraged to accept. Odoevskij goes one step further by dispensing with a central hero altogether. The author stated in his notes to *Russian Nights* that he intended to bring together several philosophical attitudes, mainly rationalism and idealism, whose essence would be expressed in the sub-stories through the outlook and life of various protagonists:

> [...] избраны разные лица, которые целою своею жизнию выражали то, что у философов выражалось сжатными формулами - так что не словами только, но целою жизнию один отвечал на жизнь другого (*RN* 314).
>
> [...] various persons were chosen whose entire life expressed what philosophers expressed in compressed formulas - so that one answered the life of the other, not in words but with a whole life (*rn* 30).

The result is a "drama of ideas," which conflict with each other or complement each other, thus contributing to a complete discussion of the issue of which path will lead to a harmonious future. In the course of this discussion, an understanding is reached on the nature of the necessary synthesis as the basis of harmony. In relation to the manuscript writers, this drama of ideas represents the two friends' growing inner consciousness of philosophical approaches and possible solutions. As expressed by the narrator of *A City*

Without Name, the stories are offered as lessons enabling future generations to reach harmony more successfully (*RN* 109). These lessons circumscribe artistically different philosophical outlooks of more recent enlightened theories.[4] The resulting unfolding of consciousness takes place not (as is the case in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*) symbolically in one hero, but in all the different levels of readers of the manuscript, including the two friends who composed it, the four protagonists of the main frame who read and discuss it, and finally, the reader of *Russian Nights*. The unfolding of universal consciousness constitutes the central topic, the single subject-matter of both romantic works.

However, the manner in which insights are accumulated differs somewhat in the two works. While Heinrich absorbs positive lessons from the sub-stories, reflecting a more osmotic and uncritically accepting appropriation of values, in *Russian Nights*, it is the failures to achieve a full life (i.e., a universal outlook) displayed in the sub-stories that reveal a more evaluative, cerebral attitude in the two manuscript authors. They draw their conclusions about the true path toward a full life from critical examination and evaluation. It is through scenarios of failure to achieve harmony that the two friends and the readers of their manuscript come to the progressive realization that only a true synthesis of opposites, of reality and ideality to a higher, more satisfying level, can provide happiness and a fullness of life.

The aspect of universal poetry understood as an encyclopedic synthesis of literary formats and branches of human knowledge is equally present in both works. Both contain

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[4] Similarly, Schulz refers to the sub-stories in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as lessons ("Lehrstunden;" 1992 117).

commentary on various branches of the sciences and the arts and elucidate how they relate to each other. With regard to the mixing of genres, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* displays both prose and interspersed poetry and poetic songs. The third person narrative of the main frame (i.e., Heinrich's development) is interrupted by condensed dialogue designed to express a sudden affinity of spirit, as happens, for example, between Mathilde and Heinrich and Zyane and Heinrich. *Russian Nights* avails itself of prose only. Nevertheless, it perhaps offers more textual variety than Novalis's novel. The main frame is written in dramatic form, while the sub-stories mostly consist of third-person narratives, and the travel frame of the two friends composing the manuscript is written in the first person plural. One can further note the use of epitaphs, direct quotes and footnotes from scholarly works and personal notes from the author, Odoevskij himself, as additional formats. The Bach story even contains the rendition of musical notes to describe a fugue and a musical theme (*RN* 172, 179). Both *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights* thus evidence a mixing of various topics, narrative voices and literary text types in order to express their thoughts in as many variations as are deemed necessary, clearly bursting the confines of literary convention. At points in Odoevskij's work, the reader is in fact no longer sure whether what is being read is creative fiction or a dissertation, especially due to the many footnotes explicitly provided by the author Odoevskij (for example, *RN* 112-114). The reader may gain a similar impression of scholarliness in the second part of Novalis's novel during the conversation between Heinrich and Sylvester on concepts of transcendental philosophy. However, their conversation is much more cryptic and poeticized than the philosophical discussions in

Russian Nights. For example, Sylvester offers the following observation on conscience[5] in response to Heinrich's question, at what point evil could be eradicated from the universe:

> Wenn es nur eine Kraft gibt - die Kraft des Gewissens - Wenn die Natur züchtig und sittlich geworden ist. Es gibt nur eine Ursache des Übels - die allgemeine *Schwäche*, und diese Schwäche ist nichts als die geringe sittliche Empfänglichkeit, und Mangel an Reiz der Freiheit (*HVO* 204).
>
> When there is only one force - the force of conscience - When nature has become modest and moral. There is only one cause of evil - the all-pervasive *weakness*, and this weakness is nothing but a reduced moral receptivity, and a lack of charm in freedom (translation mine; see also *hvo* 164-165).

The different text types all form part of a romantic encyclopedia of sorts. The relationship of all these diverse parts to an ideational centre, in true accordance with the two writers' poetic convictions, reflects the lively organic quality of nature itself, celebrating unity in diversity.

In Novalis's novel, Heinrich's physical journey from his home in Eisenach to Augsburg mirrors an inner journey that becomes not merely increasingly spiritual, but seemingly transcends death and points to an infinite development in a purely non-physical, spiritual sphere. In *Russian Nights*, it is the two authors of the manuscript who embark on a journey in order to gather material that may help them solve the riddle of life. However, one is never quite sure whether their stories have really been encountered during their travels, or whether they invented them to express symbolically the insights they have attained through purely cerebral effort, by playing out mental scenarios taking

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[5] Barrack (1971) discusses in detail Novalis's concept of conscience in the conversation between Heinrich and Sylvester.

place in a purely spiritual or fictional realm. In any case, in both works the sub-stories are symbolic representations of ideas. For example, in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the Atlantis Tale expresses the power of poetry and the need for a synthesis of a knowledge of nature with poetic imagination; similarly, in *Russian Nights*, the story of the improviser Cypriano expresses the need for an inner, spiritual link between the poet and nature in addition to his empirical understanding of it in order to achieve a full harmonious understanding of the world through his creative act.

Especially in *Russian Nights*, the stories play out hypothetical scenarios, thus representing a speculative form of inquiry into the world. They form, therefore, a metafictional commentary on the value of fiction as a gnoseological tool, as a vehicle for a philosophical journey. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, fiction is by and large presented as prophetic, displaying a persuasive confidence in poetry as a force of real change. By contrast, in *Russian Nights*, poetry is characterized as truly, and perhaps more honestly, speculative: the stories with their variations on the idea of synthesis and balance offer possible scenarios which the reader (as indicated by the main frame reactions) is at liberty to endorse, reject or modify. In either case, however, the sub-stories are symbolic variations of an idea. It is the stories' symbolic meaning in relation to each other and the whole which makes them interesting, while their face-value subject-matter is of secondary importance for the overall universalistic thrust of the two works.

Heinrich's positive evolution toward a universal understanding seems guaranteed in his positive dream of the blue flower. It is also the miner who firmly expresses optimism and faith in the progressive unification of spirit and matter, and thus a future of

harmony:

> "Es ist erfreulich," sagte der Alte, "jene allmähliche Beruhigung der Natur zu bemerken. Ein immer innigeres Einverständnis, eine friedlichere Gemeinschaft, eine gegenseitige Unterstützung und Belebung, scheint sich allmählich gebildet zu haben, und wir können immer besseren Zeiten entgegensehn" (*HVO* 146-147).
>
> "It is a pleasure," the old miner said, "to observe the gradual calming of nature. An increasingly cordial harmony, a more peaceful communion, a mutual support and stimulation, appear gradually to have taken shape, and we may look forward to better and better times" (*hvo* 87).

By contrast, in *Russian Nights*, one can initially discern rising frustration in the two friends as they encounter, in their journey, more and more failures to achieve a fullness of life (*RN* 198/*rn* 207). Certainly, in the main frame, a sceptical or at least ambivalent attitude makes itself felt in varying degrees in all four protagonists. However, as the manuscript authors recognize the true path toward harmony, they develop a new optimism in their vision of synthesis between Russian and Western cultural values at the end of their manuscript:

> Тебя, новое поколение, тебя ждет новое солнце [...]. Соедини же в себе опытность старца с силою юноши, [...] и в святом триединстве веры, науки и искусства ты найдешь то спокойствие, о котором молились отцы твои. Девятнадцатый век принадлежит России! (*RN* 203).
>
> The new sun is waiting for you, new generation [...]. Unite, then, in yourselves the experience of an old man with the strength of a youth, [...] and in the sacred triad of faith, science and art you will find the peace for which your fathers prayed. The nineteenth century belongs to Russia! (*rn* 211-212).

The projected final synthesis in both *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights* is accompanied by a strong dose of optimism, generally referred to as "faith." This optimism relates to the viability of suspending the perpetual antagonism which dominates reality. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the synthesis, or suspension of antagonism indicated

in the sub-stories foreshadows Heinrich's own development, which in this way gains an aura of certain success. In *Russian Nights*, the synthesis is envisioned by the two manuscript authors despite the failures to suspend antagonism portrayed in the sub-stories. While Heinrich models his own goals on examples of a successfully reached harmony narrated in the various stories and conversations, the two friends in *Russian Nights* learn from past or looming future failures illustrated in the manuscript stories. Odoevskij's two seekers therefore display a solution-oriented, problem-solving attitude toward the future. Their biggest achievement is seen to rest in the identification of the two "enemies" of harmony, scepticism and syncretism:

> У скептицизма есть удовлетворенное желание - ничего не желать; исполненная надежда - ничего не надеяться, [...] несчастные эпохи противоречия оканчиваются тем, что называется синкретизмом, то есть соединением в безобразную систему, вопреки уму, всех самых противоречащих мнений [...]. Науки, вместо того чтобы стремиться к тому единству, которое одно может возвратить им их мощную силу, науки раздробились в прах летучий, общая связь их потерялась, нет в них органической жизни (*RN* 199-200).

> Scepticism has the satisfied desire to desire nothing; it has the fulfilled hope not to hope for anything, [...] unfortunate epochs of contradiction end by what is known as syncretism, that is, the union of all the most contradictory opinions into one hideous system in defiance of human reason [...]. Sciences, instead of striving to attain the unity which alone could restore their power, have crumbled into flying dust; their common bond has been lost; they lack organic life (*rn* 208).

This passage in essence laments the loss of a centre, a "Mittelpunkt," the term F. Schlegel used to describe the function of a mythology in providing a new system of meaning for the new world. Further noteworthy in both *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights* is the covert cultural romantic statement made through the youthfulness of the various seekers. It is their eagerness and their confidence in the future which alone

moves into the realm of possibility the attainment of the next level of human development toward harmony. Their insights and their prospects thus reflect the basic concept of romantic history as an ever-evolving triadic movement toward a state of perfection. This state of perfection is equated with a universal understanding of the world.

As a result of the central quest for universality, a number of further similarities in the two works concern devices of depiction. The task of developing a philosophical idea in poetic images and symbols engenders artistic consequences typical for the romantic novel. As a result of this central concern, protagonists of both the main frames and the sub-stories are carriers of ideas, and function as part of the overall symbolism of the story in which they appear. They are only sketchily outlined, do not appear fleshed-out, and in many cases are not even assigned proper names. In fact, both Novalis and Odoevskij give many of their protagonists the aura of anonymity and mystery. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the opening passage speaks of a mysterious stranger ("der Fremde;" *HVO* 195), while the miner, despite his considerable role in Heinrich's development, is only referred to by his age and profession ("der alte Mann," *HVO* 239; "der Alte," 243, 246; "der Bergmann," 243). Mathilde seems to reappear after her death as Zyane in the second part of the novel (*HVO* 324-325), as if it does not really matter, who the persons are in terms of individual identity, but rather, what they symbolize. In the second part of the novel, it is even Heinrich himself who sinks into temporary anonymity, when he is referred to simply as a "pilgrim" (*HVO* 319-325). Similarly, in *Russian Nights*, both the manuscript writers themselves and most protagonists in the sub-stories remain nameless. The narrator of the Bach story is referred to simply as an

"investigator" ("исследователь;" *RN* 147) and "eccentric" ("чудак;" *RN* 147) who represents an attempt to reveal the spiritual essence behind historical fact. The narrator of the *A City Without Name* also remains unnamed (as does his lost fatherland), and is referred to repeatedly as a "black man" ("черный человек;" *RN* 96-97) and "stranger" ("незнакомец;" *RN* 97). His character, as well as the identity of his lost home town are unimportant. What matters for the overall narrative is the ideational content expressed. A further example can be furnished in the figure of the economist, who also remains anonymous, as do, indeed, the two friends who have compiled the manuscript. They possess no individuality as human beings. They are merely agents in a process of identifying a method by which a universal outlook can be reached. It is perhaps the very absence of fully developed characters, the generality of the protagonists in both *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights*, that contributes most to the symbolic and universal nature of these works as attempts at romantic *Universalpoesie*.

