Donehower

The Birth of Novalis

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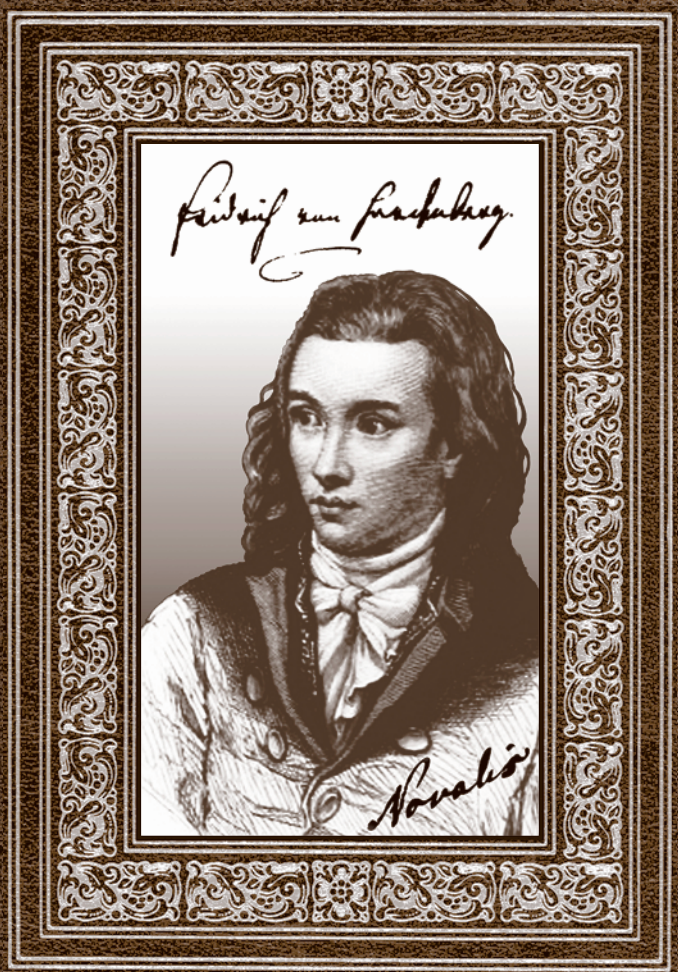

Friedrich von Hardenberg's Journal of 1797, with Selected Letters and Documents

Translated, edited, and with an introduction by

Bruce Donehower

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Introduction

"Reading" Novalis

Between April and July 1797, the twenty-five-year-old Saxon aristocrat and former apprentice law clerk Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (1772–1801) kept a journal that captured the moods, thoughts, and observations that followed the deaths of his fifteen-year-old fiancée, Sophie von Kühn (1782–1797), and his dearly loved younger brother, Erasmus (1774–1797). This journal, which consists of short, day-to-day entries, is complemented biographically by what has been preserved of Hardenberg's letters. Taken together—and read in conjunction with surviving notebook entries and fragments written shortly before, during, and shortly after this period of time—the journal and letters shed light on a process of maturation and self-discovery during which Friedrich von Hardenberg reimagined his identity.

Novalis, the name Hardenberg chose as his poetic inscription, signified past and future. It had roots in Hardenberg family history, as we shall see. But it also heralded things to come: namely, that brief springtide of literary brilliance known as early German romanticism. This moment had its center in Jena and occurred during the years that Hardenberg did his most significant poetic work: 1798–1801.

The story of Hardenberg's transformation—the birth of Novalis—has been told many times: how he met by chance and immediately fell in love with twelve-year-old Sophie, a "mere quarter hour" that changed his life; how Sophie and he became engaged, at first secretly in fear of his parents' reaction; how Sophie took ill and died just a few days past her fifteenth birthday; how he mourned her to the verge of suicide until, like Dante with Beatrice, he found himself united with her again in a moment of ecstatic, mystical vision; how from this

moment the mere mortal Friedrich von Hardenberg gave way to the immortal poet Novalis, romantic herald of a Golden Age. Howsoever possible, Sophie became the center of Hardenberg's poetic universe, the point around which his creative identity constellated. She was, as Hardenberg called her, his "religion," and his continued devotion to her became an article of personal faith. The famous visionary moment at Sophie's grave, which he recorded briefly in a journal entry dated May 13, 1797, became inspiration for the third hymn in *Hymns to the Night*, which may have been drafted at that time.

> Once when I was shedding bitter tears, dissolved in pain, my hope disappearing, and I stood alone by the barren hill that hid the form of my life in coffined darkness—lonely as no other has ever been, driven by unspeakable fear—powerless, only a thought of misery remaining.—As I looked frantically for help, unable to go forward or turn back, as I clung to the fleeting, extinguished life with endless longing:—then, out of the blue distances—from the heights of my former ecstasy, came a shiver of twilight—and at once the bond of birth broke apart—light's manacles. Away fled the splendor of the earth, along with my sorrow—and with it my sadness flowed into a new, fathomless world—you inspiration of night, you heavenly sleep, you overcame me—the countryside was exalted; my newborn spirit soared. The mound became a cloud of dust—and through the cloud I saw the transfigured countenance of my beloved. Eternity reposed within her eyes—I seized her hands, and the tears became a sparkling, unbreakable bond of union. Millennia, like thunderheads, swept upwards in the distance. I wept ecstatic tears upon her neck to welcome the new life. It was the first, incomparable dream—and since then I have held an eternal, changeless faith in the heaven of night and its light, the beloved. (I, 135)

This poeticized moment of erotic-mystical yearning and transfiguration became within a few years after the poet's death a widely accepted key to his biography. The apotheosis of Sophie von Kühn—her conflation with Sophia, Maria, and Isis—became likewise a paradigmatic axiom for the understanding of Novalis and his work.

While Hardenberg, for a variety of reasons, played no small part in this mythic endeavor, perhaps the most significant impetus for the myth's acceptance came from Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), Hardenberg's friend and literary executor. Ironically, Tieck never met Sophie; Tieck and Hardenberg became friends in 1799, two years after

Sophie's death. But Tieck's revised introduction to the third edition of the Novalis *Schriften* (1815; edited by Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich Schlegel) brought to full expression the tendency to idealize Novalis, and Tieck's interpretative statements regarding the biography of Novalis were decisively important in setting the agenda for Hardenberg's posthumous reception.[1] Tieck ignored or minimized the complexity of Hardenberg's interests and activities, celebrated the poet's relation to Sophie as a rite of passage to supernormal realms, and conflated references to Dante, Raphael, and John the Evangelist to create a literary-spiritual fable with enormous popular appeal.

This extratextual glamour of the Novalis mythology became stunningly persuasive after the poet died. Indeed, it dramatically increased Hardenberg's readership, which during his lifetime was confined to a small circle of family and friends. Within less than a decade after Hardenberg's death from tuberculosis in 1801, the biography of Novalis had become one of the foremost Romantic texts: a *Märchen* (fairy tale) that presented an archetypal tale of *Sehnsucht* (yearning) and longing for the hereafter.

Suitable iconography soon appeared.[2] Idealized, heroic busts of Novalis became shrines for romantic pilgrims. Illustrations to questionably edited editions of the dead poet's works showed a similar representational trend. It became common to refer to Hardenberg as Novalis in regard to the entire span of his life. When Hardenberg's dear friend and mentor, August Cölestin Just—who knew Hardenberg from the early days in Tennstedt before Hardenberg took the pen name Novalis—referred to the poet in a biography (1805) as "Friedrich von Hardenberg: Assessor of Salt Mines in Saxony and Designated Department Director in Thuringia," he was criticized for his gauche accent on correct historical detail and for his philistine ignorance of the sublimely mythic and spiritual. "It is an impossible task to describe Hardenberg's life, but Just has failed to achieve even the least that's possible," Hardenberg's cousin Hans Georg von Carlowitz wrote to his wife in 1806. And a few years later, in another reader's reaction to the same text by Just:

> Vienna, January 25, 1810
> Justinus Kerner to Ludwig Uhland in Tübingen
>
> I am sending you this excerpt [from Just's biography] because I know that it will interest you immensely. But it makes a rather extraordinary and disturbing impression

> to think of Novalis as an official or director of a salt mine. That is horrible!! I would have pictured his life completely differently. The young Miss Charpentier also disturbs the poetry. But his death is so transcendently beautiful. (IV, 550)

This letter is typical of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century readers who implicitly assumed that Hardenberg was Novalis.

Yet, as the included texts in this collection help make clear, Hardenberg's relation to Sophie and his reaction to her death are highly complex, contradictory, and layered. And Sophie's death was not the only crisis that befell Friedrich von Hardenberg in the spring of 1797—nor was it perhaps the most fateful. Less noted but personally devastating to the poet was the loss of his younger brother, Erasmus, who died only a few weeks after Sophie, on Good Friday 1797. The news of Erasmus's death reached Friedrich in Tennstedt on Easter Sunday, after he returned from a visit to Sophie's grave. Hardenberg had gone to Tennstedt to avoid witnessing his brother's death at their parents' home in nearby Weissenfels. During life, Erasmus shared Friedrich's enthusiasm for Sophie and her close-knit and amiable family unit at the country estate in Grüningen. Erasmus's death, following so closely upon Sophie's, heightened the personal tragedy. It propelled Friedrich von Hardenberg into a crisis of mourning and survivor guilt far more profound than Sophie's death alone might have brought about. A later journal entry from July 1800, seven months before the poet died, reminds us how closely Hardenberg remembered and still felt this doubled loss: "Where Sophie and Erasmus waken, there can I be at lasting peace" (IV, 55).

"Reading" Novalis thus presents a special challenge and fascination for the twenty-first century. Because of the way life and poetry intersect, because of the deliberate strategies used by Hardenberg and others to conflate poetic reality and historical fact, and because of the strange phenomenon that to a great extent Hardenberg's life events *can* be read (or marketed) as a transcendent symbol or work of art, it is hard to resist reading Novalis as a still engagingly vital myth.

It is the purpose of this introduction and the accompanying translations of selected primary texts to allow readers of English to investigate this "birth of Novalis" from the crises and biographical imperatives of Friedrich von Hardenberg's life—in particular, the catalyzing events

that occurred during the crisis months of 1797 that this collection partially documents. It is during these months that Novalis is "born"—born, that is, as myth and persona, which became for many readers for many years the definitive interpretive key to Hardenberg's brief but encompassing life's work. It is during these months that Hardenberg invented his literary persona and discovered his authentic poetic voice: an achievement that he announced to his friend A. W. Schlegel in a letter dated February 1798. He had just become a full-time student at the prestigious Freiberg Mining Academy, and he wanted to reassure Schlegel that his enthusiastic study of scientific and technical subjects had not turned him into a positivist "simpleton." The letter promised early future delivery of a manuscript.

> The soon-to-arrive fragments will convince you of this—most of them are of older origin and have been merely revised. Your keen judgment may consign them to fire or flood—I renounce them completely to their fate. If you should have a desire to make a public use of them, I then would ask you to do so under the signature *Novalis*—a name once used by one of my ancestors and not entirely unfit for this purpose. (IV, 251)

The name Novalis first appeared publicly several weeks later in April 1798 with the publication of these edited and rearranged fragments known in English as *Pollen* or *Grains of Pollen (Blüthenstaub)* in the first issue of Friedrich Schlegel's and A. W. Schlegel's magazine *Athenaeum*. This pen name immediately caught on. In a certain sense, it became symbolic of the early-romantic reaction to the Enlightenment during the years 1798 to 1801—so much so that the name Novalis at times has subsumed within its aura all that is stereotypically "romantic."

Finding Hardenberg, then, in Novalis–that is, learning to discriminate between facts of biography and facticities of myth–has become an important emphasis in recent decades of German scholarship. This has occurred since the publication of the historical-critical edition of Novalis's writings in the latter part of the twentieth century. Prior to that, readers lacked access to a complete overview of Novalis's works. Moreover, they often were misled in their appraisals by questionable or tendentiously edited editions of the surviving texts. Thorough scholarship has allowed for the chronological arrangement of the writings. And fortunate recovery of hitherto unpublished manuscripts has provided a clearer view of the range and complexity of the poet's extensive

nonliterary professional life, which included an ambitious and highly successful (albeit short) career in the mining industry and civil administration—with poetry, as Richard Samuel commented, "emerging from this sum of intellectual and practical work" not at the beginning but at the end.[3]

For readers of English, one difficulty in achieving a nuanced overview of the poet's life has been the scarcity of comprehensive translations, although since the 1990s several publications of hitherto unavailable fragment collections have appeared. Even so, Novalis reception in English retains a resonance of Thomas Carlyle's early appreciative review, written in 1829. Carlyle, who relied on the partisan "Novalis" biographies written by Friedrich's brother Karl von Hardenberg and expanded by Ludwig Tieck, promoted a reading of Novalis as the inscrutable, enigmatic, mystical poet of "the blue flower," an attitude of perplexity carried forward even quite recently by Penelope Fitzgerald in her splendid novel of the same name. As Carlyle writes:

> Novalis belongs to that class of persons, who do not recognize the "syllogistic method" as the chief organ for investigating truth, or feel themselves bound at all times to stop where its light fails them. Many of his opinions he would despair of proving in the most patient Court of Law; and would remain well content that they should be disbelieved there. He much loved and had assiduously studied Jakob Böhme and other mystical writers; and was, openly enough, in good part a Mystic himself. (99)

Hardenberg, however, did not intend solely to accent the mystical in choosing his evocative pen name. On the contrary, he appeared drawn to this name for reasons more aligned with personal ambition, and the name brings together contradictory strands of conservative family tradition and Enlightenment progress.

