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Re-Imagining "Spaces" for Relating Within and Between France and Germany in the Long Nineteenth Century

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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The "modern world" as we now know it is quite different from that which was emerging in

Western Europe and began to accelerate in its development under the impetus of revolution and

wars at the turn of the nineteenth century. Not only were material conditions in the process of

shifting from those grounded in more traditional, rural and agrarian ways of life to those

developing into more urban and industrialized ones, but the "social ontology" and cultural forms

of "mapping" and communicating about reality were also changing.

This study employs a "macro-historical" framework which incorporates complexity and

complex system principles to investigate some of the patterns of these highly transformative

systemic changes as they impacted Germany and France in particular in the long nineteenth

century. These societies are employed in this investigation for two reasons: 1) because they were

among that handful of communities that directly participated in the emergence of modernization

as a rather explosive and rapidly developing phenomena in that historical moment (whose

consequences also included the emergence of new social movements and forms of social

structuration as expressed in nationalism and the modern nation-state), and 2) because, as

directly neighboring communities, these two illustrate in a microcosm some of the dynamic

operations of closely co-existing complex systems themselves.

    Consideration of the lives and selected literary works of pairs of German and French writers

at three different time points in the century grounds the discussion, because these artists are

themselves viewed as important innovators who both *embodied* and *expressed* signs of the *new*

forms of society and culture that were then emerging. These particular writers (Heinrich von

Kleist and Germaine de Staêl; Heinrich Heine and Honoré de Balzac; and Heinrich Mann and

Stéphane Mallarmé) are particularly suitable for this study because of their notably *protean*

capacities for vision as well as their positions "on the margins" of their communities which not

only afforded them insightful perspectives on the shifting sociocultural landscape but also

challenged them to employ their talents to give the latter some novel narrative shape.

    After an initial chapter which outlines much of the theoretical framework for the discussion,

chapter two considers Staël and Kleist who expressed creative visions of (potentially) new kinds

of social agents and their relationships to (those virtual) societies that were then appearing to be

on the verge of *emerging* after the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. The third chapter

discusses Heine and Balzac as artists trying to develop new aesthetics in a kind of (implicit)

service to their respective German and French communities' post-war efforts at recuperating and

reconfiguring a new "social order" trending towards the "new modern." And the fourth chapter

considers Mann and Mallarmé, who are viewed as confronting some of the new adaptive

challenges in the latter part of the century arising from continued progression of the powerful (and perceptibly impersonal) self-organizing forces of modernization and many Europeans' disillusionment *with* (and withdrawal from) them, to which these writers responded with their own creative strategies for trying to *actively* address these challenges and provoke their contemporaries to do the same.

The final chapter reflects upon the value of using a complex systems interpretive lens for understanding the roles and work of such writers, who are regarded via this lens as significant *innovators* who responded particularly meaningfully to the individual and communal challenges raised by the self-organizing forces operating in their historical moments in the nineteenth century. It also briefly considers the pros and cons of employing such a "holistic" perspective for appreciating such artistic work more generally.

Chapter 1:

Complex Systems and the Roles of Six Writers

The "modern world" as we now know it is obviously quite different from those worlds that

emerged in France and neighboring territories of the still extant Holy Roman Empire (soon to

become the German nation) during the long nineteenth century. There have been numerous

assessments of the phenomena of modernity. Some have applauded it and its effects, while others

have been severely critical. All, however, have acknowledged the phenomena as a kind of

process, one arising from many factors and changing in its manifestations over the past few

hundred years but which truly began to accelerate throughout western Europe under the added

stimulus of revolution and wars around the turn of the nineteenth century. Individual and

collective adaptation to these transformative events, their cultural sequelae, and the quickening

of social forces that they helped promote (such as the undermining of traditional authorities,

increasing industrialization, the rise of a middle class, demographic shifts from provinces to

cities, and technological advances) was apparently no small feat, as the intellectual and

sociopolitical ferment throughout much of this long century suggests. As I will argue in the pages

that follow, a significant part of this *adaptation* also involved people co-constructing "worlds" -

making mutually intelligible sense - of the social forces that were playing out around them and

through which they navigated. In order to do this, the discussion will focus on exploring some of

the aspects of this adaptive *process* as instantiated in the persons, social activity, and writing of

six different literary artists who were members of western Europe's neighboring French and

German-speaking communities during different periods of the long nineteenth century.

Specifically, it will consider how these three French (Germaine de Staël, Honoré de Balzac, and Stéphane Mallarmé) and three German (Heinrich von Kleist, Heinrich Heine, and Heinrich Mann) writers, though they were naturally distinguished by their own inclinations and uniquely-situated experiences, at the same time all responded to the adaptive challenges of their respective historical moments in ways that, when viewed through a specific interpretive lens, may be understood as having certain features in common. Explicating this in some detail will occupy the following three chapters.

Before proceeding, it is important to note the principal reasons for choosing France and Germany (and writers in their communities) as the focus of this particular study. One is that their societies were among that small group of western European ones which actually underwent the sociocultural transformations that have been referred to as "modernization" in the long nineteenth century. It is widely acknowledged that this handful of European communities bordering the Atlantic Ocean became the *site* of both *innovation in various social and cultural domains* and of *new technologies* because of a *confluence of factors* that had set the stage for their emergence in that particular part of the world at that time. These factors included the centuries' long *development of local conditions* (such as those which had resulted in the interest in and capacity for large-scale ship-building, for example) which had led, in their turn, to the emergence and stimulation of exchange networks that had grown to connect widespread markets across the globe with this area as a central hub, the related rise in importance of commercial enterprise, and the igniting of the Industrial Revolution (which had sparked first in Great Britain but then spread rapidly beyond that country's borders). Additional factors were those deriving from intellectual influences of the Enlightenment which had *valorized the growth of new*

knowledge - knowledge that was not bound by local cultures or traditions and which could be sought in exploration of new "territories."

The convergence and interaction of these and other factors together may be seen as having laid the groundwork for "modernization," whose "taking shape" as a phenomenon escalated under the forces unleashed by the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. But in addition to these circumstances within which both France and Germany (and a small group of other European countries) were situated and to which these two were both subject, there were *also* circumstances specific to them *as neighboring* communities (sharing borders, for example), which intermittently brought them into conflict (wars of words and other weapons) and provoked them to (re-)assert their identities and positions of power relative to each other.

One way of appreciating these kinds of dynamic processes is through a theoretical framework based on consideration of what are referred to as "complex systems." A "macro-historical" perspective which specifically incorporates complex system notions (and complexity principles) will, in fact, constitute much of the interpretive lens by which this study is undertaken.

Thus considering specific *French and German* writers for the present work is regarded as particularly advantageous because of the changes that took place not only *within* but also *between*, and in a *superordinate sense across,* these two communities at the moment when Western Europe became the historically fortuitous (from a complexity and complex systems' perspective) site of local conditions coalescing and "emerging" in the form of "modernization" in the world. That is, in *them* we can observe in a sort of microcosm some of the profound concentration of forces that in their interaction were propelling sociopolitical and cultural

transformations (together deemed modernization) expressed at different levels of scale during this century-long period of radical change in western Europe.

In addition, the six writers targeted in this "case study" should be noted to have been specifically selected because of features that *they* shared despite their individual (locally-differing) circumstances. As will be discussed in greater detail in the chapters that follow, all six of these writers manifested notably *protean* capacities for expressing themselves and their visions, *and* all operated "on the margins" of the communities in which they participated, which afforded them a non-mainstream (also called "second order") perspective on the shifting sociocultural landscape of their eras thereby challenging each of them to articulate their perspective in *a novel narrative shape*. In other words, all of these writers themselves may be seen as both personally *and* circumstantially well-situated for being able to integrate the confluence of forces that were impacting their "worlds" at the time and express them in cultural products (literary works) which were *simultaneously innovative* and potentially *adaptive* in the context of their era's dynamic (and unstable) conditions. And while the selection of these writers is not meant to imply that they are the *only* ones who could be fruitful for this kind of analysis, there are, in other words, good reasons for selecting them (but future work may want to investigate other artists through a similar theoretical lens).

We should now proceed to also clarify more of the details of the interpretive lens to be employed for the discussion. For one thing, the phenomenon of *complexity* itself may be seen as operating in the objective world across different durations of time and extensions in space, in the manner that the historian David Christian and his colleagues from a variety of other disciplines

have discussed in their work on "big history"[1] (which will be described in somewhat greater detail in consideration of modernizing trends taking place in Europe in the nineteenth century in chapter four). For another, *complex entities* (such as human beings and nation-states themselves) may be understood as containing diverse components that are arranged in very particular ways such that, when they *emerge* from the "assembling" of their components into *particular patterns* that *allow them to work,* they have *new (so-called emergent) properties* that cannot be explained by simply referring back to consideration of the separate components from which they derived (as a side-note here, "flows of energy" appear to be required to help *maintain* the emergent pattern and structure of complex things no matter the domain in which they arise; consequently, in order for complex entities to (continue to) exist, they cannot be completely isolated; they must have boundaries/borders that are somewhat loose or only partial relative to their environments) (Christian et al 5-6).

Inherent in this perspective is the belief that *complexity* also characterizes the minds (brains) of human beings and how they engage with and behave in their social and material worlds, which are made up of other complex entities (like cities and communication, transportation, and economic/financial systems, for example) that manifest complex properties and behave according to complexity principles themselves. While many of the details of the development of particular complex systems and interactions between them (like those between human beings and their social groups and the latter with *their* "environments") are incompletely understood and

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[1]Particularly useful texts for gaining an overview of this work include *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History, 2nd ed.* by David Christian (U of California P, 2011) and *Big History: Between Nothing and Everything* by Christian et al (McGraw-Hill, 2014).

remain objects of intense investigation, for this particular study a relatively small "part" of the objective world will be examined for some of these kinds of issues.

Thus, the study will target a relatively delimited region (the neighboring countries of France and Germany) for signs of *patterns* in *emergent (cultural/literary) products* that were expressed by the six selected writers, who were themselves both *subject and responding to* the growing complexity (here "modernization") of their environments in their eras.

Others have referred to such complex phenomena and their interactions as those to be discussed here, but described them in somewhat different terms. One finds, for example, references to a kind of *compression of time* and accompanying sense of "social acceleration" (suggested by Hartmut Rosa) as well as to an individual and collective experience that "all that is solid melts into air" (as per Marshall Berman) as the various forces of modernization in their complex interactions altered life in Europe and then, some time later, spread around the world. Others have also noted that modernization was also accompanied by social activity that fostered the related rise of the spatially more *expansive* concept of "nationalism" that became a new (in the nineteenth century) "totalizing project" for interpreting "national autonomy or identity" (and that is now, in its turn, being challenged by even more expansive "totalities" such as "the global" and the "Anthropocene") (Nir 236-237).

As I will also be contending here, however, many of the shared conventions arising in the non-theoretical knowledge of communities in the nineteenth century that were involved in understanding and communicating about social *identities* which were *tied* to these changes in temporal perception (in considerations of work, for example) and matters of social scale (whether as *national identities* or class-based ones that now subsumed both male and female

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industrial *workers*, for example) were not stable during the nineteenth century either. That is, they too were undergoing change at an unprecedented rate. And these six writers arguably sensed some of the *patterns* of these changing circumstances and their implications for people's *changing identities*.

The real world, of course, is actually inherently dynamic and *constantly* changing (so to speak), though our being able to perceive it as such depends upon the level of scale at which it is viewed. In other words, rather than being constantly aware that matter in the world is always in *motion* - coming into existence and fading away, whether extremely slowly as at the scale of geologic time or extremely quickly as at the atomic scale - we as a species tend to rely on perceiving all sorts of phenomena as being and remaining stable within a range that we can recognize and engage with so as to be able to function and act in the world.

For human beings, it is thus more a matter of being able to notice and recognize *change* in the sense that something appears *different.* That is, we tend to perceive when phenomena violate expectations of what is (simply) the case or "conventional" and attempt to deal with such change with a persistent capacity to *act*. Perceptible change in this sense may range from the relatively slight, mildly surprising, and easily accommodated, all the way to the quite disruptive, shocking, and traumatic. Perceptible change also depends on local conditions and prior experience with features of one's environment, such that these have led to the establishment of memories and points of reference for what *is* to be expected and used as the grounds for acting in particular circumstances. And, what will be argued in the present discussion is that the writers discussed here may be understood as having had a sense of the *pattern of how* their worlds were changing

(becoming *different*) and yet were able to *respond meaningfully* with new narratives regarding the changes they perceived taking place.

In essence, therefore, the discussion will be directed at trying to show how these writers, living their lives in situationally-specific but *related* sociocultural contexts, gave creative expression to cultural products that had the *potential for being meaningfully shared* with others (of reasonably similar constitution and experience) through giving some *form* as well as communicable content *to the "complexity"* of the changing worlds that they and their fellows inhabited. As this statement suggests, the discussion itself will involve multiple threads, and these threads will be pursued for how they interrelate with each other, as discussion of a *process* may be said to warrant. In other words, the discussion will not only *describe* some of the conditions and expression of these writers in a typical linear fashion. It will also try to "demonstrate" (in a more or less performative sense of illustration) some of the multidimensionality of the social complexity *converging on* these writers as they experienced such complexity in their own lives and worked to give some manifest (emergent) shape to it. This will be undertaken by not only analyzing some of these writers' literary work but also by providing certain biographical details and historical context that will hopefully help convey a sense of some of the *interactions* taking place between these different levels viewed here as different levels of *scale* (or what certain systems and complexity theorists refer to as different domains of complexity, which will be more fully described in what follows).

Before moving on to the actual discussion of the six writers and their works *in this manner*, however, certain historical aspects of systems and complexity theories themselves, as well as certain concepts that have emerged from working with them, should also be made more clear.

Unlike some other originally scientifically-conceived models whose motifs and details gradually found their way into the broader culture and have since come to have notable influence on artistic expression and criticism (think: Freud's theories of psychoanalysis, for example), there has been relatively little attempt to relate systems and complexity theoretical perspectives to much art-related phenomena, particularly to *analytic* considerations of work by artists, literary or otherwise. (The work by Niklas Luhmann is a notable exception to this dearth of application, though its predominant focus on issues of systems' growth and maintenance (rather than change) has been viewed by some as rather limited and arguably "reactionary." [Cramer 4])

The fact that both systems and complexity theories themselves have undergone significant evolution since their essential inception in the middle of the twentieth century (Richardson and Midgley 163-168) likely partly explains why they have tended to receive relatively little dedicated attention by those interested in the arts. Because of these theories' conceptual evolution (and for related reasons), it is also difficult to speak of established *conventions* associated with even the most recent systems and complexity theorizing perspectives. Nonetheless, the latter have had important impacts on multiple disciplines and research groups, from those physical, biological, and computational-scientific ones where they originated to social-scientific, business, and other scholarly groups where the theorizing and application of such perspectives have continued to advance. It is this very wide-ranging extension that has resulted in some disciplinary boundary fuzziness, however. Despite the latter, the work's extension has been associated with the establishment of not only some common vocabulary and use of terms such as *system*, *emergence, dynamic, nonlinear, adaptive* and *hierarchy,* but also a shared belief that there are universal principles underlying the behavior of all systems (Phelan

237). And perhaps most intriguingly for the purposes of the current discussion, it has also led to

some relatively recent conceptual *contacts with issues* raised by members of knowledge

disciplines which *are* concerned with various aspects of the arts, including aesthetics. These

contacts currently remain tentative and rather few. But deriving as they do from several different

scholars and critical directions, they appear suggestive enough in their convergence to warrant

further exploration, which is the position that will be adopted here.

For example, the scholar of English and American literature Clifford Siskin in his recent

System: The Shaping of Modern Knowledge (2016) indicates that a major aim of his study is to

show how the concept of system as well as systems themselves came and are continuing to gain

increasing attention for how they operate and exert effects - epistemological as well as

sociopolitical - in the increasingly modern world after the Enlightenment. He describes his work

as offering "a specific, historical argument *about* system…an explanation of how system became

a primary form for shaping knowledge during the Enlightenment and where it might be headed

in the future" (8). In his prologue, he begins, however, by stressing that, to this day, there is no

single concise definition of the concept of system (which systems and complexity theorists

themselves also readily acknowledge and do not regard as necessarily counter-productive to their

work [Richardson and Midgley 167-168]). Siskin argues that this is due in large part to the term's

"primitive" quality and the "fundamental questions" it has raised "in so many realms" in men's

efforts to know the world (2). Consequently, as he goes on, it has taken on various "incarnations"

over time (ranging from Galileo's observations on the sighting of Jupiter's lunar system, to

Newton's and other proliferating theoretical and classificatory systems that promoted the

Enlightenment, to Darwin's algorithmic system of survival, to our own "plethora" of increasingly

specialized applications of the concept to biological and "nervous," and various "social" and

"computing," systems, to name just a few) (2). Thus, as he says, while it has contributed to

"altering how we know the world, system has [also] changed it" - leading through much intra-

and cross-disciplinary work to an appreciation now of its versatility "as being both scalable

(systems within systems) and adaptable (to different conditions and substrates)" (2-3). But while

he acknowledges the absence of a single concise definition, he does provide a working one for

his overall discussion - which is of system "as a genre - as a form that works physically in the

world to mediate our efforts to know it" (1). Thus, while his emphasis is on system as a "form"

viewed as a "genre" or mode of explanation in knowledge disciplines, it is at the same time on

describing various manifestations of this genre's (form's) *effects* as:

> shap[ing] knowledge over time by transforming wholes (previous systems) into
> parts (the new system)…thus enabl[ing] a mix of continuity and discontinuity,
> bringing existing ideas forward but altering their meanings and effects through
> this change of scale….as in the Enlightenment project of the encyclopedic
> scaling up of separate systems into 'complete' records of what was known…
> [and] participat[ing] in the process of error correction that the physicist David
> Deutsch (in *The Beginning of Infinity: Explanations That Transform the World*
> (2011, 130) has identified as central to the Enlightenment effort to produce better
> explanations - explanations that benefited from adjustments to scale…[being]
> better matched to the specific problems they were supposed to resolve. (Siskin 41)

Siskin's work is, in fact, a wide-ranging analysis that includes several illustrative examples of

system both as an influence on various writers from the Romantics to post-modernists

(predominantly in Great Britain) and as an actual force for promoting increasing specialization in

various intellectual disciplines and facilitating their contributions to modern expert knowledge.

And, though Siskin devotes little attention to the term's use and effects in sociopolitical domains

specifically, he does indicate that Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) seemingly laid the

"groundwork" for regarding societies' functioning as "Master Systems" and, thus, being able to view these systems as objects that could be "blamed" in political debates (particularly by those resisting social reform and change), beginning with highly contentious ones that took place in the British parliament at the end of the eighteenth century (Siskin 163-168).

Siskin's study, however, appears as just one example of how certain scholars with interests in the (literary) arts have recently undertaken work addressing systems and their "working" in the world, as Siskin himself has put it. Coming from a somewhat different disciplinary background and with a focus on complexity rather than systems-thinking itself (to which, as has already been noted, complexity theorizing is related), the narrative theorist Richard Walsh along with computer scientist Susan Stepney have compiled a multi-author work entitled *Narrating Complexity* (2018). In it, they present essays by various scholars interested in offering proposals for how narrative theory from the humanities and ideas from complexity science might inform each other, while also noting some of the inherent challenges of doing so. Walsh as narrative theorist (with a cognitive bent) frames the undertaking and challenge this way: "we are concerned with narrative as a primary mode of thought, one that has a specific form and therefore constitutes a specific kind of logic…a basic way of making sense that is central to our ordinary engagement with the world and each other… [but which is also] a significant constraint upon our ability to make sense of phenomena that resist its logic—notably, the behaviour of complex systems" (Walsh 12). As already noted, phenomena that can be understood as complex systems include such entities as the human brain, organisms and ecosystems, social and economic organizations like cities, and many other networked entities having significant

interdependencies with their environments. And as Walsh and Stepney point out, some of these systems' behavioral properties include:

- **Feedback** and temporal "loopiness," which does not allow any simple linearisation of cause and effect

- **Emergence**, where the behaviour of the whole cannot be readily deduced from the behaviours of the parts, and where the whole affects the parts

- **Relational** nature, where the many-to-many interactions between the component parts are more pertinent to the system behaviour than are the parts themselves

- **Openness**, in that a complex system cannot be understood in isolation, because of its essential interactions with its environment

- **Reflexiveness**, in social systems, where narratives of the system are also within the system, affecting it

- **Stability** in the face of change, where the stability is not passively static, but an active self-maintenance that needs to be supported

- **Tipping points** of rapid unexpected change in the face of small perturbations, as a seemingly stable complex system is finally pushed beyond its limits

- **Multiple timescales**, fast and slow, many beyond human perception

- **Multiple spatial scales**, large and small, also beyond human perception

(Walsh and Stepney 319-320)

It is worth noting these various commonly acknowledged properties of complex systems (several of which Siskin also mentions) for several reasons. Many if not all of the (bolded) terms will recur at points in the following discussion. This insertion of a particular vocabulary (with meanings that are not always simply intuitive) will hopefully begin to provide a framework for establishing associations and some degree of basis for translation of complex system considerations into a domain where they have had little incorporation to date. Acknowledging them also helps make clearer some of the challenges arising from trying to actually "narrate

complexity." As Walsh specifically notes, simple narratives have "limited ability to model multiple, simultaneous, reciprocal and recursive relations" (Walsh 16). Thus, there are inherent challenges in even trying to construct a narrative argument such as the present one because of the "simultaneous, reciprocal and recursive relations" among the objects under consideration. Nonetheless, I will attempt to *show* how diverse forces at a so-called macro- level of scale may be understood as having converged *simultaneously* upon the pairs of writers whose lives and works I will be discussing (and considering chronologically), while the work they *produced in their respective eras*, in their turn, constituted new *patterns* of material (in their form and content) that were meant to operate in the world and have *an influence upon the latter*. And, from a "big history" perspective, I will also be trying to show how they functioned as *innovators* within the complex systems of their historical moments and worked to make contributions to the "collective learning" of their communities as well.

It is possible that one might wish to pause here and question the fundamental claim being made that systems-thinking and complexity principles have any relevance to the (literary) arts and art-making based on an argument that art is not only a unique enterprise but operates according to principles that run counter to the use of such an approach, which might be viewed as reductive. While the issue is debatable, of course, there are reasons for *not* viewing such an interpretive lens in a context such as this as *simply* reductive.

M.W. Rowe, a philosopher of aesthetics, in his essay on "Literature, Knowledge, and the Aesthetic Attitude" (2010), notes, for example, that: "an attitude which hopes to derive aesthetic pleasure from an object is often thought to be in tension with an attitude which hopes to derive knowledge from it…[but] this alleged conflict only makes sense when the aesthetic attitude and

knowledge are construed unnaturally *narrowly,* and…when both are correctly understood there is no tension between them" (emphasis added) (1). He makes an argument for *construing* the "aesthetic attitude" more broadly than some may tend to do, including by pointing out how knowledge and certain truths about the world *may be conveyed* by the (literary) arts, even though doing so does not typically take the form of making propositional statements about the world; and, among the "*non*-propositional kinds of knowledge" it can convey, as he says, is "learning how certain situations could be reconceptualized" (which can have both perceptual and practical consequences) (9-10). He concludes that: while our "desire for imaginative knowledge [as] rational creatures… is *not the same as* our desire to enjoy certain formal patterns of sound, movement and colour…the[se] two desires show remarkable formal similarities, and both are a part of our desire for aesthetic experience," so that there need be "no conflict between aesthetic interest and curiosity about life" (emphasis added) (23). Our desire for "aesthetic experience," in other words, can (according to this argument) accommodate a desire for appreciation of the richness of an art work's plethora of details (as in such works' "patterns of sound, movement and colour") *and* a desire for "imaginative" (that is, non-propositional) forms of knowledge which can address our "curiosity about life." And, in a complex systems framework, some *truths about the world* may be said to specifically *appear* via processes that are "emergent."

That is, we can *appreciate more* about the world ("life" itself) in the *discernment of patterns in processes of reconceptualization* to the extent that they *appear new* to us. In other words, we can *learn* from them. And while these *patterns* with *new properties* may very well appear *abstract and less rich* than the detailed components from which they "emerged," *by their very nature*, *they are neither inherently "simplifying" nor simplistic.*

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Such a stance allows one to see how an interpretive lens employing systems-thinking and consideration of complexity principles may actually be *compatible with* "aesthetic interest" and need *not* be understood as completely reductive or *inappropriately "*simplified."

An "aesthetic interest" has been voiced, in fact, by some systems and complexity scholars themselves. Systems-theorist Gerald Midgley, for example, in his recent (2016) reflections on his primary field's decades-long theoretical developments, has observed that the philosophical underpinnings of "critical systems thinking" (heavily influenced by Habermasian theories of linguistic ontology) have proven useful in the study of four "domains of complexity"; however, its framework has also left gaps in certain areas. He distinguishes the four domains as 1) "natural world" complexity (the complexity of "what is," whose ideal of inquiry in historical traditions such as science is *truth*), 2) "social world" complexity (the complexity of "what ought to be," whose ideal of inquiry is *rightness*), 3) "subjective world" complexity (the complexity of what any individual (self or other) is thinking, intending or feeling, whose ideal of inquiry can be called *understanding subjectivity*), and 4) the *meta-level* complexity of the other three domains' interactions (Midgely 3). He provides this classificatory framework while also offering personal musings on whether it was appropriate (now in hindsight) to exclude *beauty* as an ideal of inquiry. He also observes that, since the establishment of the critical systems framework, most attention has been directed to the natural world domain while much less has been devoted to the normative social domain, and comparatively little to the domain concerned with subjectivity, thus leaving "major opportunities for developing new theories" related to both of them (4-5). He singles out David Snowden (who "advocat[es] the collection of multiple individuals' stories and

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then look[s] for patterns across them"), however, as a notable exception to the "subjective world" domain's dearth of investigation (5).

Snowden, originally an IBM researcher, and Karl Weik, a social psychologist, have actually both created managerial models and research programs that use narrative as "a sensemaking response to complexity" in organizations (Browning and Boudès 32). Though their approaches somewhat differ, they are similar in that both place "the person" at the center of their models and observe that, *if* the communication practices among individuals interacting locally with each other "are in fact vulnerable and attentive to the margins" of their organizations, the "best self-organized solution" may emerge and become a model for further action by the group (Browning and Boudès 37). In an analogous fashion, as I will be trying to show, all six nineteenth-century writers to be discussed were also each in his or her own way, through their personal situations and respective "communication practices," *vulnerable* as well as *attentive* to the margins of *their* respective self-identified communities; and it was from these positions that they observed the *forms of relating shifting* in their societies and were able to put the sense of these *changing patterns of relating* into *words* and afford narratives of notable aesthetic quality by which others could "learn."

Finally, one more highly influential thinker in the humanities whose own work has not only included a significant focus on the "person" but has also recently been re-interpreted as bearing a significant relationship to systems-thinking and complexity principles as these may be applied to the literary arts is Michel Foucault.

Some scholars, for example, have noted how aspects of Foucault's philosophy have several similarities to, but also important differences from, the Habermasian ontology (outlined in

Midgley's 2016 paper) that has framed much of recent critical systems thinking. Brocklesby and

Cummings, in their 1996 paper on the subject, observe that both perspectives embody forms of

so-called emancipatory thought in critical theory (traceable back to Kant), but that they differ in

the meanings that they apply to emancipation, in a manner that these scholars summarize as

follows:

> The Habermasian…is primarily concerned with developing theoretical
> approaches that can be applied to collectively emancipate others from a
> 'worse' to a 'better' state. In this mode, experts intervene in situations with the
> aim of improving the human condition by creating better holistic systems. The
> genealogy to Foucault, on the other hand, concerns itself more with providing
> tools which individuals can use themselves…to free their minds to alternatives
> by highlighting the way in which power within systems subjugates them. This
> approach seeks…to make visible, the unwritten categories and rules of the
> system(s), so as to enable individuals to develop responsive strategies to
> them… Fundamentally, the issue is human emancipation or self emancipation. (741)

As the authors point out, however, the two views are not mutually exclusive, and the

emancipation in both cases may be regarded as a kind of freeing move based upon acquiring

conscious knowledge of those social forces that converge upon and control people's behavior

(and "dominate" and "subjugate" them, as Foucault often put it).

Mark Olssen, a scholar of political theory and educational policy who has written extensively

on Foucault, also specifically refers to Foucault as a "complexity theorist"[2]. Furthermore, he has

discussed the role of literature in Foucault's thinking *as* such a theorist. Olssen points out that

much of Foucault's early writing focused on writers (notably Sade, Roussel, Artaud, and

Blanchot) and their works, and that, despite his writings' later shifts into social critical

discussions emphasizing power and resistance (the "political"), it continued to show the

influence of his thoughts regarding the literary ("Exploring Complexity" 83-86). Most pertinent

to the present discussion, Olssen cites the early Foucault who asserted (in his 1969 essay "What

is an Author?") that: "the author does not precede the works; he is a certain functional principle

by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses" and that "perhaps it is time to study

discourses not in terms of their expressive value or formal transformations but according to their

modes of existence. The modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation of

discourses vary with each culture and are modified within each" (qtd. in "Exploring Complexity"

86). Olssen also observes, however, that for Foucault, the so-called "author function" of writing

is something of a paradox in that it actually "differentiates" and "individuates [authors] as

socially and historically constituted individuals," thus making writers *appear as if* they preceded

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[2]Olssen details his considerations of Foucault as a complexity theorist in his book *Michel Foucault: Materialism and Education* (Bergin & Garvey, 1999, and expanded edition, Paradigm Press, 2006) and several articles, including his 2008 paper "Foucault as Complexity Theorist: Overcoming the Problems of Classical Philosophical Analysis." In the latter, he explores parallels between what he calls Foucault's Nietzschean view of history and models of complexity developed and utilized in the physical and social sciences in the twentieth century. Specifically, Olssen argues that Foucault rejects mechanical atomist epistemological world views (Hegelian, Marxist, and structuralist ones) that are based upon a Newtonian conception of a closed universe operating upon the basis of a small number of invariable and universal laws by which all may be predicted and explained and posits instead a radical ontology whereby the conception of the totality or whole is reconfigured as an open, relatively borderless system of infinite interconnections, possibilities and developments that emphasizes notions such as self-organization and dissipative structures; time as an irreversible, existential dimension; and a world of finite resources but with infinite possibilities for articulation or creative re-investment. ("Foucault as Complexity Theorist" 96)

their work ("Exploring Complexity" 87). This is because their writing, *like action in general* (in a Foucauldian move that Olssen argues anticipates complexity science which was still embryonic at the time of the philosopher's writing), "renders reversibility impossible" and "establishes the agent [author] as absolutely unique" ("Exploring Complexity" 87). Thus, as Olssen puts it, rather than the author, it is the *writing itself* which is "that material activity which spatializes, individuates and alters, thus is a mechanism for creativity, novelty and uniqueness" ("Exploring Complexity" 87).

While Foucault turned his attention away from particular writers and their works by the end of the 1960's, his early thinking on literature and the activity of writing clearly foreshadows some of the themes in his later discussions on discourse analysis wherein he specifically addresses aspects of signification and its relationships to (social) systems-in-transformation. In these discussions, he specifically argues, according to scholars McHoul and Grace, that discourses are said to be made up of groups of statements that "do things" and "bring about effects rather than merely 'represent' states of affairs" (37). Interestingly, this point recalls the position taken by Siskin in *his* study that "system" may be understood "as a genre - as a form that works physically in the world to mediate our efforts to know it" (1). That is to say, both seem to converge on a view that acknowledges *writing as a form of acting* whether through "statements" (Foucault) or by means of a "genre" (Siskin) that does a kind of work in the world which "bring(s) about effects." As the following chapters will lay out in their respective discussions, the writers in each case are also to be understood as engaging in *their* writing as actions meant to bring about certain effects - effects largely to be derived from providing their fellows with a *new perspective* on their world and some of the details of its *shifting*

"ontology" (including the nature and relationships between social identities) thereby constraining in their turn the ongoing workings of their societies. Or, as Snowden has summarily characterized an aspect of "complex adaptive systems" (CAS): "while these systems are constrained, the constraints are loose or only partial, and the nature of the constraints (and thereby the system) is constantly modified by the interaction of the agents with the system and each other; [that is] they coevolve" (Snowden 225).

In much the same way, as the present study will try to show, Staël and Kleist, Heine and Balzac, and finally, Mann and Mallarmé may also be said to have engaged their modernizing worlds in this more abstract sense of an "author function," employing writing as a form of acting that was both creative and novel, and producing literary works that *inter-acted* with their increasingly complex worlds in *processes of co-evolution*.

While the discussion will touch upon several of these writers' works (including essays), it will also incorporate close reading of particular ones: *The Mannequin: A Dramatic Proverb in Two Acts* by Staël; *Prince Friedrich of Homburg* by Kleist; *Deutschland: A Winter's Tale* by Heine; *Père Goriot* by Balzac; *Man of Straw* by Mann; and *Conflict* and *A Roll of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance* by Mallarmé.

Chapter 2:

The Creative Destruction of Staël and Kleist

In his essay "What is the Contemporary?" (2008), Giorgio Agamben describes "contemporariness" as a kind of stance, or relationship to one's historical moment, that involves adopting a particular mode of thought which confronts both existential and epistemological challenges:

> Contemporariness is, then, a singular relationship with one's own time…it is *that relationship with time that adheres to it through a disjunction and an anachronism.* Those who coincide too well with the epoch, those who are tied to it in every respect, are not contemporaries, precisely because they do not manage to see it; they are not able to firmly hold their gaze on it. (41)

In his view, those who are most fully contemporary overcome the difficulties in "holding their gaze" on "[their] own time" by "not allow[ing] themselves to be blinded by the lights of the century, and so manage to get a glimpse of the shadows in those lights…perceiv[ing] the darkness of [their] time as something that concerns [them], as something that never ceases to engage [them]" (45).

This capacity for "contemporariness" has the potential to arise, I would suggest, from the kinds of significant "crises of agency" that pressed Staël and Kleist (and the other writer-artists whom I will be discussing later) towards the *margins* of their societies while compelling them at the same time to dig deep into their natural abilities and respond to these pressures creatively. That is, through the convergence of the "force relations" (per Foucault) that impinged upon them and "darkened" their worlds (as Agamben says) by throwing up new challenges to their aspirations and abilities to act, they arguably became highly attuned as well as motivated to

engage with the discourses of their times but in a "disjunctive" way (per Agamben) by *altering* the narratable and articulating some of the *potentiality* they perceived in their "contemporary."

