

**Fragmentation of Text, Fragmentation of Time:
Evental Aesthetics in Friedrich Schlegel and
Roland Barthes**

Winfried Eckel

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Abstract

Friedrich Schlegel and Roland Barthes's shared preference for the fragment as a form of writing is closely related to their diverging interests in the category of the whole. While Schlegel uses fragmentary forms to evoke the idea of a comprehensive wholeness, which contrasts the contemporary experience of differentiating discourses of knowledge and a growing gap between the culture of experts and the world we live in, Barthes regards such an all-integrating wholeness only as monstrous. Writing under different historical conditions, the French poststructuralist is interested in using the form of the fragment to break up the idea of supposedly homogeneous wholes, such as the bourgeois subject, history, or the work of art. In this context, it has not yet been recognized enough how much both authors understand their writing as a vivid communication and dynamic interaction with the reader: by means of the fragment, both aim at creating evental reading effects that interrupt the continuum of time and involve the recipient in a surprising way. The result of the sudden perception of unexpected connections, according to Schlegel, is "*Witz*"; of the sudden perception of breaks, colliding codes or the new, according to Barthes, it is "*jouissance*." The present essay links Schlegel and Barthes's theories of the fragment with their aesthetics of eventality, and shows how the fragmentation of the text is connected with a fragmentation of time.

Keywords

Fragment

"*Witz*"

"*Jouissance*"

Friedrich Schlegel

Roland Barthes



1. Introduction: The Rise of Modern Fragmentarism

It is a common experience that fragments of literature and art, such as an unfinished text or a piece of an ancient sculpture, can possess an aesthetic fascination that is stronger than that of a finished and complete work. This experience seems to be a rather modern phenomenon; at least, it has only been conceptualized relatively late in the history of aesthetic reflection. Antiquity had no concept for what we nowadays call a literary fragment: the term “fragment” was related only to concrete objects such as bread or things made of wood or stone. Insofar as the poetics of Aristotle or Horace were dominated by concepts of wholeness, unity or coherence, the fragment was not considered a positive aesthetic option.¹ Certainly, within the framework of the rhetorical tradition, which also includes, for example, *Peri Hypsous* by Pseudo-Longinus, there existed a knowledge of the impact of figures of speech, such as the ellipse or aposiopesis, that cut down on or interrupt the utterance.² But these observations did not yet condense into a more comprehensive justification of the fragmentary. The denigration of rhetoric from Plato to Kant additionally contributed to the fact that aesthetic orientation toward the ideal of wholeness was a given for a long time. For example, in the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas postulated in his *Summa Theologica* that “integritas sive perfectio” (integrity or perfection) is necessary for beauty in the first place: “Quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt” (The things that lack something are ugly precisely for this reason).³

This theoretical association of fragmentariness with ugliness was only called into question by the rediscovery of antiquity in the Italian Renaissance. Many of the antique works of art and writings which were considered exemplary and worthy of imitation were only handed down in fragments. This fact could not remain without influence on the evaluation of the fragment as such. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Johann Joachim Winckelmann relates a baffling experience: while he is viewing the Belvedere Torso of Hercules, it seemingly undergoes a miraculous transformation and ceases to be an incomplete fragment. In an epiphanic episode, the very idea of a perfect work of art emerges. What at first sight appeared to be but a “verstümmelte Statue” (mutilated statue) and a “verunstalteter Stein” (disfigured stone) is complemented in his mind by the (imagination of the) missing head and the lost limbs to form a complete figure of the hero and God: “es sammelt sich ein Ausfluß aus dem Gegenwärtigen und wirkt gleichsam eine plötzliche Ergänzung” (an outflow from the present gathers and effects, as it were, a sudden supplement).⁴

Another 150 years later, Rainer Maria Rilke describes a similarly startling experience of wholeness in his sonnet *Archaischer Torso Apollons*,⁵ the opening

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poem of the second part of his *Neue Gedichte* (1908), dedicated to Auguste Rodin. As with Winckelmann, this experience seems unexpected and overwhelming, even though Rilke embeds its rendering in a larger reflection on its preconditions. In contrast to the earlier description, the poem maintains that an imaginary completion of the fragmented statue to an entire figure is not necessary at all, since the torso itself seems to contain the missing elements, especially the head with its divine gaze. Without this secret presence of the lost and absent, the sonnet argues, “stünde dieser Stein entstellt” (this stone would be disfigured). Yet the contrary seems to be the case. Fragmentation, that is, the loss of the head and limbs of the statue, is not considered a disfigurement, but a reduction to the essential. Less seems to be more: Compared to the idea of the original work, the aesthetic power of the torso appears to be increased rather than diminished.⁶ It is no wonder that Rilke’s mentor and friend Rodin starts creating statues that deliberately render the impression of being unfinished or broken.

This ascension of the fragmentary from a deficient mode of the aesthetic to an aesthetic ideal is typical of modernity since the eighteenth century. It can be observed not only in the field of the fine arts, but also in literature, on which I will focus in the following. Here, the reevaluation of the idea of fragmentation can be seen, above all, in the fact that, from the mid-eighteenth century onward, the fragment is conceived as a form which an author can choose consciously and deliberately. In Germany, for example, Herder, Lavater, Klopstock and other writers published books with titles already indicating that they were containing fragments.⁷ This considerably extended the meaning of “fragment” compared to the previous use of the term, which, for example in Diderot’s texts,⁸ had been reserved for on the one hand, the broken and only partially preserved and, on the other, the unintentionally incomplete. What is new at the end of the century is the idea that it is possible and meaningful to produce fragments intentionally and that it can be an advantage for a text to be understood as a fragment, that is, as part of a lost or unachieved whole.⁹

This is by no means self-evident. Whoever would like to narrowly confine the meaning of “fragment” by recalling the original sense of the word (Lat. *fragmentum*, “the broken,” from *frangere*, “to break”)¹⁰ will probably deny that deliberately produced texts, referred to as fragments, really are fragments and argue that we are only dealing with fictitious fragments or fragment simulations, which merely appear to be broken or unfinished, as in Rodin’s sculptures.¹¹ One may therefore prefer other generic terms such as “aphorism,” “maxim” or simply “short prose.”¹² Nevertheless, the self-understanding of the texts is important and part of their particular communication strategy. Writers who call their texts a

fragment extend an invitation to relate it positively or negatively to the idea of a whole.

2. Fragment as Form and Aesthetics of Eventuality

Friedrich Schlegel and Roland Barthes, whose fragmentary texts I want to present here in greater detail, write in exactly this new tradition, which has its beginning in the eighteenth century. Their collections of short prose are collections of fragments precisely because that is what they are supposed to be: paratextual framing, for example titles such as *Kritische Fragmente* (Schlegel 1797) or *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (Barthes 1977), clearly emphasizes this claim. In addition, Schlegel and Barthes have formulated, within their fragments, self-referential theories of the fragment, which give instructions on how their texts are to be understood. It is not least because of these theories that the writers occupy a prominent position among the numerous authors of intentional fragments.

