

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

NCLC

178

Volume 178

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

*Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Philosophers, and Other
Creative Writers Who Died between 1800
and 1899, from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations*



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Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism, Vol. 178

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 84-643008

ISBN-13: 978-0-7876-9849-2
ISBN-10: 0-7876-9849-0
ISSN 0732-1864

Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Preface

Since its inception in 1981, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism (NCLC)* has been a valuable resource for students and librarians seeking critical commentary on writers of this transitional period in world history. Designated an “Outstanding Reference Source” by the American Library Association with the publication of its first volume, *NCLC* has since been purchased by over 6,000 school, public, and university libraries. The series has covered more than 500 authors representing 38 nationalities and over 28,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical reaction to nineteenth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *NCLC*.

Scope of the Series

NCLC is designed to introduce students and advanced readers to the authors of the nineteenth century and to the most significant interpretations of these authors’ works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. By organizing and reprinting commentary written on these authors, *NCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *NCLC* presents a comprehensive survey of an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *NCLC* is devoted to literary topics that cannot be covered under the author approach used in the rest of the series. Such topics include literary movements, prominent themes in nineteenth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

NCLC continues the survey of criticism of world literature begun by Thomson Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)* and *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)*.

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An *NCLC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose works have been translated into English, the list will focus primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting those works most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *NCLC*, with the exception of the Topics volumes. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Thomson Gale also produces an annual paperbound edition of the *NCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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Frank, Joseph. "The Gambler: A Study in Ethnopsychology." In *Freedom and Responsibility in Russian Literature: Essays in Honor of Robert Louis Jackson*, edited by Elizabeth Cheresch Allen and Gary Saul Morson, 69-85. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 168, edited by Jessica Bomarito and Russel Whitaker, 75-84. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006.

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Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments xi

Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board xiii

Novalis 1772-1801	1
<i>German poet, prose writer, novelist, and essayist</i>	
Stendhal 1783-1842	134
<i>French novelist, biographer, autobiographer, travel writer, essayist, critic, and novella writer</i>	
Mrs. Henry Wood 1814-1887	260
<i>English novelist, short-story writer and editor</i>	

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Author Index 341

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Topic Index 449

NCLC Cumulative Nationality Index 463

NCLC-178 Title Index 467

Novalis

1772-1801

(Pseudonym of Friedrich Leopold Freiherr von Hardenberg) German poet, prose writer, novelist, and essayist.

The following entry presents criticism on Novalis's works from 1980 to 2006. For further information on Novalis's life and career, see *NCLC*, Volume 13.

INTRODUCTION

Considered one of the most important writers of the early German Romantic period, Novalis is best remembered today for his lyrical poetry in *Hymnen an die Nacht* (1800; *Hymns to the Night*), his intricate use of symbols, and his imaginative experiments with the form of the novel. With his closest friends Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich von Schlegel, Novalis articulated and refined late eighteenth-century Romantic doctrine in Germany. His works are valued for their embodiment of this doctrine as well as for their literary merit. Critics continue to admire the originality, breadth, and intellectual depth of Novalis's theories, in which he sought to bring literature, philosophy, and science together into a comprehensive system of knowledge shaped by his belief in the unity of all things.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Novalis was born on his family's estate of Oberwiesendach in Thuringia, Germany. His father, a landed aristocrat, insisted on maintaining a strict religious atmosphere in the household. The Hardenberg children were privately educated, but it was not until 1781, when a serious illness confined Novalis to a lengthy period of bed rest, that he exhibited exceptional intellectual curiosity. From then on he read voraciously; by the time the family moved to Weissenfels in 1784 and he enrolled in the Eisleben Gymnasium, he had acquired a thorough education in the classics. The period between 1790 and 1794 was a time of ongoing development for Novalis: he studied philosophy, history, and law at Jena University, at the University of Leipzig, and at the University of Wittenberg, where he graduated with a degree in law. During his years as a student, Novalis was profoundly influenced by his contact with Friedrich von Schiller, then a history professor at Jena, the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and his classmate Schlegel, who later became a key theoretician of German Romanticism.