The Shaping of Progressivity

The notion of a universal romantic poetry is, as F. Schlegel stressed in his most famous fragment (*Athenäumsfragment 116*), inextricably linked to progressivity. The central task of the romantic novel has been repeatedly identified as the artistic expression of eternal progressive movement toward a hypothetical absolute synthesis. As a poetry of poetry, the romantic novel must therefore also constantly reflect on its own nature resulting from this core task. On a more intrinsic textual level in both *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights*, progressivity is shaped artistically through narrative

structure and a postponement of synthesis into infinity. Finally, eternal progressivity is subverted by the concept of affinity through dialogue.

Poetry of Poetry

Novalis defined the romantic novel as a "Machwerk" (a practical, generative work), as a creative construction and expression of an unfolding transcendental mind, a "life in book form." As such it reflects primarily the mental development of its creator and constitutes a "life book" for him. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, this is expressed in Heinrich's own book of life that he discovers in the hermit's cave. It represents a metafictional reference to the entire novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* itself. Together with additional metafictional commentary, such as the hermit's views on history and poetry, and Klingsohr's understanding of poetry and poetic creativity, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* emerges as a novel about a novel, poetry of poetry, a work containing within itself its own explanation and modes of existence. For instance, the following passage in which the hermit argues for a speculative interpretation of history is significant with respect to the artistic license Novalis takes with the historical Afterdingen-material about a poet's competition on the Wartburg, on which his novel is loosely based:

> Wenn ich das alles recht bedenke, so scheint es mir, als wenn ein Geschichtsschreiber nothwendig auch ein Dichter seyn müßte, denn nur die Dichter mögen sich auf jene Kunst, Begebenheiten schicklich zu verknüpfen, verstehn [...]. Es ist mehr Wahrheit in ihren Mährchen, als in gelehrten Chroniken. Sind auch ihre Personen und deren Schicksale erfunden: so ist doch der Sinn, in dem sie erfunden sind, wahrhaft und natürlich. Es ist für unsern Genuß und unsere Belehrung gewissermaßen einerley, ob die Personen, in deren Schicksalen wir den unsrigen nachspüren, wirklich einmal lebten, oder nicht (*HVO* 259).

> When I reflect earnestly upon these things, it seems to me a historian must necessarily also be a poet, for perhaps the poets alone master the art of skilfully organizing events [...]. There is more truth in their fairy tales than in learned chronicles. Even though the characters and their fates are invented, the spirit in which they are invented is nevertheless true and natural. To a certain extent it is all one, as far as our enjoyment and instruction are concerned, whether the characters in whose fates we trace out our own ever really lived or not (*hvo* 85).

Historical material is primarily used as a means to express the unfolding of a transcendental perspective and feeling of harmony that the reader can follow, not to disseminate historical facts. Similarly, in *Russian Nights* various metafictional references identify the entire work as a reflection of its creator's thought process for the reader's benefit. Faust states:

> [...] но нельзя отрицать, что в произведениях литературных, особенно в романе, отражается если не жизнь общественная, то по крайней мере состояние духа пишущих людей (*RN* 209).
>
> But you can't deny that literary works, novels in particular, reflect if not the social life then at least the spiritual state of writers (*rn* 218).

This thought is also expressed in the artist stories about Beethoven and Bach: their biographies provide the raw material with which is expressed a certain idea about art harboured by the writer of this fictitious biography.[6] Faust, referring to the Beethoven story, contends:

> Если этот анекдот был в самом деле, тем лучше; если он кем-либо выдуман, это значит, что он происходил в душе его сочинителя; следственно, это происшествие все-таки *было*, хотя и не *случилось* (*RN* 124).

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[6] The need to conduct historical inquiry with speculative, poetic imagination is expressed directly on the last pages of *Russian Nights*, when Faust praises Russia as a "nation whose poets have guessed history before history by means of their poetic magic" (*rn* 253/*RN* 244).

> If this anecdote was really true, all the better; if it was invented by someone, it means that it happened in the heart of the writer, consequently, this event *was*, although it didn't *happen* (*rn* 129).

This passage underlines the entire reference of the work to a higher, spiritual realm of ideas beyond the plot. And therefore, all the protagonists in the various sub-stories express in different variations the spirit of their creator, who is none other than the transcendental poet whom the author Odoevskij identified himself as in his introduction. Thus, both *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights* are reflections of their creators' transcendental efforts, and as self-reflective products, emerge as poetry of poetry in this basic aspect.

But *Russian Nights* is a novel of a novel in a second, more complicated sense. *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* has an auctorial narrator, who rarely comes to the surface, but who is clearly identified as a contemporary of the reader at the turn of the last century. This becomes clear, for instance, in the following comparison of Heinrich's times and the narrator's contemporary time:

> Eine *liebliche* Armuth schmückte diese Zeiten mit einer eigenthümlichen ernsten und unschuldigen Einfalt; [...] da hingegen die neuere wohlhabendere Zeit das einförmige und unbedeutendere Bild eines allgemeinen Tages darbietet (*HVO* 203-204).

> An *idyllic* poverty adorned those times with a peculiarly earnest and innocent simplicity; [...] whereas the more prosperous modern age presents the monotonous and more humdrum picture of a commonplace day (*hvo* 25).

The search for the blue flower, the unfolding of Heinrich's consciousness as a metaphysical being, is clearly undertaken for the benefit of the modern reader, who is confronted with a previous "reflective and romantic period" (*hvo* 25; "eine tiefsinnige und romantische Zeit," *HVO* 204):

> [...] und also vertiefen wir uns willig in die Jahre, wo Heinrich lebte und jetzt neuen Begebenheiten mit vollem Herzen entgegenging (*HVO* 204).
>
> And so we immerse ourselves willingly in the years when Henry lived and went to meet new experiences with an eager heart (*hvo* 25).

Odoevskij likewise wrote with the reader's involvement in mind, which explains the construction of the main-frame as pure dialogue (*RN* 311-312). He designed the discussions of the main frame as a chorus of sorts that would represent possible reader reaction (in the current age of positivism) to the material presented in the manuscript-portion (which reflects the values of a more romantic age). Faust mentions that the two manuscript writers lived in an age dominated by Schellingian thought and "also participated in this general movement" (*rn* 43/*RN* 41). But whereas in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* the reader is the recipient of the story, in *Russian Nights* he becomes an invisible or vicarious participant in the main frame dialogue, the reading of the manuscript, and thus, in the actual quest for answers to the central question. This moves the manuscript-layer of *Russian Nights* to the centre of the work as romantic novel, while the superimposed main frame ("chorus") is in fact a further reflective level replacing a potentially more biased auctorial narrator (as one finds in Novalis' novel). The dialogic main frame in *Russian Nights* thus constitutes an additional element of reflexivity compared to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Since the manuscript with its sub-stories represents the idealistic search by the two deceased friends, it is this manuscript-part especially which corresponds to the progressive search portrayed in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* in its journey frame with sub-stories. *Russian Nights* as a whole thus discusses a type of romantic novel (the manuscript search) with constant interruptions,

delays, reflections and preliminary conclusions in the main frame that in turn indicate a romantic search. In other words, one could argue that *Russian Nights* is a novel of a novel of a novel.

In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, as was already pointed out, one encounters some references to a less poetic contemporary world. In *Russian Nights*, written as it was during the dawn of positivism in Russia, Faust also makes a clear distinction between a prosaic present and a more spirited, romantic past, when he associates the manuscript writers with Schellingianism, while addressing his three discussion partners as "materialists" (*RN* 144). The manuscript portion is identified as the product of a more romantic age. Hence, *Russian Nights* offers a clearly identified reflection of one historical age over a previous one. More specifically, the work discusses none other than the value of an earlier variety of thought and its literary shape (expressed in the manuscript search) that shows clear affinities to the Jena concept of the romantic novel. Therefore, *Russian Nights* is a novel of a novel in a literary-historical sense also: it is a romantic novel dealing with the merits of a romantic novel (or philosophical search) created in the general spirit of the Jena *Frühromantik* dominated by Schellingian principles (manuscript portion) that is reevaluated in an age of materialism and technology (main frame situation).

Structure and Meaning

Structural parallels between the two works under examination become apparent in both the structural arrangement of thematically distinct parts (architectonic structure) and

narrative structure, both of which are devised to indicate movement toward higher insight through a gradual accumulation of meaning.

The architectonic structure of the romantic novel was determined by Novalis to reflect unity in diversity. It must be constructed of distinct, independent parts, which nevertheless are held together by a common centre whose essence is revealed in stages by the successively appearing sub-stories. This principle is equally evident in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights*. In Novalis's novel, the separate sub-stories, including the merchants' tales, the miner's accounts of his education and Klingsohr's fairy tale, could all stand up to an individual reading. For instance, the Arion Legend, the Atlantis Tale and Klingsohr's fairy tale could easily stand on their own as parables of, respectively, a victory of poetry over materialism, social convention and rational-enlightened values. They also receive a deeper symbolic meaning and function in relation to Heinrich's development as a transcendental poet. His successive hearing of the stories symbolizes Heinrich's progressively unfolding insights into the nature of the absolute. In this sense, the stories are external mirrors of Heinrich's inner stirrings, comprising glimpses of a synthesis between spirit and matter. The Arion Legend, besides illustrating the power of poetry, shows the superiority of spiritual over material value. The Atlantis Tale reflects the need for a synthesis of the natural sciences and poetic intuition. Zulima's story describes her former homeland as a perfect synthesis of life and poetry. The accounts of the miner uncover the spiritual essence of precious minerals, thus elucidating the hieroglyphic value of nature's physical existence. The hermit argues for a synthesis of objective historical fact with speculation, while Klingsohr's fairy tale

develops a scenario in which fable transcends the forces of rationalism and effects universal harmony, thus revealing poetry as the final agent of a synthesis of the material and the spiritual. The stories thus clearly operate on a higher level outside their own subject-matter as progressive stages of Heinrich's growing universal awareness. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the sub-stories take on a higher significance in their relation to the overall focus of the novel, the development of Heinrich as a transcendental poet. Their diversity is offset by their unity toward this ideational centre. By the same token, the main frame dealing with Heinrich's journey to Augsburg is elevated to a higher level through the various sub-stories, which indeed symbolize Heinrich's poetic awakening, the maturation of certain insights leading to a progressively universal world view.

In *Russian Nights*, the various sub-stories are certainly autonomous, since most of them already existed as separate entities before their integration into Odoevskij's final creative work. In the new context as part of *Russian Nights*, they are now held together by a common centre, consisting of the central questions asked by the four main frame protagonists, which read: "What are we?" (*rn* 40/*RN* 38) or "Why do we live?" (*rn* 41/*RN* 40), or the complementary question posed by the manuscript writers "Why do others live?" (*rn* 43/*RN* 41). These questions are linked to the human desire for a fullness of life, which could be reached through the attainment of ultimate truth and universal insight (*RN* 42-43). The sub-stories of the manuscript are variations on the tackling of these questions, representing the investigations and insights of the two friends into the sciences and the arts. They symbolize the progressive awareness the two friends gain on how the question of life has been solved variously in the past, and consequently, how it

might be solved in future. However, contrary to Heinrich's development, the insights of the two friends are more clearly marked as reached by negative examples: each story, from the economist cycle to *Sebastian Bach*, offers variations on the ultimate failure to attain a fullness of life and inner harmony. These failed efforts are artistic expressions of various philosophical beliefs, predominantly from enlightened rationalism, materialism and utilitarianism, as well as exalted notions of romantic art.

Fundamentally, the individual sub-stories in *Russian Nights* are progressive variations on the problem of achieving a balance between the material and the spiritual. The story about the architect Piranesi illustrates (albeit with the use of madness as hyperbole) the antagonism between artistic impulse and worldly usefulness. The economist cycle exemplifies the torments of a person whose balance of spiritual and rational needs is never reached. Having realized the emptiness of his previous existence as an accountant (*The Brigadier*), the economist subsequently cannot find balance and happiness in society (*The Ball*), in the martyrdom of the poet as outsider (*The Avenger*), in love (*The Mockery of a Corpse*), in a return to economical theory as enhancer of humanity (*The Last Suicide*), or, finally, in religious faith (*Cecilia*). In every area he encounters an antagonism in which material concerns crush the spirit, including, in the end, literally his own spirit. Successively in the stories, human aspiration is crushed by social convention, poetic truthfulness by hypocrisy, love by material convenience, humanity by economic reality and quiet religious fervour by the loud and obnoxious pursuits of a society preoccupied with self-gratification. *A City Without Name* discusses most powerfully the result of a one-sided social emphasis on usefulness at the expense of

spiritual necessities. All these stories examine the perils inherent in a dominance of the material over the spiritual.

