Demonic History

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Published by Northwestern University Press

Wetters, Kirk.
Demonic History: From Goethe to the Present.
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NOTES

Introduction


2. Hans Blumenberg, Arbeit am Mythos (abbreviated AaM), 437; unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

3. On “onomasiology,” see Assmann, “Translating Gods: Religion as a Factor of Cultural (Un)Translatability.” Where semasiology “starts from the word and asks for the referent,” onomasiology “starts from the referent and asks for the word” (139).

4. See Brodsky, In the Place of Language, on the architecture of the referent in Goethe: “the form of the referent . . . [is] demarcation rather than signification . . . as neither given in nature nor by thought . . . but made . . . through . . . the forming of a place to which perception returns, on which imagination lingers” (xv).

5. Mephistopheles himself is not a conventional personification of evil. He famously claims to be “a part of the power that always wishes for ill and always makes good” (Faust, vv. 1335–36; HA 3:47). See Schmidt-Dengler, “Teuflisches bei Goethe,” which argues that after Klopstock’s Messias the German Spätaufklärung became unable to identify the devil. The increasing fuzziness of religious-metaphysical competencies allowed the devil to cede his position to the demonic. But this is not the end of demons. To the contrary, lacking a single personification of evil (Satan), evils become decentralized, depersonified, inexplicable. See also Muschg, “Goethes Glaube an das Dämonische” (336); and Anderegg, Transformationen: Über Himmlisches und Teuflisches in Goethes Faust (100, 170). Contrary to Goethe’s remarks to Eckermann, Anderegg establishes affinities between Mephisto and the demonic.

6. Muschg, “Goethes Glaube an das Dämonische,” says almost the same thing, with a broader and more drastic emphasis: “The concept of the demonic thus replaces the concept of God” (337, my translation).

7. The conception in question is that of Heraclitus’s fragment 119—ethos anthropos daimon—which is often understood to mean that a man’s character is his fate. See, for example, the discussion in Heidegger’s “Letter on ‘Humanism,’”
which argues that the fragment does not mean “Man’s Dämon is his individuality [Seine Eigenart ist dem Menschen sein Dämon]” (Wegmarken, 354)—but rather: “Der (geheuere) Aufenthalt ist dem Menschen das Offene für die Anwesenheit des Gottes (des Un-geheueren)” (356). The Heraclitus connections are also developed—at a degree of separation from Goethe—in Krell, Daimon Life; and Hadot, The Veil of Isis.

8. Unlike Nicholls, I see Goethe’s concept as decidedly post-classicist. See Szondi’s idea of “overcoming classicism,” developed in “Die Überwindung des Klassizismus” and Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie 1 and 2.

9. Matala de Mazza’s “Dämonologie: Anmerkungen zu Hans Blumenberg” outlines Blumenberg’s relation to Goethe. Her interpretation differs somewhat from mine, perhaps because for me the demonic represents a specific mode of self-reflection in Goethe, to which Blumenberg has a particular affinity. If, as Matala de Mazza puts it, “Goethes Daseinskonzept der philosophischen Haltung Blumenbergs widerstrebt[1]” (169), then the aspect of Goethe’s thought that Blumenberg resists is the titanic self-fashioning of the young Goethe. Thus Blumenberg (sympathetically) sees the demonic as a late attempt to come to terms with an earlier (failed) Daseinskonzept. My own reading of Blumenberg is elaborated in “Working Over Philosophy: Hans Blumenberg’s Reformulations of the Absolute.” Wellbery in The Specular Moment expresses the shortcomings and the strength of Blumenberg’s work in his characterization of it as “speculative fiction” (445).

10. Hofmann’s 2001 Goethes Theologie provides a further contrast. Hofmann weaves the history of theological perspectives on Goethe together with the theological possibilities presented by Goethe’s works. Hofmann represents the discipline of theology, and raises the important question of the degree to which Goethe can be adequately treated within traditional disciplinary boundaries.

11. The demonic in this understanding (addressed in chapter 3) is the sublime object of myth, religion, and metaphysics. The following sentence expresses the relation of the demonic and the mythic in Blumenberg: “Was er [Goethe] an Napoleon dämonisch nennen wird ... gehört der Kategorie des Mythischen an” (AaM 559). Goethe translates the mythic as the demonic—and Blumenberg translates it back.

12. For a detailed analysis of this figure of the “flight behind an image,” see Kreienbrock’s forthcoming “Bilderfluchten: Zur Goethezeption bei Hans Christoph Buch, Hans Blumenberg und Georg Simmel.”

13. In another passage, Blumenberg cites Goethe’s words to Eckermann from March 2, 1831, which state that the demonic manifests itself in events (Begebenheiten) that cannot be resolved by understanding or reason (Verstand und Vernunft). Blumenberg comments that this is “not an attempt at defining the demonic but a description of the resistance that characterizes it” (AaM 518–19).

14. This is something different than Paul de Man’s Resistance to Theory. Rather than subjects’ resistance to theoretical discourses, Blumenberg means the resistance produced by objects that cannot be fully theorized.

15. Hofmann, based on Blumenberg, reads the demonic as a figure of discontinuity in nature and history (Goethes Theologie, 355–74). Hofmann’s theological approach unsurprisingly emphasizes the demonic (not the daemonic), but he
underscores “the vast compass of this word, which serves . . . as an Ersatz-concept for the indeterminate divine beyond all preexisting models of theological interpretation” (362, my translation).

16. I realize that this aspect may be a problem for some readers, but I would respond that especially when it comes to Goethe, there is a need of scholarly work that does not latently or overtly grapple with problems of mimetic rivalry and ressentiment.

17. My approach generally accords with Mandelkow’s lengthy study, Goethe in Deutschland. Reception history “does not seek an empathic relation to past historical standpoints but to critically reflect these standpoints in the light of contemporary research-interests [gegenwärtiger Erkenntnisinteressen]” (1:13, my translation).

18. Conversations with colleagues in Bonn during my sabbatical year made me concretely aware of this: Lars Friedrich traced the demonic to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Stephan Kraft to Gottfried Benn. A less personal example of such connectivity is Jochen Schmidt, whose commentaries on Hölderlin’s “Der Rhein” invoke the Dämon stanza of Goethe’s “Urworte Orphisch” (Schmidt, Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens 1:405–6; Hölderlin, Sämtliche Werke und Briefe, 862). The lines in Hölderlin read: “Ein Räthsel ist Reinsprungenes. . . . Denn / Wie du anfiengst, wirst du bleiben, / So viel auch wirkt die Noth, / Und die Zucht, das meiste nemlich / Vermag die Geburt, / Und der Lichtstral, der / Dem Neugeborenen begegnet.” Given that Goethe’s poem was written more than a decade later and without any awareness of Hölderlin’s, the connection might be read as a sign of the infectiousness of the underlying idea (e.g., genius). The infection is thus traceable—but not isolable as long as it is traced under the heading of “the demonic.” The term’s indefiniteness allows for a kind of unregulated traffic, which does not mean that nothing is moving. To the contrary, it is a black market of underground transactions.

19. In a broader sense, the critical awareness of the demonic represents a critique of forms of social-characterological-political analysis that have been endemic to countless spheres of thought and action. The demonic in this sense is a limit-concept, a conception of the limits of the world—constantly changing due to globalization and technology—as well as of the limits of history and the human. The specificity of the word “demonic” characterizes the attempt to transcend or transgress such limits. “The demonic” names a field of possible transvaluations that are often simply referred to as “modern.” Calling modernity demonic is not automatically conservative or anti-modern, to the extent that it refers to the incessant dynamics of unforeseeability and unintended consequences: beyond the ne plus ultra, skillful navigation is all there is.

20. Together with Gide, I would mention Carlyle’s Sartor Resartus, a complex case meriting a separate treatment. The novel’s fictional translator-biographer renders the German word Dämon in English as “guiding genius” (109). This seems to support the reading of Dämon as daemon, except that this daemon belongs to a protagonist named Diogenes Teufelsdröckh (“devil’s shit” in Carlyle’s own translation, xiii). The “genius” is further specified as Eros, which, as Teufelsdröckh writes, “may be either true or false, either seraphic or demoniac, Inspiration or Insanity” (110), thereby implicating it in the ambiguity of the demonic. Teufelsdröckh’s beloved Blumine is, in the same chapter, interpreted
as a Lucifer figure—emphasizing the *lumine* in Blumine. She is a “Light-bringer” (111) and “Morning star” (113), who leaves Teufelsdröckh “falling, falling, towards the Abyss” (113). Additional traces of Goethe’s demonic are evident in Carlyle’s novel, in a persistent metaphorics of spectrality: 117 (“the Future is wholly a Stygian Darkness, spectre-bearing”), 130, 143 (“the Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres”), 151, 167 (“poor devil! Spectres are appointed to haunt him”), 196 (“Witchcraft, and all manner of Spectre-work, and Demonology, we have now named Madness”), 198 (“but a pale spectral illusion”), 201 (“the veriest Spectre-Hunt”), 223 (“an authentic Spectre”); see also the discussions of “Demon-Worship” in the chapter “The Dandiacal Body” (207–18).

23. Next to Tillich, I would also mention Wundt’s chapters on demons in his *Völkerpsychologie* (1906 and 1910), which represent an attempt to systematize the phenomena qualifiable as “demonic.”
24. Otto, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*, esp. 179–82. Otto relies on Goethe’s definition of the demonic as that which evades both “reason and understanding” (Verstand und Vernunft, 179) and clearly considers it a predecessor of his idea of the numinous (das Numinose, 180). The change of name reflects a clear shift in emphasis: Otto connects Goethe with “heathen” irreligiosity (182). Between Otto and Tillich, Volz’s 1924 *Das Dämonische in Jahwe* also develops a theological discourse on the demonic. Volz, whose essay appeared in the same series as Tillich’s (Mohr-Siebeck in Tübingen), refers to both Otto and Goethe (41). See also Nicholls (*Goethe’s Concept of the Daemonic*, 229–34) on Blumenberg’s reference to Otto’s das Numinose (AaM 559); both Nicholls and Blumenberg find that the substitution of “the numinous” for “the demonic” reflects a deliberate misunderstanding.
25. Muschg’s 1958 “Goethes Glaube an das Dämonische” posits Goethe’s “belief” in all kinds of demons. Muschg’s postwar anti-Gundolf position holds the line against classicization, harmonization, and idolization. The focus on Goethe’s biography, personality, and beliefs falls within a counter-tradition that tends to view the demonic as an aspect of Goethe’s supposed superstitiousness.
26. Agamben’s “Benjamin and the Demonic” discusses ancient traditions of daemonology (or demonology); Goethe comes up occasionally, but ancient sources are the main focus. Agamben speaks of an idealized “alter ego” that began to be conceived in the “fusion of the ancient pagan and Neoplatonic motif of the idios daimon of every man with the Jewish motif of the celestial image, demuth or zelem, in whose image each man is created” (145–46).
27. Scholarship on ancient demonology traces comparable semantic and orthographic borderlines: Rosen-Zvi’s *Demonic Desires*, a study of the rabbinic yetzer and “other demonic and semi-demonic entities” (9), deals with “demos” as the sources of evil. Padel, however, cited by Rosen-Zvi (7), writes of “daemons” in the context of fifth-century Greek antiquity. The conceptions developed by Padel are in turn compatible with post-Goethean ideas of the demonic: “Something ‘comes in’ from the outside . . . . Something already in the mind comes out” (Padel, *In and Out of the Mind*, 134). Daemons “had to be lived with, just as
we have to live with radioactivity, carcinogens in our food, and a thinning ozone layer” (138).