Following his graduation, Novalis, who had chosen to pursue a career in public service, traveled to Tennstedt for further administrative training. There he fell deeply in love with Sophie von Kühn, the thirteen-year-old daughter of his landlord, and in 1795 they became secretly engaged. Novalis continued his training while embarking on a rigorous self-directed course of study in science and philosophy. His diligence was rewarded when he won the position of assistant administrator of the Saxon Salt Works in 1796. The next year, however, brought twofold tragedy into Novalis's life—the deaths of Sophie and his brother Erasmus. Devastated by grief, Novalis entered a period of mourning that, in the view of many biographers, never ended. Yet he continued his studies, attempting to distract himself with the works of Immanuel Kant, Jakob Boehme, and Tiberius Hemsterhuis. In 1798, Novalis was successfully treated for tuberculosis in Teplitz. Later that year, he became engaged to Julie von Charpentier. He also began to write at this time, encouraged by the poet Christoph Martin Wieland. Although the majority of Novalis's writings were published posthumously, in 1798 two collections of his axioms and fragments—*Blüthenstaub* and *Glauben und Liebe*, both of which reflected his readings in poetry, philosophy, and science—were published in journals. When symptoms of tuberculosis reappeared in 1800, Novalis traveled to Dresden to seek a cure, but his treatment was unsuccessful and he died in Weissenfels in 1801.

MAJOR WORKS

All of Novalis's works were published under his pseudonym—which in Latin means “new land”—as a symbol of the uncharted spiritual and intellectual territory he was exploring. Philosophical and theological speculation serves as the basis for two works: *Die Christenheit oder Europa* (1802; *Christianity of Europe*), an essay in which Novalis celebrated the unified world view afforded by medieval Catholicism, and *Geistliche Lieder* (1802; *Sacred Songs of Novalis*), a collection of poems marked by his concept of religion as a personal relationship with God. This individualistic view of religion and his lush, lyrical style are the main features of Novalis's Romanticism, which figures prominently in his best-known collection, *Hymns to the Night*. This work was acclaimed by his contemporaries and established the poet's reputation with its mystical philosophy, striking imagery, and blending of free verse with prose. Re-

counting his feelings about Sophie's death, Novalis described in the six poems that make up *Hymns to the Night* his newfound faith in a reunion with Sophie in the afterlife. "Life is the beginning of Death; Life is lived for the sake of Death," he proclaimed; thus these poems, vibrant rather than somber in mood, record his longing for death and his view of it as a joyful new beginning.

Critics have praised Novalis's two novels, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802; *Henry of Ofterdingen*) and *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs* (1802; *The Disciples at Saïs*), both incomplete at his death, for their experimental narrative style characterized by surrealistic plot elements and unusual shifts in time and place. Influenced by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, *Henry of Ofterdingen* depicts a young medieval poet's initiation into the mysteries of his art. His search for knowledge is symbolized by his quest for an elusive blue flower, which thereafter became the universal image of longing in German Romantic poetry. Novalis also structured the novel around a central story-within-a-story, the fairy tale "Klingsohrs Märchen," in accordance with his belief that fairy tales, or Märchen, can convey a higher order of experience than realistic narratives. Novalis's second novel, *The Disciples at Saïs*, is also imbued with philosophy and mysticism. The work follows the experiences of a group of pupils in ancient Egypt and focuses on their mission to unite science and poetry through discovery of the symbolic meaning of natural objects. Like *Henry of Ofterdingen*, *The Disciples at Saïs* relies upon a Märchen, "Hyazinth and Rosenblüte," for its symbolic meaning.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Novalis's works were known to only a small circle of friends at the time of his death. In nineteenth-century Germany, E. T. A. Hoffmann and Henrik Steffens praised Novalis's profundity and melodious style, while at the same time members of Junges Deutschland, the Young Germany movement, condemned what they perceived as his turning away from reality. His reputation grew when Thomas Carlyle introduced Novalis to English-language readers, stressing his originality, spirituality, and subtlety of intellect; and Wilhelm Dilthey's positive assessment in German in the latter part of the nineteenth century contributed to a revival of critical interest in his works. Since that time, commentators have applauded Novalis's complex system of imagery and symbols, his wide-ranging philosophical speculations, and his innovative narrative style. Novalis's prose and poetry are highly esteemed by a number of scholars, many of whom offer detailed analyses of the abstract themes, challenging style, and ethereal mood of his works. Novalis's influence on the American Transcen-