The following three stories, on the other hand, examine the spiritual realm, in particular romantic art, more closely as a viable venue for a fullness of life.[7] Here, the awareness is reached that a life in pure art (i.e., a purely spiritual existence) is as incapable of granting true happiness as a life dedicated exclusively to material concerns. Beethoven's obsession with perfect artistic expression of his "inner symphony," in other words, the attempt to effect a perfect correspondence of the two spheres of essence and expression brings him despair, isolation and death. The improviser Cypriano, by contrast, jeopardizes his own satisfaction as artist by obtaining just that elusive perfect correspondence of spheres between inner spirit and expression. However, such perfect expression comes with a complete empirical knowledge of nature. His fate demonstrates how such perfect artistic expression is as unsustainable as a complete mechanical understanding of nature. Together, they lead not to inner harmony, but to the annihilation of the improviser. The story ultimately illustrates that the synthesis of the spiritual and the material must remain *de facto* unreached, hypothetical, because the absolute transcends man's human capabilities (since Cypriano dies). The attainment of the absolute would spell the end of art as a human activity. These insights are further explored in the last story concerning Bach. It examines the feasibility of true happiness in a life dedicated completely to art. He is the only protagonist whose glimpses of the absolute are raised

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[7] Odoevskij here examines romantic art understood as an exclusively spiritual sphere of human activity that is alien to the concerns of reality.

"to the level of endurance" (*rn* 162/*RN* 155), but this turns out to be an unnatural state unconducive to human happiness. Despite his extraordinary ability to express himself in his music and find contentment in a spiritual life, Bach fails to synthesize this spiritual existence with the real life that surrounds him. His life, rather than portraying a progressive synthesis of spirit and matter (or self with other), is based on a persistent rejection of matter in favour of exclusive attention to the spirit.

In conclusion, all the stories depict the insights the two friends gain into the pitfalls of an imbalance between spirit and matter and the progressive realization, culminating forcefully in Bach's unhappy ending, that only a synthesis of the spiritual and the material, rationalism and humanism, art and life can bring forth happiness. Noteworthy is the symmetrical arrangement of the stories: in the first three (*Piranesi*, the economist cycle and *A City Without Name*) the imbalance is caused by a dominance of the material; in the subsequent three stories (*Beethoven*, *The Improvvisatore* and *Sebastian Bach*) imbalance results from a dominance of the spiritual, from a life devoted exclusively to art.[8] This architectonic symmetry underscores the purpose with which the stories are grouped according to their basic idea and points again to their ultimately symbolic meaning in the larger context of the manuscript (and the main frame) as philosophical

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[8] The sub-stories describe an imbalance that Faust considers to operate on all levels of life, endangering the health of any type of organism, from plants to individuals to entire societies (*RN* 241-245). In analogy to the four basic elements of chemistry, humanity thus requires a balance of truth, love, awe and strength (*RN* 240). However, this analogy does not really follow from the previous text, which argued for a synthesis of science and art accompanied by faith (i.e., an optimistic belief in humanity) as the basis for a new outlook that would generate a fullness of life. This synthesis is spelled out directly toward the beginning of the epilogue (*RN* 202), but it is nowhere linked to the subsequently mentioned balance of four elements.

search. The scene of the court trial makes the symbolic relationship and meaning of the stories in relation to the search of the two friends absolutely clear, and it is curious that scholarship has drawn such little attention to this vital scene, which Faust clearly designates as a quasi-epilogue and systematic guide to the entire manuscript. Faust declares with unmistakable metafictional significance for the entire work that despite its seeming diversity of stories, both he himself and the two young friends understand the manuscript as an organic unit with a common centre of reference:

> Фауст: "Мне кажется, что мои друзья видели неразрывную, живую связь между всеми этими лицами - идеальными или нет, не в том дело [...]. Мне она кажется довольно явною; но если вы сомневаетесь в ней, я прочту вам еще несколько листков, которых я не хотел было читать, ибо они не что иное, как жертва систематическому характеру века, которому мало мысли безграничной, неопределенной, - а непременно надобно что-нибудь такое, чтоб можно было ощупать" (*RN* 190-191).

> Faust: "It seems to me that my friends saw an uninterrupted living connection between all these persons - ideal or not - that does not matter [...]. To me it seems rather obvious; but if you doubt its existence, I'll read you a few more sheets which I didn't feel like reading before, because they are nothing else than an offering to the systematic character of the century, which is not satisfied with an endless, indefinite thought, but needs something palpable" (*rn* 198-199).

The sub-stories are variations of a single idea: the never-ending search for balance and synthesis. Similarly to the stories in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, their diversity is undercut by the basic unity of thought that runs through them, raising them to a higher ideational level beyond the narrow events of their subject-matter, constituting axioms in an indefinite process of thought. This basic structural concept of *Russian Nights* thus corresponds rather closely to the idea behind the structure of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.

In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Heinrich's education is expedited through the sub-stories with the aid of fiction. In *Russian Nights*, one can distinguish a similar relationship between the sub-stories in the manuscript and the two friends who composed it. The two friends accumulate stories they found helpful to their task, the pursuit of the essence of life. Additionally, the entire manuscript as fiction educates and influences the four protagonists of the main frame, who are also on a philosophical search. This emphasis on fiction expresses faith in the power of the word, and is also indicative of self-reflective romantic thinking in literature. The phenomenon of the story within the story, the narrator within the narrator, fulfils two functions: firstly, the recourse to old stories lends their content the aura of authoritative legends, ancient wisdom and echoes of a former world in which harmony was a way of life; and secondly, it renders material from a further receptive distance, for the reader of the novel reads the stories and the reaction to these stories, thus being able to reflect on something already reflected on by someone else. This narrative technique is used in both *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights*. Each level of narration represents a further stage of reflection. For instance, the merchants narrate a story to Heinrich, which he reflects on and absorbs. The reader of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, in turn, evaluates this whole process. In *Russian Nights*, the main frame discussion is already a reflection on someone else's thoughts (the manuscripts writers), which are reflections on the material they collected on their journey.

Further, the more a narrative layer is temporally removed from the reader's period and the main frame, the more it is characterized by harmony. The closest one ever comes

to a glimpse of the poetic expression of such harmony is in the "narrated" poetry of, for example, the youth's song at the court in Atlantis, in which such universal poetry is described, but cannot be reproduced:

> [...] der Gesang trug ein fremdes, wunderbares Gepräge. Er handelte von dem Ursprunge der Welt, von der Entstehung der Gestirne, der Pflanzen, Thiere und Menschen, von der allmächtigen Sympathie der Natur, von der uralten goldenen Zeit und ihrer Beherrscherinnen, der Liebe und Poesie, von der Erscheinung des Hasses und der Barbarey und ihren Kämpfen mit jenen wohlthätigen Göttinnen, und endlich von dem zukünftigen Triumph der letztern, dem Ende der Trübsale, der Verjüngung der Natur und der Wiederkehr eines ewigen goldenen Zeitalters (*HVO* 225).
>
> [...] his song had a strange and wondrous stamp. It dealt with the origin of the earth and the stars, the rise of plants, animals, and man; with the all-powerful sympathy of nature; with the primeval golden age and its sovereigns - love and poetry; with the emergence of hate and barbarism and their battles with those benevolent goddesses; and finally with the coming triumph of those divinities, the end of calamities, the rejuvenation of nature, and the return of an everlasting golden age (*hvo* 48).

The same universal content and wisdom is attributed to ancient books and hieroglyphic inscriptions throughout the novel, not the least of which is Heinrich's mysterious book of life discovered in the hermit's cave. All these references portray fiction as containing truth.

A similar use of narrative layering can be found in *Russian Nights*. Odoevskij in a footnote defines the period for the main frame as that point in time, when the spirit of idealism ceased to satisfy the age (i.e., the 1840s; *RN* 40 n.1). With assistance from Faust, the three young protagonists of the main frame seek guidance to the solution of their quest in a manuscript from an earlier, more idealistic and hopeful period. Within the narrative layer of the manuscript, one encounters further narrative layers: for instance, the economist cycle is edited and annotated by an unknown man, so that the

material is reflected upon and filtered by (in this order) the economist, the editor, the two friends, the main frame protagonists and the reader of *Russian Nights*. Within the main frame, there is a further reflective layer in that Faust, already familiar with the manuscript, influences and guides the interpretation of the stories by his three young friends. Similarly, the story about the architect Piranesi occurs two narrative layers away from the main frame: it was told to the two friends by their uncle, and they recorded it for the manuscript, which is read by the main frame protagonists and the reader. The fictional biography of Bach is narrated by an "investigator" to the two friends, and thus also operates two narrative levels below the main frame. Here, we even find a passage that corresponds to the instance of "narrated poetry" in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* which is meant to reflect the attainment of absolute insight. Bach's experience of spiritual revelation inside the church organ narrates the only true glimpse of the absolute in the entire manuscript:

> Вдруг он смотрит: четвероугольные столбы подымаются с мест своих, соединяются с готическими колоннами, становятся ряд за рядом, еще... еще - и взорам Себастияна явилось бесконечное, дивное здание, которого наяву описать не может бедный язык человеческий. Здесь таинство зодчества соединялось с таинствами гармонии [...]. Все здесь жило гармоническою жизнию [...]. Долго длилось сие видение. Пораженный пламенным благоговением, Себастиян упал ниц на землю [...] (*RN* 159).

> Suddenly he saw rectangular columns rising form their places, joining the Gothic columns, forming tier after tier, again and again... and before the eyes of Sebastian appeared an infinite, beautiful edifice which could not possibly be described consciously in the barren language of man. Here, the mystery of architecture joined with the mysteries of harmony [...]. Everything here lived a harmonious life [...]. This vision lasted for a long time. Wonderstruck by fervent awe, Sebastian fell to the ground [...] (*rn* 166-167).

Further, similar to Novalis's novel, *Russian Nights* is scattered with references to old books, authoritative sources of insight that need to be reevaluated. Each level of narration represents a stage of reflection, a reflection on a reflection, pointing to the constant human quest for self- and re-examination, and the need to continually probe the past for meaning. The past constantly needs to be reinterpreted and made productive in a further synthesis with contemporary insights into a higher entity. While Novalis simply indicates that this historical mechanism is generally valid in romantic thought, Odoevskij invests it with a more concrete contemporary meaning. Through Faust's facilitation, the three young people of the main frame, in reading the manuscript, create a new vision of synthesis in the idea of a cultural synthesis of Russian and Western European values into a higher entity.[9] This synthesis, it is hoped, will usher in a new historical age not unlike the golden age of antiquity. Odoevskij thus offers a more concrete vision of the future, while Novalis describes in general terms the future perceptive qualities of the transcendental individual as the human being of the future.

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[9] This synthesis is vaguely described as a blend of Russian spirituality and instinct with Western empiricism and thirst for knowledge and innovation. In both Novalis's and Odoevskij's writings, the idea of synthesis remains rather abstract, for it is a symbol of a future ideal that cannot be defined in concrete terms.

The Continual Postponement of Synthesis

In true keeping with romantic aesthetics, which are based on the continual antagonism between the ideal and the real and its temporary suspension in the symbol, synthesis is never portrayed as permanently reached in either *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* or *Russian Nights*. The closest the reader comes to such synthesis is the visions of the absolute in the "narrated poetry" mentioned earlier. In Novalis's novel, this is found in the Atlantis Tale, when the youth's song before the king is circumscribed as being a universal poetry. However, it is not reproduced verbatim, because the author is not in its actual possession, since the absolute can never be fully expressed. Therefore, a perfect universal view must remain hearsay to both Heinrich and the reader of the novel. In *Russian Nights*, it is at first glance Bach who comes closest to living an ideal life. His experience of spiritual revelation inside the organ is rendered in a "narrated poetry," an expression of poetic insight. Within the entire work, it represents a rare glimpse of the absolute, and like Novalis, Odoevskij cannot express it verbatim, but can only circumscribe it. The works can talk about absolute poetry or a universal outlook, and how it may be found, but its complete expression remains elusive, even if it is said to be reached momentarily. Consequently, the promise of synthesis is eternally projected to some future point.

Since the future synthesis is never actually shown to be reached, its attainment must be rendered as a plausible future event. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the harmony described in the sub-stories and in the encounters between Heinrich and other figures on his journey have a clearly foreshadowing function. Generally, they anticipate Heinrich's

development, which is already laid out for him in these tales. Having met the miner, Heinrich himself realizes this:

> Nun übersah er auf einmal all seine Verhältnisse mit der weiten Welt um ihn her; fühlte, was er durch sie geworden und was sie ihm werden würde [...]. Die Erzählung der Kaufleute von dem Jünglinge, der die Natur so emsig betrachtete, und der Eydam des Königs wurde, kam ihm wieder zu Gedanken, und tausend andere Erinnerungen seines Lebens knüpften sich von selbst an einen zauberischen Faden (*HVO* 252).
>
> Now he surveyed at a glance all his relations to the wide world around him, felt what he had become through it and what it would become to him [...]. The story the merchants told about the youth who studied nature so diligently and who became the king's son came to his mind again, and a thousand other recollections of his life strung themselves on a magic thread (*hvo* 77-78).

