

Maximilian Bergengruen

“Fortrollende Gegenwart:” Psychopathology and Epical Present Tense in Georg Heym’s *Der Irre* and *Der Dieb*

In Georg Heym's volume of short stories *Der Dieb* (*The Thief*) there are two stories dealing with the themes of psychopathology and theological time (and its sublation): *Der Dieb* (*The Thief*) and *Der Irre* (*The Madman*).¹ Both stories, like the other texts, were written in 1911. The collection was published posthumously in 1913. Via the discursive links of the 'Neue Club' ('New Club')² but also through his own independent study, Heym had come into contact with theories from psychology³ and Lebensphilosophie⁴ in the years 1910 and 1911. At the same time, while

1| For the role of the author Heym in the posthumous publication of his work, see Alexander Nebrig, "Expressionistische Nachlassgebürten. Georg Heyms postume Autorschaft," in *Nachlassbewusstsein. Literatur, Archiv, Philologie 1750–2000*, ed. Kai Sina and Carlos Spoerhase (Goettingen: Wallstein, 2017), 346–363.

2| On the short time and instability of the association, see Gunter Martens, "Georg Heym und der 'Neue Club,'" in *Georg Heym. Dichtungen und Schriften*, vol. 6, ed. Karl Ludwig Schneider (Hamburg: Ellermann, 1968), 390–400; Peter Gust, "Georg Heym in der Zirkelbildung des Berliner Frühexpressionismus," in *Literarisches Leben in Berlin 1871–1933. Studien*, vol. 2, ed. Peter Wruck (Berlin: Akademie, 1987), 7–44; Achim Aurnhammer, "Verehrung, Parodie, Ablehnung. Das Verhältnis der Berliner Frühexpressionisten zu Hofmannsthal und der Wiener Moderne," *Cahiers d'Études Germaniques* 24 (1993): 30–31. This discursive connection is documented in Martens, "Georg Heym und der 'Neue Club,'" 402–438; Richard Sheppard, ed., *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs*, vol. 1 (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1980).

3| For the reception of psychology in the New Club and Heym himself: Akane Nishioka, *Die Suche nach dem wirklichen Menschen. Zur Dekonstruktion des neuzeitlichen Subjekts in der Dichtung Georg Heyms* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 177–180.

4| On Heym's study and exploration of philosophical theories, cf. Nishioka, *Suche nach dem wirklichen Menschen*, 203–208.

writing he took his orientation from a literary text that, also discursively informed, dealt with the same psychiatric themes (in particular "Verfolgungsideen" ['ideas of being followed or persecuted'])⁵ and related them, albeit not in the same way, to (para-)theological notions: Alfred Döblin's *Die Ermordung einer Butterblume* (*The Murder of a Buttercup*).

Shaped by literary practice, this connection between these two discursive strands may be described in Heym's work as follows: an external being-in-time—in the terminology of this volume: presentness—is sublated in favor of an inner time in the cases of the eponymous and unnamed protagonists. This psychological intrinsic time is not structured so that an inner succession of felt senses of time is produced through memory; but rather so that, via psychopathology (I), a path is forged to a different, metaphysical sense of time, or more precisely: a sublation of time (II). This path can be traced into the finest details of the narrative style, in particular the choice of tense (III).

I. Psychopathology

Based on the contemporary understanding of paranoia or "Dementia paranoides,"⁶ Heym's *Der Irre* describes the hallucinations ("Sinnestäuschungen" and "*Erinnerungsfälschungen*" ['memory falsifications'],⁷ i.e. "Paramnesien" ['forms of paramnesia']⁸ and "Confabulationen" ['confabulations'],⁹ of the protagonist, for example when he believes to remember that the patients in the "Fleischerei" ("butchers") of the psychiatric clinic he has just been released from, were "in heiße Bäder gesteckt" ("stuck in hot baths") and "verbrüht" ("boiled alive") so that they could be made into "Wurst" ("sausages").¹⁰

Connected to this are "Verfolgungsideen," for example when the madman identifies those who try to reason him out of his hallucinatory perceptions/memo-

ries, in this case: the psychiatrist, as being allied with the butchers: "So, der hatte also mit unter der Decke gesteckt" ("So the doctor must have been in league with them too"). The fear of conspiracy and ambush changes into an agoraphobia as the story unfolds: "Er kam durch ein paar volle Straßen, über einen Platz, wieder durch Straßen. Ihm wurde unbehaglich in den Menschenmassen. Er fühlte sich beengt" ("He passed through a few crowded streets, across a square, through streets again. He began to feel uneasy among the masses of people. He felt crowded").¹¹ The sense of being persecuted is matched by its opposite, a "Größenwahn" ('Megalomania'):¹² "Das berauschte ihn, machte ihn zu einem Gott" ("He was intoxicated; he was a god").¹³

Driven by the idea of revenge, the madman's fantasies of violence turn active, prefigured by his musings on "[d]en dicken Direktor, den hätte er an seinem roten Spitzbart gekriegt und ihn unter die Wurstmaschine gezogen" ("[t]he fat governor: he'd have got him by his pointed red beard and fed him into the sausage-making machine"). Recalling his time in the asylum, the fantasies are by no means limited however to images of slaughter: "Und der Assistenzarzt, dieses bucklige Schwein, dem hätte er noch mal das Gehirn zertreten" ("And the assistant doctor, that hunch-backed pig; he'd have stamped on his brains"). The further the madman moves away from the institution, the more his fantasies adjust to the new surrounds: He left the "Straße" ("road") and turned off "in die Felder" ("into the fields"), reveling in the joy of treading "in die dicken Halme" ("into the thick stems"). Feeling as if he was walking across a large square, he abandons himself to the idea that he was stamping on people: "Da lagen viele, viele Menschen, alle mit dem Kopfe auf der Erde [...], und jedesmal trat er dann rechts und links um sich, auf die vielen weißen Köpfe. Und dann knackten die Schädel" ("Many, many people were lying there, all with their heads to the ground [...] and each time he trod to right and left, on the crowd of white heads. And then the skulls cracked").¹⁴

It is plainly obvious that here Heym is influenced by another Expressionist text published just a year before, namely Alfred Döblin's *Die Ermordung einer Butterblume* (published on September 8 and 15, 1910 in *Der Sturm*).¹⁵ This

5] Emil Kraepelin, *Psychiatrie. Ein Lehrbuch für Studierende und Aerzte*, 5. ed. (Leipzig: Barth, 1896), 465.

6] Kraepelin, *Psychiatrie*, 463. Cf. Wolfgang Schäffner, *Die Ordnung des Wahns. Zur Poetologie psychiatrischen Wissens bei Alfred Döblin* (Munich: Fink, 1995), 59; Yvonne Wübben, "Tatsachenphantasien. Alfred Döblins Die Ermordung einer Butterblume im Kontext von Experimentalpsychologie und psychiatrischer Krankheitslehre," in *Tatsachenphantasie. Alfred Döblins Poetik des Wissens im Kontext der Moderne*, ed. Sabina Becker and Robert Krause (Bern: Lang, 2008), 92–93.

7] Kraepelin, *Psychiatrie*, 466; 467.

8] Kraepelin, *Psychiatrie*, 123. Cf. Wübben, "Tatsachenphantasien," 87.

9] Alfred Döblin, "Gedächtnisstörungen bei der Korsakoffschen Psychose" (PhD., Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg, 1905), 31.

10] Georg Heym, "Der Irre," in *Georg Heym. Dichtungen und Schriften*, vol. 2, ed. Karl Ludwig Schneider (Hamburg: Ellermann, 1962), 19–20; id., "The Madman," in id., *The Thief and Other Stories*, trans. Susan Bennett (London: Libris, 1994), 47.