dentalists, the French Surrealists, and on such writers as Richard Wagner, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, and André Gide is often surveyed by scholars. Commentators also focus upon Novalis's response to such works of classical literature as Plato's *Republic* and his treatment of the theme of creation. For his bold use of imagery, for the modernity of his narrative style, and for his vision of the unity of all life, Novalis is today regarded as one of the chief writers of early German Romanticism.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Blüthenstaub* (axioms) 1798; published in journal *Das Athenaeum*
- Glauben und Liebe* (prose fragments) 1798; published in journal *Jahrbücher der preussischen Monarchie*
- Hymnen an die Nacht* [*Hymns to the Night*] (poetry and prose poetry) 1800; published in journal *Das Athenaeum*
- **Die Christenheit oder Europa* [*Christianity of Europe*] (essay) 1802
- **Geistliche Lieder* [*Sacred Songs of Novalis*] (poetry) 1802
- **Heinrich von Ofterdingen* [*Henry of Ofterdingen*] (unfinished novel) 1802
- **Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs* [*The Disciples at Saïs*] (unfinished novel) 1802
- Novalis Schriften*. 2 vols. (poetry, prose poetry, unfinished novels, essays, letters, diaries, axioms, and prose fragments) 1802
- Schriften*. 4 vols. (poetry, prose poetry, unfinished novels, essays, letters, diaries, axioms, and prose fragments) 1960-75

*These works were all first published in the two-volume collection *Novalis Schriften*, 1802.

CRITICISM

William Arctander O'Brien (essay date December 1980)

SOURCE: O'Brien, William Arctander. "Twilight in Atlantis." *Modern Language Notes* 95, no. 5 (December 1980): 1292-332.

[In the following essay, O'Brien argues that Henry of Ofterdingen is Novalis's response to the attack on poets in Plato's *Republic*.]

It is the evening after the *Republic*. Socrates greets his friends and at their urging, agrees briefly to review the course of last night's discussion. He sketches the outline of his ideal state almost impatiently in these opening lines of the *Timaeus*, a dialogue written by Plato not one evening, but years after the earlier one. Socrates is in haste, for he will not entertain tonight, but listen. Dressed for a party, he mentions only in passing the poets he slandered at such great length last night. Waxing metaphorical, Socrates compares his beautiful state, the *Kallipolis*, to a fine painting or a sleeping animal, and he expresses a desire to hear of its realization or awakening in a great war. Socrates prepares for his silence and closes his encore by setting the stage of the *Republic*'s after-piece, handing over the performance abruptly to his friends:

I should like, before proceeding further, to tell you how I feel about the state which we have described. I might compare myself to a person who, on beholding beautiful animals either created by the painter's art, or, better still, alive but at rest, is seized with a desire of seeing them in motion or engaged in some struggle or conflict to which their forms appear suited—this is my feeling about the state which we have been describing. There are conflicts which all cities undergo, and I should like to hear someone tell of our own city carrying on a struggle against her neighbors, and how she went out to war in a becoming manner, and when at war showed by the greatness of her actions and the magnanimity of her words in dealing with other cities a result worthy of her training and education. . . . When I had completed my task, I in return imposed this other task on you. You conferred together and agreed to entertain me today, as I had entertained you, with a feast of discourse. Here I am in festive array, and no man can be more ready for the promised banquet.

(*Timaeus* 19b ff.)

Timaeus and Critias are eager to please Socrates, and they claim to have hit upon a plan that will surpass his fondest wishes:

I will tell an old-world story that I heard . . . about the greatest action which the Athenians ever did, and which ought to have been the most famous, but, through the lapse of time and the destruction of the actors, it has not come down to us.

(*Timaeus* 21a-d)

Critias justifies his choice of material with the startling claim that the *Republic* is merely a later, if faithful, copy of the Athens he will now represent to us:

The city and the citizens, which you yesterday described to us in fiction, we will now transfer to the world of reality. It shall be the ancient city of Athens, and we will suppose that the citizens whom you imagined are our veritable ancestors. . . . They will perfectly harmonize, and there will be no inconsistency in saying that the citizens of your republic are these ancient Athenians.

