Fragmenting Fragments: Jean Paul's Poetics of the Small in "Meine Miszellen"

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> Jean Pauls große Formen sind so wenig reine Art, wie er als Dichter reine Art ist: er ist ein gemischt-Mischender, und jeden Augenblick droht seine Kunst in ihre Elemente zurückzubrechen.[1]
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> —Max Kommerell, *Jean Paul*

Between 1810 and 1820 Jean Paul collected a series of his fragmentary short texts from newspapers and literary annuals and republished them in three volumes under the name *Herbst-Blumine, oder gesammelte Werkchen aus Zeitschriften*. This eclectic anthology of literary ephemera, whose transience is reflected in titles like "Die Junius-Nacht-Gedanken," "Nachlese für die *Levana*," "Meine Miszellen," and "Poetische Kleinigkeiten," brings together an extraordinarily heterogeneous array of different kinds of texts, whose printed origins from newspapers, *Taschenbücher* and *Musen-Almanache* recall the typological interconnection between satires, miscellanies, almanacs, and journals. These small forms distinguish themselves above all through their generic hybridity, mixing prose with poetry, satire with sentimentality, dream diaries with fictional epistles. For mixed collections of texts such as these, which in the nineteenth century frequently bore titles like "Miszellaneen," "Museum," "Kritische Wälder," and "Vermischte Schriften," the only applicable motto would be: *variatio delectat*.[2]

In the title of *Herbst-Blumine*, Jean Paul refers to his miscellanies not as "Werke" but as "Werkchen." His use of the diminutive foregrounds not only the smallness and brevity of his short texts, but also their material ephemerality as print objects. In contrast to major works of literature, such "Werkchen" are too fleeting and marginal to be preserved in the public library system, and hence destined to quickly vanish from both the book market. The

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preface to the first volume of *Herbst-Blumine* thematizes this medial circumstance when the editorial "I" observes that "nichts sich so schnell aus den Taschen verliert als Taschenbücher und keine in die Obstkammern öffentlicher Bibliotheken kommen" (SW II/3:115). It is for this reason, as the editor goes on to note, that he chose the title "Herbst-Blumine" for his anthology: first, it relates the short lifespan of literary anthologies—literally *Blumensammlungen*—to the seasonality of "autumn crocuses" [Herbst-Blumen]; second, it paronomastically links the latter, which as the narrator observers is in fact a "giftig[e]" and hence "ungenossen[e]" (SW II/3:115) species of flower, to the "unenjoyed" and "forgotten" minor works featured in the anthology.

The preface to the first volume of *Herbst-Blumine* thus situates the anthology within the long genre tradition of the *florilegium*, whose etymological origins derive from the phrase "a gathering of flowers," and refers to a compilation of excerpts from writing. This genre, which dates as far back as antiquity, became associated in the early modern period with the ordering of reference-, excerpt-, and commonplace-books.[3] Later, in the early-nineteenth century, the rise of serialized print formats such as the *Taschenbuch* and almanac meant that the form that literature assumed had to accord with the commercial exigencies of the book market, putting into question not only the hierarchy between author and reader, but also the autonomy of the artwork.[4]

In this discursive-historical context, the collected edition made it possible for authors to re-inscribe their scattered short texts back into the homogeneous space of the book and, crucially, under a unified authorship. During the Romantic period, the collected edition and the miscellany—as Andrew Piper has argued—thus came to form a kind of dialectical relation:

> Like the format of the collected edition, the nineteenth-century miscellany served a crucial ordering function in an age of too much writing. [. . .] Where the collected edition aimed to canonize its author and in the process create a literary canon, the miscellany was far more a document of the carnivalesque impulse to undo such rules, standards, or means. With the absence of any obvious organizing principle [. . .] the romantic miscellany authorized the reader to create the linkages between such cultural strata.[5]

To this constellation of tensions belongs not only the competing impulses of organization and proliferation, homogenization and dispersion, but also the opposition between author- and reader-centric formats: whereas the collected edition, as Piper goes on to show, aimed at the canonization of the author through the reproduction of previously published works, Romantic miscellanies, by contrast, were organized around the unifying figure of the reader. Furthermore, such miscellanies appealed not just to any reader, but rather to those who were trained in the techniques of literary "flower picking"—of skimming, selection, and collection.

At the same time, as the case of Jean Paul's *Herbst-Blumine* suggests, literature around 1800 was already aware of this new situation and reflected

this change in its structure. Jean Paul's republication of miscellaneous short texts in the form of a collected edition can be understood in this respect as part of a pragmatic strategy to adapt to these changing medial circumstances, one which he had in fact already experimented with just a year prior to the release of the first volume of *Herbst-Blumine*: in 1809, he published the first volume of his novel *Dr. Katzenbergers Badereise; nebst einer Auswahl verbesserten Werkchen*. The "selection of minor works" [Auswahl verbesserten Werkchen] which accompanied each of the three volumes of *Dr. Katzenberger* consisted for the most part of revised almanac and paperback submissions or date back to his early satirical collections, the *Grönländische Prozesse* (1783) and *Auswahl aus des Teufels Papiere* (1789). In the introduction to *Dr. Katzenberger*, he cites literary miscellanies such as the *Taschenkalender* and almanac, as well as newspapers, in order to justify the unconventional mixture of theoretical texts, fictional prose, and "minor works" included within the frame of a single book: "Mit den Taschenkalendern und Zeitschriften müssen die kleinen vermischten Werkchen so zunehmen – weil die Schriftsteller jene mit den besten Beiträgen zu unterstützen haben –, daß man am Ende kaum ein großes mehr schreibt" (SW I/6:81).

On the one hand, Jean Paul doubtlessly parodies here the medial relations which led to the acceleration of book production and text circulation around 1800, with the result that ever more "kleinen vermischten Werkchen" began to flood the market in ever shorter amounts of time. On the other hand, he not only diagnoses the transformation of fiction into the form of a compendium or collection in the nineteenth century—as well as the corresponding shift form the "major work" to the "minor work," from the *opus* to the *opusculum*—but also realizes this shift at the level of literary form by coupling his "selection of minor works" to the "major" form of the novel. In doing so, Jean Paul's republication of minor works ceases to be merely satirical or pragmatic and gains subversive potential in relation to the book as a discursive format. In works such as *Dr. Katzenberger* and *Herbst-Blumine*, Jean Paul "takes aim at an established order within the book as such, an order whose formats [he] stretches to its limits."[6] Against the traditional conception of work as a "beautiful whole," Jean Paul's "monstrous writing"[7]—his tendency to append digressive prefaces, heterogeneous insertions, and collections of "minor works" on to his voluminous novels—expands the small, fragmentary, and miscellaneous beyond the accepted horizons of the "major work" of literature, transforming it into a kind of literary bazaar within which all possible literary forms swarm and proliferate.

To this day, however, the reception of Jean Paul's work has still been largely determined by the conception of "work" as it prevailed in the nineteenth century, with closure, consistency, necessity, and the coherence of outer and inner form as its fundamental attributes. As a result, literary scholars of the twentieth-century often overlooked the complex intertextual dynamics

that characterize Jean Paul's own discursive means of production. In 1923, for instance, Rudolf Alexander Schröder advised readers of Jean Paul's novels—acknowledging their digressive, miscellaneous character—to separate the "Spreu vom Weizen, [. . .] das Ganze in seine gesonderten Eidyllien zu zerlegen und dann jedes einzelne rein zu genießen."[8] What ostensibly gets lost in this filtering—the "chaff" [Spreu]—is according to Schröder nothing but "ein in bezug auf Jean Paul im Grunde unwesentliches."[9] With such explanations, the reader is confirmed as well-versed in the techniques of reading *florilegia*, and in fact the reading of Jean Paul's works are still characterized by this selective, 'excerpting' way of reading, which seeks to filter out the desultory and digressive from his novels in order to comprehend their total narrative coherence. Arguably, Robert Minder best summarized this approach in his remark that reading Jean Paul's work constitutes a unique lesson in "das Geheimrezept aller Literaturwissenschaft (wie sonst denn fräse sich unserein je durch den Bücherhirsebrei hindurch?)—das Darüberhinweglesenkönnen, nobler gesagt: die Geschwindigkeitsregelung."[10]