The name Novalis has roots in the Hardenberg family history. It reputedly dated to the thirteenth century when a certain Herr von Hardenberg came into possession of the estate Großenrode bei Nörten in Hannover and began to refer to himself as "von Rode" or as the Latinized "de Novali," names that mean "one who clears new ground for cultivation" (Kluckhohn; Ritter) or, more simply stated in American vernacular, a pioneer.[4] In German, the verb *roden* (from which we have the word *Rode* in Großen*rode*) means to cultivate a field or to turn up the earth for planting. According to a footnote on this

etymology in the historical-critical edition, the earliest known ancestors of the Hardenberg family, Hermann and Bernhard (circa 1190), chose the name de Novali or magna Novalis to honor their possession of the Großenrode estate; later, Bernhard's sons changed this name to de Hardenberg (IV, 834).

Paul Kluckhohn pointed out in his introduction to the first volume of the historical-critical edition that according to Hardenberg family tradition the poet spoke his pen name in Germanized fashion with the accent on the first syllable: Nóvalis. In this pronunciation, the name Nóvalis has affinities with the Latin *novus* (new). When Hardenberg proposed the name Novalis to the Schlegels as a pseudonym for his writings, the pronunciation apparently shifted to Novális as we say the name today—perhaps one reason for this shift, notes Kluckhohn, was that the Schlegels were not familiar with the Hardenberg family's accustomed pronunciation. The Schlegels, Tieck, and subsequent readers favored this pronunciation, and either the poet tolerated the misunderstanding or was indifferent to the change.

As a term designating "one who settles or cultivates a new land or clearing in the woods," the name Novalis has the connotations of groundbreaking independence as well as overtones of trespass. It is suggestive of a person who crosses boundaries of settled assumption to discover and possibly claim unknown, uncharted territories. The activities of such individuals implicitly put under question the norms, assumptions, and ideologies of settled societies. Such persons implicitly act as heralds of a new age or order,[5] seed bearers, revolutionaries, or pioneers—this latter word now understood in its martial connotation, which is in keeping with revolutionary ethos of early romanticism.

The prefatory fragment to *Pollen* suggests all these shades of meaning when it makes the bold but latently ironic claim, "Friends, the soil is poor / We must scatter abundant seed to ensure even a middling harvest." Such ambiguous though highly suggestive juxtapositions of past traditions and future renewals are characteristic of early-romantic literature generally and Hardenberg's writings specifically. His pen name is both the signature of tradition and a challenge to the same—much in keeping with the intentions of the Schlegels and their *Athenaeum*, which Hardenberg hoped would inaugurate "a new age in world literature."

Hardenberg's decision to "write" himself as Novalis signified the discovery of his authentic voice. But poetry was not his sole concern. In the months leading up to the announcement of his literary persona

in 1798, Hardenberg decisively ratified an earlier decision to follow his father into a career in salt mine administration by enrolling as a student at the world-famous Freiberg Mining Academy. He had previously been a poetaster and student of law at Jena, Leipzig, and Wittenberg and had undertaken a strenuous self-education in the field of contemporary philosophy, encouraged by the examples of Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Schlegel, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Richard Samuel (*Der berufliche Werdegang Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, 1929) and Gerhard Schulz (*Der Berufsbahn Friedrich von Hardenbergs (*Novalis*)*, 1963) have demonstrated that work, science, and professional accomplishment were at least equally important determinants—if not more so, at moments of crisis—as poetry and Sophie. After surveying the range of Hardenberg's academic and professional achievements from 1798 to 1801 and noting the extreme diligence with which Hardenberg pursued his career as engineer, scientist, and mining administrator down to the most exacting details, Schulz concludes:

> It can be proved furthermore that Hardenberg not only fulfilled his tasks conscientiously in an exemplary way but that he did so with the deepest inner propensity. The notion of a tortured double life spanned between burdensome daily grind and creative freedom of the spirit is foreign to his thinking, which relentlessly sought synthesis. (311)

One product of this relentless urge to synthesis is the so-called *Romantic Encyclopaedia*, or *Allgemeine Brouillon*, which was recently translated. This collection of fragments, "an extraordinary project to reunite all the separate sciences into one universal science" (*Novalis: Notes x*), was written in free moments during Hardenberg's student years at the Freiberg Mining Academy. It is an example of Hardenberg drawing inspiration from science, technology, mathematics, and a host of other practical and theoretical disciplines—an example of how the name Novalis orients us as much toward a daylight world of post-Enlightenment enterprise as much as toward a nighttime world of mystic yearning for a lost Sophie.

Another characteristic expression of this progressive agenda to unite opposites is the term *magical idealism*.[6] Hardenberg's "discovery" of magical idealism in 1798 in the so-called *Teplitz Fragments* brought to expression an implicit but major theme of the 1797 journal and supporting letters. Magical idealism, as we shall see, is simultaneously Har-

denberg's attempt to articulate an organizing concept for early-romantic theory and a programmatic strategy for integrating Hardenberg's personal biography. The phrase, like the name Novalis, suggestively evokes a range of meanings. But as Richard Samuel pointed out, while the magical idealist fragments written in Teplitz in 1798 touch on a variety of subjects and ideas, the "main theme, however, remains *daily* or *ordinary* life as a departure point for magical idealism" (II, 517). The creative, playful sublimation of the ordinary-everyday into the poetic-mythic is very much the concern of this magical-idealist praxis. The same critical theme appears in Hardenberg's letters, and this "main theme" is highlighted during the crisis months of 1797 that the journal, in particular, documents. The sharp disjunctions of the journal entries—the rapid changes of tempo, focus, vocabulary, and context and the frequent, asyndetic use of a dash to connect, punctuate, or abruptly transition or juxtapose—relate us to this later magical-idealist project, which involves the construction of free, moral identity amid the random, ever-shifting, and often overlapping contingencies of daily life. The months that the journal documents, April to July 1797, serve as a critical workshop for this emerging ethos and constitute a turning point in Hardenberg's biography.

Such complex interchange of roles and identities—the ability to shift with consistent authenticity between spheres of activity that are outwardly mutually exclusive and to coordinate these spheres within an overarching creative ethos—is central to Hardenberg's poetics and to his emerging concept of identity. Hardenberg finds his vocation as Novalis when he discovers how to align the imperatives of individual biography with the archetypal persistence and patterns of the mythic, and he coins the name Novalis to mark this discovery, which touches on every aspect of his life after 1797.

This magical-idealist approach to identity construction mirrors themes common to the late eighteenth century—particularly in regard to the era's questioning of subjectivity and the era's radical use of aesthetic theory to trespass boundaries Immanuel Kant had delimited for philosophy.

By the latter decades of the eighteenth century, Kant had established the so-called experience of self-consciousness (the synthetic unity of apperception) as the highest founding principle of his philosophy when he brought together aspects of Gottfried Leibniz's and René Descartes's epistemology (apperception and cogito, respectively) into the concept of pure apperception (*reine Apperzeption*). For Kant, the *I*

which thinks itself must accompany all representation as a pregiven condition. In the moment of apperception, thinking turns back on itself to confirm the reality of its own existence and experience. Unlike Descartes, however, Kant divided the experience of cogito into two opposed realms: the realm of senses (*Sinnlichkeit*) and the realm of understanding (*Verstand*). His critical philosophy described the means by which these two realms achieved dynamic reconciliation as human knowledge. Such reconciliation can occur only by an act of will; without it, the two realms remain opposed: sensations lack conceptual content, while concepts lack sensible basis. By emphasizing the *means* by which sensations and concepts are conjoined via human understanding, Kant abandoned an older model of mimetic certainty in favor of something entirely new. Instead of passive receptivity toward the contents of sense perception, consciousness becomes the creator of content. Truth is no longer a matter of mere representation, but a synthetic, active achievement (judgment) of the human mind in which sense-given percepts follow rules of apperception that Kant called a priori categories of human judgment. The categories were for Kant necessary and general, hence lawful and objectively true. Their lawful mediation between percept and intellect guaranteed human objectivity, in contrast to the danger of mere associative fantasy, a danger posed by David Hume.

Yet, despite the assurance of the lawful operation of these categories of judgment (an operation that joined predicate to subject as valid truth propositions), the prior epistemological certainty of objective, mimetic representation was fatally undermined by Kant's philosophy—and with it, the way became open for the revisions of Jena romanticism, whose partisans make use of a "philosophical aesthetics" (Bowie) to extend Kant's insights in radical ways. For them, Kant poses philosophically the problem of the relationship between the world and human consciousness, asking how that relationship is sustained and what is its characteristic mode of functioning. With this turn from the emphasis on *whether* the world exists to *how* the world exists for the perceiving subject, the way is prepared for an understanding of truth as an activity of self-disclosure. For Hardenberg, Schlegel, and their contemporaries, the work of art *enables* truth to appear, but it no longer *presents* it. Likewise, criticism and critical discernment become essential adjuncts to the work of art, in that art, as mere artifact, is dumb.

Kant's so-called Copernican turn in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) was essential prerequisite for early-romantic theory in that it heralded the end of mimesis and the naïve realism of classicist Aristotelian aesthetics. Henceforth, knowledge is "psychologized,"[7] in the sense that the givenness of objects exists through and within the activity of human knowing. All this occurs within the confines of synthetic unity of apperception, as it were, and analytic judgments set forth either ongoing, evident aspects of this synthetic activity or are the statements of logical certainty that result.

Yet, as Manfred Frank and others have explored in recent years,[8] a problem remains here that the early romantics (specifically Friedrich Hölderlin at first and then Hardenberg) will diagnose. To do so, the early romantics turn to the etymology of the word *judgment* in the German language: *Urteilen* in the sense of *Ur-teilung* (the originary division of a preexistent ground). In direct philosophical statements or indirect poetic fragments (many of which were written during Hardenberg's time of engagement to Sophie), Hardenberg argued that there must be an ongoing, preexistent unity that underlies each individual act of judgment, which judgment catastrophically divides. Each act of judgment or division conceals and makes evident at the same time. It conceals the *originary unity* while at the same time making conceptually evident a single aspect of that unity insofar as the act of judgment raises such an aspect to the level of concept and thus makes it visible as truth. In accepting the evidence of this truth proposition, however, we simultaneously conceal or occlude the underlying unity of being, which makes the proposition possible at all. The hiddenness and unhiddenness of Truth occur simultaneously in each individual act of judgment, or in the operation of Kant's synthetic apperception overall. Being or unity never comes to expression except via differentiation and difference, occurring in time.