The most explicit example of fiction foreshadowing real developments can, of course, be found in Heinrich's book of his own life, which he finds in the hermit's cave. In this fashion, past mythical evidence of successful harmony is used as a harbinger of the future attainment of such harmony, thus indicating that harmony is possible, because it existed before, and is innate to human nature. This idea is already offered in the opening pages of the novel when the stranger triggers Heinrich's dream of the blue flower, leaving him with the following impression:

> Ich hörte einst von alten Zeiten reden; wie da die Thiere und Bäume und Felsen mit den Menschen gesprochen hätten. Mir ist grade so, als wollten sie allaugenblicklich anfangen [...] (*HVO* 195).
>
> Once I heard tell of the days of old, how animals and trees and cliffs talked with people then. I feel just as though they might start any moment now [...] (*hvo* 15).

This vision of primordial harmony is succeeded by a dream of long wanderings, moving from war and captivity to sacred calm and bliss (*HVO* 90-93), the same bliss for which Heinrich longs. An immediate line is drawn between the past and the future, displaying

a typical triadic movement from former harmony, to a period of loss thereof, and final renewed harmony on a higher level, corresponding to a synthesis of antagonistic principles (see also Mähl, 1965 305-328). A similar movement is contained in the song of the youth in the Atlantis Tale. Thus, the sub-stories are designed to foreshadow Heinrich's future development. The technique of using the past as a validation of future development is also used in the foreshadowing function of Heinrich's father's dream. While the father failed to attain a higher life himself, he nevertheless is prophesied to have a son with a higher destiny[10] (*HVO* 200-202). The method of creating convincing assumptions about future developments is clear: invent or resurrect a myth in legend form, defend it by arguing that what can be imagined must be achievable and has in fact already existed, then use it as proof or justification that the depicted attempt at synthesis is credible. The projected synthesis is thus touted in persuasive fashion as a predictable and natural consequence, even though it is never actually offered in its entirety. Nevertheless, the illusion is created that synthesis is just around the corner and will be logically reached at the end of the progressive movement depicted.

Echoing the visions of harmony conjured up in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the two manuscript writers in Odoevskij's work invoke a primordial image of harmony, which functions as a sort of motto for the search they are about to undertake:

> Между тем восставали перед нами видения прошедшего, рядами проходили мимо нас святые мужи, заклавшие жизнь свою на алтаре

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[10] Heinrich is a higher projected synthesis of his father's ultimate sobriety and his own poetic nature. He is also a synthesis of his northern father (Eisenach) and his southern mother, who takes him to her home town, Augsburg.

> бескорыстного знания [...]. Неужели труды, бдения, жизнь этих мужей были пустою насмешкою судьбы над человечеством? Сохранились предания: когда человек был в самом деле царем природы; когда каждая тварь слушалась его голоса, потому что он умел назвать ее (*RN* 51-52).

> Meanwhile there rose before us visions of the past, holy men passed before us in rows, men who had pledged their lives on the altar of disinterested knowledge [...]. Could it be that the work, the vigilance, the life of these men were an empty mockery of fate over mankind? Legends remained of the time when man was truly the ruler of nature; when every creature obeyed his voice, because he could name it (*rn* 54).

Again, a line is drawn between a harmonious past and future possibilities. Myth and legend function as heralds of a destiny within humanity's reach, if only humanity were willing to make an effort to reconnect with its inner, primordial sources. Further, in *Russian Nights* the manuscript writers refer to an ancient book which argues on a more intellectual level that a return to harmony is possible:

> Не напрасно человек ищет той точки опоры, где могли бы примириться все его желания, где все вопросы, его возмущающие, могли бы найти ответ, все способности получить стройное направление [...]. Ему нужен [...] живой центр для всех предметов, - словом, ему нужна истина, но истина полная, безусловная. Недаром также в устах человека сохранилось поверье, что можно желать только того, что знаешь; одно это желание не свидетельствует ли, что человек имеет понятие о такой истине, хотя не может себе отдать в ней отчета? иначе откуда бы этому желанию пробраться в его душу? Одно это предчувствие полной истины не свидетельствует ли, что есть какое-то основание для этого предчувствия [...] как бы не было похоже на грезы [...]
> (*RN* 42).

> Not in vain does man seek the point of support at which all his desires could be reconciled, all the questions disturbing him could be answered, all his abilities could find a harmonious direction, [...] he needs a live centre for all things - in a word, he needs truth, complete, undisputable truth. Also, it is not without purpose that man's lips have preserved the belief that one can desire only what one knows. Doesn't this desire alone indicate that a man has a concept of such a truth, although he cannot account it to himself? Otherwise how could this desire

> invade his soul? Doesn't this presentiment of an absolute truth indicate that there is some basis for this presentiment [...] no matter how it may resemble dreams [...] (*rn* 44).

One is reminded here of Heinrich's dream of the blue flower, which is in fact a condensed poetic representation of the argument advanced in this quoted passage. Similarly, in *Russian Nights*, the synthesis is projected and defined as possible, even though it is never shown to be attained. The tone of possibility, of feasibility, is set before the philosophical journey, which encounters only failures to implement harmony (in the sub-stories). Despite these failures, the argument made in the ancient book remains valid. In *Russian Nights*, the synthesis in the sub-stories is openly elusive, but the very lessons their failures afford provide the two seekers with insight into the type of thinking necessary for future harmony. The feeling of always falling short despite one's best efforts is most closely voiced in the story about Bach. As his development is traced, the reader initially seems certain that the composer will reach perfect harmony, but toward the end of his life, when he has become alienated from his fellow human beings, his inner harmony is revealed as an illusion.[11] In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the depicted synthesis in the sub-stories is also not without blemish. For example, Atlantis, the kingdom of harmony, sinks into the sea; Zulima's idyllic homeland has fallen into enemy hands. Thus, the accounts of synthesis are constantly subverted, and harmony seems continually just beyond reach. Many critics have placed too much emphasis on the

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[11] The two artist stories can be seen as corrective criticism on the one-sided romantic view of art as an alternative world into which one can simply escape. Again, this point underscores Odoevskij's aesthetics as rooted in reality, as "radically" romantic and therefore corresponding to the Jena variety of German romanticism.

aspect of synthesis in this work, some even expressing confidence that, if completed, the novel would have ended in achieved synthesis (for example, Zimmermann 276). However, this assumption is not supported by either the finished portions of the novel or its author's literary theories. Certainly, Novalis himself downplays the *de facto* losses of harmony, stressing, instead, the need for a reinstitution of harmony, while Odoevskij uses these losses as platforms to launch an improved attempt at reaching harmony through an effort of thought. Novalis by and large conjures up an atmosphere of harmony that needs to be emulated with the help of "heavenly guidance" (*hvo* 22; "himmlische Führung," *HVO* 202). By contrast, Odoevskij, in a more analytical, positivistic period, transforms his stories into objects of study and analysis in order to provoke a thoughtful discussion on how the problem of antagonism could be solved in real life.

Turning more closely to the frame tales of the two works, one notices here too that due to the eternal postponement of synthesis, the stage by stage accumulation of insight always leads to more riddles and renewed desire for insight. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Heinrich's dream creates the goal of synthesis, which he must approach. This goal is initially embodied by Augsburg as his travel destination. During the trip, Heinrich reaches various temporary insights, most notably, when he reads his own book of life in the cave; however, the book's missing ending only opens up more questions as to his future. Similarly, the destination Augsburg turns out to be but another stepping stone in his development. For it is here that Heinrich meets the poet Klingsohr, who gives him further instruction on the nature and power of poetry. It is also here that Heinrich identifies Mathilde as the face in the blue flower, the symbol of Heinrich's

search for absolute synthesis. Their union, celebrated in the poem "Astralis" at the beginning of part two of the novel, turns out to be yet a further stage, since Mathilde dies and instructs Heinrich from the beyond in the following fashion:

> Härme dich nicht - Ich bin bey dir. Du wirst noch eine Weile auf Erden bleiben, aber das Mädchen wird dich trösten, bis du auch stirbst und zu unsern Freuden eingehst (*HVO* 321).
>
> Do not grieve, for I am with you. You still have a while to stay on earth, but the girl will comfort you until you die too and enter into our joys (*hvo* 155).

The end of his journey is again delayed, projected into the future. His encounter with the girl Zyane (a variation of Mathilde) reveals again the reappearance of stages toward a continually elusive goal. Heinrich asks Zyane, where they are going ("Wo gehn wir denn hin?" *HVO* 200). Her answer "always home" ("Immer nach Hause;" *HVO* 200) points to the eternal nature of the journey, a never-ending search for a spiritual homeland. This homeland is ultimately none other than the self, complete transcendental comprehension.[12] The conversation with Sylvester, while showing some of Heinrich's new insights, also underlines that Heinrich is still, and always will remain, an eternal disciple, in this case of Sylvester. He will never possess ultimate wisdom. Of course, at this point the novel comes to an unplanned end because Novalis died. If Tieck's account of the planned continuation is even remotely credible, Novalis intended to send Heinrich around the world to become immersed in more and more cultural experiences, including

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[12] It is in this sense that one of the most well-known lines from Novalis's fragments must be understood:

> Nach Innen geht der geheimnißvolle Weg. In uns, oder nirgends ist die Ewigkeit [...] (II: 419).
>
> The mysterious path leads into our inner being. In us, or nowhere, is eternity [...].

ancient Greece, Rome and the Norse world, and to synthesize everything and everybody in the very end[13] (I: 359-369). Despite Tieck's, and indeed Novalis's optimism,[14] many critics feel that the envisioned synthesis could never have been convincingly portrayed (for example, Kohlschmidt 125). In fact, considering Novalis's aesthetics, a final synthesis should not have been the goal of his novel. Rather, the novel should provide transcendental glimpses into the absolute, and furthermore, attempt to bridge the antagonism between the ideal and the real through the symbol. Therefore, one critic refers to the sub-stories in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as "schematic drafts of the future" which in an interaction with the main frame explore a "discourse of delay" (Kuzniar, 1987 101-102), since the dissolution of antagonism is perpetually postponed.

The continual postponement of synthesis in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* appears in the main frame of *Russian Nights* as the continual elusiveness of answers. In each sub-story synthesis collapses due to an imbalance of spiritual and material elements. The two positivist sceptics Victor and Vyacheslav resent the continual short-fall of answers in the manuscript, and frequently, it is their expressions of vexation with which the main frame

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[13] This vision of final synthesis in Novalis's thinking takes on rather incomprehensible forms. Generally, he seems to have wanted to bring all natural and cultural phenomena to one denominator in an effort to express artistically the goals pursued in the encyclopedic project *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*. Similarly, Odoevskij traces the roots of *Russian Nights* to an earlier, rather unfeasible encyclopedic project (*RN* 313).

[14] See Novalis's notes on the planned continuation of his novel (III: 652, Nr. 568; 671-672, Nr. 612; 675, Nr. 625) and the "Paralipomena zum 'Heinrich von Ofterdingen'" (I: 335-358).

discussions resume. After the reading of *A City Without Name*, Vyacheslav states: "I don't understand what these gentlemen wanted to prove by it" (*rn* 115/*RN* 109). At the end of the seventh night, he outright rejects the stories as proper answers to the questions that prompted their nocturnal meetings. When Faust has finished reading *The Improvvisatore*, Vyacheslav exclaims:

> Измена, господа! [...] Фауст нарочно выбрал этот отрывок из рукописи, вместо ответа на наши вчерашние возражения (*RN* 139).
>
> Treason, gentlemen! [...] Faust purposely chose this excerpt from the manuscript instead of an answer to our objections yesterday (*rn* 145).

In the ninth night, both Victor and Vyacheslav demand concrete results from the manuscript:

> Виктор: "Ну, а что же знаменитая рукопись? какую еще сказку расскажут нам твои эксцентрические путешественники?"
> Фауст: "Рукопись кончена."
> Вячеслав: "Как кончена? - Стало быть, это был *пуф*!" (*RN* 190)
>
> Victor: "Well, and how about the famous manuscript? What other stories will your eccentric travellers tell us?"
> Faust: "The manuscript is finished."
> Vyacheslav: "What? Finished? So it was just a *bluff*!" (*rn* 198)

At this point, Faust must explain the interconnectedness of the stories and their symbolic meaning by providing additional material: the passage describing the court trial of all the stories (or their protagonists). Therefore, the apparent ending of the manuscript is delayed, and will be delayed again when Faust reads further pages by the two seekers containing their theory of the dying West. Here, it is the manuscript writers themselves who provide an explanation of the results of their investigations:

> Нас спросят: "Чем же кончилось ваше путешествие?" - Путешествием. Не окончив его, мы состарились тою старостию,

> которая в XIX веке начинается с колыбели, - страданием [...]. Тщетно мы измеряли шагами пустыню души человеческой, [...] тщетно с горькою насмешкою рассматривали их развалины, - безмолвна была пустыня и не раздралась еще завеса святилища! (*RN* 198-199)

> We will be asked, 'How did your journey end?' By journeying. Before we ended it we became old with that old age which begins in one's cradle in the nineteenth century - with suffering [...]. We measured the desert of the human soul with our steps in vain, [...] bitter with our scorn we examined their ruins in vain - the desert remained silent and the veil of the sanctuary was not yet rent (*rn* 207).