Against the kinds of selective ways of reading Jean Paul advocated by Schröder and Minder, which seek to filter out the "essential" from the "inessential," the "major" from the "minor," this article makes the case for the reading of Jean Paul above all as an author of the small, marginal, and microscopic. By shifting the focus away from his titanic-polyhistoric works toward his diffuse minor works, I want to argue not only for the poetological significance of the small and fragmentary with respect to Jean Paul's own method of text production, but also for the central role played by contemporaneous miscellanies in its formation and development. In order to advance this argument, I will focus on one particular "Werkchen" included in *Herbst-Blumine*, entitled "Meine Miszellen," which thematizes the relation between Jean Paul's literary practices and the small form of the miscellany. There it will be argued that Jean Paul stages the transformation of the miscellany from a pragmatic literary format, which in the nineteenth century was used primarily for conveying news, anecdotes, and new scientific discoveries from around the world, into an experimental form of writing whose material ephemerality opens up the space for a new method of fragmentary text production. Finally, I will conclude by showing how Jean Paul's employment of this medium gains epistemological significance both in relation to his own "miscellaneous" way of writing as well as his broader poetological program.

From the perspective of the text's composition, "Meine Miszellen" reveals itself to be a highly heterogeneous work whose three separate sections consist of quasi-aphoristic remarks ("Nro. 1: Bemerkungen über den Menschen"), a somnambular epistle ("Nro. 2: Springbrief wines Nachtwandlers"), and a collection of sentimental lyric written in so-called "polymetric" verse ("Nro. 3: Polymeter"). Here the mixed nature of writing serves to intensify the variation (*variatio*)—one of the principle rhetorical attributes of miscel-

lanies, along with brevity (*brevitas*) and random ordering (*ordo artificialis*)[11]—of styles, topics, and genres. In this respect, the diversity of forms in "Meine Miszellen"—as well as *Herbst-Blumine* as a whole—appears to be aimed at readers accustomed to the stylistic pluralism of contemporaneous serial prints. At the same time, the very heterogeneity of this collection of texts depends paradoxically on the reproduction of previously published material. The copy of "Meine Miszellen" from *Herbst-Blumine*—along with every other "Werkchen" included in the volume—was in fact a republication of an earlier work, which first appeared several years earlier in the yearly almanac *Taschenbuch der Liebe und Freundschaft gewidmet*. Furthermore, all three sections of "Meine Miszellen" were originally published as standalone texts, numerous passages of which are taken directly from previous books, collections, and manuscripts.[12] This recycling and remixing of preexisting material appears to revise the notion of novelty from one of pure originality—strictly opposed to the copy—to that of new and unexpected combinations of different texts.

In the first line of "Meine Miszellen," Jean Paul situates his work within a constellation of contemporaneous miscellanies from around the world in order to justify the production of his own: "Wenn es russische, englische, französische etc. Miszellen gibt, warum soll es nicht deutsche geben? Und wenn diese, warum nicht auch meine?" (SW II/3:129). The hypophoric structure of the preface suggests not only a discursive strategy of self-legitimation, but also a decidedly ironic analogy between the miscellanies belonging to different nationalities—as they were typically organized during this period—and those of an individual author. In this abrupt shift from the national-linguistic to the authorial, from the generic to the singular, the conception of "miscellany" itself undergoes a transformation or even deformation. Here one can read the presentation of the text as the performative act of the *citation of genre*.[13] This citation of genre not only distinguishes Jean Paul's "own" miscellany from its generic predecessors, but also engenders new kinds of monstrous possibilities. Significant in this context is that Jean Paul appropriates a pragmatic literary format whose principle attribute is that it eludes subsumption under a higher generic principle, appearing as the paradoxical genre of the genre-less or the genre of the heterogeneous. Moreover, the fact that contemporaneous miscellanies were frequently associated with a weak or non-existent authorship anticipates the implicit and explicit thematizations throughout Jean Paul's text of the traditional hierarchies between author and reader, production and reception, as well as their carnivalesque inversion.

Before proceeding further, it must be asked to what extent "Meine Miszellen" resembles another more well-known kind of "small form"[14] around 1800: the Romantic fragment. A cursory glance at the striking mixture of different genres in "Meine Miszellen" immediately recalls Friedrich Schlegel's famous dictum from the *Athenäums-Fragmente* that Romantic poetry

ought to bring together all genres of poetry, rhetoric and philosophy, so that "Poesie und Prosa, Genialität und Kritik, Kunstpoesie und Naturpoesie bald mischen, bald verschmelzen."[15] Although Schlegel's ambiguous invocation here of the words "mischen" and "verschmelzen" leaves to a certain extent unanswered the question as to whether the fragment ought to strive toward integration or dispersion in its reflective "hovering" [Schwebe], he doubtlessly presents a conception of writing whose smallness and fragmentariness—like Jean Paul's miscellany—are decisively opposed to systematic and narrative closure. Yet by 1810, the year in which the first volume of *Herbst-Blumine* was published and nearly a decade after the publication of Friedrich Schlegel's *Lyceums- and Athenäums-Fragmente* (1797, 1798), the Romantic fragment had arguably already been canonized as a philosophical genre.[16] In this discursive-historical context, Jean Paul's "Meine Miszellen"—a text in which the author parodically "überall seine nettesten romantischen Gestalten anheftet und umhängt" (SW II/3:134)—can be read, I will argue, as an attempt to introduce a greater degree of heterogeneity and fragmentariness into the small form than the form of the Romantic fragment itself allowed for at this point in time.

In order to understand what is at stake in this confrontation between the form of the fragment and Jean Paul's "Meine Miszellen," it is helpful to consider in what ways this marginal "minor work" stands in relation to his broader poetological program. As will be argued in the following pages, Jean Paul's thematization of his own "miscellaneous" way of writing in "Meine Miszellen" brings his method of text production into connection with his concept of *humor*, which he defines in the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* as the form of the "inverted sublime" [umgekehrtes Erhabene] (SW I/5:125). By connecting the aesthetics of irony as the negative representation of the infinite—the theory of the sublime—with the non-idealistic materiality of the small and finite, Jean Paul's concept of humor on the one hand seems to mirror Schlegel's concept of irony, which likewise draws on Kant's theory of the sublime as the paradoxical basis of a constrained poetics. On the other hand—as Paul Fleming has argued—"[w]hereas Friedrich Schlegel prescribes an infinite process of becoming so as to achieve a progressive approximation of the absolute [. . .] for Jean Paul the gap between the finite and the infinite, the real and the ideal, is insuperable."[17] In contrast to Schlegel's theory of irony, then, which seeks to transcendentally uncouple the epistemological from the material through the approximation of the "infinite idea," Jean Paul's humor proceeds in the opposite direction; rather than a "progressive approximation of the absolute," humor oscillates abruptly between the infinite idea (spiritual-sublime) and the sensuous, corporeal, and finite.[18] In doing so, it exposes Romantic irony's dependence on the raw materiality of writing and language.