Staël and Kleist were radically different from each other in so many ways, of course, some of which will be pointed out in this chapter. Yet, despite these differences, aspects of what we know of their behavior as well as of some of the work that they produced also evince signs of their direct experience with and sensitivity to features of complex systems, as these were beginning to manifest in the dynamic workings and intellectual climate of Western Europe during their lifetimes.

For one thing, both were notably concerned with "limits" that various "powers" (in the Foucauldian sense) placed upon them. Among these limits were those engendered by increasing insecurities surrounding their positions in the aristocracy as well as what they encountered as so-called common knowledge - that is, cultural conceptions of the "womanly" or the "humanly possible" (as these were being disseminated through the work of intellectuals like Rousseau and Kant, respectively). These limits may be seen as the inverse of affordances - the options and opportunities for acting - that their social milieus offered them at the time. Just as systems may be understood as existing at different levels of scale such that "systems" at lower levels *nest* within those at higher levels, and the latter *afford* relatively more (or *less*) expansive "environments" to those below them as one proceeds upward along the hierarchy of such nested relationships, individual human beings - like Staël and Kleist - may be viewed as embodied systems embedded in broader social and cultural systems of varying kinds - that could range from family systems defined by kinship (blood relations) and rules of marriage to larger communal systems of varying exclusivity and "qualified" membership that were prevailing at the

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time, such as the *salons* in Paris (in which Staël and her mother before her were high-profile participants) or Prussian military organizations or state bureaucracies (like those in which Kleist briefly took part during his lifetime). In other words, from such a "complex systems" perspective, human beings may be understood to operate in a "world" of interrelated "systems" that they *create, co-constitute, and understand along with others as the ones in which they operate.* And it was in such a nested "system" context, that Staël and Kleist may be said to have experienced themselves as "limited" and in some degree of crises as so-called "agents."

But while many of us now living in the twenty-first century may acknowledge such a perspective or, at least, have an implicit sense that our world consists of such complex systems' interrelationships, those living at Staël and Kleist's time could not (at least, not in such terms). This is obviously due to the fact that their world had not yet developed such a discourse; or, more specifically, the (social) science(s) for formulating the details of such conceptual knowledge had not yet emerged. As Siskin has argued, "system's" ontological status - as a way of being in the world - and its influence *on* the material world and our ways of understanding how it operates, have both grown over time. Staël and Kleist would thus have necessarily understood the sense of "a system" quite differently from the specific ways in which we do. Yet, I would suggest that they were not only ahead of their time in ways that many others have argued (Staël as an early feminist, Kleist as a kind of proto-modernist), but that they were both also *kinds* of early systems-thinkers. And some of the ways in which they might be viewed as such will be described in what follows.

I would also speculate that they were even *able* to become productive "contemporaries" - to whom *some* others (those who had access to their works) would look to gauge a sense of the

times and their own place(s) in it - not only because of the so-called crises of agency that drove them, but also because of their own *moves* throughout the social and cultural systems in which they were respectively situated. Both were, in fact, among those handful of individuals who, because of their education and means, had opportunities to gain multiple and quite diverse perspectives on their societies, observing aspects of the latter from relatively privileged but what could also be called *marginalized* positions, so that they could appreciate much of the social dynamical complexity of their time and give it some meaningful narrative shape. Or, as Agamben might put it, from their positions of "disjunction," they could see behind and through (metaphorically speaking) various "obscurities" of their time and work at trying to throw some light on the "shadows" arising from their period's "darkness."

Reasons accounting for Staël and Kleist's so-called social disjunction and marginalized positions obviously differed, however. Most notably, each clearly had *some* power in their respective societies, but that power was limited, as both of them well knew. While Staël was an aristocrat with widespread connections in the upper echelons of her own and other countries' societies, not only was the security of such a position under threat, but she was also a woman; and *as* a woman, her ability to act and impact others in the public sphere was highly constrained. Kleist, on the other hand, was a man and as such could move relatively freely in various domains in the public sphere, but he wanted to be an *artist,* and as such, presumably due to his temperament as well as his personal and professional choices, which were also clearly restricted by his having been born into a family of relatively *low* status in the Prussian aristocracy, he enjoyed little success.

Though each could, of course, be viewed in isolation and on their own gender-specific or artistic terms (so to speak), the present aim, as I will underscore here once more, is to try to gain an appreciation of how they may be viewed as having something in common as productive "contemporaries" of their historical moment from a complex systems perspective. One way of framing some of their commonality is in the characterization of their period as one of "creative destruction"[3]. These words together convey the sense of a significant eradication or clearing of a space leaving a residue wherein new forms have the opportunity to emerge and proliferate (analogous to the notable devastation of an ecosystem whose remains germinate and contribute to the resumption of interconnected life-forms in a somewhat different state).

As I will be suggesting in my interpretation of some of these writers' work, the latter could be viewed as efforts at reformulating aspects of the very *natures* of the so-called "elements" making up the societal "wholes" (systems) of which they were a part. But they were not just concerned with the so-called "building blocks." Critical to the CAS perspective I will be suggesting they implicitly grasped, they also were concerned with how these "elements" could interdependently *relate* to each other and potentially yield new social "orders."

As I will try to show, one way this manifested was through their reworking some of the connotations of social "binaries" (regarding female versus male (Staël), and the human versus non-human [Kleist]) in the context of the communal identities with which they were concerned.

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[3]From a CAS perspective, a massive sociocultural 'perturbation' like that of the Revolution of 1789 may be viewed as one of "creative destruction." This term "creative destruction" initially popularized by the economist Joseph Schumpeter (and borrowed by Gunderson and Holling in their discussion of "adaptive cycles" in evolving hierarchical "human and natural" systems [34; 319]) refers to a phase of "release" of what have become "overconnected" (increasingly fragile) system elements - with some elements now available to try to capture "new" opportunities, just as others at the same time attempt to minimize losses, both however promptly engaging in efforts to try to work together to reorganize and establish a new "workable" order(ing) of system and environment (Gunderson and Holling 34-35).

Thus, in this and other ways, they tried to redefine and give some discursive shape to the flux of nascent social structures burgeoning before their eyes.

Kleist and Staël lived at a particular historical juncture where the forms of social relation were being subject to profound challenges (and, particularly during the Napoleonic Wars, were threatening the very survival of many living in both of their homelands). Clearly there had been a massive and violent decimation of traditional French power structure(s) leading to destabilization of the pattern of social relationships defining France that was reverberating across western Europe, including the complex of German-speaking territories of the late Holy Roman Empire. Conventions - old answers to persistent questions of how to perceive and navigate in the world - were not only in the process of being rather widely and resoundingly denied, but traditional authorities for restoring order and promoting *acceptable* (and sanctioned) affordances were also no longer to be found embodied in kings or other monarchs.

With the latter's legitimacy severely undermined, the search for answers was turning to alternate sources and deeper consideration of others who might be qualified to manage communities (like those of France and the still-embryonic "Germany") which were growing in their socioeconomic complexity in the modern world. But as will be discussed in more detail in chapter four, these spreading challenges to monarchical authorities and attendant nobility where the sociocultural attentional focus was significantly tied to *personages* who were formally sanctioned as largely responsible for establishing and enforcing the social "order" (as the social ontology) were also being accompanied by the growth of more *impersonal* forces (such as commercialism and trade) to whose "power" increasing numbers of people were becoming subject.

Thus questions regarding new kinds of "sovereignty" were circulating. From one Enlightenment perspective that was supported by Revolutionary democratizing principles, one possibility was recourse to new kinds of "selves," those with the relatively newly appreciated powers of reason and capacities for systematizing that were, in their turn, fostering the growth of systems of knowledge that were changing (by means of various media and newly-developed technologies), aspects of the material world itself. As the sociologist and political scientist Jack Goldstone has put it, the French Revolution was itself of a relatively new kind in that a significant majority of its participants were specifically aiming to *not* restore social order based on an appeal to traditional authorities (kings and/or the Church), but wanted change (Goldstone 61-62); and the change they created became a new kind of social organization legitimated by means of a constitution - akin to the American one recently created and clearly deriving from Enlightenment influences of valuation of reason and ideals regarding "natural rights, to liberate men (though not yet women) from [such] authorities" (Goldstone 66-69).

Thus, the Revolution may be regarded as having opened up a new space of possibilities for rethinking the world in which human beings circulated and by which they themselves and their social environments were constituted - worlds that inhered the potential for both a new form of systematic governance and new ways of looking at "the people" as elements *in* it. Agent categories could thus be said to have become foci of concern since they were a virtual crucible for affording new "forms" for the actors who would mediate the relations between large-scale communities (such as those between the French and German-speaking societies-about-to-become-"nations" of western Europe). But they would also have had significance at the more micro-level of daily interactions between the elements of such large-scale systems - those

interactions sanctioned by relatively long-held behavioral customs and legal codes defining gender categories and their roles, for example.

Historian Suzanne Desan has reinforced this latter idea, pointing out that "the French Revolution destabilized gender dynamics in all sorts of ways and created spaces for self-invention"; she also notes that the appreciation of this phenomenon over recent decades has provoked the development of a field now "informed by much subtler thinking about gender as culturally constructed," and a growing trend towards analyzing women as "actors" with a view towards "individual motivation, and close attention to the day-by-day, play-by-play dynamics of revolutionary politics" (Desan 567-568).

We are now able to begin looking at Staël herself through such a lens, perceiving her as such an "actor" who, as the devoted daughter of a politically outspoken French financial minister under Louis XVI (Jacques Necker), wife of a Swedish Baron and ambassador to Paris (Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein), and colleague-confidant of several French and British intellectuals, artists, and men of state, was also someone immersed in and conversant with the details of revolutionary politics. But as a woman living in this time of questioning of social identities (and where her own *aristocratic* one was evidently on the wane), she not surprisingly struggled with her own. The public (social) identity she took pains to construct and promote was also of an unprecedented and complex kind - one which John Isbell has characterized as embodying qualities of a new "romantic heroine" and "political animal" (Isbell, 1996).

Thus**,** Staël herself philosophically explored and artistically experimented in her work with considerations of new possibilities for female identities as *elements* operating within the purview of the developing but relatively powerful and (under Napoleon) assertive French system. Kleist,

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on the other hand, living in a German-speaking society under threat and on the verge of being

dominated and (re-)defined by the very system (form of governance, legal codes, and other

potential controls) of its aggressive French neighbor, was arguably more concerned in *his* work

with expressing what it meant to him as a *man* (qua *"human"*) *and an artist* to be living within

and operating as a part of a *German* (national) system-in-the-making.

  The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to supporting these claims and, in particular,

showing how both of these quite different individuals could be seen as experimenting with and

promoting - to the extent social circumstances *allowed* - novel aspects of fundamental social

identities with whose dynamics and instability they themselves appear to have had significant

familiarity.

  While the oeuvres of both Staël and Kleist were diverse in terms of genre, both wrote plays,

which were prime media for representing social identities due to their form as public

performance. As the scholar of theater studies, Erike Fischer-Lichte, has observed, plays (at least

in the European tradition) were written with the conscious understanding that audiences

understood theatrical performances as being concerned with staging such identities (4). She also

argues, however, that such works may be understood as existing in a "dialectical relationship"

between "theatre and the social reality of the theatregoers." As she puts it, the sense of such

theater could be appreciated by perceiving it as:

> an integrated and integrating element of social reality, changes in which it
> can decisively influence by a permanent dynamisation - for example, by
> offering a current critique of the concept of identity or by proposing
> alternatives, perhaps even by initiating them…Enormous tension can
> arise [however] between the dominant concept of identity in the social
> class which supports the theatre and the outline of identity created by
> a drama - and its performance on stage. (5)

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Fischer-Lichte refers here to what she regards as a long-standing tradition by which European theater and dramatists operated, which was also one in which Staël and Kleist worked, though they would have introduced their own specific stylistic nuances in the designing of identities working to find expression in their own plays.

Just over a decade ago, the cultural historian Lynn Hunt published a manifesto of sorts to fellow scholars in an article entitled "The Experience of Revolution" (2009) that bears on the related matter of how to regard and try to interpret works by artists like Staël and Kleist, who produced their creations during a time of dramatic social change. In it, she proposed a kind of paradigm shift away from scholars perceiving and describing "the world as discursively constructed" (a mode in which she acknowledged having herself long participated) towards one that acknowledges a world that is "*also built* through embodiment, gesture, facial expression, and *feelings*, that is, through nonlinguistic modes of communication that have their own logics" (emphases added) (674). She admits having come to make this intellectual move herself via an awareness of some recent observations in neuroscience (for which I must also acknowledge some bias) that reinforced the value to her of considering the impact of felt experience on minds interacting with each other in the cultural expressions of such a period.

Specifically, she notes that these neuroscientific observations 1) provide evidence for the "self's" material basis in physiologic processes which act as "an organizer that arranges, categorizes, and manages experience" (that is, "it is not simply a discursive effect"), 2) underscore the reality of unconscious processes (including feelings and emotions) arising from bodies that interact with more or less conscious cognitive faculties of reason and decision-

making as well as aspects of the physical and sociocultural world around them, and 3) help illuminate sources of the human capacity for "empathetic identification with others" - a capacity which allows us to have some access to (rather than being completely sealed off from) the feelings of others (673).

In addition, as she argues, attempts to understand the time of the French Revolution and its aftermath should include acknowledgement of its having been a time when many if not most individuals of the period experienced some form of revolutionary *violence*, whether arising from frightening physical threats (that Stael testified she had personally been subject to [see Hillman 250]), the mayhem of the Terror, and/or the aggressive threats and disorientation immanent in the Napoleonic Wars that subsequently traveled across Europe, where "words were rushing to catch up" to what individuals felt and yet (in that less articulate sense) still knew (674-675). In other words, in Hunt's view, this historical period of significant tumult and intermittently explosive violence should also be acknowledged as a time when the"irrational" and "unpredictable" were as present and operative as "rational calculation" and the "predictable" (675). The Revolution's impact, therefore, may be understood not only in universal but also in psychological and visceral terms.

And, finally, as artistic depictions, such as prints, proliferated in that period, they "helped society or 'the social' become more visible" "as an object of experience and cognition"; and with their aid, "the gap grew between customary social experience and new political expectations… [and] the uncertainty and anxiety created by this growing gap prompted new kinds of reflections about and new kinds of representations of social relations (Hunt 677). In sum, they captured the loss of "semiotic stability" in many aspects of "the social" representing itself to itself, and

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thereby "opened the door to a new conceptualization of society itself" - a conceptualization that could *not* simply be "imposed," but, particularly in the modern era, "must be learned, lived, embodied, and felt within individual selves" (Hunt 678).

Assuming all of this to be the case, works like Staël's *The Mannequin* and Kleist's *Prince Friedrich of Homburg* may be understood as not only having been informed by such experiences but also affording representational "mirrors" by which their audiences could be helped to see themselves and their world differently.

Staël lived through and experienced the Revolution and subsequent Terror directly, so that it would seem quite reasonable to try and discern some of the effects of such experience on her thinking and her work, as Hunt advocates. Yet, for her, "experience" had also included exposure to Enlightenment ideas and valorization of systematic approaches to thinking and behavior. This particular confluence of experiences may account for some of the differences between her thinking and that of intellectual female contemporaries who had not shared them. Thus, her reflections on sensibility as well as her philosophy of the passions, though not always internally consistent in their details (showing, as they did, signs of some reconsideration over time), did always demonstrate an acknowledgment and appreciation of both feelings - whether arising physiologically or morally (through what we would now call empathy) - *and* reason and logic to temper and guide them in their behavioral expression. As French and Enlightenment scholar Tili Boon Cuillé has observed:

> Unlike Mary Wollstonecraft, who continued to oppose sensibility and reason, billing the one as feminine and the other as masculine, Staël considered the two qualities to be complementary, and their combination to be an essential attribute of all citizens - men and women alike - if the republican ideal was to become a reality. (9)

Staël's consistent acknowledgment of this complementarity as an "essential attribute of all

citizens," I would argue, was yet another manifestation of how system was proceeding to operate

as a (still in many ways unconscious) *form* working in the world to "mediate our efforts to know

it" (Siskin 1). Going beyond simply advocating their complementary relationship, Staël (unlike

Wollstonecraft and many others who took the latter's position) promoted a neutralization of the

connotation that "sensibility" was to be associated with the category of the feminine and

"reason" with the masculine. That is, she was systematically trying to rework the "binarism" of

the feminine/masculine social identities of her period by articulating new connotations for the

"signed" differences between them in the future she envisioned. Her work also had the potential

to impress certain people in the western European world of the time because she had made a

name for herself as a so-called "scandalous" woman as well as a celebrated public intellectual

virtually on a par with other public intellectuals like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, whose

work Staël *generally* admired and knew quite well (for a discussion of Rousseau's own use of the

terminology of systems as a significant form in his *Confessions,* see Siskin [177-178]).

There are various reasons for focusing on one of her plays entitled *The Mannequin: A*

Dramatic Proverb in Two Acts in the present discussion. Though it has typically not been viewed

as one of her major works, Staël appears to have considered its details as thoughtfully as she did

those which achieved wider attention. As use of the word "proverb" in its title implies, Staël

regarded it in some ways as being a work of that literary genre of *proverbes* that were forms of

morality plays that had been popular in England centuries earlier but which were becoming

popular again "in the drawing rooms of France in the nineteenth century" (and particularly later

in that century through the works of Alfred de Musset)(Neuss 1). Such plays could often be comedies, though they were intended to be "educational, designed to be read as a truth of the proverb the playwright chose to illustrate," though they could be "amplifications of proverbs" rather than being explicitly based on one (Neuss 1-2). In this particular work of Staël's, no explicit proverb is mentioned in the title or the play itself. But reference to a "mannequin" did have special significance for many at the time who were "in the know" regarding prevailing social and political debates. And the linking of the gender category of the feminine with connotations of mannequins - notably their "dummy" qualities, such as silence, and lack of movement or willful self-direction - was, by all accounts, anathema to Staël. There is little doubt that she would have wanted to oppose such notions gaining traction in this time of unstable social identities,

Staël had also already written two of her most famous and widely read novels *Delphine* (1802) and *Corinne* (1807) when she wrote *The Mannequin* in 1811. In those novels, she had examined the limits of women's freedom in an aristocratic society and as an artist in western European culture (contemporary England and Italy). In *Corinne* specifically, as Maria Fairweather, one of Staël's biographers, indicates, Staël had given her heroine a "strong voice" and had "tackled head on the image of the ideal woman as a submissive creature who remained silent or at best only uttered polite commonplaces"; yet, despite this forthright quality of her character, the novel ends tragically for Corinne, leaving one "with questions rather than answers," as it "demonstrates yet again that the society of the time would not tolerate such women" (327). At the point she chose to write *The Mannequin*, Staël had already been exiled without a trial, banished to a distance of no closer than 200 km from Paris, by Napoleon, who

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used various means to discredit her and her work, including limiting much of its printing because of what he regarded as its subversive qualities. Knowing of her extensive network of foreign and domestic connections that included diplomats and many of his political opponents, he perceived her as a significant threat to the government he was in the process of trying to establish, where a woman's voice such as hers would not have been welcome.

Despite such pressures, Staël did return in *The Mannequin* to the dilemma of an intellectually gifted woman who feels highly constrained in speaking her mind publicly. In it, however, she changes the manner of presentation of this theme. The changes she makes point not only to her versatility but also suggest some additional circumspection on her part regarding how to go about the writing and portrayal of such a then-provocative female character. As we will see, this character (like Staël herself) is obliged to use round-about methods to achieve a goal that she views as ultimately beneficial to "all concerned."

This play was actually written for her private theater at Coppet - the home her father had built and to which he and his family had retreated just prior to the Revolution, after his own temporary banishment from Paris and the employ of Louis XVI when he attempted to explain aspects of his views as finance minister in a public debate and disclosed embarrassing details (in the king's view) regarding the French national debt. Staël apparently learned many lessons about social and political discretion (or possible consequences of the lack of it) from her beloved father. French scholar Joyce Johnston has stated that Staël never even sought to have her plays staged, which may have been because (as she indicates John Isbell also proposes), she wished to "maintain a private persona in response to her political influence" (14). In the privacy of her home, however, where censors had no place and she could be selective of her audience, Staël could proceed to

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stage this short satire - which has been summarized by Fairweather as a "comedy" in which

"Sophie, the talkative and feisty heroine, persuades an unwanted suitor to fall in love instead

with her pretty and demure 'cousin' who, happy to sit at the back of the room" and never broach

"her own opinion about anything" turns out to be a "cardboard doll" or *mannequin* (327).

Staël's own political savvy and pragmatism could thus be said to be in evidence here, as they

were in the penning of many of her other writings including those that were not set for the stage.

That is, she recognized her place in her own patterned system of social relations and appears to

have engaged in specific maneuvers to navigate this very system so as to avoid reprisal and

protect herself, while continuing to do her utmost to impart her then radical views to help

refashion the social identities comprising it. Knowing herself to be an official outsider and

incapable of participating in the programatic formulations and policy directions of her own social

system, and in some real danger herself from those (like Napoleon) who disagreed with and may

have felt in some ways threatened by her, she allowed men (including some trusted members in

her own extensive social circle) to present some of her ideas, if indirectly (Johnston also notes

that "[Staël's] plays were adapted by male authors of the time" including E.T.A. Hoffman and

somewhat later Jacques Offenbach who "borrow[ed] elements" of *The Mannequin's* plot to

"overturn social codes" in their own work - *Der Sandman* (1815) and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*

(1880), respectively) [Johnston 14]).

Vivian Folkenflick also points out in the introduction to her translation of selected writings by

Staël that *The Mannequin* has been interpreted as a "light-hearted comedy" with a feminist

theme, but that Staël subsequently took up its theme more seriously in her Second Preface to her

Letters on Rousseau (in 1814, two years before her death), where "she warns that a woman who

cannot find intellectual freedom 'is nothing but a doll'" (32). This latter comment may be understood as being in response to Rousseau's paternalist discussions of dolls in the context of women's education for which he was "notorious among progressive thinkers [like] Germaine de Staël and Mary Wollstonecraft" (Douthwaite 280).

It is presumably in this context that Staël's proverbial mannequin may be appreciated. Though an acknowledged admirer of much of Rousseau's liberal thought with whom she shared "the Enlightenment project to reform society and the arts in light of a revised notion of human nature" (Cuillé 6-7), Staël obviously differed with him on several of the details of how to achieve these reforms, notably where women were concerned.

In *The Mannequin*, she also employs several techniques for simultaneously portraying and conveying her deeply intertwined philosophical and political views. Staël was obviously an accomplished writer who not only prided herself on her own literary skill and rhetorical eloquence, but also regarded these capacities - for communicating via speaking and in writing - as tools with and to which *artists* (and particularly educated women) were highly suited (this view is one she articulates at great length in her *De la littérature dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (1799), which is "sometimes hailed as one of the founding texts of literary criticism" [Hillman 237]). As Suzanne Guerlac, scholar of French literature and culture, has noted, Staël reported that her own experience in the Paris *salons* imbued her with a view that "power is achieved through a force of language and character is revealed through words," and that it was by means of such expressions of power and character that women could find real influence; as Staël saw it, such expression also had the potential for opposing Napoleon's military empire with "an empire of speech" that was informed by "passions" of a virtuous,

"loving" and "persuasive" kind (Guerlac 53). By refashioning "the feminine" into the portrayal of what she regarded as a more authentic female character, she appears to have envisioned a new role for women, one by which they could be understood as reasonably included *within* the discourses (qua multiplicity of force relations per Foucautl) of the systems of the new western European societies on the sociocultural horizon.

It is thus not simply comical but also ironic that she would portray the heroine of this play *The Mannequin* as one who stages a social identity but through her very performance illustrates the real undesirability of a superficially attractive but, in fact, unfeeling and soulless doll ("dummy") who is completely incapable of expressing *any* character *or* identity. Considering the play thoughtfully, one can appreciate and see through some of the "shadows of the time" (per Agamben) which tended to obscure the full humanity of women, according to Staël.

It should also be noted, however, that as Staël has created this play, what matters are not simply gender identities and how her audience might have understood their sociopolitical construction. Apparently recognizing much of the complexity of Identities (and the challenges associated with trying to manage their interrelations in practice from her own experience during her tumultuous time), she complicates this relatively brief and simple narrative with an interweaving of identity concerns grounded in ties to one's family and homeland as well. Tensions between perspectives rooted in (now-) competing classes and livelihoods (those of the traditional aristocrat, more modern businessman, and "enduring" artist) are also present.

The play consists of just four characters whose interactions take place exclusively in a domestic space in Berlin, the home of a young woman Sophie and her father, M. de la Morlière, a prosperous businessman with his own composite identity as a French émigré who now lives

and conducts all his work in Germany and in German. Such a framing is significant on several levels, including the fact that it appears as an interesting recalling of Staël's own situation as a privileged individual with complex social affiliations arising from ties to diverse geographically-dispersed communities existing in some tension with one another.

Despite his ties to France by ancestry and cultural preference (which he repeatedly underscores in the dialogue), but because his religious faith as a Huguenot conflicts with that of French Roman Catholics, M. de la Morlière has been obliged to continue to reside in "Protestant Germany" on which he now depends for his livelihood. Born and raised in this socioculturally hybrid environment, Sophie tries to satisfy some of her own inclinations while navigating between and being obliged to meet demands arising from two of the three other (all male) characters who are portrayed as largely caricatured members of these various French and German communities.

In the opening scene, the crux of the plot is immediately established as a conflict between Sophie's desire to marry a young *German artist*, Frederic Hoffman (who loves her and appreciates her intellect) and her father's desire (and the promise he has already made) to have her marry a particular *French gentleman*, the Count d'Erville, whom Sophie dislikes. She indicates to her father that her strong distaste is based on the Count's giving no indication of recognizing or caring anything about her feelings (offering no signs of empathy, seemingly in another recalling of Staël's own conflict with Napoleon) and his never acknowledging her or other people's real characters (which the Count himself subsequently affirms, as when he casually responds to a question posed to him that "frankly, I really wasn't listening" [330]). Sophie explicitly notes that she loves her "Papa" and regards it as her duty to abide by his

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wishes. But her fondness for the young German Fredric becomes clear in the tone and reciprocal

flow of their dialogue as well as in their ability to devise and stage the mannequin plot for

misleading the Count *together*. With these character maneuvers, we see the beginnings of a

potential re-arrangement of relationships between the play's "elements" - that were initially

established on the basis of M. de la Morlière's "promise" and Sophie's uncertain position in the

space of relations.

Along one dimension, the play's staging of embodied national identities and alliances

resonates yet again with Staël's own apparent struggles to reconcile homeland allegiances.

Though the offspring of Swiss parents, in public settings she tended to proclaim herself French

and it was from such a stance that she actually opposed Napoleon, France's leader. But as the

historian Susanne Hillman has put it:

> as de Staël conceived [the term nation], it connoted a spiritual and
> cultural homeland, a place where one's friends dwelled, and a land for
> which one might need to sacrifice oneself. What it was not was a
> specific territory with precisely delimited borders. Instead, it constituted
> an imagined entity, an idea that inspired feelings of love and belonging
> regardless of its geopolitical shape and that demanded one's loyalty,
> ultimately for the benefit of humankind. (252)

Such a conception of the nation, in an age when concerns regarding this new category of social

identity and its defense were being sparked by Napoleon's own expansionist aggression, was a

difficult one to publicly defend. In a kind of mirroring of this problem, Sophie's initial argument

with her father that she be allowed to marry Fredric fails - as the limits of the possible,

established by his promise and the form of "nationalism" he defends, are too strong. Thus,

despite his own birth and continued residence in Germany, his particular form of French

"nationalism" asserts itself in his maintaining that "I may have happened to be born [in

Germany], but birth is an accident; it counts for nothing in the life of a man. My real country is France," where he regards his ancestors as having been "full of glory" when they left (327). He will only agree to *her* choice of husband if she can find a way to absolve him from his promise of engagement of her to the Count. Hence Sophie's plan to dupe the latter with Fredric's help emerges.

At the same time, the narrative's specific lauding of Sophie's willingness to maintain and strengthen *her German* identity (via marriage to Fredric) appears as purposeful as does the design of Sophie's ruse. During her period of exile, Staël traveled extensively in Germany, clearly admiring much of its culture (particularly that of Prussia, which she referred to as "la patrie de la pensée" in her *De l'Allemagne* [1813]); and, as Hillman also notes, Staël's "celebration of the splendid tapestry of national cultures, woven of all the intellectual riches of mankind, carries undeniable Herderian overtones" (244-245). That is, by all accounts, Staël herself respected and felt great affection for this Other culture, and could portray her heroine as seeking happiness in this commingling of national affiliations. Thus, the emphatic nationalism in the context of this matter of her engagement, which the male authority (father) figure and the French Count in her play embody, will only be amenable to a kind of softening and re-negotiation of their positions if she can find a way to convincingly illustrate the *value* of an articulate female - who prefers a more diplomatic solution (like that which Staël had tried to articulate to Napoleon) - to them.

The Count is portrayed through the dialogue, however, as a self-absorbed man of questionable morals (as when he states, for example, "I've already been in love lots of times, and lots of people have been in love with me" [334]), who frankly has no love for wealthy Sophie but has

"lots of debt," which he ascribes to "the custom in France" [331]). He appears, therefore, to be a man who will be difficult to convince by any conventional means or methods of diplomacy. Thus, Sophie must design a different strategy, but notably she also does this with the full awareness and support of her fellow *artist* Fredric.

Then as the plot unfolds, and in the course of being subjected to the staging of her device, the unsuspecting Count actually expresses his preference for a mute, immobile, and unaccomplished "woman" (who "never bothered much about reading," "doesn't think it quite right for a woman to draw," and has no [singing] voice at all" [345]), who shortly thereafter turns out to be simply a mannequin.

We see, however, that in the process of fooling and then "illuminating" the Count, Sophie's character also becomes transformed, from one with very limited social agency - completely subject as she is to what her father and the Count have decided *for* her - to one who has played a significant role in deciding her own fate. Sophie's newly-found "agency" may also be understood as her having re-negotiated aspects of the "boundaries" between her German female character and the French male character of the Count (a move which also recalls Staël's own desires for a more peaceful rapprochement between Germany and France). One appreciates this reconciliation in the Count's final comments wherein, for the first time, he not only "listens" to Sophie (his tendency to *not* "listen," particularly to her, has been emphasized repeatedly up to this point), but also directly acknowledges her presence and her "wishes" (347). The demarcation that has also been maintained (with some satirical humor) by the male characters in their expressed preferences for French *versus* German cultural values and identities has also been softened, as

Sophie's father relinquishes his wish for a French son-in-law and will allow young Frederic to take the Count's place.

Staël obviously recognized the challenges she confronted in trying to publicly stage the performance of such a play - one that, despite its overt light-heartedness, could easily be interpreted as taking a "stab" at the militaristic form of nationalism and disparagement of the female voice embodied in the Napoleonic regime. But she was also something of an idealist, whose aspirations appear to have included effecting various maneuvers to re-form the various social systems (in all of their complexity) that she observed in flux around her. Thus, even with this "secret" play, she articulated a vision of a world where the happiness and well-being of individuals could be aligned with the happiness and well-being of the communities qua nations in which they lived (a vision she also projected as a second part of her *De l'influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations* (1796), but which she never completed [Guerlac 44]). In contrast to Staël's novel *Corinne* then, which ends tragically with more "questions than answers" (Fairweather 327), *The Mannequin* offers a different kind of ending and suggests an alternate set of connotations for addressing the traditional "binarisms" of masculine and feminine and opposing national identities within its narrative system of meaning.

It would also seem to be worth noting that the clever dialogical tool of employing insincerity in Sophie's and Fredric's combined efforts to fool the Count had the potential to exert a similar effect on her intended audience. As the philosopher Andreas Stokke has discussed at length in his recent book *Lying and Insincerity*, insincere speech is one among several ways of circumventing the general expectation most of us have that speech is used to *inform* others by communicating *truths* about the world. Unlike frank lying, however, which is an example of a kind of speech that

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is often regarded as asserting a non-truth from purely selfish motives to deceive, other forms of insincerity can, at times, serve valuable purposes, as in the case of implicating or communicating things indirectly and/or obliging ordinary speakers to engage in meta-linguistic reasoning and surmise a truth without harming them or hurting their feelings (Stokke 3-5). Thus, we find, in the play's concluding scene, that Sophie offers a lengthy explanation of her behavior to the Count whom she implores to "not make a simple joke into something horrible," but rather to now understand her motivation and desires to which he has previously been oblivious. With such a maneuver, Staël has again demonstrated her rhetorical and verbal skills, cleverly revising the thinking and altering the controlling behavior of this French male character (who now releases her from her engagement) without in any way demeaning him and at the same time illustrating what we might call the moral of this tale to her audience: that our heroine, like the Count himself, constitutes a genuine person - that is to say, an element of their social relational system with actual agency and thus a "force" (à la Foucault) to be reckoned with - and not a cardboard or "living doll" (347).

Finally, I would suggest that Staël employs another related technique in this play that illustrates her significant appreciation of not only the nuances of interpersonal dynamics but of how systems - at multiple levels - operate. It involves the element of surprise.

In her recent book *Elements of Surprise: Our Mental Limits and the Satisfactions of Plot,* scholar of cognitive literary studies, Vera Tobin, has observed that despite conceptions of surprise covering a wide range of phenomena that differ significantly in their degrees of unexpectedness and contrast with held beliefs, "well-made" surprises in narratives "produce a flash reinterpretation of events together with the feeling that the evidence for this reinterpretation

was there all along" (1-2). Staël's *The Mannequin* could certainly be viewed as such a "well-made" play constructed around an intentional induction of surprise and "flash reinterpretation" - such that the Count *abruptly* comes to change his thinking (and, in the audience's witnessing of this moment, they may also change theirs).

Surprise as an emotion has also been extensively studied by psychologists, though it has recently begun to receive greater attention by scholars in other disciplines, such as cognitive science, linguistics, and philosophy (see, for example, *Expressing and Describing Surprise*, edited by Agnès Celle and Laure Lansari, John Benjamins Publishing, 2017 and *Surprise: An Emotion?,* edited by Natalie Depraz and Anthony J. Steinbeck, Springer, 2018). Despite there being no complete scholarly consensus, surprise seems to differ fundamentally from other emotions and specifically those that elicit typical, and typically overt, behavioral *responses.* Surprise has been conceived to operate more as a "general interrupter to ongoing activity" or, metaphorically speaking and in its most intense form, as a kind of "circuit breaker" (Tomkins 107).