The situation described here is, indeed, similar to Heinrich's reappearance as a despondent pilgrim, which denotes a further delay before further revelation. But for the two seekers in *Russian Nights*, a partial epiphany is not long in following either. They come to realize that throughout their journey, they nurtured a type of thinking which they can now apply by offering a solution to current problems in the idea of a synthesis between Russia and the West. As Faust had noted earlier, the manuscript developed scenarios of theories fully applied (for instance Malthus' population theory in *The Last Suicide*). These scenarios are rendered in poetic images which, while hyperbolic, still express essentially valid observations (*RN* 110/rn 115). The two seekers conclude from the observations they accumulated on their journey that the West is dying: neither the West's philosophical theories nor its art are capable of fostering individual happiness and social harmony. To this empirical fact they add an element of speculation, and thus develop their concept of Russia as the rejuvenating factor in a new synthesis with Western culture. By arriving at this concept, the two friends provide a concrete example of applied progressive thinking. However, even within this concept, one encounters further delay, a continual postponement of the envisioned harmony, when Russia's task

as saviour is shifted onto the next generation:

> **Велико наше звание и труден подвиг! [...] Другая, высшая победа - победа науки, искусства и веры - ожидает нас на развалинах дряхлой Европы. Увы! может быть, не нашему поколению принадлежит это великое дело! Мы еще слишком близки к зрелищу, которое было пред нашими глазами!** (*RN* 202)
>
> Great is our calling and difficult our task! [...] Another, higher victory - the victory of science, art and faith - is awaiting us on the ruins of enfeebled Europe. Alas! Perhaps this great task is not for our generation to perform! We are still too close to the spectacle we have witnessed! (*rn* 211)

The solution is projected into the future and clearly addresses the readers of the manuscript (the main frame protagonists), as well as the readers of *Russian Nights* itself, as the new generation, into which all hope is placed (*RN* 203).

In keeping with their positivistic convictions, Victor and Vyacheslav consider these statements to be nothing but empty phrases and pathos. It is Faust who points to the type of thinking and ideas in the manuscript as its most important elements, thus deemphasizing the importance of tangible results (*RN* 233). Through his facilitation, the three young friends reluctantly come around to endorse his views on the possibility for positive change. Faust argues that in human terms the West has not progressed, despite an abundance of activity (*RN* 213). Western enlightenment is revealed as, at best, a small step toward the attainment of true harmony in humanity. And even though "the necessity of one general living theory is felt more and more each day" (*rn* 236/*RN* 227), Faust points out that real science and real history do not even exist yet (*RN* 226-227). Nevertheless, Faust speaks confidently of a future resolution of problems, because he has faith in the unique qualities of Russia as a young, spirited nation. Victor shows his reluctance to accept the further postponement of attaining definitive goals when he states:

> Все хорошо, [...] но что же нам между тем остается делать? (*RN* 245)
>
> That is all fine, [...] but what do we do meanwhile?" (*rn* 255)

Faust explains that through the reading of the manuscript Rostislav, Victor and Vyacheslav have been inoculated with the progressive thinking that it illustrated. However, a reflective distance is needed to make wise and full use of this newly acquired type of thinking:

> Фауст: "Нет, господа, для этого вам еще надобно выйти из состояния брожения, которое осталось от прививки; подождать той минуты, когда гармонически улягутся все стихии, вас образующие [...]" (*RN* 245).
>
> Faust: "No, gentlemen, you're still in a state of agitation which is the result of inoculation; you must wait for the moment when all the elements forming you will achieve harmony [...]" (*rn* 255).

It is clearly up to the young generation of positivists to effect a new synthesis. Thus, Faust also reveals himself as already too alienated from the positivistic "spirit of the times" to play an active role in the synthesis of this reality with a new ideal. Faust represents but a stage of mediation, he passes the torch of his two deceased friends on to the younger positivistic generation who alone can foster a synthesis that will result in future harmony. Progressive philosophical thinking thus provides the tools to fight the disease of the age, rather than prescribe the means for a cure.

Fundamentally, Faust and the manuscript writers have revealed to the three protagonists of the main frame the method of thought which alone can move harmony into the realm of possibility. The same atmosphere of possibility and optimism is conveyed in Heinrich's conversation with Sylvester in the second part of Novalis's novel. Just as the periods of harmony described in the German novel are never reached fully by

Heinrich himself, in *Russian Nights* neither the two friends writing the manuscript nor the four protagonists reading it ever come into its immediate possession. However, both Heinrich and the Russian seekers are progressively aware of the goal and the methods for reaching it, and this is, ultimately through poetry and, more specifically, through the mediation of the symbol. In this spirit Sylvester prophesies to Heinrich:

> Euch wird alles verständlich werden, und die Welt und ihre Geschichte verwandelt sich euch in die heilige Schrift, sowie ihr an der heiligen Schrift das große Beyspiel habt, wie in einfachen Worten und Geschichten das Weltall offenbart werden kann; wenn auch nicht gerade zu, *doch mittelbar* durch Anregung und Erweckung höherer Sinne (*HVO* 334; italics mine).
>
> All things will become intelligible to you, and the world and its history will become Holy Scripture for you, just as in Holy Writ you have the great example of how simple words and stories can reveal the universe, if not directly, *at least mediately* through the rousing and waking of our higher senses (*hvo* 168; italics mine).

While Heinrich will gain immediate insight into himself, he will nevertheless only be able to express it indirectly ("mittelbar"). Similarly, Faust in the epilogue points to the fact that while truth can be immediately grasped within ourselves in a transcendental act (*RN* 237), its expression can only be rendered approximately in the symbol, since "we instinctively reach for a certain letter in nature, as the constant symbol of a living thought" (*rn* 202-203; "**постоянный символ живой мысли**," *RN* 194). However, "in nature man can find only *likeness*, but never *identity*" (*rn* 203; "**лишь *сходство*, но *равенство* - никогда**," *RN* 195). Aware of the problem of representation in romantic aesthetics[15] and the perpetuity of the philosophical search, Faust, as Odoevskij

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[15] The problem of representation in romantic aesthetics is discussed in detail in Seyhan 1992.

himself observed, finds aesthetic satisfaction in the symbol as the next best thing to absolute representation (*RN* 314/*rn* 30).

"Not-Knowing" and Self-Reflexivity

The perpetual postponement of synthesis is ultimately attributable to the permanence of the state of "not-knowing," which Novalis termed "Nichterkenntnis." It would seem that in Novalis's understanding the acceptance of "not-knowing" after a brief glimpse at truth is a deciding factor in the attainment of personal happiness. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, stages of insight are continually reversed into stages of "not-knowing," a prime example being Heinrich's book of life, written in an incomprehensible provencal language. While it indicates to him the course of his future life, it also ends in further "not-knowing," because its ending is missing. Nevertheless, Heinrich accepts and appreciates these glimpses for what they are. He is content with always "lifting veils," even if it is only to find yet another veil. Each wondrous glimpse at the absolute, such as the brief reappearance of Mathilde's voice, is welcomed as furthering his own development, in the course of which he embraces more and more of the surrounding world.

By contrast, Odoevskij's figures in the sub-stories rebel against the supremacy of "not-knowing," which is why Cypriano solicits help from the devil to obtain absolute knowledge of nature. Cypriano realizes too late the value of rare glimpses in relation to a possession of absolute knowledge, a knowledge which destroys his chance for happiness:

> С каким горем он вспоминал о том сладком страдании, когда, бывало, на него находило редкое вдохновение, когда неясные образы носились перед ним; волновались, сливались друг с другом!... Вот образы яснеют, яснеют; из другого мира медленно, как долгий поцелуй любви, тянется к нему рой поэтических созданий; приблизились, от них пашет неземной теплотою, и природа сливается с ними в гармонических звуках - как легко, как свежо на душе! (*RN* 138)
>
> With what grief he remembered that sweet torment, when a rare wave of inspiration overcame him, when vague images floated before him, billowing and fusing with each other!... Then the images grew brighter and brighter; a host of poetic creations drew near to him from another world. Slowly, like a long kiss of love, they came quite close, breathing with unearthly warmth, and nature fused with them in harmonious sounds, and his soul felt easy and light! (*rn* 144)

Both Cypriano and Beethoven fail to accept a vague, approximate expression, and thus ultimate "not-knowing" as a new stage of self-encounter. Similarly, the main frame protagonists Victor and Vyacheslav reject the cryptic, elusive nature of the manuscript.

By contrast, Novalis' Heinrich celebrates the ultimate incomprehensibility of the hieroglyph as an occasion for self-reflection and insight into both self and world. When Zulima describes her idyllic land of origin, she mentions the stone tiles that can be found there, which display strange inscriptions and images:

> Sie scheinen so bekannt und nicht ohne Ursach so wohl erhalten zu seyn. Man sinnt und sinnt, einzelne Bedeutungen ahnet man, und wird um so begieriger, den tiefsinnigen Zusammenhang dieser uralten Schrift zu errathen. Der unbekannte Geist derselben erregt ein ungewöhnliches Nachdenken, und wenn man auch ohne den gewünschten Fund von dannen geht, so hat man doch tausend merkwürdige Entdeckungen in sich selbst gemacht, die dem Leben einen neuen Glanz und dem Gemüth eine lange, belohnende Beschäftigung geben (*HVO* 236-237).
>
> They look so familiar, it appears to be not without reason that they are preserved so well. You meditate and meditate and guess at a meaning now and then and get all the more eager to unravel the profound connection of these primitive inscriptions. The unknown spirit of these arouses uncommon reflection; and even if one leaves without the wished-for revelation, still one has made a thousand remarkable discoveries within oneself, which give a new splendor to life and

provide the mind with a long and rewarding occupation (*hvo* 60-61).

This passage gives a condensed explanation of the value of transcendental poetry and transcendental inquiry, thus also containing metafictional commentary. Equally important is the emphasis on increased self-knowledge and personal satisfaction in perceiving the world from a viewpoint of an informed yet mystified state of "not-knowing." In *Russian Nights*, Cypriano immediately and fully understands the hieroglyphs on the sheet of paper given to him by the devilish Segeliel:

> Это был огромный свиток, сверху донизу исписанный непонятными цифрами. Но едва Киприано взглянул на них, как, оживленный сверхъестественною силою, понял значение чудесных письмен (*RN* 135).
>
> It was a huge scroll covered from top to bottom with incomprehensible numbers. But no sooner had Cypriano glanced at them than, enlivened by supernatural power, he understood the meaning of the magic writing (*rn* 140).

However, his full comprehension fails to nourish his soul, in other words, he achieves no further spiritual self-encounter. In the epilogue, Faust defines transcendental insight into one's self as the prime task of humanity and identifies poetry as the only means available with which to expedite this self-reflective process. Inviting the individual to perform "a free and complete penetration of the spirit" in a transcendental act, Faust muses:

> Великое дело понять свой инстинкт и чувствовать свой разум! в этом, может быть, вся задача человечества. Пока эта задача не для всех разрешена, пойдем отыскивать те указы, которые какая-та добрая нянюшка дала в руки нам [...]. Одна из таких указок называется у людей творчеством, вдохновением, если угодно, поэзиею. При помощи этой указки род человеческий, хотя и не силен в азбуке, но выучил много весьма важных слов [...] (*RN* 238).
>
> It is a great thing to understand one's own instincts and to feel one's mind!

> Therein, perhaps, lies the whole task of mankind. Until this task is solved for everyone, let us go seek the instructions given us [...] by some good teacher [...] One such instruction people call creations, inspiration, poetry, if you like. With the help of these instructions, mankind though not very well versed in the basic principles, has learned many rather important things [...] (*m* 247).

These things one learns from poetry are about oneself, and by extension, society in general. Poetry, through symbols, can elucidate for people their own selves:

> Человеку дана привилегия творить особый мир, [...] этот мир называется искусством, поэзиею; важный мир, ибо в нем человек может найти символы того, что совершается, или должно бы совершаться внутри и вокруг его (*RN* 241).
>
> Man is given the privilege of creating his own particular world [...]. This world is called art, poetry; it is an important world because in it man may find symbols of what takes place, or should take place within and around him (*m* 250).

Faust considers this to be a first, indispensable step toward future harmony. He therefore also identifies the most important function of the search conducted by the manuscript writers as triggering self-reflective thinking, through which a new viewpoint could be reached (*RN* 198/*m* 207).