I. Reading Jean Paul's Writing: Skimming and Dispersion

In the first section of "Meine Miszellen," entitled "Nro. 1: Bemerkungen über den Menschen," Jean Paul presents a diffuse collection of "remarks" [Bemerkungen], many of which are taken directly from an expansive collection of apothegm that he began to compile starting around 1780.[19] While both their condensed, aphoristic mode of presentation, as well as their variation of content and themes, conforms to the rhetorical attributes of miscellanies, their witty-combinatorial arrangement can also be brought into connection with Jean Paul's own poetics of "wit" [Witz], which juxtaposes the most disparate objects and ideas in order bring forth the new and novel.[20] The sharpening of contrasts and formation of differences inherent to wit presents itself at various points in "Bemerkungen über den Menschen," manifesting itself in the form of satirical contrasting pairs, such as those between "good" and "bad" novelists, or "moral" and "immoral" profit, as well as in paronomastic combinations, as in one witty pun which alludes to the etymological interconnection between the word "premonition" [Ahnen]—a keyword of German Romanticism—and, in the context of military discourse, the word "revenge" [Ahnden]. A selection of the first several remarks reads as follows:

> Der Furchtsame erschrickt *vor* der Gefahr, der Feige *in* ihr, der Mutige *nach* ihr. (SW II/3:130)
>
> Jede kühne Tat macht eine zweite nötig, sonst bringt sie Untergang; und eben das Ahnen und Ahnden dieser Notwendigkeit entkräftet die Menge, welche sonst wohl den größten Mut verspürte, ganz so zu handeln wie Cäsar, oder wie Sokrates, oder wie Friedrich II., aber nur *einmal* im Jahre oder im Leben. (SW II/3:130)
>
> Jeder Schmeichler hat wieder seinen Schmeichler; den Bandwurm halten wieder nadelförmige Würmchen besetzt. (SW II/3:130)
>
> Schlechte Schriftsteller sollte man *vor*, große *nach* ihren Büchern kennen lernen, um jenen mehr die Bücher, diese mehr den Büchern zu vergeben. (SW II/3:130)

As this selection of remarks suggests, there appears to be on the one hand strikingly little in common between them. They leap from one discourse or theme to the next, and their separation from one another is (at least in the original publication format) emphasized by the inclusion of visual line breaks, a format which Jean Paul borrowed from contemporaneous miscellanies such as the *Miszellen für die neueste Weltkunde* (1807). These line breaks (or, in contemporary editions, paragraph breaks) seem to delineate a clear contextual horizon that presents each remark as internally closed and in itself complete, implying at the same time an approach to reading that treats the individual remarks as deriving meaning from themselves alone.

On the other hand, several features of the remarks—their condensation, juxtaposition, as well as certain formal and stylistic repetitions—seem to be intended to provoke an opposite approach to reading that would draw non-linear relations between different remarks. More precisely, while some remarks have more explicit recourse to previous ones than others, other remarks appear to implicitly anticipate a remark which comes after, and vice versa. In both cases, however, they compel the reader in each case to proceed backwards and forwards at the same time, to skip around and skim read, thereby inviting a non-linear—as opposed to sequential—reading. This relational way of reading manifests itself in numerous remarks through the repetition of emphatically-printed prepositions such as "*vor*," "*in*," and "*nach*." On the one hand, these small word-particles serve to intensify the moment of witty contrast, thereby accelerating the comic effect, as in the above-quoted remark, "Der Furchtsame erschrickt *vor* der Gefahr, der Feige *in* ihr, der Mutige *nach* ihr." On the other hand, their spatio-temporal connotation of linearity and succession seems to restage, albeit in a condensed manner, the serial logic of the text as a whole, which proceeds from one discrete remark to the next while also drawing attention to the similarities and interconnections between each of the respective parts.

This textual dynamic, which evokes meaningful relations between various contrast-formations, presents itself as well in a number of seemingly unrelated remarks that precede and follow one another. Thus in the case of one satirical remark on the deeds of "great men" [große Manner], the remark which immediately follows refers to "women" [Weiber] who "spielen auf der Bühne die Rolle der An- und Verstellung viel besser als die der Aufrichtigkeit; denn jene ist Rolle in der Rolle, diese nur Rolle" (SW II/3:130). What at first appears to be a mere gender cliché turns out, upon closer inspection, to reflect on the rhetorical conceptualization of the theatrical. Here the term "Verstellung" (illusion, dissimulation) makes an appearance, which is associated with rhetoric itself as the art of persuasion, and specifically with irony as the rhetorical technique of dissimulation. In the remark which immediately follows, however, the contextual horizon of the word "dissimulation" shifts from gender cliché to philosophical discourse, building a contrast not between "great men" and deceptive women, but between essence and appearance: "Doch oft scheinen sie sich uns vorher verstellt zu haben, bloß weil sie sich nur nachher zu schnell veränderten; ja meistens wird selber das Verstellen Verändern und Schein Sein" (SW II/3:130). In this passage, the conjunction "doch" establishes a syntactic connection between the two remarks, foregrounding the ambiguity between essence and appearance, "being" [Sein] and "semblance" [Schein]—the classical *topos* of philosophical discourse, which since Plato differentiates philosophy from rhetoric.

I want to argue that this transposition in the above remarks from the masculine to the feminine, from the philosophical to the rhetorical, is—in

spite of all appearances to the contrary—not coincidental. Rather, it concerns an associative dynamic between the various remarks which hovers precariously between a pure effect of reading and a logic inherent to the text itself. From this 'interstitial' perspective between text and context, between reading and writing, what at first appears to be a mere repetition of similar words and figures in different remarks reveals, upon a further reading, a dynamic of role-playing, whereby words disguise themselves in various "roles within roles" according to the contextual horizons of the particular remark in which they are embedded. The references to theater and rhetoric can be read in this context as poetological allusions to the epistemological ambiguity between the objective and the subjective, the illusory and concrete—distinctions which the text continually puts into question.

This relational dynamic manifests itself once more in the interplay between two particularly striking remarks that address in different ways the discourse of power-relations. While the first remark, cited above, presents an analogy between the disparate figures of Caesar, Socrates, and Friedrich the Great, the second remark parodies the royal courts with its satirical depiction of courtly "Schmeichler" (flatterers, courtiers), whose repetition forms a kind of *mise-en-abyme*: "Jeder Schmeichler hat wieder seinen Schmeichler; den Bandwurm halten wieder nadelförmige Würmchen besetzt" (SW II/3:130). Curiously, the second clause shifts from the *topos* of the royal court to natural-scientific discourse with the juxtaposition of the parasitic figures of the "ringworm" [Bandwurm] and the "little needle-shaped worms" [nadelförmige Würmchen]. In a reversal of the expected relation between parasite and parasitized, here it is the parasitic ringworm which is now the victim of even smaller parasites. At this point, the satirical analogy between courtly life and parasitic organisms—underscored by the repetition of the word "wieder" in the middle of both clauses—seems to break down, yielding no obvious *tertium comparationis*. At the same time, the pairing in the second clause of the ringworm and the little needle-shaped worms which "occupy" it hints at an oppositional metaphor between the bigger and the smaller, the singular and the infinite. Applied to the medium of text itself, the remark's semantics of containment thereby raises the possibility of a paronomastic meaning to the word "Band" in the composite word "Bandwurm," connoting not only "ring," but also "volume," as in the "little volumes" [Bändchen] which are said to comprise *Herbst-Blumine* itself.

The remark thus opens up a medial and material perspective onto the collected edition as a whole, which stages the dialectical tension between unification and dispersion according to a metaphor of parasitism and dependency. Within the constellation of the remarks, Jean Paul's ringworm can perhaps be read from this perspective as a kind of condensed poetological figure for his own miscellaneous way of writing, joining the Romantic bestiary of creaturely-corporeal figures of the small and "micrological" such as

Friedrich Schlegel's hedgehog [Igel]. As Schlegel famously writes of the hedgehog in the *Athenäums-Fragmente*: "Ein Fragment muß gleich einem kleinen Kunstwerke von der umgebenden Welt ganz abgesondert und in sich selbst vollendet sein wie ein Igel."[21] With its quills pointed outward to provoke and irritate the reader into infinite reflection on the fragment's illusive meaning, the hedgehog embodies the poetic ideal of fragmentary writing: while Schlegel emphasizes with it the unity of the fragment, describing it as "von der umgebenden Welt ganz abgesondert," it remains nonetheless fragmentary in the perspective which it opens up and in its opposition to other adjacent fragments. Its "unity" thus reflects Schlegel's view of the whole of things not as a totality, but rather as a universality of infinitely opposing stances.[22]

Yet where Jean Paul and Friedrich Schlegel may be said to part ways with respect to such a fragmentary poetics concerns precisely the formal condition of "dissociation" [Absonderung] and "internal perfection" [in sich selbst Vollendung], which Schlegel posits as the necessary conditions of infinite reflection. In order to achieve the effect of sublime brevity, that is, Schlegel's fragment or hedgehog must dissociate itself not only from the "surrounding world"—the external world of referentiality—but also from its own embeddedness within a given medial context, thereby uncoupling the symbolic from the materiality of print and writing. Thus while he and Schlegel both relate their respective forms of the small and fragmentary to similar heraldic emblems of obstinate, spiky creatures, Jean Paul's juxtaposition of the ringworm and the little needle-shaped worms, by contrast, does not constitute the image of a discrete monad; rather, it relates his miscellaneous way of writing to the ephemeral dynamic of associative relations, which in each case bring into view their dependence on medial and material conditions. Finally, in contrast to Schlegel's hedgehog, the spikes of Jean Paul's "little needle-formed worms" are pointed inward—toward the medium itself—rather than outward, toward the reader. Instead of taking the Romantic route of reflection, that is, they expose the gap between the infinite idea and the finite with respect to the contingency of writing at the material level.