(*Timaeus* 26cd)

This "reality" to which Socrates' friends transfer the *Republic* is, of course, that of Athens' legendary war with Atlantis. The *Timaeus* and the *Critias*, the last Socratic dialogues, elaborate the oldest and most extensive account of Atlantis in Western literature. Critias tells Socrates that the Egyptian priest at Sais, who had first heard the story in a foreign tongue and with different proper names, passed it on to Solon, who then brought it to Athens. It was retold faithfully through the generations, and Critias, who heard it years ago as a child, still has a written account of it. The sunken continent emerges into Western literature as the ancient enemy of the *Republic*, and a myth from the land of magic poses the only worthy foe to Athens' ideal state.

We can complain along with Critias that the story "has not come down to us," for the battle-scene, if Plato ever completed it, has been lost. Socrates' spirited *Republic* must hold itself in reserve for a battle that, after repeated deferral, never takes place. Timaeus is the first to postpone it while he expounds the cosmogeny that fills the dialogue bearing his name. Then his friend begins the evocation of Atlantis known as the *Critias*. Critias tells how Atlantis was founded by the union of Poseidon with a mortal, describes its terrain, customs, and rituals, and traces its growth up to the dawn of empire. His story picks up momentum as he tells how Zeus convenes all the gods of Olympus to lay a great judgement upon Atlantis, and the god of gods, speaking from the center of the earth says—nothing! Zeus says nothing, nor does Socrates or any of his companions, for this last Socratic dialogue abruptly breaks off at the point Zeus is about to speak. The great judgement, along with the great battle of Atlantis, submerges into the glimmering surface of the blank page.

If the *Republic* narrowly avoids the great battle with Atlantis in the *Critias*, it has nevertheless withstood countless other attacks in a tradition stretching back at least to Aristotle's *Politics*. The writings of this tradition have generally chosen to confront the *Republic* on what would seem to be its own grounds, those of philosophical discourse, and have let fall the figure of Atlantis to magical and occult texts. In the history of this interminable seige, this *Iliad* of philosophy, there is a minor skirmish so far removed from the front line that it may better be regarded as an undercover operation. This clandestine subversion of Plato's massive political edifice is perpetrated by no less improbable an agent than the eighteenth century's Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772-1801), better known as Novalis, and his Trojan horse is the innocent-looking novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, a fiction that seems more like a toy or hobby-horse. Images from Plato's writings recur throughout the novel, and the climax of its most famous episode, "Klingsohr's Fairy Tale" ("Klingsohrs Märchen"), reworks the figures of the cave and the sun in a story whose logic responds with remarkable precision to So-

crates' claims for his *Republic*. The dialogues of Heinrich and his mentors in Novalis' novel respond to specific charges levelled against the poets by Socrates and his companions, and its extended story of Atlantis in Chapter Three elaborates an image of the state and the poets' function within it that imaginatively revokes their persecution and expulsion from the *Republic*.

Heinrich von Ofterdingen's relation to the *Republic* has always remained unexamined, while the influence of Plato on Novalis has been taken for granted in a most general way.¹ Although the Atlantis story in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* fills the second longest chapter of this fanciful *Bildungsroman*—only “*Klingsohr's Fairy Tale*” is longer—studies of Novalis' politics have preferred to concentrate on his two earlier works, *Glauben und Liebe* and *Die Christenheit oder Europa* (*Faith and Love* and *Christianity or Europe*).² The first, a small collection of fragments and poems, appeared in 1798 in a monthly magazine devoted to the new Prussian king and queen.³ The second, an essay extolling the virtues of the Catholic Middle Ages, remained unpublished after Novalis' friend, Friedrich Schlegel, became aware of the king's displeasure over *Glauben und Liebe* and heeded Goethe and Schleiermacher's advice not to publish the piece. The explicitly political and historical concerns of these two short works have tended to divert critical interest away from *Heinrich von Ofterdingen's* possibilities as a political text, so that while the novel is usually praised as Novalis' most mature and imaginative work, its politics have been examined merely in order to amplify points taken to be already established in the earlier writings.⁴ The Atlantis story, the conversations of Heinrich, and the “veil of imagery” (as Hayward has nicely put it)⁵ in “*Klingsohr's Fairy Tale*” make any assumption about the novel's politics as a mere rehashing of Novalis' earlier writing highly questionable.