11] Heym, "Der Irre," 20; 31; id., "The Madman," 47; 59–60.

12] Kraepelin, *Psychiatrie*, 465.

13] Heym, "Der Irre," 23; id., "The Madman," 50–51.

14] Heym, "Der Irre," 19; 20–21 id., "The Madman," 46; 48.

15] A mutual dependence (or at least a comparability) between the two texts has also been considered by Jörg Schönert, "Der Irre von Georg Heym. Verbrechen und Wahnsinn in der Literatur des Expressionismus," *Der Deutschunterricht* 42, no. 2 (1990): 94. Heym most certainly knew Döblin's text through the New Club and its connections to *Der Sturm* is also demonstrable through the discursive context; on the relationship between the New Club and the publishing editor of *Der Sturm*, Walden, Gust, "Georg Heym in der Zirkelbildung des Berliner Frühexpressionismus," 19–20. On the relationship Walden/Döblin cf. Sabina Becker, "Zwischen Frühexpressionismus, Berliner Futurismus, 'Döblinismus' und 'neuem Naturalismus.'" Alfred

story describes how the protagonist Michael Fischer watches himself as he "auf die Blumen stürzte und einer Butterblume den Kopf glatt abschlug" (was "hurling [...] at the flowers and cleanly striking the head off a buttercup").¹⁶ Here too we find, albeit formulated with more restraint, the association that when destroying a plant it is a person—underlined by the parallel of the head—who is being brutally killed.

Heym adopts a second psychological element from Döblin, namely memory gaps, which Döblin himself takes from his own work on the Korsakoff psychosis. In his doctoral thesis from 1905 Döblin had argued that the amnesias caused by Korsakoff is a "Störung in der Verbindung der Vorstellungen" ('disruption in connecting perceptions'), i.e. an "Assoziationsstörung" ('association disorder'), with the consequence that the patient finds it impossible to assign a perception "aus dem Inhalt des Erlebten" ('from what was experienced') a "Platz zwischen vorher und nachher" ('place between before and after').¹⁷ And this is precisely what happens to Michael Fischer, the protagonist of *Butterblume*, after his 'Gewalttat' ('violent act'):¹⁸ "Was ist geschehen?" fragte er nach einer Weile. [...] Ich erinnere mich dieser Blume nicht, ich bin mir absolut nichts bewußt" ("what had occurred, he asked after a while [...]. I don't remember that flower, I know absolutely nothing about it at all"). Expressing the amnesia in both instances, underlining the parallels, is the loss of clothing: Fischer "vergaß [...] den Hut im Gras" ("forgot his hat in the grass"),¹⁹ while the madman lost his "Kleiderbündel [...] unterwegs" ("lost his bundle of clothes on the way").²⁰

Related to this is a coexistence of varying, if not actually mutually exclusive, extreme states of consciousness to be found in both texts. After Döblin's Herr Fischer no longer knows "was [...] geschehen [ist]" ("what had occurred"), he—having just succumbed to a violent fantasy—is described as a "feinfühlig[e] Herr" ("sensitive gentleman") who "fuhr zusammen" ("started back")²¹ upon catching a glimpse of what he has done. The same occurs with Heym's madman. After the latest act of violence, which is though now no longer fantasy—he has brutally killed two children—he "mußte weinen, große Tränen liefen langsam über seine Backen

Döblin und die expressionistische Bewegung," in *Expressionistische Prosa*, ed. Walter Fähnders (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2001), 22–23; 26ff.; 30–31; 34–35.

16| Alfred Döblin, "Die Ermordung einer Butterblume," in *Alfred Döblin. Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2, ed. Christina Althen (Frankfurt o.M.: Fischer, 2013), 60; id., "The Murder of a Buttercup," in *Early Twentieth Century German Fiction*, ed. Alexander Stephan, trans. Patrick O'Neill (New York: Continuum, 2003), 58.

17| Döblin, "Gedächtnisstörungen," 37; 32.

18| A cautious but not unproblematic argumentation for Korsakoff, understood as a memory disorder, is given in Wübben, "Tatsachenphantasien," 87–90. For a greater emphasis on paranoia, see Sandra Janßen, "Die Psychopathologie der Komplexitätsreduktion: Paranoia," in *Komplexität und Einfachheit*. DFG-Symposium 2015, ed. Albrecht Koschorke (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2017), 124–144.

19| Döblin, "Die Ermordung einer Butterblume," 61; 64; id., "The Murder of a Buttercup," 59; 61.

20| Heym, "Der Irre," 22; id., "The Madman," 49.

21| Döblin, "Die Ermordung einer Butterblume," 62; id., "The Murder of a Buttercup," 60.

hinunter" ("could not help crying; big tears ran slowly down his cheeks"). And after the second murder as well, the amnesia allows a distancing from the subject of the deed: "Aber pfui, bin ich schmutzig.' Er besah sich. 'Wo kommt denn das viele Blut her?'" ("Ugh, aren't I dirty?" He looked himself over. 'Where's all this blood come from?")²²

The second story by Heym, *Der Dieb*, describes a religious form of the persecutory delusion: the protagonist "hatte seine Zeit mit allerlei Studien verbracht, um die Qualen seiner Melancholie zu heilen" ("had passed his time in all kinds of studies, trying to heal his tormenting melancholia").²³ The seemingly somewhat ahistorical formulation of 'Melancholie' ('melancholia') could be referring to Döblin's teacher Alfred Hoche, who shortly before, turning explicitly against "Kraepelin," had defended "Melancholie" because as he saw it, the concept of "manisch-depressive [...] Irresein" ('manic-depressive insanity') had yet to prove its worth and replace the ancient term designating a "selbstständig[e]" 'Krankheit' (an 'independent' illness).²⁴

Like Fischer, like the madman, the thief tormented by melancholia has a propensity to become engulfed in paranoia, haunted for example by the vision that "[a]lle Leute auf der Straße lachten ihm ins Gesicht" ("[a]ll the people in the street laughed in his face"). In the case of the thief, the paranoia is especially fixated on women, and includes an erotic dimension, on the one hand, while on the other it turns to the religious. The thief believes that all women have given him the "bösen Blick" ("evil eye"), forcing him to resort to "mannigfache [...] Schutzmittel" ("many precautions") against it.²⁵ At the center of his battle against the feminine is Mona Lisa. His paranoia concentrates on her, whom he senses as if she—or her picture²⁶—were a "Meuchelmörder hinter seinem Rücken" ("an assassin [...] standing

22| Heym, "Der Irre," 24; 27; id., "The Madman," 51; 55.

23| Georg Heym, "Der Dieb," in Georg Heym. *Dichtungen und Schriften*, vol. 2, ed. Karl Ludwig Schneider (Hamburg: Ellermann, 1962), 72; id., "The Thief," in id., *The Thief and Other Stories*, trans. Susan Bennett (London: Libris, 1994), 2.

24| Alfred Hoche, "Die Melancholiefrage," *Zentralblatt für Nervenheilkunde und Psychiatrie* 33 (1910): 193–194.

25| Heym, "Der Dieb," 91; 77; id., "The Thief," 23; 7.