> Consciousness is a being outside of being inside being.
>
> But what is that?
>
> This "outside of being" cannot be authentic being.
>
> An inauthentic being outside of being is a likeness—Therefore, what is outside of being must be a likeness of being inside being.
>
> It follows that consciousness is a likeness of being inside being. (II, 106)

Being (*Sein*) cannot be thought, since thinking, in the above sense, necessitates the divisive, originary deed of judgment, which separates thinking from its ground. Nor can being be represented, since in order for it to be represented it must first fall out of being. This fall, however, is inevitable insofar as we are constrained by our present mental activity to make mental representations at all. We are aware of this inevitability to a greater or lesser extent. As Hardenberg wrote:

> Philosophy is originally a feeling. The philosophical sciences conceptualize the intuitions of this feeling. It must be a feeling of inner, necessarily free relations. Philosophy always requires, therefore, something given—it is form—and yet real / and ideal at the same time, / like the originating act. Philosophy cannot be constructed. The limits of feeling are the limits of philosophy. Feeling cannot feel itself. (II, 113)

"Philosophical aesthetics," wherein the subject attempts to determine the truth-content of the object world via self-referential exercise of its own activity of judgment—and the consequent calling into question of the grounds of subjectivity—appears historically in Jena in the 1790s, specifically during the years 1797 to 1801, which we designate as *die deutsche Frühromantik* or "German early romanticism." These years coincide with Hardenberg's mature activities as Novalis. Key early-romantic phrases such as *romantische Poesie*, "poeticization of philosophy," "romanticization of the world," or the need for a "new mythology" (or even the pen name Novalis) are means of characterizing a literary-philosophical strategy whereby all things (biography included) become potential works of art. The stage for this magical-idealist drama includes all: the earth, the state, companionable societies, an individual's life, and everything at hand for human usage. In this respect, early romantics carry on the Enlightenment project of perfectibility while adjusting the means to this end. Hardenberg, for example in his journal, time and again returns to the theme of *Bildung* (education) as he perfects his work of mourning for Sophie. It is finally this emphasis on *Bildung*, which is characteristic of early romanticism though not the Sturm und Drang, that makes Hardenberg a Novalis and not a Werther. Significantly, he reads and rereads Goethe's prototypical novel of *Bildung*, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, during these weeks. Werther dies; Hardenberg dies, too, in a manner of speaking, but he magically resurrects himself

and Sophie as symbols—works of art that give to the age and body of the early romantic era its signal "form and pressure."

Werner Vordtriede remarked that "poetic symbols in this sense can only arise in the last years of the eighteenth century" (98), at that moment in history when the "I" feels itself cut off from the Absolute, from spirit or Being. It is a crisis moment for identity and for philosophy. Before that moment we do not find it possible in a general sense for the "I" to cognize itself in this way (and thus "consciousness," so understood, was not a problem as such). Fichte's *Ich-Lehre*, with its emphasis on selfactivity (*Selbsttätigkeit*, an idea that appears in Novalis's writings many times), is an obvious sign of this change, following from Kant. "Only since Fichte is it possible to treat the object as a symbol of the subject," Vortriede writes (113); we might elaborate further in a postmodern context, following on the insights of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy: only since Fichte can thinking confront "the thesis of a dissolution of all processes of production in the abyss of the subject" (*Literary Absolute* 16). The poetization (*Poetisierung*) of the world that Hardenberg frequently mentions is, as Vordtriede points out, an attempt to confront the subject/object crisis that self-reflectivity brings about, with its consequent threat of spiritual diminishment and threatened death of the subject. Hardenberg's goal of an encyclopedic "poetization of the world," such as we see in the fragments entitled *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, is then nothing less than "the transformation of the visible world into this higher truth of the symbolic" (117)—his Novalis, a similar strategy.

In the mature fragments of Novalis, the "I" is conceived dynamically within a field of ever-shifting tensions and relationships. Here, for example, we encounter the term hovering (*Schweben*) as a means to draw attention to this dynamic.

> All being, being itself, is nothing more than being free—hovering between extremes that must of necessity be united and separated. From this luminous point of hovering, all reality flows—everything is contained in it—object and subject exist through it, not it through them. I-ness or productive power of imagination, the hovering—determines, produces the extremes, between which it is hovered—This is a deception, but only in the realm of common understanding. Otherwise it is something thoroughly real, because the cause of it, hovering, is the origin, the mother of all reality, reality itself. (II, 266)

"Hovering" occurs in an intermediate zone and is itself paradoxically an agency of mediation and point of origin. Increasingly, the romantic subject defines itself as an intermediary or as an inhabitant of intermediary zones whose ironic distancing from the foundational absolutes of tradition, metaphysics, orthodox religion, or ideology allows the subject to maintain a tenuous freedom of expression and a hopeful degree of creatively independent, moral activity in the everyday world. The subject thus defined so freely to itself becomes in a sense symbolic; its open-endedness, mutability, and affinity with chaos, indeterminacy, and change invite an endless play of interpretative acts—or despair. The often-preferred contextual spaces for such playful interpretative acts are *liminal zones* (Turner): intermediate areas such as forests, caves, deep-shaft mines, mountainous or frozen wastes, nighttime and darkened landscapes, death, borderlands, open spaces of water, or impersonal vistas of anonymity in the developing cities. These liminal zones provide transitional realms of sliding, shifting meanings whose indefinite outlines are both sources of anxiety and invitations to playful, open-ended creativity and identity formations. The romantic subject has affinities for such zones and defines itself through these affinities. *Liminal personae* (threshold people) "are those who have slipped through or eluded the network of classifications that normally locates states and positions in cultural space" (Turner 95). They are those who have resituated their point of perspective outside that accepted grid. The threshold that they cross is "frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon" (Turner 95). In this sense, the name Novalis, with its connotations of "one who clears a [intermediary] space for cultivation in the woodland," is an immediate historical antecedent to Martin Heidegger's use of a similar trope to articulate his concept of *Lichtung* (clearing).

For the romantic subject, personal moral freedom lies in one's ability to resist systematic closure even when the irresistible tendency of the world, human nature, and society is to ratify such closures. "*Wir suchen überall das Unbedingte, und finden immer nur Dinge*," Novalis writes—"we search everywhere for the absolute (the unconditional), and find only things (the conditioned)" (II, 413). Whereas in later romanticisms the "I" is increasingly harried and defeated in this quest, early romantics such as Hardenberg cling optimistically to this ideal of indeterminacy and "hovering"; by doing so, they redefine chaos in a

positive, heuristic sense. When Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel call for the world to be romanticized or poeticized, for example, they partly mean that the subject must consent to abide in a fluid zone of indeterminacy and change from which free, creative/poetic (or ironic) possibilities arise. They advert to language questions raised earlier by Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) and by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) in reaction to critical philosophy, particularly as the early romantics move toward religious symbolism and the mythological—areas that Kant placed out of bounds because these liminal zones of indeterminacy threatened to compromise the healthy limits of reason and thus individual freedom. Paradoxically, Novalis found just the opposite to be the case.

> A truly *synthetic* person is one who resembles many persons at once—a genius. Each person is the germinal point of an *infinite genius*. He is able to be divided into many persons, yet still remain one. The true analysis of person as such brings forth many persons—the *person* can only be individualized as persons, dissolution and dispersion. A person is a *harmony*—no admixture no movement—no *substance* such as "*soul*." Spirit and person are one. (Energy is origin.) (III, 250–51)

The name that Hardenberg chose to symbolize his magical-idealist project, Novalis, is thus a complex glyph. It is simultaneously a landmark of personal, psychological integration, a means to articulate emergent themes of early-romantic theory (and its challenge to Enlightenment orthodoxy), and the beginning of Hardenberg's successful attempt to translate personal events of historical biography into a metapersonal realm of myth.

The journal that Hardenberg kept from April to July 1797 becomes then from this perspective a highly relevant text in which the problems and themes of "magical idealism" are identified early on and worked on, as though in a laboratory. In this context, the journal should be read in relation to the fragments known as the *Fichte Studies* (1795/1796), those "Notes and Commentaries" (*Bemerkungen*) in which Hardenberg came to grip with Fichte's philosophy and surmounted it.[9] These fragments from the *Fichte Studies* were for many decades a highly relevant but unpublished and hence unappreciated dimension of the so-called *Sophie-Experience (Sophie-Erlebnis)* of the Grüningen years. More recent scholarship has done much to correct this blind spot, and recent translation has made these fragments available in English. These notes

and commentaries inspired by Fichte's work have emerged as a philosophical counterpoint to the more well-known and celebrated biographical events at Grüningen, Tennstedt, and Weissenfels—perhaps, in fact, they are the more crucial but hidden aspect of those events and that experience. Hardenberg's extensive marginal notes and musings on the borderland of Fichte's philosophy are the thorough-ground basis for a *Philo-sophie-Erlebnis* insofar as they provide the foundation for the construction of Novalis as myth and magical idealist text.

Hardenberg died in 1801, only three years after writing himself as Novalis. In an uncanny way, the events of Hardenberg's life do indeed support and illumine the stages of his poetic career. This element of his biography has, as I mentioned, long been appreciated. What is far more engaging for readers in a culture that is postmythological, postreligious, and secular (reactionary lapses into fundamentalism notwithstanding) is the inner developmental and symbolic process that Hardenberg followed to become Novalis. One can view this process in various ways. It is artistic or mythological, shamanic, postmodern, religious or depth psychological, "romantic" or subversively political and revolutionary to the degree that each of these nomenclatures is understood as signifying what for Novalis would have been a magical-idealist deed: the cooperation between the seen and the unseen—the unity of theory and praxis in an aesthetic realm as symbol—the mediation between the ordinary-everyday and the mythological-spiritual, and the hopeful millennialist transformation of the former as a result. This mutual interpenetration of the inner determinative reality of the subject and outer determinative reality of the object can be synthetic and creative, Novalis believed. Who or what does this shaping; where is the artist who creates this mythology out of life? This is a question that Hardenberg's biography and the texts and fragments that relate to his biography lead us to ask.

The Meeting with Sophie von Kühn

> I had not been in Tennstedt for long when I made the acquaintance of the unforgettable maiden to whom I owe thanks for my character. (IV, 310)

Early on the autumn morning of November 17, 1794, the apprentice law clerk Friedrich von Hardenberg, age twenty-three, in the company of his mentor and office supervisor Councilor August Cölestin Just

(1750–1822) and Just's twenty-six-year-old niece and resident housekeeper, Caroline, took a business trip by coach from the Just office in the small village of Tennstedt to consult a government official. The trip covered about ten kilometers. Near the village of Greussen, Friedrich von Hardenberg made the acquaintance of a young military man, twenty-five-year-old Lieutenant Adolph von Selmnitz (1769–1814). Selmnitz and Hardenberg quickly hit it off. The lieutenant captured the sanguine *Freiherr*'s (baron's) attention with a tempting report. At a nearby estate in Grüningen, which was held in the keep of an affable country squire by the name of Captain von Rockenthien, there dwelled two lovely maidens. These stepdaughters to Rockenthien, who had taken possession of the Grüningen estate after his marriage to its gracious widow Wilhelmine von Kühn, were of an age to receive suitors, and the idyllic, domestic sociability of the estate encouraged amiable visitations, Selmnitz said.

The news came as music to young Hardenberg's ears. And for him, that first visit to Grüningen became an event of earth-shaking consequence.

Just several days earlier, following his father's advice if not explicit direction, he had arrived in Tennstedt to begin an apprentice year in civil service under the steady eye and capable official hand of August Cölestin Just. Friedrich's devout father had posted the young man to provincial semi-exile in defiance of the father's patronizing elder brother's wishes to situate the lad more favorably in the worldly bustle of the Prussian civil service—an arena more likely to applaud the ambitions of a brilliant, well-educated, handsome, and conversational youth. Perhaps the father intuitively foresaw that his eldest son's artistic, restless spirit required a more settled path.

Friedrich was not opposed to this decision. The father's Pietistic sensibilities found an echo in his offspring, who felt torn between a penchant for flirtatious liaisons and the sober call to the duties of industrious maturity. The goal at Tennstedt—for father and son—was to settle Fritz on a professional path that would lead to self-sufficiency. Matters of economy were pressing, although funds had never lacked for Friedrich's studies, which had gone on for several years. Would his *Bildung* ever end? The question of What to Do?—how to find the proper integration of inner inclination and external necessity—was very much on the young *Freiherr*'s mind as he entered the Just household as live-in apprentice. This What to Do? soon became a theme that

dominated his leisure hours as he read through cover to cover several times Goethe's novel pitched to a similar predicament: *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.[10]

In Tennstedt, a country town at short remove from the family town house at Weissenfels but worlds distant from those proximate centers of urban glamour and gaiety, Leipzig and Dresden, the father no doubt hoped that his son would settle down to a stable, minor aristocratic career and bring to fruition his legal studies. Application was the order of the day. In Tennstedt, the Councilor Just's young niece, Caroline, and the beckoning sociable atmosphere of a military post at the nearby town of Langensalza were as yet the only hopes to soften what risked becoming a potentially tedious and isolated year of legalisms and stuffy paperwork.