The term surprise is also used by some, however, to refer to certain phenomena in the scientific field of complex systems (see, for example, *Uncertainty and Surprise in Complex Systems: Questions on Working with the Unexpected*, edited by Reuben R. McDaniel, Jr. and Dean J. Driebe, Springer, 2005). The term as used in this context is not simply meant metaphorically, but actually refers to phenomena at levels of scale beyond the individual, specifically at the level of "people in organizations" who, as (members of) collectives often tend to "view surprises as unwelcome and generally dysfunctional occurrences, prompting actions to avoid or manage them" (McDaniel and Driebe (7). In other words, they are perceived by such

groups of individuals as significant disruptions of a status quo that then *promote* some alternate *course* of action.

Staël knew herself to be a self-interested individual, but she also knew herself to be a part of broader systems - a family as well as a (set of) communit(ies) whose survival and well-being were of great concern to her. Though she had personally experienced massive surprises and come face-to-face with aspects of the fundamental disruption of the western European social order, she (like many others subject to the same experience) was concerned in her work with making creative efforts to regroup but on a *new* course of action *after* this experience. In her case, this regrouping and redirection took place not only at the personal level of her own family but also within her writing projects, whose themes had obvious connotations suggesting greater roles for women at the broader collective levels of society and in the debates surrounding French nationalism.

Staël's forward-looking vision, despite its being a relatively influential one at the time, was just one of those "in the air," however. If Staël aspired to being a "part" of a new kind of nation, a new kind of "France," one where its men *and* women (qua system elements) engaged with each other in a space where both were agents (probably citizens) motivated by the Enlightenment ideal of reason and "sensibility" working together, this was her own unique expression of an ideal for a potentially new social reality. She recognized that change was inevitable, and she seems to have been driven to try to alter at least one connotation of the feminine in the discourses of her time. That is, she tried to re-form the alternate (and largely prevailing male) conception of women as "living dolls" with little (if any) capacity for reason who, if they acted at all, it was as a consequence of being driven by their inherent (comparatively less rational) sensibilities which

required firm external (that is, "male") direction for their proper guidance. Thus, without denying many of the clear differences between women and men, or contesting the idea that women were motivated by unique sensibilities, she worked at reframing the details of gender categories in a manner that could raise the possibility of women's co-participation in the political governance and development of rational economic and other social policies of the new French republic (qua system organized on a foundation of various rationally structured sub-systems).

Kleist, a notoriously conflicted but talented soul whose life would end tragically early (and infamously) in a highly calculated suicide pact with a woman, also had a forward-looking artistic vision influenced by certain Enlightenment ideals. Akin to Staël's, it could be said to have arisen in part from a sensing of certain threats to his agency. But unlike Staël, who was quite concerned with "who" would be able to participate in her society's "systematic" reconstitution, Kleist, as I will try to show, was more concerned with the question of "how." That is, how might men create a new "system" or form of community, going so far at times as to even question the very feasibility of the latter.

While the "destabilization of gender dynamics" that Desan refers to was obviously acutely felt by Staël in terms of her social identity as a woman - thus influencing several aspects of her proposed version of social reform - masculinities themselves were far from immune. In particular, on the German side of the conflicts related to the various Napoleonic Wars that arose in the aftermath of the French Revolution, questions of *male* identities along with national identities were also at issue. Renewed "thinking about feeling" and debates regarding such

identities' relationship to agency that the French Revolution fostered[4], and that much of Staël's own work could be argued to have epitomized (from a female perspective), also found expression in this other world of largely German-speaking peoples who sensed the growing French threat. Kleist's passionate *male* voice may be seen as among those concerned with how to address various challenges - including, though not limited to, those for which men would have been militarily responsible - engendered in his own society by this physical *and* sociocultural threat.

But, from what we know of his life (and the details are relatively limited, since he was a more enigmatic and socially isolated individual than was Staël), both his personal and intellectual concerns centered less on the details of pragmatic differences between men and women and their implications for politics (his vision seems to have had no kinship with any kind of early "feminism") and more on the constitution of aspects of human - still very much qua "male" - nature.

Born in 1777 into a family occupying a lower rung of the Prussian aristocratic hierarchy that had traditionally produced men entering the military, and then orphaned in his early adolescence (his father, a captain in the Prussian army dying unexpectedly, followed three years later by his mother, who had been denied a pension as well as her request for her son Heinrich's entrance into the military academy), Kleist appears to have occupied a world effectively on the outer margins of privilege and the mainstream from a relatively early age. Initially home-schooled, he entered the Prussian army as a corporal at age fourteen where he met two young men who would

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[4] See Rosenfeld, Sophia. "Thinking about Feeling, 1789-1799." *French Historical Studies,* vol. 32, no. 4, 2009, pp. 697-706 for extensive discussion.

become his life-long friends, but where he also apparently felt an "unbearable" dissonance between his ideals and his daily life experience, so that he left vowing never to return to the military (though he did so briefly, years later, on a couple of occasions related to personal ideological conflicts involving Napoleon) to educate himself and pursue an administrative career (Fischer 2-3). Early in the process of following his avowed plan, Kleist underwent what has been referred to as his "Kantian crisis" - a dramatic response to his understanding (that may have involved some misinterpretation) of some of Kant's work on the "limits" of human reason. What specific works Kleist read remains unknown, though signs of his tormented disenchantment with what he understood Kant (an intellectual hero of his and of many others of the time) to mean appear in some of his regular correspondence with his half-sister Ulrike (a confidante who also often came to Kleist's rescue when he was in financial straits, which occurred frequently). While further elaboration of the known details of the personal difficulties Kleist experienced in his early life goes beyond what can be included here, it may be stated in summary that these adversities were among those which many scholars regard as most influential in provoking Kleist's altering his career plans, turning to writing, and in firing his artistic ambition.

But his well-known struggles to subsequently establish and "define" himself as a respected artist (that is, one viewed by others - including Goethe - as one worthy of the "name") were also accompanied by similar and ongoing struggles to become an established "part" of *any* particular - and socially sanctioned - community in his society. He apparently suffered from a stammer that contributed to bouts of social anxiety. And between bursts of creative activity (as well as within the themes of some of their products), there are signs of his inclination towards recurrent movement, so to speak, and accompanying identity ambiguities, so that he truly could be said to

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have "adhered" to his historical moment via a "disjunction" (as Agamben might put it) and as a "denizen of the in-between" (Mehigan and Fischer 4).

Thus, though he was briefly engaged to a young woman, for example, that arrangement was ultimately broken off for unclear reasons; at the same time, feelings he expressed in some of his correspondence with male friends have raised questions about his own sexuality, though whether he was actually homosexual or was simply significantly engaged in the so-called "cult of friendship" of the period remains a question of debate (Pfeiffer 215-217). Contributing to these controversies are arguments surrounding his motivation to also address matters of "male (or veritable human) nature" from an intellectual position. Some scholars see Kleist as having a resistance to the scientifically-grounded (Humboldtian) discourse that was shifting from a one-sex to the two-sex and "complementary gender system" emerging in the early nineteenth century that has persisted till today (see Pahl's *Sex Changes with Kleist* (2019) for full discussion) as well as a fascination with "androgyny" and "simultaneously constructing and disrupting binaristic gender categories" both in his fiction and in his correspondence (where, at one point, for example, he expressed the desire 'to fashion a wife' "[out] of his bride as a still formless 'mass' which he [would] sculpt into a perfect being") (MacLeod 208-209).

Along with these apparent concerns regarding the forms of sociocultural categories of (kinds of) persons, however, were Kleist's aforementioned even broader ones centered on constitution of "the subject." That is, there are various signs that he was interested in the processes underlying the latter's capacity for thinking and understanding, and thereby also characterizing (the extent of) one's autonomy. These concerns were, of course, central to Kant's own widely-

circulated philosophical project grounded in his three *Critiques:* those of *Pure Reason* (1781,

1787), of *Practical Reason* (1788), and of *The Power of Judgment* (1790).

But while Kant's highly influential work (and major contributions to the discourses of the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in particular) consisted of a systematic exploration of

these phenomena characterizing the subject and his subjectivity in a philosophical sense, Kleist's

artistically assertive response was a complex one, which manifested in both his creative fiction

as well as in what have been deemed his "unorthodox philosophical essays" (Fischer 15).

In the former, he seems to have often experimented with dramatic characters (as in his *Prince*

Friedrich of Homberg to be discussed below in more detail), many of whom are depicted as

subject to obscure or conflicted (paradoxical) motivations, at the same time that he tried his hand

at "structural innovations" that provided "cues which alert the audience or reader to the presence

of a creative disturbance of patterns that had grown all too familiar and predictable" (Stephens

72). Some of these latter have even been interpreted as bestowing a "parodying" (Stephens 72) or

"ironic" and "'comedic" (Frye 229) form to the narrative shape of what could otherwise be

viewed as serious existential and potentially disturbing themes.

At the same time, through his essays (discussion of which may be argued to provide some

useful background for appreciating the general tenor of his intellectual stance - though given his

own range of expression and "unsettled" tendencies, none will be suggested to hold the

monolithic key to his fictions), Kleist does articulates a quite prophetic vision of "complex

systems" and of man himself as a "being" within them. Specifically, I mean to suggest that with

(at least) two of his most widely-read essays, Kleist not only affords his readers with some

intriguing perspective on his own "contemporary vision" (again, per Agamben) but also

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expresses his rather prescient view of man's nature as a kind of self-reflective as well as socially reflexive being which would become recognizable as a kind of "complex system" itself in certain scientific discourses many decades later. At the same time (as he portrays it and as we now also understand it), this individual "complex system" may also be seen as one (nested) within and subject to the manipulations of such "systems" (like bureaucracies and nations) operating simultaneously but at higher scales.

In his brief essay "On the Gradual Construction of Thoughts During Speech" (1806), for example, Kleist challenges the "traditional image of thought - of thinking as conscious retreat into the interiority of reason," portraying it instead as a kind of self-organizing process which, once instigated, emerges in its full form "outside the mind," "materializ[ing] in speech and writing" where it is "shot through with impersonal energies that undermine the integrity of subjectivity" (Gailus 245). As Kleist himself states, "I have only to begin boldly and the mind, obliged to find an end for this beginning, transforms my confused concept as I speak into thoughts that are perfectly clear, so that, to my surprise [one might recall here the significance of "surprise" in the operation of "complex systems" discussed earlier], the end of the sentence coincides with the desired knowledge" (42). As a part of his formulation, he also states that he views this process as an unconscious "energetic" one associated with a sudden "well[ing] of immense possibilities break[ing] through into consciousness" (43), so that "it is not we who know, but at first it is only a *certain state of mind* of ours that knows" (45), and that speech is, therefore, *not* to be understood as an "impediment, a sort of brake on the wheel of intellect, but like a second wheel running parallel with it on the same axle" (44).

This veritable externalization of the "construction of thoughts" as an emergent process involving the interplay of simultaneously operating forces would have been a particularly radical philosophical position in his own time, but as the German scholar Bernd Fischer has stated, it "not only anticipates much of today's pragmatic and structuralist language theories but also confronts the reader with the problem of intended and unintended consequences of speech-acts in a manner that is almost reminiscent of chaos-theoretical assumptions" (Fischer 15). For the purposes of the present discussion, it is also important to note that "chaos-theory" is a branch of mathematics that focuses on *dynamical systems* whose behaviors may superficially appear unpredictable (that is, random or "chaotic") but which are actually explicable through appreciation of their high sensitivity to initial conditions - as in the case of the so-called "butterfly effect."

Arguably much like Staël, with her drive to alter the perceived connotations of the feminine (or female) in the discourses of her society, Kleist could also be seen as driven to articulate a (then-) unconventional conception or connotation of the human "subject" - going so far as to limit the value of reason and foreground the role of unconscious processes in a re-working of the binarism between the Enlightened sense of the human and the non-human (or animal qua "inhuman"). We see additional, and perhaps even more pointed, evidence for this in his later essay "On the Marionette Theater" (which Kleist published in four installments in 1810 in the daily journal *Berliner Abendblätter* that he himself edited, but which lost financial support and whose publication ended after less than a year in 1811 not long before his suicide).

This longer essay, which has been subject to various scholarly interpretations, is written in the style of a dialogue arising in a public park (where puppet theater performances are staged) as

the narrator encounters an old friend and master dancer who is the chief interlocutor. In this

hybrid story-speculative essay, the interlocutor proposes, to the narrator's surprise and confusion,

that non-sentient beings like puppets can be *made* to dance, and to do so with such grace and

beauty that they actually have "an advantage…over living dancers" (4); and when asked by the

disconcerted narrator why and how this could possibly be the case, the dancer replies that it is

because the marionettes:

> would never be guilty of affectation. For affectation is seen, as you know, when the
> soul, or moving force, appears at some point other than the centre of gravity of the
> movement. Because the operator controls with his wire…only this centre, the
> attached limbs are just what they should be…lifeless, pure pendulums, governed
> only by the law of gravity. This is an excellent quality. You'll look for it in vain in most
> of our dancers. (4-5)

There is an ironic tension apparent in this dialogue, which has been suggested to illustrate the

juxtaposition of Romantic "idealistic notions of freedom and a nightmare suspicion of

determinism born of Enlightenment ideals of total, rational order" - one that opposes "hopes for

the autonomous self and fear that the individual in society may end up as a determined

automaton" (Block 65). On related notes, the philosopher John Gray in his *The Soul of the

Marionette: A Short Inquiry into Human Freedom* (2015)[5] and literary scholar Kenneth Gross in

his introduction to his collection of multi-authored essays *On Dolls (*2018) both emphasize the

essay's concerns regarding the impact of human subjectivity and capacity for self-awareness on

aspects of the human condition and behavior. As Gray observes, for Kleist "puppets represented

a kind of freedom that human beings would never achieve" - "controlled from above by

puppeteers," their movements are "effortlessly grace[ful]" specifically *because* they "cannot

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[5] Gray's discussion (pp. 2-5) of Kleist's essay refers to the David Constantine translation of "The Puppet
Theater" in the latter's edited volume of Kleist's *Selected Writings,* Hackett Publishing, 2004, pp.
411-416.

know they are unfree" (2-3), while Gross notes that "it is the human actor who turns clumsy, graceless, wooden, affected, embarrassed and even violent in his self-consciousness, in his anxious *wish* for grace, his uncertainty about where to locate his soul" (xv) - that is, as a *consequence* of turning his quest for knowledge (and more specifically, for knowing how to "act") back upon himself and interrupting the flow of 'natural' grace that non-thinking puppets are privy to. Bernd Fischer also sees Kleist as concerned with (and opposing) influential tendencies towards 'hyper'-rationalizing the Enlightenment project, describing this essay as participating (along with two other lesser-known works) in offering an "ironic recapitulation and simultaneous dismissal of the whole project of idealist philosophy of history" (Fischer 15) (that is, as basically challenging the overall "Hegelian" project(s) asserting construction of reality by the human "mind" [understood as the mental or Spirit]).

While these scholars emphasize the ironic stance and existential angst that Kleist's essay suggests, another scholarly interpretive thread has focused on additional details of the essay that raise the possibility of a resolution of the aforementioned tensions. These details appear in the interlocutor's recounting of an incident when he was effortlessly bested in a bout with a performing bear, after he (the speaker) had been goaded by some other men into challenging the animal with his sword. In the essay's conclusion, the interlocutor attributes the bear's "success" to a kind of supremely *natural* grace - as he puts it: "grace appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness. That is, in the puppet or in the god" (Kleist 10). And it is the latter which the animal embodies, since he effects no "interruption" of "the unstable feedback loop that links us [humans] to the gaze of the other" so that, unlike us, he is able to see "the infinite" (Kittler 292). And when asked by the narrator

whether human beings "must again eat of the tree of knowledge in order to return to the state of innocence," the dancer-interlocutor replies in the affirmative, noting, however, that "that's the final chapter in the history of the world" (Kleist 10).

The German scholar Wolf Kittler has, in fact, proposed that this essay participates in a Kleistian effort to "rehabilitate" the Enlightenment's "knowledge project" (Mehigan and Fischer 6-7). Kittler argues via numerous illustrations that the essay includes multiple covert references consistent with the mathematical theorizing (the differential calculus) of Kleist's time (in its metaphorical references to the movement of "pendulums," for example), while at the same time, it (quite presciently) outlines this "simple physical system [as] a model case of chaos and complexity theory" (Kittler 289). And with its summary lauding of the value of "no consciousness" or an "infinite consciousness," the essay (like the mathematics of differential calculus itself) has "dared to use," according to Kittler, "infinitely small" and "infinitely large… quantities as operators [to] provide a model for a new understanding of 'the history of the world' between paradise and redemption" (Kittler 292).

One could suggest, therefore, that here again, in another demonstration of Kleist's creative imagination, we find more evidence not only for the aesthetic-philosophical concerns raised by his so-called "Kantian crisis" but arguably also for another artistic response to some of the various sociocultural forces pressuring the re-shaping of perception of, and discourses regarding, embattled (social) *systems* moving towards operating at *unprecedented scales* in the German-speaking societies of the early nineteenth century. In Kleist's final work and what some argue to be his finest play *Prince Friedrich of Homberg* (written shortly after the *Marionette Theater*

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essay and completed only a few months before taking his own life), even more enigmatic challenges confront spectator-readers.

If Staël's *The Mannequin* contributes to the so-called "opening up" of a discursive space for trying to re-configure connotations of the category of the "feminine" in the context of a broader communal effort at re-shaping the socioeconomic and political systems of *her* changing nation, Kleist's *Prince Friedrich* may be said to work in a somewhat analogous fashion, but with a narrative naturally made up of very different details and grounded in a sensibility informed by Kleist's own singular and specifically *German male* character. And whereas I would suggest that Staël's simpler work, which is obviously more playful, appears rather optimistic in its hinting at such "reforming" possibilities, Kleist's play evinces a rather different sensibility - one grounded more in a vision of paradox that reflects the simultaneous promise as well as "threat" arising from the sense of new systems as he *felt them* to be emerging in *his* locale in the same historical period.

In Kleist's play, the historical figure, Prince Friedrich, culturally-established as the hero of the battle of Fehrbellin (1675), is portrayed with a degree of psychological and relational complexity that one would hardly expect in the case of such a cultural icon. Understood at one level as a political statement (Craig 13-16) or "patriotic drama" as Kleist himself asserted the play to be (Peters and Peters ix), the staging of the Prince character's and his fellow officers' military success against the Swedes might seem intended to support the idea of the Prussian "nation's" hoped-for win over Napoleon's forces with whom they were engaged at the time. But as all scholarly interpretations also recognize, this battle appears to serve merely as the dramatic backdrop against which another kind of "battle" operating *within* Prussian society is at play. This

level of interpretation focuses on the very ambiguity arising from the "fleshed-out" characters themselves. That is, their ambiguity could be said to derive from their very complexity as embodied individuals of thought *and* feeling with hopes, dreams, *and fears*, who are also men in *ambivalent relationships* with the authorities of their own state. Precisely this kind of relationship was to be found in the patriotic but potentially rebellious group of soldiers led by Neidthardt von Gneisenau (with whom Kleist is said to have had a "temperamental" kinship), who objected to the cautious line of policy against Napoleon pursued by the Prussian Prime Minister Hardenberg (Craig 16). But for spectator-readers, there remains the question of what this latter battle signifies, and how the very disorder that *it* generates within the narrative might resolve - and for which there seem to be no straightforward or easy answers.

From the outset, we find Prince Friedrich, who is the play's primary focus, evincing signs that his character's personal and relational boundaries are, in fact, not completely stable. For an iconic Prussian officer and military hero, he appears quite strange. As the German scholar Lawrence Frye has observed, the Prince appears in the opening scene as a virtual "fool" and that, in his view, this may be seen as one among several ironic twists which recur throughout the play, including in the final scene as the Prince effects an "ironic self-annihilation" in the making of a "grand gesture" (submitting to his death sentence) as he simultaneously regains "good fortune" (the admiration and the romantic interest of others) in this, the play's, final "joke," which effectively "takes the sting out of humanly manipulated assaults of irony." Thus, through such an interpretive lens, Frye perceives a predominantly "comedic lighting of [this] political icon" (Frye 229-251). But though I would agree that an ironic stance seems clear, I would suggest that an alternate, or at least complementary, view of the narrative arc and its resolution is

possible - one that focuses more on the problem of the instability of the lead character and his relationship to both the state authority and other members of his community.

This instability, I would argue, manifests in various ways until the final scene of Act Four (where he writes the letter in which he "decides" his own fate) as he moves between different states of consciousness (waking and dreaming) not only while alone but also in the presence of others, and shows clear signs of distraction so that he has difficulty staying on task when exhorted by others, and exhibits behaviors that signal strong emotion and acting on impulse rather than according to social expectations and directives.

Thus, in the first scene, as the Elector and his entourage, including his fiancé Natalia, descend from a castle and approach him in a garden, the Prince appears sleep-walking, absorbed in "dreams of his own future," all the while whispering to himself and "wind[ing] himself a splendid wreath of glory" (6). The group observes that he "must be very ill" (6), but that he also appears like a "fool" or a "madman" (8), so that, as the scene ends, the Elector encourages them all to quickly "get away from him" and commands:

> Back into the darkness with you, Prince of Homberg! Into nothingness!
>
> Nothingness! If it suits your convenience, we'll meet again upon the field
>
> of battle. The things you seek cannot be won by dreaming. (8-9)

As we and the Elector see here, the Prince appears to be relationally disconnected. This dissociated quality of the Prince's character then continues to manifest in subsequent scenes. It appears, for example, when he leaves the garden appearing "bewildered" while pressing the glove he has snatched (unobserved) from Natalia's hand to his forehead (9), and subsequently, despite being awake, is unable to recall where he obtained the glove (12-14); and,

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in a later scene, he looks to others (a couple of fellow officers) as if he is notably distracted and

unable to transcribe the Elector's battle orders for his troops to follow the next day (17-19). This

latter moment is particularly significant for its bearing on what the social authorities in the play

will deem "insubordination on the battlefield" but which, in light of his previous mental state

(which the audience has observed), may be interpreted as oddly unwitting and almost accidental.

A view of the Prince's character as one assertively bent on repudiating the authority of the

Elector (qua state) is also belied midway through the play in Act Three in his obvious expression

of "unmanly" fear and lengthy expression of disbelief that the Elector, who has "love[d] him like

a son" (49), would simply fulfill "his duty as required by the law" (48) and not overturn his death

sentence for his questionable insubordination. Portrayed as caught up in the harsh machinations

of a legal system - nested within the larger workings of a nation he had supported and believed

himself to be a part - the Prince appears strangely akin to an actor who (in contrast to a true

marionette) finds himself existentially uncertain about "where to locate his soul" (as Gross put it

[xv]). In the midst of such a quandary, I would argue that the Prince's character only achieves

coherence and some *grace* as he asserts an extremely unconventional (and, to some, morally

questionable) kind of agency and *chooses* to relinquish his own status as a material being who is

both flawed and suffering as a result of his own self-consciousness (akin to the ideal that the

dancer-interlocutor promoted in the conclusion to the marionette theater essay). That is, perhaps

Kleist wished to assert what he viewed to be the ultimate irony, as his Prince character is being

led blindfolded to his death: "Now, immortality, you are totally mine! You are streaming toward

me with the radiance of a thousand suns through the blindfold on my eyes. Wings are growing on

my shoulders, and my spirit is already soaring through the calm ethereal spheres…[while]

everything beneath me is lying in a mist" (90). Thus, rather than simply submitting to the system qua state, the Prince claims to have *achieved* a new form of (godlike) consciousness - as he approaches a more sublime state that involves becoming part of a totality at a virtually incomprehensibly larger scale (akin to the infinite or absolutely large that Kant described). Ironically, then, narrative order returns as the Prince finds himself about to become a part of a non-human system (one beyond human ken) in which he will lose his human self.

Arguably, we find here another instance of Kleist's dramatic (some have said "romantic") response to his "crisis of agency" - in this case with a virtual neutralization of the binarism of the human and non-human, but in a manner which could be viewed as both ironic and uplifting. It is tempting to speculate that Kleist may have even understood his own quite purposeful dual suicide (with a terminally ill female friend/possible lover) as a way to find transcendence, to achieve a kind of grace he felt was denied him in life but which, as he said, "appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness" like a puppet "or an infinite consciousness" like a god. Obviously unable to become a real puppet and seemingly disinclined to submit to the "fear" of potentially becoming a socially-"determined automaton" (Block 65), he may have sought greater fellowship and communion in his ideal of a different form of being.

Staël heard of Kleist's death in November 1811 and reacted quite strongly though not particularly sympathetically, as she drafted her *Réflexions Sur Le Suicide* that would come out a year later in Stockholm (without naming Kleist specifically) and "ce faisant à proposer une théorie du « savoir-souffrir » résolument moderne" (Foerster 129). Her *théorie* included questioning the motives of those who would take their own lives when, as she saw it, there was a fatherland to die for.

Thus, while their views about the world around them at the time differed significantly in many of their particulars, Staël and Kleist were both clearly deep thinkers about their places in that world as well as deep thinkers about *feelings.* Such "thinking about feeling" had been renewed and fired by the French Revolution as Rosenfeld has pointed out. At the same time, "words were rushing to catch up" to what individuals felt and yet (in that less-articulate sense) still *knew*, according to Hunt. And among those things that they were increasingly coming to *know* was the general "shape" of "the social," as I would call it. But the latter's still rather vague conceptual shape was aided in becoming more graspable not only by increasingly popular artistic media such as prints, which depicted scenes of the social strife then ongoing and "helped society or 'the social' become more visible" "as an object of experience and cognition" (Hunt 677), but also by such narrative works as those by these writers, whom we now recognize as having been astute observers of their "contemporary" (as per Agamben).

As a final point here, I would also suggest that *both* Kleist and Staël strove each in their own way to express "knowing how to suffer" in a resolute yet modern fashion. At the same time, they also maintained a sense, even if only subconsciously, of the "creative destruction" (as per systems-researchers Gunderson and Holling) taking place in their world, which involved some genuine loss, of course, but also afforded opportunities for re-imagining other kinds of "order" that might be on the horizon.

In the next chapter, I will move on to discuss two other artists (Heine and Balzac) who were concerned with the experience and articulation of signs of new "order" *actually emerging* in *their* time - a time of some regeneration that included development of new forms of social

connectivity which would support heading toward a more expansive world of nations-in-relation

and warranted very different aesthetics.

Chapter 3:

Heine and Balzac Regrouping after the Wars

After nearly twelve and a half years, the Napoleonic Wars that had swept across vast portions

of the face of Europe and involved belligerents as far-flung as the United Kingdom, Scandinavia,

and the Russian and Ottoman Empires had finally come to an end. With treaties signed and the

Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) completed, beleaguered monarchical authorities throughout

nearly all parts of Europe found themselves restored, if only tentatively. That is, in this new dawn

of so-called peace, the calm was actually an uneasy one. And German-speaking regions and

France itself were no exceptions in this regard. Austrian statesman Prince Metternich essentially

now held sway over several still disparate German-speaking territories and Louis XVIII of what

was deemed the Bourbon Restoration relatively weakly managed the new constitutional

monarchy of France, but the particular communities over which they exerted their respective

authority (along with those in other locales in the surrounding Europe) had drastically changed,

thus posing unprecedented challenges to their administrations and efforts at restoring a sense of

social "order."

Thus, while the forms of the political systems which were overseeing the practical social

organizational efforts at resuming life as "usual" harkened to the recent past for their models and

social supports, there was now a "new normal," so to speak. Wartime events had not only

ravaged significant portions of the physical landscape and their respective populations, recent

pressures from the promotion of democratic ideological principles along with new forms of

economic organization, whose effects were continuing to impact class distinctions as well as

people's sense of material security, had dramatically altered the social and cultural landscapes as well. Having shared the common experience of living through these events and under these pressures, whether they were situated in one of the several localized German states that continued to vie with each other in their "cooperative" relations or in the French capital or its provinces where inhabitants had their own long-standing mutual differences, the people in these neighboring social groups inevitably perceived their "worlds" differently and found themselves confronting an uncertain future.

Some of the uncertainty arose from pressures impacting the very forms of social organization itself. That is to say, while German and French political authorities and the forms they preliminarily re-assumed maintained some continuities with their societies' recent pasts, Enlightenment influences promoting rational systematization of various social domains aimed at encompassing and managing worlds of objects on ever-larger scales, such as the social systemization of lawful behavior (by means of the new Napoleonic Code adopted on a pan-European scale) and establishment of codes and regulations for facilitating the growth of commerce and finance (grounded in analytical ways of thought, manipulation of large numbers, and ideals of risk-reduction and error minimization), were at the same time pressing these collectives' organizational moves forward.

In addition, despite the fact that the sociocultural details internal to each social system's functioning (which were grounded in their respective histories and were naturally resistant to change) differed dramatically, both of these systems were being subjected to outside forces pressing them to compete in an increasingly modern world. And while from a complex systems perspective, societies qua systems are always *somewhat* "open" (that is, they are necessarily

open to exchanges of energy and information with their environments in order to survive and grow), at this historical moment in this European locale, I would argue that the kind and degree of "openness" of these social systems were also being pressed to change such that *inter-national* (larger scale) forces could impact them and still be accommodated (in other words, the forms of more traditional internally "over-connected" systems were being *felt* to be more vulnerable and insufficiently resilient, so that adjustments were required). But, as Lynn Hunt might put it and I am suggesting, "words were still rushing to catch up," and more social and cultural work was required to support these "adjustments."

Times had unquestionably changed, and the narratives by which people understood them were necessarily evolving. But who was responsible, so to speak, for creating these new narratives? In contrast to the sensibility of just a few decades earlier, when the programs of ruling authorities had had a more absolutist quality and socially-prescribing and defining power (in the sense that Niklas Luhmann has described of the nobility essentially determining the social ontology), political leaders were now obliged to recognize the broader world-stage on which their own actions could be witnessed, judged, and for which they could be held accountable. They themselves were subject to unprecedented pressures to recognize and acknowledge extra-systemic forces.

At the same time, members of the recently impassioned as well as besieged populace were unlikely to forget the actions of those whom they had regarded as revolutionary heroes clamoring for a new order based on "liberty, equality, and fraternity" or the laying waste of their own or neighboring communities. And, as is the human wont, though people in these societies would have gone on with their daily lives, they (except for those too traumatized to speak of them)

could also be expected to have enjoined others to listen and share in the telling of stories of those transformative times. While the intensity of revolutionary fervor had diminished, the experiences of that turbulent period could not be simply erased from the minds and memories of those who had deeply felt them and whose lives had been upset by them.

In making his own case for a significant role for popular narratives driving *economic* fluctuations in our contemporary society, economist Robert J. Shiller notes that his colleague Ramsay MacMullan has also "implored" his fellow historians in his *Feelings in History: Ancient and Modern* (2003) to appreciate that gaining "a deep understanding of history requires imputing what was on the minds of those people who made history," and "if we try to understand people's actions, we will need to replicate in ourselves as best we can the feelings they themselves experienced" (Shiller 6). Along these same lines (and following Hunt's lead to some extent), I would also suggest that making a certain kind of empathetic effort may be useful in this context of considering the actions of people in the German-speaking and French communities in this post-revolutionary period. And, what I'm at the same time suggesting is that "the people making history" in this period were something of a new "breed." Thus, as the nobility and its discursive norms were losing traction, a new *mix* of proscriptive narratives were being promulgated which were no longer almost exclusively from the ruling aristocratic groups (top-down) but now included significant input from the commoners (or so-called bottom-up). In other words, in this post-war period, despite the "best efforts" of those in power, long-standing traditions related to hereditary entitlements and associated conventions of comportment were clearly being questioned; at the same time, commercial forces and technological developments directed at modernization were simultaneously channeling "picking up the pieces" of material as well as

human resources and reshaping the forms of people's daily lives about which commoner (popular) voices were having an increasing say.

This ability to even have "an increasing say," however, itself depended not just on intermittent rioting and local revolts that continued to crop up and take place throughout much of this early-to-mid-century period. A growing "say" in this moment of what I have been referring to as "re-organization" also depended upon new forms of connectivity and the emergence of new self-conscious identities that these fostered. And these were made possible not simply by the flourishing of print-making (and its consumption) and the rise of the publishing industry that Lynn Hunt and Benedict Anderson have respectively described (photography would actually be invented in 1826 and emerge as a popularizing force by the mid-century, while electricity, and media like radio, which it made possible, would not be technologically harnessed until many decades later). New narratives by voices capable of capturing people's attention and resonating with their experience were *also* required.

Two such voices were those of the German Heinrich Heine and Frenchman Honoré de Balzac, whose work will be discussed in some detail in this chapter. In addition to temperamental qualities and innate talents that are likely to have contributed to both men's creative urges and literary output, it will be argued that it was at the interface of their felt experience of those modernizing "systemic" pressures to which they (like their contemporaries) were subject and their own subjective responses *to* them in the expression of their *own* social identities that they helped begin to "flesh out" the sense of these pressures both for themselves and others. In other words, they helped begin to provide glimmerings of the *sense* (the form and content) of the

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complex systems their own collectives were participating in but for which few members of the populace yet had words or mental images.

Heinrich Heine, German poet, essayist, and social critic, and Honoré de Balzac, French novelist, short story, and occasional non-fiction writer, were among the most visible public figures who were also artists in this period, which also happened to be the first one in which writers, due to socioeconomic developments and the emergence of the publishing industry, could actually make a living from their writing. Thus, for those literate individuals (whose numbers were also on the rise) who were seeking both mirrors and mouthpieces for perceiving and communicating narrative forms for realizing an *authentic sense* of themselves in that moment, the works of these highly prolific and engaging wits were now available via expanding media forms (including newspaper articles and serial fiction) for them to begin to turn to.

Heine (1797-1856) and Balzac (1799-1850) were members of the same historical cohort, but circulated through largely different - though both spatially and culturally overlapping - societal systems. Their life-experiences and social identities were thus subject in many ways to sociocultural influences that were naturally singular, but also quite similar and interrelated. As young men, Heine, a native German speaker from the Rhineland, and Balzac, a Frenchman whose boyhood was spent in Tours and Vendôme (relative "provinces" at the time in France), both came to reside in Paris, where their sense of social life in the urban environment of that city contrasted sharply with that provincial one which each had known where they had been reared. As will be discussed later in greater detail, these contrasts in sensibility, between those associated with the provinces and their traditions and those associated with the (aside from London) most modern city of its time, had profound impacts on them and their work. Heine effected a self-

imposed exile in Paris as an aspiring artist who also had liberal political views. He recognized

that he would have a greater capacity for personal expression and political voice in that city than

in his German homeland where he had been subject to significant censoring (since Prussian

authorities were now themselves beginning to depend increasingly on print culture to support

their own political agendas). For his part, Balzac's temperamental energy and apparent

dissatisfaction with what he perceived to be the "signs of his times" (including a decline in

monarchical authority and traditional values) drove him to observe and critique widely diverse

aspects of Parisian society itself. In other words, despite their differences, both men appear to

have been impelled to afford themselves of opportunities to "create" in that urban (complex

system) workspace and try to produce literary works with "more modern" aesthetics which could

speak to their respective communities that were themselves undergoing still largely tacit but

widespread change.