26| For the connection between viewing pictures and the thief's madness, see Alexander Košenina, "Gefährliche Bilder? Wie Kunstbetrachtung literarische Figuren ver-rückt (Goethe, Kleist, Th. Mann, Heym, Schnitzler)," *ZfG* 27 (2017): 501–503; and on the associated iconoclasm, Torsten Hoffmann, "Nehmt Spitzhacken und Hammer!' Funktionen und intermediale Implikationen von Bildzerstörungen bei Friedrich Schiller, Heinrich von Kleist, Wilhelm Busch, Georg Heym und Botho Strauß," *JDSG* 52 (2008): 289–328; Burkhardt Wolf, "Auf diesem furchtbaren blutlosen Schlachtfelde'. Das 'Pathos des Realen' bei Georg Heym," in *Ultima ratio? Räume und Zeiten der Gewalt*, ed. Gerhard Scholz and Veronika Schuchter (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2013), 18–20; Peter Sprengel, "Brennende Masken. Georg Heyms *Der Dieb* und die Novellistik der Brüder Mann," *GRM* 65 (2015): 227–231. For the role of the Mona Lisa in the art of around 1900, see Ursula Renner, "Mona Lisa—Das 'Rätsel Weib' als 'Frauenphantom des Mannes' im Fin

behind his back"). The thief believes to be exposed to her attacks because "das Weib" is "das ursprüngliche Böse" ("woman was the original evil"). At the same time, he convinces himself that Christ's work remains incomplete and indeed had been "umsonst" ("in vain"),²⁷ and it is now up to him—here the persecutory delusion turns into megalomania²⁸—to take up this work of salvation in the battle against the feminine evil (in the form of Mona Lisa): "Denn Gott hatte ja keinen anderen als ihn" ("For God had no one else but him"). This megalomania can revert back into persecutory delusion however, for example when the thief remarks that Mona Lisa (and thus all evil in the form of the feminine) is "sehr schön in ihrer Verworfenheit" ("so beautiful in her depravity"). Permanently suspended in this danger, the thief senses that God too is "hinter ihm her" ("after him") and "Gott" ("the heavenly Father") "schickt seine Polizisten ihm überall nach" (is "sending his policemen out after him everywhere").²⁹

It is thus clear that the thief (like the madman and even before both of them Döblin's Michael Fischer) disintegrates into halves which the memory cannot unify, one in which he hates all that is feminine, in particular fixated on the Mona Lisa, and, at the behest of God, he aims to track down and obliterate—and another in which the Mona Lisa (and with her all that is feminine) is his "Geliebte" ("beloved").³⁰ In the latter he rebels against God, noting, like a good Nietzschean, that God is "gestorben" (had "gone") and was now "perhaps dead" (probably an allusion to the *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* [*Gay Science*], aphorism 125: "Gott ist tot" ["God is dead"])³¹ and "streckt [...] seine Zunge heraus" ("stuck out his tongue").³²

de Siècle," in *Lulu, Lilith, Mona Lisa ... Frauenbilder der Jahrhundertwende*, ed. Irmgard Roebing (Pfafling: Centaurus, 1989), 139–156 (for "The Thief:" 142–146).

27| Heym, "Der Dieb," 78; 74; 75; id., "The Thief," 9; 4.

28| For the function assigned paranoia in this text, see: Burkhardt Wolf, "Georg Heym: Der Dieb und die Paranoia als 'kritische Aktivität,'" in *Paranoia. Lektüren und Ausschreitungen des Verdachts*, ed. Timm Ebner et al. (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 2016), 71–87.

29| Heym, "Der Dieb," 87; 86; 81; id., "The Thief," 18; 17; 12.

30| Heym, "Der Dieb," 92; id., "The Thief," 24.

31| Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, ed. Giorgio Colli andazzino Montinari, vol. 3 (Munich: dtv, 1980ff.), 481; id., *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 120. See Heym's diary entry of June 6, 1907, in Georg Heym, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, vol. 3, ed. Karl Ludwig Schneider (Hamburg: Ellermann, 1960), 89: "Die Götter sind zu lange schon tot. Ich allein bin nicht im stande, sie wieder zu erwecken" ("The gods have been already dead too long. I'm not able to reawaken them on my own"). See also Kurt Mautz and Georg Heym, *Mythologie und Gesellschaft im Expressionismus*, third ed. (Frankfurt o.M.: Athenäum, 1987), 247. For the Nietzsche reception in the New Club, see Martens, "Georg Heym und der 'Neue Club,'" 395; 397; Gust, "Georg Heym in der Zirkelbildung des Berliner Frühexpressionismus," 28; on Heym's Nietzsche reception, Gust, "Georg Heym in der Zirkelbildung des Berliner Frühexpressionismus," 43 (note 86).

32| Heym, "Der Dieb," 92; id., "The Thief," 24.

II. Apocalypse and the Mystic

Heym is the first of the two authors to take seriously the religious element in the religious monomania or the religious paranoia of his protagonists, moving away from considering it solely as a delusion. Similar as in Viennese Modernism (at once deeply venerated and criticized by the Berlin faction),³³ the contemporary criticism of "medical materialism,"³⁴ delineated for example in William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), is followed to the effect that the metaphysical dimension of the text is not played off against the psychological.

Shortly before his death, Heym's madman—to begin with this story—jumps from the gallery balustrade of a department store to the floor below. There he "reißt ein Ladenmädchen zu sich herauf, legt ihr die Hände um die Kehle und drückt zu" ("pulls a shop-girl up to him, places his hands around her throat and presses"). This leap is accompanied by an imagined experience of nature wherein he perceives himself to be "ein großer weißer Vogel über einem großen einsamen Meer" ("like a big white bird over a great lonely sea"). Poising to take off, his wish is "[in dieses] Meer zu sinken" (to "sink onto the sea"). Atop of the shop-girl it feels as if he "reitet auf einem schwarzen Fisch" ("is riding on a black fish") and he "umarmt seinen Kopf mit den Armen" ("embraces its head with his arms"); shortly after he "drückt ihm den Hals ab" ("breaks its neck"). After he is shot in the back of the head, the scene changes to a sinking into the "Ozean" ("ocean"): "Und während das Blut aus der Wunde schoß, war es ihm, als sänke er nun in die Tiefe, immer tiefer, leise wie eine Flaumfeder. Eine ewige Musik stieg von unten herauf und sein sterbendes Herz tat sich auf, zitternd in einer unermeßlichen Seligkeit" ("And while the blood shot out of the wound, it seemed to him now as though he was sinking into the depths, ever deeper, light as a piece of down. An eternal music rose from below, and his dying heart opened, trembling with immeasurable happiness").³⁵

What is striking about this description is the obvious connotation of the sublime in the fantasy; after all a murder is depicted and after all by a narrator who has already classified his protagonist as a madman in the title. In the sense of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, the narrator remains almost completely in the seemingly exalted personal interior view however and counters it merely with the neutral exterior view of the death of the shop-girl—but not a nullifying value judgement.

The concentration on the animal (bird, fish) linked with the exalted state has its roots in the middle of the story, there however not yet with the connotation of the sublime. At the point concerned it serves rather—borrowing from Zola's *La*

33| See Aurnhammer, "Verehrung, Parodie, Ablehnung," 36–39.

34| William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature*, 14th ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), 13. Cf. Maximilian Bergengruen, *Mystik der Nerven. Hugo von Hofmannsthal's literarische Epistemologie des 'Nicht-mehr-Ich'* (Freiburg i.Br.: Rombach, 2010), 7–34.

35| Heym, "Der Irre," 32–34; id., "The Madman," 61–64.

