Tropes of Transport

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Introduction

Hegel is not a very agreeable philosopher—that much can probably be agreed upon. From Schelling and Kierkegaard to Derrida, his name has come to stand for the imperialism of an all-appropriating spirit, cold magisterialism, and Prussian state control. Yet, his work does not always agree with this reception. Some of the more interesting recent readers of Hegel today find in his philosophy a transformative thought in progress, a restless openness to contingency, and an ecstatic vulnerability.¹ The incompatibility of these two strands of Hegel’s reception goes to prove that what we refer to with the one name “Hegel” still moves.

It is widely accepted that Hegel introduced philosophy to a dynamic notion of truth. *Tropes of Transport: Hegel and Emotion* locates the tropes that render truth dynamic in the emotional register. Focusing primarily on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, I read his work—using the tools of literary and rhetorical analysis—in dialogue with literary texts contemporary to Hegel or to us.² The latter constellation serves to explore how Hegel resonates with some of our concerns today. In my reading, I trace how emotionality (dis)organizes the logical, quasi-existential, and narrative unfolding of Hegel’s text. Emotions transport consciousness, the protagonist of the *Phenomenology*, across its various stages of self-reflection, and draw the reader into that process of self-reflection. I call this (dis)organizing force the “emotional syntax” of Hegel’s text. Through a thorough analysis of the emotional syntax of Hegel’s philosophy, *Tropes of Transport* contributes both to the recently begun reevaluation of Hegel’s philosophy, and to the burgeoning interdisciplinary studies of affect and emotion.

Emotionality clearly forms a primary, albeit much neglected concern in the explication of Hegelian philosophy. With its account of emotional temporality, *Tropes of Transport* elucidates the cross-vectored temporality of Hegel’s text. It describes Hegel’s speculative logic as a logic of sympathy that undoes the dichotomy of rationality and emotionality by drawing on emotion to propel self-reflection and on self-distance to thicken the experience of emotion.

Intervening in the multidisciplinary study of affect and emotion, *Tropes of Transport* illustrates that a fresh analysis of Hegel’s philosophy offers an important resource for a cutting-edge theory of emotionality.³
In particular, it explores how Hegel’s thought and textual practice of mediation, plural subjectivity, impersonal subjectivity, and sympathy advances such a theory.

Mediation

If the form is said to be in parity with the essence, then it is for that very reason a bald misunderstanding to suppose that cognition can be content with . . . the essence, but can do without the form.

—Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 19

If it is usually assumed that the force of intensities and the sincerity of emotions depend on their immediacy, I explore to what extent mediation—and therefore a certain degree of fabrication and manipulation—is constitutive of emotionality. Hegel serves as a particularly helpful interlocutor for such an exploration not only because he offers a sophisticated analysis of mediation, but also because the notion that feelings are immediate and therefore non-reflective dates from the Enlightenment era, and Hegel, as this book shows, is one of its earliest critics.

The idea of mediation plays such an important role in the long and complex history of the Marxist reception of Hegel that it might be confusing to encounter the term here, in the context of a discussion of transports. Indeed, I am not concerned with the concrete forms of mediation—between man and nature or between classes—that Marxist theorists have foregrounded. Capital, the media, or labor are not my primary interests here (although my irritation at the fact that the discipline of philosophy is interested in the emotions only when they labor in the service of epistemology or morality, and the fact that this emotional labor is unevenly divided across gender lines, was an important motivation for this work). Instead, I draw on the structural notion of mediation in Hegel, according to which the immediate appears as simple, straightforward, and unrelated to other things, whereas the mediated is complex, indirect, related to other things, and resultant. Hegelian thought shows that every certainty that seems immediately evident and fresh to a particular consciousness proves, from a different perspective, indeed socially and historically mediated. Hegel relentlessly criticizes the idea that we have immediate access to the truth, or rather that there is such a thing as a simple truth independent of our practices of reflection.
I apply to the context of feeling this wide meaning of mediation that we know mainly from the epistemological context in Hegel. Modern philosophical, literary, and everyday discourses of emotion are highly charged with anxiety about the authenticity of feelings and the sincerity of their expression. But if, as I argue, emotions are—in the most pared-down description—modes of relationality, they cannot be simple, pure, whole, consistent, and “at one with themselves.” Thus, emotionality is inherently ambivalent, contaminated, disrupted, confused, and incongruous with itself—or, in one word, inauthentic—and we necessarily have a hard time experiencing emotions fully and expressing them sincerely. Both pleasurable and painful at the same time, they never quite fit the categories elaborated by centuries of classificatory impulse (they shift between love and hate, fear and desire, grief and relief—to name but a few of the more obvious examples of emotional ambiguity). In addition, they are split between the singular and the common: an emotion feels both urgent in that it concerns me in my singularity, and banal in its commonality. The experience of grief, joy, and so on is possible to the extent that I share it with another (this other could be myself), which means that I never “fully” experience these transports (even if the other I share them with is myself). For all these reasons, we need to attend to the double modality of emotionality: that, on the one hand, emotions are real and, on the other hand, they are manipulations, performances, or cultivations of the real. Hegel’s structural notion of mediation helps us to get into view both the mediatedness and the immediacy of emotion.