Literary scholar Peter Brooks has argued in his book *Enigmas of Identity* that "who you are—

in the sense of what you can legitimately call yourself, and what others call you—seems to have

become a problem with entry into the modern age in a way that it wasn't before…identity is in

fact a large problem that stamps not only novels but all sorts of social issues in the nineteenth

century, and up to our own time" (4). As he intimates here and I have suggested as well but

through a systems lens, modern identities became a "problem" in the long nineteenth century as

they engaged phenomena at levels within systems "above," "below," as well as "at" the (so-

called) "level" in which they themselves operated, that is, at the superordinate level of "social

issues," at the "output" level of production of literary and popular narratives that portrayed

characters with their own identities, as well as in the very persons of those who mediated

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between these two - the writers-artists-intellectuals who wrestled with their own identities in these systems as well. Modern identities, in other words, were beginning to be experienced and recognized as "problems" that became *loci* where changes in understanding of self and other were being both enacted and narratively debated, notably by those writers-artists-intellectuals who I am arguing were sensitive and attentive to these issues.

As the German literary scholar Anthony Phelan has asserted in his *Reading Heinrich Heine*, "Heine's importance two hundred years after his birth is closely tied to his self-understanding, his understanding of the process of modernity, and to twentieth-century readings of the forms in which these understandings were articulated" (x). As Phelan puts it, Heine defined his position in relation to the tradition of Romantic poetry, while at the same being committed to the development of a "modern writing" (xi) wherein he "dismantl[ed] the poetic language of selfhood" (xiii)….so that *style itself* bec[ame] the instrument of the most rigorous and scathing political analysis" - and modern critics, like Jacques Derrida, regard him as the "famously 'elusive poet' deriving the strength of his encounter with Paris and Parisian politics from 'knowing how not to be there'" (xiv). As Phelan argues, despite Heine's legacy being substantial, it has at times been controversial in its purported value in part because of this very "elusiveness" (sometimes called "vagueness"), but which Phelan himself and the poet Helmut Heissenbüttel (whom Phelan also cites) both attribute to the style of Heine's writing and its textual effects such that Heine "plays a kind of hide-and-seek with the expectations of autobiographical reference" (xiii). And though his very "elusiveness" and style have also been subject to much critical interpretation, I would suggest that one way they could also be viewed would be as a form of expression of the very "self-understanding" Phelan indicates Heine

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developed (or worked at developing), which arguably arose in turn from the well-known identity

challenges he personally confronted. The latter will be described in greater detail in pages to

follow, but they included his being a native German from a minor kingdom within a fragmented

set of German-speaking states dominated by Austria and Prussia; being Jewish but pressured in

his adulthood to convert to Protestantism; and being an aspiring artist in an increasingly modern

world where work-identities (like other "identities") were becoming an increasingly problematic

social issue (as Heine's cousin Karl Marx, whom he knew, also famously emphasized). That is to

say, this persona which Heine seems to have often projected - as an "elusive" poet - was

appropriately elusive since it was truly *unsettled. At the same time,* this being unsettled could

also be said to be consistent with the broader dynamics of his historical moment which, despite

being at relative peace, continued to move forward with modernizing changes on an unstable

forward edge.

Unlike Heine, one could surmise that Balzac was able to be *comparatively* secure in speaking

frankly about his French *national* identity, given his country's long-standing centralized political

structure and current social policies permitting relative freedom of expression. But, as his

biographical details and literary project suggest, he found himself subject to and a critical

observer of the problems of "identity" *internal* to French society after Napoleon's defeat. As will

be discussed further, he proceeded to dissect these problems in unprecedentedly "realistic" detail,

portraying a society whose political system with its formal tensions between monarchy and

republicanism had an uncertain future as well as a burgeoning *bourgeois* middle class concerned

with defining itself but which, in the eyes of many, was also becoming an increasingly

anonymous urban crowd with few signs of individuality. Brooks has suggested that Balzac

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actually felt himself to be confronted with a generalized semiotic crisis wherein every bourgeois man attired in black appeared like every other one, and that he regarded the nineteenth century as a "stupid" one associated with rampant "pathology of social life" (which was also the title of a never-finished manuscript Balzac worked on throughout his career) (Brooks 17).

Evidently Heine and Balzac both experienced a sense of dissonance with the tentative "status quo" of their (overlapping) modernizing social systems and were thus (and for other reasons to be detailed) on some of the "margins" (as per Snowden and Agamben) of their social groups. At the same time, however, it apparently was imperative to both of them to respond creatively to try to articulate and leverage the latter's nascent, though still largely covert, forms according to their respective visions. They may also be said to have been addressing the "system-wide" needs of their societies understood as complex adaptive systems (CAS), which I've suggested were to essentially "regroup" and produce new forms of communicating and effecting social connections commensurate with the circumstances of their age, but which in this historical moment also necessitated helping enlighten their contemporaries regarding this "abstract" activity. That is, they were trying to help promote a greater awareness and grasp of the new social "ontology" that was in the process of emerging but which (in a reflexive sense) the populace itself (and *not simply the nobility*) was also becoming *increasingly responsible for actually establishing*. These writers did this, I suggest, by "modeling" aspects of these complex systems themselves through particular aspects of their writing.

But how might one understand such "modeling"? A useful and illustrative discussion of this issue has been offered in another context by biosocial-systems scientist Graeme Cumming and philosopher of science John Collier in a "synthesis" paper ("Change and Identity in Complex

Systems" [2005]) wherein they address "the problem of how we can *capture* the *dynamic,
changing nature* of complex systems, including ecosystems, social systems, and economics, in a
cohesive conceptual framework" (emphasis added) (1). While their discussion primarily speaks
to scientists and their research concerns, it includes what I would argue are points that are more
broadly applicable to human tendencies to produce certain kinds of "models" *in order to act in
the world of complex (social) systems*. They speak specifically of "metamodels" (rather than
simply "models") because this term includes the sense of "*captur[ing]* the *essential ingredients*
of *many* interrelated models in symbolic form" (emphases added) (5). It acknowledges the
presence of *complexity* and the presence of dependencies and ongoing interactions between and
among the components of various systems as well as systems within systems. That is, such
"metamodels" may be regarded, these authors suggest, as "a kind of specific metaphor: a way of
thinking about things that serves as a powerful tool" (as they note, this tool for scientists would
be for generating hypotheses for testing in their research) (5). It is in this sense of an implicit
search for such a "metamodel" with its resulting helpful "way of thinking" that I am suggesting
many Europeans of the nineteenth century also sought *narratives* to aid and support *them*,
embroiled as they were in an historical moment when "commoners" were becoming increasingly
responsible for not only comprehending but also for participating in the shaping and *managing* of
the complex social systems that were then involving them.

    Cumming and Collier also note, however, that one's "subjective interest" in particular
systems is in many ways critical for not only representing and "defining" the particulars of those
models we (need/want) to construct, but also and more specifically for "establish[ing] the natural
properties" that constitute the "identity conditions" of our system(s) of interest "over time and

space" (2). We choose, that is, to construct certain models (of complex systems) for their functionality and for certain purposes we have in mind. But while continuity through space and time is a central component of identity, as these authors also point out, a significant "problem is to *find* suitable dynamical *relations* that *determine system identity* by *binding the system together*" (emphases added) (3). At the same time, "suitable dynamic relations" *are,* in fact, those "natural properties" that need to be ascertained ("rather than localized properties that are found in every part of the system" [3]). In other words, and with these considerations applied specifically to the case of those nineteenth century post-war Europeans under discussion, their most so-called "useful" ways of thinking were likely to have involved individual and (sufficiently) group-wide quests for models that one might say "suited" the particular forms of relating in their time but that were also sufficiently widespread that they could at the same time *actually* help "bind" them and their "systems" together in order to do the kind of collective work that seemed necessary for their group's survival and future progress.

Though such abstract notions might at first seem far afield of useful considerations of Heine and Balzac, I am suggesting that they are, in fact, not. Rather, in thinking (and trying to imagine and feel) the complex historical situations of these artists and their contemporaries with these needs and modeling notions in mind, one can better appreciate the adaptive challenges and nature of the tasks confronting them - both as social individuals and as *regrouping collectives.* Unlike scientists, and other scholars, however, who use various means to try to *distance* themselves from their "objects of study," these German and French people of the nineteenth century were quite limited in means at hand for them to try to do this. That is, they were essentially inextricably involved - one might go so far as to say "entangled" - in the

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phenomenology of that which they fundamentally needed (and, in the case of many, consciously *wanted*) to know. But some of what they needed to "know" were the aforementioned "natural properties" that existed in "suitable dynamical relations" and "determined system identity by binding the system together." In other words, they needed to see more clearly who *they* were as well as how they *did* and *might relate* to each other so that they might have the possibility of influencing and making more informed decisions about *bonding* themselves and binding their system together.

In the midst of such complex systems, however, with their inherent feedback loops, reflexiveness, and other system-wide properties, relatively few could (or were likely motivated to try to) *capture* and convey such (implicit) knowledge. Individuals like Heine and Balzac were thus relatively unique as they (akin to those other writers Foucault discussed) attempted to do much of this sociocultural "heavy lifting" by producing narrative *fictions* whose content *and form* could afford some representational "capture" of their own and their contemporaries' social reality.

As both talented and now-*working* artists, however, they also understood the importance of making contact with the feelings of their audiences, and entertaining them, so that they could hopefully keep them engaged (and reading!). They, therefore, designed their explicitly endorsed "new aesthetics" in ways to do so. But in trying to actively stimulate their intended audiences' *interest* as well as their *efforts* at modeling their worlds' dynamics and their own identities within them, notable details of Heine's and Balzac's "new aesthetics" necessarily differed.

One of the particularly notable differences between the collective concerns of these writers' respective German and French communities that their literary work reflects, I would suggest,

pertains to that level of so-called national "identities." German-speaking groups did not yet

cohere as a (social) system with a "national identity," while the French did. This difference had

significant implications for what the two collectives could hope to achieve and *actually do* as

they struggled to compete in the increasingly "modern" world (which Heine clearly recognized).

On the other hand, though "the French" could already *act* qua being "France," the so-called

"natural properties" (ontology) of their *internal* dynamical relations had become more

problematic after the revolutionary period. This, I would argue, determined the outlines of much

of *their identity questing* which Balzac could be said to have tried to address. Consequently, one

would expect that specific ingredients, so to speak, of Heine's and Balzac's narrative models

aimed at capturing the sense of the social "complexity" then-embroiling their respective German

and French communities would themselves be somewhat different. Specifically, I will try to

show how the former emphasized properties of language, shared memories, and traditions in

order to *support the nascent bonding* of "German" individuals *and promote* their collective

coherence as a system with a "national" identity which would be necessary for establishing them

as a significant player on the increasingly global and competitive world-stage, while the latter

focused on the post-revolutionary burgeoning forms of relating that were starting to characterize

but were *also challenging* French society's *internal* dynamics at that particular historical moment

(though Balzac's writing naturally invoked many of the shared memories and traditions of

France's recent past as discursive touchstones in order to help *maintain* a coherent and

continuous sense of French identity as well).

So how did Heine and Balzac actually do this? I have chosen to consider select works by

these writers to try to address this question. Though both men wrote extensively throughout their

careers, I am focusing here primarily on Heine's relatively late-in-life epic poem *Deutschland: A Winter's Tale* (written in 1844) (but with some additional reference to a few other works that illustrate some of the evolution of Heine's own thought over his lifetime); and, in Balzac's case, I will consider select pieces from his multi-volume collection *La Comédie Humaine* (which was written over a span of many years around the same time as Heine's work but targeted both the periods of the French Restoration (1815-1830) and the July Monarchy [1830-1848]) with particular attention to one of his most acclaimed novels from this collection, *Père Goriot*. Essentially, I view their ability to "capture" some of the sense of the complexity in their world(s) as arising primarily from the very *forms* of their respective narratives which, I will argue, reflected some of the properties of complex systems that were being increasingly foregrounded in social and cultural milieus in their lifetimes (and are consistent with properties of such systems as we understand them today).

Before proceeding to discuss Heine specifically, however, there is one more noteworthy commonality of early adult life-experience to which these writers seem to have responded rather similarly in the subsequent execution of their art. In their earliest efforts at writing, both suffered setbacks imposed by authorities who aimed to effectively silence them. Heine was repeatedly censored by the Prussian authorities in his native country, while Balzac was discouraged from writing (initially for the theater) by a professor at the Collège de France for his supposed lack of talent and then subsequently by his unsuccessful attempts at trying to write for the general public under a pseudonym which contributed to the failure of a publishing and printing house he had established that also left him in tremendous debt for the remainder of his life. Both men, however, were irrepressible. Heine's solution to achieving his outlet for creative expression was

to move to Paris but continue to maintain a productive connection with his supportive Hamburg publisher Julius Campe, while Balzac's was to be remarkably persistent and virtually throw himself into writing at all hours of the day and night and produce writing that finally gained attention for some of its (then-) novel qualities.

Both men's identities and very *agency* as writer-artists were thus initially significantly challenged and subjected to kinds of "force relations" like those Foucault has described that often constrain modern identities. But as the philosopher Charles Taylor has also pointed out in his *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (1989), there is another side, so to speak, of modern identities. This consists of the subjective one, which may or may not be consonant with externally imposed designations, and when it is not, can engender a striving for a sense of personal authenticity. It is in this setting of such a dissonance experienced at the dynamic interface where these two so-called sides meet in *practice* that efforts at social change may occur, and which I am specifically suggesting contributed to at least some of the *drive* promoting these writers' interests in contributing to modeling the dynamics and structure of the social systems to which they were essentially subject throughout their working lives.

Reflecting the fact that "the stability [of complex systems] is not passively static, but an active self-maintenance that needs to be supported" (Walsh and Stepney 320), Austro-Prussian authorities in Heine's lifetime worked to reassert their own vision of a "status quo" by promoting traditional models of political rule and keeping liberal and nationalist ideas like his, which were thought to be fundamentally challenging to their state(s), at bay. Their efforts at preserving the social order in the forms with which they were then- established not only manifested in such activities as the physical suppression of the republican Revolutions which took place throughout

Europe in 1848 (just four years after Heine wrote his epic poem), but also in various forms of policing activity, including censoring, and the detention of those viewed as subversive (often identified as "criminals") as well.

In Heine's native German environment, not only his writing but the censoring act itself identified *him* as a potential threat to his country, though with his idealism and vision of what he felt his native land might *become*, he would not have felt comfortable assuming such a negative identity. He also experienced overt anti-Semitism and, after "much soul-searching," in 1825 he made the conscious decision to convert to Lutheran Protestantism. He saw the latter as being associated with more liberal politics than Catholicism, and very *practically* "as an entry ticket to regular employment," so that this choice also seems to have "laid the groundwork for his later denominational identity games" (Joskowicz 70). Thus in order to continue to work, and as one who was inclined to write and wanted to speak as "authentically" as he could given the circumstances of his time, he went elsewhere, moving to Paris in 1831. His subsequent activity there also offers some insight into his view of himself and what he was actually about as he seemingly tried to elude that uncomfortable sense of identity conflict and dissonance he experienced at home.

He arrived in Paris less than a year after the July Revolution (1830), which had resulted in the dethroning of Charles X along with his reactionary policies and his replacement by the "Citizen King" Louis-Phillipe. This political move signaled to many that the French capital was now a haven for more independent and progressive minds. Heine was already "notorious" for his *Book of Songs* (1827) and his *Travel Pictures* (1828-1831), which consisted of "witty, sometimes nasty" travelogues in poetic prose (Zantop, "Introduction" 2). His first publications after his

move to Paris, however, were feuilletons on the subject of French painters (who were presenting at the annual art exhibitions (Salons) in the immediate aftermath of the recent revolutionary power shift) that he subsequently compiled under the title *Französische Maler (French Painters)* in his volume *Salon I* and published for a *German* audience (1834).

German studies scholar Susanne Zantop observes that these essays on French painters and their paintings appear to have been written in a spirit that questioned the effects of such a political revolution on art itself. But, despite Heine's siding with the revolution in principle, this initial work from a position of self-imposed exile did not have the tone of a political pamphlet per se. Rather, it was "a text deeply suspicious of ideologies and troubled by the idea of violent change. It is certainly not a text for aesthetic purists but a curious, elaborate mixture of descriptions, narration, aesthetic theory, historical and political commentary, dramatic enactment, enthusiastic celebration, and sitcom burlesque" (Zantop, "Introduction" 3). That is, it suggested that Heine was "less interested in innovations in the field of visual arts than in developing his own literary innovations…and that the paintings he discusses are being used as "metaphors or referents…as raw material to work with in order to solve aesthetic-political problems that— according to Heine—affect art at all times" (Zantop, "Introduction" 5-6).

Bent on his career as a writer, he thus appears to have been highly committed to developing his own voice - one which he regarded as promising a new aesthetic which was capable of "truly" addressing problematic social issues of the times as he sensed them from his own unique perspective. In this his first Paris-based work, Heine discusses many paintings, though he was clearly struck by Eugene Delacroix's *The 28th July: Liberty Leading the People*, whose fascination for him (as Zantop interprets it) lay in his perception of its "relationship to his own

aesthetic-political project [with] its focus on contemporary history, its ironic relationship to convention (traditional history painting), and its depiction of dialectical opposites that challenge rather than affirm accepted beliefs" (Zantop, "Liberty Unbound" 37). That is, within its "space" as a work that is both "history painting" and "genre painting," it holds the "lofty" and the "lowly" in creative tension, so that one can appreciate the "free play of communication between different levels and modes of artistic creation"; as Zantop puts it, "In Delacroix, Heine rediscovers himself" ("Liberty Unbound" 37). One might also say that he saw the integrative identity challenges confronting his own person refracted through the complex interactions of his perspective with that of a fellow artist who saw the world of their shared historical moment much as he did.

This was just one of many works Heine produced while living what turned out to be the remainder of his life in Paris, however. He actually continued to write more books for German-speakers *and* translated German works into French for the French public (including publishing what he viewed as a corrective response to Staël's popular *D'Allemagne* (1813) (Die romantische Schule [*The Romantic School*]) in 1833 for the latter audience). By such means, he seems to have essentially embraced a role as mediator between France and Germany in order to promote increased mutual understanding of the two cultures. He also appears to have maintained a perspectival dualism in the process, however, adopting a kind of intermediary position between the German and French cultural systems (their languages, intellectual, artistic, and popular traditions) without actually settling his allegiances on either.

To reiterate, a complex systems perspective is concerned with *system-wide* phenomena and how these operate. Adopting such a lens, Heine (as a "part" or "element" of various complex

systems of his own time) may be perceived as having been driven by personal concerns but *at the same time* by a sophisticated and highly-informed vision by which he understood his situation in a broad *collective context.* He recognized much of the complexity of the dynamics in which he and his contemporaries were caught up, and moved to express his acknowledgment of this complexity in a "modern aesthetic" that others could appreciate as he did. By means of his facility with cleverly and skillfully expressing such a sensibility in his own *literary* art, he contributed to addressing current group (communal) challenges in *modeling* the *dynamics and forms* of relating between the embodied "lofty" and "lowly" perspectives of members of German and French societies who were themselves pragmatically engaged in trying to maintain the *integrity* of their respective social orders while also *creating* new identities more resonant with the felt experience of their time and particular circumstances.

Perhaps there is no better Illustration of this *virtually simultaneously conflicted* and *integrated* vision emerging in Heine's work than in his epic poem *Deutschland: A Winter's Tale*. I refer to the vision emerging from this literary work as having these *virtually simultaneous* qualities because, on the one hand, while the various moves and interactions of the multiple "lofty" and "lowly" forces operating in the social circles in which Heine moved *did actually* occur simultaneously in "real-time," they could not do so within the "linear logic" of the literary narratives he constructed (this being one of the real challenges of "narrating complexity" that Walsh has noted). Nonetheless, by the skillful use of literary and specifically poetic techniques at his disposal, Heine was able to capture a *sense* of the complexity inherent in his vision for his intended readers and their imaginations. That is to say, via a singular voice, the poem's tone and poetic structure, along with his narrator's individual perspective alternating with that of "his

group" (that is, switching references to "I" and "we") and its broader thematic content, Heine *captures* the (for him) contemporary sense of being *unsettled* by being faced with the new modern challenge of managing *multiple* identities, some of which could be readily adopted while others were being imposed and from which individuals (depending on *their* particular circumstances) were likely to be relatively alienated as he was. These multiple identities were themselves associated with diverse incompletely separable aspects of social systems then in flux. For example, in Heine's case, these "conflicting" identities were associated not only with German versus French cultural traditions, but also with his regional identity as a Rheinländer in tension with those of other German-speaking territories, changing class structures and economies, and different religious denominations. The particulars of such conflicts would obviously have been different for individuals with attachments to alternate sets of social groups.

But Heine does not seem to be concerned with conveying a sense of modernity's complexity and the conflicts it engenders within individuals alone. Rather, he seems at the same time to be attempting to offer an *integrated response* to this palpable problem and its consequences *for the group*. And, in this poem, he is primarily addressing the German-speaking group, with whom he maintained an ambivalent relationship as his native community. Heine effects this group-directed message by pointing to a questing for a kind of solution to a problem that he senses many others residing in the disparate German-speaking territories of his time sought as he did. That is, he skillfully captures the sense of a *search* for representing an *ideally integrated* and coherent *modern* group (national) identity that could afford some sense of social stability as well as community. There is arguably some irony, however, in engaging in a quest for such an *ideal* which can never be "absolutely" realized. An acknowledgement of this "painful" irony (which

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Heine seems to suggest that it was for *him*) appears to declare itself in the poem's concluding stanzas, which will be discussed in some detail as well.

Heine wrote his *Deutschland* poem thirteen years after moving to Paris and a year after he made a brief return to his native country and visited his mother in the winter of 1843, when his homeland was still in the political grip of the Austrian Metternich and Prussian authorities. On the one hand, the poem has been variably praised as a masterfully-composed vehicle for conveying Heine's progressive and seriously subversive political agenda whose clever construction allowed it to circumvent the German censors and reach his intended audience. On the other hand along with the remainder of his writing, it has also been criticized at other times (as by Kraus and Adorno [see Phelan (2007) for chapter-long secondary discussions of such criticism]) as being "an involuntary reflex of his experience of the modern" (Phelan 46), demonstrating particularly in its style a kind of character weakness and acquiescence to growing marketing demands and trends towards commodification of publications appealing to popular tastes.

While the view proposed here does treat his work as being related to his "experience of the modern," it does not endorse it as either a simple reflex or an involuntary one arising from an inherent weakness. Rather it regards his work (at least that under discussion here) as expressing a relatively conscious and deeply-felt concern for developing a modern aesthetic that addressed some of the now-recognized features of "complexity" emerging in his time which individuals attempting to "come together" as a new kind of collective themselves embodied. With such concerns in mind, Heine formulates satirically veiled polemics against what he regards as the reactionary and repressive political and religious forces then in power, but at the same time

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poetically works to promote a sense of bonding with and among his readers, while chiding them for what he views as their political passivity in the face of such repression.

Thus, he employs the theme of a journey along with several other devices that suggest both a material body as well as a mind in motion, promptly engaging readers' senses along with their curiosity about what is about to unfold. Even for a twenty-first century reader who might have little knowledge of the historical details of his time, one can quickly appreciate a sense of "lightness" to Heine's touch, a pleasant almost playful quality to his voice which, as the translator Reed says in his introduction, lends a casual, almost conversational quality to the narrative, so that one could almost feel as if one were sitting alongside the narrator in the carriage as he proceeds to make his way home (Reed 16-17). This feeling of being drawn in to a companionable position is enhanced by the poetic rhyme scheme of iambic stresses and the "spring-heeled" rhythm that easily accommodates German (as well as English) vernacular speech forms (Reed 22). At the same time, the stanzas Heine employs were a staple form of German folk (*volk*) poetry of ballads and lyrics that were themselves likely capable of eliciting mnemonic echoes of a shared cultural tradition in his German readers. While all of these devices would have tended to promote a sense of intimacy and potential sense of people's bonding together, signs of the poet's whip-smart and genuinely entertaining wit pop in and out, encouraging readers to sense their own minds in motion as well.

Along with applying these socially engaging maneuvers grounded in language use (that are also specifically valorized as personally meaningful in the poem's first lines - see below), Heine promptly begins to interweave "lower" and "higher" concerns. Thus, while the poem's opening lines have an admittedly sweet almost sentimental quality, Heine goes quickly beyond the

potentially "saccharine," switching the narrative focus to satirically-presented and cleverly-

veiled political concerns indicating that this narrator is not simply preoccupied with nostalgic

feelings. Thus (from Caput I) :

In the dismal month of November it was,   It did strange things to me when I heard
the gloomy days grew shorter,   the German language spoken -
the wind was tugging the last leaves down like nothing so much as if my heart
as I left for the German border.   was pleasantly being broken.

And as I came nearer German soil,   A little girl was playing the harp
I felt my heart beat quicker   and singing with genuine feeling
within my breast, and I even think   and out of tune, but still the song
a tear began to trickle.   she sang was most appealing.

(three stanzas deleted) ——————————————-
I know the tune, I know the words,   Why shouldn't we be happy on earth
I know every single author;   why should we still go short?
I know they tippled wine on the quiet   Why should the idle belly consume
while publicly preaching water.   what working hands have wrought?

A different song, a better song,   There's bread enough grows here on earth
will get the subject straighter: to feed mankind with ease;
let's make a heaven on earth, my friends, and roses and myrtles, beauty and joy,
instead of waiting till later.   and (in the season) peas.

(three stanzas deleted) ——————————————
The maiden Europa is betrothed   That's wedding enough, and I'll sing my song
to that handsome Genius, Freedom.   to help the solemnising.
They lie in each other's arms embraced Deep in my heart I feel the stars
it warms my heart to see them.   of consecration rising.

No priest will bless their vows, but the pair They are stars inspired, they wildly glow,
have taken and will fulfill them.   Dissolving in streams of fire -
Here's to the bride and here's to the groom, I feel I could break an oak, my strength
and to all their future children.   miraculously grows higher.

                   (excerpted from Heine 29-33)

Thus, in a lyrical spirit and, as he indicates, virtually "singing," the narrator turns his attention

and his own "tune" away from the "appealing" but clumsily "out of tune" one of the child to the

more informed, though still craftily playful, one of a mature man of vision who knows the wider world. Slyly attacking the Catholic hierarchy and their traditions ("I know they tippled wine on the quiet while publicly preaching water"), he bemoans *their religious* "message" which he suggests is actually heartless and aimed at extorting the poor while it advises the latter (those with "working hands") to defer their *own* earthly gratification. Then employing symbolism from Greek mythology, he optimistically suggests that his and his compatriots' then-"maiden Europ(a)" should be wedded to their continent's enlightened hero "Freedom," which the poet portrays uniting with and rescuing "her." Thus, here again bringing together the "lofty" and the "lowly," he, the inspired and vigorous poet (strong enough to "break an oak"), offers the tantalizing glimmerings of a new world with a more promising future potentially emerging.

However, as the narrator-poet proceeds on his journey through various hamlets and towns on his way home, his mind also begins to wander into and out of different states of consciousness (sleep and wakefulness) in which the dream content consists of highly-detailed scenes conveying a sense of being haunted. This dreamy feeling of being haunted arises from run-ins with various specters including with a "dark companion" who accompanies him on a "nocturnal" walk through Cologne where he is reminded that:

The French and the Russians have shared out the land,   Here we enjoy a hegemony,
Britannia rules the oceans;   for once we are not divided.
we reign unchallenged in the realm   Other nations have kept their feet
of dreamy abstract notions.   on the ground with which they were provided.

(excerpted from Heine 61)

That is to say, as his "companion" also affirms, he (Heine) and other Germans may *together* ("undivided") excel at "dreaming," but this contrasts with the practical achievements of other

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"grounded" nations whose coherence has allowed them to become "rulers" in the world of material reality.

And then as their walk proceeds into the Cologne cathedral and the Three Kings' Chapel where Heine speaks to a skeleton king, he informs the latter: "I see you belong in all respects / to an age that's dead or dying," and his companion who has affirmed his preference for "action," "…with one blow / the three poor skeletons shattered, / all the old bones of false beliefs / he mercilessly scattered/…and [with that, Heine's] dream/ [is] abruptly terminated." (excerpted from Heine 65-67). This episode underscores Heine's respect for German intellect and imagination, but also his associated concern with its relative ineffectualness in the modern era where many old beliefs of his countrymen also ring "false," warrant "shattering" and switching instead to a state of being awake and taking "action."

This scene is followed later by another dream episode wherein the narrator encounters a German icon Barbarossa (Frederick I, Holy Roman Emperor 1155-1190), who was then-idealized by many but he (Heine) disparages for any "real" ability to be of use to him and his German contemporaries ("Barbarossa' - I cried in return - / 'You're only some old fable, / go back to bed, we'll free ourselves / without you, we're quite able" [105]).

Here in mid-poem we start to see a shift from the more sentimental and idealistic emphases of the opening to a more practical forward-looking one that will begin to acknowledge tensions between collective German pride in its past and a need to relinquish and move beyond "fables." This tension (interspersed with moments of levity) will essentially grow in the following scenes as the narrator moves closer to reaching his goal (home). It will also manifest at two levels. On the one hand, there are signs of simultaneous tugs between a relatively passive state (dream) for

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collective wholeness and autonomy, and a more active inclination to effect a progressive future in reality. At the same time, the narrator starts to exhibit signs of an internal split or conflict of voices *within himself* - a discord that is reminiscent of the dissonance arising from the clash of disparate identities Heine (was obliged to) assume(d) in his own life.

This redirected movement towards illustration of the narrator's growing appreciation of the *real* challenges confronting his diverse German (-speaking) countrymen trying to achieve his ideal of unity then begins to manifest more explicitly (beginning with Caput XX), when the narrator finally reaches "home" (here Hamburg, where Heine had spent a significant part of his young adult life both as a ward of his comparatively wealthy uncle Salomon and in meetings with his publisher, Campe). Now with his eyes literally and figuratively more "open," the narrator-poet starts to convey his growing sense of unease at the disturbing obstacles he sees facing him as he tries to promote his political ideal of a German nation based on French ideological principles of "liberty, equality and fraternity."

Mixed feelings and signs of evasiveness start to become evident when, for example, his mother plies him with obviously tasty food while asking him about life among the French which he declines to answer (117-121). Subsequently he is also quite disturbed when he perceives the "people of Hamburg" having "changed" ("even more than the city" which had suffered a recent fire disaster), now appearing as "walking ruins" and "poor broken objects of pity" (127).

His tone also starts to become more gritty and "painfully" ironic. After having a meal with Campe and other "pleasant company," he encounters "a splendid figure of womanhood" (135), a fantastical caricature of a prostitute who will accost and try to seduce him to come back and reside in Hamburg. And as the narrator here begins to drive towards his conclusions (Caputs

XXIV-XXVI), he finds himself drawn momentarily into a rather foul but still intriguing mess (so to speak) whose details *hint at* what the future might bring.

Thus, now virtually "in the arms" of this strange figure whom he refers to as a "Goddess," in a scene recalling the much earlier one involving Europa and Freedom, the narrator-poet engages in a dialogue with her that is both revelatory and unpleasant. In "explaining" to her why he had returned to Hamburg for a visit ("I wanted to weep where once I felt / the bitterest tear-drops burning - / it's a kind of patriotism, I / suppose, this foolish yearning."), he acknowledges a "shame" that renders him ambivalent about being completely frank about such "yearning" ("I don't like to mention it; at root / it's a disease, this feeling / a *wound* that I'm ashamed of, and not a thing for public revealing.") (emphasis added) (145). This grimmer tone associated with his acknowledging his "feeling wounded" then mounts, while being mingled at the same time with a kind of biting scatalogical humor. That is, the "Goddess" agrees to reveal Germany's future to him so long as he tells no one (151), as she invites him to put his head "down the hole" of a "magic pot" (actually a chamber pot) in order to "view" it ("The future of Germany you will see / down there like a shifting phantasma, / but do not shudder if the filth / sends up a foul miasma") (155). And as the narrator reveals that he is "revolted" not only by the sight but also by the "smells" (155), he now also acknowledges that "…curing a great disease / is harder than one supposes - " and that he feels momentarily unsure of himself ("…the way the German future smelt / was ghastly, hideous - stronger / than ever my nose had bargained for - ") (157).

But as he proceeds to the conclusion of his narrative (Caput XXVII), he leaves the seductions of the "Goddess" behind and returns to the monologic stance of narrator identified as enlightened poet, adopting the "lofty" mantle of his Greek tragicomic and politically-committed predecessor

("It is the lyre my father struck / that now his offspring uses - / the great Greek Aristophanes, / the darling of the Muses" [161]). Critically, he appears to regard this identity as both vulnerable to "the mob" who is likely to "abuse him" and the German King residing in Berlin who is inclined to "rub live poets up the wrong way" (163). Nonetheless, in the final stanzas, he asserts that despite risking "stay[ing} imprisoned forever" and burning in "Dante's Hell" as "the poet's flames…scorch and scourge and scorn him," he will continue to raise his voice against the forces of the unenlightened; and in the final line, he affirms this, advising the latter to "Take care: we might roast you in such a hell / as an everlasting warning." (165).

   Thus, the narrator-poet has wended a circuitous *way,* by whose depiction he has also worked at drawing his readers along with him. Essentially he has endeavored to move all involved from a relatively simple idealistic (and thus distant) position to a more ambivalent but realistic one that acknowledges a sense of the diverse and complex challenges ahead. German scholar David Pugh has analyzed Heine's well-recognized affiliative (poetic, dramatic, and political) ties to Aristophanes in a discussion of what he, too, regards as this poem's depiction of an "ambivalence" arising from what he asserts was Heine's philosophy, which maintains (according to Pugh) "that we are foolish creatures inhabiting a largely but not wholly chaotic world presided over by an obscure comedian-god, whose place we aspire to usurp but who will always have the last laugh by reminding us of our own nothingness" (Pugh 680). Pugh notes that this might seem a rather "unwelcome" interpretation, particularly to those who view Heine as "an icon of German progressive politics" (680). While my own view also acknowledges Heine's ambivalence, it sees the latter as arising more from Heine's self-acknowledged "wounded" position as one unable to settle on any absolute and fixed identity himself, which leaves him questioning his own

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patriotism, as well as his own class affiliations (manifest, for example, in his conflicted responses towards those whom he compassionately views, on the one hand, as downtrodden "working hands" victimized by current sociopolitical trends and "the mob" (qua Communist sympathizers [Pugh 680]).