Bête Humaine (1890)³⁶—the description of uncontrolled violence. Commencing with: “Er fühlte, daß in ihm wieder die Wut aufkommen wollte. Er fürchtete sich vor dieser dunklen Tollheit” (“He felt the rage coming on again. He feared that dark, furious state”), just three lines later the rage and fury merge into an animal: “Plötzlich sah er das Tier wieder, das in ihm saß” (“[s]uddenly, he saw the animal again, the one that crouched inside him”). Soon after, the animal becomes a specific species through a comparison. Taken aback at how quickly the victim can run—“[w]ie die laufen kann” (“She can run fast!”)—the madman adds: “aber so eine Hyäne ist noch schneller” (“but a hyena’s faster”).³⁷

As the story unfolds, building on this perception, the animal inside him is externalized (“hier konnten gleich wieder die Hyänen aus dem Korn kommen” [“The hyenas could come back out of the corn at any moment”]), and then incarnated: “Später fand er einen Rübenacker, er riß ein paar Rüben heraus und aß sie” (“Later, he found a turnip field, and pulled up a couple of turnips and ate them”).³⁸ The first positive and for that also metaphysical description as an animal or animal-like creature is while bathing in the pond, where he “tanzte nackt in der weißen Sonne, groß, stark und schön wie ein Satyr” (“danced naked in the white sunlight, big, strong and handsome like a satyr”),³⁹ albeit still capable and willing, later discarded, to question this position, feeling it to be shameful: “Plötzlich kam ihm der Gedanke, daß er etwas Unanständiges täte” (“Suddenly it occurred to him that he was doing something indecent”).⁴⁰

The identification with the animal intensifies when the madman, leaping from the balustrade in the department store, believes he is a bird diving down into the “Ozean” below. This clearly alludes to the ‘ozeanische Gefühl’ (‘oceanic feeling’),⁴¹ around 1900 a common topos for describing the union between humans

36| Schönert, “Der Irre von Georg Heym,” 91, has also drawn attention to this connection; for Heym’s reception of Zola in general, see Nishioka, *Suche nach dem wirklichen Menschen*, 53–144, with reference to *Der Irre*: 235–237.

37| Heym, “Der Irre,” 25; id., “The Madman,” 53.

38| Heym, “Der Irre,” 26; 27; id., “The Madman,” 55.

39| The satyr relates back to the Dionysian dance: “Er begann wie in einer Verzückung um die beiden Leichen herumzutanzten” (“He began dancing ecstatically around the two corpses”). Heym, “Der Irre,” 23; id., “The Madman,” 56 and earlier. For this in general, see Edith Ihekweazu, “Wandlung und Wahnsinn. Zu expressionistischen Erzählungen von Döblin, Sternheim, Benn und Heym,” *Orbis Litterarum* 37 (1992): 337. Cf. on Heym’s conception of the Dionysian in general, Gust, “Georg Heym in der Zirkelbildung des Berliner Frühexpressionismus,” 31–32.

40| Heym, “Der Irre,” 27; id., “The Madman,” 56.

41| Ironically, the ‘ozeanische Gefühl’ (‘oceanic feeling’) first gained its name only subsequently to its description and moreover as a negation of its existence. In *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (*Civilization and its Discontents*) Freud claims—while critically discussing Romain Rolland’s *Die Zukunft einer Illusion* (*The Future of an Illusion*)—that the “ozeanische Gefühl” (‘oceanic feeling’) [Sigmund Freud, *Studienausgabe*,

and a divine creation. And this union with life, nature, the cosmos or the universe not only comes about in the medium of water but also—as a bird of prey—in the animal. This union with nature through the animal is another topos popular in the early 20th century, for example when Lord Chandos senses inside himself the “Todeskampf dieses Volks von Ratten” (“death throes of the pack of rats”).⁴² Or in the words of the popularizer of science and the mystic of life, Wilhelm Bölsche,⁴³ “ich bin auch im Tier” (‘I too am in the animal’).⁴⁴

The feeling of union also entails the loss of the last form of presentness, namely the perception of time in terms of succession. Completely in line with Eckhart’s “nū”⁴⁵ (circulating as a topos around 1900),⁴⁶ the madman’s perception of nature is accompanied by an experience within which, as contemporary life mystics contend, “Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft [...] nur ein einzig-einiger ewiger Strom sind, der vom Unendlichen zum Unendlichen strömt” (“past, present and future [...] are only a unique/unified eternal stream that flows from the infinite to the infinite”).⁴⁷ Or in the perceptual modus of the madman: “Ein unendlicher

ed. Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards and James Strachey (Frankfurt o.M.: S. Fischer, 1969ff.), vol. 9, 198; id., *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 2] represents a form of narcissism that “nachträglich in Beziehung zur Religion geraten ist” (“subsequently became connected with religion”) [Freud, *Studienausgabe*, vol. 9, 204; id., *Civilization and its Discontents*, 11]. For the positively connoted “ozeanische [...] Gefühl” (‘oceanic feeling’) as a topos prevalent amongst adherents of ‘Lebensmystik’ around 1900, see Wolfgang Riedel, *Homo natura. Literarische Anthropologie um 1900* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1996), 85–150.

42| Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Rudolf Hirsch et al, vol. 31 (Frankfurt o.M.: S. Fischer, 1975 ff.), 50–51; id., *The Lord Chandos Letter and Other Writings*, trans. Joel Rotenberg (New York: New York Review Books, 2005), 123.

43| For the connection Heym/ Bölsche cf. Gust, “Georg Heym in der Zirkelbildung des Berliner Frühexpressionismus,” 7–8; on Bölsche as ‘Lebensmystiker’ see Riedel, *Homo natura*, 105–107.

44| Wilhelm Bölsche, “Über den Wert der Mystik für unsere Zeit,” in *Angelus Silesius. Cherubinischer Wandersmann*, ed. Wilhelm Bölsche (Jena/ Leipzig: Diederichs, 1905), XII. Similarly Bölsche, “Über den Wert der Mystik für unsere Zeit,” XXVI. Cf. Bergengruen, *Mystik der Nerven*, 25–26.

45| Meister Eckhart, *Sämtliche deutsche Predigten und Traktate sowie eine Auswahl aus den lateinischen Werken. Kommentierte zweisprachige Ausgabe*, ed. Niklaus Largier, trans. Joseph Quint et al. (Frankfurt o.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993), Pr. 9, vol. 1, 104.

46| Bölsche, “Über den Wert der Mystik für unsere Zeit,” XLIV: “Die echte mystische Vorstellung von einer Aufhebung des Zeitlichen und Räumlichen [...] tritt hervor als eine Empfindung, eine Schau, ein Erlebnis” (‘The genuinely mystical idea of sublating the temporal and spatial [...] emerges as a sensation, an intuition, an experience’).

47| Gustav Landauer, “Durch Absonderung zur Gemeinschaft,” in *Das Reich der Erfüllung. Flugschriften zur Begründung einer neuen Weltanschauung*, H. 2, ed. Heinrich Hart and Julius Hart (Leipzig: Diederichs, 1901), 48–54; id., “Through Separation to Community,” in *Revolution and Other Writings. A Political Reader*, ed. and trans. Gabriel Kuhn (Oakland: PM Press, 2010), 99.