Novalis was outspokenly interested in the fictive politics of his little novel. He bluntly called it his “political novel”⁶ and suggested to Caroline Schlegel that it might contain “the apprenticeship of a nation.”⁷ Conversely, the generally supposed Platonic influences on Novalis are more difficult to trace from supporting documents. Very little is known of Novalis' philosophical reading before 1795 except that Friedrich Schlegel, upon first meeting Novalis in 1792, wrote his brother August that the young Hardenberg's favorite authors were Plato and Hemsterhuis.⁸ Novalis left us no study of Plato on the magnitude of his Fichte or Hemsterhuis notebooks, and no titles by Plato are listed among his library holdings. Yet these omissions are not necessarily decisive. Novalis' brother Karl says he could read Greek pretty well by the age of twelve,⁹ and Novalis fully exploited the public and private libraries open to him. His friend and professional supervisor, August Just, claims that Hardenberg was an extremely fast reader, able to pick up

and put aside a book as if never having read it, only to recall its exact details much later.¹⁰ The title *Platons Republik* occurs at least twice among Novalis' papers, once on a booklist beside Rousseau's *Héloïse* and Kant's *Zum ewigen Frieden*, an essay on political peace.¹¹ In 1797 he considered sending Schlegel a *Pröbchen Republik*,¹² and his notebooks of the period use the word *Republik* interchangeably with *Staat*.¹³ Perhaps most tellingly, Novalis set the beautiful fragment *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* (*The Disciples of Sais*), which he was working on just before the novel, in the same Egyptian city where Solon hears of Atlantis in Plato's account. These and more repeated allusions to Plato make it unlikely in the extreme that Hardenberg would elaborate a political myth about Atlantis in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* without good knowledge of its source in the Socratic dialogues.

The rapid crystallization of Novalis' poetic abilities just before his early death makes problematic the assumption that his political thinking in no way develops with *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Even between the two earlier pieces, *Glauben und Liebe* and *Die Christenheit oder Europa*, the increase in his expository powers and the widening of his field of interest—from Prussia to all of Europe—have long been evident.¹⁴ There is no reason to suppose that *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* would fail to continue this attempt at political generalization, and the presence of an elaborate story about Atlantis—which enters European writing as the political enemy—makes *Heinrich von Ofterdingen's* extension of Novalis' fictive politics highly probable. The novel does not simply dress up Novalis' earlier ideas in poetic metaphors. In Novalis' politics—and, we shall see, Novalis indicates this is so for Plato's politics as well—the metaphors are precisely the question.

I

If *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* briefly interrupts the philosophical dialogue with the *Republic*, we might expect it to lend its voice to a defense of the poets. After all, according to Novalis the novel unfolds the aesthetic education of a young protagonist who “ripens as a poet.”¹⁵ This expectation is reinforced by Heinrich's most uncanny experience in the novel, when one of his mentors tells him that the *book* he is in is devoted to poetry's praises.

The scene occurs toward the end of the cave episode of Chapter Five. Heinrich and his companions are visiting a hermit who, like Socrates' philosopher-king, has left the cave only to rule and later return to it. The company goes off to examine more of the cave, leaving the boy alone to leaf through the hermit's old chronicles and poems. His eye is no sooner caught by the illustrations of a curiously incomplete volume than Heinrich, utterly bewildered, recognizes himself and his loved ones

among the book's pictures. He abruptly shuts the book upon his companions' return, and though sorely embarrassed at his self-exposure, he finds himself unable to refrain from asking about the book's contents. The old hermit slyly answers him:

It is a long time since I read it. I cannot exactly remember its contents any more. As far as I know, it is a novel about the wondrous fortunes of a poet, in which poesy is presented and praised in its manifold relations. The conclusion is missing in this manuscript.¹⁶

That Heinrich finds a history of his future, or that the text indicates itself as a foreign book (written "in provençal") should not be too surprising in a work where one of the later characters, Astralis, can sing, "I found myself only from afar, / A reminiscence of old as well as future times."¹⁷ When dreams and the world can exchange roles,¹⁸ memories can precede experience and stories their realizations. Heinrich von Ofterdingen comes across a copy of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (or without italics) within *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. The boy's sudden, "wondrous shame" (*wunderliche Scham*) in the cave marks a moment of self-consciousness for him and the novel, a fall from the mundane temporality of representation. By means of this magical disruption, both Heinrich and the reader are promised knowledge about poetry within *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. But, unlike Heinrich, who must quit the cave and its treasures, the reader may continue through the novel to find out more about poetry.