Both writers choose the form of the fragment because the idea of wholeness, which thinkers such as Aristotle or Thomas Aquinas could still take for granted, has become problematic in modernity. If modernity, in contrast to earlier epochs, is characterized by the loss of holistic world views, the emergence of a functionally differentiated social order, processes of particularization in the most diverse areas, the break with the past, individualism, and pluralism, it is obvious why the idea of the fragmentary is gaining in importance. Schlegel and Barthes are both skeptical about the claim that “the whole” in the sense of an all-encompassing unity can be understood and represented in any positive form. However, they pursue very different communicative strategies due to intentions of a more constructive (Schlegel) or a more destructive type (Barthes): while the German Romantic puts the use of the fragment to the service of an at least indirect representation of comprehensive wholeness, the French poststructuralist is precisely concerned with critically exposing the ideological moment of every concept of wholeness. These partly contradictory strategies are characteristic of different development phases of the modern age: Schlegel’s approach corresponds to an early stage in which the regulatory function of the holistic idea is still maintained, whereas Barthes’s approach corresponds to a later stage, called “postmodernist” by some, in which diversity takes precedence over unity, the particular precedence over the whole. In the final section of this paper, these schematic juxtapositions will be seen to permit further differentiations. Even though Barthes does not mention Schlegel, his conception can be productively related to that of his predecessor. A typological comparison

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makes it possible to distinguish the peculiarities of each of the two writers through their contrast.

In addition to the self-positioning in terms of genre, the communication strategies pursued by the fragmentary texts of Schlegel and Barthes also include a second element: the emphasis on their own temporality, their event character or, if I may, their eventality. This aspect has hardly been noticed and thus also makes a comparison rewarding. The event quality is based on what Camelia Elias has called the “performativity”¹³ of the fragment, namely the fact that the fragment does not simply describe what it is ultimately about, but that it produces it with the aid of the reader. The emphasis on genre and the emphasis on event are interlocked, for it is precisely the relationship of the fragment to the idea of wholeness that the authors understand as an event, whether the relationship is thought to be affirmative or critical. If the assertion of fragmentariness reflects an aspect of the texts as fixed written objects, the stress on the event character indicates that the texts also want to be part of a dynamic communication. The fact that texts are relatively time-stable things does not rule out the possibility that they can become events again and again in different situations.¹⁴

The basic event character of communication in general is accentuated in a particular sense in the fragmentary texts of Schlegel and Barthes: the production and reception of the fragment is ideally linked to an event-like interruption of the passing of time.¹⁵ The fragment appears as an incident, a sudden occurrence, an event in the emphatic sense. Winckelmann and Rilke’s descriptions of the fragmented sculptures have already shown that the perception of a fragment has been stylized into an event that breaks the continuity of the usual time experience. Similarly, for Schlegel and Barthes the fragment implies a moment of disruption: the fragmentation of the text seems to necessitate a fragmentation of time. It is striking how much the aesthetic reflections of both authors on their own writing are permeated by an emphasis on the present and a semantics of suddenness.¹⁶ Instead of a future-oriented philosophy of history, in particular a functionalization of the aesthetic in terms of a teleology of history as it shaped the thinking of many contemporaries of Schlegel and Barthes (e.g., Schiller or Paris May respectively), the celebration of the intense aesthetic moment as an event that does not refer to anything beyond itself is to be found in both writers.¹⁷ For Schlegel and Barthes, the autonomy or intransitivity of the aesthetic is essentially based on this notion of the event.

In both instances, one can speak of an aesthetic of eventality, in the case of Schlegel linked to his concept of “*Witz*” (wit) and “*witziger Einfall*” (witty idea),

and in the case of Barthes based upon the concept of “*jouissance*” (enjoyment), which is produced by the text in an unpredictable manner.¹⁸ Schlegel was able to take up the notion of wit from the poetics and literary criticism of the eighteenth century,¹⁹ whereas Barthes found the idea of *jouissance* (and its contrast to that of *plaisir*) to have already been stated by Lacan.²⁰ Both authors, nonetheless, enrich the adopted concepts with their own conclusions.

While *Witz*, according to Schlegel, brings remote things to a surprising synthesis, in Barthes’ view the *jouissance* experience is to be found where the reader encounters unexpected ruptures, collisions of codes or even something new. The first experience results from the momentary perception of identity, the second from the momentary perception of difference. Schlegel regards wit as the “Prinzip und Organ der Universalphilosophie” (principle and organ of universal philosophy) because in his eyes it is distinguished by “das Kombinatorische des Gedankens”²¹ (the combinatorial nature of thought); Barthes, however, posits: “Le sujet accède à la jouissance par la cohabitation des langages, qui travaillent côte à côte: le texte de plaisir c’est Babel heureuse”²² (The subject attains enjoyment through the coexistence of languages *working side by side*: the text of pleasure is happy Babel). A common feature of *Witz* and *jouissance* is the notion of suddenness: for Schlegel, wit is an “Explosion von gebundnem Geist”²³ (explosion of bound spirit), the “äußere Blitz der Fantasie”²⁴ (outward lightning of imagination); Barthes himself emphasizes the “*imprévision de la jouissance*”²⁵ (*unpredictability* of enjoyment), “Le texte ... n’est pas isotope: les bords, la faille, sont imprévisibles”²⁶ (The text ... is not isotope: the edges, the rift, are unpredictable). What *Witz* and *jouissance* ultimately have in common is that they are also conceived as an end in themselves: “Witz ist Zweck an sich”²⁷ (wit is purpose in itself), Schlegel writes; and about the “*Textes de jouissance*” (*Texts of enjoyment*) we read in Barthes that “Ils sont pervers en ceci qu’ils sont hors toute finalité imaginable ... Le texte de jouissance est absolument intransitif”²⁸ (They are perverse in that they are beyond any conceivable purpose ... The text of enjoyment is absolutely intransitive).

Martin Seel has argued that works of art are generally “event objects” fashioned specifically for the purpose of event production.²⁹ What then is so special about the texts of Schlegel and Barthes? Their fragmentary texts stand out as they are not just “event objects,” but also contain their own theories about their object status and event character. In terms of their object nature, they interpret themselves as fragments and thus – in whatever more precise meaning – as incomplete, without a continuous connection and deficient in relation to a concept of wholeness. And by means of the keywords “*Witz*” and “*jouissance*,”

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they themselves give hints on how they want to become an event. In principle, it cannot be ruled out that Schlegel or Barthes's fragmentary texts, instead of being perceived as witty or pleasurable, are read as boring. Indeed, from the point of view of ordinary reading expectations, this is the more likely perception.³⁰ The text-immanent theories of *Witz* and *jouissance*, however, can heighten the readers' awareness and increase their willingness to read the texts in the desired way. The theories thus contribute to the production of events. They diminish interpretative contingency, that is, the fact that texts can become an event for us in very different ways, and that we can associate quite different meanings with these events.