Friede, eine ewige Ruhe zitterte unter diesem ewigen Himmel" ("An endless peace, an eternal rest, trembled under this eternal sky"). At the end of the fantasy, or in other words: while passing into death, an "ewige Musik" ("eternal music") rises up and the entire experience defies quantification, "sein sterbendes Herz tat sich auf, zitternd in einer unermesslichen Seligkeit" ("his dying heart opened, trembling with immeasurable happiness").⁴⁸

Animals also possess an important function in *Der Dieb*: as Heym's protagonist moves towards the end, his own and that of the story, he crouches "wie ein schwarzes Tier in dem Viereck des blauen Mondlichtes" ("like a black animal in the square of blue moonlight"). Before this, "seine gekrümmten Hände standen wie ein paar Schnäbel über seinem Kopfe, und seine langen und verwüsteten Haare tanzten auf seinen dünnen Schultern [...] wie ein riesiges Känguruh" ("his crooked hands" are "like two beaks above his head, and his long, neglected hair" danced "on his thin shoulders [...], on and on like a giant kangaroo"). In the end he seems to the narrator to be like "eine Maus" ("a mouse") chased by "ein paar große Teufel" ("two great devils")—the firemen trying to save him from the burning house.⁴⁹

All these descriptions of animals converge, as I wish to argue, on the beast of the apocalypse (Revelation 13.1): "vnd sahe ein Thier aus dem Meer steigen / das hatte sieben Heubter vnd zehen Hörner / vnd auff seinen Hörnern sieben Kronen / vnd auff seinen Heubten namen der Lesterung" ["and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy"].⁵⁰ The apocalypse is namely the theological scenario of *Der Dieb*, which, aside from a few exterior views and some non-focalized insertions (to be elaborated on below), is depicted without narrative distance in its entirety. Through an idiosyncratic but by no means inconsistent reading of specific eschatological passages in the New Testament, in particular Mark 15.34 ("Mein Gott / mein Gott / warumb hastu mich verlassen?") ["My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"] and the 17th chapter of the Revelation, which, as is well known, features the whore of Babylon, the thief becomes convinced that "Gott hatte ihn [Jesus Christus] verlassen, und sein Werk war umsonst gewesen" ("God had forsaken him [Jesus Christ], and his work had been in vain"). Because the thief sees himself embattled by tribulations, very much "wie Christus, der zwei Jahre in den Schrecken der Wüste ausharren mußte" ("like Christ who dwelt two years amid the horrors of the wilderness"),⁵¹ but which he though now believes to

have mastered,⁵² the idea ripens in him that he is Christ, or indeed a better Christ, and must therefore complete the work of salvation—naturally hopeful that God will not forsake him. Accordingly, his subsequent actions—the theft of the Mona Lisa and his journey to Florence—take place under apocalyptic portents: "Und nun war die Stunde gekommen" ("And now the hour had come"), the "Schlacht [sollte] beginnen" ("battle was to begin"), and he hears the "Trompete" ("trumpet"), which he takes to be "deutlich eine Anspielung auf das Jüngste Gericht" ("clearly an allusion to the Last Judgement").⁵³

The antichrist or Satan, i.e. the figure instigating the apocalypse,⁵⁴ who is the opponent to the figure of Christ, i.e. the thief, in this scenario is women as such,⁵⁵ concentrated in the picture of Mona Lisa and reflecting the Bible description of the apocalypse,⁵⁶ which he reads again directly in the story: "Und ich sahe das Weib sitzen auf einem rosinfarbenen Tiere, das war voll Namen der Lästerung, und hatte sieben Häupter und zehn Hörner" ("I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns").⁵⁷

During this work of salvation, i.e. his battle with the female "Hölle" ("Hell") who takes up the "Herausforderung" ("challenge"), the scenario remains the same as the one the thief perceived at the very beginning, namely that he finds himself in a situation of permanent temptation. Incessantly he is aware of this danger: "Ja, wenn er abfiel, wenn er, der den Himmel offen gesehen hatte, Gott den Gehorsam aufsagte, so machte er sich selbst zum Spott und kreuzigte sich selbst, sich, den wahren Messias und Boten Gottes" ("Yes, if he were to defect, if he, who had seen the heavens standing open, were to revoke his obedience to God, then he would be putting himself to open shame, crucifying himself, the true Messiah and messenger of God").⁵⁸

Shortly before the climax of the story it looks as if God has lost his most important Messiah and messenger in the apocalyptic final battle, because he—should she stop laughing—"wollte sich [...] auf der Stelle dem Teufel verschreiben" ("would sell himself to the devil on the spot"): "Ach er verachtete sie, aber er liebte sie. Und er verachtete sich selber, daß er sie liebte, diese Hure, die es verstanden hatte, ihn, den Heiligen Gottes, in den Schlamm herunterzuziehen" ("Oh, he despised her, but he loved her. And he despised himself for loving this whore who had known how

48| Heym, "Der Irre," 33-34; id., "The Madman," 62-64, emphasis M. B.

49| Heym, "Der Dieb," 95; 93; 96; id., "The Thief," 28; 25; 29, emphasis M. B.

50| Luther 1545; *The Bible*. Authorized King James Version. For the apocalyptic as a figure of thought in *Der Dieb*, Hoffmann, "Nehmt Spitzhacken und Hammer!," 312-313; Wolf, "Auf diesem furchtbaren blutlosen Schlachtfelde," 15-17; in Heym's work generally, Mautz, *Georg Heym*, 224-247.

51| Heym, "Der Dieb," 75; 74; "The Thief," 4; 3.

52| Allusions to Mark 1.12 as well as Matthew and Luke, both chapter 4.

53| Heym, "Der Dieb," 81-83; id., "The Thief," 12-14.

54| 1 John 2.18; Revelation 20.1.

55| Cf. the contemporary antifeminism Heym draws on, Hoffmann, "Nehmt Spitzhacken und Hammer!," 311; Johannes F. Lehmann, "Biblischer Gotteszorn und menschliche Wut. Georg Heyms Novelle *Der Dieb*," *Essener Unikate* 26 (2005): 45.

56| Revelation 17.3.

57| Heym, "Der Dieb," 87; id., "The Thief," 19.

58| Heym, "Der Dieb," 88; id., "The Thief," 19-20.

to drag him, the holy one of God, down into the mud with her"). But at the very last second he hears Mona Lisa laugh, and "das verträgt kein Mann. Seine ganze Liebe war weg" ("no man can stand for that. His whole love was gone").⁵⁹

If the "brennende Feuersäulen" ("blazing pillars of fire"), the fire destroying the building the thief is in, fulfill the apocalyptic scenario, then Heym's protagonist takes on an ambivalent role. On the one hand, the laugh had led him to take "Rache" ("revenge") on the female antichrist. Or at least he cuts the picture, striking "da wo das Lachen am bösesten saß, an dem rechten Mundwinkel" ("in the right-hand corner of the mouth where the smile was at its most wicked").⁶⁰ On the other hand however, the battle does not end with the destruction of his enemy but in fact with a double assimilation: firstly laughter takes hold of the thief⁶¹ and he "mußte lachen, zum erstenmal seit einer Ewigkeit" ('has to laugh, for the first time in an eternity'), while at the very end "sein lautes Gelächter" ("his loud laughter") rings out;⁶² and secondly, he does not simply destroy the picture but makes a mask out of it that he then pulls over his face. He takes revenge on evil, but also enters into an union with her—and not with God, to whom he wags his long tongue out of the picture's empty mouth.

Not described in the Bible, this independent position in the apocalyptic final battle enables the thief to astonishingly enter into a state similar to that of the madman, i.e. one of unity and timelessness. Laughter has lead him to the brink of death and hence the cusp of a new dimension of time. The mouth had "sich zu dem furchtbaren Lachen des Todes auseinandergezerrt" ("drawn apart into the frightful grimace of death"), a "Lachen unhörbar und doch laut, unsichtbar und doch da, alt und dunkel wie die Jahrtausende" ("an inaudible laugh which could yet be heard, which could not be seen and yet was there, ancient and dark as the centuries"). Sliding out of his present into a much more expansive time dimension, the thief now—despite or even because of the Nietzschean realization of the death of God—experiences the impression of a mystical sublation of time: "Und plötzlich konnte er, als er seine Tat übersah, das Wesen der Dinge erkennen, und er wußte, daß nichts war, kein Leben, kein Sein, keine Welt, nichts, nur ein großer schwarzer Schatten um ihn herum. Und er war ganz allein oben auf einem Felsen. Und wenn er nur einen Schritt tat, sank er herunter in den ewigen Abgrund" ("And suddenly, as he surveyed his work, he could see the essence of things, and he knew that there was nothing, no life, no being, no world, nothing, only a great black shadow around

59] Heym, "Der Dieb," 92–93; id., "The Thief," 24–26.