28. I use the “primal words” without capitalization when referring to the five words alone (and not to the poem); even more frequently, however, I will use the German Urworte or “Urworte” (to refer to the poem). Also, in the three publications of the poem during Goethe’s lifetime, it was punctuated differently: “Urworte. Orphisch.” (1820), “Urworte Orphisch.” (1820), and “Urworte. Orphisch.” (1828). I concentrate on the second 1820 publication, so I have followed its punctuation; the full German text, including Goethe’s commentary, and my own English translation are reproduced as an appendix.

29. Schmidt questions whether the “Urworte”—as a work—should be referred to in the singular or plural. He argues for reading them as a poem rather than as poems or a cycle of poems. Schmidt’s argument is based on the interdependence of the stanzas (Goethes Altersgedicht, 28)—but the top title, “Urworte,” is plural, and Goethe himself does not refer to this work as “a poem” but rather as “a series” of Urworte and as “stanzas” (Buck, Goethes “Urworte. Orphisch,” abbreviated UO, 72). To preserve the plurality and the integrity of this series, I refer to the “Urworte” and their corresponding “stanzas” in the plural. In contrast to Schmidt, see Sewell, The Orphic Voice (269–75): “Each of the Urworte . . . is a poem” (274).

30. See Swales, “Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, ‘Urworte. Orphisch’ ” (63). But Swales is hardly alone. Nicholls, though he largely avoids the question, indirectly follows Swales and many others in focusing on the Dämon-Tyche pair. The conflation of Dämon and das Dämonische is the norm—against Benjamin’s critique of Gundolf and despite Goethe’s indication (UO 72) that all five stanzas comprise a concept of the demonic.

31. The long-standing tradition of invoking unattributed snippets of the Dämon stanza as a part of panegyrics—nominally attributed to Goethe—on the power of fate and the lives of great men continues even in relatively recent publications. See, for example, Seibt’s Goethe und Napoleon, 244–45.

32. Another side example is Hans Pfitzner’s musical setting of the “Urworte” for vocal quartet, chorus, and orchestra, which was left incomplete after his death in 1949 (Schrott, Die Persönlichkeit Hans Pfitzners, 137–39). Pfitzner is a good reader of Goethe’s stanzas insofar as he understands them as a cycle, and his use of solo voices with chorus balances individualizing and collectivizing moments. But it is striking that one of the last works of such a notoriously conservative composer should be an “Urworte” setting.

33. To give a sense of how established the language of the demonic had become only a few decades later, I quote from Adorno and Horkheimer’s Dialektik der Aufklärung, a sentence that may echo Spengler or Benjamin—in addition to Otto or Freud: “Das von den Dämonen und ihren begrifflichen Abkömmlingen gründlich gereinigte Dasein nimmt in seiner blanken Natürlichkeit den numinosen Charakter an, den die Vorwelt den Dämonen zuschob” (Adorno, Gesammelte Schriften, 3:45).

34. The “demonic novel” is meant as a condensation of the connections between the demonic and the novel and not as a specific subgenre. Nor is it a “modern epic” in Franco Moretti’s sense. But, taking a cue from Moretti, the demonic novel may fit his characterization of Russian literature, in which “epic
and novel are intertwined with an intensity unknown to other European literature” (Modern Epic, 50). Extending Moretti’s theses, Doderer’s *Demons* may reflect Austria’s exceptional relation (comparable to nineteenth-century Russia) to the European historical norms of progress and enlightenment. For the same reason, another important case would be Melville’s *Moby-Dick*: the importance of Goethe’s idea of the demonic for the conception of the figure of Ahab is argued in Robert Milder’s “Nemo Contra Deum . . .: Melville and Goethe’s ‘Demonic.’” This essay contains striking formulations, the importance of which is amplified by the fact that Milder is not a Goethe scholar by trade: “the demonic occupied an anomalous position in both a theistic and an atheistic scheme of the universe” (225); “Goethe’s solution was as appalling as the problem it addressed, for it seemed to abandon the world to the rule of the demonic while positing a God who, if He existed at all, was so removed from human affairs and so morally and spiritually indeterminate that belief in Him was not far from practical atheism” (227). Milder notes that the demonic is a subjective projection, but does not go so far as to call it a superstition: “It gathers under one denomination and causal scheme various undeniable elements of human experience, but whether it exists as anything more than a projection is a moot point” (231–32); for Melville “it may have been the very ambiguousness of the demonic which proved most liberating” (232).

**Chapter One**

1. Compare UO 21–30; see also Staiger (*Goethe*, 3:96–99); Swales (“Johann Wolfgang von Goethe ‘Urworte. Orphisch,’” 59); Nicholls (*Goethe’s Concept of the Daemonic*, 230–40); and Schmidt (*Goethes Altersgedicht Urworte. Orphisch*, 8–11). Buck reproduces the three first publications of Goethe’s text, while Schmidt includes the facsimile of a manuscript in the hand of Goethe’s copyist (41–43). Buck also includes excerpts of diary entries’ correspondences pertaining to the “Urworte” (UO 67–76) as well as the writings of Hermann, Creuzer, and Zoëga (UO 76–86). To my knowledge, no one (including Buck) has systematically investigated these sources in the context of the “Urworte.” The reason for this neglect may be the complexity and—for Germanists—relative obscurity of the material. If I were to speculate on Goethe’s motives with respect to debates on the origins of antiquity, I would say that he wanted to maintain the unity and polar opposition of the Greek “classical” vs. the Israelite world (structured by polytheism vs. monotheism). Goethe disagrees with historical methods that mix traditions “by transsubstantiating everything with everything else” (UO 74). The “Urworte” seek to speculatively imagine a transcendental origin of antiquity—which may also run the risk of “confusing everything”—but I believe that Goethe’s intent was to produce a synthetic ideal of pre-antiquity from which everything else, including monotheism and polytheism, could be derived. This attempt pertains not only to the discourses up to Goethe’s time, which are complex enough, but to similarly motivated later works, such as Bachofen’s *Mutterrecht* and Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*.

2. In a letter to Sulpiz Boisserée from July 16, 1818, Goethe expresses the desire to “bring diffuse antiquity back to its quintessence” (UO 72).

3. Jochen Schmidt (*Goethes Altergedicht Urworte. Orphisch*) underscores the paradigmatic status of the primal words as general categories that encompass
all human life (10). However, the context of Goethe’s scientific writings suggests extensions beyond the primary anthropological valence.

4. See Willer, “Urworte: Zum Konzept und Verfahren der Etymologie”; Willer describes the German “Ur-” prefix as “an inherited transfer that creates both distance and continuity” (36, my translation); he also develops early nineteenth-century contexts—etymology and comparative mythology—into which Goethe’s “Urworte” intervened.

5. Blumenberg also emphasizes (AaM 165–91) that the time prior to the foundational texts of antiquity is much more vast than the times for which we have written records. What we perceive as a foundation and an origin can only have been the culmination of a lengthy process.

6. Compare Swales (“Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, ‘Urworte. Orphisch,’ ” 62–63); Schmidt (Goethes Altersgedicht Urworte. Orphisch, 16 and 32); Gundolf’s reading is addressed in chapter 3. Buck reads the relation as dialectical. It is, however, not a Hegelian dialectic. Rather than an immanent movement of opposition and reversal, the “Urworte” consistently reflect the intervention of an external force: the unity and uniqueness of Dämmon must conform to a more general Tyche; this opposition is catalyzed by the appearance of Eros, who unexpectedly promotes social integration (Ananke). The Eros-Ananke transition is arguably the most dialectical, except that its immanent movement, like that of the Dämmon-Tyche opposition, merely produces standstill. Eros and Elpis are winged beings who intervene from the outside and transcend a static opposition.

7. Buck reads the “Du” as the reflex of a lyric “Ich” (UO 33), but for me the “Urworte” are not essentially lyrical: the universality of the “you” apostrophizes each individual reader.

8. Georg Simmel’s 1913 Goethe declares that an “abyss” separates “the artistic boundedness and self-sufficiency of form” from “the infinity of becoming”; geprägte Form covers over a “problem” and a “question” of “how form can live and that which has been imprinted can develop” (81, my translation). Compare Simonis, Gestalttheorie von Goethe bis Benjamin, 69; and Krois, “Cassirer als Goethe-Interpret,” 304–6.

9. In Blumenberg’s attempt to define form as the source of “meaningfulness” (Bedeutsamkeit), he relates symmetry to circularity and recursiveness (Kreisschlüssigkeit) with reference to both visual-symbolic and temporal-narrative dimensions. In this context, he cites the line on geprägte Form (AaM 78). Development is thus conceived as an “imprinted form” of temporal Kreisschlüssigkeit.


12. Compare Nicholls (Goethe’s Concept of the Daemonic, 242–43); Swales (“Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, ‘Urworte. Orphisch,’ ” 70). Swales goes further than I would in attacking Goethe, while Nicholls goes further than I would in defending Goethe from Swales.
13. See book 4 of *Poetry and Truth*, which retells the story of the Tower of Babel; this collapse is offset by the “luck” (*Glück*) of a “patriarch” (*Stammvater*) who was able to “imprint his offspring with a decisive character” (*seinen Nachkommen einen entschiedenen Charakter aufzuprägen*), thereby giving rise to a nation with longevity (HA 9:130). This political theology reduces ancient history to natural selection.

14. I agree with Swales’s emphasis on gender in the “Urworte,” but her analyses are often not detailed enough to draw precise conclusions. For example, I question whether *Dämon* is “fundamentally male” (“Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, ‘Urworte. Orphisch,’” 69) or whether, defined as “individuality,” it might not apply to all genders.


16. See Bersier, “Sinnliche Übermacht—übersinnliche Gegenmacht,” which observes a hospitable and a demonic *Eros* in Goethe. Partly for biographical reasons, she argues for an increase in the latter in Goethe’s later literary works.

17. Naumann’s “Talking Symbols: Ernst Cassirer’s Repetition of Goethe” leaves no doubt that for Goethe (as well as for Cassirer) *Eros* is fundamentally a form of “self-reflection” (371) with profound epistemic consequences.