Hardenberg characteristically had highest hopes to turn this tedium to his favor by making the most of every opportunity to learn and excel. In addition, the environs offered some anticipation of romantic liaisons. In a letter to his younger brother and spiritual confidant, Erasmus, written in Tennstedt at the beginning of November 1794 shortly after his arrival, Hardenberg characterized the social life he had been leading just prior to commencement of his duties as well as his conflicted attitude toward his ongoing penchant to flirt:

> Between you and me, I was glad to leave Weissenfels: Too much is unhealthy.[11] You know I keep nothing secret from you. In the end I became too intimate with the colonel ["Fritzschen" Lindenau, Karl's girlfriend]. The intimacy became too *significant*—I do not want to lie and dissemble—plain speech is difficult in her presence and does not help. Distance is best. I avoided all tête-à-têtes at last. They were too tempting, and, as an honest fellow, I should not say too much. I have always mixed fun with business, so that business did not forget itself. Flirting is a charming but ticklish enterprise. May God in his goodness preserve one from ambition and the irresistible hankering to be the darling of any one girl. (IV, 144)

Tennstedt and the Just official household seemed a desirable and safe middle ground. Here the temptation to continue the old flirtatious games was still in play, but the general context of the middle-class establishment and its sober routine of duties promised to foster a mediating balance between frivolity and enterprise. And a search for

balance between conflicting extremes was always a need of Hardenberg's temperament. In any event, if things got too severe, there was relief to be had at the nearby military watering hole in Langensalza. As Friedrich further confided to Erasmus:

> It's going pretty well for me here. I've found lodging between four very pretty young women whom I can see from the window and have conversation with three of them. I was already in Langensalza. There, too, I hope to fit right in. Through and through the flirt—in this place there's a general dearth of dancers. My bureaucratic mentor is a useful, practiced, and humane man. His conduct toward me is quite friendly. I am very diligent and have hope that Father with be satisfied with my efforts as well as with my efforts to economize. I play a worthy role here and stand in good credit, as it appears. (IV, 144–45)

It was a question of allowing oneself to "hover" between these extremes.

Already Hardenberg was known to his close friends and siblings as a young man of infinite potential, a mass of raw material "from whom anything's possible." He was one of fortune's favored: attractive, highly intelligent, scion of the aristocracy with an innate gift for sociability, devotion, and a protean conversational ability and passion for gab that endeared him to almost everyone, combined with an uncanny ability to find a topical level with any partner, male or female. Over the past several years as a student in Jena, Leipzig, and Wittenberg he had swung between overachievement and dissipation and, within the confines of his rather closely circumscribed world, had become well-acquainted with some of the leading personalities and most of the best ideas of his time. Overall, he made the impression of a young man brimming with enthusiasm, endowed with enormous talents, in search of a context. His close friend, Friedrich Schlegel, described some of the brilliance of Hardenberg's personality in a letter to his brother, A. W. Schlegel.

> I have never seen such joyous energy in youth. His feeling is colored by a certain chaste purity that has its origin in his soul rather than lack of experience, because he has been quite often in the midst of society (he's become fast friends with everyone); one year in Jena and he's well acquainted with the best minds and philosophers,

> most notably Schiller. Yet, at the same time, he has been completely the student in Jena, and, as I've been told, has often fought.—He is very gay, very open to impression, and takes on the qualities of each formative influence.— (IV, 572)

The young *Freiherr*'s pious father, devout and prayerful to a fault, seems to have been puzzled by his son's sanguine breadth of interests and talents. A later relative tells the story how the father was surprised shortly after his son's untimely death to learn that the beautiful lyrics sung to a hymn during worship ("Was wäre ich ohne Dich gewesen") were written by his offspring. Apparently, Heinrich Ulrich Erasmus Freiherr von Hardenberg (1738–1814) had not taken much notice of the poetry during Friedrich's lifetime. Presumably, then, he may not have taken much heed that along with poetry Friedrich also had developed a renaissance catalog of interests in almost every contemporaneous category of knowledge that could interest a post-Enlightenment German mind—took interest, to a large degree mastered, and often improved. But could the father really be faulted? Much of this original activity occurred as a sideline in whatever free moments Friedrich could spare from his exceptional attention to the details of his day jobs: as lawyer, technical student, mining engineer, and state official. Perhaps this exceptional diligence in pursuit of the daily grind threw the father off scent—or perhaps the senior *Freiherr*'s single-minded Pietistic concentration on family, duty, and the divine kept him from noticing minor miracles of genius in his midst. Whatever the explanation, it is true nonetheless that the senior Hardenberg steadfastly supported his son's somewhat erratic path of development; and while the father perhaps did not intuit or comprehend where that path might lead, he gave his son the freedom and means to pursue that path individually.

On Monday morning, November 17, young Hardenberg's circuitous path encountered destiny.

Sophie von Kühn was twelve when she first met Friedrich von Hardenberg. Friedrich took her for a year older than she was, and no one apparently bothered to disabuse him of this mistake—not for quite some time, until things began to look serious.

Puzzling as this encounter has persisted to be—even more so in a twenty-first century context—at the time it had all the alarming earmarks of love at first sight (at least from Friedrich's side of the encounter). And it was read that way by Friedrich's brother, Erasmus,

who confessed that when Friedrich's enthusiastic description of the fateful meeting arrived shortly afterward in a letter, the symptoms it presented made the younger brother's "hair stand on end."

> I confess that when I first opened your dear letter it astonished me; *obstupui et comae mihi ad montem steterunt*; I am, however, already too sufficiently accustomed to unusual events and circumstances in our lives, particularly in this point of concern, that I would not find my way soon into this one also. (IV, 364)

Brother Erasmus did indeed soon find his way, and he proceeded to deliver a homily. More plodding and given to circumlocution than Friedrich (who would soon evolve a style quite the opposite: pithy, foreshortened, and apt), Erasmus took time to wander around a subject several times before he addressed it. In the course of those circumlocutions, we are able to reconstruct a sense of Friedrich's provocative letter, which was lost. (This letter and all the letters of Friedrich to Sophie are lost or were destroyed.) At several points in his musings, Erasmus repeats his brother's words. Thus, we have learned that a mere and famous "quarter hour" was all that it took for Fritz to decide that young Sophie was his eternal love.

Erasmus sounds suitably skeptical—a young man of the world:

> You write me that a quarter hour decided you; how can you see into the heart of a maiden in a quarter hour? Even more so, a maiden of such unusual qualities, as you have described. If you had written a "quarter year," I would have marveled at your knowledge of the female heart, but *a quarter hour*, think about it yourself, a quarter hour—that sounds entirely so miraculous that I must search behind the description for the true cause: passion, that eternal knave.— (IV, 367)

But there must have been something in the air or in the water at Sophie's estate, for with time and visitation Erasmus fell in love with Sophie too—in fact, he became head over heels infatuated with the entire family and scene—so much so, that the proverbial tables soon were turned. Friedrich was compelled to play Erasmus to Brother Erasmus. In a letter written a year later in 1795, Friedrich urged his younger brother to mitigate his zeal; under the spell of Sophie and Sophie's family, Erasmus had begun to sound a little addled. Friedrich wrote:

> I love the people in Grüningen as much as I love myself and you—but they are human beings, and after so long a sojourn among them as I have made, you would not be able to avoid seeing the dirtier reverse side. I have seen that side, and after seeing it I am still tuned to Grüningen as previously. I saw it, however, a priori beforehand, and prepared myself for it. In this way I was not caught unprepared and nothing contradicted my emotions. (IV, 159)

Hardenberg, ever the scientist/philosopher as well as poet (in fact, he was the scientist/philosopher first and poet later) had an ability to remain objective, it would appear. In other writings, such as the description of Sophie named *Klarisse* contained in this collection, this tendency appears again.

This is not to suggest that Sophie von Kühn was not a remarkable individual or that her family was not remarkable in its way—for Friedrich, even more so when he set Sophie and her lively clan in contrast to his strenuously religious parental household. Sophie was by all accounts exceptional. Later mythology notwithstanding, the phenomenon of Sophie's personality was observed and noted by more than just her fiancé. Others—her family, her acquaintances, governess, and friends, Fritz's own parents and siblings, Fritz's middle-aged mentor Just, even Friedrich Schlegel and Goethe—testified that there was something inexplicably attractive or compelling about her nature, outwardly simple and girlish though she was. "*She desires to be nothing*—she *is* something," Friedrich wrote. But he also could say: "she is cold through and through" (IV, 25).

Attempts to mythologize or transcendentalize Sophie von Kühn have made the reading of "Sophie" as complicated and fascinating as the reading of Novalis. "Sophie" reception could take its place as a minor adjunct to Novalis reception.[12] But minus the discovery of a definitive trove of lost letters or personal documents, in the end Sophie will remain what Hardenberg first called her: a riddle.[13]

Characteristically, Friedrich hovers between extremes when he describes Grüningen and Sophie. Almost from the first, he has a tendency to see the place through the lens of a personal mythology. The diary entry dated Tennstedt, December 1794—written shortly after meeting Sophie—describes Friedrich's second visit to Grüningen in terms that remind one of a medieval Grail knight paying court to a castle of captive maidens. It is mock heroic, perhaps, but consistent with

the overall tendency to frame the encounter as an "enchantment." The intensity of that initial encounter made Hardenberg ill; he was temporarily outside the context of settled routine and complained of this to his female friend and confidante Caroline Just, saying that "the source of the ailment lies in my fantasy" (IV, 148). Likewise, as the relationship deepened, he indulged in domestic daydreams that are themselves poetic vignettes. (See letter from Grüningen dated June 1795.)

It appears that Sophie von Kühn brought about a dramatic change in Hardenberg's personality from the moment he met her. The fond, closely knit, uninhibited, and expressively domestic atmosphere in which Sophie lived contributed to the impact, the letters show. Moreover, Hardenberg's attraction to Grüningen rested on a firm and fond foundation of early childhood memories from the Hardenberg country estate at Oberwiederstedt. His ties to his own siblings and parents had always been extremely close, and in whatever situation he found himself he tended to recreate the sociability of his early formative years with mother, brothers, and sisters. The situation at Grüningen complemented and supported this tendency. The community at Grüningen presented a coy if not subversive alternative to the Pietistic decorum of Hardenberg Saxon/Prussian paternal aristocracy; it struck a note with young Friedrich's sympathies for revolution. Moreover, the simplicity, goodness, and lively affectionate atmosphere at rustic Grüningen recommended it as an idyllic, pastoral scene. In a letter to Sophie's stepsister Wilhelmine von Thümmel written in February 1796, Hardenberg confessed how much Sophie's extended family meant to him:

> By chance an exceptional and lovely event has led me into a family circle where I have found what I sought, where I will come to find what I scarcely did not dare to hope to discover. What birth has denied me, good fortune has put in my path—I see in the midst of foreign fellowship what I miss in my own family circle. I feel that there are closer affinities than ties of blood—I find that chance is of a mood to lead me in a very motherly way—howsoever the usual humdrum order of things consigns me as much as possible to the worst tedium of the everyday. (IV, 166–67)

The same mood prevailed in Friedrich's younger brothers, Erasmus and Karl. Like Friedrich, they were no strangers to romantic

trysts. "Fritz the flirt," as his younger brothers called him, had already had some close scrapes with the opposite sex (including a humiliating, failed expectation of marriage in Leipzig), and until he met Sophie he seemed bent on repeating such escapades. The acquaintance with Sophie ended this period of youthful dalliance overnight. From the day he met her, Sophie became the idealized center of his life; the advent of their acquaintance was the catalyst that set in motion his development as a poet. They became unofficially engaged March 15, 1795, two days before Sophie's thirteenth birthday.

Though the meeting with Sophie seemed dramatic as a shooting star, it merely accelerated Hardenberg's already prolific, renaissance tendencies for study and self-improvement. Emotional excitement did not distract him from philosophy. In the fall of 1795, the year that he and Sophie became "secretly" engaged, while still fulfilling his clerkship duties in Tennstedt with exemplary diligence, Hardenberg began an intensive study of Fichte, a philosopher whom he had already encountered in person and influence in Jena. The fragments known as *Fichte Studies* that chart this occupation continue in notebook form until spring/summer 1796 (throughout the so-called Grüningen idyll until the time of Sophie's operations for failing health). They document a private intellectual drama in counterpoint to his romantic involvement with Sophie—a drama playfully acknowledged by Hardenberg and those who knew him through the ongoing pun on Sophie's name: Philo-Sophie. By his own acknowledgment, Hardenberg undertook this study of Fichte's philosophy as an exercise to develop his mental powers. But this intense, focused, and critical engagement with the philosophy of his foster-relation Fichte helped lay the intellectual groundwork for his later poetic mission.[14]

In the fall of 1795, Sophie fell ill with the first symptoms of what was to become an escalating health crisis. From July to August 1796 she underwent three operations on her liver. She endured this torturous ordeal in Jena, spent a few months failing to recover, and in December returned to Grüningen to die. Friedrich's younger brother Erasmus accompanied Sophie and her family on Friedrich's behalf; Friedrich remained at home in Weissenfels to attend to official duties. In December 1796, Erasmus, too, was showing signs of ill health, although no one imagined that in less than four months Erasmus, like Sophie, would be dead.