60] Heym, "Der Dieb," 97; 94; id., "The Thief," 30; 26; 27.

61] Very likely an allusion to Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4, 49; id., *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*, trans. Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 29: "Nicht durch Zorn, durch Lachen tödtet man" ("Not by wrath does one kill, but by laughing").

62] Heym, "Der Dieb," 94; 97; id., "The Thief," 27; 30.

him. And he was quite alone, up above on a rock. And he had only to take a single step and he would sink down into the *eternal abyss*").⁶³

Although only in the modus of the conditional, it is no coincidence that here Nietzsche's "unendliches Nichts" ("infinite nothing")⁶⁴ is connected with the mystical idea of the bottomless "abgrund" ('abyss') in the soul⁶⁵ articulated by Johannes Tauler—hence invoking the vision of a mystical timelessness. This vision can be related to psychopathological conception underpinning the story. In his dissertation Döblin had argued, in a manner very similar to Bergson, that, without any placement in time performed by acts of memory, psychic perception arises "aus dem Nichts" ('out of nothing'). And it is to this "Nichts" ('nothing') that a person returns—or indeed actually remains in—who is suffering from paranoid Korsakoff psychosis, for which disrupted memory functions are characteristic.⁶⁶

The experience of a non-successive and thus non-temporal perception is metaphysically charged in Heym's story, and to the effect that the thief's perception of time is not simply, as in Döblin's dissertation, a deviation from that of a person sound in mind, but at the same time escalates, in the sense of a 'Mystik der Nerven' ('mysticism of the nerves'),⁶⁷ into a mystic "nû"—albeit not a divine one. The Nietzschean nihilism prevents namely that the abyss here can be a divine nothingness; instead, this is an abyss that arises from the insight that nothing is, no present, no past, no world, but also no God or anti-God—and it is only into this decidedly non-theological "nû" or nothingness that the thief can enter.

The emphasis is on 'can,' since the "wenn" which introduces the sentence mentioned above has only a temporal but also a conditional function [Änderung MB]. This also then pertains to the mystical experience of timelessness or the non-divine "nû": the thief senses the abyss of timelessness but shrinks back from entering and so—for the moment at least—remains in the present. The final step is first taken in the closing scene.

63] Heym, "Der Dieb," 95; id., "The Thief," 27, emphasis M. B.

64] Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 3, 481; id., *The Gay Science*, 120.

65] Johannes Tauler, *Die Predigten. Aus der Engelberger und Freiburger Handschrift sowie aus Schmidts Abschriften der ehemaligen Straßburger Handschrift*, ed. Ferdinand Vetter (Berlin: Weidmann, 1910), Pr. 28, 117; Johannes Tauler, *Predigten*, ed. and trans. Georg Hofmann, 2 vols., third ed. (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1987), Pr. 28, vol. 1, 197.

66] Döblin, "Gedächtnisstörungen," 17; 32.

67] For this term, see Bergengruen, *Mystik der Nerven*, 7–34.

III. Narrative Style and Tense

Alfred Döblin's *Butterblume* is narrated with an internal focalization on its protagonist in many episodes, and hence follows Fischer's external and internal perceptions. There are however a small series of neutral external focalizations, for example at the beginning when Fischer's external appearance is described ("[d]er schwarzgekleidete Herr" ["the gentleman in black"]; "der Dicke" ["the fat man"] etc.). Occasionally these descriptions move quietly into (pejorative) evaluations (transporting an authorial viewpoint): "Er hatte eine aufgestellte Nase und ein plattes bartloses Gesicht, ein ältliches Kindergesicht mit süßem Mündchen" ("He had a tilted nose and a flat beardless face, an elderly child's face with a sweet little mouth"); "der schlaffe Herr in Schwarz" ("the flabby gentleman in black"). Similarly the following formulation: "In den Ernst seines Äffchengesichts war ein leidender Zug gekommen" ("A trace of suffering had appeared in the gravity of his monkey's face").⁶⁸ The narrator never articulates the madness of the protagonist however.

This switch in the narrative mode is radicalized by Heym's narrator,⁶⁹ who in *Der Irre* mostly follows the viewpoint of the protagonist with an internal focalization, but at one place is prepared to forfeit this in favor of a different internal focalization—namely an old man who notices the murder of the woman ("Das ist sicher der Mörder, dachte der alte Mann." ["That is certainly the murderer, thought the old man"]). In this connection there are authorial evaluations and ascriptions, e.g. "der Verrückte" ("the madman"), which are also evident of course in the title, alternated with externally focalizing descriptions, which also contain a certain evaluating: "Und der Irre lachte über das ganze Gesicht, das Blut zog sich in den Falten zusammen. Er sah aus wie ein furchtbarer Teufel" ("And the madman laughed all over his face so that the blood ran into the creases. He looked like a fiend").⁷⁰ At the end however, the subtle polyperspectivization of double viewpoints is reduced to the oceanic feeling of the madman, namely at once both an external and internal perspective, but now without any authorial evaluation.

Der Dieb follows a similar approach, also mainly shaped by an internal focalization. But here, too, we have a title that conveys an authorial perspective and evaluation. Even more subtly than in *Der Irre*, this maintains the same vocabulary, for example when the thief is also called "Irre" ("[t]he madman"). It is precisely at this point, however, that there is also an external focalization when this "Irre" moved to the guard at the Louvre, gave him a "Fünffrankenstück" ("five-franc

piece") and told him "er sollte ihn in zwei Stunden holen und ihn hinauslassen" (to "come and fetch him into two hours and let him out"). A zero focalization had already occurred ("[s]eine Freunde wußten nichts mehr von seinem Leben" ["His friends now knew nothing of his life"]) and several times external, e.g.: "sein struppiger Vollbart wurde von einem lauten Lachen geschüttelt" ("his big bristling beard was shaken by a loud laugh"). At the end, a second internal focalization, distinct from that of the protagonist, on the firemen (who are killed as a result of his actions) is suggested: "und als sie wieder an ihm vorüberflogen, hörten sie noch in ihre Verzweiflung hinein sein lautes Gelächter hinter sich her" ("and as they flew past him, even in their despair they heard his loud laughter ringing behind them").⁷¹

Although only suggested, the evaluating and judging position of the narrator is replaced in any case towards the end by a focalization on other figures: the "Betrunkene[n]" ("drunks"), the "alte [...] Mann [...]" ("old man"), and the firemen, "[d]ie durch die glühenden Dachsparren springen" ("leaping through the glowing rafters").⁷² It seems as if the trajectory of Heym's narrative modus is to contrast the metaphysical interior view with its sublation of time to a subtly inserted external viewpoint in which objective time continues. This stylistic approach is reflected in the use of tense, the final aspect of our considerations.

The stylistic device of switching tense is already discernible in Döblin's *Butterblume*. Mostly written in the preterit, the text changes into the present in a few passages—and precisely whenever, as I would like to show, the protagonist's presentist experience of time not only 'contaminates' the narrator in free indirect speech,⁷³ but when, as explicated in the Korsakoff study, the former slips into a "fortrollende Gegenwart" ['onward rolling present']⁷⁴ that has neither a before nor an after, and with this psychopathologically radicalized experience of the present overwhelms the latter and forces him into altering the tense.

The general present tense of Fischer's experience of time, as becomes clear in direct speech ("Ich *bin* nicht berauscht. Der Kopf *darf* nicht fallen [...] ["I'm not drunk. The head *can't* fall [...]"]⁷⁵ etc.), impacts on the indirect speech to the point that it now also determines the tense used by the narrator. If previously it was possible to mainly use the epical preterit⁷⁶ ("Diese Blume dort *glich* den anderen

71 | Heym, "Der Dieb," 84; 72; 79; 97; id., "The Thief," 15; 1; 9; 30.