18. See Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*: “Eros and Ananke are the parents of human culture” (66, my translation).

19. Pierre Hadot, *N’oublie pas de vivre* also emphasizes that “le poésie ne représente pas un genre littéraire, pratiqué par un écrivain, mais une attitude, un exercice spirituel” (232). I became aware of Hadot’s chapter on Goethe’s “Urworte” only after I had completed my own. In order to highlight the overlaps and discrepancies between the two independent readings, I decided not to revise my text in light of Hadot’s.

20. Compare Schmidt, *Goethes Altersgedicht Urworte. Orphisch*, 26; I am perplexed by Schmidt’s assertion that *Elpis*, though dominated by “freedom and expanse,” is “ambivalent.” The mirage character of hope is well known, and in the end the interpretation depends on the degree of hopefulness of the individual reader, but even if *Elpis* implicitly lowers expectations (through the relation with *Ananke*), she remains a figure of clear-sightedness, above “clouds, fog and rain.”

**Chapter Two**

1. The Frankfurt edition suggests that it was written around 1798 (FA 1017) and gives it the title “Betrachtung zur Morphologie” (FA 1023).

2. For a detailed account of this synthetic method in relation to the philosophy of the period, see Förster, *Die 25 Jahre der Philosophie*: “Characteristic . . . of scientia intuitiva is that, unlike Hegel’s science, it does not start from the supreme idea but instead seeks . . . to ascend to it through knowledge” (364, my translation).

3. Goethe’s morphology is not included in the epistemic shift of Michel Foucault’s *The Order of Things*, but it could probably be understood within this narrative. However, morphology’s reliance on analogy and similarity may also fit in Foucault’s idea of the pre-classical *episteme*. And Foucault’s attempt to solve the problem of diachronic form or “structure” may be an example of morphological method. Compare Simonis, *Gestalttheorie von Goethe bis Benjamin* (67); and Pörksen, “Alles ist Blatt” (127). The emphasis of analogy over causation may
mystify or “literarize” science; see Pörksen, who argues that Goethe’s method was contrary to the sciences’ trend toward increasing abstraction (“Alles ist Blatt,” 129).


6. Förster’s “Goethe and the ‘Auge des Geistes’ ” reconstructs the philosophical underpinnings of Goethe’s generative-developmental morphology. He never mentions geprägte Form die lebend sich entwickelt, but he does paraphrase it in the context of Goethe’s “leaf”: “To really comprehend [the living plant] . . . I must know the law underlying its development, its typus or archetype, so that I can generate imaginatively a new plant from it” (95, emphasis mine).

7. See Simonis, Gestalttheorie von Goethe bis Benjamin (34–39). See also Eva Geulen’s recent “Urpflanze (und Goethes Hefte zur Morphologie),” which does not focus on “discrepancies” (Simonis 34, my translation), but argues that the Urpflanze-idea has been systematically overinvested: “Urpflanze is the name, the cipher, of the need . . . to suspend contradictions between abstract idea and concrete intuition” (Geulen, “Urpflanze,” 155).


9. The morphological essay “Fossiler Stier” (published 1822) shows that Goethe himself was not immune to this way of thinking. Citing Dr. Körte, Goethe compares the skull of a fossil steer with a modern domesticated one. On the basis of formal-aesthetic criteria, the latter is clearly favored (HA 13:198). The fusion of nature and culture favors Bildung, progress, and development. Goethe especially focuses on the horns, which are a weapon in nature, but useless and ornamental in the domesticated animal (HA 13:202–3).

10. In “Einwirkung der neueren Philosophie” (published 1820), Goethe reflects on Kant’s first critique. Here he not only conceives analysis and synthesis as natural forms, but assimilates them to the alternating rhythms of human understanding (HA 13:27).


12. In a longer text, “Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen,” first written and published after Goethe’s return from Italy, then revised and republished in Zur Morphologie in 1817 and again in 1832, further terminological layers may be uncovered. For example, “Verwandschaft” is correlated to metamorphosis (§53, §69, §71, §80, HA 13:80–88). The “rhythmic” model of systole and diastole is echoed in §50 (and repeatedly thereafter) in the idea of “expansion and contraction” (HA 13:79).

13. In the Pandora chapter of Goethe, Gundolf writes: “Symbol is to the individual what myth is to the collective: organic expression, involuntary self-externalization, the becoming image of inner life. Allegory is the conscious attempt to find the significant image for such a life (individual or collective)” (583, my translation).

14. My idea of analogia entis owes more to Heimito von Doderer than to Saint Thomas—but Doderer’s idea of it may have also owed something to morphology.
15. A further analogue of the Lucifer function is Goethe’s sonnet “Mächtiges Überraschen,” which conceives the genesis of a new world in the collision of “demonic” unities. See Campe, “Goethes Mächtiges Überraschen,” especially his reading of the reflected “flickering” (Blinken) of the stars (90).

16. The negation and transcendence of the (narcissistic) self-ness of the self may be a “Plotinian” moment. See Davidson’s introduction to Pierre Hadot, Plotinus, or The Simplicity of Vision (10–13). Goethe’s figure of pulsation, however, suggests a continuous and immanent—less mystical—version of this process.

17. In an alternate version of the end of book 8, Goethe does not allow his own ideas to flow as smoothly into general words of wisdom, but criticizes the “embarrassing efforts” (peinliche Bemühungen) of his youth (MA 16:986). One line, however, offers support for the connection of book 8 to the demonic in book 20: “Ich enthalte mich hier aller Bemerkungen darüber um so mehr, da ich späterhin werde bekennen müssen, wie ich durch mancherlei andere ähnliche Vorstellungen hindurch gegangen” (MA 16:986). Both the passage from book 8 and the passage on the demonic from book 20 were first drafted at the beginning of the 1810s: book 8 between winter 1811 and summer 1812 (HA 9:736), and the demonic in the spring of 1813 (HA 10:644).

18. Compare Breidbach, Goethes Metamorphosenlehre, 310.

Chapter Three

1. For a relatively recent assessment, see Mandelkow, Goethe in Deutschland 1 (267–80). Mandelkow links Gundolf, Chamberlain, and Simmel by way of their shared hostility toward modernity (and the corresponding desire for cultural renewal). Despite Gundolf’s shortcomings (276–78), Mandelkow notes his vast influence (276) as well as certain strengths in comparison to the scholarship of the time (278).

2. Gundolf’s spelling differs from the English transliteration, Ananke.

3. The connection to the grey sisters from the end of Faust is highly interesting, however, in that they—together with their brother, Death—are also five in number.

4. The unity of the “Urworte” could be demonstrated by the fact that the other allegorical figurations that Gundolf names could be read as subordinate moments of the “Urworte.” Death’s absence is undoubtedly significant, but the numerous figures of its transcendence may reveal it to be derived rather than “primal.” Gundolf’s invocation of karma in the same breath as entelechy gives a sense of just how open the demonic is to projections from various sources. Poetry and Truth’s vague reference to sources—“after the example of the ancients and others who thought of something similar” (HA 10:175–76)—gives license to free association.

5. Staiger’s Goethe equates the Orphic “Urworte” with “the complete depiction of Goethe that lies before the reader [in Staiger’s biography]. For everything which the poet and scholar ever thought about man is truly compressed here with maximum power into only a few lines” (3:99, my translation). This is still rather close to Gundolf. The “Urworte,” as I read them, neither represent the last word on the demonic nor are they a direct self-representation of Goethe’s “thought.”

6. Compare Schmitz, “Das Ganz-Andere: Goethe und das Ungeheure” (428). Schmitz also understands the sentence with the exclamation point as a list of Urworte, but he does not cite the line about Orphic “Urworte.” Schmitz treats the
demonic more systematically than and in less space than any other commentator; in the end he sees it as an Ahnung (435) of ideas that others were able to more clearly formalize. For me, on the other hand, Goethe’s strength lies precisely in his awareness of the limitations of concepts that act as if their objects were more knowable than they actually are.

7. See Blumenberg, “Nach dem Absolutismus der Wirklichkeit” (AaM, chapter 1), as well as my essay, “Working Over Philosophy.”

8. Gundolf’s analysis of the “Urworte” is brief, but the language of the Dämon stanza clearly informs his overall approach; “geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt” is a leitmotif in his introduction (Goethe, 1 and 5). On Gundolf and the George circle’s “tendency to read morphology ideologically,” see Annette Simonis (Gestalttheorie von Goethe bis Benjamin, 18, my translation).

9. In the first years of the twentieth century, as Geulen shows in “Nachlese: Simmels Goethebuch und Benjamins Wahlverwandtschaftenaufsatz,” Simmel proposed a morphological reading of Goethe’s life, the major assumptions of which are shared not only by Gundolf and Spengler. Morpho-biography arguably continued to dominate even in those, like Benjamin and Blumenberg, who disputed key elements of it.

10. For all of the sobriety and decided populism of Staiger’s introduction to the first volume of his 1952 Goethe, it still has much in common with Gundolf. Staiger sees a quasi-morphological progression in Goethe’s life (9), emphasizes the incompatibility of literature with scientific analysis (11), and monumentalizes and heroizes Goethe to establish contemporary relevance: “Wie bestehen wir heute vor ihm?” (1:11).

11. Goethe sees the significance of life in its productivity, which posterity perceives retrospectively (Eckermann, Gespräche mit Goethe, 650–60). Shakespeare (658) shows how all particulars of a work (Hamlet) may be subordinated to an overarching power that guarantees the coherence of the whole.

12. Cassirer is one of the few who situate the demonic through a retelling of the end of Poetry and Truth. His lecture at Yale, “Bemerkungen zum Faustfragment und zur Faustdichtung” (esp. 58–59), is not primarily about the demonic. Krois, “Urworte: Cassirer als Goethe-Interpret,” notes the intensity of Cassirer’s “Urworte” reception.

13. Goethe’s method of neutralizing the power of the world in the interest of his own Selbstbehauptung is a main topic of Blumenberg’s Arbeit am Mythos (esp. AaM 482).

14. Goethe’s famous “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” may be read as an illustration of this.

15. Ironically, in Poetry and Truth and the Italian Journey, being at home implies a predominance of foreign influences, whereas travel frees one from both self- and other-determination. Travel, conceived radically, leaves the compulsions of self and identity behind. The idea of Wiedergeburt (“renaissance”) in the Italian Journey does not have a precise analogue in the “Urworte.”

16. In the Gespräche mit Eckermann (March 11, 1828), the word “aperçu” is repeatedly connected to the demonic (653, 657, 658). “Aperçu” may be another word for Urwort, and “der Gedanke” is another potential synonym. See Hofmann, Goethes Theologie (285–329), in connection to Urworte and Jung-Stilling (296–98).
17. This is also an implication of Dostoyevsky’s *Demons*. Pyotr Stepanovich suffers when his expectations are dashed; Nikolai Stavrogin attempts to presuppose nothing at all so that nothing can challenge his system. Neither is a success. Even “insane” individuals make decisions based on “character” or some other disposition: Kirillov’s attempt at self-unification—to become God through suicide—fails to convince the other characters (and perhaps the reader) this is his real motive.