At the beginning of 1797, Hardenberg finished his apprentice year in Tennstedt and decided to accept a position in the salt mine administration under the supervision of his father. This change in profession (and rapprochement with the elder Hardenberg) was motivated by a desire to become financially self-sufficient so that he and Sophie could marry. By this time the "unofficial" engagement had become known to Friedrich's parents, and although at first it caused upheaval and consternation (particularly with Friedrich's father and uncle, who objected less to Sophie's age than to the problem of her spotty aristocratic pedigree), the charisma of Sophie's personality even in sickness and the pitiful condition of her health softened the parents' hearts, particularly the father's. Only Friedrich's uncle, the "Grand Cross" or "Pole Star" as the Hardenberg siblings called him, remained opposed. The uncle's presence in Weissenfels during the winter and spring of 1797 when Sophie lay ill in nearby Grüningen greatly added to Friedrich's emotional and physical stress.

On March 19, two days after her fifteenth birthday, Sophie died. Friedrich already had taken leave of her for the last time on March 10 and had returned to the family home in Weissenfels, knowing that he would never see her again. The news of her death did not reach him until March 21. The confirmation of her death plunged him into despair, as the letters indicate. He planned to visit her grave for the first time that coming summer. But a second blow fell. As noted earlier, in March his brother Erasmus, whose health had been a matter of anxiety, returned home to Weissenfels. He was mortally ill. The situation worsened swiftly. Alarmed and distressed, Hardenberg left Weissenfels for the peaceful refuge and security of Tennstedt, where the Justs were as a second family to him and where Caroline Just stood near to offer feminine consolation. Tennstedt lay only a short distance from Grüningen and Sophie's grave.

The death of Erasmus von Hardenberg on Good Friday, April 14, 1797, plunged Friedrich von Hardenberg into despair. At this point, two deaths and emotional losses intersect, and Hardenberg begins a time of extended mourning and introspection. Would Sophie's loss alone have led to this crisis? The surviving documents leave the situation open to inquiry. Those documents do make clear, however, how extraordinarily close the brothers were and how deeply Friedrich suffered his brother's loss. For the next two months, he remained away

from Weissenfels, "hovering" between Tennstedt and Grüningen. Plans to delay the visit to Sophie's grave until the summer were changed. Plans to spend the summer with Friedrich Schlegel in Jena were put on hold. On April 16, Easter Sunday, Hardenberg visited Sophie's grave for the first time. It soon became the focus for his meditations. News of his brother's death greeted him at the Just household when he returned from Sophie's grave. On April 18, while still in Tennstedt, he began his journal.

The Journal of 1797 and Selected Letters

> Diary—without reflection—simple relation. (II, 235)

When we compare the journal of April to July 1797 that follows on the deaths of Sophie von Kühn and Erasmus von Hardenberg to the letters written around the same time, we notice a difference in tone, language, and focus. Throughout the journal, thoughts and observations are conveyed in brief, fragmentary phrases often punctuated with dashes, often with a frankly personal honesty that does not seek value or meaning in events but merely reports. Written during a time of grief, the entries are for the most part remarkably free of sentiment. The juxtapositions of daily detail are sometimes shocking or amusing. Events of wholly disparate significance are crowded next to one another, shoulder to shoulder, unedited, with no connectives, simply as they occurred. While the effect is often jarring, it is at the same time true to the stream of consciousness and randomness of daily life. Each daily entry begins with a number that marks the number of days since Sophie's death. Remarkably absent, however, is any attempt to judge or justify personal experience. By no means is this a journal of devotion or meditation in a conventional religious sense.

In his introduction to volume 4 of the historical-critical edition, Richard Samuel noted that Hardenberg used this time of crisis to search for "a new form of language." In this sense, the journal entries form a stylistic bridge from the earlier prose to the poetic economy of the later Novalis fragments. Many of the entries lack a rhetorical context and are often almost impersonal. In the letters, Hardenberg chose his language with a particular audience in mind. In the journal, he often spoke to no one, and only in certain passages did he construct himself as a substitute audience. Such transparency perhaps gave him

a special degree of therapeutic freedom. But it was also an important step forward in his attempt to craft a new language that could be used to chart the inner landscapes of subjectivity.

The letters function differently. Hardenberg and many of his contemporaries viewed letter writing as an extension of the art of conversation. And for them and others, conversation stood in high esteem as a sophisticated oral form of literary art. The importance of conversation underscores the value of small, companionable societies for the early romantics. The conversational interchanges between persons drawn to one another for their "elective affinities" served as freely constellating workshops for creativity, original thinking, and potentially revolutionary social change.

Hardenberg, especially, excelled in this art of conversation. And he indicated that it was nearly an essential component of his ability to think. By all reports, Hardenberg had a prodigious ability to talk, and he could talk brilliantly to nearly anyone on any subject. He used the spoken word and conversation in a heuristic way, as an extension of poetic or philosophic creativity. Letters were then another example of this conversational bent.

The journal has a countertendency.

Hardenberg is rarely alone during the months that follow Sophie's death. Contrary to the stereotypical image of the otherworldly, solitary romantic, he was nearly always by preference in the midst of close friends, family, or acquaintances. He had a need to be near people, and he sought out social situations and relationships that were similar to the close domestic life with father, mother, and siblings that he had known growing up at the country estate in Oberwiederstedt. Even during the worst weeks of mourning in the spring of 1797 he remained in the midst and bustle of familiar society, with which he interacted fully on a day-to-day basis.

During the time of the journal, Hardenberg varied his residence between Tennstedt and Grüningen several times before moving to the family estate at Oberwiederstedt in June 1797 and then to the Hardenberg town home in Weissenfels, where he largely remained until September. The journal entries are filled with references to social events, people coming and going, visits, conversations, meals, coffee breaks, walks, and other activities—in addition to private reflections on his moods, interests, libido, and states of mind. The dates of residency in Tennstedt and Grüningen fall like this:

Date	*Place*	*Key Events*
April 13–April 30	Tennstedt	Death of Erasmus on Good Friday (April 14); first visit to Sophie's grave on Easter (April 16); beginning of journal (April 18).
April 30–May 2	Grüningen	Twenty-fifth birthday (May 2); visits Sophie's grave.
May 3–May 9	Tennstedt	
May 9–May 22	Grüningen	Visits Sophie's grave (May 10); receives Shakespeare translations from Schlegel (May 13); visits Sophie's grave (May 13) "I blew the grave away from me like dust . . . in the evening I had a few good ideas"; *Romeo and Juliet*; Fichte.
May 22–May 29	Tennstedt	
May 29–June 1	Grüningen	"True concept of the Fichtean I" (May 29); visits Sophie's grave (May 30).
June 1–June 22	Wiederstedt	Varied activities.
June 22–June 27	En route to Weissenfels	
June 27–End of journal	Weissenfels	"Christ and *Sophie*" (June 29).
July–End of August	Weissenfels	Plans for Freiberg and the Mining Academy.

Despite this varied activity, the journal nonetheless delimits a private, asocial domain in the midst of public language and community. Its purpose is not conversational—nor poetic nor rhetorical. It is observational and frank, sometimes a mere accounting of incidents. The often cold, abbreviated, and clipped observational tone—the disinclination of the subject to pose or assume a role in relation to some pro-

jected or imagined audience—is at times jarring. While the letters are conversational, narrative attempts to construct meaning from the context of events in counterpoint to a concerned reader's critical reception of that narrative, the journal's goal is merely to record a sequence of events; it is an exercise of scientific method in the stages prior to hypothesis or experiment—prior to theory, prior to system, prior to myth.

It is ironic, then, that Hardenberg's journal reveals in the course of its writing a dramatic arc. There are three notable moments of climax, or three discernable acts. The first occurs on May 13 when Hardenberg visited Sophie's grave and had the famous vision that is the purported inspiration for the third hymn in *Hymns to the Night*.

> In the evening I went to Sophie. There I was indescribably joyful—lightning-like moments of enthusiasm—I blew the grave away from me like dust—centuries were as moments—her presence was palpable—I believed she would appear at any moment. (IV, 35–36)

The second climax occurs on May 29 when Hardenberg noted that "between the border gate and Grüningen I had the joy of finding the true concept of the Fichtean I" (IV, 42). The third occurs at the end of the journal, a month later on June 29, when Hardenberg wrote the phrase "*Xstus und Sophie*" (IV, 48). After this, the journal peters out. Life begins afresh. Hardenberg returned to daily activities—excursions, plans, meetings with friends, preparation for the beginning of a new career as a student of mining technology, preparations for publication of the fragments already in hand, plans for a literary career, and finally a new fiancée.[15]

Clearly, some of the events mentioned briefly in the journal have a thematic affinity to their later expressions as fragments or poetry—most notably the "vision" at Sophie's grave. What is not so clear, however, is whether Hardenberg committed some of these thoughts to drafts of poetry during the time he kept the journal. Other manuscripts of this period, notes, or drafts of poems or fragments are lost. Even the most dramatic entry in the journal—the experience at Sophie's grave on May 13—reads as a frustratingly undeveloped *aperçu*. It remains an ongoing point of controversy as to when or how Hardenberg came to recast that briefly mentioned experience into poetry. Equally uncertain is to what extent the literature he was reading at that time influenced the experience or the vocabulary chosen to describe whatever actually happened at Sophie's grave. Hardenberg was a voracious and retentive

reader. During the time of the journal, he continued to read avidly. To cite some examples: aside from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, he had received a suggestive letter from his brother Karl on May 11, which also may have influenced the choice of language used to describe the "grave experience" on May 13. Karl wrote:

> I know of no more impressive natural scene than a thunderstorm; just as I wanted to write to you, such a frightening phenomenon transpired; yet, it now is past; the thunder rolls in the distance, and the sky is again fully bright; the frightening, dark clouds were visible through my window, only at the farthest end of the horizon did there appear a small, brilliant, light-blue streak, like a beautiful thought of a future, happy life. With true joyfulness can I contemplate sudden death in the streak of lightning; it appears to me so much quicker, such a soft transition from this life that I would almost presume to yearn for it; one moment, and one would be—*There*, dear good Fritz, in the eternal embrace of our beloveds. In short, I take this ability to contemplate eternity as an inexhaustible source of wealth for human beings. (IV, 483)

Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* are specifically mentioned in the journal on April 23; and during the months of April and May he was also reading Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* intensively (if not obsessively) and reviewing his notes and commentary on Fichte's philosophy (the so-called *Fichte Studies* from 1795 to 1796).

The May 13 journal entry's obvious affinities to the third hymn in *Hymns to the Night* have led some commentators to speculate that this experience at Sophie's grave was a decisive turning point in Hardenberg's biography—perhaps the very moment at which the individuality Novalis was born.[16] These coincidences and synchronicities also have led to speculations on the existence of an early poem that dated from this time—the so-called original-hymn that became the seed kernel for the later finished poem.[17] They have led to declarations that this briefly mentioned incident at Sophie's grave on May 13 was in fact a spiritual enlightenment or initiation, so that from this moment forward the minor Saxon aristocrat Hardenberg became overshadowed by the eternal individuality Novalis, a being whose biography is written through the ages for all time.[18]

However one interprets this event at Sophie's grave, the sudden tragic loss of Sophie (and Erasmus) certainly remains central to the

reading of Hardenberg's life. If the experience at Sophie's grave is not perhaps *the* important turning point in Hardenberg's biography, it is nonetheless a highly significant moment—its significance deriving less from the event itself than from the subsequent mythology constructed by Hardenberg and perpetuated by others to frame this event and retell it. For his part, Hardenberg's ongoing attempts to mythologize Sophie were partly an aspect of his work of mourning, partly a strategy to master his own identity as a poet, and partly a deliberate meditative exercise to heighten his spiritual capacities or powers of creative memory. These exercises were pursued with special intensity during the ending days of April and the beginning days of May 1797. (See journal entry for May 5, 1797.)

The spring, summer, and autumn of 1797 were the crucible months for Hardenberg. And by the end of 1797, Hardenberg's life had settled into new lines of development.

Between a letter dated September 5, 1797, and a letter dated November 30, 1797, Hardenberg is silent—we have no letters written by him during this period that document his thoughts or activities. During these autumn months, however, he kept himself busy with his work as a salt mine administrator under his father's supervision and for a time in October he visited friends in Artern; in August he visited his friend and mentor Cölestin Just. Just, who knew Hardenberg very well, found him in a "very cheerful" mood. At the end of October Hardenberg was again in Jena. He returned to Weissenfels at the beginning of November and remained there until December 1. During these months, in addition to work and social activities, Hardenberg became reacquainted with the writings of Franz Hemsterhuis after A. W. Schlegel loaned him a French edition. Late fall of 1797 found Hardenberg filled with activities and new projects. On November 30, he wrote to A. W. Schlegel that he was "joyful as a child with [Shakespeare's] Hamlet" (IV, 237). The next day he left Weissenfels for the Mining Academy of Freiberg, where he enrolled in January 1798 as the 493rd student since the institute's founding in 1766. En route to Freiberg, he spent Christmas with his cousins at the estate Siebeneichen near Dresden.