Heine's sense of his world being "largely but not wholly chaotic" might also be said to have derived from his (implicit) awareness of his native land's consisting of a still unintegrated set of German-speaking territories with their own local identities that had not yet found sufficient commonality in a sense of what one might call "nationhood" in an emerging complex ("national") system in his lifetime[6]. At the same time, his epic poem also hints at his being an individual who feels himself fundamentally challenged with regard to having a sociopolitical/ national identity himself - this being suggested, for example, in his (the narrator's) conveying his Rheinländer's sense of being different from and upset with the Prussian military who were dominating and literally patrolling his homeland; we see this expressed in his veiled derision of Prussian soldiers and their appearance, for example ("The cavalry's get-up I quite / approved - one must speak fairly - / especially that spike of steel / that crowns it all so squarely /…It's really only the thought of storms / that I find a little fright'ning - / that spike on your Romantic heads / might attract some modern lightning." [Heine 39]).

But as his own acknowledgment of "feeling a wound that [he's] ashamed of" (145) and the tone of his poem's conclusions intimate, Heine also felt himself to have been "wounded" by

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[6]For a detailed discussion of nations understood as complex systems, whose *ordered forms as distinct nations* emerge in large part from initial "chaos" and the subsequent "tipping" (often abruptly) of local behavior into a coherent movement by interactions within horizontally-oriented peer-to-peer networks containing distributed knowledge of nationalist ideas, see Eric Kaufmann's article on "Complexity and nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism,* vol. 23, no. 1, 2017, pp. 6-25.

those social forces beyond his personal control that contributed to his conflicted state of unstable (historically still-irreconcilable) identities. Heine thus both embodied and presented, through his highly-skilled literary creations, a sense of the varied and interacting social and political forces that the common "man" in German-speaking territories of western European was having to try to address and negotiate in his lifetime. He seems to have been quite suited, in other words, to conveying *ways of thinking about and* providing, one might say, *some of the sense of a model* (even if still formally incomplete) of the complexity of modern systemic forces (or multiplicity of force-relations as Foucault might put it) to which he and his contemporaries contributed (but were at the same time subject) in the creation of the German nationalist movement that would formally emerge a few decades later.

Thus, despite Heine's native German home clearly remaining of lifelong concern to him, by the very fact of his self-imposed exiling he seems thereafter to have remained in a kind of "flight," as the journey in his *Deutschland* epic poem metaphorically suggests (and others who have commented upon his "elusiveness" have noted). That is, it captures the perceptible feeling of a body and mind in motion arising from identities that he found difficult to reconcile and the dissonance this irreconcilability provoked in him.

But if the modern aesthetic that the Jewish German Heine was working at developing arguably expressed some of the very instability in social identities (along with their feedback "loopiness") which was related to the latter's still-uncertain accommodation to and interaction with various modernizing trends emerging at the time, Balzac's was no less relevant to the times or to social identities specifically. Both his style and his focus, however, were somewhat different. Though his work, in many ways, targeted "system-wide" collective matters as Heine's

did, the sense of his literary project was not directed so much at demonstrating how to *feel* one's

way, so to speak, towards an informed (if ironic) collective uniting in order to fight for a

communal cause, as the notoriously sensualist Heine's was. Rather, Balzac's aesthetic vision

appears to have been more bound up in exposing and dissecting, so to speak, the new identities

and forms of social communication and connection being established as well as the problematic

discordances ("pathology" as he sometimes called it) that these burgeoning connections were

engendering in his own modernizing society.

    This mid-nineteenth century period in which both Heine and Balzac lived also straddled the

literary shift from Romanticism to Realism. Heine's work both expressed and critiqued the

romantic, espousing while secularizing the pagan sensibility of the classical Greeks, and voicing

dreams about, while agitating for, real political change in the service of his German-speaking

contemporaries, for example. But while Heine personally projected the very sense of this

unstable position (and accompanying dissonance) to his public at the same time that the form

(aesthetic) of his work did, Balzac employed a very different voice. By all accounts, Balzac was

much more grounded in a literal (geographical) and cultural sense, and the new aesthetic *he*

offered could be said to have reflected that. Unlike the German Heine, Balzac was not obliged to

address concerns regarding how to effect some sort of new manner of collective "connectivity"

that would allow disparate territories to unite as a bounded national German "system" (in

Kaufman's sense) that could operate in an *inter-national* setting on an equal footing with those

other societies (like the French and British) that were rapidly moving forward with their

modernizing projects at the time. Rather, his concerns lay more with where his *own* native

community's concerns with "connectivity" resided - that is, with the processes and details

involved in picking up the pieces left by the Revolution and Napoleonic Wars and generating the new forms defining the social structure(s) of French society.

His creative attention thus targeted the social issues which directly occupied him in *his* life, though most of the novels and novellas which make up his *Human Comedy* are actually centered around recent historical events (the French Restoration and the July Monarchy) which had set the stage for his own present moment. His aesthetic, therefore, reflects and responds to what he perceived as the emergence of a new face of France.

But perhaps because of his own "entanglement" in the details and some (much?) of what he witnessed was unfamiliar in its expression and too radical in his judgment, he seems to have found some features of the "new order" distasteful. Nonetheless, he clearly found them important to expose. He was, after all, also making a living from his writing and, despite his initial failures, ultimately came to be a public figure of some celebrity (akin to Heine, whose work he knew and to whom he dedicated, with some "unjust" "spitefulness" (per Saintsbury xiii-xiv), his short story *A Prince of Bohemia*).

Balzac's post-war French society was clearly changing and the systems (related to increasing urbanization, new forms of economic organization, and political/democratizing pressures, for example) were in the relatively early stages of their processes of becoming, so to speak. They were thus still relatively enigmatic to most of those caught up in them. As Luhmann has described it, a new social ontology was also under development (though his theoretical formulation maintains its own distinct character, which is somewhat different from the "complexity" lens being employed here). Here it is being specifically suggested that Balzac had his own discerning eye (metaphorical speaking) trained directly on these phenomena. In addition,

one might say that here is another instance of what Hunt has described as "words rushing to catch up" to what people at a more visceral and subconscious level already knew, and that Balzac was acting as a notable contributor to this distinctly human systemic effort of individuals and their collective trying to articulate a sense of themselves/itself and become a bit more self-aware (as he also kept his "gaze" trained on the "shadows" of his time as a "real contemporary" as per Agamben).

Heine's model (as I've referred to it) may be said, on the one hand, to have been targeting more long-range connections through time and space (envisioning bonding connections across German territories and differing cultural mindsets that could support national integration and future progress in the global competition with other nations). Balzac's, on the other hand, may be said to have targeted more *local* and *immediate* connections and their dynamics in his modernizing community (as he considered some of the mindsets of, and relationships between, those living in the provinces versus Paris, for example).

As a part of this distinctiveness, the two writers also sometimes adopted different points of view commensurate with their own circumstances. Thus, Heine in his *Deutschland* poem, adopts the first-person perspective of a "wounded" poet, one who experiences his own fragmented identity and envisions how his similarly divided native collective might aspire to an ideally more united condition as some kind of new nation. Balzac, however, typically adopts the cooler perspective of a (seemingly) more objective third-person narrator focused on the "object" (qua *Comédie)* of his already relatively bounded society (qua nation) whose features and workings were essentially laid out before him and accessible to his own imaginative manipulation. At the same time, while he has sometimes been depicted as a rather dispassionate observer (bordering

on the stereotype of a scientific sociologist), Balzac's subjective concerns and biases (which were politically much more conservative than Heine's) remain in evidence in his writing, as he repeatedly hints at a disillusionment with what he saw as lack of meaningful reform arising from the July Revolution and genuine preference for "the core values of monarchy, religion, and the family" (Watts 4). Nonetheless, he concentrates on depicting the details of the French social life coming-into-being in his *Human Comedy* as he saw them, while also conveying a panoramic sense of that society's *own complexity and connectivity across* its regional *and* country-wide sweep. The virtual system which he portrayed in his literary project thus arguably conveyed, through many of its own formal narrative qualities, a *modeling* of some of the very burgeoning complex systems' forms and processes that were developing and becoming increasingly (though still largely implicitly) evident around him.

These formal narrative qualities manifest in some of the very stylistic innovations for which he became famous. These include his being a pioneer in the modern use of flashback (a kind of "temporal loopiness") which embedded stories within stories thus fostering linkages between representations of a past and those of the narrative present, and in the reappearance of individual characters (beginning with several from Père Goriot [1835]) in subsequent novels and novellas, thereby allowing readers to imaginatively trace the social and developmental trajectories and growing networks of such characters across narrative contexts shifting in time and space.

He employs flashback, for example, in some of his greatest novels, including *Illusions perdues* (*Lost Illusions*) to relate the second and third parts of this tripartite serial work, which portrays the different tempos and qualities of life of characters residing in, and moving back and forth between, the provinces and Paris while in the midst of their own quests and frustrations in

achieving success in love and life (particularly in the worlds of commerce and in art). He also

uses flashback techniques in several of his shorter fictions, including *Le Colonel Chabert,* where

the protagonist's recollections of scenes from the Napoleonic Empire contrast markedly with his

present experience of the Restoration's pampered elite and neglect of the poor.

But he also exploits the technique as a framing device in many other novellas, including

Sarrasine and *Another Study of Womankind*. In these contexts, as Peter Brooks puts it, he

"renews an age-old tradition of oral story-telling, now giv[ing it] a new and knowing

form" ("Introduction" viii). These particular novellas each have their own thematic focus,

however, as the narrator qua story-teller engages his listener(s) for different social purposes. In

Sarrasine, for example, an unnamed aristocratic-narrator slowly unveils the peculiar details

regarding the identities of enigmatic fellow characters and the subject of a mysterious painting in

an effort to pursue a romantic relationship with a Mme de Rochefide; while in *Another Study of*

Womankind, another male aristocrat-narrator (in this case, a listener) avidly attends to various

tales on the subject of the "perfect" woman being recounted by his hostess-novelist for the

edification of her select group of Parisian salon attendees. In both of these works as well as

others, Balzac specifically emphasizes the power of story-telling itself and the effects of that

power on those listening, while at the same time decrying the loss of "the spirit of an earlier age

of sociability…doomed by a world of commerce, journalism, and the devaluation of

leisure" (Brooks viii-ix) as he reworks the forms and manner of story-telling in his own age.

By such means, Balzac thus appears to underscore his appreciation of such "tasteful" and

"typically Parisian" (as he sometimes called them [*Human Comedy: Selected Stories* 19]) face-

to-face narrative exchanges, while implicitly bemoaning their fading away along with the loss of

intimate contact and (in many cases) bonding they promoted. Yet his sprawling *Human Comedy* contains covert signs of other ways of imagining social connection in the French society he is now directly confronting - a society increasingly dependent on new forms of communication and connectivity or what one might already call "virtual" human contact and narrative story-telling. Notable among these is that serial returning to over thirty major and minor characters (such as Eugène de Rastignac, Delphine and her financier husband Frédérick de Nucingen, artists Jean-Jacques Bixiou and Joseph Bridau, and the physician Horace Blanchon) who appear and reappear in his fictions, "thus giving readers the impression of catching up with old friends as they might in the real world" (Watts 4). One might also regard such textual and character interrelating as a kind of early representational form of social networking activity, anticipating the even more expansive "virtual" form that it would take on (as technologies and media forms have continued to evolve) later in the twentieth century.

As Brooks himself also asserts, Balzac "stands as the first true realist in his ambition to see society as an organic *system*…Balzac 'invents' the new century by being the first writer to represent its emerging urban agglomerations, its nascent capitalist dynamics, its rampant cult of the individual personality" (emphasis added). And he continues: "By seeing and dramatizing changes that he mainly deplored, he initiated his readers into understanding the shape of the century," a feat for which Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx also acknowledged him (Brooks "Introduction" vii-viii; xiv). And though the quality of Balzac's writing has attracted some criticism, his inventive aesthetic's impact on writers and readers not only in his own time but in generations to follow remains unquestioned.

Thus, Balzac may be said to have contributed significantly to the growing popular awareness of features of burgeoning complex systems and individuals' places within them (as within cities and commercial enterprises) that were becoming visible in France during the mid-nineteenth century. Among other things, he fleshed out narrative details by which readers could appreciate the material form of some of the "connectivity" within French modernizing social systems. He pointed towards the presence of new forms of social networks that appeared to emerge spontaneously (through the very medium he along with other writers of the mid-nineteenth century were for the first time employing), along with their so-called feedback loops and interrelationships at different levels of scale (that is, between and "within" individuals). Balzac's voluminous *Human Comedy* also virtually enacts the *simultaneity* of such complex social activity - an inherent aspect of complex systems - by defying the linear logic of traditional narratives when these are viewed in isolation. And while each novel and novella making up his literary project may clearly be read on its own terms and appreciated for its own literary value, it is primarily when they are viewed in their larger aggregate that one can gain a more totalizing grasp of the dynamic temporal and spatial relationships among the large cast of characters, which are reminiscent of those taking place among actors in the larger social system that was also French society at the time.

Despite having here enumerated some of the various ways in which Balzac's sprawling project illustrated and conveyed the sense of his society as an "organic system" (as Brooks also refers to it), it is nonetheless the case that he occasionally also ventured to communicate some of this holistic sense of relationships between characters and their social world qua "system" within individual works as well.

For example, in *Père Goriot,* perhaps the most renowned single work among the more than ninety novels and novellas that constituted the *Human Comedy* collection, Balzac skillfully employs various techniques to illustrate the broad scope of social forces arising in and operating during the Bourbon Restoration as well as ways in which they covertly but effectively "bore down," so to speak, on individual characters (and, to some extent, vice versa).

While a major thematic focus centers around the eponymous character whose obsessive love for his two grown daughters, who have married into wealth and privilege, leads to his financial and personal ruin, an interwoven theme is carried along by the impoverished young aristocrat, Eugène de Rastignac, who witnesses the older man's tragic story unfold. Significantly, this young character has come to Paris from the provinces in hopes of making his fortune and it is through his eyes (as a fellow lodger who befriends the old Goriot at the run-down boarding house which both inhabit) that readers appreciate what a relatively naive individual like himself *learns about the machinations of a whole society* whose dynamic is itself changing - from one *defined* by the aristocracy and its hierarchizing principles to one *increasingly defined (at the same time)* by capitalist values and dynamics.

Balzac also imparts the aforementioned sense of his society as an "organic system" by means of various literary devices. Not only are readers obliged to follow along with Rastignac as he learns various lessons from his encounters with members of diverse aspects of Parisian society, but they are actually confronted with a narrative structure and stylistic tactics that facilitate appreciation of movement between "highs" and "lows" as well as the scalar extremes of "parts" relative to the larger "whole" and connections among them all.

For one thing, the main characters are routinely portrayed as criss-crossing the narrative space by carriage or by foot against the relatively static backdrop of Paris' urban space of buildings, streets, and neighborhoods (which is also aided in its mental representation by the author's provision of a detailed map of the city at that time). While essentially all of the notable characters are depicted in such a mobile way, the virtual hub of this activity is the boarding house from which Rastignac makes his numerous forays "out" into the Paris streets, whether to attend classes at university in the Latin Quarter, visit members of the elite classes as a "poor relation" of a female aristocrat, or meet and develop relationships with the nouveau-riche Goriot daughters, all of whom reside across town on both the Right and Left Banks of Paris. Thus, we find the novel opening with an extensive (eighty-two page long) depiction of the details and neighborhood placement of the well-worn boarding house, whose lodgers are hierarchically-situated across floors by the monthly rent they can pay. The form of this organizational arrangement is underscored by various lodgers' moves to more prime or more wretched locations in the house as their fortunes change (as in the case of old Goriot who must move closer to the cold attic as his resources are depleted by his "self-serving" daughters).

But these depictions of overt physical moves and semiotically-significant spatial (re-)arrangements of characters are also accompanied by the more covert dynamics of interpersonal struggles for gaining and maintaining financial security and social status. Such concerns and conflicts are illustrated by nearly all notable characters in the novel but perhaps most flagrantly in the exploitative verbal and behavioral interactions the Goriot daughters engage in with their father which will ultimately lead to his death. But while Rastignac has clearly been seduced by the wealth and beauty of both of these young women, readers are also privy to his

struggles internally and morally with his growing understanding of the dynamics of the social

system ("road to success," so to speak) and the fateful choices he is being pressured to make

within it. Sharpening this conflict are his run-ins with another fellow lodger, the criminal Vautrin

who, like Rastignac will appear in several follow-up novels in the Balzac project, but in this

novel attempts to convince the young man to collude in a murder plot in order to advance his

(actually both of their) personal ambitions. We find that Rastignac does not remain completely

thoughtless. He does intermittently reflect on his self and his situation, at one point noting that:

"…in the past month, [he] had developed as many virtues as faults. His faults were prompted by

society and the need to fulfill his increasing desires. Among his virtues was that Southern

impetuosity which tries to resolve problems by confronting them head on, and does not allow a

man from South of the Loire to remain undecided about anything…" (Balzac, *Père Goriot* 89).

Thus, he finds himself challenged and "pulled" in various directions. And while he will *not*

succumb to Vautrin's enticements and in the novel's concluding pages *will* work to ease the

suffering of the dying Goriot, he is also overcome with "a wave of dreadful depression" (Balzac,

Père Goriot 263) as he realizes he does not even have the few francs necessary to pay those

digging the grave of his friend. With that in mind, Rastignac:

> now, all alone, walked a few paces to the higher part of the cemetery, and saw
> Paris spread out along the winding banks of the Seine, where the lights were
> beginning to shine. His eyes fastened almost hungrily on the area…{that was} home
> to that fashionable society to which he had sought to gain admission. He gave this
> murmuring hive a look which seemed already to savor the sweetness to be sucked
> from it, and pronounced the epic challenge: 'It's between the two of us now'!
> And as the first shot in the war he had thus declared on Society, Rastignac went
> to dine with Madame de Nucingen. (Balzac, *Père Goriot* 263).

Thus, from his panoramic vantage point in these the novel's closing lines, Rastignac addresses the "whole" of the society of which he is a part, at the same time affording readers some grasp of the sense of a "system" which his character has come to discern, understand, and begun to grapple with. At the same time, readers are left with the question of how he will actually move forward in his confrontation with the so-called system whose details he appears to anticipate "savoring" but which he also finds so challenging that he virtually shakes his fist at it. But, of course, in Balzac's *Human Comedy*, the story is "to be continued."

As a final note here, one more point regarding the significance of Balzac's stylistic tendency to often employ specific spatial arrangements and cues to aid visualization of abstract phenomena (as in the cases of the boarding-house organization and Rastignac's view of "Society" noted above) should be mentioned. Andrea Goulet observes in her paper entitled "Balzac's Optics of Narration" (2001) that there is a romantic versus realist tension in Balzac's *Human* Comedy that manifests in "a continual dialogue between the competing modes of "vision" (as in the "visionary eye attuned to the realm of mystical revelation") and "sight" (as in the "scientific eye trained for the positivist observation of details in the world") (43). She supports this contention by pointing out the many narratives which emphasize the roles of inspired *voyants* (Louis Lambert, Victor Morillon, Séraphita/itus) and blind seers (Facino Cane) versus those with worldly heroes "whose eyes are gradually trained to perceive the workings of society" (Eugène de Rastignac, Lucien de Rubempré, Raphaël de Valentin) (44). The implications of this "textually encoded move from one mode of seeing to another in Balzac," she suggests, lies in its "exploration" of the "modern observer" - that is, of the seeing subject as bodily, temporally grounded and implicated in a *nexus of political and economic forces that strip*

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the subject of perspectival mastery" (emphasis added) (58). As I have also suggested, such a move would have been particularly meaningful in this historical period not only because "the modern observer must gain experience with the subtle, changing phenomena of social appearances in order to interpret them" (Goulet 66) but also because (as Goulet also intimates) absolutist sociopolitical perspectives were declining in their legitimacy and ability to afford acceptable narratives of the "ontology" of the modern world then emerging.

Thus, as Goulet also implies, one can appreciate in Balzac's depictions the tensions as well as the tentative beginnings of a new (though still unstable) tendency in western Europeans' cognitive modeling of their social world - one characterized by a growing trend towards incorporating a significantly visual mode that emphasized "spatial relationships" and had, at the same time, the potential to aid in efforts at "reworking" the sense of social relationships themselves. In other words, moves towards "spatialization" and the kind of abstraction it supports may be argued to have facilitated individuals' relinquishing the sociopolitical focus on simple hierarchies and consideration of other (newer) forms of social relationships (including more horizontally-oriented democratic ones). By so doing, they also would have had the potential to "re-gain" some of the perspectival mastery in grasping the sense of their society, which may have seemed to be slipping away from them. Such a trend would seemingly have been supported not only by the use of new "tools" arising from emerging technologies and their applications (as with photography), but also by all of the other immediate and direct (embodied) encounters individuals would have had with various details of the modern complex systems (such as cities, communication networks, banking and other financial systems) that were

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continuing to develop and grow in their scalar reach in the mid- to latter portions of the nineteenth century.

In the next chapter, the persistent need and pressures of the German and French populaces to effect what could be deemed "satisfying and useful" ways of modeling the sense of their modern societies will continue to be discussed, but now as they were taking place in the latter part of the nineteenth century after the Franco-Prussian War. Seemingly, there was less need now to imagine and try to describe *emerging forms* of social connection in their respective societies as compared with a few decades earlier. But, as these societies were developing, diversity within them was also increasing and becoming more apparent as an energetic force *itself* (increasing diversity being another feature of growing "complexity"). For some individuals then, as in the case of these next two writers, there were now discernibly new "problems" arising. These included awareness that "the people's" concerns were now starting to differentiate and compete among themselves *in an uneasy alliance* with those late nineteenth century authorities who were trying to assert their *own* version(s) of the new social "ontology." In this penultimate chapter, the focus will be on two artists, Heinrich Mann and Stéphane Mallarmé, whose careers and concerns were shaped both by *local* circumstances after the war as well as by *mutual* cross-cultural post-Enlightenment developments that were beginning to promote explorations of the very nature of individuals' psyches (and expression of desires) themselves along with considerations of how to address the systemic challenge of *actually integrating* the increasingly diverse segments of their population(s) into stable modern communities with a promising future.

Chapter 4:
The Political and Poetic Forms
of Mann's and Mallarmé's Solutions

In this chapter, the focus of the discussion on select writers and their works will shift to try to illustrate how the *form* of new "problems" emerging in western Europe (and Germany and France in particular) in the latter part of the nineteenth century were taking on a new shape *as well as* how two artists of that period responded to such changes in their own work in their efforts to address them. Again, employing some of the conceptual vocabulary and principles of complex systems will be useful. Essentially, it will be argued that pressures leading to increasing differentiation and diversification of identities at different levels of scale (individual and collective) within these societies were at the same time beginning to lead to problems with *integrating* the elements so produced. This abstract characterization of such "problems" (which is common when employing a "complexity" lens) will be fleshed out in the present chapter with specific attention to elaboration of many of the details of their particular expression *in the specific locales* of Germany and France and *the unique circumstances* of the two writers, Heinrich Mann and Stéphane Mallarmé. From a "complexity" perspective, presentation of such particulars *and* their abstract interrelationships are both necessary for elucidating the "complete picture," so to speak, of any specific (set of) complex systems, as these two societies (and the two writers themselves) may be considered to be. As the historian David Christian and his colleagues have noted, complex entities contain diverse components but these components are arranged in particular ways in order for them to exist and function properly (think how the

component "parts" of an animal or an airplane need to connect and relate to each other properly in order for these entities to exist and operate, so to speak; note also how these entities are more "complex" than their unassembled constituents) (Christian et al 5). In the case of the German and French communities under discussion, the aforementioned pressures of increasing "differentiation" of social (including national) identities will be argued to have been leading to problems with their "integration" into stable and satisfying inter-related "wholes." The latter will be argued to have been a significant "stimulus" to these writers orienting themselves to concerns with both the individual psyche (or personality) *and* the formation of communities at the end of the century.

Before entering directly into a discussion of Mann and Mallarmé and their work, however, it will be useful to offer a brief summary of the argument so far in order to situate them more specifically and clarify the comparative sense in which they may be understood relative to each other as well as those who had come before them.

Formally, the discussion has been aimed at elaborating some of the ways in which various currently recognized principles associated with notions of "complexity" may be employed for appreciating the activity of, and production of particular works by, select French and German writer-artists in the long nineteenth century. Essentially, via this lens, these writers have been viewed as *agents* - of a particularly innovative type - who participated in the dynamics of the "complex adaptive systems" (CAS) that they inhabited in an inherently relational fashion. Such agents may be said to exist as *bounded sub*systems (CAS) themselves (by which boundedness they become capable of *interior* processing) that typically learn or adapt in response to interactions and exchange of information with other agents in their environments; at the same

time they are constrained by and respond with further constraints upon the broader contextual systems of which they constitute a part. That is, as was noted in the introduction: "while these systems [CAS] are constrained, the constraints are loose or only partial, and the nature of the constraints (and thereby the system) is constantly modified by the interaction of the agents with the system and each other; [in other words] they coevolve" (Snowden 225).

While observing that complexity theorizing still exists in its early stages, complexity scholar John H. Holland also points out that all known CAS themselves have several hallmarks. These include tendencies towards *hierarchization*, such that particular combinations of agents at one level combine to form agents at the next level up (as in human brain structures interacting to yield mind/brains of human beings that both define the latter and allow them to act and interact with each other to yield groups which may, in turn, interact with other groups to promote even broader co-evolving complex systems). For the purposes of the current discussion, it is also useful to note that such complexity notions have also been adopted, and are continuing to be developed, by scholars from various natural and social science as well as humanities disciplines in the relatively new field of "big history"[7]. The latter's aim is to identify general patterns across relatively long time-frames (from the moment of the Big Bang to the modern historical period) while ultimately noting and continuing to explore the singular status of the *human* species and its behavior *in the context of this broader picture of developmental change.* Critically, the perceived *broad* shape of such change (to the current historical moment) is one of general tendencies

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[7]Historian David Christian and his colleagues pioneered the theoretical foundations of this new "macro-historical" discipline, which have been published in several works, including *Maps of Time* (2011) and *Big History: Between Nothing and Everything* (2014).

towards *greater* complexity *emerging* in wide-spread domains (whether one looks at solar systems, life on earth, or patterns within and between human societies).

While it would be neither appropriate nor possible to articulate all of the scientific considerations that underlie this "big history" framework here, it is important to note that the latter does include a reasoned and empirically-grounded framework for understanding recent trends in human world history as signs of systems increasing in their complexity. Greater complexity, in this sense, does not simply mean more "complicated." Rather, it refers to developing more complex entities, defined as those things that have "many diverse components that are arranged in precise ways so that they generate new qualities [called] emergent qualities" and which appear to emerge only where *conditions are optimal* (so-called "Goldilocks conditions") [Christian et al 4-5]. Importantly, such trends towards greater complexity depend at the same time on "flows of energy" that not only support the *creation* of such new structures but also help *maintain* them for the time necessary to *stabilize patterns of activity* so that *more* generative interactions and processing in the service of fostering further emergence may take place (Christian et al 5-6) (note that these general trends towards greater complexity in various domains do not deny the occurrence of (the nearly-complete or complete) eradication of certain structures and subsystems, since "flows of energy" actually depend upon (cycles of) exchange between systems that rise and fall in terms of their existence, as human beings themselves are obliged to do).

While such a conceptualization of historical change may appear quite abstract, it is grounded in the discernment of patterns of material *details* that relate back to the considerations here at hand. For example, as these authors note, western Europe (including France and Germany) in the

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nineteenth century became the site of an explosion of technologies and innovation because of a confluence of factors ("Goldilocks conditions") that had set the stage for their emergence in that region. These included the colossal extent and variety of exchange networks that had grown to connect locales and markets across the entire globe with this area as a central hub, the related increasing importance of commerce, and the spark for the Industrial Revolution taking place in that vicinity (first in Great Britain from which it diffused rapidly). But also, and particularly relevant to the current discussion, there was the region's intellectual roots in the Enlightenment (with its "skepticism generated by new knowledge and the conviction that knowledge should be sought in exploration") and commitment to "knowledge that was global in its reach and application and not bound by the traditions of any particular regional culture" (Christian et al 239). The results were epic transformations in economies (notably in the resources countries and their governments could procure through global contacts, the money to be made, and the rising power of capitalists and the middle class) that contributed to *fueling incentives to innovate*, along with changes in the nature of governments for managing the wealth and growing power of industrial economies.

As Christian and his colleagues point out, modern governance was at the same time in this region trending towards shifts in relationships between consensual and coercive forms of power, such that modern states (initiated by the historically more politically-centralized France) "reached more directly into the lives of [the] people" (via, for example, the growth of bureaucracies, policing, the judiciary, and educational systems) while at the same time promoting the latter's identities as citizens. But this also led to something of a "paradox." That is, despite "democratic" pressures promoting the (new) voices of citizens and encouraging expression of

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their interests, "the reformed state was also in many ways much more powerful than the monarchy it replaced" (Christian et al 253-254). But this "paradox" was not just arising from pressures promoting new identities specifically tied to the political realm. It was also deriving some of its significance and strength, I would argue, from forces playing out in the realms of industry and commerce that were promoting new identities and behaviors in those realms as well. That is, a new middle class (bourgeoisie) was emerging, much of whose modus operandi was grounded in the exercising of personal taste and making choices among material goods. Thus, while increasing numbers of people were being encouraged to regard themselves as more "free" in the realms of politics *and* personal lifestyle, their so-called freedom was, in fact, being increasingly constrained by these very products of advancing social complexity over which they as individuals *and* their local governments had only a certain amount of control. (As Christian and colleagues have essentially argued, such advancing complexity has a "mind of its own," so to speak, accounting in large part for, among other things, what have been deemed "arms races" and the emergence of the Anthropocene, defined as the latest geologic era wherein aggregate human activity has begun to have a significant effect on the planet's climate and ecosystems.)

Together these factors (along with technological developments) which were gathering momentum in the mid- and latter parts of the nineteenth century caused "for the first time ever, wrenching social and technological change [that] could be *felt* by many in *a single lifetime*" (emphases added) (Christian et al 260). As already noted, this unprecedented pace of change cutting across so many aspects of people's lives (in those Western locales which included France and Germany) could also be argued to have increased most people's sense of "entanglement" in this complexity. For some, this "entanglement" arguably engendered an

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increasing sense of what some have called "alienation," feelings of powerlessness, and/or despair. Others, however, as I will be arguing Mann and Mallarmé were, responded with active efforts to address this growing complexity with innovative strategies aimed at trying to articulate some of its features, so that others might not only be more enlightened but also more empowered in managing these phenomena that were challenging the very integrity (integrative capacity) of their communities.

As I have been arguing, it is this perception of such *evolving* problems (related to the increasing complexity of their societies and their environments) that the various paired French and German writers under discussion experienced themselves and made efforts to articulate and address.

Thus, Staël and Kleist may be seen to have shared a common western European environment on that "brink of change" which, as described by Christian and colleagues, the Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic Wars further provoked by largely undermining what had been becoming increasingly fragile and *unsustainable* sociopolitical structures (monarchies, aristocracies). These structures had supported both artists in their youth but were now slipping away. Staël, who felt (and consciously recognized) the instability of her own aristocratic position paralleling the rising tide of commercial forces, offered a vision of a potential future social system which would be characterized by new kinds of "agents" that, for the first time, would ideally include women with *voices* in significant *public* roles who would be valued for their talents irrespective of class; while Kleist, still driven by his so-called "Kantian crisis" and interpersonal difficulties, articulated a proto-modernist vision of "agents" and their societal relational challenges that would manifest more obviously to others in its future "versions" as the seeming fragmentation of

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modern and post-modern sensibilities. While recognized by *some* in their own time for their innovative sense (and now, in hindsight, acknowledged for a notable prescience of their artistic visions), both writers' works were effectively prevented from gaining much social traction at the time by those in positions of power and authority (for example, Staël by Napoleon and Kleist by the Austrian Archduke Charles as well as Goethe himself).

After the manifestly unstable wartime period in which these artists lived, however, there was the *relatively* peaceful period during which the German as well as French communities were now largely preoccupied with recovery and the quite practical reorganizational adaptive challenges (qua problems) specific to each. A "new normal" (as we might refer to that sense of a different state of the world after a crisis) was *emerging*, continuing to be impelled largely by the commercial and technological forces that were altering various social structures and patterns of connectivity within and between (national) communities for channeling the "flows of energy" (per Christian et al) supporting modernization.

Writers Heine and Balzac offered their creative responses to these challenges in the form of works embodying new aesthetics that they regarded as more resonant with their times and having the potential to make sense to many in their communities. For Heine, unifying what he regarded as the sociopolitically backward territories of his beloved homeland into a unified German nation capable of greater participation in the increasingly "modern world" was a critical aspiration, while for Balzac, it was more a matter of articulating the new sociocultural details and forms of connectivity among the widely spatially and temporally-dispersed players in his "comédie humaine."

Individuals like Staël, Kleist, Heine, and Balzac were sensitive to what I have been calling the "problems" of their collectivities largely, I would suggest, through their sensing themselves simultaneously losing the supports for critical features of their own identities and being uncertain regarding future ones. As noted in chapter three, Peter Brooks has argued in his book *Enigmas of Identity* that "who you are—in the sense of what you can legitimately call yourself, and what others call you—seems to have become a problem with entry into the modern age in a way that it wasn't before…identity is in fact a large problem that stamps not only novels but all sorts of social issues in the nineteenth century, and up to our own time" (Brooks 4). In their respective situations, these four seemed to have straddled a middle ground between those with the most power in their societies and those with the least, so that they simultaneously sensed, and were obliged to work at reconciling, the so-called "integration" challenges of changing identities *within themselves* over which they had some but only *limited* control.

But at the heart of the primary theme of this chapter is the notion that the very *form* of the so-called "problem of identities" that Brooks and others have noted was also shifting across this century. Thus, social identities at the turn of the nineteenth century were in many ways under threat, becoming frankly ambiguous and unstable. But only a few decades later, many social identities were undergoing *actual* reshaping as some, like those of the nobility and aristocracy, though still extant, were faltering as their titles were increasingly tending towards nominality (figurehead status) only, while those of the capitalists and middle class were "coming into focus" as those with increasing power.

So, while Staël and Kleist appear to have been attuned to the "creative destruction" around them (Staël to what the "destruction" signified and *migh*t portend for radically new roles for

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women in society and Kleist to the diversification and fragmentation within and between "agents" themselves), Heine and Balzac perceived the nascent forms of the collectivities and identities of their members as they were *actually* emerging and self-organizing around them.