This has several implications—epistemic, critical, and ethical. The fact that emotionality is inherently ambivalent, confused, and incongruous does not mean that it is irrational. Conversely, we will observe in Hegel that attention to the forms of reflection and self-reflection inherent in emotionality changes the rules of rationality. The idea that feelings should be purely immediate leads to more or less willful denials of mediation, which in turn make it only easier for external manipulations to take hold. Attention to the social and historical mediation of feeling can serve as a first step toward criticizing the economic and political capture of affect, but it also implies that feeling cannot and should not be immune to critique. Finally, and most importantly for the current study, Hegel offers conceptual tools and analyses that make it possible to shift from an ethics of truthfulness to an ethics of sympathy. A single individual without interpersonal interactions, without recourse to the imagination of interpersonality, or without the ability to relate to herself as another, would have no emotions. Hegelian transport is always shared; that is to say, it creates a texture of sympathy.
Plural Subjectivity

By “transport” I mean an emotion—strong or slight—that carries one out of oneself and to a different self. The self-reflection of spirit, which Hegel traces in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, relies on such transports. Hegel describes the logic of transports as one of “determinate negations.” This logic—which Hegel famously characterizes by exploiting the multivalence of the German term for “negating,” *Aufhebung*—suggests that there is an overlap between negation and affirmation. Hegelian subjectivity is the capacity to self-negate without self-destroying, to generate new selves out of the contradictions of former selves. What Hegel abstractly calls “negativity,” this book renders more concretely with descriptions of emotional processes. Hegelian negativity manifests, for example, as tremble, brokenness, laughter, or release. While these transports enable the emergence of different selves, they also expose and breach the boundaries of the self-sufficient subject. *Aufhebung*, since it preserves what it negates, divides the subject. In the transition from one subject to the next, the former subject does not simply disappear. The new self encompasses and is forced to relate to the remains of its former manifestations. As modes of self-relation, transports thus project new selves and remember old selves. The history of cumulative *Aufhebungen* multiplies internal differences and makes the subject more emotional with each step.

This brings me to an important challenge of Hegel’s quasi-literary text: its temporality. While philosophical texts traditionally make atemporal truth claims, the *Phenomenology’s* conceit—that we are accompanying the self-assessment of exemplary worldviews or epistemes—not only temporalizes truth but does so by creating a complex temporal plasticity. The *Phenomenology* has often been read as a narrative, more specifically as a bildungsroman. I argue rather that the text intertwines the temporalities of the three major literary genres: the syncopating measures of poetic rhythm, the virtual present of theatrical enactment, and the folded sequence of narrative. This intertwinenet of different, in themselves disrupted and complex, times contributes to the emotionality of the Hegelian text.