One does not need to go very far to see some truth in the hermit's words, for *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* initiates its praise of poetry even before the novel proper, in its verse "Dedication." It will be useful for our comparison of Novalis' and Plato's texts to recall how both works begin, though the question of any conscious contrast by Novalis at the very outset of his novel must remain at best a moot point.

Socrates is walking home from the Piraeus to Athens at the beginning of the *Republic* when the slave of Polemarchus comes up behind and bids him to wait. Polemarchus soon arrives and constrains Socrates and his companion, Glaucon, to visit his nearby house. Just as Socrates left the Piraeus in the middle of the port's public festival, he now interrupts Cephalus, Polemarchus' father, in the middle of the evening sacrifice. Cephalus greets his guests warmly, but Socrates soon drives the old man away with pointed rudeness and condescension ("Cephalus, did you *inherit* or did you *earn* most of what you possess?" "For my part, Cephalus, I am really delighted to speak with the *very* old." [*Republic* 330a, 328e, my italics]). Socrates forces the old man offstage: he wishes to keep ritual to one side (he will have no priests in his republic) or he will at least have no *other* rituals interfere with *his*. The *Re-*

public continues long into the night, and Socrates and his fellows forego both the evening meal (always the consummation of the sacrifice, now displaced to the "feast of discourse") and the horse-race promised by Polemarchus (a novelty to conclude the Piraeus' festival in honor of a new goddess). Plato removes the performance and institution of rituals from Socrates' presence, just as Socrates will demand the removal of poets from his ideal state.

Where Socrates spurns ritual and banishes the poets, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* would reinstate them with the traditional bow to the Muse. The opening lines of the dedication invoke the Muse, thank her for awakening the poet's "noble drive," and request her protection for his "noble art." The aristocratic young Hardenberg's repetition of the word 'noble' (*der edele Trieb, die edele Kunst*) is telling in such a brief poem, and it implies poetry's successful integration in a social hierarchy from the very beginning of the novel (if not from its title). The second half of the dedication enumerates the blessings of "song's secret powers" (*des Gesangs geheime Macht*) and the dedication climaxes in an elevating reunion with the beloved, this benevolent force of poetry incarnate: "I saw her hover towards me like an angel, / And I flew awakened into her arms" (*Da sah ich sie als Engel zu mir schweben, / Und flog, erwacht, in ihrem Arm dahin*). The novel seems from the outset to take a traditional stance in favor of poets and poetry.

The three most outspoken admirers of poetry in the novel are the merchants who accompany Heinrich and his mother to Augsburg, the narrator who describes their trip, and Klingsohr, Heinrich's friend and teacher after their arrival. The conversations of the first and last introduce the boy to art, and their descriptions of the poet's craft fire his ambition to become a poet himself. The narrator explains that Heinrich is "born to be a poet"¹⁹ and substantiates this by revealing the poet's temperament. A detailed examination of these three sources' claims for poetry, particularly in relation to some of the most famous Socratic objections to poets, will prepare our interpretation of the Atlantis episode by illuminating its setting in the novel.

The greatest single exponent of poetry in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is Klingsohr, the friend and advisor of the boy's kind and wealthy uncle in Augsburg. He is a poet, and his words to Heinrich have invariably been taken as Novalis' final statements on poetry.²⁰ His lesson to Heinrich fills most of the two chapters leading to his long fairy tale, and its setting, on a hill overlooking the city, is rich in allusion from the New Testament to Rousseau, as well as from the *Phaedrus* and *Republic*. For just as Socrates' political dialogue takes place outside Athens near its suburban port, Klingsohr speaks to Heinrich outside the city where he plies his trade. In *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*'s morning dialogue, though,

the participants will make sure they finish up in time for the meal and return to the city for the evening's celebration (a contrast with the *Republic* made famous by More's *Utopia*).