By the late nineteenth century, however, a growing proportion of the western European populace, extending beyond the most elite and intellectual, appears to have actually begun to have some cognizable sense of these systemic sociocultural shifts taking place *within their own lifetimes*. Christian et al have described these shifts as a consequence of the relatively rapid increase in social complexity taking place in this locale - that is, a result of the dramatic development of new material forms of networking and interconnection, the exchange of information made possible by the latter, and the resultant collective learning that they facilitated in this hub space. The notion of collective learning that they employ refers to "the human ability to accumulate more innovation with each passing generation than is lost by the next. It has allowed us to exploit our ecological niches with increasing efficiency and permitted us to greater harness the energy flows of the planet and sun…[but it] is important not only for understanding human biological evolution but also areas of conventional human history as well" (Baker 77). And, as will be argued further in this chapter, some of the pressures on collective learning during this late nineteenth century period were specifically with regard to *how to understand and manage the rapidly growing social complexity* taking place.

A primary challenge, however, was (and remains to this day) localizing and effecting more enlightened managerial "control". This is important to address because, as already noted, advancing complexity has a "mind of its own" (recall that complex systems tend to self-organize with the emergence of new structures and other consequences). There was and is no single god-

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like agent overseeing and managing the whole process (though human beings have often looked to one). Instead, according to this macro-historical complexity view, human beings (individual agents of all sorts) interact to produce their resultant social and cultural systems which then go on to have their own consequences. Societies have always had the potential to be managed and directed well (towards greater human benefit) or badly (to the detriment of many if not all of their members, as recent Great Wars and the collapse of great ancient civilizations can attest).

But, as these "big history" scholars have also noted, the increases in social complexity arising from the intensifying pressures of modern forces in the nineteenth century were giving rise to a special case. A paradox was developing. While democratic principles were circulating and encouraging a more consensual form of governance, the modern state was also emerging and effecting not only greater intrusion into but also exerting greater control over people's lives than the monarchies they displaced. Thus, as I argue in this chapter, a new challenge was emerging (that continues unresolved to this day): *how to collectively learn* how to address and manage this apparent paradox.

From a complex systems perspective then, it could be argued that the increasing social complexity described here was promoting a new adaptive challenge, and that this challenge included finding narratives that could allow making sense of this growing complexity and help guide people in their own actions in this changing world. Essentially, a new "question" could be said to be taking shape; that is: "who" is responsible for managing this growing complexity and "how" are we/they to do it?

As I will try to illustrate more clearly in the discussion of Mann and Mallarmé, this new challenge was one that they both were trying to address. Like the writer-artists already discussed,

they could be regarded as innovators working in the service of contributing to collective

learning. But in their particular cases, they were trying even more self-consciously to

"accumulate more innovation in their generation" such that it *could*, in fact, be handed on and

not be "lost by the next" (recalling Baker's quote) because of their now added concerns about

"integrating" the growing "diversity" of voices into stable communities. And, how did they do

this? They did it, as I will be trying to show, by encouraging their audiences to try to *reflect more*

upon themselves as *individuals* with *psyches and personalities* and consider what these might

also mean for being able to effect social integration and stable modern *communities.*

In order to give more credence to this assertion, one may note that there are other scholars

who acknowledge many of the same general issues, though they frame them differently as a

result of their disciplinary vantage point. That is to say, these macro-historical complexity

scholars (Christian et al) are not alone in viewing such a challenge as having emerged in the

nineteenth century (and as continuing to press us during our present age). For example, social

thought and art history scholar Andrei Pop (whose argument will be noted in more detail in the

following discussion of Mallarmé's work as a Symbolist) targets what he calls the "problem of

subjectivity" arising during the late nineteenth century. While acknowledging social and cultural

forces promoting this "problem," his emphasis is on its philosophical aspects and what such a

problem meant for both artists and scientists of the period. His use of the term "subjectivity" is

therefore different from that of cultural critics who use it to refer to ways in which individuals

must situate themselves in relations to power. Rather, it focuses more on considerations of what

it means to be a subject (an individual who possesses conscious experiences, such as

perspectives, feelings, and beliefs). It is akin to the sense of "subjectivity" employed by literary

scholar, Donald E. Hall, who makes a distinction between identities and *thinking about* identities. Thus, in his monograph *Subjectivity,* he says "identity can be thought of as that particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances that, in short- or long-term ways, gives one a consistent personality or mode of being, while subjectivity always implies a degree of *thought and self-consciousness about* identity, at the same time allowing a myriad of limitations and often unknowable, unavoidable constraints on our ability to fully comprehend identity" (emphasis added) (Hall 3). Thus, according to Pop and Hall, there is a distinction to be made between a mode of being (as a particular subject) and reflecting upon and thinking about that mode of being, which is a distinction that I propose was coming into sociocultural focus in the latter part of the nineteenth century; and that it's coming into focus was a challenge that both Mann and Mallarmé also perceived and tried to address.

One other theorist who should be mentioned in this context is the sociologist and noted systems theorist Niklas Luhmann. While this is not the place to detail much of Luhmann's theory of society, his work on the subject of social self-description is useful to appreciate for how it interfaces and jibes significantly with aspects of Christian and colleagues' depiction of growing social complexity and with the shift from a focus on identities to so-called "subjectivity" in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Pointing out where and how his theorizing differs on the subject of social self-description is also useful, however, because it helps underscore the significance of employing the complexity lens of Christian et al in the remainder of this chapter.

Luhmann argues that a new form of social observation began to take place in the nineteenth century. Specifically, he distinguishes between what he calls "first-order" and "second-order"

observers or observing systems[8], which the historian Jaap den Hollander summarizes this way: "…the crucial difference between first and second order observation [is that] whereas I observe only my own environment, other people observe *me in my own environment*. They notice that I observe the world from a particular point of view, while I am unable to see this. This means that second order observation introduces an element of perspectivity and contingency in our way of observing" (Hollander 53). As Luhmann himself says: "deconstruction [which equates with second order observing] destroys this "one observer-one nature-one world" assumption" of first order observing (Luhmann 756). He also asserts that such deconstruction or second order observing began to take place in the nineteenth century because there was a shift from a social order with a hierarchical stratification which gave those at the top (the nobility) "privileged positions for observing and describing itself and the surrounding world…[that is] for producing *ontology"* to a new social order based on "the primacy of functional differentiation" that resulted in "the 'world we have lost,' the world of ontological metaphysics, the world of 'being or not being,' the world of the two value-logic that did presuppose one (and only one) observer who could make up his mind simply by looking at what is the case" (Luhmann 778-779). With this shift, as he says, "function systems" [for example, communication, transportation, educational, political, commercial-economic systems, etcetera] "became independent from stratification, organizing their own boundaries [and] their own modes of inclusion and exclusion of persons" and "a new semantics of modernity (the modern world, the modern states, and so forth) tried to catch up with the changes" (Luhmann 779). But critically, as Luhmann sees it, while "special

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[8]Note that in the Luhmann and Hollander papers quoted from here, the punctuation differs, so that the terms "first-order" and "second-order" in the former equate with "first order" and "second order" in the latter. When not directly quoting from either, the latter style will be employed in the discussion.

problems such as 'the social question" and national imperialism became controversial issues, …

framing them in terms of problems and problem solutions could not contribute much to a self-

description of the society. *Only the mass media* succeeded in serving this function." (emphasis

added) (Luhmann 780). Thus, Luhmann considers the distinction between first order and second

order observing (that is, between simply maintaining a way of "being" or identity and *exercising*

a perspective on that identity or identities) as taking place at the group/societal level. He

discusses systems "observing" systems and does *not* situate "observation" at the level of

individuals.

His view differs, therefore, from that of historians like Hollander (and David Christian). Thus,

while Luhmann does identify a notable shift in the form of social organization during the

nineteenth century (as they do) which, as he says, temporally coincided with the introduction of a

new (second order) way of observing and means of self-description, his emphasis is on "social

wholes" or autopoietic systems and relationships between their bounded functional subsystems

with their own "modes of inclusion and exclusion of persons." And, as Hollander points out, in

contrast with personal individuality, "the individuality of social wholes…is a controversial issue"

(40). It is this focus on second order observing taking place exclusively at this "social whole"

level (and thereby making the media so central to his discussions of social self-description)

which differs from the view adopted here of historian and complexity theorist David Christian.

Recall that in the latter's model there is the notion of "collective learning," which depends on

interactions taking place at the level of individual agents which results in innovations *emerging*

at the societal level. Advancing social complexity thus depends on operations at *both* the

individual and societal (social whole) levels, constraining as well as feeding back on each other.

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Hollander himself, while acknowledging the value of Luhmann's insights at the "systems" level, points out that his own perspective as an historian is also shaped by his being a "self-conscious storyteller" so that "unlike sociologists" (like Luhmann), he "will not soon give up the individual action perspective" (Hollander 55).

And this individual action perspective is what will continue to be emphasized here, though some of its interactions with the systems level of influences and constraints will also be acknowledged and illustrated. Thus, as we proceed now into specific discussion of the writers at the end of the long nineteenth century, we will acknowledge that shift towards a new ontology which Luhmann specifies, but instead of regarding the new sources and means of self-description (second order observing) as being limited to the media, the focus will be on *individual innovators* (Mann and Mallarmé) who, it will be argued, regarded it as part of their personal mission to contribute to collective learning (à la Christian) by provoking and stimulating their fellows' own second order observing and subjectivity (in Hall's sense).

With these points in mind, the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to exploring some of the ways in which Mann and Mallarmé shifted their focus largely away from the concerns of their predecessors at the same time that the social-system context around them was shifting. Recognizing the simultaneity of these shifts is actually critical. This is because the so-called explosion of collective learning that took off in Europe with modernization over the prior couple of centuries proposed by Christian and colleagues is believed to have depended upon not simply the presence of a greater *number* of potential innovators but also on increases in *connectivity* between them (as from printing, the growth of communication and transportation systems like those that Luhmann describes, and the colonial expansion of Europe into a global network)

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which allowed such innovators to share and refine their ideas (Baker 98-99). Such connectivity was accelerating in the latter part of the nineteenth century and facilitating the simultaneous *presentation* of alternate perspectives.

As noted in chapter two, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben has suggested that those who are most **"**contemporary**"** with their epoch, as I would assert all of the six writers under discussion here were, tend to exist in a singular relationship with it. As he puts it, such individuals manage to "firmly hold their gaze" on the "darkness" of their eras and "get a glimpse of the shadows" thrown by the "blinding lights" of the time (Agamben 44-45). The sense of such metaphors I believe may also be understood as relatable to other ones that organizational complexity theorists like Browning and Boudès (along with Snowden and Wieck) use when they refer to those persons "on the margins" of their social groups discerning not only the shape of a problem circulating in their midst but who then also offer a new narrative as its solution. As I have been suggesting and will continue to try to show, the writers here under discussion may be regarded as such individuals "on the margins," who worked to address largely implicit problems of their times and afford them a shape which not only they but others could potentially grasp. I would also suggest that their "being on the margins" actually helped them acquire and hold alternate perspectives in mind, *akin* to being able to effect that kind of second order observing that Luhmann describes as taking place at the societal subsystems level (via the media).

Staël and Kleist, and Heine and Balzac, each had their own means of acquiring (and reasons for embodying) multiple perspectives on their contemporary moments, as described in the previous chapters. And as will be shown here, Mann and Mallarmé had their own personal reasons too. But in their case, the social context of increasing social complexity associated with

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growing pressures on the populace to address the issue of increasing agent "diversity" (and multiplicity of interests) *and* the challenge *this* posed to social "integration" (achieving stable community) by the century's end, drove them as well. And while they employed different literary themes and genres to address these concerns (Mann articulating his vision more in terms of his community's struggles to democratize, while for Mallarmé it became (later in his life) more a matter of how to actually advance the appreciation of art and art-making in people's lives, from a complex systems (macro-) perspective, their work may also be seen as operating in a complementary fashion. That is, both may be regarded as trying to help *foster communities made up of individuals with greater self-awareness and capacity to communicate with each other in a spirit of greater creativity and communal problem-solving.*

Thus, both artists may be said to have been concerned with collective learning that could help promote a "better" future. And, while Mann may have tended to perceive such a future in more frankly secular and political terms, Mallarmé did so through a highly-developed artistic lens by means of which he re-worked his art as a kind of new "religion" for the modern age. While acknowledging these category differences in whose terms they perceived and spoke of relationships between "the individual and the collective" in their respective situations, the following discussion will also attempt to show that both artist-writers' work were comparable, however, in being designed to *provoke* their audiences and change their "thinking." And, in both their cases, the change was meant to afford a different *perspective* (akin to second order observing) - one that would not only promote "self-description" (as Luhmann put it) but also offer the *potential* for finding common ground among "diverse" selves and managing the problem of "integrating" into a new social order with a real sense of *community*.

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While examples of these artists' writing will be discussed in order to try to justify these assertions, some description of the signs of growing social complexity (as per Christian and colleagues) that established some of the systemic context constraining these men's work (and the nature of the problems they addressed) will first be provided. And, as was done in the case of the previous writers, some of the details of their personal lives in this context will also be noted.

Proceeding now, it will likely be most useful to begin by briefly summarizing those historical events and their consequences that have been most widely-acknowledged as shaping and defining the sensibilities and social activity within what I will here call the "system-worlds" that Mann and Mallarmé inhabited jointly, on the one hand, and individually, on the other.

Undoubtably, the most momentous event in this regard was yet another war (the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71), which took place when Mallarmé (1842-1898) was a young adult and officially concluded with the armistice and signing of the Treaty at Versailles the year Mann (1871-1950) was born. Among the war's most obvious consequences was the fact that the respective language-based communities emerged from this major clash *newly-defined* as two distinct *national entities*. Both, however, also continued to operate in the *shared* context of increasing international competition for control of resources supporting modernization.

Thus, in contrast to those worlds inhabited and inherited by the four writers already discussed, where countries' and their people's interactions had been evolving primarily on the foundations of expanding commercial exchange networks, temporary wartime coalitions, and still-limited modern technologies (notably the publishing industry) for facilitating connectivity, with the Franco-Prussian War, the bases for emergence of a more expansive world, of greater social

complexity with increasingly differentiated but increasingly *impersonally connected* functional subsystems, were established.

The treaties and changes in communal behavior this war promoted would accelerate not only the *internal* (bounded systemic) development of a new territorially-unified German *nation* (so-called modern state) now symbolically sharply demarcated (along the Rhine and at the Alsace-Lorraine borders) from neighboring France, but also internal disruptions and generative recovery efforts within the latter. These consequences of the war would, in their turn, contribute to reinforcing these nations' respective roles as distinct players in the ever-growing global competition for energy and other resources (in the service of survival in the increasingly modern world).

Thus, the newly officially-acknowledged nation of Germany could now proceed with a domestic program of so-called "nation-building," which was essentially based on Enlightenment *rationalist* (but not democratic) principles and modern commercial practices. Under the direction of the first chancellor Otto von Bismarck, the new nation was supported in its overall development by the prompt institution of a networked infrastructure consisting of a common currency and transportation system as well as new educational policies for socializing the youth and imparting the new *national identity*.

Despite retaining its own distinct sociopolitical identity after its military defeat, France, on the other hand, underwent marked internal changes of quite a different sort. Specifically, it entered into another period of marked political instability (initiated by the Paris Commune in the spring of 1871), arising from bitter efforts at recovering from the felt humiliation of the symbolically important political losses of the Alsace and Lorraine border territories at the hands of the

Prussian army and its allies (in a spirt of *revanchism*) (Schivelbusch 103-187), along with varied attempts at re-establishing what it regarded as its long-standing competitive edge and status as a cultural leader in the eyes of much of the Western world.

Germany's rapid leap forward with industrialization (a six-fold increase between 1871 and 1914, which outstripped that of Great Britain) and the technical achievements (for example, electricity and the automobile) that it exploited, not only increased mobility but along with "trailblazing advances in medicine" essentially "changed the way of life" in the country (GHM 116). These changes were also associated with a massive increase in Germany's population, which now included large numbers of migrants looking for employment (an increase from 41 million inhabitants in 1871 to 68 million people in 1914) (GHM 107). But there was a "crass contrast" between the often "cramped and unhygienic" living conditions of those on the lower rungs of society and those "ostentatious" ones of the "ambitious sector of the upper middle classes" such as businessmen and bankers, who were also increasing in their political influence and competed with the aristocracy, though the latter still managed "to hold its place as the social role model, in displays of status" (GHM 116). There arose then a competition for social influence and power (akin to that which had arisen in France earlier in the century) between an emergent middle class (bourgeoisie) and a nobility. But this nobility in Germany was heavily weighted towards army officers and diplomats so that public life was still significantly shaped by authoritarian conventions and a traditional military social order (which emerging avant-gardist voices like that of Mann's attempted to counter). And the influence of these traditional forms of Prussian militarism was only exaggerated with the forced resignation of Bismarck (March 1890) and ascendency of the German Empire (Second Reich) under Wilhelm II.

For France, on the other hand, these initial decades after the Franco-Prussian War and early stages of its Third Republic were fraught not only with significant social discord and notable political and judicial missteps (for example, the Dreyfus affair) but also with what one might call serious "soul-searching." Gradually, however, there were also growing signs of (what was later called, in retrospect) the Belle Époque, which was sweeping western Europe but, in Paris specifically was expressed in the monumental reconstruction of the architectural face of the city (for example, the Eiffel Tower, Paris Opera, and Metro), the massive stimulation of commercial enterprises that included the Grand Magasins and a specialization in high fashion which helped encourage tourism and the resurgence of a middle class highly dependent on consumerism and advertising, as well as considerable experimentation in artistic circles.

These broadly-sketched trajectories and new circumstances of the two neighboring nations at the end of the century were, however, also challenged by other sociocultural forces impacting them along with the wider European community. These forces have been characterized in different ways, but many scholars have viewed them as together provoking a cynicism, if not nihilism (think: Nietzche), that was becoming increasingly prevalent in the broader populace.

For example, French scholar R. Howard Bloch period notes that "modernity, as it took shape in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth, was synonymous with rupture, melancholy, skepticism, anxiety, self-criticism, spiritual failure, nihilism, and despair, alongside the perceived loss of individual autonomy as well as the failure of science and technology and of liberal democratic institutions"; he also observes that "the development of the social sciences at the end of the nineteenth century went hand in hand with this philosophical despair," specifically noting Karl Marx's own somewhat earlier discussion of

men's growing sense of alienation arising from the transition from feudalism to capitalism and Max Weber's writings in the early 1900's which "traced a similar loss of human wholeness in the rationalized forms of social relations that took hold in the Protestant work-oriented countries of northern Europe" and produced a "disenchantment of the world" which (according to Bloch) has continued to "course richly through the twentieth century" (Bloch 70-71). This latter point is particularly significant here as it points to the emergence of knowledge disciplines (for example, psychology and sociology) arising from further evolution of the Enlightenment project but now with the scientific spotlight directed even more pointedly and systematically at the individual psyche as well as forms of social organization. At the same time, however, their emergence could also be said to embody another sign of what has been described here as a growing concern with social "differentiation" and trying to understand both the fundamental principles of operation of the diverse voices so produced that were gaining in strength as well as how to "integrate" and organize them into (real) community.

As will be discussed later in more detail, Bloch situates Mallarmé and his work specifically in this context, asserting that the artist "may have thought himself a vessel of the crisis of faith as it worked itself out between the Enlightenment and the end of the nineteenth century [though] *he* emerged…from the psychological and moral extremity of his midtwenties not disenchanted but invigorated" (emphasis added) (71). While some have painted Mallarmé largely as an aesthete with little interest in social or political realities, other scholars have corroborated Bloch's view that the poet-artist underwent a notable developmental transformation. From an initial psychologically compromised and morally uncertain state, Mallarmé moved to a more socially-grounded one that over time involved increasing commitment to fostering community via his

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singular vision of art in-the-world (Porter 275-280). A comparable developmental shift (but one with a decidedly more political tenor) has also been described in Mann's case (Crick, 1982; Gunneman, 2002; Heilbut, 1998).

As scholars have made clear, however, these personal transformations should not be seen as merely the result of psychological difficulties or emotional trials that both men passed through in their respective adolescence-young adulthoods. Rather they are also, and perhaps better said to be, the result of each man's coming into contact with cultural problems articulated as philosophical ones in *both* the art and scientific communities of the time (though space does not permit description of the full biographical details, Mann's contacts arose in large part through his extensive European travels, while Mallarmé's arose largely in Parisian circles and his far-flung epistolary network).

Scholar of social thought and art history Andrei Pop also discusses some of the broad European cultural concerns qua philosophical ones at the end of the nineteenth century with which Mann and Mallarmé would have been familiar, but with an emphasis on their consequences for art itself:

> Scholars of the late nineteenth century have long been struck by the flourishing
> of esoteric doctrines, and their opposition to the positivist faith in progress that
> characterized the earlier half of the century. But focusing on the irrational
> occludes the period's commitment to revolutionary science, which is central to
> its moral and political projects. It is not as a naive rejection of reality…that
> [certain] artists…can be understood. What they have in common is rather
> the commitment to the concrete means, aesthetic and visual, but also logical
> and philosophical, by which reality, perceived or otherwise, is made accessible
> to more than one intellect…The *problem of subjectivity in particular,* of making
> oneself understood to others despite the privacy of one's consciousness, had
> to be met if collaboration in science or the sympathetic uptake of new art was
> to take place." (emphasis added) (16)

Pop proceeds to explicate the pervasive role of this "problem" in the culture of the fin de siècle, which influenced the sense-making (what he calls "meaning-making") activity of many writers and visual artists of that period. And though his focus is on the Symbolist art movement which was of French, Russian, and Belgian origin and included Mallarmé as one of its leading members, the substance of this movement was clearly responding to forces that transcended local communities and national boundaries.

One could also characterize both Mallarmé and Mann as being "on the margins" of certain social groups with which they significantly affiliated, which probably enhanced their capacities for being "contemporary" (à la Agamben) in addition to contributing to their literary concerns with men's "subjectivity." Their marginality arose from quite different circumstances, however.

Despite being a native Frenchman (with a middle-class upbringing), Mallarmé's inherent interest in language actually led to his spending time in London to become fluent in English, which he subsequently taught at various lycées in order to support himself upon his return to France. While he managed to maintain a fairly bourgeois lifestyle, he actually lived most of his life in near-poverty. Nonetheless, when he moved back to Paris from the provinces after the the war's end in 1871, he came to preside over salons held at his own modest home, which became not just a popular meeting place for artists of all kinds but the heart of that city's intellectual life for many years. Thus, Mallarmé's being "on the margins" and developing an enhanced capacity for weighing alternate perspectives could be generally ascribed to his significant experience with a culture and language besides his native ones, generally unstable moves in the social class hierarchy, and a bird's-eye view of ongoing intellectual and artistic trends in his society.

Mann, for his part, was the oldest of five siblings in what became in many ways a notorious upper-class family dynasty, in which he spent most of his adult life engaged in a highly public envy-hate relationship as the outspoken "second fiddle" to his acclaimed younger brother Thomas. In his foreword to the *Letters of Heinrich and Thomas Mann 1900-1949*, Anthony Heilbut notes that these brothers' "childhood had been privileged and inbred, so rarefied that Thomas quietly fantasized himself a prince traveling incognito through the city streets. Yet isolation from the masses left both brothers with a sense of marginality. Outsiders tended to find them excessively formal and self-effacing, the most melancholy of elitists" (Heilbut xii). Despite this commonality of experience and shared literary ambitions, however, Heinrich was the more inclined to travel and in the process became particularly appreciative of what he regarded as the Italian proclivity for demonstration of sociality and communal feeling. By the turn of the century, he emerged as the distinctly politically more liberal of the two and, in flagrant contrast to his brother, became openly critical of the then-popular and powerful Wilhelmine regime, which placed him decidedly outside of the more conservative and aggressively nationalist German mainstream. Thus, Heinrich Mann's being "on the margins" could be seen as somewhat akin to Mallarmé's in its being promoted by a variety of exposures to class and cultural contrasts. It also appears to have been distinctly honed, however, by his staking out his own public self-definition in opposition to his brother's.

From their respective positions of being variously "on the margins," Mallarmé and Mann were thus not unlike the writers discussed earlier. That is, like the social class- and gender-threatened as well as peripatetic Staël and Kleist, the reluctant religious convert and emigrant Heine and the financially-strapped yet intense (and stimulant-driven) workaholic Balzac, these talented men

"stood apart," as it were, and refined highly-reflective perspectives on their societies and their times. But because of their own particular vantage points of difference, Mann and Mallarmé's literary responses to problems they sensed in their worlds were again (and quite naturally) singular in their details. They were also dynamic works-in-progress. That is, just as they experienced their own sense of differences from others, they were, over time, also "hammering out" these differences, so to speak, as a part of both defining their personal identities as artists *and* sharing their visions with others. One could also say that, as they struggled to address the broader cultural crisis of faith in Enlightenment wholeness and human wholeness that was now leading to questions of how to understand "subjectivity" (and inter-subjectivity) itself in western Europe, they were also enacting and giving form to this late nineteenth century "problem" within the constraints and circumstances of their own lives.

For Mann, such processes were evident largely in the context of his ongoing exchanges with his brother (that were suspended only temporarily because of animosities arising from their markedly differing ideological views of Germany's role in the Great War). In her article on the Mann brothers' early attitudes to their public, wherein she aims to "inquire how [they] separately and together, understood the relationship of the writer to his reader, how they themselves conceptually and metaphorically perceived the nature and function of the communicative act," German scholar Joyce Crick underscores the significance of the literary *and* human context they afforded each other[9] (Crick 646). For Mallarmé, on the other hand, such identity-defining relational activity seems to have taken place predominantly in the context of his personal and

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[9] In one of her footnotes, Crick points out that, in a critical study by another German scholar Renate Werner, the latter actually refers to the two brothers as creating their own "literarisches Subsytem" (Crick 646).

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professional interactions in his Paris salon (the "Tuesday Poets") and the unique and highly

poetic form of epistolary activity for which he was also famous and through which he maintained

a widespread network of French and foreign contacts.

For both of these writers, it arguably then became a matter of how to use literary means

(novels, essays, and poetry) to try to address aspects of this issue that they had worked at

addressing within themselves but which appeared to them to be a largely unacknowledged and

yet persistent problem for many of their fellows - that is, the problem of gaining perspective on

and developing self-consciousness about the workings of their own minds and identities, so that

they could act more *responsibly and with greater insight* in their increasingly complex world.

For these two (for want of a better term) "activist-artists" then, how to address the enigma of

their contemporary fellows, whose thought and behavior appeared to them to be unsuited to their

increasingly complex times as well as ensnared in persistent first order observing to their

societies' detriment? How to help provoke and stimulate their audience's creativity? How to help

foster a greater sense of responsibility among the people for participating in the shaping of their

collective future?

With these questions in mind, the discussion will now turn to a major work by each author,

first Mann's novel *Der Untertan (The Man of Straw,* sometimes alternately translated as *The

Loyal Subject*) followed by Mallarmé's poem *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira le Hasard* (*A

Throw of the Dice will Never Abolish Chance*) in order to flesh out some of the notable means by

which each writer appears to have literarily responded to them. Other writings by these artists

(including Mann's essay "Geist und Tat" [Mind and Action" (1910)] and Mallarmé's prose poem

"Conflit" ["Conflict" (1897)]), along with some of these men's documented comments about

their own work, will also be considered, however, in order to help clarify some of the discussion points.

German literature scholar Karin Gunnemann has summarized the significance of Mann's *Der Untertan* this way:

> To this date no other work in German literature has so seriously engaged not
> only literary critics but also historians and sociologists. In the endless investigation
> of the problem of Germany's historical *Sonderweg*, Mann's *Der Untertan* still plays
> a role today. The book is used in the ongoing intellectual debate about the origin
> of the "authoritarian character," the continuity of German history, and the relationship
> between modernization and democracy. (51)

The work has thus spoken, and continues to speak, to many audiences even beyond the German reading public of the time whom Mann most directly targeted. The novel primarily traces the youthful development and adult emergence of its main protagonist Diederich Hessling (and his "authoritarian character") in a kind of *Bildungsroman* fashion. It is also couched, however, in a highly detailed social, cultural, and political setting which includes several other characters (among the most notable being Herr Buck, a patriot of the 1848 revolutionary era, and his adult son Wolfgang, a cynical and dandyish actor-turned-legal counsellor) whose own portrayals in the narrative contribute to illustrating significant individual differences in experience and world-view along with much of the complexity of the societal and interpersonal dynamics of the period as Mann discerned it.

The novel has often been described stylistically as a satire whose main character Diedrich appears as a caricature, broadly-sketched and highly-simplified. Yet while not denying the novel's satirical qualities, such a view of Diedrich's character overlooks the deeper significance of (and the author's skill in) depicting him as such a "limited" character. Mann himself later

recalled some of the personal experiences that sparked his creative process for this novel (which was eight years in the researching and the making [1906-1914]). In particular, while in an elegant cafe in Berlin (in 1906) he had observed "the dense crowd of the bourgeois public. I found the people loud, without dignity. Their provoking manners betrayed to me their secret cowardice" (Gunnemann 52). Thus, as Mann recalled, there were many others in his own society who *actually* appeared to him to be as *coarse* as the character he was in the process of creating; at the same time, he apparently sensed that such behavior was *owing to* these individuals' *lack of an inner robustness,* that is, their "secret cowardice."

Another way of framing the offensiveness, ignobility, and inner weakness that Mann perceived being expressed by many of those around him would be to characterize them as manifesting an under- if not mal-developed subjectivity. In other words, a subjectivity that (at least, from the kind of humanistic perspective that Mann himself maintained) was not afforded opportunities to achieve its real human potential, inasmuch as it lacked capacities for significant self-awareness, self-restraint, and self-directedness and was insensitive to the positions and feelings of others. From a Foucauldian perspective, such a person and his selfhood might be said to lack sufficient self-knowledge for effecting his emancipation and implementing much of his own creative potential. While from a Luhmann-like perspective, one might describe it as the embodiment of one who is "stuck" in what was becoming the increasingly outmoded first order observer role and tends to regard reality exclusively on the basis of the "one observer-one nature-one world assumption" (Luhmann 756).

Diederich is portrayed as being so brutish, clumsy and *limited* in his range of responses relative to most modern standards of expected (western) behavior as to often appear ridiculous

(as, for example, when he abruptly terminates his relationship with his first girlfriend Agnes Gõppel in an argument with her father in which he decries her feelings for him, and paradoxically intimates that she might be rather too 'loose' in her affections; and then when Herr Gõppel departs sobbing, "Diederich fell on his knees and wept passionately…[and] that evening he played Schubert… [but then remarks to himself that] that was a sufficient concession to sentiment. He must be strong" and goes on to wonder whether his comrades Wiebel and Mahlmann had ever been so sentimental or had such "soft spots" in *them* [Mann 70]). Thus, the tone of the work does, at times, border on the humorous. But underlying this is a persistent dark undercurrent of his world being frankly out-of-joint, inasmuch as he appears to have so very little ability to actually "know" or think for himself that he routinely engages in self-contradictory and self-diminishing behavior. And while occasionally asking himself "how should I think about this," "what should I do," he limits his querying to the dynamics of "one world"; that is, he limits his wondering to *only* how his fellow military men and comrades-in-arms might think and behave, rather than seriously considering the perspectives and positions of others outside this domain (like Agnes or Herr Gõppel).

Throughout the novel, from its opening pages to its conclusion, we also see Diederich groveling and submitting to male authorities, whether in the shape of an abusive father, leaders among the youthful Neoteutons whose group he is invited to join, officers in the military (to which Diederich briefly belongs until his malingering to "save his own skin" leads to his honorable discharge), noblemen, or the German Emperor whom he continually lauds and whose proclamations he defends from afar. One can easily recognize that his character is, at the same time, being molded. Powerful social forces, whether personified in these male authorities or

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imparted through the persistent valorization of (historically Prussian) militarism and the highly-

reinforced practices of commercialism and consumerism, channel his becoming a "man of

straw." Thus, as we see in the novel's opening paragraph, Diederich is described as:

> a dreamy, delicate child, frightened of everything, and troubled frequently by
> earache. In winter he hated to leave the warm room, and in summer the narrow
> garden, which smelt of rags from the paper factory [owned by his father]…Diederich
> was often terribly frightened when he raised his eyes from his story book, his
> beloved fairy tales. A toad half as big as himself had been plainly sitting on the seat
> beside him! Or over there against the wall a gnome, sunk to his waist in the ground,
> was staring at him! His father was even more terrible than the gnome and the toad,
> and moreover he was compelled to love him. Diederich did love him. (Mann 5)

Readers see that Diederich's original temperament reflects a sensitivity and an inclination

towards pastimes that foster his imagination and "dreaminess." But from his earliest beginnings

in his punitive and hierarchically-organized household (which includes a weak mother),

Diederich's imagination is squelched and his sensitivity distorted. HIs socialization appears to be

being essentially manipulated by a father who takes advantage of his son's natural fears, which

will then later be reinforced by a social *system* of structured relationships operating on similar

principles. Thus, he "was compelled to love" his "terrible" father, which immediately equates (in

the next sentence) to "Diedrich *did* love him" (emphasis added). And, as a consequence,

Diederich remains largely unaware of how he comes to value, and be attracted and attached to,

the conditions and demands of a social life that sustains itself while diminishing *his* full potential

(to be a true friend, loving husband, autonomous thinker, and so on; that is, to become a

thoughtful man of conscience capable of considering multiple perspectives).

In contrast to his brother Thomas, whose conversion to democracy came rather late, Heinrich

Mann shifted from being ideologically conservative to more liberal and generally supportive of

democratic principles relatively early in his adult life. His well-known interest in and greater receptivity to French literature and culture clearly played a part in this. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, Heinrich became much more of an overt social critic while Thomas remained largely a defender of Germany's aggressive nationalism in the years before the outbreak of the First World War, which fanned the often hostile differences that the two brothers maintained in their private and public discourses (as in their reviews of each other's publications) at that time.

But as Heinrich was trying to understand and offer an explicit form for some of the so-called "darkness" he perceived in his contemporary era (as per Agamben), he appears to have remained concerned not just with local circumstances but also that broader issue of the time that I have referred to as the problem of "subjectivity." This wider modern European question of how to understand the shaping of and communication between minds that challenged scientists and artists (as Pop has noted) was in many ways also central to questions of how to promote an enlightened and responsible citizenry. But such a political concern actually ran counter to that of the Wilhelmine regime, whose policies embodied a throwback to (now) increasingly outmoded monarchical power structures, which traditionally operate through reinforcing themselves and their own relatively rigid boundaries (from top to bottom, so to speak) rather than enlightening the minds of individuals. But as we with the benefit of hindsight can see, such an authoritarian political agenda was difficult to reconcile with a socioeconomic one that was itself hell-bent on promoting its nation's becoming a dominant player in the modern world of commerce and resource acquisition, since the latter depends in large part upon a thriving middle class encouraged to be "free" to consume and make various taste and lifestyle choices for themselves.