The subject of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the path of spirit’s self-reflection or of its coming-to-know-itself. Hegel defines spirit as a plural subject: “the ‘I’ that is ‘We’ and the ‘We’ that is ‘I.’” The double genitive of the title indicates that spirit serves as both the agent of the phenomenological inquiry and its subject matter. This means that the subject of the *Phenomenology* is divided between spirit in the form of the protagonist and spirit in the form of the phenomenologist. In other words, the book has two characters who manifest and propel spirit’s self-reflection:
the phenomenologist and the protagonist, called “consciousness.” Hegel refers to the phenomenologist in the first-person plural (“we”), indicating that the author and the reader share in the plural subjectivity of the phenomenologist and reinforcing the slippage between author, reader, and spirit. The protagonist is also a plural subject. Indeed, I argue throughout this book that the *Phenomenology* does not trace the linear development of one consciousness, but presents the constellation of many figures or shapes of consciousness. Therefore I will sometimes speak of protagonists in the plural. Strictly speaking, the protagonist is neither singular nor plural because the many figures of consciousness all have their own identities and are also versions of one another. It is thus possible to refer to the constellation of different figures of consciousness as the protagonists or as the protagonist (then understood as manifoldly divided within).

Trembling—one of the tropes this book explores—literalizes or materializes the back-and-forth movement of the self between its various shapes. The self trembles with fear before the transition to a new self and such tremble propels the transition, yet the new self is also shuddered through by the old selves. The trembling movement blurs the shape of each self. Indeed, it blurs the border between intra- and intersubjectivity. Another trope that jumbles the prefixes intra- and inter- is “acknowledging,” which renders thinking, cognition, and recognition as always again incipient movements toward an other self and also toward the practice of thinking and knowing itself. Hegel’s speculative logic demands considerable plasticity in casting the self-relationality that emotionality essentially is in at times intra-, at times intersubjective modes. Thus, rhythm emerges as an important characteristic of emotionality that this book explores. Emotional subjectivity is plural subjectivity in the sense that it moves to multiple, incongruent beats and incessantly combines dynamic and complex shifts between self-reference and external reference.

Impersonal Subjectivity

Hegel’s notion of “objective spirit” offers an effective tool for an account of emotional processes going on outside the heart or the mind. Since Hegel does not think of subjectivity as the exclusive attribute of persons, the emotional relations that oscillate or tremble between the intra- and the intersubjective are often transpersonal or entirely impersonal in character. The still-pervasive habit of attributing emotion exclusively to human subjects requires a critical analysis. Terada has developed a
deconstructionist theory of emotion based on the insight that a unified subject as traditionally conceived could not possibly experience emotion (Terada 2001). Riley locates emotion at the interstices of the human, in particular in language, where she observes “impersonal passions” that don’t quite coincide with the felt emotions of individual speakers (Riley 2005). Despite these and other advances in thinking emotion as impersonal or anonymous, we still tend to project a person who “has” or “expresses” the emotion whenever we speak of emotion (as different from affect). This book follows a different approach and explores, especially in its second part, the impersonality and exteriority of emotion. I am aware of the fact that it is quite counterintuitive to think of emotion as not primarily human, especially since humanity is often regarded as synonymous with the capacity to have feelings. Still, my point here is not to extend the faculty of emotion to non-human animals, as Nussbaum does (Nussbaum 2001, 89–138). I am not concerned with emotions as stable attributes that animals or other organisms might “have.” Nor do I agree with Nussbaum when she argues that emotions “always involve thought of an object” even if “this doesn’t necessarily include reflexive awareness” (Nussbaum 2001, 23). Rather, I submit that emotions always include reflexive awareness but that this reflection does not require a human self. I consider emotions as dynamic self-relations of emotionality to itself. That is to say, I subjectivize non-human sites of emotionality. To adjust to this counterintuitive idea, it helps to anthropomorphize emotionality. Broadcast on the right wavelengths, “emotionality” sounds like a proper name, and there is reason to appreciate the agency and subject status that the proper name confers upon the phenomenon. Of course, I recommend such anthropomorphizing with a winking eye and only as a strategy to relativize the strained anthropomorphizing of humans that we practice every day. As much as possible, I push toward exploring emotionality in its own right and not merely as experiences or expressions of human actants.