Self and Other

In both works under examination, art, more specifically the symbol, must effect a reconciliation between ideal and real, thus narrowing the distance to the absolute, integrating self into the other, and thereby achieving harmony. The engine for this process of reconciliation is self-reflective thinking. However, as Kuzniar has demonstrated, the flip-side of self-reflective thinking is a perpetual return to a loss of self, since self-reflective thinking is based on inner division, and is, ultimately, dependent on the gap between thought and expression. The elusiveness of synthesis in *Heinrich von*

Ofterdingen is characterized by a perpetual loss of self at the very moment at which a glimpse at the absolute truth or full self-knowledge seems possible. This happens, for example, when he finds his own book of life:

> In the cave episode Heinrich's identity is rendered enigmatic; his self is not duplicated in his double but rather divided into the reading subject and the illegible written text that represents (or reflects) this subject [...]. This division and, hence, destabilization of the self accrue when it becomes clear that any insights brought by reflection are not immediate [...]. Self-reflexivity thus signals not completed self-knowledge but the absence thereof (Kuzniar, 1988 83).

Nevertheless, the critic rightly emphasizes that Novalis does not deplore the loss of self-consciousness this entails, arguing that "it does not follow that the drive to find pure, integral being must be abandoned. What fundamentally characterizes the self for Novalis is, besides its division, its drive toward synthesis" (Kuzniar, 1988 80). Ultimately, self-loss, the constant elusiveness of truth and expression are celebrated in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* as productive forces in the realm of transcendental poetry. By contrast, the validity of this law, fundamentally one of romantic art, is lamented by Faust even as he subjugates himself to it, as this scene at the beginning of the ninth night shows:

> Когда он [Фауст] перелистывал свою старую книгу - тогда ясность снова сообщалась его взорам; когда он отводил их от книги, как бы желая во внутренности души сосредоточить смысл читанного,- сново грусть появлялась на лице философа (*RN* 182).
>
> As he [Faust] scanned the pages of the old book, brightness came again into his look; but whenever he turned his eyes away from it, as if trying to concentrate within his soul the meaning of what he had read, mournfulness appeared again on the philosopher's face (*rn* 190).

In these few lines one witnesses the futile attempt to maintain an enduring glimpse at truth and at authentic self, so that the self always returns to a state of self-loss. While Faust espouses a romantic aesthetics that bears close resemblance to the concept of poetry

championed by Novalis, he does not demonstrate the same contentment in the continual lifting of veils as does Heinrich. It is perhaps no coincidence that Odoevskij, in the same paragraph just cited, speaks of "the serenity of conviction our good eccentric *seemed* to possess" (*rn* 190, italics mine; "**казалось**," *RN* 182). Faust, in the last analysis, perhaps finds more solace in the symbol than true satisfaction.

In the romantic doctrine espoused by Novalis and Odoevskij, progressive thinking is characterized by a constant self-examination that accrues increasingly more insights into the self and the world, thus progressively approaching a universal truth that in fact synthesizes the self and the other. In order to understand oneself, one needs to understand the other. This entails the act of going back and forth between the self and the other, thereby narrowing the distance between the self and the other toward some sort of state of absolute insight. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the sub-stories are the other through which Heinrich gains insight into himself and grows spiritually. Therefore, his departure from his home (toward the "other") strikes Heinrich as a new approach toward it (*HVO* 205), so that he will find his self in the other.[16] This is later validated in Zyane's remark that their destiny is "always home" (*HVO* 325). In *Russian Nights*, the manuscript writers convert the introspective question "Why do we live?" (also posed by the main frame protagonists in the first night) into "Why do others live?" In other words, they convert the search for the self into a search for the other. Their journey into the world (i.e., the sub-stories) is therefore really a journey of self-discovery. It is through

[16] Hörisch points out that in Novalis's novel the self is in fact only truly free in the other (227, 231). For a detailed discussion of the mutual symbolization of the self and the other in Novalis's aesthetics see Ruder 1974.

the help of the other that they define their own position. The ultimate imbalance in the manuscript stories between the self and the other is expressed when the characters of the sub-stories are brought to trial. Here, the court repeatedly finds that a concentration on either exclusively the self or the other leads to a loss of that on which one thought one had been focusing. As a result, no enriching, fulfilling interaction between the self and the other can take place. For example, the arraigned Piranesi concludes that he was too preoccupied with searching for himself, so that he forgot about people, the others. To this, the court replies: "Your life belonged to the people, not to yourself!" (*rn* 199/*RN* 191). The other dominated him, because he failed to synthesize himself in this other. By the same token, Faust clearly spells out the need for a mutual enrichment of self and other, in fact the need to try to close the gap between self and other. This requirement comprises his main advice to his young friends:

> Я вам рекомендую [...] читать две книги: одна из них называется *Природой* - она напечатана довольно четким шрифтом и на языке довольно понятном; другая - *Человек* - рукописная тетрадь, написана на языке мало известном [...]. Эти книги в связи между собою, и одна объясняет другую, [...] но [...] читайте не строки, а между строками, там много найдете любопытного [...]. (*RN* 239).
>
> I recommend to you to [...] read two books: one of them is called *Nature* - it is well printed and its language is quite comprehensible; the other one is *Man* - a manuscript written in a little-known language [...]. These books are related to each other, and one explains the other, [...] [but] don't read the lines, but rather between the lines: you'll find there much of interest [...] (*rn* 249).

This is a clear metaphor of the need to integrate the self into the other, to synthesize the two principles and thereby gain, if not ultimate synthesis, then at least increased self-knowledge, "much of interest."

Affinity Through Dialogue

Ultimately, both Novalis and Odoevskij see the continual antagonism, the elusiveness of the synthesis, as an occasion for a self-enriching philosophical search, although in Odoevskij's work the acceptance of "not-knowing" is accompanied by a strong dose of regret. In neither of the two works under discussion does one encounter the sort of romantic irony espoused by F. Schlegel, who employed it to subvert his own idealism.[17] Novalis and Odoevskij, rather, create a swelling of meaning, a growing affinity between protagonists that can offset the elusiveness of synthesis. Thus, they place their hope squarely on the inner capabilities, the instinct of the individual. In the two novels, this is expressed primarily in the general trope of the dialogue, in which a mutual understanding between characters, an affinity of spirits, indicates that harmony is achievable. In an earlier section of this chapter, the dialogic element was identified as an important ingredient in the romantic novel. Indeed, both at the very beginning of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, and in the "Desiderata" section at the beginning of the manuscript in Odoevskij's work, the invocation of a harmonious primordial world is closely associated with perfect communication between man and nature (*HVO* 195; *RN* 52). Especially in *Russian Nights* the problem of complete expression is continually addressed. Faust, in the end, banks all his hope on an instinctual, inner understanding between people that may mitigate or even overcome the impossibility of complete expression.

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[17] E. Behler, for example, cannot establish any true romantic irony in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1983 296).

In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the different conversations between Heinrich and the people he encounters on his journey show a progressive creation of affinity, which represents a growing affinity of Heinrich with the other, with the world around him. The word "conversation" ("Gespräch") is used repeatedly throughout the novel to characterize an exchange of views that generates or reveals an affinity of spirit (for example, *HVO* 230, 237-239, 241, 245). Several scholars have referred to this phenomenon, including Schulz, who examines conversation in Novalis's novel as a separate "narrative type" ("Erzählfform;" 1992 129-130). While the first conversation with his parents confronts Heinrich with a rather prosaic world, he does find some commonality with his father, when he hears of his similar dream, even if the father did not heed its call (*HVO* 200-202). The merchants, despite their practical outlook, introduce Heinrich to the world of poetry. His conversations with them, apart from minor disagreements (for instance, their critical view of Heinrich's mentor, the court chaplain) mitigated by the business people's tolerance, are characterized by considerable mutual understanding (*HVO* 207-208). Heinrich's dialogue with Zulima reveals an even higher degree of spontaneous affinity, which prompts the girl to observe that Heinrich looks familiar to her and resembles one of her lost brothers (*HVO* 236). These words also signal the will to bridge the gulf between the eastern and the western world. The conversation between the miner and the hermit is a mutual reinforcement of ideas and views, creating, besides more affinity, an aura of conviction through a mutual validation of opinions. The following is a typical response from the miner to the hermit's statements:

> "Wie wahr und einleuchtend is Eure Rede," setzte der Alte hinzu (*HVO* 258).

"How true and plausible your words are," the miner added (*hvo* 84).

The creation of affinity leads to a swelling of meaning that has an immediate effect on the listeners, opening up new vistas of possibilities:

> Heinrich und die Kaufleute hatten aufmerksam dem Gespräche zugehört, und der erstere fühlte besonders neue Entwicklungen seines ahndungsvollen Innern (*HVO* 263).
>
> Henry and the merchants listened attentively to the conversation, and the former especially felt a new unfolding of intuitive inner life (*hvo* 89).

Similar effects result from Heinrich's conversation with Klingsohr, and in particular, with Sylvester in the second part of the novel. Sylvester and Heinrich praise each other's contribution to the conversation and delight in the insights they are able to express and arouse in each other (*HVO* 332-334). When Heinrich talks about the identity of a poetic song and a noble deed, he mentions that consciousness must be raised to the state of fiction ("fable"), which he equals to an intense conversation that is free of conflict:

> Das müßige Gewissen in einer glatten nicht widerstehenden Welt wird zum fesselnden Gespräch, zur alleserzählenden Fabel (*HVO* 332).
>
> Conscience at ease in a smooth, non-resisting world turns into fascinating conversation, into fable telling everything (*hvo* 167).

The affinity of spirit created through conversation emerges as a driving force for obtaining insight and approaching harmony. This is, of course, most clearly symbolized in the condensed dialogues between Heinrich and Mathilde in the first part (*HVO* 287-290), and Heinrich and Zyane in the second (*HVO* 325). Here, the agreement of spirit has reached a point at which the very identities of the interlocutors become intertwined, sometimes even obscured, indicating that some measure of interpenetration of self and other has taken place:

> "Wer hat dir von mir gesagt." frug der Pilgrim. "Unsere Mutter." "Wer ist deine Mutter?" "Die Mutter Gottes." "Seit wann bist du hier?" "Seitdem ich aus dem Grabe gekommen bin?" "Warst du schon einmal gestorben?" "Wie könnt' ich denn leben?" (*HVO* 325).
>
> "Who told you about me?" inquired the pilgrim. "Our Mother." "Who is your mother?" "The Mother of God." "How long have you been here?" "Since I came out of the grave." "Were you once dead?" "How else could I live?" (translation mine; see also *hvo* 158[18]).

Notable also is the answer to a question with another question, which, besides again indicating the perpetuity of searching, also underlines the affinity between the characters, who still understand each other through questions, rather than straightforward answers. Finally, the basic cryptic nature of these condensed dialogues points to the characters' having reached a degree of spiritual affinity that requires no detailed explanation.[19]

In *Russian Nights*, dialogues and conversations are also characterized by a growing affinity among interlocutors, thus fulfilling a similar function as the dialogues in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. In the sub-stories, lack of affinity with others is stressed as a prime stumbling block to attaining a fullness of life. Its absence destroys the economist, the inhabitants of *A City Without Name*, Bach and Cypriano alike. About the latter it is concluded:

> [...] он *все видел, все понимал*, но между им и людьми, между им и

---

[18] The rendition of the dialogue in separate lines in the translation undermines the effect of spiritual intermingling in the original text, and is therefore inappropriate.

[19] Frye examines this key dialogue primarily from the point of view of reader manipulation. He suggests that it creates an "autonomous space" (533), in which complete affinity can be more convincingly expressed. Further, he shows that the very structure of the condensed dialogues in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is triadic, moving to a synthesis of ideal and real (537, 543).

> природою была вечная бездня; ничто в мире не сочуствовало ему (*RN* 136).
>
> He *saw everything*, he *understood everything*, but there was an eternal abyss between him and people, between him and nature; nothing in this world sympathized with him (*rn* 142).

By contrast, his master Albrecht evokes an affinity in Bach, which Bach cannot put into words, but which seem to express his own inner feelings:

> Слова Албрехта падали на душу Себастияна; часто он терялся в их таинственности; он не мог бы даже пересказать их, но он понимал чувство, которое они выражали; этим чувством бессознательно возрастала душа его и укреплялась в пламенной внутренней деятельности [...]. Когда Себастиян слушал Албрехта, то всегда думал, что себя слушает (*RN* 169, 172).
>
> Albrecht's words sank deep into Sebastian's heart; their mystery frequently bewildered him. He would not be able to repeat them, but he understood the feeling they expressed. Through this feeling his soul unconsciously grew and gained strength in ardent inner activity [...]. When Sebastian listened to Albrecht, he always thought that he was listening to himself (*rn* 177, 179).