18. Book 16 of *Poetry and Truth* discusses the demonic in relation to animals; “natural phenomena that show [*deutet auf*] understanding, reason or even will [*Verstand, Vernunft, ja auch nur auf Willkür*] astonish and even horrify us” (HA 10:79; also 10:177). Humans understand “nature” as *Ananke* ("the realm of necessity"); this produces “horror” (*Entsetzen*) when animals appear to exhibit a rational will. The demonic emerges out of categorical confusion, but this cannot necessarily be solved by more rigorous distinctions, because categorical presuppositions (animals = nature = necessity) are what produce the problem in the first place.

**Chapter Four**

1. Doderer’s early diaries, the *Tägebucher 1920–1939*, will be abbreviated TB; all Doderer translations are my own.

2. See the recent study by Kleinlercher, *Zwischen Wahrheit und Dichtung: Antisemitismus und Nationalsozialismus bei Heimito von Doderer*.

3. Osmancevic, *Oswald Spengler und das Ende der Geschichte*, sees a new relevance of theories of decline in an era marked by the limitations of optimistic theories of “the end of history.”

4. In Doderer’s *Repertorium* (abbreviated R), a self-made dictionary of important ideas, in an entry dated 1963, entitled “Improvement [*Besserung*],” he writes: “One may feel bad about a vice that has abandoned one or a mistake that one is no longer capable of. One used to fight against it, and therein lay the tension. Now there’s nothing there. Emptiness, *Erfüllungs-Rückstoß*. A door is closed” (R 37).

5. This micro-narrative can be found in Doderer’s “Sieben Variationen über ein Thema von Johann Peter Hebel” (1926), “Die Bresche” (1924), and in his Siberian writings.

6. Quotations from Spengler’s *Decline of the West* are marked with the abbreviation UdA; translations are my own.

7. Janensch’s *Goethe und Nietzsche bei Spengler* sees Spengler’s cyclical conception as a reversion to understandings of pre-Christian antiquity, whereas teleology reflects the modern, Christian, eschatological, and linear ideas of history. Spengler and Nietzsche use cyclical history to oppose the modern conception. This may be true as far as it goes, but the problem becomes abstract if other contemporary theories (for example, Max Weber) are not a part of the implicit context.


9. A Spenglerian patterning may be visible in the structuralist anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss; see Kuhnle, “Ekelhafte Stadtansichten,” focusing on the idea of “entropy” (153–54). Spengler and Lévi-Strauss have similar styles of cultural symbolic analysis; *Tristes Tropiques*’s emblematic sunset may also be read
as a symbol of decline (Untergang). Goethe and Spengler—and morphology—thus inform the background metaphors of intellectual filiations extending from structuralism to cultural studies and beyond. More evidence of this can be found in Liu’s 1996 dissertation, “The Question Concerning Morphology: Language, Vision, History, 1918–1939,” which traces Goethe’s morphology through Spengler, Propp, Mauss, Levi-Strauss, and others. Liu claims: “As the first application of morphology to culture, and thus to some degree the inspiration of the various morphologies that succeeded it, Spengler’s text remains an incidental origin in the genealogy of formalist, structuralist, and poststructuralist thought” (16, footnote). (I thank Arnd Wedemeyer for calling my attention to Liu’s work.)

10. Spengler is not entirely vanquished: his ideas are still present in right-leaning political discourses. In the academic context, Adorno’s “Spengler nach dem Untergang” offers both critique and postwar recontextualization. When it comes to satirizing Spengler’s theoretical weaknesses, Robert Musil’s contribution is the last word: “Es gibt zitronengelbe Falter, es gibt zitronengelbe Chinesen; in gewissem Sinn kann man also sagen: Falter ist der mitteleuropäische geflügelte Zwergchinese. Falter wie Chinese sind bekannt als Sinnbilder der Wollust. Zum erstenmal wird hier der Gedanke gefaßt an die noch nie beachtete Übereinstimmung des großen Alters der Lepidopterenfauna und der chinesische Kultur. Daß der Falter Flügel hat und der Chinese keine, ist nur ein Oberflächenphänomen” (cited from Felken, “Nachwort” to Spengler’s UdA, 1261).


12. Despite similarities, Herder’s historicism is not identical with Spengler’s comparative morphology, above all because the former does not assume the substitutability of individuals within a morphologically stabilized universal history. Spengler operates with a fixed universal historical frame, whereas Herder emphasizes strict singularity. See Cassirer, Philosophie der Aufklärung, 309.


14. A passage of part 2 of Decline of the West expresses this idea with tragic-heroic pathos: “The last race [Rasse] to keep its form, the last living tradition, the last leader [Führer] go through the goal victorious” (UdA 1101; see also UdA 686).

15. See Strong, “Oswald Spengler: Ontologie, Kritik und Enttäuschung”; Strong connects Spengler with later critical thought, especially Foucault’s episteme (185–86). The insight into past epistemic moments for the sake of identifying and critiquing our own is close to Spengler’s idea of archaeology: “Archaeology itself is the expression of the feeling that history repeats itself” (UdA 4–5).

16. Spengler fits into all three of the “three conservatisms” presented at the end of Habermas’s “Modernity: An Unfinished Project” (53–54). This may be a problem in Habermas’s typology or a sign that Spengler, due to his theory’s internal contradictions, is archetypal for twentieth-century conservatism.

17. Spengler is a declared anti-classicist and anti-romantic. Renaissance, both as a name for an artistic period and as an idea, is also an object of scorn. In all of these cases, his objection is that imitation—as well as canonizing and classicizing gestures—is always inauthentic and belated in comparison to the original organicity of “culture.” The eighteenth-century morphological idea of Bildungstrieb, though it does not appear in Spengler, is also worth mentioning here. Degner’s Bilder im Wechsel der Töne addresses Bildungstrieb (171–79) in Hölderlin,
thereby producing an intensely anti-morphological conception. His poetics of Bildungstrieb skew perceived morphological continuity toward an aesthetics and literary practice opposed to single-outcome systems. What Degner terms a “Revision des Blicks” is the “recursive construction” (176) of alternate unrealized Bildungstrieb. Where the sentimental gaze remains fixated on a supposedly perfect past, Hölderlin pursues a strategy of deliberate pseudomorphosis.

18. Many readers implicitly pass judgment on Spengler and his moral character. These readings miss the “dramatic irony” and become victims of it. Spengler brought a tradition of negative portrayals down on himself, but vilification is counterproductive. For example, Jochen Schmidt, Die Geschichte des Geniegendankens (2:202–5), seems uncertain if Spengler is a cause or an effect of the historical dynamics he implicates himself in. Schmidt, citing the same passages as Hermann Heller’s 1930 essay, repeats Heller’s verdict. Schmidt thus appears antiquated in comparison with much earlier work such as Adorno’s “Spengler nach dem Untergang” (1938, English 1941, 1950, Prisen 1955) or Lübke’s 1980 “Historisch-politische Exaltationen: Spengler wiedergelesen.”


20. Spengler claims that cross-cultural borrowing occurs under the aegis of the epistemic prejudices of the target culture. Spengler views such appropriations negatively, as an impediment to the self-developing entelechy of discrete cultural monads; great cultures emerge in spite of pseudomorphosis (UdA 784).

21. Spengler at one point defines Urworte as axioms, deductive a prioris, which “give shape to experience rather than emerging from it” (UdA 483).

22. Another example of Spengler’s confusion of author and protagonist is a famous line from Tasso, which Spengler puts in Goethe’s mouth: “... Goethe gab es ein Gott, zu sagen, wie er leide” (UdA 382).

23. Spengler does not like the language of “problems,” which seems too activist and trivially academic to him: “As long as we have hope, we tend to call the arcanum a ‘problem’” (UdA 571).

24. The importance of Goethe’s “Urworte” for Spengler (and the contrast between Benjamin’s dialectical image and Spengler’s analogical “simultaneity” of epochs) have been noted in Ophälders’s “Dialektik eines Bildes des Abendlandes.”


26. According to Spengler, in modernity only law is retrograde, an un-Faustian holdover from earlier times (UdA 617–55).

27. In part 2 of Decline, Spengler says that the privileged recipient of “inner certainty” is “the true statesman” who is “history incarnate” (die Geschichte in Person) (UdA 1113); “there are moments [Augenblicke] in which an individual knows himself to be identical with fate and the center of the world [die Weltmitte] and experiences his personality almost as a cloak [Hülle] in which the history of the future is preparing to dress itself” (UdA 1115).

28. Twentieth-century classics on reason and causation in history might include works of Weber, Lukács, Schmitt, Heidegger, Benjamin, Adorno, and Adorno-Horkheimer and, after the war, Koselleck (Critique and Crisis), Blumenberg (Legitimacy of the Modern Age), and Habermas (Theory of Communicative Action).

29. Liu, “The Question Concerning Morphology,” is persuasive on this point, but he is perhaps too willing to overlook Spengler’s official thesis in order to
postulate post-poststructuralist undercurrents. Liu follows Badiou in questioning philosophy’s relation to the representation of infinity (116–21). The increasing general awareness of the idea of infinity, Liu argues, ushers in an era that Spengler’s *Decline* anticipated and helped to precipitate. Liu daringly goes against the endemic rejections of Spengler, but for me the messianic-epochal implications he develops remain too meta-historical. Liu’s findings could be productively contrasted with theories that insist on the idea of redemption vs. theories that suppose a political theological “covering” of sacred concepts with secular ones.

30. A parallel passage from part 2 shifts the emphasis away from the primal unity and toward a primal entanglement of exception and rule: “An animal is afraid of individual dangers, but early man trembled before the entire world. Everything within him remained dark and unresolved. The quotidian and the demonic are completely and lawlessly entangled [unentwirrbar und regellos verstrickt]” (UdA 894).

31. The “warp and weft” metaphor of the demonic is rewritten in Doderer’s “Sexualität und der totale Staat” in the relation of burning logs to the grid of a grating, which allows ash to fall through (Wiederkehr der Drachen, 286). The unburned logs represent primitive unity, whereas the ash is the alienation of modern thought after it has passed through a rational-conceptual grid.

32. See Schmitz, “Das Ganz-Andere: Goethe und das Ungeheuere,” which expands upon the idea of *sittliche Weltordnung* (427).

33. Faust imagines something like this at the end of his life (HA 3:344; vv. 11433–44) before Care (die Sorge) catches up to him; Blumenberg’s *Work on Myth* conceives the unity of primitive man as “the absolutism of reality,” which refers to a situation of pure terror and the absolute state of exception; the post-absolutist state of reality is a “work on myth” characterized by balanced (i.e., not unified) powers.