3. Part and Whole: the Programmatic Framework

The texts by Schlegel and Barthes provide the frame of reference in which they themselves want to be read. This is especially evident when we consider the function and meaning attributed to the form of the fragment in the textual theories of aesthetic communication. In these attributions, the programmatic differences in the use of the fragment form between Schlegel and Barthes become more apparent. Above all, these differences have to do with determining the fragment in relation to the idea of *totality*. In contrast to Barthes, Schlegel takes a fundamentally positive approach to this concept. Although, for Schlegel, the form of the fragment is motivated by the notion that direct access to the whole is no longer possible under conditions of modernity, Schlegel understands the fragment as a medium that at least allusively evokes an idea of the whole. An inkling of totality is indeed possible because an ultimately harmonious relationship between part and whole, multiplicity and unity, is assumed in the horizon of the Idealistic-Romantic generation around 1800. For Schlegel, his own fragment collections appear to be "ein bunter Haufen von Einfällen, die nur vom Geiste eines Geistes belebt, nach Einem Ziele zielen"³¹ (a motley heap of ideas that simply animated by the spirit of a spirit aim at a single purpose). The animation by a unifying spirit designates the quasi-religious prerequisite under which perhaps not a single fragment, but a collection of fragments can evoke the idea of the whole. "Alle π [poetischen] Fragm.[ente] müssen irgendwo Theile eines Ganzen sein"³² (All poetic fragments must be parts of a whole somewhere), Schlegel notes. And in his Jena lecture on transcendental philosophy from 1800/01 he says: only "*das ist wirklich, was sich aufs Ganze bezieht*"³³ (*that is real what refers to the whole*). Manfred Frank is correct when he writes that for Schlegel and the early Romantics as a whole, "especially the fragment is at the service of a new totality."³⁴

Barthes, on the other hand, emphasizes the antithetical relationship between part and whole much more strongly, and uses the fragment form to critically question or destroy established notions of wholeness. Any concrete assertion of a *totum*, even the idea of totality per se, is suspected to be ideological because it is guided by interests. Compared to the part, the whole seems to be rather repressive than integrative – a characteristic evaluation that Barthes shared with many members of the '68 generation. The intellectual self-portrait in fragments, which the author presented in 1975 under the title *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, states the following about Barthes's preference for the fragment form: "Son premier texte ou à peu près (1942) est fait de fragments; ce choix est alors justifié à la manière gidienne 'parce que l'incohérence est préférable à l'ordre qui déforme'."³⁵ (His first text or nearly first text (1942) is made of fragments; this choice is at the time justified in the way of Gide "because incoherence is preferable to the order that distorts").³⁶ According to Barthes, every comprehensive order, every totality runs the risk of violating the included parts. Whether it is to do with the whole of the world, the whole of the subject, or the whole of a certain thing (such as a text) does not matter. "Das Ganze ist das Unwahre" (The whole is the untrue), Adorno's sentence from *Minima Moralia*,³⁷ would probably have been accepted by Barthes in the same way as Schlegel would have agreed with the contrary sentence from Hegel's preface to *The Phenomenology of Spirit* to which Adorno refers: "Das Wahre ist das Ganze" (The true is the whole).³⁸

These different and even opposing definitions of the part/whole relation correspond to completely different ways of using the form of the fragment. Schlegel as well as Barthes's use aims at communicative effects, which can be addressed as "events" in the light of our observations above: in both cases, though under different conditions, the surprising break-up of familiar structures and the perception of something new is the main concern. Schlegel aims at the reader's sudden recognition of large correspondences. He has readers in mind who may have just had all their attention occupied by a precisely described detail, but who are now, by a witty combination of thoughts, confronted with something completely different and seemingly remote, so that they succeed in perceiving an identity in the different – with the effect that a fleeting notion of totality as the unity of unity and multiplicity may also arise.³⁹ For Barthes, by contrast, it is important that the reader suddenly becomes aware of rifts, contradictions, or inconsistencies as they are produced not only by the clash of two fragments, but also in the micro area of a single fragment or the macro area of Barthes's entire oeuvre. In this way, the reader has to be confronted with the fact that certain

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common constructs of wholeness are no longer tenable, such as a concept of personal identity or a self-contained history.

With regard to the communicative function of the fragment form in Schlegel and Barthes, one can therefore speak of a quite different, and sometimes even contradictory programmatic framework. Both writers are concerned with shattering expectations and turning this shattering into an event – the former for the purpose of uncovering surprising connections and bridges, the latter with the intention of destroying rigid notions of unity and wholeness that have become too familiar.

4. Communication in Fragments I: Schlegel

If the fragment form is used as a medium for the production or destruction of connections, the fragmentary texts of Schlegel and Barthes address quite different ideal readers. Barthes's books, which pursue the staging of sensual fractures, demand a reader who, at least to some extent, adheres to those ideological concepts of wholeness that need to be critically undermined, but who at the same time experiences the questioning of these ideas as pleasure and liberation. By contrast, Schlegel's fragment collections rely on a reader who is to some extent dissatisfied with modern experiences of particularity and therefore, in view of a positive idea of wholeness, not only retraces the witty connections fixed in individual fragments, but also unfolds and perhaps even expands potential links between the fragments in order to unleash the idea of a universal interconnectedness.

It is remarkable how much the fragments of Schlegel's collections (like Novalis's *Blüthenstaub* fragments of 1798) consider themselves an instance of lively communication with the reader. Instead of being finished artifacts, they see themselves as imperfect, provisional, in need of supplementation, and as an incentive to the reader's own productivity, who responds and adds to them.

Der synthetische Schriftsteller konstruiert und schafft sich einen Leser, wie er sein soll; er denkt sich denselben nicht ruhend und tot, sondern lebendig und entgegenwirkend. Er läßt das, was er erfunden hat, vor seinen Augen stufenweise werden, oder er lockt ihn es selbst zu erfinden. Er will keine bestimmte Wirkung auf ihn machen, sondern er tritt mit ihm in das heilige Verhältnis der innigsten Symphilosophie oder Sympoesie.⁴⁰

The synthetic writer constructs and creates a reader as he should be; he doesn't imagine him calm and dead, but alive and responsive. He lets whatever he has created take shape gradually before the reader's eyes, or he tempts the reader to create it himself. He does not try to make any particular impression on the reader, but enters with him into the sacred relationship of the most profound symphilosophy or sympoetry.

For Schlegel, the synthetic writer is the one who, in contrast to the analytical one, knows how to limit himself effectively in his communication, who does not wish "to tell everything he knows."⁴¹ He rather keeps something, perhaps even the decisive element, "back to himself," in order to let the reader guess at it or to move him toward self-activity.⁴² He understands the art of restraint and cautious suggestion, because he knows that in literature "mag wohl alles Ganze halb, und alles Halbe doch eigentlich ganz sein"⁴³ (every whole can be a part and every part really a whole). That way, he allows for the reader to participate in his authorship.⁴⁴

The idea of the fragment collection as an offer for conversation which the reader has to answer or supplement is compatible with Schlegel's other notion that each conversation integrates the various contributions as fragments in itself: "Ein Dialog ist eine Kette, oder ein Kranz von Fragmenten"⁴⁵ (A dialogue is a chain, or a wreath of fragments). In the image of the "chain" or "wreath," each conversation appears as an open or enclosed whole, whereas the individual contributions appear as mere "links" or "branches" – even if the contributions themselves may claim to be a whole or to grasp the whole, the totality of being: as Schlegel notes, "Auch das größte System ist doch nur ein Fragment"⁴⁶ (Even the largest system is only a fragment). In this way he expresses the conviction that the whole, in the sense of totality, necessarily eludes a single consciousness. The Romantics' preference for the fragment form as well as the form of conversation reflects this transcendence of totality. In the words of Manfred Frank, totality here shifts "from a constitutive to a regulatory idea."⁴⁷