Sympathy

Hegel’s textual practice generates an almost inadvertent sympathy with the protagonist/s in the reader, just as Hegel’s logic demands sympathy of the thinker with the subject of her thought. Sympathy poses a threat to the idea of autonomy. The “free agent” in the classical sense—whether inner-directed or tradition-directed (to fall back on Riesman’s influential
but dated terminology)—knows who he is and can tell right from wrong; he is at one with himself, single-minded, and calm. Pinkard argues that such self-sufficiency might be a beautiful idea, but it “cannot survive its confrontation with other putatively self-sufficient agents—unless the agents in question are gods” (Pinkard 2007, 15). Pinkard refers to Hegel’s discussion of the dialectic of mastery and servitude as evidence for the problems with conceiving freedom as self-sufficiency. A less divine but more workable notion of freedom values the emotional turmoil of challenging ourselves and others, of adopting a negative, reflective, or ironic stance toward our own and others’ beliefs and feelings. It appreciates the wounds and the tears (Zerrissenheit) through which others enter the self. And it embraces the notion of a plural self enacting many roles. This freedom—which, I argue, is Hegel’s notion of freedom—demands that we reconcile ourselves to emotionality—not that we repair what is torn.

Hegel sees this model of freedom exemplified in the “self-alienated spirit” of Rameau’s Nephew. The nephew abandons individual selfhood to become all the voices of existence. He “piled up and mixed together some thirty airs, Italian, French, tragic, comic, of all sorts of character; now, with a deep bass, he descended into the depths of hell, then, contracting his throat, with a falsetto he tore apart the vaults of the skies, alternately raging and then being placated, imperious and then derisive.” (§ 521)

The “inverted and inverting, disrupted” performance of the nephew proves contagious; it infects the philosopher-judge with an inadvertent sympathy (§ 653). The calm and sincere consciousness (Diderot’s “Moi”)—who usually “in all honesty composes [setzt] the melody of the good and the true in . . . one note”—is not quite sure what to think of the nephew’s performance (§ 521, trans. modified). He remains torn in his judgment of the nephew and, thus torn, ends up imitating or nachempfinden the entire gamut of emotions that the nephew just performed:

For the motionless [ruhig] consciousness . . . this speech appears as a “blather of wisdom and folly, a medley consisting of as much skill as it did of baseness, of as many right as of false ideas, of such a complete inversion [Verkehrtheit] of sentiment, of such consummate disgracefulness as well as of such entire candor and truth. [The supposedly motionless consciousness] will be unable to refrain from going into all these tones [in alle diese Töne einzugehen], and from running up and down the entire scale
of feeling, of moving from the deepest contempt and depravity to the highest admiration and stirring emotion.” (§ 521, trans. modified, italics: my emphasis)\textsuperscript{13}

The honest consciousness turns into a reiteration of the disrupted consciousness. Such contagion or inadvertent sympathy shows that the model of subjectivity that is bound up with emotionality and freedom, as Hegel sees them, does not emphasize individuality and does not clearly distinguish between the singular and the plural. Even the consciousness whose honesty consists in sticking to one note inadvertently becomes several.

Hegel’s notion of freedom and his analysis of contagion imply an ethics of sympathy.\textsuperscript{14} By “ethics,” I don’t mean a substantive definition of goodness, or a procedural definition of right action.\textsuperscript{15} What I consider “ethical” lies at the intersection of ethics, aesthetics, and philology.\textsuperscript{16} It is the practice of paying close attention to subtle complexities, acknowledging alterity, and appreciating the confused and often messy process of juggling contrary pulls and negotiating differences. Sympathizing with the unfamiliar while retaining a gait of one’s own, adjusting to another rhythm without losing one’s beat: these are the domains of emotionality. To avoid such negotiations by reducing, denying, or stabilizing differences seems to me unethical. But to engage in these negotiations requires the willingness to temporarily be wrong, do wrong, be done wrong, and allow for forgiveness. It is an ethics beyond good and evil, if that is possible. This emotional ethics is obviously too large and complex a topic to be dealt with adequately here, but I can isolate two aspects of it that are relevant to the book: emotional ethics demands a practice of sympathizing with (one’s) other selves (including impersonal selves) and an extreme plasticity of the self (or a practice of self-figuration).