The figure of the reader nonetheless looms prominently in "Meine Miszellen," manifesting itself in the concluding remark from the first section, which reflexively addresses the author and readers of the text itself. There Jean Paul parodically describes his remarks as "scattered thoughts" [zerstreute Gedanken], emphasizing the contingency of their content and principle of ordering. Furthermore, this dispersion of miscellaneous remarks corresponds in turn to an equally "scattered" technique of reading, which completely abandons the linear, sequential approach to reading narrative prose. The remark reads as follows:

> Wie unersättlich ist der Mensch, besonders der lesende! sogar zerstreute Gedanken lieset er wieder zerstreut und blättert und schauet in Sentenzen, anstatt

> sie von vorn anzufangen, zuerst ein wenig herum, wie jeder noch von diesen Miszellen her sich erinnern wird. Findet er seine sentenziöse Kürze und Abwechslung schon vor, wie er sie in keinem weitschweifenden Werke genoß: so will er diese gegen die Langeweile noch einmal abgekürzt und abgewechselt sehen, wirklich als ob die Leser Große wären, oder die Großen Leser. Ich weiß nicht, wie man diesem Lesen ein Ende machen soll. (SW II/3:133)

In this passage Jean Paul parodies the reader of serialized short texts, whose "insatiable" [unersättlich] appetite is matched only by his or her inability to read in a linear, sequential manner. Instead of reading from beginning to end, the reader of miscellanies—ostensibly well-versed in the art of skim reading, or the "Geschwindigkeitsregelung," to quote Minder—reads "distractedly" [zerstreut], skimming around from one passage or page to the next.[23] Similar to his remark from the introduction to *Dr. Katzenbergers Badereise*, in which he critically diagnoses the rise of "kleinen vermischten Werkchen" at the expense of "major" works, he establishes once more a sharp opposition between major and minor forms, between "these miscellanies" [diesen Miszellen] and the "rambling work" [weitschweifenden Werke] of literature, whose lack of "brevity" [Kürze] and "variation" [Abwechslung] yields only boredom and dissatisfaction.

Against the backdrop of his own literary corpus, Jean Paul's reference in this passage to the "rambling work" and its negative reception by the reading public reveals decidedly ironic undertones. For Jean Paul's reputation as an author of notoriously digressive, interminable novels was complimented only by the widespread impression of his manner of writing as excessively condensed and obscure. This is because—as Hans-Walter Schmidt-Hannisa has argued—Jean Paul's writing is grounded in a complex procedure of processing information through *excerpts*.[24] In contrast to the excerpting techniques of the baroque period, which aimed at the discovery of pre-existing information and its circulation, Jean Paul's procedure seeks to recombine and recontextualize information according to a combinatory method, within which "dem Zufall eine entscheidende Funktion einräumt."[25] If in the context of the hermeneutic reading culture around 1800 a "good" work of literature meant one that makes comprehensible to readers its own way of reading, then the striking indecipherability of Jean Paul's texts, which Hegel famously derided as the "barocke Zusammenstellungen von Gegenständen, welche zusammenhangslos auseinanderliegen und deren Beziehungen [. . .] sich kaum entziffern lassen,"[26] was perceived as nothing less than a provocation.

What Hegel's criticism of Jean Paul makes clear is not only the scandalous character of his method of text production, which incorporates an excess of scholarly references and collectanea in order to generate unexpected combinations, but also the profound continuity between his "rambling work" and miscellaneous writing. Far from being strictly opposed, both are in fact grounded in a witty-poetic combinatory which disperses every thought and

meaning, making a hermeneutic "fusion of horizons" impossible. Just as the impossibility of deciphering the relation between a single passage within one of Jean Paul's voluminous novels according to its total narrative context renders potentially every unit of narration into an incoherent fragment—into a form of *unform*—so too does the potentially endless intensification of brevity and variation in his miscellanies yield a no less rambling work, whose reading and writing—and reading in writing—could go on indefinitely.

Far from drawing a clear distinction, then, between the ostensibly author-centric "rambling work" and the reader-centric miscellany, with its clearly-defined attributes of brevity and variation, the comic inversion between author ("Große") and reader leads in the final remark to an abyssal "not-knowing"[27]—"Ich weiß nicht"—which, as an ironic expression of feigned doubt or ignorance, brings the first section of "Meine Miszellen" to an end, while at the same time paradoxically affirming its potential endlessness as a *form without a form*.

At this point, the question must now be raised as to what extent this reperspectivization between author and reader in "Meine Miszellen" reflects, in fact, a core poetological tenant of German Romanticism, which similarly seeks to invert the traditional hierarchy between author and reader, production and reception. Here it is worth quoting the well-known remark on authorship and reception from Novalis's *Blüthenstaub* (1798):

> Der wahre Leser muß der erweiterte Autor sein. Er ist die höhere Instanz, die die Sache von der niedern Instanz schon vorgearbeitet erhält. Das Gefühl, vermittelst dessen der Autor die Materialien seiner Schrift geschieden hat, scheidet beim Lesen wieder das Rohe und das Gebildete des Buchs – und wenn der Leser das Buch nach seiner Idee bearbeiten würde, so würde ein 2. Leser noch mehr läutern, und so wird dadurch daß die bearbeitete Masse immer wieder in frischtätige Gefäße kommt die Masse endlich wesentlicher Bestandteil – Glied des wirksamen Geistes.[28]

In this passage, a similar role reversal between author and reader takes place, albeit one which—in contrast to Jean Paul's remark—is not parodied, but presented as a positive poetological program. By abandoning the strict division between author and recipient, Novalis's poetics of the small breaks with the long aphoristic tradition that instrumentalized literature for the pedagogical purpose of conveying established truths. In contrast to this didactic tradition, Novalis—like Schlegel—conceives of the fragment as an epistemic medium whose brevity and obscurity yield new constellations of meaning. From this perspective, he exhorts the reader to become the "erweiterte Autor" and to situate themselves in relation to another's texts not as a passive recipient of information, but as an active participant in an infinite process of rewriting.

In accordance with Novalis's revolutionary program of reception aesthetics, Jean Paul likewise emphasizes the productive nature of reading, lik-

ening it elsewhere in his oeuvre to "ein Schaffen" (SW II/6:690). Yet what distinguishes his conception of the reader from Novalis's lies precisely in the latter's recourse to a transcendental logic, whereby the raw materiality of writing is perpetually filtered upward to become a "Glied des wirksamen Geistes." That is, by orienting the raw material in each case according to a new "idea" [Idee], the movement from one level of reflection to progressively higher levels of reflection leads Novalis's poetics—like Schlegel's hedgehog—away from the material and medial conditions of writing toward the *mise-en-abyme* of infinite reflection. For Jean Paul, by contrast, dispersion and proliferation aim not at the *incomprehensibility* of the symbolic, but rather at the *illegibility* of the material itself.