The converging concepts of fragment and conversation in Schlegel's work indicate that the event character, which is obvious with regard to conversation, is also important for his fragmentary texts. Even in terms of their object character, in their concrete materiality, the fragments seem to underline this claim to their event-like nature, provided that their brevity (the longest being barely more than half a page long) and their discontinuity (blank lines separate the thematically unconnected entries) all suggest the suddenness of an "idea"

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(Einfall).⁴⁸ If the idea is per se an event in itself because it interrupts a continuum, this applies even more so to the “witty idea,” which discovers unexpected similarities among seemingly distant objects.⁴⁹

This eventality is reflected in the following fragment by means of an image from the social sphere: “Manche witzige Einfälle sind wie das überraschende Wiedersehen zwei befreundeter Gedanken nach einer langen Trennung”⁵⁰ (Some witty ideas are like the surprising reunion of two befriended thoughts after a long separation). This fragment is a “witty idea” itself, not only the description of such an idea. In a surprising way, it brings together the concept of the witty idea – that is, the surprising combination of thoughts – with the notion of an unexpected reunion of two friends. At the same time, this imagery asserts that the issues of intellectuality (a witty way of thinking) and life-world experience (friendship), which at first sight seem to be brought together quite arbitrarily, can entertain a mutual affinity with each other, so that their separation may be as painful as the separation of two friends. Insofar as wit isolates a specific feature from these conventionally separated areas in order to highlight a single point of agreement, it proves to be an analytical and synthetic ability at the same time.

Inspired by the obviously ‘witty’ fragments and challenged by the concepts of symphilosophy and sympoetry, readers may examine Schlegel’s fragmentary texts for further witty connections between different fields of knowledge and experience. They may also create such connections themselves by linking scattered fragments with each other, or even by adding ‘witty ideas’ of their own,⁵¹ as the participation of Schlegel’s friends in his *Athenaeum* fragments suggests.⁵² In any case, the syntheses produced by wit have an event-like character. The fragment, for a moment, suggests the idea of unity, which as *pars pro toto* evokes the notion of unity in the infinite, that is totality. Thus, wit gains an epiphanic character.⁵³

Ist aller Witz Prinzip und Organ der Universalphilosophie, und alle Philosophie nichts andres als der Geist der Universalität, die Wissenschaft aller sich ewig mischenden und wieder trennenden Wissenschaften, eine logische Chemie: so ist der Wert und die Würde jenes absoluten, enthusiastischen, durch und durch materialen Witzes, worin Bacon und Leibniz, die Häupter der scholastischen Prosa, jener einer der ersten, dieser einer der größten Virtuosen war, unendlich. Die wichtigsten wissenschaftlichen Entdeckungen sind *bonmots* der Gattung. Das sind sie durch die überraschende Zufälligkeit ihrer Entstehung, durch das Kombinatorische

des Gedankens, und durch das Barocke des hingeworfenen Ausdrucks. Doch sind sie dem Gehalt nach freilich weit mehr als die sich in Nichts auflösende Erwartung des rein poetischen Witzes. Die besten sind *échappées de vue* ins Unendliche.⁵⁴

If wit in all its manifestations is the principle and the organ of universal philosophy, and if all philosophy is nothing but the spirit of universality, the science of all the eternally uniting and dividing sciences, a logical chemistry: then the value and importance of that absolute, enthusiastic, thoroughly material wit is infinite, that wit wherein Bacon and Leibniz, the chief representatives of scholastic prose, were masters, the former among the first, chronologically speaking, the latter among the greatest. The most important scientific discoveries are *bons mots* of this genre – they are such because of the surprising contingency of their origin, the unifying force of their thought, and the baroqueness of their casual expression. But they are, of course, in respect to content, much more than the evanescent expectation of the purely poetical wit. The best are *échappées de vue* into the infinite.

This fragment, too, is a ‘witty’ fragment in Schlegel’s sense. It practices its own theory of wit by surprisingly linking the supposedly separate with one another and calling “philosophy,” as the science of the mixing and separating sciences, a “logical chemistry.” Similar combinations can be found in many other fragments: with reference to the “Affinitäten aller Künste und Wissenschaften” (affinities of all arts and sciences), Schlegel speaks, for example, of the “Tendenz aller reinen Instrumentalmusik zur Philosophie”⁵⁵ (tendency of pure instrumental music toward philosophy), or conversely demands a “Theorie der grammatischen Tonkunst”⁵⁶ (theory of grammatical music) to better understand certain philosophical writings. The witty connection of normally separate spheres can even go beyond the realm of arts and sciences when he defines “progressive Universalpoesie” (progressive, universal poetry) as making “die Poesie lebendig und gesellig und das Leben und die Gesellschaft poetisch”⁵⁷ (poetry lively and sociable, and life and society poetical).

Contrary to the differentiation of discourses since the Enlightenment, and contrary to an ever-growing confrontation between expert culture and everyday life, wit insists on the perception of similarities between the diverging worlds.⁵⁸

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From a sociological perspective, it is one of the aporias of early Romanticism that the faculty of wit itself, at least in the form cultivated by Schlegel, is only possible within a special discourse, namely literature.

5. Communication in Fragments II: Barthes

Barthes's work shows no trace of any explicit involvement with Schlegel.⁵⁹ But like the early Romantic, Barthes uses the object character of the fragment – that is, its conciseness due to its brevity and clear delimitation – for the deliberate production of events. He is also concerned with a text design that surprises the reader and might challenge his or her expectations.⁶⁰ In contrast to Schlegel, however, he does not aim at the sudden revelation of undreamed-of contexts or epiphanic notions of a comprehensive whole, but rather at disturbing or even destroying conventional but problematic unities of a seemingly more tangible nature. Contrary to Schlegel, he therefore does not rely on a regulatory idea of totality, but proceeds from concrete concepts of wholeness such as “work,” “subject,” or “history,” which he tries to subvert by means of the fragmentary form of writing. In his opinion, the idea of an all-inclusive totality is only a monster made up of heterogeneous parts, which causes fear and laughter at the same time, like violence does.⁶¹

The fragments themselves already refute the idea of a logical connection, because they stand in a relationship of mere contiguity to each other; that is, the sequence of fragments does not represent a continuous development of thought. Like Schlegel, Barthes explains the fragments' discontinuity with their “idea” character: they come unbidden to the author's mind and cross the boundaries of linear thought processes.⁶² In his books, the fragments' discontinuity is accounted for by the fact that Barthes has refrained from placing the individual sections of text into a systematic sequence. On the contrary, they were arranged to avoid too much consistency. As if to rule out an idea of a sequence oriented on a structure or a central sense from the outset, the books *Le Plaisir du texte* (1973), *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (1975) and *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (1977) follow a more or less strictly observed alphabetical arrangement of the fragments by means of headings or keywords:⁶³

fini l'angoisse du “plan,” l'emphase du “développement,” les logiques tordues, fini les dissertations! une idée par fragment, un fragment par idée, et pour la suite de ces atomes, rien que l'ordre millénaire et fou des lettres

françaises (qui sont elles-mêmes des objets insensés – privés de sens).⁶⁴

finished the anguish of the “plan,” the emphasis of “development,” twisted logics, finished the dissertations! an idea per fragment, a fragment per idea, and for the continuation of these atoms, nothing but the millennial and crazy order of French letters (which are themselves senseless objects – deprived of meaning).