Feeling some kinship with the French writer-activist Émile Zola, Mann "had begun his life as a writer by dreaming and handing out 'dainty morsels' before he became 'a teacher of democracy' who understood his work as 'duty, mission, and battle' for the improvement of humanity" (Gunneman 77). His *Der Untertan* was, in fact, written during this transitional period. But while assessments of the political dimensions of this novel have often overshadowed appreciation of its literary qualities, some scholars specifically praise them.

German scholar Mark W. Roche, for example, has shown how Mann employs multiple literary devices to convey ways in which Diederich's character in interaction with those around him personifies "Verehrung der Macht" (worship of power) while also effecting what he refers to as "the self-cancellation of injustice" (Roche 72). Roche focuses on Diederich's character after his very early childhood and points out that, from his youth, this character regularly enacts the roles of both "master and slave," bending to the will of his superiors as he comes to occupy a position within a social hierarchy in which he then bullies others (in a kind of "sado-masochistic" fashion) (Roche 72). In his desire to belong, Diederich assimilates to the extant power structure. But the portrayed circumstances are such and the means of assimilation so clearly pathological that he effectively loses his self; and, in his adulthood, this manifests as an over-identification with the Emperor, whose pompous behavior and political rhetoric Diederich often mimics. This is evident, for example, when he lords over his family members or his employees at the publishing company that he has inherited from his father (and with "his inflexible mien and speech, his commanding glance, [h]is family and his workmen were cowed into respectful silence" [Mann 121]). As Roche also points out, while Diederich does occasionally question his idolization of power, such moments in the narrative tend to be brief,

and his character's emotional responses shallow. Thus, as already noted, he seems incapable of much insight. At the same time, Roche argues that Diederich's claims for justifying his behavior (which come to the fore occasionally when he contrasts his own behavior with that of the two Buck characters) are based on a stance of "power positivism" (essentially "might is right"), and that his claims are not only inconsistent but philosophically untenable. In applauding the novelist's methods and skill, Roche states that "Mann portrays the self-cancellation of this [philosophical] position not only in the content of the novel but in its formal aspects as well. Odd juxtapositions, expressions out of place, paradoxes, abrupt transitions, and non sequiturs, aesthetic elements that give the novel much of its humor, function as the aesthetic corollary of Diederich's self-contradictory concept of injustice" (Roche 88).

Thus, Mann employs numerous literary devices that not only illustrate the strangely-twisted quality of Diederich's character but also the limited capacity for thoughtful and moral agency in the kind of self he personifies, emerging as it does in a society that encourages such opposing action-tendencies in its members. As Roche puts it in his conclusions, "logical structures and their means of illustration are what make a work of art universal. *Der Untertan* not only satirizes the peculiar vices of German bourgeois society, it ponders a universal problem" (Roche 88). And while Roche situates the "universal problem" that *Der Untertan* "ponders" largely as a philosophical one grounded in logic and concerned with demonstrating the unjust and therefore untenable position of "power positivism" or "might is right," its 'universal' significance could also be said to arise from illustration of other structural principles and themes. Thus, from a macro-historical perspective like that of Christian and his colleagues, which emphasizes the roles of advancing complexity in the universe and collective learning by human societies in promoting

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innovation and increasing social complexity (in our world, specifically), this novel may also be regarded as a significant example of the "universal" effort to contribute to such innovation and collective learning.

But Mann's insights into the so-called "complexity" and "shadows" of his contemporary era and the implicit problems that they were engendering for his fellow Germans extend beyond his representation of Diederich's "authoritarian character." They appear in his detailed portrayals of other characters, notably the Bucks, as well. Wolfgang Buck and his father, old Herr Buck, are less comedic and frankly more poignant characters, as their depictions point to distinct concerns that some (other) Germans of the time may very well have acknowledged in themselves, but to which they responded ineffectually. In their contrasts and conflicts with Diedrich's character, these characters help illustrate that new problem arising from the growing "diversity" of voices in modern societies and its contribution to the challenge of reconciling the "modern paradox" between coercive and more consensual forms of power (as well as that between limited first order and multi-perspectival second order observing) in the formation of a stable community previously noted.

In a scene midway through the novel, for example, former schoolmates Wolfgang and Diederich re-encounter each other and have a lengthy conversation in which they catch up on old times. In this exchange, the clearly more worldly Wolfgang, who is also a seeming representation of the then-modern man, articulates much of his character's mindset, which abounds in unhappiness with the state of current affairs but also endorses pessimism so that he has become almost indifferent and inclined towards acting inauthentically. Thus, as he says to an increasingly "uneasy" Diederich, "What matters personally to each of us is not that we should really change

the world very much, but that we should create in ourselves a sense of life, and a feeling that we

are causing changes. That only requires talent, and the Emperor has plenty" (Mann 146). But as

Diederich proceeds to bluster in a defense of the Emperor, Wolfang continues:

> You people allow him to prescribe phrases for you, and never was opinion
> so well drilled as now. But deeds? My excellent contemporary, our age is not
> prepared for deeds. In order to exercise one's capacity for adventure, it is
> necessary, first of all, to live, and deeds are dangerous to life…[and in reply to
> Diederich's retort questioning whether the Emperor is being accused of cowardice,
> Wolfgang says] I have expressed no moral judgment. I have mentioned a fact
> connected with the history of our times which concerns us all. For the rest,
> we are not responsible. The time for action is finished for the actor on the stage,
> for he has played his part. What more can reality demand of him? (Mann 147)

Though Wolfgang is specifically denoted, despite his repeated shoulder shrugging throughout the

conversation, as appearing "troubled," Diederich bursts into a "roar of laugher" (Mann 147).

Clearly Diederich has no appreciation of the other man's concerns and there has been no

achievement of mutual understanding. And while Wolfgang does subsequently *actually act* by

engaging in the legal defense of someone whom he regards as unjustly accused of actions against

the Emperor, he ultimately fails.

During this lengthy courtroom scene, he passionately denounces Diederich's own falseness in

his testimony against the accused, but not so much because he regards Diederich as having

malicious intent but because he regards the latter as an "average man, with a commonplace

mind" who has been "molded" by the Emperor into a "loyal subject" (Mann 167), With much

grinning and yawning on the part of the judges, the court's final decision is that Wolfgang as

counsel for the defense has "overplayed his part" (Mann 170). And as the defendant is arrested

and led away, the narrator speaking for the court spectators notes that "As for the Buck clique,

which talked so big, their influence was over!" (Mann 171).

This failure on Wolfgang's part is complemented at this relatively late point in the novel by the advancing decline in power and status of his father, old Herr Buck, as well. This character, who appears initially in the novel as a defender of principles of the '48 revolutions and seriously engaged in various efforts at social reform in his community, by the novel's end has suffered several property swindles and other humiliations at the hands of Diederich. And on his deathbed in the book's final pages, old Buck finally collapses under the latter's spying gaze, as both he and his family "start" from a kind of "horror" - and Diederich vanishes (Mann 296).

Der Untertan largely works through negating the value of much of what is depicted. In this sense, it is provocative. Some have criticized the work, however, for seeming to lack hope or offering a strategy for a way out of the inhumane conditions Mann intimates existed in Wilhelmine society. But as Gunneman has pointed out, "[Mann] did not want to be seen primarily as a critical sociologist or historian, and certainly not as a mere commentator of current affairs. He was an artist who analyzed facts in order to suggest solutions" (Gunneman 70). That is, by offering such a work as *Der Untertan,* his aim was not so much specifically didactic as to encourage readers' *own activity* (rather than passivity)*,* including their self-reflection and thought about their own identities and responsibilities. But the forms by which he did his "suggesting" also varied over time. That is, he employed different genres with different kinds of narrative logic and audience appeal for trying to suggest "solutions."

For example, while in the midst of writing *Der Untertan*, Mann published an influential programmatic essay "Geist und Tat" (1911) (translated as "Mind and Action" or "Spirit and Deed") which was a "passionate call on all German writers to become 'agitators' and give uncompromising support to democracy, to bridge the gap that separated them from the people"

and "launched the literary movement that soon came to be known as *Aktivismus* (Gunnemann 71). In this and a companion essay entitled "Voltaire-Goethe" (1910), Mann asserted that democracy was mistrusted and feared as an unknown and possibly uncomfortable form of life by German society. In a letter to a colleague Eugen Bantz regarding his work on *Der Untertan*, Mann also argued that such misgivings were significantly shaped by Germany's own traditions, which fostered the admiration of widely-acknowledged "great men" (such as Kant and Nietzsche) who were disinclined to practical action, while they undermined the German people's own humane feelings of "love, ambition, and self-confidence" (qtd. in Gunnemann 71). According to Gunneman's reading of the 1910 essay, Mann even went so far as to challenge the traditionally unquestioned valorization of Goethe, whose love of humanity, he argued, was formulated from a "distant" god-like position that resisted and "feared change"; and that "social injustices were explicable to him as necessities of nature" (Gunnemann 71-72).

While such provocative statements apparently galvanized *some* of his readership, many others, particularly in the period before WWI were quite put off. While Mann had hoped to provoke individuals' reflection upon and enhance self-consciousness of their own and their fellows' identities and behavior with his *Der Untertan*, years later (after 1918) he stated that he actually felt the need to 'apologize' for underestimating that character, whose relationship to power he had viewed as mostly play-acting and not really capable of so much physical destruction and 'slaughter of human happiness' (qtd. in Gunnemann 69). In other words, he seems to have acknowledged that he had not fully appreciated either the extent of the emotional problems associated with the "authoritarian character(s)" of his age or the extent of their capacities for "destruction" and "slaughter." Being more of a humanist and worldly modern man

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himself, he may very well have failed to sufficiently recognize and acknowledge the "reality" of

a character who embodied the more brutal and warlike qualities of a man of an earlier age (but

who also now had the tools of the modern age at his disposal for wreaking terrible and

widespread carnage). In hindsight, his perception as well as his representation of the Wolfgang

Buck character, on the other hand, may have been quite "spot-on" in their cognizance and

depiction of the skepticism and mixed feelings regarding taking moral action in the public sphere

that others may have had during the period. That is, there appears to have been no significant

willingness on the part of the German populace to seriously question their subjectivity (or

"emancipate" it in a Foucauldian sense) and by so doing work to alter the relationships between

coercive and consensual forms of power by developing a more enlightened citizenry (as was

beginning to take place in other modern nation-states such as France). Perhaps the seeming

paradox regarding modernization's tending towards states of greater complexity subject to

"democratic pressures" (by more self-conscious and questioning agents) while also engendering

a new kind of "reformed state" capable of managing such complexity but whose very "power

was in many ways greater than the monarchy it [would] replace" (Christian et al 253-254) was

too much of a "mental" challenge to accommodate (given Germany's disinclination towards

democratic principles). Perhaps attempting such a shift was also felt to be a potential threat to the

power they regarded themselves as "already" wielding. Here one might also recall the historian

Anne Applebaum's argument for there being a "seductive lure of authoritarianism," which she

asserts is in part due to the "emotional appeal" of official conspiracy theories. As she puts it:

> the emotional appeal of a conspiracy theory is in its simplicity. It explains away
> complex phenomena, accounts for chance and accidents, offers the believer
> the satisfying sense of having special, privileged access to the truth. But…for

those who become the one-party state's gatekeepers, for those who repeat and promote the official conspiracy theories, acceptance of these simple explanations also brings another reward: power" (Applebaum, Anne. "A Warning From Europe: The Worst Is Yet to Come." *Atlantic,* October 2018 issue, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/10/poland-polarization/568324/. Accessed 25 July, 2020.)

One might argue that Germany's then-clinging to its more traditional authoritarian culture was not only out-of-synch with the modernizing drives going on at the same time in its commercial and technological spheres, but that the power many of its agents saw themselves wielding arising from its militaristic conventions did actually mask a "cowardice" to change and venture to adapt to the mental and relational demands of their era's growing social complexity (in this vein, Applebaum also notes in her "Warning from Europe" that *meritocracies* like democracy are more difficult to sustain and can become targets of those who do not achieve/or hold onto power in the *merit* battle).

Mann himself was, in many ways, constrained by his own situation within the German nation-system (as per Snowden) at the same time that, as a worldly (and privileged) individual who had acquired some of his own capacity for second order observing, he came to feel personally responsible for trying to influence the ongoing development of his people with his democratizing agenda. As a late product of the Enlightenment as well, he worked intently at trying to educate and emancipate German minds whom he perceived to be poised on the cusp of modernity but limited by their own lack of insight arising from their society's system of socialization and outmoded logic (now *illogic*). The question of how to actually engage and free (so to speak) the *desirous and feeling* processes of active minds for the betterment of individual selves as well as their collectivities (a problem Freud was working on at the same time in Vienna, though his

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psychoanalytic theorizations as we now have come to recognize were also limited in many ways by the Victorian constraints of *his* social system) remained an incompletely addressed challenge.

Heinrich Mann's work thus may be understood as exemplifying one creative effort at the end of the long nineteenth century designed to try to stimulate more critical mental activity and personal reflection in and among his fellows who were being challenged by an increasingly complex world - a world whose shaping was sensed (particularly by those most "contemporary," like Mann, as per Agamben) to be under questionably capable (and moral) control. Stéphane Mallarmé's work, as I will now try to show, was another. But for a variety of reasons, including the latter's life-long interest in language itself and his sensibilities as a poet, the set of artistic strategies he employed were significantly different.

From a complex systems perspective, these artists' trying to encourage such "activity" in others (and enact it themselves) arguably made real sense in their historical moment. The dynamically-interrelated complex systems (economic, sociopolitical, and cultural) in which they were all immersed and by which they were constrained were evolving largely on their own terms; that is, they were significantly *self-organizing* rather than being completely determined by top-down (political or other) activity. And, as Christian and colleagues have pointed out, such "mindless" self-organization need not always be in a direction beneficial to a particular group or species (as we see in cases of urban blight or with the climate changes emerging in the Anthropocene, for example). Yet it is important to recall that agents are *themselves* complex adaptive systems; and *human* agents in particular have come to evolve unique capacities for mentation and exerting *intentional* responses as counter-constraints on the dynamics and structures of their surrounding environments (systems), which may be particularly important in

the modern age (given the power of our technologies and degree of interconnectedness). Thus, "innovators" like Mann and Mallarmé (as Christian et al would likely deem them) may be understood as working to stimulate their fellows to achieve greater self-awareness so that they might work together more effectively at "redirecting" their larger evolving systems along (what these artists then-envisioned as) *better* collective paths.

As already noted, while Mann's vision of the people's (including artists') intervening to a greater extent in the future direction of their society was couched in fairly explicit political terms, Mallarmé's was not. In fact, the latter's artistic motives, as the diversity of Mallarmé scholarship attests, have not always been easy to discern. Some scholars, such as Jacques Rancière (*Mallarmé: The Politics of the Siren* [2011]) and Lawrence M. Porter ("The Evolution of Mallarmé's Social Consciousness" [2013]) have been among those who more recently have perceived a real-worldly engagement bordering on a sense of duty to the collective (more often conceived as broader humanity than French society alone), particularly in Mallarmé's later work. Traditionally, however (that is, prior to the last two or three decades [Wayland-Smith 89]), the broad field of Mallarmé scholarship tended to view the poet rather narrowly as an aesthete whose work typifies those who (akin to Wolfgang Buck) had become skeptical of having any real impact on the world and was inclined to withdraw from it and, in his case, focus only on the (variably framed) enigmatic, irrational, or transcendent workings of Mind. And while biographers have regularly described the poet as a man of reserved and modest character who acknowledged refined tastes (in marked contrast with the more bohemian and flamboyant Rimbaud, for example), like many literary critics, their grasp of the motivations that underlay his work's roundly acknowledged "difficulty" have sometimes conflicted.

Part of the challenge of grasping them may derive from Mallarmé's own roots as a Symbolist in the tradition of the Parnassian poets, who were actually influenced by Baudelaire, and who "combin[ed] outward impassivity with the stress on intense inner emotion…[such that] the artist tries to be an objective observer, coldly detached like a scientist; simultaneously, however, he seeks within himself all the passions of which humanity is capable" (Dorra 6-7). Embodying such seemingly contradictory impulses and goals could present an interpretive challenge to others. In addition, his documented near-breakdown in his mid-twenties, to which he gave semi-autobiographical literary expression in his only novel *Igitur* with its Hamlet-like main character, also hints at a temperamental sensitivity that some might see as predisposing him towards withdrawal from worldly challenges. After this youthful period and his return from the French provinces to Paris in 1871, however, a maturing Mallarmé became the head of the "Tuesday Poets" group (*Les Mardistes*), which drew together (at his home on the Rue de Rome) writer-poets and artists as diverse as Paul Verlaine, André Gide, Paul Valéry, Rainer Maria Rilke, William Butler Yeats, Oscar Wilde, Edouard Manet, Auguste Rodin, and Edgar Degas among others. The intellectual stimulation and spiritual attraction inherent in the allusive and so-called mysterious qualities of Mallarmé's teaching points and writings apparently energized this social group, which became a significant cultural hub whose influence ramified widely and helped propel Mallarmé to fame well beyond Paris and French national borders.

His complicated drives and (to many others) enigmatic character thus appear to have been (with time, at least) well-managed and directed with carefully nourished artistic intentions and life-goals in mind. As he himself noted repeatedly in different contexts, there was a real organization and "order" (*ordonnance*) to his vision and his method. Wayland-Smith specifically

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notes: "Ordonnance" and "ordonner," "corrélation" and "réciprocité" are among Mallarmé's most frequently employed terms to describe the organizing process of poetic creation. By minutely calibrating and arranging a poem's internal relationships (semantic, phonetic, grammatical, or lexical) Mallarmé sought to take the *hasard* of mute materiality and transform it into calculated thought" (90).

Intriguingly, such terms for a poem's creation as a kind of process of "self organization" (wherein, as Mallarmé also stated, the poet himself is largely submerged and "eliminated" ["Crisis of Verse" in his *Divagations* (1897), trans. Barbara Johnson, p. 208]) are highly reminiscent of those employed by complexity researchers to describe some of the properties of complex adaptive systems (such as the brain). And, as historian and philosopher Paul Michon, has pointed out, in notes he wrote for a conference to which he was invited to speak in England (1894), Mallarmé also suggests that poetic and world rhythms actually take part in a loop (recall the various feedback and looping activities present in complex systems). Poetry, as the poet said, is a "song" drawn "from the world in order to illuminate its fundamental rhythm" (Michon 1). He also employs the term rhythm (or rhythmic) to refer to human subjectivity itself: "Every soul is a rhythmic tangle" (*toute âme est un noeud rythmique*) ("Music and Letters" in *Divagations*, p. 184; here, however, one may note a specific example of the many challenges poetry presents to the translator, particularly poetry like that of Mallarmé's, where form and word choice with all of the associative implications the latter derives from its source language are so critical to his poems' effects. Consider, for example, the fact that *noeud* may be translated not only as "tangle," but also as "node" or "junction" (words also common in the complexity lexicon and referring to a site where multiple forces or pathways intersect), as well as

"knot" or "braid.") Allowing for these translational intricacies, one is still able to discern an "ordered" intentionality in his creations, which Mallarmé not only professed but critics now also increasingly recognize as being present in his work - that is, an "order" which is significant here as it arguably illustrates the creative *self-organization* taking place within him which he himself acknowledged as being only partially under his own conscious control. This process taking place within the metaphorical "rhythmic tangle" of Mallarmé's own "soul" may arguably be seen, in other words, as another sign of complexity operating in the world, but here at the individual, rather than at the social systemic, level.

Thus, it would seem that Mallarmé himself sensed some of the complexity *principles* operating within the world (which have always existed), though he was influenced both by his own temperamental inclinations and the then-current state of knowledge about them, such that he was constrained in *how* he went about articulating them. But that is not to say that he was particularly interested in addressing the nature of *complexity* itself in any scientific sense. Rather, he is arguably better viewed as an innovative artist who was sensitive to the sociocultural foregrounding of some of these very complexity principles (such as self-organization, emergence, feedback loops) which was actually being promoted by the unusually *rapid and concentrated advances in social complexity taking place around him* (and he like Mann was seemingly capable of keeping his "gaze fixed" on some of these "shadows" of their age, as per Agamben).

Certainly, some of the works in the modernist style that were produced by other artists who followed Mallarmé might very well be perceived and judged by many to be as "difficult" in many ways as his own. But here again, as literary scholar Peter Howarth has asserted:

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[this] style is not…just a symptom of social breakdown or social retreat into difficulty. Rather, we might say its distinctive character, and some of its political problems, come from trying to be individual and all-embracing *at once*…[modernists'] adopt[ing] no recognizable genres, forms. or approved artistic vocabulary…allowed the poet to shape the poem according to the nature of her material, and made poems more individual, and thus harder to understand. But without the border between art and life which recognized genres create, the style of modernist poetry became more continuous with social experience than any art before it (17-18).

One might also say, as from the position being taken here, that such artists (like Mallarmé) were acknowledging some of the very "loopiness" and self-reflexiveness in the world, such that the "border between art and life" can seem to be lost and one's style may actually become "more continuous with social experience." And some of this *experience itself,* as has been being argued, was the feeling of oneself being subject to more "democratic" and socioeconomic pressures to be "free" to express one's own personal vision *as well as* the perception of the more "abstract" and impersonal nature of the social world increasing in its complexity around them.

Mallarmé as a virtual modernist himself was clearly sensitive to nuances of his *own* social experience, which included being attentive to his local (personal, familial, collegial, Parisian) circumstances, as well as the *systemic* ("all-embracing") challenges of maintaining a social order and stability grounded in some sense of broader community. He also recognized that *some* of his fellow poets were already motivated as he was by such concerns. As he said in a published interview with the journalist Jules Huret in 1891(whose proofs Mallarmé corrected himself): "Above all, [Victor Hugo was] unaware of this incontrovertible notion: that in an unstable society, lacking unity, no stable and definitive art can be created. From this incomplete social organization, which explains in itself the disquiet of the human mind, an unexplained need for individuality arises, of which the present literary manifestations are a direct reflection…," which

he goes on to characterize as "present-day poets" (his fellow Symbolists) understanding that there is "something abnormal in the certainty of discovering, when opening any book of poetry, uniform and agreed-upon rhythms from beginning to end, even though the avowed goal is to arouse our interest in the essential variety of human feelings" (Dorra 141). A major Symbolist goal, in fact was to *reanimate* language in both its form and content to help foster a grasp of the real diversity (and fragmentation) of experience and feeling in their *unsettled* time (or, as the poet Matthew Zapruder has put it: the Symbolists' poems were "designed not to be *about*, but to *do*...as a mechanism to circumvent our ordinary ways of making meaning, talking 'about' and 'describing'…and get[ting] us to feel the presence of higher truths, a reality that is above and beyond our mundane world" [Zapruder 167]).

While many in his era were apparently despairing of being able to "do" such work, Mallarmé appears to have been more optimistic about his and his fellow artists' capacities to address the increasingly secular challenge of representing and conveying a sense of the proliferating and expanding "invisible" (complex) forces impinging upon people's lives in their time (and thereby promote a sense of these "higher truths").

There have been, of course, extensive references to religious and spiritual concerns in characterizations of Mallarmé's work, as in Paul Auster's observations on the poet's lengthy (but unfinished) poem in honor of his eight-year-old son who died from a long rheumatic illness; as he says: it is "one of the most moving accounts of a man trying to come to grips with modern death…without God…[or] hope of salvation—and it reveals the secret meaning of Mallarmé's entire aesthetic: the elevation of art to the stature of religion" (Auster xi). Or, as Elizabeth McCombie has stated: "Mallarmé depicts the poet as high priest, necessarily set apart from the

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mundane political process in order to learn and reveal the mysterious truth" (McCombie xi). But as she also notes, this being "set apart" does not signify a tendency to withdraw from worldly matters; instead, "the modern artist's search to reveal 'truth' in Mallarmé's eyes was not apolitical but, rather, radical and democratic," such that as he himself said "At this critical hour for the human race when Nature desires to work for herself, she requires certain lovers of hers… men placed directly in communion with the sentiment of their time—to loose the restraint of education, to let hand and eye do what they will, and thus through them, reveal herself" (qtd. in McCombie xi). In other words, akin to Mann, Mallarmé appears to have felt that something was "not right with the world," so to speak, to which he needed to help give expression and encourage work that could help restore a more "Natural" order. But he (more than Mann) seems to have been acutely sensitive to (and concerned with) the loss of *religious* explanations for making sense of the powerful forces intruding upon and "upsetting" people and their lives in the world - forces which now included not only natural ones (like plagues, famines, and earthquakes, for example), but also abstract man-made ones (technological, bureaucratic, and so on) arising from increasing social complexity.

The details of his vision, thus, did not lend themselves well to political terminology, as they did for Mann, but to other framings. But whether couched in terms of membership in a "mystical future community" (Howarth 15), being a vessel of Nature's expression or, as he seems towards the end of his life to have (also) thought of himself, a variant on the modern worker (as noted in the following poem), Mallarmé, like Mann, was seemingly concerned with the interrelated problems of increasing social diversity and reconciling such diversity within a stable community.

Such concerns are evident in Mallarmé's prose poem "Conflit," which Lawrence M. Porter documents as one of Mallarmé's last works, written at about the same time as his radically unconventional yet ultimately quite influential poem *A Roll of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance.* Porter regards "Conflit" as marking the third and final phase in what he outlines as the "evolution" and "awakening" of Mallarmé's "social consciousness"; as he says, "it crystallizes his [Mallarmé's] social stance" (Porter 284). This several page poem appears essentially as a meditative reflection by the poet on his responses to a group of laborers hired to work on the construction of a railway line intruding upon the property of his annual summer rental in Valvins, a village not far from Paris on a tributary of the Seine. In the poem, he never questions that he *is* (or should be) a poet, but as we'll see, he does grapple with *how to think about being a poet* and whether and how his work may (or may not) be comparable to and as worthy as that of manual laborers (and vice versa).

The eponymous "conflict" of the poem operates on several levels, initially as that provoked by men of a different social class who work with their hands (manual laborers) frankly disturbing him and disrupting the more contemplative work that he does: "…this time the worm-eaten shutter / opened on a ruckus, refrains, arguments, below: I remembered / reading about the invasion of workers expected in the un- / happy domicile I haunt the corner of, proceeding to offend / the place where solitude had reigned for so long, with the lay- / ing of a train track. I remember agonizing at first—should I / go or shouldn't I?—but overcoming my hesitation, I said the / hell with it, too bad! I'll go defend the property as mine…" (41).

But then the conflict quickly moves into one centered more inside of himself over questions of what he and they might actually have in common and to what extent his work actually differs

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from theirs. As he notes: "…This crowd goes in and out, shouldering shovels and / picks: which invites one to think of things in the back of one's / mind, and forces one to proceed directly from notions one / tells oneself *are nothing but literature…*" (42). Though he then immediately refers to the men as "my devoted enemies," he proceeds to appreciate that they are not only "sharing" much of the same physical space, eating and drinking as he does (though actually to a greater extent than he does), but he must acknowledge a certain "strength" in them with mixed feelings of "annoyance" and religiosity, so that he is "moved enough to kneel" (42). As he goes on to consider whether he should "dislodge the intruders," he asks "what language should I use" as he recognizes "the inanity of my plight in the eyes of simple / men, who would take my speech, surely, rather more seriously / than the eleven citizens—neighbors—I tried it out on, who / immediately laughed at it. These drinkers have a sense of the / marvelous, and, after working very hard, they might imagine / superior delicatenesses somewhere, and understand the need to break out…" (43). The poet's own sense of awkwardness and uncertainty about how to relate to these men is thus becoming mixed with flashes of insight into their humanity along with an incipient sense of fellowship with them - a sense of fellowship perhaps even greater than with his fellow bourgeoisie (the "citizens—neighbors" who laughed at him).

Though he "continues to be racked with contradictory states" (44) and notes being "…afraid; it is hard to be to- / gether; contact among men cannot, I fear, ever happen…," he also experiences "Sadness that what I produce remains, to / people like this, essentially, like the clouds at dusk or the stars / in the sky, vain."; but then shortly thereafter he has an apparent epiphany when he witnesses the workers drunk, fallen to the ground, essentially engaging in

"work stoppage" in a kind of "resistance" to the "majority" (bourgeoisie), a move with which he sympathizes, so that he is inspired to walk among them "freely admiring and dreaming" (45-46).

His concluding paragraphs then become quite changed in their tone and use of language, imparting a felt sense that is much more respectful and consistently reverential. Thus: "Without saying what it is or elu- / cidating this ceremony, they honorably reserve the dimension / of the sacred in their existence by a work stoppage, an await- / ing, a suicide. Out of the pride inherent in daily work, simply / to resist and stand tall, comes knowledge, magnified by the / pillars of a stand of tall trees…," and as the narrator keeps "watch over these artisans of ele- / mentary tasks, I have occasion, beside a limpid, continuous / river, to meditate on these symbols of the People— some ro- / bust intelligence bends their spines every day to in order to ex- / tract, without the intermediary of wheat, the miracle of life / which grounds presence" (46). Here the poet-narrator himself seems to have been transformed; his experience with and reflection on *observing* these Others has produced a change in his own perception (reminiscent of the consequences of second order observation described by Luhmann) and new insights into his own and others' identities and self-description.

In his essay, Porter indicates that "Conflit" "replaces Mallarmé's paternalistic relationship toward the poor in [his] earlier prose poems from 1864 with relationships among equals from different social classes" (285). But he also regards the poem as an end-of-life "ethical footnote of solidarity…which rejects the false consciousness of a social exclusion that would make this world tidier for the privileged" (287). And while he acknowledges that the poet has left a legacy of "artistic treasures" with his "supremely Modernist, or world-ordering vision," he tends to diminish the latter for some of its details, such as the poet's use of "constellations" and other

cosmological reference points (that will be noted in the discussion of *Roll of the Dice* to follow) which he regards as "flagrantly subjective" and a "specious ordering of objects unimaginably remote from each other, a pattern that exists only in the perceptions of an observer situated at one arbitrary point" (286-287). The interpretive stance taken here, however, is somewhat different. That is, instead of regarding "Conflit" as simply an "ethical footnote," one could appreciate the work as Mallarmé's enacted sense of broadening connection to others in his socially more complex world, whether they were family, artist friends and colleagues, readers of his challenging work, or manual laborers such as these. And while Mallarmé's stance was unquestionably "subjective" and emergent from an individual perspective, as we've seen, the poet himself was among the first to acknowledge that this was the case, seeing it as appropriate to artistic expression in his time. In other words, he recognized that diversity of perspectives and their expression was becoming an increasing fact of modern social life; but this increasing differentiation of perspectives (related to increasing social complexity) was also engendering certain problems requiring a response. And, as suggested here, *his* response was arguably calculated to help enable others (primarily his readers, but fellow artists as well) to become more consciously aware of this "fact" and begin working in concert to redress them. And, as a second point, it might be worth *incidentally* noting that employing cosmological constellations in his poems as patterns of order *may seem* "specious" to a readership such as ours (living many decades later) which is less inclined to perceive them anthropomorphically or as having specific human significance (than through a scientific lens), as Porter suggests. But if one thinks of them more as metaphors (which Mallarmé may or may not have done - the scholarly arguments go both ways), they might actually be seen as at least helpful for offering a depiction of a kind of

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order consisting of a pattern of vast and distant arrangements that his readers could be inspired by and potentially employ creatively in their *own* imaginations and navigation.

As Wayland-Smith also points out in her essay "Mallarmé, Technology and the Poet Engineer" (2013), Mallarmé was not uninformed about scientific matters and the technological advances of his age. In fact, he was interested in making use of some of the latter in the very design of his literary projects, including his *Roll of the Dice,* to which we will soon turn. But in recalling Wayland-Smith's point that words referring to "order" (such as "ordonnance" and "ordonner," "corrélation" and "réciprocité") "are among Mallarmé's most frequently employed terms to describe the organizing process of poetic creation" (90), one also obtains the sense that Mallarmé valued patterns *qua patterns* for the very *order* they presented *as well as* for what they could *do*.

Admittedly, Mallarmé's allusive style in his writings was itself a challenge to most others. But, as he affirmed in many contexts, as he saw it, that was the point. Provoking others (notably his readers) to exercise their capacities for analytical thinking and interpretive insight (and disrupt their bourgeois complacency) was a major goal. As an artist (and one with a very strong allegiance to the "aesthetic attitude" per Rowe), however, he was quite attuned to the importance of individuals' still deriving pleasure from (and hopefully perceiving beauty in) such work. As he also said in his interview with Huret (1891): "The Parnassians [with whom Mallarmé had earlier aligned, but from whom he later broke off], who take the object in its entirety and show it, lack mystery; they take away from readers the delicious joy that arises when they believe that their own minds are creating. *To name* an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem, which derives from the step-by-step discovery, *to suggest*, that is the dream…There must

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always be enigma in poetry, and the goal of literature— there is no other—is *to evoke* objects….
(Dorra 141-142). And, among these objects, as I have been suggesting, were new conceptually
abstract ones (such as "the nation-state," "systems," etcetera) that like the invisible force of
gravity were now being increasingly recognized as having real effects in and on the world.

And while Mallarmé claimed that true poetry must resist industrialized consumption by the
masses, at the same time, a close examination of Mallarmés work "reveals it to be subtly
informed by the very rationalizing, *managerial instincts* of the technological culture from which
it takes its distance" (emphasis added) (Wayland-Smith 90). In fact, according to Wayland-
Smith, Mallarmé was struck by new scientific discoveries regarding energy and technological
means of harnessing it being developed in his lifetime (such as the second law of
thermodynamics, which states that there is a natural tendency of any isolated system to
degenerate into a more disordered state; and electricity, which was emerging as a new means of
supporting the lives of and connections between individuals, respectively). Perception of such
seemingly opposing tendencies occurring simultaneously (that is, natural tendencies in the
universe-world towards greater disorder [entropy] along with energy-demanding countermoves
to create and maintain structure) are actually some of the most significant principles underlying
the trends towards greater *complexity* that Christian and his colleagues have identified and which
they and others have described as becoming increasingly evident to individuals within societies
becoming modern in the nineteenth century.