This opposition between the Romantic epistemology of infinite reflection and Jean Paul's own poetic epistemology of a materially-oriented poetic obscurity becomes all the more evident in a subsequent remark in "Meine Miszellen." This remark concerns a satirical reversal of perspectives between royal rulers and their subjects. It describes a scenario in which two oppositely-shaped mirrors are at play: one, a "Vergrößerungsspiegel" wheeled on stage by the rulers and pointed in the direction of the crowd, and the other, a "Verkleinerungsspiegel" held by the rulers themselves in order to view the crowd standing before them. The two mirrors are then pointed in the same direction, producing the unusual effect of a visual "Zwischenraum," within which both figures paradoxically appear "größer und kleiner" at the same time:

> Am Throne ist ein Vergrößerungsspiegel angebracht, worin der Menge fürstliche Mängel, fürstliche Tugenden, Freuden und Leiden größer erscheinen, als die Fürsten selber es finden können. Diese hingegen haben wieder einen Taschen-Verkleinerungsspiegel – oder ist es eine dunkle Kammer – worin sie die Zustände der Menge beobachten, also macht derselbe Zwischenraum größer und kleiner. (SW II/3:131)

In this passage, the first mirror is shown to have the effect of magnifying the "fürstliche Mängel, fürstliche Tugenden, Freuden und Leiden," while the second, pocket-sized mirror diminishes the size of the crowd for the rulers, at which point Jean Paul raises the possibility that the "Verkleinerungsspiegel" may in fact be a "dunkle Kammer"—a *camera obscura*. As an optical instrument which "für die Denker der Aufklärung eine Modellfunktion [gewinnt], an der sich Sehen, Wahrnehmen, Erkennen exemplifizieren lassen,"[29] the *camera obscura* served a crucial epistemic function in the late-eighteenth century as the "Konkurrenzmodell zum Spiegelkabinett,"[30] with its implications of vanity and caprice. Here, however, Jean Paul invites the possibility that two opposing optical instruments are simultaneously at play: one which (ideologically) distorts and minimizes the reflection, and another which seeks to furnish a purely objective image, free of any dependence on an observing

subject. The resulting perspective which the remark opens up onto the text is, in the final instance, one of impossibility, for it remains entirely unclear in the context of the remark whether the two mirrors reflect each other or face opposite directions, in what way a pocket mirror may act in the capacity of a *camera obscura*—which would constitute an entirely different optical metaphor—or even what the topographic status of the paradoxical "interstitial space" [Zwischenraum] is.

Far from yielding a meaningful figure of reflection, then, the optical scenario staged in this remark concludes in a moment of obscurity and grammatical illegibility, with the final clause ostensibly failing to specify any clear direct object. At the moment in which the *camera obscura* appears, the reader encounters only an aporia—a *dunkle Stelle*—in the middle of the sentence, which defaces and distorts the image of the *mise-en-abyme*—the hall of mirrors—into a formless "interstitial space" [Zwischenraum], within which objects paradoxically appear "bigger and smaller" [großer und kleiner] at the same time. Taken as an epistemic figure in its own right, this obscure interstitial space can perhaps be situated in opposition to Schlegel's metaphor of the mirror in connection with his theory of *progressive Universalpoesie*. In one of the most well-known fragments from the *Athenäums-Fragmente*, Schlegel likens Romantic poetry to an infinite reflection of mirrors, writing: "Und doch kann auch sie am meisten zwischen dem Dargestellten und dem Darstellenden, frei von allem realen und idealen Interesse auf den Flügeln der poetischen Reflexion in der Mitte schweben, diese Reflexion immer wieder potenzieren und wie in einer endlosen Reihe von Spiegeln vervielfachen."[31]

That Jean Paul did not entirely endorse Friedrich Schlegel's poetic program of an infinite reflexivity has already been suggested by other scholars.[32] Yet if Jean Paul's poetics of the small is to be assessed on its own terms, then the question as to what alternative epistemology his writing offers must now finally be addressed. Jean Paul's reference in the above remark to a paradoxical interstitial space, within which the dynamics of becoming bigger and becoming smaller simultaneously unfold, suggests a possible answer—one already raised earlier in this essay—to this question, namely his concept of humor. Against the Romantic project of an infinite approximation of the absolute, as in the Friedrich Schlegel's theory of irony, humor presents itself in the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* as an epistemology of double perspectivization between the big and the small, the infinite and the finite:

> er [Humor] hebt – ungleich dem gemeinen Spaßmacher mit seinen Seitenhieben – keine einzelne Narrheit heraus, sondern er erniedrigt das Große, aber – ungleich der Parodie – um ihm das Kleine, und erhöhet das Kleine, aber – ungleich der Ironie – um ihm das Große an sie die Seite zu setzen und so beide zu vernichten, weil vor der Unendlichkeit alles gleich ist und nichts. (SW I/5:125)

With its constant dialectical pivoting between the infinitely big and the infinitesimally small, humor sets into a motion a dynamic of "pure becoming

without measure,"[33] as Deleuze writes of Alice's paradoxical becoming bigger and smaller in the *Logic of Sense*. Just as Alice, according to Deleuze's reading, is said to "move[] in both directions"—the infinite and the infinitesimal—"at once,"[34] so too does the paradoxical perspective of humor—at once magnifying and minimizing, as it were—imply a completely different notion of space than that of the Romantic *mise-en-abyme*. In contrast to Schlegel's "endlosen Reihe von Spiegeln," that is, Jean Paul's humor does not progress upward from the finite to the infinite, but instead brings the finite and the infinite into infinitely obscure entanglements. Humor's emphasis on contrast and opposition between the epistemological and the material thus draws attention to the dependence of the "spirit" on the "letter," of the infinite idea on its corporeal-material existence, and in doing so exposes an unreflected shadow-side of Romantic irony, such that infinite reflection now culminates in a decidedly sensual-material moment: the "dark chamber" [dunkle Kammer] of the illegible, within which "alles gleich ist und nichts"—in other words, *miscellaneous*.

II. "Doubled Fractures," or the Materiality of the Letter

Jean Paul's miscellany does not exhaust itself in witty-combinatory remarks. As the second section of "Meine Miszellen," entitled "Nro. 2: Springbrief eines Nachtwandlers," shows, miscellany can also proliferate into longer narrative passages, in which oneiric visions as well as affect-laden sentimental narration likewise appear. While these heterogeneous literary forms correspond in each case to distinct methods of text production, they are no less "miscellaneous" than the witty remarks encountered in "Bemerkungen über den Menschen." In order to see how Jean Paul's miscellaneous way of writing plays out under these alternative narrative circumstances, it is worth turning briefly to the second section of "Meine Miszellen."

There Jean Paul inserts a fictional epistle, entitled "Spring-Brief" (SW II/3:135), which is said to have resulted from somnambulism. This short text is accompanied by a frame story which gives an account of the letter's unusual production. There the narrator already hints at the palimpsestic, serial character of the somnambular letter by revealing—in an intertextual allusion to Scheherzade's *One Thousand and One Nights*—that it has emerged not just from one dream, but "aus 1001 solchen brief-zeugenden Nächten" (SW II/3:134). The letter is presented as a kind of form experiment—a text brought "zur Probe" (SW II/3:134), as the narrator writes—whose syntactical "leaps" [Sprünge] and collage-like organization disclose its fragmentary origins:

> Hier folgt ein Springbrief zur Probe. Die auffallenden Sprünge darin hab' ich durch Absätze für die Augen vermittelt und angezeigt damit richt etwa ein unphilosophischer Leser aus den häufigen logischen Bindewörtern: "*daraus folgt aber – doch geb ich zu*" etc. gar auf logische Bindung schließe; denn ein

> philosophischer Kenner weiß ohne mich, daß er bei diesen logischen Stichwörtern und Stichblättern weiter nichts zu denken habe als nichts. (SW II/3:134)

Here the narrator, who—as so often in Jean Paul's works—situates himself more in the role of secondary reader and editor than author ("Hier wird den Deutschen das erste dasselbe vorgelegt, dessen Herausgeber noch dazu das Glück hat, daß er zugleich sein Verfasser ist" [SW II/3:133]), attempts to stitch together the miscellaneous material into a coherent, meaningful whole by retroactively inserting logical conjunctions and paragraph breaks into the gap-filled letter. At the same time, the frame story undermines this editorial procedure by hinting at the arbitrariness of the inserted logical conjunctions themselves: "denn ein philosophischer Kenner weiß ohne mich, daß er bei diesen logischen Stichwörtern und Stichblättern weiter nichts zu denken habe als nichts" (SW II/3:134). From this editorial perspective, such logical conjunctions turn out to serve not so much as hermeneutic "cues" [Stichwörter], as the narrator's ironic reference to "philosophical connoisseurs" [philosophische Kenner] suggests, but rather as corporeal-material "stitches" [Stiche], which on the one hand "bind" together the fragmentary material and on the other hand ironically expose the material interfaces of the wounded text-corpus.