In the main frame, it is Faust who, in the ninth night, determines that "sincerity of will" and a spontaneous, intuitive approach, a "poetic guess" (*rn* 191; "догадка поэтическая," *RN* 183) are more effective in achieving understanding in conversation between people than a vain search for the right word to express a thought as accurately as possible. Only if interlocutors are receptive to each other and are able to cultivate some affinity, can their conversation be illuminating and generate insights. Consequently, Faust rejects enlightened rational philosophy, which reduces philosophy to "the *art of reasoning*" (*rn* 192; "*исскуство рассуждать*," *RN* 184), and instead subscribes to Schelling's transcendental philosophy, for which "inner feeling" must provide the very basis (*RN* 187). Faust explains:

> [...] речь внутренняя всегда понятна для людей, находящихся в некоторой степени симпатии [...]. Одно условие понимать друг друга: говорить искренно и от полноты душевной; тогда всякое слово получает ясность от своего вышнего источника [...]. Оттого в живом, откровенном, искреннем разговоре, кажется, нет логичной связей, а между тем лишь при этом гармоническом столкновении внутренних сил человека рождаются нежданно самые глубокие наблюдения, как заметил мимоходом Гете [in *Wilhelm Meister*] (*RN* 186).

> [...] inner speech is always comprehensible for people who are to a certain degree attuned to each other [...]. There is one condition for understanding one another: to speak sincerely and from the fullness of one's heart. Then each word obtains clarity from its higher source [...]. Therefore, a live, open, and sincere conversation seems to lack any logical connection, and yet, only this harmonious agreement of man's inner powers unexpectedly begets the profoundest observations, as Goethe says in passing [in *Wilhelm Meister*] (*rn* 194).

Odoevskij here not only indirectly links the various conversations in his *Russian Nights* to the very work which the Jena romantics interpreted as the first romantic novel; the passage contains a clear appeal to the inner instinct of people to grasp the solution to life's problems immediately in themselves, in their own hearts. Moreover, Faust considers spiritual affinity to be the result of a conviction reached through an inner transcendental experiment of sorts, performed by each individual, so that everybody can share a glimpse at truth (*RN* 237). True understanding among people is only possible if they harbour the same "sense" for the metaphysical, corresponding to Novalis's "sense for mysticism." Therefore, Faust explains that he cannot fully communicate with Vyacheslav, if Vyacheslav does not share such a "sense:"

> Фауст: "[...] тождество между мыслию и словом простирается лишь в некоторой степени [...] - ее должно ощутить в себе."
> Вячеслав: "Так пробуди же во мне это ощущение."
> Фауст: "Не могу - если оно само в тебе не пробуждается, [...] произвести это ощущение в другом без собственного его внутреннего процесса - нет возможности [...]" (*RN* 193).

> Faust: "[...] the identity between a thought and a word exists only to a certain degree [...] - one must feel it in himself."
> Vyacheslav: "Then why don't you arouse this feeling in me?"
> Faust: "I can't - if it does not arise within you by itself; [...] it is impossible to create this feeling in another person without his own inner process [...]" (*rn* 201).

An innate mystical sense is likewise linked in Novalis's novel to conversation ("das Gespräch"), which will reveal to Heinrich the essence of the world:

> Heinrich war von Natur zum Dichter geboren [...]. Er sah die Welt in ihren großen und abwechselnden Verhältnissen vor sich liegen. Noch war sie aber stumm, und ihre Seele, das Gespräch, noch nicht erwacht (*HVO* 267-268).
>
> Heinrich was by nature destined to be a poet [...]. He saw the world lying before him in its great and changing relations. But it was still mute, and its soul, the voice of dialogue, had not yet awakened (translation mine; see also *hvo* 94).

Dialogue or conversation is generally seen to lead to higher insight.

In the last analysis, as Faust argues, the closest one can get to an expression of one's thought is through the symbol (*RN* 194). However, "in nature man can find only *likeness*, but never *identity*" (*rn* 203/ *RN* 195), so that other than an instinctual affinity in one's conversation partner, which the symbol may ignite, no perfect communication can take place. Most of Faust's deliberations on reaching affinity through sincere dialogue are contained in the ninth night and the epilogue. It is, indeed, in the epilogue that especially Faust and Victor reach more and more agreement. Victor partially or fully agrees with Faust numerous times (*RN* 193, 195), for instance when he observes: "Everything you say is quite true in a certain sense" (*rn* 217/ *RN* 208). Faust openly rejoices over this small showing of consensus. A few paragraphs later it is Faust, who says to Victor: "I agree with you to a certain extent" (*rn* 218/ *RN* 209). Further partial agreement is shown between the two when the conversation turns to the merits of ancient science (*RN* 219),

and when the "spirit of the time" is defined by Victor and further qualified by Faust (*RN* 229-230). In fact, Faust draws Victor more and more into his own thought process, thus making him part of it rather than attacking him as adversary. Overall, Faust attempts to demonstrate that their opinions do not differ as greatly as the young friends may think. At the end of the work, all three young men appear to have accepted the "philosophical inoculation" conducted by Faust, and it is the latter's sincerity and conviction that has brought them closer to his point of view. The optimistic ending of mutual understanding illustrates the power of not only dialogue, but poetry itself, since the thought process of the main frame discussions was unleashed and inspired by the reading of the manuscript, in itself a romantic novel of sorts.

In conclusion, in both *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights*, the elusive synthesis is mitigated by the idea of affinity created through dialogue, pointing again to the emphasis on the method of philosophical inquiry rather than results. The actual exercise of transcendental thinking (triggered through poetry) leads to a spiritual affinity among participants. It can reconcile people, bringing them closer together, which is, indeed the most basic precondition of a harmonious future. The search, the identification of a common centre of mythology, not the reaching of the goal, unites. Ultimately, the search *is* the harmony, the harmony in its eternal unfolding.

Discussion

By and large, the findings of the textual comparison involving *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Russian Nights* validate and substantiate the similarities of philosophical concepts and poetics discerned in Chapter III. Fundamentally, *Russian Nights* reveals a similar central philosophical intent to that of Novalis's novel: the artistic expression of progressivity, of continually striving toward harmony; thus, the romantic novel offers an illustration of transcendental thinking with more or less covert didactic overtures toward the reader. All devices and narrative techniques are subjugated to the central task of the two works, which seeks to create a universal outlook anticipating the harmony to be reached. In the theory of the romantic novel, the subject-matter ultimately only provides an opportunity to describe progressive transcendental thinking. Therefore, literary techniques, structural composition and narrative features become its true defining indicators. And it is, indeed, a similar use of precisely these features that elevates *Russian Nights* to the same level as *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the prototypic romantic novel of all times. Consequently, *Russian Nights* can be legitimately referred to as a romantic novel conforming in basic patterns and goals to the novel developed by the members of the Jena *Frühromantik* at the end of the 18th century.

Odoevskij's "drama of ideas" created through the use of the main frame as an element of chorus achieves much more than an objective, more contemporary viewpoint with which the reader can identify. For the resulting structural relationships of the different parts and the narrative layers effect constant interruptions and reflections on the ideas presented, therefore engendering the "delaying nature" of the romantic novel

postulated by Novalis (III: 310, 326). Both *Russian Nights* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* reveal a rhythm of delay and progress moving toward a synthesis that is always only virtually reached, but which in the end remains forever elusive. From a gnoseological point of view, the permanent elusiveness of the absolute, an idea which comprises the foundation of both Novalis's and Odoevskij's idealism, gives rise to a theory of "higher empiricism" in Novalis's thought (see Henderson 1997). This "higher empiricism" corresponds to the "speculative empiricism" advocated in *Russian Nights* by Faust as the only means by which authentic insight can be obtained.

In both works, the synthesis of spirit and matter -- the philosophical basis of transcendental poetics -- remains an ineffable glimpse conditional upon the inner predisposition toward revelation. The intrinsic value of the pursuit of synthesis is associated with the inner personal growth these glimpses afford the individual as it finds identity within its surroundings. However, at the same time, the thrust toward self-discovery entails also a loss of self, an aspect to which only few scholars on Novalis have drawn attention (Hörisch 1982; Kuzniar 1988). In Novalis's romantic aesthetics, fiction ultimately destabilizes self. The more Heinrich inquires into his nature, the more riddles he is given to solve. For instance, when he finds the mysterious book of his own life, it is written in a language he does not understand, and lacks an ending. In *Russian Nights*, fiction also destabilizes: the manuscript and Faust's comments shake up and disorient the world view of the three young main frame protagonists, who had consulted Faust precisely to find orientation. As the musings at the beginning of the sixth night show, it is no coincidence that Odoevskij chose night time as the setting for the readings,

since night is designated as a time during which people are more susceptible to destabilization as a precondition to self-reflective thinking. Thus, harmony must be lost, in order to regain it once again on an elevated level. *Russian Nights* therefore contains an instance of, in particular, Russian self-reflective thinking that applies a Western method of thought and its artistic expression to more specific Russian ends. But since this type of thinking necessarily includes the other as part of the synthesis, the Western principle reappears as part of the synthesis. As a result, the idea of synthesis again subverts the complete autonomy of Russian culture, thus discrediting the principles of Slavophilism from a fundamentally philosophical rather than specific ideological point of view. It is therefore no wonder that the Slavophiles neither liked nor could properly attack Odoevskij's novel, for as the author himself acknowledged, he intended to express artistically a philosophical idea, not to prove its validity.

While one can distinguish a similar use of patterns and devices in the two works, some aspects differ quite markedly in the two novels, betraying their provenance from different literary and cultural climates. The most salient difference is the fact that in *Russian Nights*, the sub-stories play out negative scenarios on both rationalistic theories and exalted notions about art. From these scenarios conclusions on the necessity of harmony need to be drawn. By contrast, in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the sub-stories evoke past idylls the spirit of which Heinrich seeks to restore. The different subject-matter used in the sub-stories are also noteworthy. But nevertheless, in both works, the subject-matter fulfils a similar function: it is used to symbolize ideas of synthesis or demands for synthesis that are progressively adopted by the frame tale protagonists who

hear these stories. Ultimately, the sub-stories are symbols of ideas and insights, thus referring to a higher metaphysical level.

However, there is one area in which *Russian Nights* does not follow the objective of the German example. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, more and more objects from reality are identified as identical, therefore outlining, especially in the second part, a near-surreal world of synthesis and unity. By contrast, the future world of harmony remains hypothetical in Odoevskij's novel. He does not concern himself with a tentative expression of the atmosphere which may characterize a future world of synthesis. Novalis attempts to anticipate poetically such a synthetic world, thus following the imperative of "drawing into the present the non-existent" ("das Gegenwärtigmachen des Nichtgegenwärtigen;" see Mähl, 1965 354). Odoevskij, in the end, satisfies himself with a description of the type of thinking necessary for synthesis and harmony, and does not endeavour to depict the actual world it may engender.

It is perhaps one of the most basic impulses of the romantic doctrine to draw a line between an ideal past and future prospects of harmony. Both *Russian Nights* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* refer to previous times, in which the romantic searches take place (Heinrich's medieval times and the idealistic era of the manuscript writers). The naive sincerity of those times is expressed in Novalis's novel primarily through language. Novalis considered an "antiquated style" an indispensable ingredient for the depiction of a "romanticized" world. Schulz, among others, points out that the naive, simple style in the novel disguises the experimental and cerebral character of the project (1992 112). Nevertheless, especially the modern reader cannot help but consign some portions of the

novel to the realm of *kitsch* (for example, the declaration of love between Heinrich and Mathilde at the end of chapter eight). Generally, such passages extol an emotional frankness, a "purity of heart" that is no longer deemed to exist in the contemporary time of the narrator in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (i.e., around 1800). It is precisely such a style of "pathos" and "phrases" that Faust's three young friends criticize during the reading of the manuscript (rn 212/*RN* 203). However, Faust defends this tone as expressing sincerity and emotional authenticity -- the virtues of a previous romantic age, voiced, as in Novalis's novel, through language. In the philosophical context of *Russian Nights* as a whole, this pathos expresses theories in emotive fashion.

The use of emotive language is closely tied to the overall objectives of the two novels to provide insights not through discursive speech, but through a concept of "art as hieroglyph" (Schaber 40). In this capacity, art can offer affinity through the deciphering of analogies and symbols. In this respect, Weier defines Novalis's chief objective as the emotional expression of the abstract theories of idealism (548). A similar objective was voiced by Odoevskij himself with regard to *Russian Nights* (*RN* 314). Regarding reader reception, Novalis held that philosophy must be rendered enigmatic to effect higher insight, as Immerwahr summarizes in the following:

> Da Poesie eine höhere Art der Wahrheitserfassung darstellt als Philosophie, ermöglicht das Erlebnis des Geheimnisvollen und Dunklen eine höhere Einsicht als die Klarheit eines logischen Schlusses. Nur aus der Ferne, wenn nichts als ihre *Vokale* gehört werden können, berührt uns Philosophie wie Poesie (163).
>
> Since poetry represents a higher form of grasping truth than philosophy, the experience of the mysterious and the dark renders possible a higher insight than the clarity of logical conclusions. Only from a distance, when only its *vowels* can be heard, does philosophy touch us like poetry.