It appears that reconciliation between father and son also occurred during these months following the deaths of Erasmus and Sophie. (Ironically, father and son experienced similar tragedies, in that

years earlier the father had lost his first bride shortly after marriage. This crisis of his first bride's sudden death led to the father's complete life change of outlook and to his eventual wholehearted devotion to Pietism.) Friedrich's father was an influential administrator of salt mines, and he networked persuasively on his son's behalf to secure him a promising position. Friedrich accepted the help, and part of this acceptance involved study at the Mining Academy in Freiberg under the influential direction of Abraham Gottlob Werner (1749–1817). The decision to turn his energies toward natural science and technology puzzled Hardenberg's literary friends, such as Friedrich Schlegel. Undeterred by outward contradictions or his friends' skepticism, Hardenberg forged ahead and at the same time began to pull together the various writings, notes, and fragments that would soon become the foundation of his significant poetic work.

And, as a signature of this inward change and resolution, he renamed himself Novalis.

One important element of the Novalis myth is the belief that Hardenberg flirted seriously with thoughts of suicide during the weeks that followed Sophie's death—or that from this moment forward he willed his own death or personal extinction. A careful reading of the journal and the letters yields a more layered interpretation. Throughout the journal, Hardenberg makes several references to the "end thought" (*Zielgedanke*) and "resolution" (*Entschluß*). The phrase "dying-after" (difficult to translate from the German *nachsterben*) also appears.[19] While phrases such as "my disappearance will make less of an impression on anyone than I feared" show that thoughts of suicide were certainly on Hardenberg's mind, the overall goal of the journal is not self-murder—it is self-mastery.

The word that Hardenberg uses for this goal is *Besonnenheit*. As Richard Samuel pointed out in his introduction to volume 4 of the historical-critical edition: "The change that gradually crystallizes from this process leads from despair and utter exhaustion to a renewed affirmation of life; the means to this transformation is a self-criticism that admonishes him toward the goal of presence of mind (*Besonnenheit*), Moderation (*Mäßigung*), and Calm (*Ruhe*)—albeit true that backslidings from this goal do occur" (IV, 42). The particular interpretation that Hardenberg gave to this concept of *Besonnenheit* characterizes the course of his development over the next three years after Sophie's death.

Besonnenheit means self-standing in the sense of being clear-headed, self-possessed, sober, and clear of purpose—it also has the connotation of attunement to mystical truth.[20] *Besonnenheit*, not suicide, is the implicit goal of the journal and the process it describes—despite the complementary desire to rehearse the adolescent tragic role of Romeo, for example.

Study, objective self-observation, dedication to self-improvement, dedication to career and public duty, and a determination to know oneself are very much at the center of the process that the journal documents. It shows us a time of vigorously intellectual activity, for even at the time of deepest grieving Hardenberg was exceptionally busy with words and ideas. As noted earlier, from autumn 1795 to summer 1796 during the crisis period of Sophie's worsening health, Hardenberg made an intensive study of Fichte's philosophy. During the time of the journal, he returned to these "old notes and commentaries" and worked through the philosophical problems of Fichte's epistemology with scrupulous care and original insight. He also, as noted, occupied himself continuously with Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, which, according to Just, he "knew by heart." In an amazing example of literary synchronicity, he received during May 1797 from Friedrich Schlegel the new translation by A. W. Schlegel of Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. He read this avidly immediately prior to and after his famous vision at Sophie's grave on May 13. Shakespeare, along with Goethe, occupied his mind as a literary mentor, and at the end of the journal he mentions rereading *Hamlet*, whose main character, like Novalis (but unlike Romeo) works through a crisis of grief, loss of a beloved, doubt, and threatened self-dissolution to achieve a final condition of acceptance and *Besonnenheit*. Other literary influences at the time include Young's *Night Thoughts*, Jean Paul's *The Invisible Lodge*, Schelling's *The Unconditional in Human Consciousness*, Fichte generally, the critical and philosophical writings of A. W. Hülsen, Friedrich Schlegel's letters and published writings, and a wide variety of contemporary journals and essays. Intellectually, Hardenberg kept himself ceaselessly busy during this time of grief.

The journal and letters allow us to read this activity as a process of recovery and as an attempt to find an authentic center of self-identity. This center, however, is constructed through experimentation with various mediating roles: Hamlet, Romeo, and Wilhelm Meister—to name a few. The use of antithesis and antipode, which characterize

Hardenberg's mature style and thinking, are present experimentally in the letters and journal of 1797. The romantic concept of "I" that finally emerges is conversational in a personal as well as a public sense. It is not so much a fixed point but a dynamic fulcrum of balance and dialectic between contending extremes. The discovery of this dynamic, ever-shifting point of balance leads Hardenberg beyond the confines of his personal crisis to the freedom of an awareness of his public mission and career. Once this public task is intuited, the journal no longer serves a need. It abruptly stops. The *mythological* process, however, continues with a different focus. This continuing attempt to define and maintain the "I" as an ever-moving fulcrum of dynamic poise between contending or at times mutually contradictory extremes becomes a signature of the mature, magical-idealist writings of Novalis.

Selected Letters and Documents 1792–1797

The following narrative of selected letters and letter excerpts is extracted from the years 1792 to 1797. This covers a period that begins with Friedrich von Hardenberg's years as a university student in Jena and Leipzig through his graduation from Wittenberg with a degree in law and into the period of legal apprenticeship with August Cölestin Just in Tennstedt where Hardenberg met Sophie von Kühn in November 1794. These letters and letter excerpts help provide context for the journal, whose entries are extremely terse. They assist in providing a portrait of Hardenberg's developing personality and interests prior to the crisis of Sophie's death, after which he assumed the pen name Novalis.

Obviously, an abbreviated biographical overview such as this cannot do justice to the complexity of the subject. But as the journal forms the center of this collection, these supporting documents have been selected to assist in framing it for readers not so familiar with Hardenberg's life. Absent are letters that document Hardenberg as Novalis per se; that is, letters, fragments, or other notebook jottings from 1798 to 1801 that would show the range of activities to which Hardenberg devoted his energies after the name Novalis had been assumed and which constitute the majority of his legacy. This period, as mentioned, spans the years in literary history known as early German romanticism (*die deutsche Frühromantik*), whose center was at Jena and whose circumference touched on the boundaries of Friedrich von Hardenberg's rather circumscribed world: Dresden, Grüningen, Halle, Leipzig. Absent, too, from this overview are documents relating to the poet's early character-forming years at the family homes in

Oberwiederstedt and Weissenfels or the months spent under the care of his paternal uncle Friedrich Wilhelm von Hardenberg (1728–1800) whose cosmopolitan interests, well-stocked library, and lively, wide-ranging table conversations with a variety of guests ignited the young Hardenberg's intellect and expanded his ambitions. This lacuna is addressed in part in the section of this collection devoted to biographical texts. (See the letter written by Hardenberg to Finance Minister von Oppel dated January 1800, in which he reviews and comments on his formative years.)

In October 1791 Friedrich von Hardenberg left the small university town of Jena to continue his studies in the far more glamorous and worldly city of Leipzig whose university was, for its time, one of the largest in Germany. In Jena, Hardenberg had made the acquaintance of Friedrich Schiller and had attended Schiller's history lectures. The older Schiller and he were on friendly terms. Schiller's personality and moral authority impressed Hardenberg greatly. Inspired by Schiller's example, Hardenberg began to write poetry in imitation of his mentor and had his first poetic success with the publication of *Complaint of a Youth* (Klagen eines Jünglings) in *Neuen Teutschen Merkur* in 1791. Although Hardenberg's father had sent him to school to study law, Hardenberg by inclination and temperament felt more attracted to philosophy and literature (*die schönen Wissenschaften*).

In Leipzig, Hardenberg met Friedrich Schlegel, whose example and force of personality made a deep impression on the as yet far less sophisticated poet-to-be. The close friendship between the two young men stimulated their individual careers and development. Each found recognition in the other; each sparked the other's imagination. Although Schlegel moved in and out of Hardenberg's life over the next ten years, he had a tendency to reappear at significant moments in Hardenberg's destiny, and he was with the poet in March 1801 when Hardenberg died. Friedrich Schlegel's report to his brother August Wilhelm of his first meeting with Hardenberg reflects the excitement Friedrich Schlegel felt after his first encounter with Hardenberg. Schlegel was quick to recognize Hardenberg's potential. Characteristically, Schlegel assumes the tone of an elder and more worldly wise guide, though in fact Hardenberg was his senior.

Leipzig, January 1792
Friedrich Schlegel to August Wilhelm Schlegel in Amsterdam

Fate has placed in my hands a young man from whom anything's possible.—I liked him very much, and shortly after I met him he opened wide the inner sanctum of his heart. Therein I've staked my territory and have begun research.—Still a very young man—slim and of slender figure, very fine in feature, with black eyes of brilliantly expressive powers and on fire when he speaks about some beloved topic—indescribable, how much fire—he speaks three times more and three times faster than we do—the quickest powers of comprehension and receptivity. The study of philosophy has given him a prodigal ease in the construction of fine philosophical thoughts—his point of interest is Beauty, not Truth—his favorite authors are Plato and Hemsterhuis—on the first evening of our acquaintance he gave me his opinion with passionate fire—there is absolutely nothing evil in the world—and everything once more draws near the Golden Age. I have never seen such joyous energy in youth. His feeling is colored by a certain chaste purity that has its origin in his soul rather than lack of experience. He has been quite often in the midst of society (he gets friendly with everyone right off) and after one year in Jena he is well acquainted with the best minds and philosophers, most notably Schiller. Yet at the same time he has been completely the student in Jena, and, as I've been told, is no stranger to fights.—He is very gay, very impressionable, and takes on the qualities of each formative influence.—

He himself best expresses the lovely brightness of his spirit when he says in a poem: "May nature always grant to him a friendly view of heaven." This poem is a sonnet that he made for you out of appreciation for your poetry.—It was written a few years ago—you must not judge his talent on this basis.—I have looked through his work: the most extreme immaturity of language and versification, continuous digressions from the subject at hand, too ponderous in substance and length, and prodigal superfluity of half-completed images, as with Ovid's description of the world's dissolution in

> the flood of Chaos—which does not prevent me from catching a whiff of what the good or perhaps the best lyric of poets can do—an original and beautiful manner of feeling and receptivity to all nuances of emotion.—The April 1791 issue of *Merkur* has a poem by him entitled *Complaint of a Youth*. He promised me the sonnet; perhaps I can include it. His name is von Hardenberg.
>
> The relationship to one *younger* affords me a novel, voluptuous pleasure to which I surrender.
>
> The poem next time. (IV, 571–72)

Leipzig was renowned as an ideal locale for university students to flirt and pursue affairs. The friends Schlegel and Hardenberg did not by any means shy away from such intrigues. By his own later admission, Hardenberg was an inveterate flirt, and Leipzig, home to such Mephistophelean haunts as Auerbach's Cellar, made famous in the scene from Goethe's *Faust*, provided the perfect stage on which to con this role. "Hardenberg is impulsive to the point of wildness," Friedrich Schlegel wrote to his brother August in April 1792, "always filled with active, restless delight" (IV, 573). Such restless, active gaiety soon found context in an affair, not the first nor the last, and one whose course and breakup hit him hard. A further complication arose from awkward social circumstances. The young woman referenced in the following letter, who had broken Friedrich's heart, was seventeen-year-old Juliane Eisenstuck. "Julie" came from a middle-class, mercantile family, a fact that disappointed and angered Hardenberg's father, who was sensitive to family pedigree. (The father initially stumbled in a similar fashion over Sophie von Kühn's spotty family background.) In Leipzig, Friedrich Schlegel played the middleman for Hardenberg and Julie; Schlegel's earlier involvement with Julie's married older sister, Laura, provided Hardenberg with model, opportunity, and incentive. Laura's coquettish enticement and later rejection of Schlegel's courtship upended the young man's self-esteem and for a time turned him to thoughts of suicide. The experience proved formative for Schlegel's later novel *Lucinde* (1799). Hardenberg somewhat imitated his friend Schlegel's melodramatic romance. Anticipating his father's disapproval and distressed that his student allowance did not favor the establishment of settled relationships with the sex, Hardenberg hit on the plan of tossing aside his legal studies for a career in the military. Presumably this new life path would provide a self-sufficient and

socially acceptable middle ground that would satisfy his class-conscious father and allow him the means to marry Julie. The problem was Julie apparently rejected his marriage proposal and his parents were unable to provide the funds prerequisite for a proper enlistment. Julie's rejection (or some other complication not adequately explained) "dishonored" Hardenberg and helped sober him to resume his law studies in the far less distracting university town of Wittenberg—much to his parents' relief. In a letter written from Dresden in April 1793, Friedrich Schlegel consoled his friend on the aftermath of this affair with Julie but also presciently anticipated a pattern that would reappear about eighteen months later when Hardenberg met Sophie von Kühn.