34. Compare Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*: “In modern Germany there were a great many Spenglers before the master-metahistorian had his day” (188).

Chapter Five

1. An exception is Axer’s forthcoming “Alldeutig, zweideutig, undeutig,” which focuses on Benjamin’s essay on Karl Kraus. Among older work, Agamben’s “Benjamin and the Demonic” stands out, but it often overlooks the connection to Goethe or takes it as self-evident. Agamben’s emphasis of messianic motifs over “demonic ambiguity,” however, and his implicit equation of the demonic and the Luciferian, for example, reflect unresolved misunderstandings and conceptual difficulties.

2. Citations of Benjamin refer to the Suhrkamp edition (abbreviated GS); translations are my own. Simonis’s *Gestalttheorie von Goethe bis Benjamin* includes an extended narration (323–27) of Benjamin’s engagement with Goethe. Lindner, “Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften,” makes an even stronger case, mentioning Benjamin’s 1931 plan, which he was never able to realize, to write a lengthy book on Goethe (480).


4. A letter to Max Horkheimer from 1940 (Gesammelte Briefe, 6:413–14) suggests a late rereading, focused on the later sections of Spengler’s book. Benjamin sees *The Decline of the West* as symptomatic for the development of Hitlerian
ideology. Benjamin’s criticism of the left’s confused response to part 1 and relative silence about part 2 may perhaps be readable as indirect self-criticism. Whether he knew Spengler’s work or not, Benjamin never refers to it by name in his published work. But Benjamin’s polemics against others—especially Gundolf—leave little doubt about his position toward Spengler.

5. The remark—“Was soll ich von ihm halten? Ein trivialer Sauhund”—is recorded by Werner Kraft (“Über Benjamin,” 66). The wide circulation of this anecdote has exaggerated its importance: Benjamin’s negative attitude toward Spengler is unsurprising, but the 1933 comment in itself adds nothing. The full anecdote, however, is more interesting: Kraft asked Benjamin what he thought of Spengler’s politics in the 1930s (his opposition to Hitler), but the response reflects a general indictment of Spengler’s philosophy. Kraft implies that, despite the harsh reaction, Benjamin may have once shared his contemporaries’ interest in Spengler. Kraft sees both Spengler and Benjamin as figures who are more interesting than their fate: “Gewiß war Spengler ein Verhängnis, und doch zeigt ein Photo in dem Almanach des Verlages Beck ‘Das Aquadukt’ [sic] (1963) das ergreifende Bild eines jugendlichen Philosophen, das auch Benjamin ergriffen hätte” (66). The volume in question, Der Aquädukt (1963), includes features on Egon Friedell, Franz Blei, Hilde Spiel, and Heimito von Doderer. Kraft’s odd claim that Benjamin would have been fascinated by the 1910 photo of Spengler may be rooted in Kraft’s desire to see a resemblance between the young Spengler and the young Benjamin.

6. See Wundt’s chapter, “Dämonenglaube und Dämonenkulte,” from his 1905 Völkerpsychologie: Mythus und Religion (457–576). Wundt’s approach to the demonic in 1905 reflects a degree of similarity with Goethe’s “Urworte” and Poetry and Truth—as well as with Gundolf’s Goethe. Wundt’s demons also exhibit “demonic ambiguity”: a demon may be an evil spirit or a “guardian demon” (Schutzdämon), a “duplication of the personality” (Verdoppelung der Persönlichkeit) or a “demonic embodiment of the human fate” (dämonische Verkörperung des menschlichen Schicksals) (457).

7. By the time of the publication of part 2 of Decline in 1923, Spengler had integrated Freud’s theory into his claims (UdA 693–96).

8. Scholem’s remarks pertain to the two versions of Benjamin’s essay (“Die Lehre vom Ähnlichen” and “Über das mimetische Vermögen”). In further sketches on this topic, dated from the mid-1930s, Benjamin wrote: “A further canon of similarity is the totem. The Jewish ban on image-making is probably connected to totemism” (GS 2.3:957).

9. Compare Sagnol, “Recht und Gerechtigkeit bei Walter Benjamin”: “In opposition to the claims of the whole tradition of the philosophy of law [Rechtsphilosophie], law [das Recht] [in Benjamin] does not represent an accomplishment of man, his emancipation from mythic forces [Gewalten] that formerly ruled humanity but is instead their ominous remainder [verhängnisvoller Überrest]” (60, my translation).


11. Thanks to Google, it is easy to discover that the line comes from chapter 7 of France’s 1894 Le Lys rouge. The same line from France is cited somewhat more fully in part 2 of The Decline of the West: “Jedes Recht ist von einem einzelnen
Stande im Namen der Allgemeinheit geschaffen worden. Anatole France hat einmal gesagt, ‘daß unser Recht in majestätischer Gleichheit dem Reichen wie dem Armen verbiete, Brot zu stehlen und an den Straßenecken zu betteln’” (UdA 630). The reference functions similarly in both authors’ critiques of the modern institution of law.

12. For both Benjamin and Blumenberg, myth is a polemic against a preceding age, but for the latter it expresses a distance from and a polytheistic fragmentation of a previous “absolutist” era in which humans were utterly at the mercy of unnamed horrors. Though not necessarily reflective of progress, myth at least represents a process of rationalization (in both senses) in which the mere appearance of controllability is decisive. For Benjamin, the blindness that comes with myth’s progressive sublimations magnifies the final costs. Blumenberg acknowledges that modernity may only raise the stakes without ever fully breaking from myth, but his idea of “work” pragmatically focuses on myth’s ongoing ability to mitigate the hostility of existence. Both Benjamin and Blumenberg oppose Christianity’s hybridization of myth and monotheism. Blumenberg calls it an “absolutism of transcendence” (AaM 158) that contradicts myth’s efforts to lower the stakes (by telling stories of how a tenuous livability came about).

13. The intense interest of recent science fiction with this problem reflects the way that it plays out under the conditions of modern technology. Especially the idea of “apophenia” developed in William Gibson’s *Pattern Recognition* explores the question of whether there is really a “conspiracy” (a demonic force behind unfolding events) or whether the chances that coincidences and patterns will be perceived and realized are only increasing through more extensive technological networking.

14. The English title of this work, *Origins of the German Mourning Play*, is cumbersome; thus I will follow the common convention of referring to it simply as the *Trauerspielbuch*.


16. Doderer’s “Sexualität und der totale Staat,” though perhaps not perfectly consistent on this point, is overall a clear case of the confusion of analogy and affinity. Doderer’s understanding of “analogey” may be that of Aquinas’s *analogia entis* inflicted by Spenglerian morphology; compare Kleinlercher’s conversation with Wolfgang Fleischer (Kleinlercher, *Zwischen Wahrheit und Dichtung*, 355).

17. Hamacher’s “Afformativ, Streik” describes the afformative as an “event of formation that does not give rise to any form” (*Ereignis der Formierung, das in keiner Form aufgeht*, 364). This contrasts with speech act theory’s idea of the “performative,” which is apparently conclusive, executive, and formulaic.

18. Haverkamp’s *Figura Cryptica* also emphasizes the Goethean *figura morphologica* encrypted in the dialectical image (52–53).

19. Simonis’s *Gestalttheorie von Goethe bis Benjamin* characterizes Benjamin’s version of morphology in terms of fragmentariness and dynamic openness with respect to the form-ideals of classicism, thereby deemphasizing the anti-classicist side of Goethe’s own conception of metamorphosis. A stereotyped classicism thus tends to overstate and mischaracterize the differences between Goethe and Benjamin: “Benjamin glaubt in Goethe somit einen exemplarischen Vertreter der Moderne zu erkennen” (330, emphasis mine).
20. Benjamin’s Goethean anti-Platonism is echoed in Blumenberg’s criticism of Rothacker’s appropriation of the idea of *geprägte Formen* in his *Philosophische Anthropologie*. Rothacker sees a historical conservation of forms in institutions, but Blumenberg argues that apparent continuity only covers troubling discontinuities: “Zeit schleift die Prägnanzen [the significances of inherited forms] nicht ab, sie holt aus ihnen heraus, ohne daß man hinzufügen dürfte: ‘was drin ist’” (AaM 79).

21. Simonis sees the Goethe essay as a work of “extraordinary significance . . . within Benjamin’s oeuvre” (*Gestalttheorie von Goethe bis Benjamin*, 330). Lindner (“Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften”) observes the essay’s meticulous organization (from which Benjamin eliminated all subsections and subtitles); according to Lindner, it represents “a maximum” in Benjamin’s theoretical stylistics (*ein Maximum seiner schriftstellerischen Darstellungskunst*, 473).

22. There is, as far as I can see, no compelling reason to strictly periodize Benjamin’s work. The 1931 essay on Karl Kraus, for example, is arguably comparable to the Goethe essay in its complexity and returns to some of the same topics (including the demonic). Axer’s “Alldeutig, zweideutig, undeutig” shows how the later essay reconfigures concerns that had occupied Benjamin since the 1910s.

23. The first paragraph concludes with an excursus on fate and character in relation to sign systems. I bracket it, however, because Benjamin introduces this topic primarily in order to exclude it. He concludes that “signifying relations can never be conceived causally.” This rules out all semiotics of physical signs as the effects of character or as predictors of fate. The semiotic question is “an equally closed and difficult relation,” but it is a “different problem.” The topic of the essay is thus not the *signification of fate and character* but the *relation of fate and character itself* (GS 2.1:172).

24. According to the economical formula of the *Trauerspielbuch*: “The tragic is to the demonic as the paradox is to ambiguity” (*Das Tragische verhält sich zum Dämonischen wie das Paradoxon zur Zweideutigkeit*, GS 1.1:288).

25. According to an early fragment: “Heidentum entsteht wenn die Sphäre des geniushaft Menschlichen, der Urphänomene der Kunst, Musikáes und *mechané* die symbolisch für das Dasein der Heiligkeit sind zur Sphäre der Geistigkeit selbst erhoben werden, zur dämonischen Gemeinschaft. / Das Heidentum steht in der Sphäre des Dämonischen und des Geniushaften” (GS 6:90). In striking contrast to assumptions of art’s loss of its communal function in modernity, Benjamin seems to suggest that the communal and cultural potentials of art are the result of false idolization and heathen religiosity.

26. The confusion of Benjamin’s reading with the one he attacks persists even in recent interpretations. In Martínez’s *Doppelte Welten*, Benjamin is made into “the most decisive example” of the mythic reading, which “posits a radical difference between our modern world and the one represented in *The Elective Affinities*” (37–38). For Benjamin, the ambiguities of Goethe’s novel are precisely those of “our modern world.” See Liska’s “Die Mortifikation der Kritik” for a comprehensive though certainly not exhaustive inventory of misreadings and deliberate distortions of Benjamin’s essay.