Before examining this material dimension of the "Springbrief" further, it is worth turning briefly to the prefatory description of the letter's production, which the editor establishes in the frame story as follows: the authorial "I," situated in a pastoral setting of wide gardens and mountains, has sheets of paper lying before him and begins to write a letter. Suddenly, his verdant surroundings appear to him "mehr wie Schwarz und Nacht," and he "entschlief neben dem Briefpapier, ging ins Nachtwandeln über und fing dann auf dem Papiere das Schreiben an, das ich hier vorlege, aber an einen Korrespondenten, den ich eigentlich gar nicht kenne" (SW II/3:134). In this unconventional scene of writing, the letter's production is depicted as a process of writing ("das Schreiben") uncoupled from both a conscious sender and known recipient, thus making the epistemological condition of not-knowing central to its composition. Furthermore, the transition from wakefulness to dream state stages a cross-fading of literary genre conventions, shifting rapidly from the idyllic *topos* of the garden—associated in Jean Paul's writing with the contradictory mixture of complete pleasure and sorrowful constraint[35]—to the *terra incognita* of the (Dark) Romantic dreamscape. Here the description of the dream as a spontaneous unleashing of fantasy, in which the author "erschrickt selber über das ermattende Abflattern aller Kräfte im Traum, über das Umherschießen dieser Nordlichtsstrahlen nach allen Richtungen" (SW II/3:133), draws on the Romantic conception of the dream as a means of intensifying the poetic imagination through the deformation of reality. Like a creative deity, the somnambular writer can bring to life the phantasmagoric landscape of his imaginary dream world purely through the "natürliche Magie der Einbildungskraft."[36]

At the same time, this description serves the more specific purpose of linking the phantasmagoria of the dream world to the semantics of the miscellaneous: when the author later glances at the sheet of paper upon which he has written, he encounters "das ganze Nachtgarn wimmelnd von Fang aller Art [. . .] im selben Netz, Phalänen und Sternschnuppen und Nachtraubvögel, oder ohne Metapher, ein beschertes Christgeschenk von Miszellen oder Mischlingen aus allem anzutreffen" (SW II/3:133). This wild constellation of "miscellanies or hybrids" [Miszellen oder Mischlingen], as Jean Paul self-referentially remarks—consisting of fleeting nocturnal phenomena "of all kinds" [aller Art], such as "moths" [Phalänen], "shooting stars" [Sternschnuppen], and "night raptors" [Nachtraubvögel] – brings into view the "swarming" [wimmelnd] formlessness of the miscellaneous, which is characterized by its excess of potential and its hybrid dynamics of transformation and transition.

The dream may thus be said to present yet another mode of Jean Paul's technique of *inventio*, which in contrast to its function in the baroque rhetorical tradition is tasked with bringing forth new relations between objects and ideas. At the same time, his "Springbrief" can also be read as a parody of Romantic dream-poetics. In an ironic reversal of the latter, somnambular writing is now no longer intimately associated with genius and unlimited poetic potential, but raises instead the specter of (self-)plagiarism; for if the unconscious independently produces phantasmagoria and images that the poet can use as raw material for his own poetry, then the writer who has fallen asleep turns out to be nothing more than his own "Abschreiber und Verehrer" (SW II/3:133). The solipsistic circulation of writing which the "Springbrief" stages can thus be traced back in each case to the fragmented "I" of the writer—a circumstance already alluded to at the beginning of the section. Furthermore, this applies not only to the ethereal circulation of dream-material, but also—as a subsequent passage from the end of the frame story reveals—to the material circulation of print. There Jean Paul refers to the book market and printing press in connection with the production of his own miscellany:

> Sondern viele Menschen – das mein' ich – legen (denn ich rede von Buchschreibern) ihre Gedanken so wechselnd-umgekehrt durcheinander als gewöhnlich die Buchhändler die Bogenlagen derselben, wovon ich Beispiele gekauft. (SW II/3:133)

In a further intensification of the contingency and disorder of his miscellaneous method of text production, Jean Paul depicts here a fictional scenario in which not only the writer, but also the book dealer plays a role in the disordering and deformation of written material: while the writers of books "legen [. . .] ihre Gedanken wechselnd-umgekehrt durcheinander," the book dealers are said to order "die Bogenlagen der selben" in an equally contingent and disorderly manner. Furthermore, this production process is shown to be no less circular than the dream scenario, since in the end it is the authorial "I" who is said to buy his "examples" [Beispiele] from the book dealers. In

this way, he appears once again in the dual-role of producer and consumer of his own thoughts. Both the circularity of exchange—from "Gedanken" to "Bogenlagen" and back—and the subsequent intrusion of a 'foreign body' in its midst, excludes, in the final analysis, the possibility of grounding these (miscellaneous) thoughts in an original source or "Grund*lage*," and thereby of the hermeneutic "Aus*legung*" of their originally intended meaning.

Returning back to the passage discussed at the beginning of this section, it becomes clearer how Jean Paul adapts the Romantic semantics of the dream into a small form of the miscellaneous with respect to its (fictional) composition and authorship. In both cases, he foregrounds the solipsistic circularity of the written material, which links the dynamics of the ethereal dream-work to the materiality of the publication process. This recalls the earlier tension between the materiality of the letter, in the form of its palimpsestic illegibility, and the editorial transformation of the letter into a hermeneutically-decodable whole. That this editorial procedure nevertheless ironically exposes at the material level the contingency of writing, which it also seeks to veil, comes once again to the fore in the actual "Spring-Brief" inserted into the text. In addition to an abrupt shift in the semantics of the dream to one of sentimentality and affect, there one encounters a witty analogy between the typography of the letter, which is said to have been composed in *Fraktur*, and the textual body itself as wounded or literally *fractured*:

> Was Sie mir aber schreiben, ist mir ausgeschrieben aus der Brust, wenn Sie Schreibmeister und Wundärzte so unterscheiden, wie Sie tun. Wie wahr, Herr Ober-Zoll! Der Schreibmeister bindet an doppelte Fraktur, der Wundarzt an doppelte Frakturen; – ein wahrer arithmetischer Doppelbruch. (SW II/3:135)

Here the writer of the letter—addressing the Prussian state censor ("Herr Ober-Zoll"), who is posited as the letter's only ostensible reader—paronomastically compares the "writing master" [Schreibmeister] who "an doppelte Fraktur [bindet]" to the "wound surgeon" [Wundarzt] who does the same "an doppelte Frakturen." The broken typography of the "doppelte Fraktur" is thus 'compounded,' as it were, by a double break in the body of the text, which the writer-surgeon heals by 'binding' together the doubly-fragmented fragments, recalling in turn the above-cited passage that refers to "logische Bindewörter" as "Stichwörtern und Stichblättern."