Perhaps this, if nothing else, also describes the intended function of the manuscript in Odoevskij's novel.

In *Russian Nights* a new age is confronted with a romantic novel and search, and is urged to form a new synthesis. The work thus continues the romantic principle of an ever-evolving philosophy and quest for truth, attempting to create a new synthesis of idealistic material (the manuscript) with the more sober views of the 1840s in the main frame. Faust hopes that the inoculation of his three young friends with the ideas expressed in the manuscript will lead to a new synthesis of idealistic principles with the realities of the current times. Clearly, the young generation alone is capable of striking such a balance. However, the method of reaching insights, despite being romantic by nature, also caters to the positivistic age in which the main frame is set: the sub-stories do not, as in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, simply try to elicit the desire to emulate the idyll they depict. Rather, they require mental effort and critical thought that will lead to more logically and independently reached conclusions. In the German novel, one traces someone else's unfolding of consciousness, while in Odoevskij's novel, the reader can participate more actively in the reaching of a new consciousness. One can observe in *Russian Nights* a more serious attempt at convincing the reader, an approach necessitated by a new age that wants tangible proof. By contrast, Novalis operates with seductive persuasion intended to sway a reader who is willing to suspend his disbelief.

As a novel that evaluates a romantic novel even as it still operates with the same basic concepts itself, *Russian Nights* thus illustrates not just the reception and use of the poetics of the *Frühromantik*. Rather it reevaluates and revitalizes the chief methods and

goals of this early variety of German romanticism in an attempt to make transcendental thinking fruitful for a modern age. The novel therefore represents a more tangible, applied synthesis of an idealist way of thinking and contemporary realities, addressing the basic concerns of Russia and modern Europe. However, the comparison raises the question to what degree Novalis really portrayed in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* the synthesis of the ideal and the real extolled in his theories, since in his novel the real seems to recede more and more into the background. To be sure, in *Russian Nights*, the last proposed synthesis takes on more and more concrete features as the idea of a cultural synthesis between Russia and the West, thus drawing into the projected ideal real-life social concerns regarding the weaknesses and strengths of both societies. From Reble (1941) to Roder (1992 756-757) scholarship on *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* has, not without justification, tended to emphasize the attainment in the second part of a spiritual realm, where "the world becomes dream." One can, indeed, not help but wonder, where in Novalis's novel the "dream becomes world," as promised in the poem "Astralis" (*HVO* 319). Perhaps, therefore, Odoevskij was more consistent in implementing the poetics that he shared with Novalis, than was Novalis himself.

However, it is questionable whether Odoevskij applied these theories more successfully from a literary-aesthetic point of view. Overall, *Russian Nights* suffers from a measure of disjointedness, and frequently, a forced reinterpretation of the individual stories in their new setting.[20] For example, one could easily imagine a more fitting story

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[20] However, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* was similarly criticized by none other than F. Schlegel, who, despite all its merits, found it burdened with "clumsiness and ponderousness" ("Ungeschicklichkeit und Schwerfälligkeit;" Novalis IV: 333). The very

than the one about Piranesi to express the need for spiritual creativity despite its practical uselessness. In fact, without Faust's remarks, this interpretation does not immediately suggest itself. Further, as the general spirit expressed poetically in the sub-stories is continually linked by Faust to real-life issues that range from child labour to the hypocritical arguments in favour of capitalist free enterprise, the poetic, fictional quality of the entire work becomes subverted, sinking to a more prosaic level that could be perceived as clashing with the tone of the sub-stories. In particular, some of the more opinionated monologues by Faust are somewhat grating, and the general question of how much open didacticism a work of art can sustain does seem to become relevant with regard to *Russian Nights*. In short, even though the vast variety and difference of parts are justified and explained by the poetics of the novel as they attempt to bring different types of material under one common denominator, the impression of homogeneity may still fail to materialize in the reader. And this may not, as Odoevskij hinted, be simply attributable to the reader's lack of inner receptivity, but to the way in which the material was chosen and presented. Ultimately, the inclusion of numerous philosophical and scientific portions in an effort to create an overall perspective of thematic universality contributes to the inaccessibility of the work. Contrary to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, which could perhaps be enjoyed on a more straight-forward level as a naive medieval

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principle of unity in diversity is perhaps too ambitious, too ideal, to implement to complete satisfaction.

tale,[21] *Russian Nights* cannot be recommended readily to the uninitiated as a "good read."

In the final analysis, however, the "didactic" content is mitigated by the general emphasis on the method of philosophical thinking expressed in *Russian Nights*. Odoevskij's hope in the future rests primarily in the nature of progressive idealistic thought, and it is this type of thinking that is revived to enable humankind to tackle its problems. Transcendental philosophy thus teaches how to think, not what to think. Therefore, even in *Russian Nights*, the content of the solution touted at the end is somewhat secondary, since in accordance with progressive thinking, it will soon be replaced by yet another synthesis. The idea of a synthesis between Russia and the West must be understood as more of a paradigm with which one can express the idea of progressive synthesis in cultural metaphors. A comparative examination of Odoevskij's solution of cultural synthesis in *Russian Nights* and Novalis's use of cultural metaphors in his two essays *Christendom, or Europe* and *Faith and Love* may reveal further interesting parallels in the two writers' thought and expression. Such an analysis, however, exceeds the scope of the present dissertation.

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[21] At least one critic, however, contends that it is precisely the didactic aspects of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* that define its inaccessibility to the reader (Schulz, 1992 122).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Within the development of Russian romanticism, Odoevskij's concentration on the basics of transcendental idealism, which he sustained throughout his writing career, is clearly unique. ***Russian Nights***, as the culmination of this focus, is equally unique in the history of Russian literature. The similarities between ***Russian Nights*** and ***Heinrich von Ofterdingen*** are generally defined by the understanding of the task of literature held by the two romantic writers. Basically, this task becomes the expression of eternal striving toward a synthesis of reality and ideality. In light of this chief objective, comparisons of Odoevskij's romanticism to that of Hoffmann no longer seem tenable. While Odoevskij's ***Russian Nights*** describes the infinite search for synthesis, in Hoffmann's works reality and ideality are permanently and grotesquely split.

Fundamentally akin in his transcendental outlook to Novalis, Odoevskij has, indeed, suffered a fate of misreception in his own country that is comparable to the critical treatment Novalis received in both Russia and Germany. The Russian symbolists already drew renewed attention to Novalis at the turn of the century. In recent decades, Novalis has been again somewhat rehabilitated in Russia in an effort to rectify his image as the conservative poet of the blue flower. This gives hope, also, to a consideration of Odoevskij in a revised context. The comparison to Novalis illustrates that Odoevskij's literary roots are found not just, as previously assumed, in the philosophy of idealism underlying early German romanticism, but in the very literary theories and practices that it developed (***Frühromantik***). This links the Russian writer to a progressive, innovative and solution-oriented literary movement. As a result, the view of Odoevskij as an

"outdated" romantic no longer seems appropriate. Rather, he emerges as a romantic fundamentalist dedicated to the core concepts of transcendental idealism. Therefore, Odoevskij could not, for example, promote the concept of *narodnost'* in its narrow, more parochial Russian context that helped pave the way for the doctrine of Slavophilism. Instead, his search for harmony and balance revealed a general humanistic interest that defied usurpation by subsequent ideologies.

As explained in Chapter III, Odoevskij and Novalis shared a strikingly similar philosophical and aesthetic basis. The textual comparison in Chapter IV illustrates that Odoevskij's rootedness in the theories of the *Frühromantik*, whether reinforced by actual readings of works such as *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* or not, had an impact on his literary creativity in rather more detail than has previously been acknowledged. It extends beyond the treatment of romantic themes and ideas to the very devices and mechanisms employed by Novalis, which are by and large synonymous with the principles of the German romantic novel. However, Odoevskij transfers these principles to a new historical situation. The main frame dialogue inserts an additional reflective layer creating an historical distance from a previous romantic age, while at the same time increasing narrative objectivity. Hence, the work in many ways caters to a more positivistic age without abandoning the basic principles of idealist thinking and its literary expression. In *Russian Nights*, therefore, the romantic novel is redefining itself and relegitimizing its importance in a modern scientific age. Literary romantic reflexivity in this work survives into the age of positivism in the mid-nineteenth century and generates solutions relevant to modern times.

As a result, the overall tone of the main frame is clearly modern, while the romantic age is relegated to the manuscript portion. More overtly and with more current overtones than in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, reflexivity and narrative layering in *Russian Nights* are employed to link, compare and cross-pollinate two different historical eras and their types of thinking. Therefore, Odoevskij is applying to the Jena theory of the romantic novel the romantic principle of continuous evolution, of perpetual, successive syntheses of the "previous" with the "new" toward an ever higher level of ideality. In this sense, Odoevskij's most important contribution in writing *Russian Nights* can be determined to be the further evolution of the romantic novel, of transcendental thinking, at the dawn of the technological age, making it relevant not only to Russia, but to the Western world in general. It is chiefly due to the time-lag in which both romanticism and scientific positivism infiltrated Russia that one is offered, in *Russian Nights*, something akin to an updated version of Novalis's poetics, which had also, some fifty years earlier, defined themselves against an encroachment of the rational and prosaic.

With respect to Odoevskij' oeuvre, *Russian Nights* is the result of a reevaluation of his earlier works of the 1830s in search of their common centre, and more specifically, their personal centre of meaning for the author. In an attempt, it would seem, to bring some kind of order and unity to the variety of his literary output of the previous decade, Odoevskij systematized and repackaged these stories, and raised them to a higher level. Individually, they represent emotive responses to the elusiveness of synthesis and longing for a better world. In their new context they are embedded in a romantic novel, where their relationship to the main frame describes a discourse of continual delay, thus

expressing artistically a transcendental intellectual process. Consequently, in their new presentation, the stories reflect the development and thought process of their creator, and, in the last analysis, his personal mythology. This mythology is characterized by failure, by always falling short, even as one gets closer and closer to one's goal, but, simultaneously, by optimism despite these failures that idealist thought in synthesis with modern thinking will serve humankind.

As a former Wisdom Lover, Odoevskij stayed true to the roots of romantic idealism as a general principle of thought. However, in *Russian Nights*, he tried to reintegrate and carry over into the age of positivism a type of thinking that had never truly flourished in the Russian literary milieu. Thus he attempted to revive something that in Russian romanticism, perhaps, never really lived in the first place. The heritage of the Wisdom Lovers was the heritage of an exclusive few, many of whom later turned their backs on their former philosophical convictions. It is for this reason, surely, that this circle is not given detailed attention in treatments of the history of Russian literature. Cornwell remarked that Odoevskij's contemporaries did not understand the author because they did not know how to read between the lines (1986b 174), even though in *Russian Nights* Faust actually demands this in a metafictional remark (*rn* 249/*RN* 239). More specifically, as this thesis has demonstrated, readers failed to see it as a symbolic romantic novel that referred to a higher metaphysical level, as did *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Odoevskij anticipated that his work would not be understood, which is reflected in the fact that he found it necessary to write three prefaces to *Russian Nights*. This is nothing short of an indictment of his age, a reproach that carries undertones of

resignation. While Novalis, perhaps, felt himself to be travelling on the rising crest of a trend intended to sweep the reader along with him, Odoevskij realized that he was swimming against the current, and that he would find few fellow-travellers. The application of the principles of the romantic novel thus both engenders the unique interest of *Russian Nights* from a literary-textual point of view, and spells its doom in terms of reception. With this particular reception history, *Russian Nights*, indeed, retraces the fate of many a text of the German *Frühromantik*.

Both Novalis and Odoevskij considered romantic poetry to be a means to teach progressive thinking that would foster the solving of problems in real life. In their understanding, romantic poetry alone could convey this necessary thought process in an engaging, emotive way, making it more psychologically palatable and absorbable for the reader. The innovative contribution of Novalis and his Jena colleagues rests precisely in the translation of philosophical idealism into literary expression. Odoevskij, working from the same philosophical basis, came to endorse similar literary principles that would give idealism artistic expression. This understanding of his work and thought clearly challenges Odoevskij's image as an isolated literary eccentric whose dilettantism prevented him from achieving a definitive goal with his seemingly awkward *Russian Nights*. The textual comparison to *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* suggests that the *romantic novel* is the appropriate genre designation of *Russian Nights*. By the same token, the author of *Russian Nights* emerges as possibly the most authentic recipient and original manipulator of early German romantic literary theory in Russia, and therefore, a rightful *pendant* to Novalis. In conclusion, it would seem that any future reconsideration of

Odoevskij's fiction and other writings can no longer ignore the heritage of the literary *Frühromantik* contained therein.

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