27. Leacock’s reading of Benjamin’s essay emphasizes the importance of the idea of decision. I also think of Dostoyevsky’s Stavrogin, who, according to the narrator, up to and including his last act, goes to great length to wordlessly show that he acts *consciously*. 
28. Peculiarly, perhaps tellingly, Lindner’s short list of the sources upon which Benjamin based his polemic against Gundolf does not include the “Urworte” (“Goethes Wahlerverwandtschaften,” 479–80).

29. Like Gundolf, Spengler tends to systematically exclude Elpis; see UdA 571.

Chapter Six

1. See Kierkegaard’s Either/Or (I): “Don Juan . . . is the expression for the demonic qualified as sensuous; Faust is the expression for the demonic qualified as the spiritual that the Christian spirit excludes” (90). In Goethe’s conversation with Eckermann on June 20, 1831, Mozart is cited as an example of demonic inspiration in opposition to the idea of Komposition: “How can one say that Mozart supposedly composed his Don Juan!” (Eckermann, Gespräche mit Goethe, 736). Goethe’s position here is evidently informed by his thinking on the conflict between Cuvier and Saint-Hilaire (HA 13:245–46; FA 838).

2. The characteristic male gendering of the demonic character is deeply rooted in the connection of (male) geniuses and figures like Don Giovanni representing productive and destructive male sexuality. Perhaps the demonic might be viewed as a parallel discourse to the more negatively connoted conception of hysteria. The young Lukács’s connection of the demonic with male heroes and narrators is apparently in line with this—but in other contexts Friedrich Hebbel’s Judith epitomized his idea of heroism.

3. The narratorless demonic novel remains absolutely current. Suarez’s 2006 action thriller, Daemon, and its sequel Freedom™, for example, grapple with the demonic in view of technology’s possibilities of fundamentally altering the systems by which individual destinies are produced. A computer program (a “daemon” or “bot”) is able to master chance and control the plot; old hierarchies of money and power are mediatized and repurposed into a rational meritocracy of individual self-realization; in Freedom™, the computer-daemon turns out to be a classical daemon capable of superseding positive law: “The entire concept of a daemon stems from the guardian spirits of Greek mythology—spirits who watched over mankind to keep them out of trouble” (82). (I thank Prof. Bettina Schlüter for making me aware of Suarez’s novels.)

4. Szondi has remarked that Lukács’s theory is “not thinkable” without Hegel’s philosophy of art (Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie, 1:309).


6. Resembling the subject-object opposition, the title of Lukács’s 1911 Die Seele und die Formen (The Soul and the Forms) also reconfigures Goethe’s Dämon-Tyche. The aesthetic strives toward “the mystical moment of union of inside and outside, soul and form” (Die Seele und die Formen, 17, my translation). This conception is compatible with Wundt’s Völkerpsychologie, which defines a Dämon as “a higher-order soul,” residing somewhere between individual psyche and collectively recognized divinity: “the meaning of the concept of the Dämon experiences two important shifts. The one leads . . . toward the idea of the soul; the other expands it limitlessly by extending it to include everything beyond the reach of human power. On the one hand the Dämon returns itself to the shape of the individual soul, on the other hand it raises itself to become a god” (458–59, my translation).
7. Lukács, *Theorie des Romans*, 137 (my translation); abbreviated TdR.

8. Broch writes in *Der Tod des Vergil* of an “overcoming of the demonic [Überwindung des Dämonischen]” (73). Whereas Lukács’s theory envisions a possibility of this-worldly transcendence, in Broch’s novel death is the horizon of its overcoming.

9. See Löwy, “Der junge Lukács und Dostojewski,” emphasizing the breadth of Lukács’s readings in the 1910s. This can also be seen in Lukács’s *Dostojewski Notizen und Entwürfe*. Hoeschen’s Das “Dostojewsky”-Projekt focuses on neo-Kantian aspects of Lukács’s thought and argues against overemphasizing Hegel; Simmel and Lebensphilosophie are also downplayed.

10. Cited from Nyiri’s preface to Lukács’s *Dostojewski Notizen und Entwürfe* (12).

11. See TdR 5–17; Spengler is also named in the 1962 introduction (10). The philosophy of history of Lukács’s 1916 theory in some ways resembles Spengler’s deterministic *Decline*: Lukács speaks confidently of “the present state of spirit” (*der gegenwärtige Stand des Geistes*, TdR 126), “the basis within the philosophy of history” (*geschichtsphilosophische Grundlage*, TdR 122), “the intuitive visionary of the philosophical-historical moment that will not return” (*der intuitive Visionär des nicht wiederkehrenden geschichtsphilosophischen Moments*, TdR 116); such formulations show that Lukács, like Spengler, believed in the “demonic” connection between artistic genius and the historical moment. This belief (or superstition) has since been the object of literary satires, such as Borges’s “Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote.” More recently and directly focusing on Lukács, Menasse’s *Selige Zeiten, brüchige Welt* tells of Leo Singer, who wants to rewrite Hegel’s philosophy of history backward in order to update it for the post-1968 world. In the process, Leo unwittingly follows in the footsteps of the young Lukács.

12. Lukács’s Heidelberg connections would have made him aware of Gundolf’s Goethe interpretation well before 1916. See Lukács, *Briefwechsel 1902–1917*, 325, 393; also Fehér’s “Das Bündnis von Georg Lukács und Béla Balázs bis zur ungarischen Revolution 1918”: “It is well known what a central importance Goethe’s unique theory of the symbol had for Lukács’s entire aesthetic development” (164, my translation).


14. On the turbulence of Lukács’s intellectual development, see Márkus’s “Die Seele und das Leben”; on the early aesthetic theories in particular, see Márkus’s “Lukács’ erste Ästhetik: Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Philosophie des jungen Lukács.” Márkus writes of “kaleidoscopic changes . . . combined with emphatic consistency of the basic problems and intents” (104, my translation).

15. Despite the fact that Adorno probably never read the *Heidelberg Aesthetics*, an affinity may be noted. See Hohendahl’s “Art Work in Modernity,” which finds that “Adorno’s theoretical endeavors can only be understood against the background of Lukács’s early work” (34).

16. Here Lukács’s aesthetics may seem to intersect with Blumenberg. Unlike Lukács, Blumenberg is comfortable with bracketing’s “negative” side effect of producing a plurality of semi-autonomous worlds.

17. Lukács, *Heidelberger Ästhetik*, 28 (my translation); abbreviated HÄs.
18. “Das Luciferische” only appears once in the *Heidelberg Aesthetics*, but it also appears in the *Theory of the Novel* and the Dostoyevsky notes. Mármus summarizes the conception: “The young Lukács interprets . . . art’s utopian function of creating a reality that would be adequate to man . . . as precisely its ‘Luciferism’: The work brings about harmony and fulfillment prior to (and without) the real redemption of man” (*Die Seele und das Leben*, 101, my translation). Mármus also writes: “According to [Lukács’s idea of “Luziferismus”], the perfected world of the work of art . . . can only represent . . . ‘an anticipation of perfection, harmony prior to and without redemption’ [ein ‘Vorschuss auf Vollkommenheit, Harmonie vor und ohne Erlösung’]” (209).

19. “Between Ahab and the whale there plays out a drama that could be called metaphysical in a vague sense of the word, the same struggle that is played out between the Sirens and Ulysses. Each of these pairs wants to be everything, wants to be the absolute world, which makes coexistence with the other absolute world impossible; and yet each one has no greater desire than this very coexistence, this encounter” (Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, 8). *The Book to Come* (esp. 97–104) implicitly builds on Lukács’s *Theory of the Novel* and Goethe’s (or Gundolf’s) idea of the demonic.

20. The idea of normative inversion, which I use here in an extended (perhaps stretched) sense, comes from Assmann’s *Moses der Ägypter*. The idea of an inversion may help to explain Fehér’s claim in “Am Scheideweg des romantischen Antikapitalismus”: “‘Luciferian’ does not mean a repudiated or purely negative state in the vagaries of human history” (291, my translation).

21. Here one can note the differences between Benjamin’s and Lukács’s conceptions. In the terms of Benjamin’s “Elective Affinities,” art could only be Luciferian if the interruption of das Ausdruckslose had never marked the borders of work and world.

22. On Lukács’s idealization of Greek antiquity as the unity of perfect historical realization of culture and society, see Mármus, “Die Seele und das Leben” (118).

23. See the *Heidelberg Aesthetics’s* opening discussion of the heterogeneity of art and culture (15). Modern cultural forms are dependent and reproductive, which, in comparison to art, makes them less interesting. But if art is Luciferian, then a high valuation of art is symptomatic of cultural problems.

24. Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* represents a conspicuous absence in Lukács’s 1916–18 aesthetics, but it is a work he was certainly familiar with. Compare Lukács, *Briefwechsel*, 2 and 230. The *Theory of the Novel* also never names Nietzsche, but he is an easily discerned opponent of its opening section. Nietzsche “psychologizes” the Greeks and conceives “the perfection of form in an idiosyncratic and solipsistic way as a function of inner devastation [als Funktion des inneren Zerstörtseins]” (*TdR* 23).


26. The idea of Glanz inverts a famous topos from *Faust II*: “in the colorful reflection [of the rainbow] we have life [im farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben]” (v. 4727; HA 149). This kind of reflection is not substantial enough for Lukács (HÅs 163), because colorful refractions are only broken light.
27. Especially in part 1, it is often uncertain which epics Lukács has in mind. Dante, Cervantes, and Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* (TdR 45) in any case make the list, while part 2 introduces limit cases such as Pontoppidan’s *Hans im Glück*, Flaubert’s *Education sentimentale*, Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*—and Dostoyevsky. Lukács never mentions Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*, but its “theoretical” approach and connections to Goethe makes it an obvious precursor to Lukács’s theory.

28. It is impossible to know to what degree Lukács may have had Goethe in mind in any given passage, but the following remark from the *Heidelberg Aesthetics* shows proficiency with Goethe’s terms: “Das Zufällige ist hier im Sinne des Goethischen ‘Tyche,’ der produktiv-machenden Gelegenheit zu verstehen” (HAs 205).


30. Lukács’s enthusiasm for Dostoyevsky may have been partly inspired by the mania surrounding the Piper edition of his works (edited by the conservative revolutionary Arthur Moeller van den Bruck). According to Garstka’s *Arthur Moeller van den Bruck*, German nationalists looked to Russia and Dostoyevsky for relief from Western-liberal ideas; they saw Russia as a land “of independent ‘soulful’ development” (der eigenständigen ‘seelischen’ Entwicklung), a “misinterpretation” that was “widespread among the German intelligentsia” of the first half of the twentieth century (18, my translation). Lukács’s Dostoyevsky notes in fact refer to the Piper edition. One might further speculate that in the 1910s and 1920s, Dostoyevsky was read not only as a figure of national identity, but in the light of nostalgia for an unreformed, “orthodox” Christianity—Christianity without a “Protestant ethic” or an iron cage.