Thus, according to Wayland-Smith, "Mallarmé viewed the materials of aesthetic creation
(whether dancing bodies or words on a page), as well as the 'material' of human aesthetic
consciousness, as latent energy sources to be maximally organized by the poet" (93). In other

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words, as an artist-poet, he felt himself to be actually engaged in energy-demanding and energy-channeling creative *work.* But at the same time, he felt that the emergent products of creation were not (or should not be regarded as) just *his*. As Wayland-Smith also says: "he envisioned the aesthetic consciousness of the *audience* - both individual and collective - as an energy-dense resource whose connective capacities had, as of yet, not been developed to the full" (emphasis added) (100). That is, he regarded his audience as potential co-participants in the (artistic) processes of creative work, though most had little experience with it. And, as has been being suggested here, much of his agenda may be regarded as being directed at trying to help change that.

Wayland-Smith notes in her conclusions that her perspective tends to bring together two traditionally disparate designations of Mallarmé, though they remain "in tension" in an (at least for now) rather unstable set. As she puts it, "we must learn to hold in tension [the] two juxtaposed images" of Mallarmé as poet, that is, as "historical isolate" or "sacred figure" outside "the vulgar constraints of nineteenth century mass culture," *and* as so-called "engineer," that is, one who embodies the "calculating, rationalizing impulse" and whose poetry engages with the "techno-logic of modernity" (Wayland-Smith 106).

And if there is any single work that would seem to personify these dual aspects of Mallarmé coming together in their manifest fruition, it would appear to be his revolutionary poem *A Roll of the Dance Will Never Abolish Chance* (written and first published in *Cosmopolis* in 1897, but not published in the book form he desired and for whose design details he had given precise instructions until sixteen years after his death [that is, in 1914]).

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From the moment the reader takes in its first pages, she can feel the power of the unconventionally organized structure of the work in the demands it places on her attention and integrative capacities. Though still recognizable as a poem, it is truly something of a stretch. It helps, of course, to know that the material work before her eyes is the output of someone called a poet and that he regarded it (more or less) as a poem himself. But one is also struck by what he does in his page and a half-long single paragraph preface to the work, which is to offer *some* though specifically limited guidance regarding how to read it (saying "let this genre become unified like the symphony, little by little, alongside the personal song…," for example), while at the same time stating that he prefers to leave the reader to her own devices. As he indicates in the preface's opening lines: "I'd prefer that this Note not be read, or that, once perused, be forgotten; it will teach the skilled Reader little that falls outside his comprehension: but it might be troubling for the naive reader having to cast his gaze on the opening words of the Poem so that those that follow, arranged as they are, lead him to the last, the whole without novelty save for the way in which they are spaced" (1). Clearly he is intending, and adamant to the end, that his work should be allusive and try to help stimulate the potential in others to *work and co-create* with him. This would seem to be critical because it is not as if he is envisioning offering *pronouncements about* the world but rather that he is more concerned with confronting a "metaphysical crisis, the constant threat of collapse into incoherence" which is at the poem's center (McCombie xxvi). That is, just as he sees instability and confusion in the social world around him, he presents the model of a world in which he along with others must discern complex patterns and "let" some new kind of order self-organize and emerge (as both collective "symphony" and "personal song").

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Thus, intentional effort and receptivity are both required, as the reader confronts words in different font sizes (the building blocks of this world) afforded in unprecedented arrangements on the page. As McCombie notes, Mallarmé had experimented with punctuation in earlier sonnets, but the layout here takes on a new verse form "the shape assumed by the mixture of 'free verse' and the prose poem expanded in time and space, akin to symphonic structure" (xxvi). And while there is no underlying specific narrative to be uncovered, there are certain motifs and phrases that appear, sometimes within and sometimes *across* pages (as with the largest font words "A Roll of the Dice," "Will Never," "Abolish" "Chance") that appear to act as structural clues and seeming keys to the sense of what is transpiring.

But, as McCombie also points out: "even as she [the reader] develops these keys, they dissolve, to be replaced by a different possibility. Just as a glimmer of sense is offered, it retreats from her grasp again" (xxvii). This very *dynamic* of the sense-making *effort* demanded by the form of the poem also finds support in symbolic motifs that center on rhythmic and "sailing" activity within it (incidentally, Mallarmé himself enjoyed sailing, particularly on the Seine). Thus, not only do *we engender waves of sense* (so to speak) from words that arc up and down as well as across certain pages, but *we also encounter short phrase fragments* (for example, "any thought of escape denied / far within epitomizes / the shadow buried in the depths by this alternate sail / until adapting / to the wingspan / its gaping depth like the hull / of a ship / listing from side to side" [7]) *and references* to "THE MASTER" (8) and "captain" with "the submissive beard" present in a "storm" (9) who is seemingly trying to resist the "vertigo" (17), *which engender associations* and hint at *some (abstract) individual* trying to *navigate* his way through this experience. But while the poet-narrator does refer on the final page to "the Seven

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Stars of the North / as well / A CONSTELLATION / cold because forgotten and disused" that

one might have thought could possibly act as a reference point for guiding one home (again, so

to speak), it is instead "watchful / doubtful / rolling / brilliant and contemplative / before

stopping / at some final place of consecration / All Thought is a Roll of the Dice" (22). Thus, as

McCombie says, while the ending "appears to promise conclusion [it] in fact points back into

what seems infinite possibility" (xxvii). One might also say that through it all and by its end the

poet has helped readers gain greater appreciation of the dynamic, highly *associative* and

contingent nature of their *own* thoughts (their own mental activity) which, despite effecting

particular "rolls of the dice" (i.e, particular thoughts of various kinds), actually always retain the

possibility ("chance") for contributing to the next creative act.

    R. Howard Bloch describes the poem as "mark[ing] an enormous break with the conceptual

world in place since the Renaissance…its verbal and visual dislocations mak[ing] it more like an

interactive poem of the digital age than like any kind of traditional verse" (27). This, I would

suggest, is another way of saying that it was also unprecedented it what it afforded individuals

(in Mallarmé's case, an increasingly literate populace); specifically, it offered the opportunity to

participate directly in a surprisingly, as Bloch says, "democratic" exercise - "an exercise in

mastering words as a way of mastering the world" [Bloch 27-28]). But in addition to its

unprecedented formal aspects, it also "sheds new light upon the condition of modernity…as it

contains a great lesson in how to negotiate, after Nietzche's declaration of the death of God, the

treacheries of a rootless, secular world" (Bloch 29) that was also growing in its complexity in

ways that Christian and his colleagues have described.

Thus, Mallarmé appears to have been as managerially inclined (so to speak) as was Mann to address systemic problems of his increasingly complex society by trying to provoke his fellows' thinking and foster greater self-consciousness regarding their social roles (identities) and "work" in the world. And, while both artists may be said to have aspired to an ideal community supported by more enlightened and imaginative individuals, Mallarmé envisioned this taking place more in the artistic realm than through direct political engagement. But as both men were aware, the People, whose very minds they were trying to stimulate and help develop for the purpose of enhancing their participation in the more democratic management of the problems threatening their societies, were still largely fledglings in this regard (as Foucault also essentially argued in his own work on "emancipation" many decades later). And, with social complexity continuing to advance (and many of its engendered problems still far from resolved in our own time), more enlightened work was (and is still) needed.

Chapter 5:
Pulling It All Together:
Six Writers and their "Systems" in Co-Evolution

Reflecting on these various discussions of the paired German and French writers at three relatively distinct moments in the long nineteenth century, I will now attempt to bring the pieces together in a (hopefully) coherent view of what has been undertaken and accomplished in the presentation and analysis. As stated at the outset, both the form of the presentation and the analysis itself were intended to rely significantly on concepts taken from complexity and complex systems research as well as the macro-historical theoretical framework and approach of Christian and colleagues, who have also incorporated many of these complexity-related concepts in their model. As those working in this area typically acknowledge, however, the nature and workings of what is presently referred to as "complexity" remain incompletely understood. On the science side, the formal study of complexity and complex systems took shape relatively recently, gaining serious momentum in the early 1980's with the founding of the Santa Fe Institute, a "think tank" forum for discussing and conducting the multidisciplinary investigation of such systems in a variety of domains (physical, computational, biological and social). The idea was to conduct theoretical research outside the traditional boundaries of academic departments and governmental funding agency budgets in order (to try) to achieve some synthesis *across* disciplines - pressing for greater dialogue and sharing of ideas with the expectation of discerning principles by which complex systems operate similarly across domains, thereby contributing via this *complementary* strategy to the overall advancement of knowledge. One might think of it as

having emerged as a late post-Enlightenment offshoot of those dual tendencies to try to encompass knowledge in an encyclopedic fashion, on the one hand, and refine it through specialized methods of rational examination, on the other. Unlike the Encyclopédistes' original endeavor to *gather all available knowledge*, examine it critically, and use it for social advancement, however, the goal of those engaged in complexity research nowadays is different in that there is no attempt to encompass all knowledge in a single enterprise; rather it acknowledges that the current state of knowledge is subject to change, and that specialization and knowledge refinement continues to be critical but that the latter may be usefully complemented by more "holistic" methods that yield discernment of abstract *patterns* (qua principles or properties) by which the objective world and phenomena at different levels of temporal and spatial scale operate in it.

The present argument and the form of the discussion on which it is based align with some of these same motivations while also employing some of the same complexity/complex system principles which have emerged from such work. Because of the subject matter, however, it tends to align most specifically with the model afforded by the historian David Christian in his research. It has operated, in other words, much as he along with his colleagues from a variety of other disciplines do in their work within the relatively "holistic" "macro-historical" framework of their "big history" agenda, but in an application to consideration of relationships between three pairs of German and French writers and their environmental contexts across the long nineteenth century.

The form and (some of the) content of this discussion of relationships between these writers and their contexts has, therefore, been rather unconventional as well as somewhat exploratory.

Nonetheless, the methodological strategy has actually aligned in certain ways with that generally employed by Christian himself in the context of his own multidisciplinary collaborations with others in both the sciences and the humanities. These have been characterized as *the use* of analogies and metaphors in the rational application of complexity principles to historical phenomena taking place in different domains and operating at different timescales, thereby allowing for the discernment of patterns of behavior that are *alike or similar* to each other in meaningful ways in these different domains (this may be seen in their application of notions of "flows of energy," "emergence of networks," and increases in "information" and "collective learning," within and between different "systems" operating at different levels of spatial scale, for example). Christian's stated aims include advancing greater appreciation of some of the findings of complexity research, as well as furthering his and his colleagues' larger project of developing an alternate "narrative" and understanding of history itself (Christian 144-149). One of the more distinctive features of this alternate narrative is that it situates human history within a longer and wider (so to speak) history of evolution of the world (and universe!), thereby, as he puts it, essentially integrating science into a different "creation myth" (Christian 146-149).

While this particular theoretical agenda exists in its early stages, it has gained some intellectual and scholarly traction (engaging numerous investigators at universities on different continents). At the same time, and as noted in the introduction, other scholars in the humanities have begun to direct some of their attention to formal concerns with "systems" and matters of "complexity" in their own (distinctive) ways as well. (Concerns with *systems* of various kinds have been present in the humanities for a long time, of course, but not in the formal sense referred to here). These other scholars include Foucault, whose body of work has been

reinterpreted by some as aligning in several ways with an intellectual trend concerned with understanding "complexity" (and complex systems), as well as the literary and Enlightenment scholar Clifford Siskin and the narrative theorist Richard Walsh.

One may recall that in his *System: The Shaping of Modern Knowledge*, Siskin states in its opening pages that "By engaging system as a genre - as a form that works physically in the world to mediate our efforts to know it - this [that is, his] book illuminates system's role in the shaping and reshaping of modern knowledge" (1). Richard Walsh, for his part, focuses (along with his computer scientist colleague Susan Stepney) on the challenges of *narrating complexity,* and points out (in a rather long list) that, among other things, the behavior of complex systems includes the property of "*Reflexiveness*, in social systems, where narratives of the system are also within the system, affecting it" (319-320).

These notions - of system as a "form" (which Siskin deems a genre) "working in the world to mediate our efforts to know it" and complex social systems having the property of "reflexiveness" - are compatible, I would argue, with that point which the complexity and knowledge management researcher David Snowden also makes with *his* observation that "while these [complex adaptive] systems are constrained, the constraints are loose or only partial, and the nature of the constraints (and thereby the system) is constantly modified by the interaction of the agents with the system and each other; [that is] they coevolve" (Snowden 225). In other words, these scholars may be viewed as together gesturing towards the idea that has been enacted here, that the roles and operations of innovator-agents (such as writers) who employ narratives *within* their systems have not only been constrained *by* but are also working at the same time to have an impact *on* them.

Thus, the argument here has explored the situations and (some of) the work of six writers in the long nineteenth century who, as I have proposed, stand out for *how they participated* in and *themselves embodied* the growing role of individuals in *defining* the (social) ontology of their societies, which were at the same time *becoming more modern* as a consequence of the confluence of circumstances that Christian and his colleagues have described through their "complexity" lens.

In order to make this more clear, recall that across western Europe's long nineteenth century, from its Revolutionary beginnings to its World-War-torn end, social, cultural, and technological changes which together have routinely been deemed "modernization" took place at an historically unprecedented rate. Christian and colleagues regard increases in complexity and the dynamics of complex adaptive systems to be an important explanatory lens for understanding many of these changes.

Thus, western Europe appears to have been unique in the world at that time for being a site of "Goldilocks Conditions", where conditions were "just right" for something new and complex to *emerge* (in this case, "modernization"). These conditions included all those which had led *over time* to the region's becoming a *hub* of interconnected global networks mediating the exchange of energy and resources (material as well as cultural-intellectual) in the world. This set of circumstance effected, in their turn, the amassing of unprecedented amounts of wealth and power in this part of the world that was divided up (though obviously not at all equally) among different countries (including France and Germany), local communities, and social groups differing in their degrees of privilege, according to their access to them (this process is obviously conceived as a self-organizing one with no "master plan" in mind). At the same time, however, (according

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to this view) this concentration of resources sparked significant innovation in the channeling and use of them as well. Forms of governance were also shifting to accommodate and administer the management of such vast resources. Traditional monarchies and the nobility were declining in their overt authority and social "grip," while those of a more entrepreneurial bent were rising in power and influence. As a part of this process, as Niklas Luhmann has pointed out, the very "social ontology" was taking on a new form in the nineteenth century as well (that is, the nature of "the social" was no longer completely defined by relationship to, or enforced by, those at the top of the traditional social hierarchy).

At the same time, and as Peter Brooks has stated "for the first time," social identities themselves were becoming a problem. While there are likely many reasons and possible explanations for this, notable among them is the fact that the *balance* between coercive and consensual forms of power was beginning to be altered, as Christian et al have pointed out. While they have emphasized the spread of democratic principles as a significant contributor to this shifting balance, the rise of the bourgeoisie and bolstering of their values could also be argued to have been an added, if more covert (since less patently political), force. Thus, the range of individuals' roles and social identities were differentiating as well as being increasingly tied to larger numbers of people in communities (as compared with the relatively smaller sizes of the "fading" aristocracies that were defined by birth, marriage, and/or rank within the military, for example). And thus the *potential* power associated with these increasingly diverse identities and the voices that expressed them was growing. But in the absence of a genuine democracy (or other communal mechanism for acting together in their interests), the diverse so-called "voices of the people" had no means of cohesion or communal expression. And, as discussed in chapter

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four, by the mid- to latter part of the nineteenth century, feelings of malaise and tendencies towards apathy were also spreading.

In other words, across the nineteenth century, individuals' sense of their place within and relationship to the broader collective was transforming rapidly, sometimes in the timeframe of decades, sometimes even within a generation's lifespan. As many scholars (including Hartmut Rosa and Marshall Berman, as previously noted) have acknowledged, the rapidity of such changes would have made them difficult to characterize by the vast majority of those caught up in them. Consequently, there would have been a special need and niche for innovator-agents-writers, such as those who have been discussed, to address and fill as modernization was progressing.

But it wasn't just the rate of social change that presumably "drove" these writer-artists to offer a response to them. It was arguably also the fact that *individuals* - that is to say, individuals among "the people" themselves (or "on the margins" of their societies, so that they were at risk of becoming *just* "the people" themselves [like Staël and Kleist]) - *were also on the verge of becoming more responsible* for shaping the new "social ontology." Recall that, as Luhmann has pointed out, the very "social ontology" by which European societies defined and understood themselves was beginning to shift at the turn of the nineteenth century, as the nobility began to lose its power to establish and enforce it. As we might put it nowadays, traditional authorities were losing "control of the narrative." But, whereas Luhmann (a sociologist) has emphasized the *media's* strategic role (as a functional subsystem in the broader social system) in taking on the task of a society coming to be able to "see" and "talk about" itself, the discussion here has assumed that certain artist-writers also played an important role in this task. In other words, the

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argument here has in many ways centered on the notion that there were some individuals (with the writers discussed here being clear "stand outs" among them) who made efforts to address aspects of the adaptive challenge of "meaning making" and establishing a new "social ontology" capable of culturally defining "who was who" and "what was what" in their eras. By such means, they afforded not only a new aesthetics (which seems to have been a particularly important goal in the cases of Kleist, Heine, and Balzac) but also a new kind of *potential sense* by which others in their societies could objectify the so-called "shape" of their societies and make them more "graspable" and thus communicable and narratable.

There is no longer any question that the media were, in fact, becoming increasingly influential in the nineteenth century and playing the kind of role in society that Luhmann has suggested. But the point here is that in addition to those implementing media management and organizational operations, individual actors with "attention-grabbing" voices had some influence and impact in this regard as well. And those in positions of power well knew it. Printing and dissemination of pamphlets, books, and newspapers had obviously been going on for many years. But several of the writers who have been discussed here were clearly subject to having their voices "constrained" by the more traditional and authoritarian powers who felt threatened by them. As we know, Napoleon intervened and limited the publication of some of Staël's work, while Kleist's *Prince Friedrich of Homberg* play was initially banned in its production; and, of course, Heine and (Heinrich) Mann were subject to significant censorship by Prussian/German authorities, so that both men moved elsewhere to be able to continue their writing. But, by the middle of the nineteenth century, publishing had become a growing *industry,* which Heine and Balzac were among the first to be able to take advantage of in Paris as a means of offering a

source of livelihood and financial support. But the force of this *industry*'s growth appears to have also been unstoppable, so that it extended into Germany as well, thereby contributing to furthering that country's coherence as a new nation in the latter part of the century. German studies scholar Kirsten Belgum details this very phenomenon of the print media contributing to the self-understanding of increasing numbers of people in Germany in her book *Popularizing the Nation: Audience, Representation, and the Production of Identity in "Die Gartenlaube," 1853-1900* [1998]) (the latter being the first successful mass-circulation newspaper in Germany, founded in Leipzig in 1853).

But recall that, as historian Lynn Hunt has argued, "the people's" understanding of themselves as playing a significant role in "the social" was emerging even earlier (at least in France) as the print industry began to flourish and increasing numbers of individuals of all classes *saw* themselves participating in public activities, like mass gatherings and demonstrations, by which they were also *making a difference* and effecting policy decisions in their towns and cities. As Hunt puts it, "words were rushing to catch up" with what people already "knew" - in this case regarding their increasingly instrumental roles in sociopolitical activity. This, I would suggest, is also consistent with the notion that a kind of second order observing (akin to that which Luhmann describes taking place at the social system level) was also on the rise among and at the level of individuals, such that increasing numbers of people began to simultaneously question their roles and places in society. In other words, growing numbers of people were not only gaining a new kind of *perspective* on themselves (as their own instrumental activity became a new object of joint attention in their communities) but they were *also* beginning to appreciate that their roles in society actually included a new kind of significance and power. Thus,

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individuals - like these six writers - were among those inclined to ask new kinds of provocative questions such as: "who am I?" and "who is or *could* be responsible" for "changing" our world and/or managing its problems for our communal benefit?"

From a macro-historical perspective (as per Christian et al), France and Germany and their native inhabitants were essentially "rubbing shoulders" throughout this many decades-long process. Of course, not only language differences, but also centuries-long cultural traditions had established them as societies in contradistinction to each other. But at the turn of the nineteenth century, they and others in western Europe had not just come to amass their own shares of these vast material and cultural resources, they also momentously engaged in fighting over them. They were thus becoming subject themselves to forces that transcended their own communal boundaries. And, as the century unfolded, they continued to jockey for their respective positions (with the Franco-Prussian War intervening) on the increasingly expansive world-stage in competition with each other.

The paired German and French writers who have been discussed here, from Staël and Kleist to Mann and Mallarmé, thus inhabited sociocultural worlds that had not only been perpetuated by local circumstances and boundary conditions which had defined them over their long respective histories, but worlds that were *now also* being significantly impacted by superordinate concerns as well that were tending to influence them both along with the broader European community. Thus, in addition to being constrained by local conditions, these various writers could also be argued (as has been done here) to have been perceiving and trying to address some of those consequences of complex systems' tendencies towards self-organization which in their cases were effecting them virtually simultaneously and more "broadly" (so to speak) and

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warranted new responses from them (as a part of their complex systems' co-constraining each other in processes of "co-evolution" [as per Snowden]).

The discussion was structured, therefore, to provide some of the details of the *nested* contexts in which these artists were operating, from those most personal and singular to those that impacted them more distantly but simultaneously. And it was these so-called "forces of modernization" operating more distantly (but impacting all of those worlds at lower levels of scale subject *to* them) that arguably piqued and stimulated these various writers.

Thus, we can enumerate all six of them, considering them both separately and together. Staêl and Kleist were argued to have both been subject during the period of the Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic Wars to the destabilization of the social systems and impending loss of the social identities which had (marginally, but still) supported them in their lifetimes. Staêl, on her side, had her own concerns as a talented aristocratic woman foreseeing (as her writings indicate that she did) that her privileged position as one of the nobility was under threat, as was the power and influence of her entire social class; at the same time, she recognized that her future specifically as *a woman* with some voice in the say of her community, as her mother had had before her (notably within the space of Salons), was likely to disappear. As she well knew, women's talents were often overlooked, so that women of her time were likely to be particularly vulnerable in any social shift tending to valorize new kinds of "battles" and aggressive competition in the public sphere, like those beginning to emerge in the world of commerce and doing business. Loathe to be seen as a "mannequin," she worked assiduously via her writing and exchanges with Napoleon himself to try to build a case for women continuing to have a legitimate voice in the new version of society she perceived emerging on the national and

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international horizon - a voice which she regarded as particularly adept at the rational use of language and forging alliances.

Kleist, for his part, had his own vulnerabilities to the changing social context(s) of that tumultuous period, though they were not so specifically gender-based. Apparently by temperament and intellectual inclination, he was a particularly sensitive man. And having been threatened by his "Kantian crisis" as well as by being either unwilling or unable to engage in military pursuits in an era of profound unrest and patriotic fervor, he developed his own passionate artistic vision of a world which, while it *acknowledged* aspects of his contemporary reality, also responded to them in an innovative fashion. Thus, he imagined a world in which wooden "puppets" could be understood as being manipulated by unseen forces (in a marionette theater) but also as figures whose *natural* construction allowed them to move with a particular grace and beauty. In the *actual* human realm, however, which his obviously troubled "Prince" inhabits and where his character is portrayed as being subject to the frequent misperceptions and callous judgments of others (like the Elector), beings can only *work to try* to transcend the constraining circumstances of their condition. And, as Kleist depicts this, such transcendence arises through an actor making *his own choices* about his future (as when the Prince chooses the "calm ethereal spheres" of "immortality" as his end [Kleist 90]). Such imaginative expressions have striking resonances with known aspects of Kleist's own life, who appears to have felt himself subject to higher authorities who manipulated (while misunderstanding) his own artistic talents, so that he apparently chose to find relief/sanctuary elsewhere by acting out his own highly-premeditated end.

Both of these individuals, in other words, seem to have had some appreciation of the "larger forces" impacting and threatening to disrupt their respective worlds, which had previously in their youth allowed them to act relatively freely and have meaningful social connections with others. Under the pressures imposed by the shifting circumstances at the turn of the century, however, both also responded with (particular) narratives that not only acknowledged some of the reality of these circumstances, but also suggested possibilities for a different future for their protagonists - ones in which individuals could adopt *new roles* while still maintaining human dignity. And, as we *now* know, both of their visions, which had been developed in a period of so-called "creative destruction," were in many ways remarkably prescient.

But, as detailed earlier, the subsequent post-war era in which Heine and Balzac lived most of their lives, entered a different phase whose larger "shape" could be said to have taken on a different character. It was a *relatively* peaceful period. Through the interpretive lens of "big history" which views changes occurring in the world according to complexity and systemic principles, this so-called phase could be viewed as largely recuperative as well as regenerative. In other words, and in a somewhat "ecological" sense, western European communities (including those of France and Germany) worked at re-establishing their worlds but not simply with a return to the "old order." Rather, continuing to benefit from the amassing of power and resources in their part of the world which was also stimulating more innovation, and employing "seeds" of their respective traditions which could be built upon, French as well as German communities began to transform and redefine themselves. As noted, social identities mediating social connection and sharing of information were also transforming and becoming a real "issue." Traditional social authorities were being challenged, power balances were shifting, and

individuals ("the people") were beginning to become aware of themselves as increasingly responsible for establishing the new "social ontology." And artists like Heine and Balzac stand out as being among those who ventured to innovate and "speak out" in this new expression of individual responsibility. Both this Rheinländer and this Frenchman, in other words, appear to have recognized many of the fundamental aspects of the ongoing social dynamics of their era. But they naturally afforded singular responses to them in the narratives they created for their different (intended) audiences.

As discussed, Heine himself was someone who was obliged to try to live with and enact *his* own uneasily-related set of social identities. Part of the solution he divined for himself was to emigrate to Paris so that he might avoid Prussian censors and more freely create as an artist. In Paris, he worked at trying to enlighten the French about the "real Germany," but his heart apparently continued to reside in his homeland whose nationhood he dreamed about but questioned could be a reality. Thus, as he portrayed in his *Deutschland* epic, he aspired to championing his homeland's coming to emerge on a future par with other nations (like France and England), but he also felt himself "wounded" and struggled to maintain hope or spell out a practical means for actually achieving it.

Balzac, for his part, was someone whose identity as an artist had also been challenged in his youth, though for very different reasons. Seemingly under the weight of this challenge (along with the need to resist financial ruin), he strove to articulate his vision of the shifting world in which *he* resided (contemporaneously with Heine) and where he saw it heading. As we now well know, his vision was that of a strikingly "complete" "system" in which diverse characters predominantly from Paris and the French provinces interacted in a temporally-extended and

spatially panoramic network of relationships. In his broadly-conceived "human comedy," he acknowledged but was also critical of many of the details of the era's changing mores and developments.

In their cases, Heine and Balzac straddled the trends of earlier romanticism and increasing realism. Both acknowledged, each in his own way and through the lens of specific interests, an emerging social "order" rising on a tide of new social identities and connections (though in Heine's case, these still existed more in the realm of "potential" than actuality). At the same time, both men worked at developing new "aesthetics" for portraying and reflecting these emergent social "orders" to their increasingly modern audiences - audiences whom they hoped would be receptive and whose tastes they also tried to please.

In the case of the final pair of writers, Mann and Mallarmé, the environmental contexts had again changed as compared with those before them. Another war involving both of their countries had intervened and the form of pressures toward modernization had continued to evolve and afford different social conditions that in many ways transcended the boundaries of their respective communities. Though the Franco-Prussian War was relatively short-lived, it had significant consequences (in addition to the many lives lost). Specifically, it propelled both countries along trajectories that were notable for how they were distinctive as well as for how they transformed them *both* into new kinds of actors on the increasingly *international* world-stage.

Germany, for its part, built upon its Prussian military strengths while proceeding to elaborate the infrastructures (including a common currency, transportation and communication networks) and encourage socialization practices supportive of its becoming a commercially successful and

powerful nation-state (this manifestly *combined* effort refers primarily to what was taking place under the Wilhelmine regime). France, on the other hand, initially struggled to deal with the humiliation of its loss but gradually re-established its social order in its early version of the Third Republic. Both nations, however, could be said to have effectively worked to advance their power and status in the increasingly globally-interconnected world and did this by continuing to *exploit and put the resources they were continuing to amass to use* in these very processes of post-war "systemic" (re)structuration. But while there were overt material signs of what some deemed social "progress" (leading, in fact, to what was later referred to as the Belle Époque that not only involved both of these nations but also extended across much of western Europe), there were also growing signs, as already noted, of a significantly widespread but more covert psychoemotional negativity. The latter has been variously described as alienation, disillusionment, despair, or cynicism about "meaning," with all leading, however, to a kind of indifference or apathy. These trends have been ascribed, of course, to various factors. But again, if one assumes the more abstract bird's eye of so-called "big history" with its incorporation of complex systems considerations, one might see these seemingly opposing trends of overt "progress"and covert "negativity" as being the outcome of ongoing processes of self-organization at different levels of scale that were beginning to collide with each other.

Thus, forces of modernization operating at more macro-levels of scale involving consolidating and promoting differentiated growth in this part of the world may have been beginning to conflict with natural capacities and interests of individuals (agents) caught up in them. In other words, a "problem" lay in the fact that such agents were themselves becoming more aware of themselves as a force contributing to changes taking place in their societies, but

they were at the same time differentiating (so to speak) from each other and becoming more diverse (in terms of their social identities and voices). That is, they lacked a coherent *collective* voice in trying to participate in their societies' management. There was thus a new challenge in trying to find an integrative strategy for bringing these increasingly self-conscious and vying voices of differing perspective *together into a* workable, sustainable, and broadly *satisfying* community.

Assuming that such considerations are reasonable, it is no surprise that individuals, like the writers Mann and Mallarmé, coming from different backgrounds and life-experiences themselves, would have viewed and responded to this so-called "new problem" and the challenges it posed somewhat differently.

Thus, the "larger problem" from Mann's perspective could easily be understood as a more frankly political one, given both his long-standing interpersonal as well as highly public conflicts with his brother who held adamantly nationalistic views (before the World War) and his self-acknowledged receptivity to aspects of *other countries'* cultures, including what he regarded as *Italian proclivities* to sociality and *French ideals* regarding sociopolitical organization. His perception of his society's dysfunction appears to have centered, in other words, on his highly-developed views of what he saw as inherent pathologies in the Wilhelmine regime and the effects its machinations were having on his people. His critical sense of these are evident in his *Man of Straw,* though it is formally portrayed as deriving *from* a clash between diverse individuals' personas (as that between the throwback Prussian-militaristic "authoritarian" character of Diederich Hessling, who thoughtlessly reflects and enacts the values of the extant power structure, and the more "modern" and worldly but painfully disaffected Wolfang Buck [as well as

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the formerly idealistic but now ineffectual old Herr Buck]). For Mann, it arguably made sense to press for more accommodation of democratic principles in the German society of his time in order to try to foster a more appropriately modern community cohering on the basis of such an "ideal" integrative mechanism.

For Mallarmé, however, "ideal" means of finding community apparently always had a different tenor. While clearly aware of the unsettled nature of his era and admittedly disenchanted with certain tendencies among the bourgeoisie and "vulgar" aspects of popular culture, his "ideal" forms of communication and effecting connection were not a matter of harnessing the diversity of voices in a political fashion as Mann's were. Instead he appears to have regarded it more his mission to join them in a recognition of the power of art (particularly the power of language, and specifically poetry) itself. He appears to have always inclined towards the enigmatic and intentionally allusive (rather than explicit and direct) in his persona as a poet. And whether acting as organizer of *Les Mardistes*, a public speaker, or writer of poetic works for public consumption, he worked to disseminate this more mysterious yet powerful sense of art and "elevate" it to the "stature of religion" (as Paul Auster has noted [xi]). And, as his final major work *Roll of the Dice* suggests, he appears to have felt that "acting poetically" could itself afford a beacon for orienting oneself in his tumultuous and increasingly secular times, though it could "never abolish chance."

So, while Mann and Mallarmé were manifestly quite different in many respects, they could be regarded as having had a broadly common aim. That is, to try to promote their fellows' (qua agents') enlightenment and creativity in being able to integrate their increasingly diverse voices into an ideally more stable and satisfying community.

Such characterizations of these artist-writers are thus grounded in details specific to each of

them while they also tend towards some abstraction. These intermittent turns towards abstraction

may be seen as having taken place for two reasons. One, it naturally derives from employing one

of the already noted means by which Christian and colleagues also advance their particular

narrative and discern patterns in the history of the human species beyond that documented by

written texts (and are explain to "explain" commonalities between the conditions leading to the

emergence of *Homo Sapiens*, the rise of agriculture, and the obviously more recent trends

towards the rise of the "modern world" and the Anthropocene). That is, some of the present

argument's "abstracting" arises, in part, from a significant reliance on the use of certain analogies

and metaphors as a form of reasoning and discerning patterns of commonality in how the pairs of

writers under discussion may be understood as having made meaningful sense to themselves and

others within the broader dynamical system-contexts of which *both* writers within the pair were a

part. It also derives, however, from engaging with certain complexity considerations themselves,

particularly that of "emergence." As Christian et al have stated:

> complex things have *new or emergent* properties…which do not exist in the
> components of which a complex entity is made. The[se properties] emerge
> only from the arrangement of those components into a precise pattern. They
> arise *out of the pattern* as much as out of the components themselves. It is the
> fact that *the pattern strikes us* as immaterial or *abstract*, whereas the
> components seem to be solid and material, that accounts for the [seemingly]
> magical quality of emergence. (emphases added) (5)

Thus, one may view some of the commonalities across pairs of writers that I have been arguing

were finding expression in some of their respective work as a *function* of these writers'

themselves discerning patterns in the broader social contexts that were common to both of them.

At the same time that they were discerning these "immaterial" and essentially invisible (to some, virtually "magical") social forces emerging in their social environments and impacting them both, however, these writers may *also* be understood as expressing themselves in the works that "emerged" from *them* in the process of such discernment.

Hence, there are most certainly tendencies towards a certain amount of abstraction in the work that has been undertaken here. To some, such abstraction might appear to dilute the very richness of the cultural (literary) products being examined and obscure a need to never "lose sight" of such works' details in the "real" appreciation of them. But, as argued here, there is also value in attending to *both* the *details and the abstracted pattern of details-in-relation to each other* because doing so can afford insights into the very creative process by which the final product "emerged" as well as perception of a *new form* of a universal truth which the grasp of such a pattern may provide. In a kind of kinship with the position taken by the philosopher M.T. Rowe noted in the introduction, if the notion of an "aesthetic attitude" is itself afforded a sufficiently "broad and satisfying account" (1), it may also be seen to accommodate both "aesthetic interest and curiosity about life" (23). In that same vein, an investigation that focuses on concerns of particular writers and the forms of their works at different points in the long nineteenth century as that attempted here may prove to be *both* "aesthetically interesting" and useful for contributing to our understanding of human beings' place in the world and telling us something about creative enterprises in "life" itself.

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