The impression of heterogeneity and incoherence is particularly strong in Barthes’s intellectual self-portrait, which juxtaposes short texts of very different types: reflections, memories, analyses, commentaries, miniature narratives, etc., supplemented by reproductions of photographs, handwritten notes, scribbles, drawings, etc. Insofar as with each fragment a new text begins that cannot be derived from the preceding one, each fragment produces a rupture and the collision of two edges at which, following the text theory of *Le Plaisir du texte*, an aesthetic pleasure is supposed to ignite.⁶⁵ Accordingly, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* states: “autant de fragments, autant de débuts, autant de plaisirs” (so many fragments, so many beginnings, so many pleasures), “le fragment ... implique une jouissance immédiate”⁶⁶ (the fragment ... implies immediate enjoyment). The use of fragments corresponds with Barthes’s predilection for beginnings and his aversion to any claim to completion. Mounir Laouyen rightly recognizes this position to be the expression of aesthetics of suddenness characteristic of fragmentary writing.⁶⁷ Like the wit aimed at by Schlegel, pleasure in Barthes is conceivable only as an event.

If wit requires a reader who understands early Romantic fragment collections as a medium of surprising combinations of thoughts, the experience of *jouissance* presupposes a recipient who has become sensitive to the complex structural breaks in Barthes’s fragmentary books. However, these ruptures do not only concern the transitions from one fragment to another, the coherence within a single fragment, or the connection of the respective fragmentary book with Barthes’s complete oeuvre. On a discursive level that goes beyond the overall work, they also touch on the relationship between a fragmentary book and conventional concepts of wholeness, such as those given by the already mentioned categories of “work,” “subject,” or “history.”

These three categories are called into question by the three fragmentary books of the 1970s, with each book focusing on one category in particular: if *Le Plaisir du texte* challenges the concept of “work,” then *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, in a polemical reference to the tradition of autobiography, is concerned

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with the subversion of the bourgeois notion of a “sujet unitaire”⁶⁸ (unitary subject), whereas *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* criticizes the idea that the discontinuous experiences of lovers could be synthesized into a unified and coherent narrative “story.” All books develop counter-concepts to those they reject. The notion of the *work* as a self-contained structure organized around a central sense is replaced by Barthes’s notion of the “text,” which is polyphonic in itself and not clearly distinguishable from the outside; the conception of the *unitary self*, which validates and reflects upon itself in the process of narration, is substituted by the idea of a “sujet dispersé”⁶⁹ (dispersed subject), which, as Christian Moser has formulated in a different context with reference to Augustine, can collect itself no longer *out* of dispersion, but only *in* it;⁷⁰ finally, the idea of the *love story* that shapes the numerous and often void “événements de la vie amoureuse”⁷¹ (events of love life) into a conventional and meaningful structure is abandoned in favor of the reconstruction of random and unconnected “scènes de langage”⁷² (language scenes) or “bris de discours”⁷³ (fragments of speech) of the love discourse, which are supposed to correspond to this event character.

In all three cases, criticism is not only expressed through the presentation of arguments, but also, and perhaps even more so, through the form of fragmentary writing, which reveals the inner frailty of the work, the dispersion and polymorphism of the ego, and the constitutive fragmentariness of the discourse led by the lovers. By breaking with the guidelines of the *doxa* in a performative act, the texts acquire an event character, which at the same time determines their subversive power. Criticism of ideology coincides with the experience of pleasure.

6. Conclusion: Broken Universes

The conception of Schlegel and Barthes’s use of the literary fragment as opposite strategies, which is guiding my reflections, needs to be put in perspective. It would not do justice to Schlegel’s idea of the fragment to merely understand it as being in the service of a new totality by producing surprising combinations of thoughts and, ultimately, as producing the idea of a universal interconnectedness with the help of wit. It would also be too narrow an interpretation to describe Barthes’s aesthetic strategy of the fragment exclusively as a disturbing force or troublemaker (“trouble-fête”⁷⁴) intended to question or even joyfully destroy conventional concepts of wholeness by inscribing breaks.

As for Schlegel, it can be said that he aims at the representation of totality just as much as he actually thwarts it. We have already seen that wit is not

only a synthetic faculty, but also an analytical one. Precisely by recognizing similarities between seemingly remote things, wit focuses on individual features, which are singled out from their overall context. In this way, fragmentation is not only overcome, but created. In his 1804/05 Cologne lectures, Schlegel himself explicitly reflects on this destructive aspect of wit:

Diejenige Tätigkeit aber, wodurch das Bewußtsein sich am meisten als Bruchstück kundgibt, ist der *Witz*, sein Wesen besteht eben in der Abgerissenheit und entspringt wieder aus der Abgerissenheit und Abgeleitetheit des Bewußtseins selber.⁷⁵

But that activity, whereby the consciousness is revealed mostly as a fragment, is *wit*; its essence consists of being torn away and is again born from the disruption and derivation of consciousness itself.

Because the syntheses of wit happen only sporadically, it may give a glimpse of totality, but it cannot produce it permanently. What is more, the different syntheses, which only ever come about in relation to isolated aspects, can contradict each other. Although every synthesis may insinuate the possibility of totality, this claim is not fulfilled by any of them. That is why Manfred Frank aptly speaks of a “fragmentary universe” with regard to Schlegel and Romanticism as a whole.⁷⁶

Accordingly, Barthes does not only criticize the doxal concepts of wholeness, namely, “work,” “subject,” or “history,” and undermine them by writing in fragments: he also adheres to them to a certain extent:

Certains veulent un texte (un art, une peinture) sans ombre, coupé de l’“idéologie dominante”; mais c’est vouloir un texte sans fécondité, sans productivité, un texte stérile . . . Le texte a besoin de son ombre: cette ombre, c’est *un peu* d’idéologie, *un peu* de représentation, *un peu* de sujet: fantômes, poches, traînées, nuages nécessaires: la subversion doit produire son propre *clair-obscur*.⁷⁷

Some people want a text (an art, a painting) without shadow, cut off from the “dominant ideology”; but this is to want a text without fertility, without productivity, a sterile text . . . The text needs its shadow: this shadow is *a bit* of ideology, *a bit* of representation, *a bit* of subject: ghosts, pockets, traces,

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necessary clouds: subversion must produce its own
chiaroscuro.

In the self-portrait, for example, apart from the notion of a scattered ego that loses itself in the void (“je suis dispersé”),⁷⁸ there also is the contrasting notion of an ego that asserts and preserves itself, and that refers the fragments it produces back to itself as a center, thus creating unity in diversity, a small closed universe: “Écrire par fragments: les fragments sont alors des pierres sur le pourtour du cercle: je m’étale en rond: tout mon petit univers en miettes: au centre, quoi?”⁷⁹ (Writing in fragments: the fragments are then stones on the circumference of the circle: I spread myself in circles: all my little universe in crumbs: in the center, what?).