Trilling observes that, around the time when sincerity emerges as both a value and a problem (with the increase in social mobility beginning in the sixteenth century), interest in “the villain” rises. Originally, a “villain” is simply a man at the lowest scale of feudal society, but “the villain of plays and novels is characteristically a person who seeks to rise above the station to which he was born,” and thus becomes morally villainized.\textsuperscript{17} He is not what he is, in the double sense of denying his given social identity and playacting (using flattery and deceit) in order to get ahead. Not only is Rameau’s nephew a villain in this sense, but all the shapes of consciousness and formations of spirit that the Phenomenology presents, its protagonist/s in general and even its phenomenologist/s, must come across as villains. Consciousness makes its way through the phenomenological narrative by relentlessly rising above its presupposed identity. At the same time, the narrative cannot advance without
the villainous or insincere involvement of the phenomenologist/s. The phenomenologist/s must be what they are not, must play the role of “natural consciousness” and sympathize with the protagonist/s in order for the text to unfold. Spirit is multiply divided, and each of its personae acts in the double consciousness of being both the hero and the villain of this story. The syntax of Hegel’s text reflects this singularly plural subjectivity of emotionality: it articulates—that is, it separates and joins—the different formations of spirit and the various shapes of consciousness in such a way that it is impossible to decide whether the text has one protagonist (who appears in many incarnations) or many protagonists (who tend to get collapsed into one by the conventions of the developmental narrative). Rameau’s nephew thus exemplifies the structural alienation of emotional subjectivity that is at work in each and every instantiation of the phenomenological subject. He models the plasticity of shifting freely between the singular and the plural—the plasticity that I have described as one aspect of emotional ethics.

Hegel uses a philosophical version of free indirect discourse—a narrative technique that blurs the distinction between the voice of the narrator and the voice of a character. Hegel presents the theories (or “certainties”) and insights of his protagonist/s by oscillating often imperceptibly between the protagonist’s voice and the phenomenologist’s voice. In doing so he creates a plastic syntax of emotionality in the *Phenomenology*. Throughout this book, I call attention to Hegel’s use of this literary device and analyze its various effects. They range from allowing for intimate knowledge of highly problematic and thus commonly dismissed positions, to creating the reflective distance necessary for emotion to register, to generating perspectival shifts within and between the protagonist/s themselves. As already noted, Hegel thoroughly abandons the idea of the strictly in-dividual subject—all subjects of the *Phenomenology* are divisible and internally divided without completely falling apart or losing all coherence. Free indirect discourse presents the difference between internal and external differences and exchanges as hard to pin down and the distinction as impossible to maintain. Overall, free indirect discourse enhances the plasticity of emotionality and facilitates an ethics of sympathy.

Chapter Overview

The present study falls into two parts. The first part (“Emotional Subjects”) focuses on Hegel’s thematic accounts of emotionality and the sec-
ond part ("Emotional Syntax") on his performative accounts of it. With literary and rhetorical analyses of the Hegelian text I hope to reveal, in the first part, some of the shortcomings of straightforward readings of Hegel’s explicit thematizations of emotion. To read the *Phenomenology of Spirit* at face value is to miss some significant challenges of this quasi-literary text. The fact that the *Phenomenology* has a protagonist ("consciousness") and a first-person plural narrator ("we"—the phenomenologist/s) demands that the reader attend to the differences between the perspective of the author, the perspective of the narrator, and the perspective of the protagonist. That is to say, when Hegel discusses “feeling” or “pathos,” he doesn’t develop his theory of emotion. Instead, he offers a critical analysis of the assumptions at work when one conceives of emotion as feeling or as pathos.

The book opens with a chapter on the trope of the “Heart.” It addresses Hegel’s response to schools of thought that give matters of the heart a philosophical value (eighteenth-century sentimentalism and philosophical mysticism). Hegel derides this celebration of feeling. He describes feeling as an inefficient way of relating to the world, one that indulges in nebulous idealizations because it lacks the “strength” to take a clear stance in words and actions. Reading Hegel on “the feeling heart,” one wonders whether Hegel values the significance of emotion. In this introductory chapter, I remind readers that Hegel does not disparage feeling as such, but criticizes only the sentimental and mystic understanding of feeling. I argue that he does so for two reasons. First, the sentimental and mystic preference of feeling over reason reproduces the dichotomy between rationality and emotionality. Second, the figure of the heart relegates feeling to interiority. Thus, this introductory chapter familiarizes the reader of *Tropes of Transport* with two important demands of Hegel’s philosophy of emotion: first, that reason and emotion be mutually implicated, and second, that thoughtful “transports” or emotional thoughts call into question the construction of interiority.