31. Volz’s 1924 *Das Dämonische in Jahwe* argues (with Job in mind) that monotheism, in order to make its theodicy coherent, must assimilate demons into the concept of divinity. Gnosticism and dualisms, on the other hand, undo this separation.

32. I borrow this term from Benjamin’s *Trauerspielbuch*, in which it refers to baroque Christianity’s and the baroque theater’s tendency to overextend the difference between the desolation of the historical world and the perfection of salvation (GS 1.1:246).

33. This debate has been further reflected in two collections on the contemporary theoretical significance of the inheritances of Gnosticism: the first, from 1984, was edited by Taubes, *Religionstheorie und Politische Theologie*, Bd. 2:
Gnosis und Politik; and the second, from 1993, was edited by Sloterdijk and Macho, Weltrevolution der Seele: Ein Lese- und Arbeitsbuch der Gnosis. The main sources of the debate, from Eric Voegelin (214–15) to Blumenberg (228–34) and Odo Marquard (234–41), are excerpted in the later volume. The Taubes volume, in addition to an essay by the editor himself (9–15), again includes Marquard on the idea of a “gnostisches Rezidiv” (31–36) as well as a critique of this conception by Wolfgang Hübener (37–53). After Voegelin, the debate was reactivated by Blumenberg’s arguments against a Gnostic relapse in Die Legitimität der Neuzeit. Schmitt’s Politische Theologie II first brought Goethe (and der ungeheuere Spruch) into the equation, and Blumenberg devoted a chapter of Work on Myth to the refutation of this reading (“Lesarten des ‘Ungeheueren Spruchs,’” AaM 567–604). The recently published Schmitt-Blumenberg Briefwechsel also includes selections of relevant texts (35–86). In the letters themselves, see especially Blumenberg’s letter from August 7, 1975 (132–34). In the somewhat different context of “literary” Gnosticism, Bloom’s “Lying Against Time: Gnosis, Poetry, Criticism” is also pertinent.

Chapter Seven

1. This conclusion roughly follows Kai Luehrs’s “Fledermausflügel im Bücherkasten”; I am less convinced, however, that Lukács’s theory is as epigonal as Luehrs imagines.

2. Doderer, Die Dämonen, 10; abbreviated DD.

3. See the entry on “Dämonen” from Henner Löffler’s Doderer-ABC (94–104). Without claiming to have definitively identified every demon in the novel, Löffler offers helpful interpretive suggestions which generally equate the “demons” with the delusional “second realities” (zweite Wirklichkeiten) that plague the novel’s protagonists.

4. Compare Honold, “Bernhards Dämonen”; “Thomas Bernhard’s grandfather was his good demon” (19, my translation). My work supports the connection between the demonic and the process of literary creation, but looking at it through Doderer highlights the implicit patricide in Bernhard’s recourse to Dostoyevsky (his literary “grandfather”).

5. Hoffmann, Aus Gesprächen mit Thomas Bernhard, 22.

6. See Liska, “Die Mortifikation der Kritik,” who argues that the point of Benjamin’s Goethe essay is to wrench some “congealed transcendence” out of the novel’s “chaos of symbols”—a chaos which critics have often read as a sign of the work’s aesthetic perfection (581). It makes a difference, in other words, whether the unresolvable meanings of the “total novel” are valued positively (as a kind of surplus) or negatively (as a deficiency characteristic of the modern, secular world).

7. The earliest genesis of the novel certainly lies before 1930. My findings show this, as does Kleinlercher’s Zwischen Wahrheit und Dichtung (214–15).

8. The secondary literature on Doderer’s novel, for good reasons, foregrounds the connection to Dostoyevsky. See especially Chevrel’s “Die Dämonen: Doderer und der Fall Dostojewskij(s).” I do not deny Dostoyevsky’s central importance, but he may also function as a decoy with respect to other sources. According to Doderer: “Criticism has been unable to establish an intensive connection between me and Dostoyevsky” (cited from Chevrel 142, my translation; see also Kleinlercher, Zwischen Wahrheit und Dichtung, 215).
9. Wundt’s definitions are compatible with the absence of demons in Doderer’s novel. According to Wundt, a demon is any incorporeal spirit, including dream images and everything which, from the subjective perspective, appears to be beyond “the usual course of events [der gewöhnliche Verlauf des Geschehens]”; demons manifest themselves in “metamorphoses that resist every rule [jeder Regel widerstrebende Metamorphosen]”; they exist “everywhere where unusual things happen [überall, wo Ungewöhnliches geschieht]” (Völkerpsychologie, 458, my translation).

10. The page numbers refer to points in Lukács’s argument that support Doderer’s epic conception of (1) the worldliness of the novel, (2) the importance of narration (and the figure of the narrator), (3) the problems of authorial-narrative perspective (Gesinnung) and meaning (Sinn and Sinngebung) and (4) the inadmissibility of direct communication between author and reader (“congealed transcendence”). After 1930, whenever Doderer cites Lukács in his diaries, he refers to at least one of the two passages noted in 1930 (TB 680, 684, 727, 898, 918, 1032, 1128, 1171–72, 1175); this continues into the ’40s and ’50s (Tangenten, 15–17, 25, 340–41, 351, 412, 455, 796, 826; Commentarii I, 174, 259).

11. In 1925, Doderer describes Kafka’s The Trial as “one of the absolute best books of all of the ones I know” (TB 273). Of Rilke’s Malte, he writes: “I admit that I had read the ‘Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge’ once before, but it is very evident that I did . . . not recognize what a work it is. Most powerful power that has given itself all of the attributes of power! [Gewaltigste Kraft, die sich aller Attribute der Gewalt begeben hat!]” (TB 286). In the same entry, Doderer mentions Rilke’s “Stundenbuch,” which he read as a prisoner of war in Siberia: “It was almost as if an angel—diving down and soaring up again—had lifted me up and drawn me out of all of the misery. This what a poet can do [Solches vermag ein Dichter]” (TB 286).

12. This is to my knowledge the only mention of Moeller in Doderer’s writings. The mention of Moeller may add something to the existing accounts of the sources of Doderer’s nationalism and anti-Semitism. Doderer was certainly influenced by the “conservative revolution” or “Germanic ideology,” as Fritz Stern calls it in his The Politics of Cultural Despair. Stern claims: “No other modern writer save Nietzsche had as great an impact on German thought as Dostoyevsky, and the character of that impact was largely shaped by Moeller” (210).

13. See Kleinlercher, Zwischen Wahrheit und Dichtung, 214–15. In the 1940s, after the failure of Die Dämonen, Doderer’s Die Strudlhofstiege emerged from his attempts to deepen his characters’ earlier lives and their relation to their milieu. In the 1950s, after Die Strudlhofstiege was published to wide acclaim, Doderer revised Die Dämonen in ways that retained elements of the original conception while distancing himself from the political and anti-Semitic agenda that defined the novel in the 1930s.


15. Dostoyevsky, Die Dämonen (2008), 53.

16. Only two months before their final separation in November 1932, Gusti Hasterlik gave Doderer a copy of Dostoyevsky’s Die Dämonen (see Kleinlercher, Zwischen Wahrheit und Dichtung, 215).

17. Compare TdR 38. The improvement of Doderer’s Dostoyevsky reading can be seen in the entry of March 26, 1937. The figure of Schatoff is now
a representative of “the Russian ideology” (TB 984) and “what is monstrous about the whole thing [das Ungeheuerliche an der ganzen Sache] . . . is that Dostoevsky here opens up one of his greatest perspectives on the philosophy of history [eine seiner grössten geschichtsphilosophischen Perspektiven öffnet] . . . without allowing this transcendence to congeal on him [ohne dass ihm die Transcendenz gerinnt]” (TB 985).

18. See Kleinlercher, Zwischen Wahrheit und Dichtung, 209–89. Though Kleinlercher’s readings are perhaps not the last word in terms of literary nuance, she decisively shows how Doderer integrated an anti-Semitic program into the first version of Die Dämonen and how he came to distance himself from it in the published version.

19. See Sommer, “In die ‘Sackgasse’ und wieder hinaus.”

20. Kleinlercher reads the figure of Zienhammer in Doderer’s Der Grenzwald as a refusal of vilification. Doderer writes: “Zienhammer ist weitaus kein perfekter Schurke, wenn es so etwas überhaupt gibt” (Kleinlercher, Zwischen Wahrheit und Dichtung, 152).

21. See D. Weber’s “Welch ein gewaltiger Apperzipierer!” Zu einigen Goethe-Zitaten bei Heimito von Doderer.” Weber portrays Doderer as a “lax” reader of Goethe who “cites from memory or second hand [vom Hörensagen]” (173, my translation). This may be accurate, but as a general characterization it may be inaccurate. Even if Doderer was often lax, this does not mean he was always lax. Weber also observes that Doderer’s connection to Goethe was “extremely intensive” (höchst intensiv, 173).

22. Doderer, Die Wiederkehr der Drachen, 40; abbreviated WdD.

23. The German sentence reads: “Eine Beziehung, die durchaus im Innern zu entspringen schien, dennoch aber, seltsam genug, in manchen Augenblicken als ein Fremdes, Herantretendes erlebt ward” (WdD 42). This comes strikingly close to Goethe’s Eros commentary: “der Mensch scheint nur sich zu gehorchen, sein eigenes Wollen walten zu lassen, seinem Triebe zu fröhnen, und doch sind es Zufälligkeiten die sich unterschieben, Fremdartiges was ihn von seinem Wege ablenkt” (UO 15).

24. Doderer is not consistent about the precise point of onset of the “adult world.” The emphasis on language acquisition places it at the end of infancy—but he also often speaks of “childhood.” The reticence of the newborn corresponds with Hofrat Gürtzner-Gontard’s metaphor in Die Dämonen of the fetus covering its face: “The young human simply protests against entering into life on the conditions offered . . . [Der junge Mensch wehrt sich einfach dagegen, unter den dargebotenen Bedingungen, ins Leben einzutretet . . . ]” (DD 487; see also 498).

25. Stefan Zweig’s 1925 Der Kampf mit dem Dämon stands out among the numerous sources that could have inspired Doderer to connect the idea of the demonic to the “Typus” of the genius (11). Zweig’s book is exemplary in the genre of “spiritual biography” of “heroic” geniuses (12) that was fashionable among conservative revolutionaries and the George circle. Zweig, implicitly in dialogue with Gundolf, justifies his focus on Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche as an anti-classical and anti-bourgeois—“tragic”—contrast to the model of Goethe.

26. The “Ouvertüre” to Die Dämonen from the 1930s is retained with minimal changes in the 1956 published version.

28. Kleinlercher, *Zwischen Wahrheit und Dichtung*, also makes this point, with respect to the eventual collapse of Doderer’s *Demons* project in 1940: “the fictional depiction of a social division of Jews and non-Jews... was already largely realized in reality” (330, my translation).