And in the book about the love discourse, its eighty sections (Barthes speaks of “figures”) in alphabetical order, which are supposed to have no syntagmatic or narrative connections among themselves and no greater order than that of a swarm of mosquitoes, are particularly appealing because they can be referred back, at least partly, to the totalizing scheme of a conventional love story. This way, it becomes possible to distinguish, for example, figures that denote more easily the beginning of such a story, such as the fragment “Rencontre” (Encounter; with the heading “Qu’il était bleu, le ciel,”⁸⁰; How blue the sky was), from figures that are more likely to indicate a crisis or even the end of love, such as “Insupportable” (Unbearable; with the heading “Ça ne peut pas continuer,”⁸¹; This can’t go on).⁸² In a different way, the adherence to ideas of wholeness and unity is also indicated by the fact that Barthes speaks of an “encyclopédie de la culture affective”⁸³ (encyclopedia of affective culture) with regard to his catalog of figures. Despite the possibility of adding further figures, the fragments in the book are supposed to form a comprehensive unity.

The differences between Schlegel and Barthes must therefore not be overstated. Their fragmentary texts have in common that they bring processes of fragmentation and totalization to a fragile balance that is deeply ironic. The paradoxical formula of the “fragmentary universe” of the Romantics finds its analogy in Barthes’s idea of a (be it small) universe in crumbs (“univers en miettes”).⁸⁴ The decisive difference between Schlegel and Barthes can be seen in the different emphases they place on the idea of the broken universe. While Schlegel ultimately wants to evoke the notion of an all-integrating whole in contrast to the discursive differentiation of the Enlightenment, Barthes, in critical reference to his own time, is concerned with questioning concepts of concrete totality such as “subject” or “history,” which have become ideological. By means of the fragmentary form, both authors aim at the production of “eventful” reading experiences: the earlier zeroes in on experiences of interrelationship, the later on

experiences of breakage. Yet, of course, it remains open to what extent real reading experience meets these intentions and expectations.

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Notes

- 1 Cf. Eberhard Ostermann, *Das Fragment: Geschichte einer ästhetischen Idee* (Munich: Fink, 1991).
- 2 Cf. Eberhard Ostermann, "Fragment," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, ed. Gert Ueding, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), 454–464, here 456–457.
- 3 *Summa Theologica*, I, 39, 8. In the following, translations from the Latin, German and French are my own. My English versions of Schlegel are based on the translations by Peter Firchow. As for Barthes, I have consulted the translations of Richard Miller and Richard Howard. But since translations always depend on the context, I have opted for alternative solutions in a number of cases. The citation of the original passages should make it possible for the reader to check my translations.
- 4 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, "Beschreibung des Torso im Belvedere zu Rom" (1759), in *Winckelmanns Werke in einem Band*, ed. Helmut Holtzhauer (Berlin, Weimar: Aufbau, 1969).
- 5 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Ernst Zinn (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel 1955–), vol. I, 557.
- 6 For a more detailed comparison between Winckelmann and Rilke, cf. Peter Horst Neumann, "Rilkes *Archaischer Torso Apollos* in der Geschichte des modernen Fragmentarismus," in *Fragment und Totalität*, ed. Lucien Dällenbach and Christiaan L. Hart Nibbrig (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1984), 257–274.
- 7 Cf. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur. Erste Sammlung von Fragmenten* (Riga: Hartknoch, 1767); Johann Caspar Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente, zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntniß und Menschenliebe*, 4 vol. (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1775–1778); Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, *Fragmente über Sprache und Dichtkunst* (Hamburg: Herold, 1779–1780).
- 8 In 1782, Diderot writes in the *Encyclopédie*: "En Littérature, un fragment, c'est une partie d'un ouvrage qu'on n'a point en entier, soit que l'auteur ne l'ait pas achevé, soit que le tems n'en ait laissé parvenir jusqu'à nous qu'une partie." (Art. "Fragment"; In Literature, a fragment is a part of a work that we do not have in its entirety, either because the author has not completed it, or because time has allowed only a part of it to reach us).

- 9 Basically, it is possible to differentiate between (I.) accidentally generated fragments created by external circumstances, which are not due to the will of an author, and (II.) fragments resulting from a decision of the author. Among the former, that is, non-intentional fragments, one can count, on the one hand, texts that have been handed down incompletely, i.e., rests or remnants (I.1), and unfinished works on the other, i.e., texts that could not be accomplished contrary to the author's intention because the author died or because other obstacles prevented the completion (I.2). The latter, the intentional fragments, may include (II.1) deliberately produced excerpts from previously or elsewhere completely accessible works and (II.2) mostly shorter texts that claim to be "fragments," although they have in a way been declared "finished" by the publication and perhaps even "polished" before publication in order to achieve the most concise expression possible. Cf. Alain Montandon, "De différentes sortes de fragment," in *Über das Fragment/ Du fragment*, ed. Arlette Camion (Heidelberg: Winter, 1999), 1–12; Michael Braun, "Fragment," in *Handbuch der literarischen Gattungen*, ed. Dieter Lamping (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2009), 281–286.
- 10 Already the use of "fragment" to denote the unfinished, which can be encountered since the eighteenth century, represents, from the point of view of etymology, a metaphorical use and an extension of the scope of the term.
- 11 It is significant that one of the most famous texts from the beginning of the discovery of the fragment as a form in the eighteenth century is a forgery: the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language* (1760) of James Macpherson.
- 12 The subsumption of intentional fragments in the manner of those of Schlegel or Barthes under the concept of aphorism has been a predominant tendency in Germany since the study of Franz Mautner, "Der Aphorismus als literarische Gattung," *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 27 (1933): 132–175. Cf., e.g., Gerhard Neumann, *Ideenparadiese: Aphoristik bei Lichtenberg, Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel und Goethe* (München: Fink, 1976). For Neumann, 'aphorism' is the generic term for a whole range of short prose forms. However, an important objection is raised by Ernst Behler, "Das Fragment," in *Prosa ohne Erzählen: Die Gattungen der nicht-fiktionalen Kunstprosa*, ed. Klaus Weissenberger (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985), 125–143: Behler demands "die betreffenden Texte unter dem Namen zu verstehen, den ihnen ihre Autoren gegeben haben: Maxime als Maxime, Sentenz als Sentenz, Anekdote als Anekdote, Aphorismus als Aphorismus und Fragment als Fragment" (134; to understand the texts

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in question by the name given to them by their authors: maxim as maxim, anecdote as anecdote, aphorism as aphorism and fragment as fragment).