72 | Heym, "Der Dieb," 95–96; id., "The Thief," 28–29.

73 | For the idea that the narrator is 'contaminated' by the figure in free indirect speech, see Franz K. Stanzel, *Theorie des Erzählens*, sixth ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 247–250; id., *A Theory of Narrative*, trans. Charlotte Goedsche (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 192f.

74 | Döblin, "Gedächtnisstörungen," 16.

75 | Döblin, "Die Ermordung einer Butterblume," 61; id., "The Murder of a Buttercup," 59, emphasis M. B.

76 | For this, see Käte Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtung* (Munich: DTV/Klett-Cotta, 1987), 64–85; however, I adopt the criticism leveled by Matias Martínez and Michael Scheffel, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*, eighth ed. (Munich: Beck, 2009), 71–72, assuming that a complete "Verschwinden der präteritiven

68 | Döblin, "Die Ermordung der Butterblume," 59; 62; 68; id., "The Murder of a Buttercup," 57; 58; 59; 65.

69 | Up until now, only Werner Sulzgruber, *Georg Heym, Der Irre. Einblicke in die Methoden und Kunstgriffe expressionistischer Prosa. Erzählen aus der Perspektive des Wahnsinns* (Vienna: Edition Praesens, 1997), 46–48, has explored the psychological time structure of the texts, albeit without consideration of the connection to psychopathology.

70 | Heym, "Der Irre," 26; id., "The Madman," 54; 55; cf. Schönert, "Der Irre von Georg Heym," 89.

auf ein Haar” [“This flower here was exactly the same as the others”]⁷⁷ etc.) to mark, at least formally, a certain distance to the presentist time experience of the protagonist, the narrator is now forced—radicalizing the epical preterit⁷⁸—to switch to an epical present that renders Fischer’s “fortrollende Gegenwart” without distance: “Und daneben im Rasen *faul* der Kopf. Er *wird* zerquetscht, aufgelöst vom Regen, verwest. [...] Das *hebt* sich lebendig, *rinnt* auf ihn zu, gerade auf Herrn Michael zu [...]. Er *springt*, *hüpf*t nur noch auf den Zehen” (“And beside it the head *is rotting* in the grass. It *is* squashed, broken up by the rain, decomposing. [...] It *rises*, alive, *runs* toward him, straight toward Herr Michael [...]. He *leaps*, *hops* only on his toes now”).⁷⁹

Psychopathologically shaped, this epical present erupts a second time, still in connection with the ‘murder’ of a flower, namely as Fischer flees: “Um nicht auf dem glatten Boden auszugleiten, *tastet* er sich von Baum zu Baum. [...] Entsetzen *packt* ihn [...]. Da *bricht* er sich mit Gewalt Bahn” (“To avoid slipping on the treacherous ground, he *feels* his way from tree to tree. [...] Horror *grips* him [...]. He *breaks* his way through violently”). In both instances the narrator switches precisely into the (also epical) preterit when the protagonist has found his way out of the “fortrollende Gegenwart” and back into a succession of events: “Der feinfühligste Herr *fuhr* zusammen” / “*Regungslos stand* der dicke Herr an der Gaslaterne vor der kleinen Dorfkirche” (“The sensitive gentleman *startled* back” / “The fat gentleman *stood motionless* by the gaslight in front of the little village church”).⁸⁰

Heym’s narrator also uses this stylistic device in both stories: the present suddenly breaking into the text dominated by the (mostly epical) preterit, but radicalizes it to the point where he deploys this present sweeping in on the narrator and his narrative style not at various places interspersed through the text but only once, at the very end—and precisely when his protagonist begins to undergo his metaphysical experiences. This most certainly has something to do with how Heym’s narrator takes these more seriously than his predecessor in Döblin’s story.

After seventeen pages in—mainly epical—preterit, in *Der Irre* the final murder of the shop-girl is described in the present: from “er *holt* aus und *springt*” (“[h]e *poises* himself then *springs*”) until “er *reißt* ein Ladenmädchen zu sich herauf, *legt* ihr die Hände um die Kehle und *drückt* zu” (“he *pulls* a shop-girl up to him,

Bedeutung des Präteritums” [‘disappearance of the past meaning of the preterit’; c.f. Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtung*, 80] does not take place in the epical preterit, but both the presentist experience of the character discourse as well as the post-temporality of the narrating find expression.

77] Döblin, “Die Ermordung einer Butterblume,” 60; id., “The Murder of a Buttercup,” 58, emphasis M. B.

78] Not to be confused with the “historische [...] Präsens” (‘historical present tense’) in Hamburger, which does not possess any temporal function; Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtung*, 96).

79] Döblin, “Die Ermordung einer Butterblume,” 62; id., “The Murder of a Buttercup,” 60, emphasis M. B.

80] Döblin, “Die Ermordung einer Butterblume,” 66; 62; 67; id., “The Murder of a Buttercup,” 63; 60; 63, emphasis M. B.

places his hands around her throat and *presses*”) solely the present tense is used. Also in the present is the first part of the metaphysical scenario that opens up to the madman in the water after he, feeling himself to be a bird of prey, has dived into the sea: from “Um ihn herum *ist* das große goldene Meer, das seine Wogen zu beiden Seiten wie gewaltige schimmernde Dächer *türmt*” (“[a]ll around him *is* the great golden sea, with towering waves on either side like brilliantly shimmering roofs”) through to “Die Schlösser *rücken* immer tiefer, die Gärten *scheinen* immer tiefer zu sinken” (“[t]he castles *go* further down, the gardens *appear* to sink ever deeper”)—also solely in the present tense.

Up until now we have encountered the psychopathological shaped epical present tense from Döblin, as a kind of narrative parallel to the “fortrollende Gegenwart” of the protagonist, which the narrator follows, or indeed has to follow. This onward rolling, unending present is described however as the prerequisite for—and not the entering into and immersing in—an oceanic feeling. There is something that hinders the protagonist from sinking infinitely: “Aber da *war* etwas Schwarzes, etwas Feindliches, das *störte* ihn, das wollte ihn nicht hinunterlassen” (“But there *was* something black there, something hostile; it *disturbed* him, it didn’t want to let him go down”). It is ultimately this ‘Wahrnehmung’ (‘perception’) of a disturbance that, mediated through indirect speech oriented on the present tense (“Aber er *wird* das schon kriegen; er *ist* ja so stark” [“But I’ll make it, of course”, “I’m strong enough”]), compels the narrator to switch to the “fortrollende Gegenwart” of his protagonist: “Und er *holt* aus” (“He *poises* himself”). And in this present tense the disturbance is marked as the main hindrance to entering the oceanic feeling: “[E]r *wird* ja niemals *dahinkommen*” (“*he’s never going to get there*”). Interestingly this occurs in the form of an obstructed future tense. The present tense thus stands for an inner present that is clearly demarked from the outer time sequence, thanks to which it is predestined for a mystical experience. At the same time however, the subjective, presentist experience of time is not completely free: the bloodlust experienced in the state of a pathological present tense and its associated future tense (“er *wird* das schon kriegen” [“But I’ll make it, of course”]) hinders actually feeling the oceanic.