Klingsohr quickly recognizes Heinrich's poetic abilities and sets about his education as a poet at once. A talented and clever man, Klingsohr speaks eloquently to the boy of the poets' assimilation in the city. He wastes no words to argue that the city *should* harbor poets, but proceeds on the simple premise that actual cities *do* contain them. He points out the poets' need of the city and urges Heinrich to learn more about life's practicalities. He particularly admonishes the boy to avoid the rash enthusiasm of young poets and a morbid preoccupation with self:

I cannot sufficiently urge you laboriously and diligently to cultivate your understanding, your natural drive to know how everything happens and hangs together logically and sequentially. . . . Enthusiasm without understanding is useless and dangerous. . . . The young poet cannot be cool and thoughtful enough.²¹

Klingsohr stresses that nothing is more basic to the poet than a recognition of natural law that assures the poet's own lawfulness. It is an argument based on the poet's good character, and it responds to an often repeated Socratic objection even more directly than Aristotle (whose silence—like Klingsohr's—about permitting poets in the state is one of his *Politics*' most politic gestures). In the *Poetics*, Aristotle defends the poets by deflecting their banishment by Socrates onto the field of dangerous emotion: to expound the benefits of catharsis for the body politic is to recognize poetry's unreasonable and emotional force as a possible source of good for the state. Klingsohr shifts from the Aristotelian and post-Aristotelian defense of poetry's good *effects* back to a guarantee of its *production*, returning the argument to the grounds of Socrates' extended attack on Homer in Book Three of the *Republic*. There Socrates argues that poetic performance harms the state by undermining civic virtue with confused and baleful stories. Klingsohr's more 'enlightened' response begins by assuming the *reasonableness* of the poet and his craft.

Klingsohr tells his young pupil that a poet must not only be reasonable, but knowledgeable. He enlightens his student about how the poet is both practical and industrious, more concerned with the practice of his excellent craft and the study of those of his fellow citizens than he is with any pleasure afforded by the mere exercise of his imagination:

Nothing is more needful for the poet than insight into the nature of every occupation, acquaintance with the means to attain every end, and the presence of mind to select the most fitting means according to time and circumstance. . . . Poetry wants to be carried on primarily as a rigorous art. As mere enjoyment it ceases to be poetry.²²

This argument about the practiced skill of poetry reinforces itself through its very elaboration, perfectly fulfilling Socrates' criterion for any activity that claims to be based on knowledge: its ability to be taught. Socrates argues that poets do not really have knowledge because they cannot explain their craft nor instruct others in it. Klingsohr refutes the argument by doing both: himself a poet, he speaks about poetry and teaches it to a pupil.

One of Socrates' last and most famous arguments in the *Republic* is Book Ten's assertion that poets make fictions because they cannot make anything else. Since artistic representation is twice removed from the real, a copy of a copy, no one would willingly choose to be an artist if he knew better:

Do you suppose that if a man were able to make both, the thing to be imitated and the phantom, he would permit himself to be serious about the crafting of phantoms and set this at the head of his own life as the best thing he has?

(*Republic* 599a)

Throughout the *Republic* Socrates argues that the poet's unreasonableness harms the *polis*. To complete his attack in the *Republic*'s last book, he urges their expulsion on the grounds of their uselessness. Klingsohr, as we have seen, frames his lesson within an enlightened transposition of the terms of Socrates' first objection: he claims that the crafting of poetry requires reason and knowledge. Heinrich, in agreeing with his master, adds a detail from his own life that disproves Socrates' later claim that the poet's uselessness drives him to his desperate work. He moves their conversation to its close by praising skillfulness (*Geschicklichkeit*) and simultaneously informing us of his own skill:

I have stood with quiet interest in my father's workshop and been happy when I could help him accomplish something skillful. Skillfulness has an especially invigorating charm, and it is true that consciousness of skill provides a more lasting and distinct enjoyment than that gushing feeling of an incomprehensible, exuberant glory.²³

Heinrich has helped his father work in the small workshop that, as we know from the novel's opening pages, lies within the family house. At home with skill, Heinrich is not the useless man that Socrates claims the poet is.

The conversation with Klingsohr, Heinrich's sole encounter in the novel with a poet, instructs the boy most concretely about the poet's skill. Klingsohr insists on the knowledge and practicality of the poets and their productive interaction with the city. He champions their reasonableness, their avoidance of excess, and their familiarity with the workings of the city, the same virtues

he needs as advisor to Heinrich's successful uncle. Always assuming that the poets' enlightened self-interest promotes the general welfare, his arguments fulfill specifically Socratic demands on the poet and justify his presence in society.