- 13 Camelia Elias, *The Fragment: Towards a History and Poetics of a Performative Genre* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004).
- 14 On the double nature of the text as a thing and event, cf. Henk de Berg, "Die Ereignishaftigkeit des Textes," in *Kommunikation und Differenz: Systemtheoretische Ansätze in der Literatur- und Kunstwissenschaft*, ed. Henk de Berg and Matthias Prangel (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993), 32–52; Georg Stanitzek, "Was ist Kommunikation?" in *Systemtheorie der Literatur*, ed. Jürgen Fohrmann and Harro Müller (Munich: Fink, 1996), 21–55.
- 15 Seel defines events as "Aufstand der Gegenwart im Fluß der historischen Zeit" (*insurrection of the presence in the flow of historical time*). Martin Seel, "Ereignis. Eine kleine Phänomenologie," in *Ereignis: Eine fundamentale Kategorie der Zeiterfahrung. Anspruch und Aporien*, ed. Nikolaus Müller-Schöll (Bielefeld: transcript, 2003), 37–47, here 42.
- 16 Cf. in principle Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Plötzlichkeit: Zum Augenblick des ästhetischen Scheins* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1981); Bohrer, *Das absolute Präsens: Die Semantik ästhetischer Zeit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1994). In both books, Schlegel and Barthes's fragmentary texts play no particular role.
- 17 Bohrer has recognized such a paradigm shift in Friedrich Schlegel's *Rede über die Mythologie* from the *Gespräch über die Poesie* (1800). But it can be shown that the transition from the future orientation to a consciousness of fulfilled presence has already been accomplished – and even more radically – in the *Lyceum* (1797) and *Athenaeum* fragments (1798), and that Barthes repeats it again in his own way in the twentieth century. Cf. Karl Heinz Bohrer, "Friedrich Schlegels Rede über die Mythologie," in *Mythos und Moderne: Begriff und Bild einer Rekonstruktion*, ed. Karl Heinz Bohrer (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), 52–82.
- 18 Quotations in the current text follow the following editions: *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*. Herausgegeben von Ernst Behler unter Mitwirkung von Jean-Jacques Anstett und Hans Eichner (München, Paderborn, Wien: Schöningh, 1959–), quoted with the siglum KA as well as volume and page number, possibly also the number of the fragment using the siglums L (= *Lyceum* fragment), A (= *Athenaeum* fragment), I (= *Ideen*); Roland Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*. Nouvelle édition revue, corrigée et présentée par Éric Marty (Paris: Seuil, 2002), quoted with the

siglum OC as well as volume and page number. Unless otherwise indicated, the emphasis in the quotations is in the original texts.

- 19 Thomas Hecken, *Witz als Metapher: Der Witz-Begriff in der Poetik und Literaturkritik des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Francke, 2005).
- 20 Armine Kotin Mortimer, *The Gentlest Law: Roland Barthes's 'The Pleasure of the Text'* (New York: Peter Lang 1989).
- 21 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 200; A 220.
- 22 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 219.
- 23 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 158; L 90.
- 24 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 258; I 26.
- 25 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 220.
- 26 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 241.
- 27 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 154; L 59.
- 28 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 251.
- 29 Seel, "Ereignis," 45. Cf. Seel, *Ästhetik des Erscheinens* (Munich, Wien: Hanser, 2000), 98.
- 30 Cf. Barthes: "L'ennui n'est pas loin de la jouissance: il est la jouissance vue des rives du plaisir" (OC IV, 234; Boredom is not far from *jouissance*: it is *jouissance* seen from the banks of pleasure).
- 31 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 159; L 103.
- 32 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* XVI, 154; no. 808; brackets original.
- 33 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* XII, 78.
- 34 Manfred Frank, "Das 'fragmentarische Universum' der Romantik," in *Fragment und Totalität*, ed. Lucien Dällenbach and Christiaan L. Hart Nibbrig (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1984), 212–224, here 222.
- 35 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 670.
- 36 The early text Barthes alludes to here is the *Notes sur André Gide et son "Journal"* (OC I, 33–46). The short introduction to these notes speaks of "la crainte d'enclorre Gide dans un système" (the fear of enclosing Gide in a system) and justifies the decision to publish loose notes: "il vaut mieux les donner telles quelles, et ne pas chercher à masquer leur discontinu" (OC I, 33; it is better to give them as they are, and not to try to hide their discontinuity).

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- 37 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997), vol. 4, 55.
- 38 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), vol. 3, 24. However, Schlegel contradicted the assumption that the whole can be represented within the conceptual continuum of a proper philosophical system. He sharply polemicizes against the “*systematische Form*” (*systematical form*), which he finds “*schlechthin verwerflich*” (absolutely reprehensible), because it goes back “*auf den Grundfehler aller φσ [Philosophie] ... nämlich das fixirte ov – die beharrende Endlichkeit*” (KA XIX, 76–77; no. 346; brackets original; to the basic error of all φσ [philosophy] ... namely the fixed ov – the *persistent finiteness*). At the same time, however, Schlegel maintained his claim to systematicity in his own thinking: “*Meine φ [Philosophie] ist ein System von Fragmenten und eine Progreß.[ion] von Projekten*” (KA XVIII, 100; no. 857; brackets original; My φ [philosophy] is a system of fragments and a progression of projects). He does not give up the systemic idea, but he thinks of the system as open and dynamic. A 53 also points to the need for a paradoxical balance between the demands of the individual and the whole: “*Es ist gleich tödlich für den Geist, ein System zu haben, und keins zu haben. Er wird sich also wohl entschließen müssen, beides zu verbinden*” (KA II, 173; It’s equally fatal for the mind to have a system and to have none. It will have to decide to combine the two). With regard to this compromise, Novalis speaks of “*Systemlosigkeit, in ein System gebracht*” (systemlessness, brought into a system) (Novalis, *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe*, ed. Hans-Joachim Mühl and Richard Samuel (München, Wien: Hanser, 1978), vol. II, 200). Bruns is right when he emphasizes the contrast between Schlegel and Hegel, but the similarities between the two authors must not be overlooked. Cf. Gerald L. Bruns, *Interruptions. The Fragmentary Aesthetic in Modern Literature* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2018), 2.
- 39 The concept of totality or wholeness corresponds to that of “*Allheit*” in Kant’s table of categories. Here three categories of quantity are distinguished: “*Einheit,*” “*Vielheit,*” “*Allheit*” (unity, multiplicity, totality). The third category results from the synthesis of the first two categories. Immanuel Kant, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1956), vol. II, 118 (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 106).
- 40 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 162; L 112.
- 41 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 151; L 37.

- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 148; L 14.
- 44 Cf. the statement of Novalis, “Der wahre Leser muß der erweiterte Autor seyn” (The true reader must be the extended author), from the *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, on which the *Blüthenstaub*-Collection of 1798 is based. The productive reader’s idea corresponds to the metaphor of seeds and pollen that runs through the text: “Fragmente dieser Art sind litterarische Sämereyen. Es mag freylich manches taube Körnchen darunter seyn: indessen, wenn nur einiges aufgeht!” (Fragments of this kind are literary seeds. Of course, there may be some rotten grains among them: but if only few of them take root!) (Novalis, *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe*, vol. II, 282 and 285).
- 45 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 176; A 77.
- 46 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* XVI, 163; No. 930.
- 47 Frank, “Das ‘fragmentarische Universum’ der Romantik,” 216.
- 48 With a total of fifteen examples, the term “Einfall”/ “Einfälle” belongs to the most important self-designations of the *Lyceum* and *Athenaeum* fragments. Schlegel notes about fragments that “sie kommen einem” (KA XVI, 165; no. 953; they come to you).
- 49 The term “witziger Einfall” is mentioned in L 22, 34, 96; A 29, 37. For the conception of wit in Schlegel cf. Neumann, *Ideenparadiese*, 452–468; Hecken, *Witz als Metapher*, 143–149. Behler thinks that the theory of wit formed the basis for Schlegel’s fragmentary writing, even though it has not attained the prominence of his theory of irony (Behler, “Das Fragment,” 138–139).
- 50 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 171; A 37.
- 51 This possibility is limited by A 264: “Man soll nicht mit allen symphilosophieren wollen, sondern nur mit denen die à la hauteur sind” (KA II, 210; You should not want to symphilosophize with everyone, but only with those who are à la hauteur). Schlegel’s exclusive elitist approach contrasts with Lautréamont’s radical slogan: “La poésie doit être faite par tous. Non par un.” (Poetry must be made by everyone. Not by one.) Isidore Ducasse (Comte de Lautréamont), *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Hubert Juin (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 311.
- 52 In contrast to the *Kritische Fragmente* published in the *Lyceum* in 1797 and the *Ideen* published in the third volume of the *Athenaeum* in 1800, the 451 notations of the *Fragmente*, which appeared in 1798 in the first volume of the *Athenaeum*, are distinguished by the fact that they do not originate only from Friedrich Schlegel: a total of more than a quarter are

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written by his brother August Wilhelm (89), Schleiermacher (29), or Novalis (13). The ideas of “Symphilosophie” or “Sympoesie” and a discussion in fragments were put into practice here.