This brings me to the second thematic figure of emotion, namely “Pathos,” which plays a crucial role in Hegel’s theory of the tragic. Hegel defines pathos as an absolute commitment to a particular ethical calling. Pathos has two advantages over the figure of the heart: because it calls for action, it escapes Hegel’s critique of mere interiority, and in that it takes a clear stance, it integrates emotionality with rationality. Nevertheless, it cannot properly be described as a trope of transport, since the passionate stance absorbs the person so fully that she is absolutely congruent with her ethical commitment. Far from effecting a transformation, pathos leads to the tragic annihilation of the individual who is under the
sway of this trope—it quite literally comes to a dead end. For this reason, 
I contend, Hegel grows rather disenchanted with philosophical invest-
ments in passionate characters and instead shifts to an analysis of how 
the theatricality of tragedy affects the trope of absolute sincerity, which is 
pathos. I argue that Hegel’s preoccupation with theatricality importantly 
informs the composition of the Phenomenology. The theatrics of the Phe-
nomenology builds ambivalence into the structure of the emotional sub-
ject by dividing the subject of the Phenomenology into a protagonist and a 
phenomenologist. I argue that the different roles of this plural subject 
both invigorate and break one another. Yet, they also serve as remainders 
of one another, so that there is never any complete destruction of the 
subject in the Phenomenology.

The analysis of Hegel’s critique of heart and pathos enables me to 
identify ex negativo three main points of his own conception of emotion: 
(1) that reason and emotion implicate one another; (2) that thought-
ful “transports” or emotional thoughts foil any clean-cut separation be-
tween, or hierarchical organization of, interiority and exteriority; and 
(3) that transport generates a plural subject, spoiling any desire for co-
herence and unification.

At the end of this first part—on “Emotional Subjects”—it becomes 
evident that where emotion is the explicit subject of analysis, the account 
inadvertently unifies and stabilizes the emotional subject. In order to 
reach an affirmative view of the non-unified subject and of emotion as a 
vehicle for self-transformation, we need to turn to non-reifying, that is, 
performative presentations of emotion as transports. We need to analyze 
what emotions do in Hegel’s text, how they carry the self-reflection of 
spirit. Thus, in the second part of Tropes of Transport I explore how the syn-
tax, not the subject matter, of Hegel’s speculative logic moves thought.

Most discussions of Hegel make the assumption that the promise 
or threat (depending on the discussants’ taste for grand narratives) of 
Hegel’s philosophy is to overcome divisions. This book challenges that 
assumption. The second part—“Emotional Syntax”—explores how the emotional syntax of Hegel’s Phenomenology both creates a plural or mani-
foldly divided subject, and connects the different parts of this plural sub-
ject (the series of figures of consciousness that make up the protagonist, 
as well as the author and the readers who share in the subjectivity of the 
phenomenologist) in a moving, mutually informing and deforming syn-
thesis.

The emotional syntax of the Phenomenology features specific tropes 
of emotionality, such as “release,” “juggle,” “acknowledging,” “tremble,” 
and “broken.” I have organized each chapter of “Emotional Syntax”
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around one of these figures, which are key words from Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. These key words involve a tropic dislocation in the sense that they are used not quite according to common sense. The most common meaning of “trembling,” for example, in the context of a study of emotion, would be the shaking movement of a human body affected with great fear. *Tropes of Transport* employs the term in a defamiliarized way to describe the shaking movement of the Hegelian text, arguing that Hegel’s text trembles.

“Emotional Syntax” opens with a chapter, titled “Release,” that discusses the ending of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Rather than in absolute knowledge, the text ends in a tear: a dash, from which two lines of Schiller’s poem “Friendship” drop. The supposedly grandiose narrative of the *Phenomenology* “releases” its grasp of the subject and its grip on the reader by speaking in another’s voice. Yet no one remains intact here. This chapter demonstrates that numerous shapes of consciousness have been ruined, that the Hegelian text falls short of coherence and closure, and that Hegel alters the verses he cites. Chapter 3 argues that the mutual syncopation and disintegration of self and other are requirements for the experience of emotion. It is thus an act of friendship when Hegel alters Schiller’s lines and when he allows his own text to be interrupted and torn open to future readers. At the beginning of the second part of the book, this argument demonstrates the appropriateness of my own method of reading, which is to remain true to the Hegelian text by transforming it.