Klingsohr recognizes from the beginning that his pupil does not come to him completely untaught. He compliments Heinrich on his account of the trip to Augsburg and acknowledges that he has already acquired some experience with poetry:

"Your account of the journey," said Klingsohr, "provided me with a very pleasant entertainment last night. I observed very well that the spirit of poesy is your friendly attendant. Your travelling companions have imperceptibly become its voice."²⁴

Heinrich's conversation about poetry with the merchants that accompany him to Augsburg early in the novel constitutes the first lesson of his poetic education and our second major source in following up the old hermit's claim that *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* discusses and edifies poetry.

The merchants assume the voice of poetry, as Klingsohr says, in three ways. First, the poetic voice of the merchants announces itself in their manner of speaking, which has all the polish and wit of Novalis' prose style. More importantly, their highly stylized talk—a dialogue of monologues, a recurrent theme and favored technique of Novalis—is spoken *in unison*, the collective utterance of a body of honorable citizens. Secondly, the merchants present Heinrich with his first two poetic fictions in the novel, including his first poem. Thirdly, these two tales are themselves stories about poets, and the merchants introduce them with an account of poets in legendary times.

The merchants break the ice in the carriage ride by helping Heinrich's mother picture the delights of Swabia to their young companion, who seems to be growing moody on his first trip away from home. Before these travelling salesmen move on to describe the charms of southern girls, they give the boy a polite account of his mother's native city. They praise Augsburg as an ideal place to work, a veritable model of cooperation between the fine arts and commerce:

"You do well to take your son back there," they said. "The customs of your native land are milder and more agreeable. The people know how to promote the useful without despising the pleasant. Everybody tries to satisfy his needs in a social and charming manner. The merchant fares well and is honored. The arts and crafts increase and honor one another; the industrious person finds work easier because it provides him a variety of amenities. . . . The more diligently the days are spent in the pursuit of gain, the more exclusively are the nights devoted to the stimulating enjoyment of the fine arts and social intercourse."²⁵

According to the merchants who work there—the citizenry Socrates fears the poets will unstring—poetry helps the city run profitably and smoothly. Like little Fabel in "Klingsohr's Fairy Tale," who restores lively traffic to the streets (*auf den Straßen war ein lebhaftes Verkehr* [I:310]), the poets refresh the citizenry for its labors. The poets' diversions and the merchants' industry have each found their time and place within the city, dividing the day between themselves. The merchants are grateful to the poets for stories to help pass the time (*die Zeit zu verkürzen* [I:205]), stories they recount to Heinrich in the carriage during the idle hours of a business trip to Augsburg.

The merchants praise poetry as the handmaiden of business in present circumstances and acknowledge it as the legendary source of natural and social order. Like Klingsohr, they recognize Heinrich's promise as a poet, and they assure him of his profession's respectability by invoking the great legendary poets with which it began. They tell Heinrich old stories in which the poets are men of great power who bring law and order to nature and its creatures. According to these legends the poets first draw forth nature's abundance:

"There are supposed to have been poets who by the strange sounds of marvelous instruments awakened the secret life of the woods and the spirits hidden in trees, aroused the dead seed of plants in deserts and waste places, and called forth blooming gardens."

They then turn to the earth's living creatures:

"They also tamed ferocious animals, made wild men accustomed to order and morality, aroused in them gentle inclinations and the arts of peace."

Finally the poets succeed in turning nature to the uses of man on a grand scale, harnessing it with their magic science:

"[The poets] transformed raging floods into mild waters, and even swept the deadliest stones into regular dance rhythms."²⁶

Klingsohr's characterization of the merchants as speakers for poetry's voice proves quite apt, and in lending a voice to poetry they permit it to sing its own praises. They stress its usefulness to the business of the city and exemplify the mutual respect between the poets and men of commerce. Their speech is the most dramatic example of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*'s tribute to the poets, opening their young listener's ears to the power and benevolence of the legendary bards.

Poetry expresses itself by speaking through others in the carriage ride, and the voice lent it by the merchants retains traces of their ventriloquism: the voice of the people that approves of the poets in their midst still manages to *profit* from the loan. The merchants' pre-