- 53 It is no coincidence that by means of the metaphors of lightning and thunder, traditionally divine attributes are attributed to wit. In the witty idea (“witziger Einfall”), the electrified imagination shall be able to release “blitzende Funken und leuchtende Strahlen, oder schmetternde Schläge” (KA II, 150; L 34; flashing sparks and glowing rays, or blaring blows). In *Ideen*, Schlegel formulates the relation to the divine even more clearly: “Witz ist die Erscheinung, der äußere Blitz der Fantasie. Daher seine Göttlichkeit, und das Witzähnliche der Mystik” (KA II, 258; I 26; Wit is the manifestation, the outward lightning of imagination. Hence its divinity, and the wit-like of mysticism). In the concept of “Erscheinung,” that of epiphany resonates.
- 54 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 200; A 220.
- 55 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 254; A 444.
- 56 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 155; L 64.
- 57 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* II, 182; A 116.
- 58 According to Foucault, thinking in similarities had played a supporting role in knowledge until the sixteenth century, when it was supplanted by the thought of representation. While it has since lost its significance in science, the poetry of modernity has returned to it. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 32 ff.
- 59 The registers of names for the five volumes of Éric Marty’s “Nouvelle édition” of the *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Seuil, 2002) do not list Schlegel.
- 60 Cf. Ginette Michaud, *Lire le fragment: Transfert et théorie de la lecture chez Roland Barthes* (Montréal: Hurtubise, 1989); Marie-Christine Barrilaud, “Roland Barthes: Les Fragments, langue équivoque,” *Revue Romane* 16 (1981): 22–35.
- 61 Cf. the final fragment “Le monstre de la totalité” in *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*: “La Totalité tout à la fois fait rire et fait peur: comme la violence, ne serait-elle pas toujours grotesque (et récupérable alors seulement dans une esthétique du Carnaval)?” (OC IV, 752; The Totality at once causes laughter and fear: like violence, would it not always be grotesque (and only recoverable in an aesthetic of Carnival)?).
- 62 Schlegel’s remark about the origin of the fragments – “sie kommen einem” (KA XVI, 165; no. 953) – is recalled by the following statement: “Sous forme de pensée-phrasé, le germe du fragment vous vient

n'importe où: au café, dans le train, en parlant avec un ami (cela surgit latéralement à ce qu'il dit ou à ce que je dis); on sort son carnet, non pour noter une 'pensée', mais quelque chose comme une frappe, ce qu'on eût appelé autrefois un 'vers'." (OC IV, 671; In the form of a thought-phrase, the germ of the fragment comes to you anywhere: in the café, on the train, talking with a friend (it comes out laterally to what he says or to what I say); you take out your notebook, not to note a "thought," but something like a blow, what we once called a "verse.").

- 63 Cf. Winfried Eckel, "Rhetorik der Streuung. Textbegriff und alphabetische Form bei Roland Barthes," in *Alphabet, Lexikographie und Enzyklopädistik. Historische Konzepte und literarisch-künstlerische Verfahren*, ed. Monika Schmitz-Emans, Kai Lars Fischer, and Christoph Benjamin Schulz (Hildesheim: Olms, 2013), 305–331; Ginette Michaud, "Fragment et dictionnaire. Autour de l'écriture *abécédaire* de Barthes," *Études françaises* 18 (1983): 59–80.
- 64 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 720.
- 65 Cf. Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 221 ff.
- 66 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 671.
- 67 Mounir Laouyen, "Le livre brisé de Roland Barthes," *Hommage et débat en ligne, mai 2000: Actualité de Roland Barthes*: "Cette prédilection pour l'inchoatif s'origine sans doute dans le caractère inattendu et imprévisible de la première phrase alors que le mot de la fin est, a priori, tributaire de ce qui précède. La surprise, le caractère inattendu, imprévu ('soudain') est une donnée fondamentale du texte fragmentaire." (This predilection for the inchoate is undoubtedly due to the unexpected and unpredictable nature of the first sentence, whereas the last word is, a priori, dependent on the preceding. Surprise, the unexpected and unforeseen ("sudden") character is a fundamental feature of the fragmentary text.) Accessed March 15, 2019. URL: <http://www.fabula.org/forum/barthes/34.php>.
- 68 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 850.
- 69 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 717, 731, and passim.
- 70 Christian Moser, "Erinnerung als Sammlung. Zum Zusammenhang von Mnemographie und Dingkultur (Augustinus, Rousseau, Benjamin, Calvino)," *Comparatio* 1 (2009): 87–111. "Conligens me a dispersione" (Collecting myself from dispersion) is the famous formula by which Augustine determines the task of the autobiographer at the beginning of the second book of his *Confessiones*.
- 71 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* V, 125.

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- 72 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* V, 30.
- 73 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* V, 29.
- 74 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 855; *Vingt mots-clés*, Interview of 1975.
- 75 Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* XII, 392.
- 76 Frank, “Das ‘fragmentarische Universum’ der Romantik.” Cf. also the section “Fragmentarischer Universalismus” in Eberhard Ostermann, “Fragment/Aphorismus,” in *Romantik-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Schanze (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1994), 276–288, here 280–283. In Schlegel, the contradiction between the desire for totality and the consciousness of the impossibility of its representation is reflected by the theory of “Ironie.” It allows his witty fragments to be called “ironic” in a structural sense. Cf. Frank, 217, and Ostermann, 281–282.
- 77 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 238. As with Schlegel, Barthes’s texts are structurally ironic.
- 78 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 717.
- 79 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 670.
- 80 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* V, 243.
- 81 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* V, 179.
- 82 In the original long version of the introduction “Comment est fait ce livre,” which he later replaced with the published version, Barthes therefore considers whether it is correct to say that the sequence of figures always remains contingent. But in the end, he does not take back or modify his thesis. Roland Barthes, *Le discours amoureux: Séminaire à l’École pratique des hautes études 1974–1976. Suivi de Fragments d’un discours amoureux (pages inédites)*, ed. Claude Coste (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 684 ff.
- 83 Barthes, *Œuvres complètes* IV, 32.
- 84 The image of the swarm of mosquitoes (“vol des moustiques,” OC V, 32) also paradoxically combines ideas of cohesion and dispersion.

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