This hyperbolic intensification of fragmentation, which fractures both the 'body' and the 'soul' of the text, brings Jean Paul's miscellaneous way of writing into connection once more with his concept of humor as the form of the inverted sublime. Crucial here are the various adumbrations that the word "binden" attains: it connects not only the (doubled) "double fracture" in the above passage to the deceptively syntactical "logische Bindewörter" in the "Springbrief," but also to the earlier remark from the first section of "Meine Miszellen," in which the figures of the "Bandwurm" and the "nadel-

förmige Wörmchen" appear. As in Jean Paul's concept of humor, this relation between the (etymologically related) words "Band" and "binden" is ultimately one of double perspectivization, which pivots between the unification (*Bandwurm*/*Bändchen*/*binden*) and the dispersion (*Wörmchen*/*Werkchen*, as well *Stiche*/*Nadel*) of written material. From this perspective, Jean Paul's "Bandwurm"—along with the "nadelförmige Würmchen" that occupy it—emerges as the poetological emblem of a circulating dynamic which, in the first step, paratactically "binds" the fragmentary parts together and, in the second step, breaks them down into even smaller pieces. This dynamic of double fragmentation is what Jean Paul consequently refers to in the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* as "humorous totality" [humoristische Totalität], which "individualisiert [. . .] bis ins Kleinste, und wieder die Teile des Individualisierten" (SW I/5:140). In contrast to Schlegel's conception of the fragment as a closed monad, which he conceives in dialectical opposition to the concepts of system and totality, Jean Paul's miscellany are characterized by a poetics of the doubled fracture, which—rather than conceiving of the fragmentary-miscellaneous as in itself complete—carries out a further reversal of perspective that brings into view the mediality and sensuous materiality of writing.

III. Collapsing Frames: Scene Change and Circularity

Jean Paul's division of "Meine Miszellen" into three sections does not derive from the conventions of contemporaneous miscellanies, which typically sprawled dozens of sections; instead, it belongs to a poetological calculation specific to his text. On the one hand, this tripartite division is the smallest form, combining both brevity and variation, while still establishing a pattern. On the other hand, it allows for the first and third sections—both of which similarly consist of collections of smaller units of text—to function as a symmetry axis that frames the "Springbrief eines Nachtwandlers" as the text's narrative center. If, as this minimal form principle suggests, a proximity between the first and third sections inheres in the text, then this framing device also bears witness to a broader tendency in Jean Paul's writing whereby beginning and end—as Gerhard Neumann has argued[37]—are staged as reciprocal feedback loops of one another: whereas the beginning always contains within it the seeds of its subversion, the end—frequently accompanied by sublime imagery as well as affect-laden, sentimental rhetoric—is theatricalized as the death of the authorial "I" itself. Finally, the fundamental feature of this theatricalization of the writing process, according to Neumann, is the precarious moment when beginning and end collide, which he refers to as the "*Traum*theater": it is the moment "vor der Öffnung des Traumvorhangs, als ein Innehalten auf dem schmalen Grat zwischen Anfang und Ende, in den Jean Paul alle sonstigen Grenzaugenblicke [. . .] hineinprojizierte."[38]

Against this backdrop, the third and final section of "Meine Miszellen," entitled "Nro. 3: Polymeter," warrants brief attention. As the commentary to "Meine Miszellen" indicates, the term "polymeter" refers to a condensed form of rhythmical prose or "free-metric verse," which Jean Paul first coined in the novel *Flegeljahre* (1804–05) and later experimented with in the "Auswahl verbesserten Werkchen" that he appended to his novel *Dr. Katzenbergers Badereise*.[39] Obeying neither the formal rules nor poetic strictures of rhyme scheme and verse, "polymeter" seems to present itself—alongside the remarks from the first section and the somnambular epistle from the second—as yet another equally "miscellaneous" genre. While their poetic condensation recalls in certain respects the witty-combinatorial character of the "Bemerkungen über den Menschen," the various entries collected in "Polymeter" are less epigrammatic than lyrical-sentimental, which more closely corresponds to the sublime sentimentality of the conclusion of the "Springbrief." If at first glance the frame structure of "Meine Miszellen" appears rather rigid and static, then, a cursory reading of "Polymeter" shows how, at the rhetorical-poetic level, these boundary lines are in fact quite open and porous. The transitions between each of the three parts of the text are theatricalized in the textual body as scene changes, which dynamize the transition from one section to the next and, in doing so, foreground their circulating movement.

Thus in the first entry of "Polymeter," entitled "An eine in der Sonne erblassende Rose" (SW II/3:142), the third section appears to immediately pick up where the sentimental rhetoric of the concluding paragraph of the frame story of "Springbrief eines Nachtwandlers" left off, in which the editor-narrator is said to be overcome with "Tränentropfen [. . .] weil mir im Traum vorgekommen war, der Mann, an den ich im Wachen schreiben wollen, sei vergangen, was leider später wahr genug geworden" (SW II/3:141). As the passage continues:

> Plötzlich riß mir waagrecht in die Laube eindringende Sonne das Augenlid empor, die Welt trat auf; – den, den ich für gestorben gehalten, sah ich traumtrunken als Sonne auf den roten Gebirgen in Westen stehen; und noch als die Sonne dahinter versunken war, sah ich sein Bild wie einen Heiligenschein auf den Bergen schweben, bis es sich allmählich in die weiten Rosenfelder des Abendrots verlor. (SW II/3:141–42)

Here, at the moment in the text in which one section breaks off and immediately transitions into the next section, the text draws the sections together, blurring their boundaries by flowing the language of the preceding section into the one which immediately follows; hence the first entry in "Polymeter" recapitulates both the figure of the sun and of the rose ("Bleiche Rose, die Sonne gab dir die Farbe, die glühende nimmt sie dir wieder" [SW II/3:142]) which appear in the final paragraph of the "Springbrief." The sun's transition from daylight to sunset gains poetological significance in this context as a

representational technique for staging the transitory character of the frame structure itself, which presents the transition between one section and the other as a dynamic process of cross-fading between "miscellaneous" forms, figures, and genre conventions—from dream-state to consciousness, from the idyllic to the sentimental-sublime, and even from life to death—whereby the figure of the dead man, whom the narrator dreams about in the above-cited passage, transforms or *deforms* into the sublime image of the glowing, sinking sun.

IV. Conclusion: The Major-Minor Work, or Jean Paul's *Leben Fibels*

Thus far it has been argued that Jean Paul's notoriously condensed, "miscellaneous" manner of writing concerns above all a conception of the small which, starting with the publication of *Dr. Katzenbergers Badereise* and later of *Herbst-Blumine*, he termed "Werkchen." By taking the example of "Meine Miszellen"—one of Jean Paul's "minor works" that addresses in manifold ways a poetics and semantics of the small, miscellaneous, and fragmentary—I have tried to show how his peculiar method of text production, which foregrounds the contingency of writing at the material level, gains central significance in relation to his concept of humor as the form of the inverted sublime within the discursive-historical context of Romanticism. In contrast to the fragmentary poetics of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, which, as I have argued, transcendentally uncouple the epistemological from the material, Jean Paul's humor, by contrast, seeks to continually bring the corporeality and materiality of writing into view, and in doing so opens up potentially new possibilities for the genre of the fragment during this period.

However, the question as to how this conception of the small, finite, and corporeal gains significance in the context of Jean Paul's voluminous novels has so far remained unaddressed. While this question cannot be exhaustively answered here, it is nonetheless worth noting, by way of a conclusion, that only a year after the release of the first volume of *Herbst-Blumine* Jean Paul published his third and final idyll, entitled *Leben Fibels, des Verfassers der Bienrodischen Fibel* (1811–13). In *Leben Fibels*, Jean Paul narrates the biography of a young bookmaker by the name of Gotthelf Fibel who is said to be the writer and inventor of the first ABC book and from whose name the German word for "primer," *Fibel*, ostensibly derives. Curiously, in the preface to that book, he ascribes to the work the term "Werkchen," despite the fact that it bears little resemblance to the kinds of "Werkchen" which he collected in *Herbst-Blumine* or appended to the end of each of the three installments of *Dr. Katzenberger*. The opening line of the preface reads as follows: "Kein Werk wurde von mir so oft [. . .] angefangen und unterbrochen als dieses Werkchen" (SW I/6:367). Here the term "Werkchen" appears to no longer refer exclusively to the genre of minor works first printed

in literary short formats, such as *Taschenkalender* and pocket books, as Jean Paul had originally conceived it, but now designates instead an alternative conception of "work" which is capable of incorporating the discontinuity and ephemerality of his short "minor works" into the poetological and narratological strictures of the novel itself.