Building on the argument developed in the preceding chapter—that emotionality is an effect of dissonances—chapter 4, “Juggle,” shows that Hegel’s language is not one with itself. The chapter analyzes what Hegel means when he contends that the phenomenological exposition must juggle the rationalistic syntax of predicative propositions and the dynamic syntax of the Hegelian “speculative judgment.” Arguing that Hegel rhythmically interweaves the two different functions of the phenomenologist (author and reader) by mutually syncopating authorial will and reader expectation, I propose a Hegelian ethics of sympathy. When Hegel asks his readers to identify with consciousness on its path, he demands of them to do what he does in his writing, namely, to march to the beat of (at least) two drums at a time.

Via a linguistic and poetic analysis of *Anerkennen*, the next chapter, titled “Acknowledging,” explores the non-closed or unending temporality of knowledge as well as the plural subjectivity of consciousness. Bringing passages from Hegel’s *Phenomenology* into dialogue with Hölderlin’s poem “Remembrance” and Goethe’s poem “Reunion,” chapter 5 ques-
tions Hegelian claims to completion and perfection. I show how Hegel tries to perpetuate the ecstasy of love by repeatedly changing the subject. While Goethe’s poem establishes self-sufficiency as the ideal, I read Hölderlin’s poem as chiefly concerned with the question of how conversing can foster an always transient mutuality. And I argue that Hegel understands recognition as a mutual acknowledging of transports (of one’s ceaselessly becoming someone else). Translating Anerkennen as acknowledging, rather than recognition, I highlight the constitutive sociality and incipience of knowledge.

Analyzing Hegel’s brief but stunning passage on “absolute fear” in the dialectic of mastery and servitude, chapter 6 makes two arguments about the trope “Tremble.” First, it shows that no individual consciousness in the Phenomenology ever actually experiences absolute fear. If by “individuals” we mean undivided, self-identical beings, then individuals cannot experience transports. Only tremulous subjects, moving from one figure of themselves to another, riddled with intervals that intertwine exteriority and interiority, are transported with fear. That said, chapter 6 makes a second argument. It shows that the syntactical arrangement of the different shapes of consciousness produces absolute fear. Specifically, the transitions between the chapters of the Phenomenology are moments of absolute fear. They are intervals of trembling: a back-and-forth movement that breaks with the linearity of any narrative of progress the Phenomenology might construe or be construed as. These transitions are not irrational or alogical but rather constitutive of the emotional syntax of Hegel’s speculative logic.

The twentieth century has read the Phenomenology as a triumphant story of progress. The seventh chapter of Tropes of Transport tells the story of spirit’s consumption and dismemberment. “Broken” notes that Bildung is experienced as torture because it repeatedly shatters self-certainty. The chapter argues in favor of an ethics of emotionality that calls for a reconciliation with disruptedness rather than of the disrupted. After exploring Hegel’s description of the Phenomenology as a path of despair, I proceed with a discussion of two exemplary moments of breaking spirit: the breaking of the phrenologist’s judgment and the breaking of the “hard heart.” This chapter concludes my analysis of the Phenomenology’s emotional syntax by demonstrating again the overlap of emotionality and rationality in Hegel: I argue that the analytic activity of the understanding fractures the phenomenological text and thus enhances its emotionality while the self-reflecting emotionality of despair emerges as a lighthearted transport.

In the epilogue, “Against Emotional Violence,” I modulate the
tropes of transport addressed in this study for a final argument against approaches and paradigms in affect and emotion studies that amplify their vehement, passionate, or violent force. Instead, I foreground the incongruence and plasticity of emotional subjectivity and offer tools to attend to dispersed feelings and fleeting emotions that give a texture of the provisional to experience—opening onto an ironic and even light-hearted kind of sentimentality.