Sinking completely into the mystical ocean takes place in the preterit again, in the—as one could put it—depths of the past tense. Meanwhile (admittedly the whole scenario spans just a few seconds!) the madman, having ‘landed’ on the floor below, is fatally wounded by a shot fired by presumably a policeman or security guard, and experiences in the moment of dying the consummation of the oceanic feeling—in the past tense: “Und während das Blut aus der Wunde *schoß*, *war* es ihm, als *sänke* er nun in die Tiefe, immer tiefer, leise wie eine Flaumfeder. Eine ewige Musik *stieg* von unten herauf und sein sterbendes Herz *tat* sich auf, zitternd in einer unermeßlichen Seligkeit” (“And while the blood *shot* out of the wound, it seemed to him now as though *he was sinking* into the depths, ever deeper, light as a piece of down. An eternal music *rose* from below, and his dying heart *opened*, trembling with immeasurable happiness”).

Interestingly, it is the real breaking into the scene that ushers in the resumed use of the epical preterit, or more precisely: an external focalized description of the shooter, also in preterit: "Hinter der Tür *erschien* ein Mann, *legte* ein Gewehr an die Backe, *zielte*. Der Schuß *traf* den Wahnsinnigen in den Hinterkopf. Er *schwankte* ein paarmal hin und her" ("Behind the door a man *appeared*, *laid* a gun to his cheek, *aimed*. The shot *hit* the lunatic in the back of the head. He *swayed* back and forth once or twice").⁸¹ The narrator now takes up this objectivity when he no longer allows himself to be overwhelmed by the subjective temporal perception of the non-successive present tense of his protagonist, but instead, despite the resumed internal focalizing, hauls him back into his own time form. This is now no longer the same epical preterit however that the narrator has used (mostly) in the preceding seventeen pages, but a preterit that has integrated the present tense of his protagonist or (in the sense of the Hegelian tripartite structure) sublated it—for he follows the presentist experience of the oceanic feeling, but now without the subjective, purely psychopathological aspect.

In Döblin's *Butterblume* the pathological present tense of Michael Fischer ends when he—and following him, the narrator as well—has freed himself from the state of utmost agitation, extreme subjectivization, and the absolute presentism of his perception. In a certain sense this is also the case for the madman: all psychopathological subjectivity ends—and this is the goal of the mystical *henosis* that finds expression in the oceanic—with the experience of death. This extreme subjectivization of the perspective was necessary to gain liberation from the successiveness of an external, objective time and enter a "fortrollende Gegenwart;" but a second step then followed, namely to overcome this pathological present tense and enter a state beyond the subjective. And this goal of the supra-subjective was shown through the—also needing to be overcome—objectivity of external focalized description of the shooter and the accompanying past tense. Here, in this presentist-charged preterit, which moreover opens the previously barred future tense—"er wird ja niemals dahinkommen" ("he's never going to get there") was the description before, while he has now gotten there –, a union takes place between narrator and figure, one that enables the Eckhartian "nû," in which there is neither a before nor an after, to be narratively depictable.

A change in tense also takes place at the end of *Der Dieb*. However, the idea that a pathological delimitation of time is expressed and a supra-temporal, metaphysical experience at least shimmers through, is no longer taken up. Rather, the decisive discovery that leads to the "ewige [...] Abgrund" ("eternal abyss") is described immediately in the preterit: "Und plötzlich *konnte* er, als er seine Tat übersah, das Wesen der Dinge erkennen, und er *wußte*, daß nichts *war*" ("And suddenly, as

he surveyed his work, he *could* see the essence of things, and he *knew* that there *was* nothing").⁸²

The end, where the harrowing death of the firemen is described, is also in the past tense ("das Feuer *fraß* ihr Gesicht, das Fleisch *flog* in Stücken von ihren Händen" ["the fire *ate* their faces, the flesh *flew* in pieces from their hands"] etc.). In contrast, the present tense is used to describe—from an external focalizing (with the viewpoint from the street, surveying the street first and then to the floor where the thief is)—the dramatic attempt launched by the firemen to save the thief: from "Die Straße *wird* voll Menschen" ("[t]he street *fills* up with people") and "wo der Kopf des alten Mannes aus der Bodenluke *heraushängt*" ("where the head of the old man *is leaning* out of the attic window") through to "Nun *kann* man sehen" ("[t]he watchers *see* them") and "Auf einmal *verschwindet* die wilde Jagd nach hinten in einer rauchenden Wolke" ("[t]hen the wild chase *disappears* abruptly rearwards in a cloud of smoke")—all present tense.⁸³

This shows that the present tense here is neither psychopathological nor metaphysical (not even in the sense of a transition or passage). If it is still possible to speak of a "fortrollende Gegenwart", then in the sense that the events come thick and fast, that in a brief span of time a host of impressions have to be received; here we are close to the "Vergegenwärtigung ..." ('re-presentation') of the historical present tense.⁸⁴ But to reiterate: this presentic perspective is not that of the thief, but that of onlookers, who are neither mentally ill nor involved in metaphysical transcendence.

In contrast, whenever the narrator adopts the metaphysical perspective of his protagonist, he switches into the past tense. This is related to—when compared to *Der Irre*—the altered insight of the respective protagonist, or more precisely: to his Nietzschean nihilism. The metaphysical fantasy of the madman was no longer theological in the sense that there had been a union with a divine entity, but there was however a positively described something of (albeit imagined) nature, with which union was sought. In the case of the thief this positive entity no longer exists. When he decides to leap into the "ewige [...] Abgrund"—and at the end a lot speaks for this assumption—then this is because he had come to know "daß nichts war" ("that there was nothing").⁸⁵ There is simply no space for a present tense evoking the metaphysical (nor one that coincides with it); and accordingly, there is nothing to be narrated.

Above all though, within the scope of this universal nihilism, the self no longer exists, the 'I' from whose perspective a metaphysical experience could be described. The death of the firemen is namely no longer described from the thief's

82| Heym, "Der Dieb," 95; id., "The Thief," 27, emphasis M. B.

83| Heym, "Der Dieb," 96–97; id., "The Thief," 28–30, emphasis M. B.

84| Which Hamburger rules out for literary texts however; Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtung*, 91–93.

85| Heym, "Der Dieb," 95; id., "The Thief," 27.

81| All quotes: Heym, "Der Irre," 33–34; id., "The Madman," 63–64, emphasis M. B.

perspective, but that of those dying themselves: “und als sie wieder an ihm vorüberflogen, hörten sie noch in ihre Verzweiflung hinein sein lautes Gelächter hinter sich her” (“and as they flew past him, even in their despair they heard his loud laughter ringing behind them”).⁸⁶ The pathological-subjectivist epical present tense from *Der Irre*, used to represent a transitional position on the way to a metaphysical experience, is still invoked but deprived of its substrate: it is no longer pathological (rather only excessive or overwhelming), it no longer enables a metaphysical experience—and above all else it is no longer subjective in the sense that it describes the (external or internal) perception of the protagonist. Instead, this self with its experience of time is now nothing other than a perceived object, no longer the perceiving subject of the narration. This is—so to speak—the consequence of *Der Irre*, in which a metaphysical preterit is developed as the outcome of the complete de-subjectivization of the protagonist. Moreover, in *Der Dieb*, and in this point it goes beyond *Der Irre*, a transcending experience without any content, only in form, is broached and dealt with. At the end, the knowledge “daß nichts war” becomes real and tangible to the effect that the subject of this knowledge cannot enter a union with a higher positive metaphysical power but sinks into nothingness and hence itself becomes a nothing.

Wishing to render this experience—which is actually no longer an experience—comprehensible, the narrator can only describe, in a gesture resolutely holding back empathy, how destruction unfolds in the physical world—and this requires the proven mode of the past tense. It is only in this way that the narrative objectivity of the outside world is not taken as a sign of metaphysical objectivity; it signifies instead all that remains. The protagonist has entered the “nichts” so fully and completely that he eludes any possible perspective. And this is why his death is not even mentioned. |