29. Important recent work has been devoted to these central and simultaneously marginal figures; see Petutschlig, *Ist er die Mitte?*, and Siegel, “The ‘Dream Diary’: Heimito von Doderer’s Poetics of the Journal.”

30. The idea of genius in latency is coined in *Die Strudlhofstiege* (510, 689, 706, 725); in *Die Dämonen* it can be observed in the contrast between Leonhard (whose genius emerges from latency) and the “struggling” main characters (who may not be geniuses at all); see my “Konjunktivisches Erzählen in Heimito von Doderers *Die Dämonen*.”

31. Another alter ego of the author, René von Stangeler, also has a split name: “René” (short for Renato?) echoes the name of the minor character Renata, who, as Siegel (“The ‘Dream Diary’”) has emphasized, may be interpreted as a figure of “rebirth.”

32. On the complexities of Quapp’s development and the narration of it, see my “Konjunktivisches Erzählen in Heimito von Doderers *Die Dämonen*.”

33. Bastards especially need know-how in order to inherit. The contrast with an archetypal literary bastard, Edmund from Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, shows the difference between Quapp’s passivity and actively “knowing how to inherit.”

34. The beginning of *Die Dämonen* finds Geyrenhoff, many years after the events of the novel, living—apparently having outlived his wife and her money—in a painter’s atelier, which he had “more or less inherited” (*gewissermaßen beerbt*) from Schlaggenberg (DD 7). Schlaggenberg, a non-inheritor, is skilled at finding such quarters. The elapsed time between the novel’s main plot and the narration of the “Overture”—and the uncertainty as to what happened in between—mutes the novel’s happy endings.

35. For more on Quapp’s *tremat*, see my see my “Konjunktivisches Erzählen in Heimito von Doderers *Die Dämonen*.”

36. The *Dämon* as a traumatic inability to perform also appears in *Die Strudlhofstiege* in René’s speech on “psychology... as disinfected demonology” (689). The paradigm of the “seeking” protagonist (the “meaning” of whose life is supplied by the ironically reflecting figure of the narrator) fits precisely with Lukács’s conception. It is also worth noting, however, that Doderer’s most idealized figures (Kaps and Kakabsa) are no longer artists (or at least receive no recognition as such) and their development is not primarily defined by seeking, but by the development of a system for receiving and practicing internal inheritance. “Success” and a certain external recognition (as in Kakabsa’s case) or the relative lack thereof (as in Kaps’s case) is secondary in comparison to the narrator’s recognition of these figures, which is crucial.

37. A far-fetched but related example is Bamford’s *The Shadow Factory*, which chronicles the attempts of the National Security Agency to produce a total transcription of reality. Even given huge databases and a virtually limitless ability to collect and transcribe, the temporal factor may prove insurmountable even to a supercomputer devoted to “Total Information Awareness.”
39. The chronicler who tries to write simultaneously with events—without
the possibility of retrospective reductions—also parallels Pierre-Simon Laplace's
famous “demon.”

40. About two years later, on May 10, 1937, Doderer repeats the same point
without direct reference to Lukács: “The narrator in his ideality has no other
attitude [Gesinnung] than that of life where it really happens [als Leben, wo es
wirklich geschieht]. He is the advocatus vitae against all congealed transcendence
[geronnene Transcendenz]. . . . This means . . . that he never collects God in any
kind of a verifiable way or into any single point but rather tries to distribute Him
as such a fine emulsion through the entirety of all of the reported events [als eine
derart feine Emulsion durch das Ganze aller berichteten Begebenheiten], that the
writing hand itself . . . no longer knows what it is actually reporting about” (TB
980).

41. Because Doderer’s Die Strudlhofstiege contains the kinds of caesuras that
Benjamin finds in the Elective Affinities, it might be categorized as a traditional
(not demonic) novel. The Strudlhof steps themselves fulfill this function, espe-
cially if Melzer’s ascent (355, 895) is read in connection to what Benjamin calls
“astral metaphorics.” In The Demons “sick terrestrial stars” (kranke Erden-
ersterne) refer to the lights of the distant city and the astrological constellation of
the fates of “our group” in this environment (DD 20, 285, 328, 388, 1093, 1118,
1125, 1141, 1146, 1152, 1162, 1343); this contrasts with Die Strudlhofstiege,
in which the stars “rose, quietly twinkling, over his [Melzer’s] inner as well as
outer horizons . . . , an interpretable constellation [ein deutbares Sternbild] that
became a figure [die Figur annahm], connected from star to star by fine silvery
spider-threads [von Stern zu Stern durch feine silberne Spinnenfäden verbunden]”
(894–95).

42. I rely implicitly on Petutschnig’s Is er die Mitte?, which reads metaphors
of wood and prosthetics as figurations of the problem of zweite Wirklichkeit
(114–33). What emerges in light of the theory of the pure types is a conception
of reality as essentially prosthetic, even and especially in the “success stories.”
Language is the ultimate prosthesis that must be integrated and subordinated to
the free use of the individual, “a dead object which through exercise is intended
to be immediately integrated into the body” (122, my translation).

43. This is comparable to Benjamin’s criticism of the ambiguity of Goethe’s
concept of nature, which turns “the words of reason . . . [into] possessions of
nature” (GS 1.1:148).

44. This conception, if one accepts it as fundamental to Doderer’s thinking,
would have deep implications for his theories of apperception. In Der Fall Güters-
slob, the “first reality,” the first world, is the “distorted perspective” of the infant.
The spontaneous force of apperception stands in relation to an act of deep memory
that has nothing to do with the “objective” perception of a “real” world (whose
conventional forms are pervasive and coercive). However, this theory of pure
types contradicts the theory of second reality in Doderer’s 1948 “Sexualität und
der totale Staat,” which also begins with a typological opposition that supposes a
“true” “analogical” reality at the base of the “pseudological” second realities that
individuals (in modern societies) create as defense mechanisms. The difference of
argumentation between the two essays may reflect Doderer’s commitment to a
“realist” reading of his work (which became the most influential interpretation).
The reductions and misunderstandings that resulted from expectations of realism and their attribution to Doderer’s intents are delineated in Rudolf Helmstetter’s *Das Ornament der Grammatik* (esp. 116–19). Despite shifts and inconsistencies in Doderer’s self-theorization, “the pure types” were not simply replaced by “second reality.” As late as 1966, in “Meine neunzehn Lebensläufe,” Doderer presented an autobiographical version of the theory of pure types; he characterizes his “development” as “the very belated attempt to make up for the prenatal advantage [das sehr verspätete Nachholen jenes vorgeburtlichen Vorsprungs]” of geniuses (WdD 493).

45. The German word *Frechheit*, which is also important for Doderer’s next novel, *Die Merowinger*, is associated with demonic character; this is also the case in the Piper translation of Dostoyevsky’s *Demons*. The word has no perfect English equivalent; in German it is a more fixed attribute without the implications of behavior expressed in English words like “audaciousness,” “insolence,” or “impertinence.” Perhaps, following Benjamin’s “Fate and Character,” *Frechheit* may be seen as a morally neutral category because it does not pertain to freedom of action; it should also be noted, however, that *Frechheit* may have been a part of Doderer’s vocabulary of anti-Semitic stereotyping.

46. The difference between “taking” and “receiving” is a crucial one throughout Doderer’s works. It is characteristic of a certain (modern) psychology to want to “take” things that can only be “given” (*Dinge zu nehmen, die nur hinzugegeben werden können*). See, for example, *Die Strudlhofstiege*, 687.

47. Croix’s name also reflects his demonic character. Doderer’s “Grundlagen und Funktionen des Romans” points to a traditional connection between the “hybrid space” of the crossroads and the demonic (WdD 162). Geyrenhoff crosses paths with Croix (DD 840) at a moment when he is at an internal crossroads; the subsequent conversation is characterized as “a kind of central station” (*eine Art von Zentrale*, DD 844–45). In a June 5, 1959, diary entry, Doderer compares the demonic to a void at the base of life, like a plug pulled from a bathtub: “Das Dämonische—äußereste Intensität ohne Richtung, an Ort und Stelle kreisend—öffnet plötzlich ein Loch am Grunde unseres Lebens, als hätte man den Stöpsel einer Badewanne gezogen” (Commentarii I, 189).

48. On bad company and the demonic, Doderer wrote in his diary on March 2, 1962, that “all bad society has something demonic about it [Alle schlechte Gesellschaft hat etwas Dämonisches]”: “Wir unterliegen in schlechter Gesellschaft keinem messenden Anspruche mehr, dürfen uns aber noch immer für was besseres halten. Keine Gesellschaft zieht so an sich wie die schlechtesten” (Commentarii I, 322).

49. Doderer, *Repertorium*, 45; abbreviated R.

**Conclusion**

1. A comparison of Goethe’s “Urworte” and Shakespeare’s “The Seven Ages of Man” is illuminating: in Shakespeare, the universal moment is expressed mostly in the beginning (“all the world’s a stage”) and at the end (“mere oblivion,” “sans everything”), whereas the intervening development is presented in historically and culturally specific images. Goethe, on the other hand, formulates his “ages” for maximum applicability.

3. A major force behind this shift was certainly Kierkegaard. See his *The Concept of Irony* (part 1, chapter 2.1), which introduces the demonic through Socrates: “the daimon is a qualification of subjectivity . . . But subjectivity is not consummated in it; it still has something external” (165). As in Goethe’s conception, in Kierkegaard it may be possible to find multiple conceptions of the demonic. For example, *The Concept of Anxiety* introduces the demonic under the heading of “Anxiety About the Good” (118). See Jaspers’s summary of Kierkegaard’s conception in *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (428–32). A telling difference with Goethe emerges in Jaspers’s conception of das Dämonische as der Dämonische: “Der Dämonische existiert” (The demonic [person] exists, 429). Goebel’s *Charis und Charisma* (79–94) also reflects a strong divergence between Goethe and Kierkegaard. The words “theological” and “psychological” may best capture the difference of emphasis. According to Goebel, Kierkegaard’s theological decisionism attempts a systematic definition of what Goethe calls “demonic character” (87). Goethe’s *Poetry and Truth*, though psychological in some aspects, is anti-theological insofar as it views the “private” theologies and psychologies of individuals as reactions to the uncontrollable contingency of a more impersonal-objective conception of the demonic as a force. Kierkegaard inverts this, turning the demonic into a pretext for its opposite, the leap of faith. Goebel argues that this famous leap is unable to be permanently stabilized, implying a reversion to Goethe’s conception (94).

4. Doderer’s de-substantialized and demystified approach sets his novel apart from Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*. Doderer read Mann’s novel at the end of the 1940s after the initial failure of his *Demons* project. Mann remains more obviously seduced by the idea of genius and its connection to a specifically German *Geistesgeschichte*, whereas Doderer’s idea of “genius in latency” focuses less on the exceptional or demonic quality of geniuses than on the insurmountable obstacles to their development.