Dresden, April 7, 1793
Friedrich Schlegel to Friedrich von Hardenberg at Weissenfels

Dear Hardenberg,

How very much I wish to be with you now, in what for you is this great and dangerous moment in which so much will be decided once and for all. I think that you have very incorrectly named your condition *health*—(the coursing of blood and the fevered pursuit of imaginations are certainly not its symptoms).—Since you only now for the first time set foot on the path, since you must pull yourself together thoroughly for the effort, since you need every bit of deliberation and courage to achieve the goal, I desire that you do not assume in a careless cocksure manner that you already have achieved your aim. This illusion, and the scorn of your former self, would betray your love for me, for which I harbor so much hope. To be sure, you have suffered much as a result of her [Julie], but I hope that you will suffer even more. Only because I have always thought that the motivating goal of a richly promising talent cannot be the blithe state of a happy butterfly.—

Isn't it so! You suddenly feel yourself the owner of inconceivable riches, strong and self-possessed?—This means: we have acquired only a portion of our deeper self; a greater crisis must one day rend to light the latent powers.—But I say to you, when the springtime of infatuation has departed, night overwhelms and draws them in and little remains but a terrible emptiness. . . . (IV, 350–51)

The resumption of Hardenberg's legal studies at the conservative and less worldly university in Wittenberg led to a separation between him and his friend Friedrich Schlegel. This change in venue from Leipzig to Wittenberg was urged on Friedrich by his parents "with all available means." Still nursing his wounds from the affair with Julie in Leipzig, Hardenberg threw himself into his legal studies with exceptional diligence and mastered the tedious material by June 1794. He later credited his training in jurisprudence with giving him ability for focused, disciplined work. Such bursts of sustained concentration in respect to "unpleasant and tedious subjects" were characteristic—later, his legal mentor in Tennstedt, August Cölestin Just, remarked how scrupulously Hardenberg could apply himself in pursuit of the most trifling details of official routine, copying and recopying legal phrases in order to master them. While ensconced in Wittenberg, Hardenberg drew a reflective breath and reassessed his friendship with Friedrich Schlegel. Clearly, that friendship and the wild times in Leipzig had matured him in many ways, and he acknowledged this in his response to Schlegel's earlier letter.

Wittenberg, around August 20, 1793
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Friedrich Schlegel in Leipzig

Dear Schlegel,

This time your letter arrives to unusually happy circumstances. I am situated quite pleasantly on my sofa in a rather bright mood, and I abandon myself to the sweet inspirations of the goddess of idleness. Once or twice I already had overlooked the envelope—then, there he was—"the old head,"[1] up front and center, which thrilled me with a holy tremor, and I recognized the godly man who consecrated this epistolary grotto to the sons of the beloved daughters of Jove and Nemesis. No greater expectation gripped a pilgrim to the miraculous grotto of Antiparos than has gripped me as I followed line by line the mysteries of your wandering. In vain—the oracle falls silent. Your eyes glow with an unworldly light—and your brow is baptized by heaven—I stand before you, gripped even more so by the mystery—I rejoice that you *are* still among the living. Now I can embrace you and feel your flesh and hear the beating of your heart. You

> drank from the well that quenches the parched—you are now insatiable. You perhaps yet tear yourself free from the fetters of the four elements—which provide for us a more comfortable dwelling than your body does for your intelligence. I lament your unfortunate, beautiful heart. Sooner or later, it must be broken. It cannot endure the zeal of your enthusiasm. Your eyes must grow dark in contemplation of the wavering depths that you behold, into which you plunge the enchanted household of your being. The King of Thule, dear Schlegel, was your ancestor. You hail from the family of those who journey the way under. Now I can say this to you, and I marvel that your brother does not say this also. You will live as few live, and certainly you will not die a common death; you will expire of eternity. You are her son—she summons you home. God has appointed you a rare destiny. Perhaps I shall never again see another human being such as you. For me, you have been the High Priest of Eleusis. Through you, I have learned to know heaven and hell—from you, I have partaken of the tree of knowledge—. . . (IV, 124)

Having successfully completed his university studies in Wittenberg, Hardenberg returned to the family home in Weissenfels and then moved to Tennstedt in Thuringia to begin an apprentice year in official duties under the direction of August Cölestin Just. This practicum was intended to round out his legal education and prepare him for a career. His father's decision to send him to Tennstedt contradicted the wishes of Hardenberg's impressive and intimidating uncle who had wanted to secure the young man a far more favorably placed situation in the Prussian civil service. Hardenberg's father opposed the plan. His opposition perhaps reflected the tension between the two brothers' personalities, or perhaps it was due to the father's unfavorable view of his brother's worldly interests and political opinions. Hardenberg's uncle had a strong influence on the poet's early life and upbringing; the worldly, free-thinking uncle and pious, conservative father delineate two sides of the poet's outlook and personality. The administrative apprenticeship in provincial Tennstedt was a point of compromise between these extremes: an opportunity to obtain practical experience in law and civil service (and avoid flirtatious entanglements) while the uncle continued to pull strings to secure his nephew

a more favorable situation in the Prussian government—a position more likely to suit the sanguine temperament of "Fritz the flirt." Hardenberg later noted that this move to Tennstedt ended a time of "fooleries and frivolities," although, as the next letter shows, it did not end it all at once.

Tennstedt, beginning of November, 1794
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Erasmus von Hardenberg at Wermsdorf

Dear Erasmus,

Although I haven't heard or received any letters from you, I will proceed with this as though I knew where you were. Karl will have written to you a great deal about Weissenfels. I am not going to further rehearse the details. On the way back from Hubertusburg we saw your hunting party from afar. Since then a lot of water has gone under the bridge at Weissenfels. We cut fine figures on the dance floor at Rippach. Between you and me, I was glad to leave Weissenfels: Too much is unhealthy.[2] You know I have no secrets from you. In the end, I became too intimate with the colonel ["Fritzchen" von Lindenau].[3] The intimacy became too *significant*—I do not want to lie and dissemble—plain speech is difficult in her presence and does not help. Distance is best. I avoided all tête-à-têtes at last. They were too tempting, and, as an honest fellow, I should not say too much. I have always mixed pleasure with business, so that business did not forget itself. Flirting is a charming but ticklish enterprise. May God in his goodness preserve one from ambition and the irresistible hankering to be the darling of any one girl.

If one could win over oneself to achieve this everywhere and nowhere, one would be the happiest of mortals. I saw your [Miss] Hoffmann at the Richters in Leipzig. Holy thunder in heaven, that is one wild stormy beauty! She was the best looking girl at the Richters. Shapely as a doll—eyes, breasts, and mouth as though sculpted. Strikingly like [Miss] Langenthal. Not too much the coquette, either. Dear brother, I implore your recommendation. Give her my greetings. At Christmas we will live like sea kings in Weis-

senfels. It's going pretty well for me here. I've found lodging among four very pretty young women whom I can see from the window and have conversation with three of them. I was already in Langensalza. There, too, I hope to fit right in. Flirting my way through the world—in this place there's a general dearth of dancers. My bureaucratic mentor is a useful, practiced, and humane man. His conduct toward me is quite friendly. I am very diligent and have hope that Father will be satisfied with my labors as well as with my efforts to economize. I play a worthy role here and stand in good stead, as it appears. Lindenau often sees me, and we're good friends. I extend my warm greetings to you and your Senior Forester.[4] Your Senior Forester is my darling. Thousand compliments to Erdamannsdorf. Kalitsch can kiss my ass. Take care—write to me soon and don't be too down in the dumps again.

Your Brother
Friedrich von Hardenberg
(IV, 144–45)

The day before meeting Sophie von Kühn, Hardenberg wrote a letter of jest and self-mockery to his student friend Friedrich Brachmann.[5] The letter caricatures the style of legalistic prose that he and Brachmann were learning to master. It also shows that romantic liaisons were still very much on Hardenberg's mind. This excerpt begins with Hardenberg referring to himself in the third person as he makes fun of the legal language, routines, and office protocols he was learning under Just

Tennstedt, November 16, 1794
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Friedrich Brachmann in Dobriluge

. . . Since then nothing untoward has befallen him, with the exception of noting that he has not yet succeeded in banishing quite completely from memory the remembrance of the milk and honey cakes of Weissenfels and the young does that nibbled beneath the roses, and he must unfortunately bear witness to the fact that there appears to be a veritable Pandemonium in the old, smoke-filled office,

> in which the Devil of Concupiscence continually commits his chicanery and dances around the paper in front of him with voluptuous images, recently even to such an extent that his quill let the name of a maiden be inked in an official protocol of state where the name of His Electoral Highness was supposed to have been inscribed, occasioning much hilarity, injuries and insult to the estate. Otherwise, he finds [Tennstedt] rather pleasing, especially as he lives among four female neighbors who piece by piece are assessed at eighteen years of age and who, in respect to their taxable assets, possess a good "fund" of dowry along with considerable appurtenances and disposable resources of all sorts, and who furthermore by virtue of the adjacent street appear to be quite pleasantly and comfortably situated for the outlet and distribution of their wares. . . . (IV, 146–47)

As noted earlier, Friedrich von Hardenberg met Sophie von Kühn on November 17, 1794. Shortly afterward he wrote a letter to his brother Erasmus in which he described that first encounter in the full glow of enthusiasm. Unfortunately this letter to Erasmus has been lost or was destroyed, as were all the letters from Friedrich to Sophie; however, we can gain a glimpse of what Hardenberg wrote to his brother by reading Erasmus's letter. Friedrich's younger brother had the long-winded habit of paraphrasing a text before he responded to it. In this way, glimpses of Friedrich's original letter are revealed.

Wermsdorf, November 28, 1794
Erasmus von Hardenberg to Friedrich von Hardenberg in Tennstedt

> I confess that when I first opened your letter it astonished me; *obstupui et comae mihi ad montem steterunt*;[6] I am, however, already too sufficiently accustomed to unusual events and circumstances in our lives, particularly in this point of concern, that I would not find my way soon into this one also.
>
> You fully understand that your letter required deliberation before I felt able to answer it, and for that reason, since I received it early yesterday, I went walking in the forest for the entire day sunk in the deepest contemplation so

that not even the evening's gay social activities could extricate me—so deeply sunk in contemplation that the thoughts that consumed me for the entire day accompanied me into sleep and intermixed interesting images with my dreams. This morning your letter was my first thought upon waking, and now I feel myself fully able to answer you.

You request that I respond as a human being and you express uncertainty as to whether my soul is *more* than my system of assumptions. You ask whether I am able to understand you. These questions could anger me, were we not for each other *that* which we are. As I respond to you now I am taking into consideration the passionate tone and context of the moment in which you wrote, for otherwise you would have thought better than to chide me to respond as a human being or even to have harbored the doubt that I might not have been able to understand you. You need to keep in mind that a human being of no better or finer education—yes, even one who stands in the grace of nature—but with a heart brimful of feeling—you need to keep in mind, I say, that such a one will act with human feeling toward one who has been for him the dearest and most beloved being amidst all the sublunary world, toward one whose fate he has shared warmly and without limitation and for whom he has shown support and participation in respect to the smallest and largest details. Flattery lies beneath us. Also, and I beg you not to take this as a reproach—it was only an outpouring of my overflowing heart. You want me to suspend my critical judgment. Dear Brother, I would gladly do so. Putting aside that I perhaps know you better than anyone else and without regard for the unusual similarity of our characters that manifests itself with varying nuances in most of our actions, ideas, and feelings and which has often astounded me greatly, it would be very daring and would show a high degree of self-confidence if you were to allow me to pass judgment on your relationship to a third person whom I flatly do not know and about whom I am unable to come to a decision in regard to the current prospects of your affiliation and still less in regard to the prospects for its future. My ardent love and brotherly concern for your best interests

prompt me to speak my opinions to the point rather than in vague generalities so that you do not allow your heart and reason to run away from you. Dear brother, the consequences of this step touch upon your entire life, so forgive me when I say with utter candidness and freedom everything that lies on my heart and that strikes me as most individual and unique in regard to your circumstances. . . .