At the same time, the significance of the term "Werkchen" in *Leben Fibels* is closely intertwined with the editorial fiction staged in the novel's frame story, in which Jean Paul situates himself—just as in "Meine Miszellen"—not so much in the role of author as that of editor and collector of previously existing material. Composed of chapters whose titles—such as "Leibchen-Muster," "Herings-Papiere," and "Kaffee-Düten"—refer to the fictional scraps of wastepaper upon which portions of Fibel's biography have been written, the novel presents itself as a contingent constellation of fragments, which the *bricoleur* "Jean Paul" is tasked with stitch together into a seamless whole, while at the same time rendering visible the gaps in the text. With this new conception of "Werkchen" in *Leben Fibels*, then, it is as if Jean Paul attempts—as Armin Schäfer has argued—"das Buch über die Grenzen des Buches hinauszutreiben, als ob seine Bücher Experimente mit der Diskursform Buch wären [. . .]. Als ob das Buch als Form nicht genügte und immer seine fertige Gestalt verfehle, wuchert Jean Pauls Schreiben über die Ränder der Bücher hinaus."[40] Left open and incomplete as fragments and remnants, "Trümmern von historischen Quellen" (SW I/6:375) which are loosely glued together, but ultimately cannot be brought together, this book about the writing of a book—and its impossibility—incorporates the poetics of the small and fragmentary developed in *Dr. Katzenberger* and *Herbst-Blumine* as a means of dismantling the "major work" from within. Here one can glean once more the contours of Jean Paul's concept of humor, which serves as the privileged form-theoretical technique in his texts—big and small, "major" and "minor"—for exposing the materiality of writing in its microscopically fragmentariness and miscellaneous dispersion.

[1] Kommerell 82.

[2] Johann Georg Gessler chose this motto for his "Satyrisch-moralisches Allerley voller anmuthigen Erzählungen und Gedichte" (Ulm/Leipzig 1762).

[3] For more on the literary tradition of *florilegia* in the early modern period, especially in relation to the miscellanies of the Renaissance, cf. Blair, esp. 126–31.

[4] Cf. Pethes, esp. 115–17.

[5] Piper 122.

[6] Krauß, "Epistemologies of Citation," 76.

[7] Cf. Schäfer, esp. 220–21.

[8] Schröder 697; cited in P. Neumann 152.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Minder 267; cited in Fleming 19.

[11] Cf. Kremer.

[12] The first section of *Meine Miszellen*, "Nro. 1: Bemerkungen über den Menschen," is taken largely without revision from Jean Paul's collection of aphorisms, entitled "Bemerkungen verschiedener Autoren," which was first published as part of his posthumous writings. Earlier drafts of the second and third sections of the text, "Nro. 2: Springbrief eines Nachtwandlers" and "Nro. 3: Polymeter," were likewise published independently prior to their inclusion in "Meine Miszellen"; a version of the latter, for instance, was first mentioned in the novel *Flegeljahre* (1804/05) and subsequently included as one of the "minor works" appended to *Dr. Katzenbergers Badereise*.

[13] For more on Jean Paul's use of citation, cf. Krauß, "Epistemologies of Citation." For more on the concept of general citationality and its relation to genre, see Derrida.

[14] For more on the concept of "small form," cf. Stadler.

[15] Friedrich Schlegel, KA I/2:114.

[16] Around 1800, the fragment was taken up in particular by philosophers of nature, as in F. W. J. Schelling's *Aphorismen zur Einleitung in die Naturphilosophie* (1806/1807), which despite its title conforms much more closely to the formal conditions of the fragment laid out by Schlegel than to those of the aphoristic tradition; in Henrich Steffen's *Grundzüge der philosophischen Naturwissenschaft*, which explicitly cites Schelling's fragmentary-aphoristic approach as its model; as well as in J. W. Ritter's *Fragmente aus dem Nachlass eines jungen Physikers* (1810). While these later fragmentary works still operate largely within the transcendental framework established by Schlegel and the Romantics, their primary orientation concerns not the critical epistemology of linguistic reflection, but rather the presentation of ideas of a philosophical system, which in its totality lies outside the field of representability. For more on the aphorism (as well as the fragment) as a philosophical form, cf. Krüger.

[17] Fleming 29.

[18] The comic relation between infinite idea and finite existence has, since Kommerell, come to characterize Jean Paul's concept of humor. Cf. Kommerell; see also Fleming.

[19] Cf. SW II/5, in particular 145–337. In addition to the inclusion of that text in "Meine Miszellen," Jean Paul also inserted parts of the original text as "Bemerkungen über den Menschen" in another one of his "Werkchen" entitled *Museum* (1814); cf. SW II/2:975–83.

[20] Cf. Jean Paul, SW I/5:159. For more on Jean Paul's concept of wit, cf. Menke, "Jean Pauls Witz."

[21] Friedrich Schlegel, KA I/2:197 §206.

[22] For more on this point, cf. Fetscher, esp. 566.

[23] Jean Paul's reference to "Zerstreuung" can also be understood in the context of the widespread diagnosis of "Lesesucht" around 1800, which—as Friedrich Kittler has argued—can be genealogically traced back to the formation of the science of hermeneutics during this period. Cf. Kittler, esp. 148f.

[24] Over the course of his life Jean Paul amassed roughly 12,000 pages and over 100,000 individual entries worth of excerpts. In a footnote from the *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, he ascribes to his method of excerpting a striking degree of contingency, in which "Ideen aus allen Wissenschaften ohne bestimmtes gerades Ziel—weder künstlerisches noch wissenschaftliches—sich nicht wie Gifte, sondern wie Karten mischten und folglich, ähnlich dem Lessingschen geistigen Würfeln, dem etwas eintrügen, der durch *Spiele* zu *gewinnen* wüßte" (SW I/5:202f). Here he refers to an anecdote from Moses Mendelssohn regarding the "Gewohnheit Lessings in seiner Laune die allerfremdesten Ideen zusammen zu paaren, um zu sehen, was für Geburten sie erzeugen würden" (F. H. Jacobi to Moses Mendelssohn on Aug. 1, 1784, in: F. H. Jacobi, "Über die Lehre des Spinoza"; cited in: SW I/5:1221). For more on the significance of Jean Paul's excerpting practice for his literary productivity, cf. Schmidt-Hannisa. See also Müller; Menke, "Ein-Fälle aus *Exzerpten*"; Krauß, "Jean Pauls literarische Kombinatorik."

[25] Schmidt-Hannisa 41.

[26] Hegel 382.

[27] For more on the literary and epistemological significance of the concept of "not-knowing" [Nichtwissen], cf. Bergermann and Strowick, esp. 13–15.

[28] Novalis 282 §125.

[29] Schuller 54.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Friedrich Schlegel, KA I/2, 182f §116.

[32] See, for instance, Paul Fleming's argument in *Pleasures of Abandonment*, in which he argues that, from the perspective of Jean Paul's poetics of humor, "Romanticism's program of being lifted up 'on the wings of poetic reflection' crashes back down to earth. [. . .] The sense of the infinite that such a plunge into the *abîmes de réflexion* is, at least in Jean Paul's view, a *mise en abyme*. Despite its long and storied career, such a philosophy of the genitive—'the poetry of poetry' or 'the irony of irony'—is for Jean Paul a failed project, because its movement toward an abstract, progressive infinite demands, in turn, the 'neglect of all reality' and, therefore, is the 'despiser of reality'" (Fleming 44).

[33] Deleuze 1.

[34] Ibid., 2.

[35] In the *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, Jean Paul paradoxically defines the genre of the modern idyll as the "epic representation of *complete happiness* in *limitation*" [*epische Darstellung des* Vollglücks *in der* Beschränkung] (SW I/5:258). For more on Jean Paul's theory of the idyll, see again Fleming, esp. 59–87, as well as Krauß, "Epistemologies of Citation."

[36] Thus reads the title of Jean Paul's poetological treatise on the imagination, which he appended to the novel *Leben des Quintus Fixlein*. Cf. SW I/4:195–205.

[37] Cf. G. Neumann.

[38] Ibid., 491.

[39] Cf. SW I/2:634–37, 671–72, as well as SW I/6:358–363, respectively.

[40] Schäfer 221.

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