No better entry point is more suitable for my friendly remonstration than to remind you of the beginning of Sulpicius' letter to Cicero following the death of his daughter Tullia, but for one difference only: there passion, grief, and suffering governed, while here it is love. All passions, however, are the same in respect to the way they work upon human beings; that is, when they are violent, they rob us of the capacity for free thinking and action, and in the light of these circumstances a good friend must urgently counsel diminution. The beginning of such a letter of advice, were it addressed to you, would therefore read: *After being informed of your love for Sophie, I resolved to write to you briefly and clearly everything that came immediately to mind and which had bearing upon your well being—not because such thoughts might flit away but because you were less able to find them yourself due to the confusion of your infatuation.*[7]

Passion, dear brother, is the word for it. Though you clothe it in whatever finery you wish, it has all the characteristic symptoms. The suddenness, surprise, and overwhelming decisiveness mark this as a manifestation of passion. And wouldn't such a passion be capable of blinding you in a moment? I don't only know this from your own confessions, I know from experience that your nervous system is very excitable; your heart is to the greatest degree sensitive and open to the impressions that the highest ideal of nature—a beautiful, innocent girl—must make upon any man of sense and sensibility. But then you are also a genius of true intellect—your soul always hungry for new activities and accordingly used to change. Now, pay close attention!—In accordance with these premises, is it wise that your ever active spirit (which already has shown a

marked inclination to tear itself loose from the chains of the routine and the ordinary in favor of alteration and movement)—is it wise that this spirit should choose to settle its affections year-in-year-out on one single being? Is it wise that this spirit should fetter itself so adamantly and to such an extent that not *once* during that long interval of confinement were the thought to arise: *would you not have been much happier if, instead of her, you had chosen to bind your life's destiny to another?* And if that thought should occur to you, would you not accordingly see everything through that lens? Would you not perhaps view your situation as more bitterly unpleasant than in fact it was? Would it not then become almost unendurable? The charm of novelty conquers at the start, but with time would not the power of ordinary, everyday life hold you in thrall to its demands and prevail over you continuously in such a way that you—when the spirit of your youth has flown away and a succession of years has transformed your temperament from sanguine to choleric—would you not, I say, thereupon also still be able to see her as the paragon of love and adoration when you soberly take into account and weigh carefully all her weaknesses and her lack of desirable advantages? If then you are no longer able to regard her in this light of optimism, then your blood will no longer so easily incline itself as formerly to set aside cautionary reservations and you will be forced to feel with every fiber of your being that you set your sights too soon and too precipitiously on a single goal only for the sake of a long and quiet savoring of that pleasure!—Finally, dearest Fritz, you yourself write: "as soon as I receive a general nod of favorable approval, the time of the blossoming of my inclination is past." Is it possible that you should not receive this nod of approval in answer to a girl who has given you her pledge—if not otherwise, then surely one day upon a tender hour—yes, especially perhaps if you should press your demand with youthful impetuosity? And if you should avoid all tête-à-têtes (you must first conquer her exclusively for yourself so that no one else can thrust you aside), then even so, four

> years [until marriage] is a long time—and four years is the shortest period of time that I can see you setting as a wedding date. You are young and fiery, the girl is young and fiery, you are both sensual human beings—give yourself leave with a vengeance to welcome a tender hour with kisses and embraces—and when it's all come and gone then you will consider: *here's a girl no different from others!* Suppose, however, that you pass over this obstacle and marry. In marriage, where you should wisely take your pleasure as a man, you will glut yourself after youth's long abstinence. Enjoyment to the full leads to satiation, and thus you arrive at the condition that you so long have dreaded, namely, you become a slave to boredom!—
>
> Now yet a few doubts and questions, dear Fritz, in respect to the girl, and I hope for your answer.
>
> You write me that a quarter hour decided you; how can you see into the heart of a girl in a quarter hour? Even more so, a girl of such unusual qualities, as you have described. If you had written a "quarter year," I would have marveled at your knowledge of the female heart, but *a quarter hour*, think about it yourself, a quarter hour—that sounds entirely so miraculous that I must search behind the description for the true cause: passion, that eternal knave.—. . . (IV, 364–67)

Shortly after meeting Sophie, Hardenberg wrote a brief sketch of a solo journey to Sophie's Grüningen estate. While the exact date or occasion of this event cannot be determined from the text, Heinz Ritter in *Der unbekannte Novalis* argued that the document delivered to the estate was a poem that expressed Hardenberg's enthusiasm for Sophie and her nineteen-year-old sister, Friederica von Mandelsloh,[8] who was married to an officer stationed in nearby Langensalza. The poem "An M[andelsloh] und S[ophie]" refers to Sophie as the "riddle" and to her sister as the "solution." Ritter reasons that the date of this second visit was November 23, 1794 (Totensonntag: Sunday of the Dead, the last Sunday before Advent), which was the first day after this initial visit on November 17 that Hardenberg would have had free from his duties at the Tennstedt office.

Tennstedt, December 1794
Friedrich von Hardenberg, Diary Entry

Early today I rode from here full of joy and spirit. I arrived at Lutzen Sömmern quickly. Instead of riding on straight to Kreyssen [Greussen], I went astray toward Ganglof Sömmern. The detour is not important, and already at five minutes before nine a man pointed out to me the Grüningen castle from a distance. I rode straight toward it. Just before a quarter to ten I rode through water and was with body and soul in—Grüningen. Better said: my body arrived, my soul was there already. In the village close to the gate path to the estate, I halted—hitched my horse to the iron hitching post of Grüningen. The building where I halted was a workhouse or jail. I inquired for someone to carry my letter to the castle. A young woman presented herself—the people viewed me suspiciously—they laughed among themselves—and told me: the lord of the castle was not at home. I charged the fair messenger to say: "The letter comes from Tennstedt and the one who brought it has immediately returned—a thousand compliments and solicitations." She went forth, and another young female said to me: "it should really be kept a secret." She half-knowingly took me for what I really was: a devotee of one of the ladies of the castle. I left instructions with her to inform anyone who might inquire afterward about me or about the missive that I had ridden immediately back to Tennstedt at a slow, walking pace. I slipped away from the village—on the far side of the water I spied the yellow castle with yearning—and trotted on. Every ten minutes I paused and looked about. The region has become so invigorating for me; I wanted to inscribe it in my memory. On the way back I struck the correct road—and had a glimpse of Grüningen just before Lutzen Sömmern. I am almost convinced that one could view it with a telescope a half hour from here. Despite the many pauses, the slow pace and the bad roads now and again, I didn't ride more than one and three-quarters of an hour. At a quarter-after-eight I rode away from here, rode very slowly, lost my way for twenty minutes, and

was in spite of this back here again at five minutes past twelve, and this including even a quarter-hour stop in Grüningen.

In summer, with a good road and a quick horse, I think I could ride comfortably there and back in two hours and fifteen minutes. On foot I go there in that time. The tree at Lutzen Sömmern—and just above Lutzen Sömmern one already easily sees Grüningen with the naked eye. Thus have I brought forth my journey in a sketch.

F. Hardenberg
(IV, 22–23)

In Tennstedt, Hardenberg had fallen into a comfortable and somewhat flirtatious friendship with his mentor's niece and live-in housekeeper, Caroline Just. He used his deepening friendship with Caroline as a forum to discuss and reflect on his state of mind after meeting Sophie. The playful, confessional tone of the following letter to Caroline, written while they were in the same house, typifies a pattern. Hardenberg habitually shared his thoughts and inner life with sympathetic women; he later confessed to this tendency in a letter to Sophie's stepsister, Wilhelmine von Thümmel, another sympathetic female friend. The language toward the letter's end (including the signature) is patently flirtatious and suggestive.

Tennstedt, end of November 1794
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Caroline Just in Tennstedt

Do not think that my indisposition is merely physical. An indisposition of the body accords with an indisposition of the soul—one, alone, would not occasion the other. It's been a long time since my imagination has been stirred to such lively movement as it was after our journey [to Grüningen]. So much enchantment at once, Sophie, in point of fact her unique friendship, and the immense vista that opened suddenly and so *decisively* for my life and destiny—all these things all at once stormed my all-too-receptive and under-exercised imagination so that at last I *had* to suffer. I feel only too acutely that the body certainly plays its part but that the source of the ailment lies in my imagination—I only need to

think briefly about those objects and suddenly there it is: that melancholy, inexhaustible longing and anxious feeling of disgust and satiety for things as they are. Without knowing it, you preserve me and hold me upright by mere virtue of your proximity. As concerns physical nourishment and diversion, I count on you in these matters, and with your approval [I will go] even so far as to ask your uncle's permission to spend time with you each evening—with the greatest hopes. Perhaps your company will provide the remedy that will help me dull the edge of my all too receptive imagination and will help me to achieve that feeling of happy, needful calm with which one easily can endure the dull passage of unremarkable events and with which one anticipates more beautiful, fortunate times, so as not to transform anticipation into the most vexing torture that a sensitive nature can suffer.

F. v. Hard.
(IV, 148–49)

Sophie's surviving writings are tersely written, naive, and childish. The style of writing and multiple errors in spelling reflect the sensibility of an unsophisticated preadolescent. "She has not yet arrived at self-reflection," Hardenberg wrote in the miniature portrait of Sophie entitled *Klarisse*, but he added in her defense that "arrived there too myself only at a certain point" (IV, 24).

Sophie's diary for the months of January to March 1795 contains very little information and ends without an entry for March 15, the day that Hardenberg proposed to her.

Grüningen, January 1–March 14, 1795

January

1. [Thursday] Kuarunses[9] came and Fickchen[10] Karolinchen[11] and I we [. ? .]
2. we were alone. But in the afternoon my dear brother came completely unexpected.
3. this morning I wrote to the aunts. There wasn't any school because Herr Graf was here today.

4. [Sunday] we were alone. In the afternoon I went to the [?].[12] In the evening we wanted to visit Magister but nothing came of it.
5. Early this morning Father and Georg went to Sagafstet. George's absence spoiled my whole day.
6. as we lay in bed a letter came for C[13] from the Justs who were coming here from Liebsich. Harden. had accompanied them until Sandeleben and went to Olle and then came back. Frau Haken came by.
7. Today Hardenb. rode away again early and again nothing much happened.
8. Today we were alone again and again nothing much happened again yesterday.
9. Today we were alone again and again nothing much happened.
10. This morning a messenger came from Sachsenburch and invited us to meet father there the next day mother answered it. In the afternoon Hardenberch [*sic*] came too.
11. [Sunday] This morning a messenger came again from Sachsen we should go there this morning we went there and met a lot of people there.
12. Today we stayed here we had a good time [. . . ?] and Court remained here.
13. Today we went out Hardenberch [*sic*] came with us and I did not have a good time.

February

[No entries for February]

March

1. [Sunday] Today Hartenberch [*sic*] visited us again and nothing happened.
2. I went early to the parsonage and when I came home I met Just Hardenberch [*sic*] was still there too.
3. Today I had the sniffles [. . . ?] but at four I went to church and when I came home Hch was gone.
5. Today Just was here but there wasn't much because we all had the sniffles.

6. Caroline [Just] left but the Councilor didn't come until 2:00.
7. Today a messenger came from Just and Hardenberch [*sic*] didn't come
8. [Sunday] Today we intended to go to church but the weather held us up I went by chaise
9. Today Reinhart and Schechter came they entertained us with their stories.
10. Today Schechter was here there wasn't much happening.
11. we were all alone today and nothing at all happened.
12. today was like yesterday nothing at all happened.
13. today was repentance day and Hartenb. was here.
14. Today Hartenber. was still here he got a letter from his brother.
15. [No entry. Day of Sophie's engagement to Friedrich von Hardenberg.] (IV, 586–87)

Spring, summer, and early fall 1795 were the idyllic months in Grüningen. Sophie did not show any symptoms of illness until November. The following letter written in June 1795 by Hardenberg to his confidante Caroline Just presents an imagination of domestic happiness. It gives us a glimpse of the hopes that Hardenberg had for his future wedded life with Sophie. Hardenberg speaks of himself in the third person. At the end of the letter, he includes an imagined wedding announcement signed "Friedrich von Hardenberg and Sophie von Hardenberg, born von Kühn" (IV, 152). In a letter dated September 1, 1795, to his brother, Erasmus, Hardenberg allowed his imagination to elaborate even more upon reality by signing himself "Fritz von Hardenberg, born von K[ühn]." The signature is intentionally playful and radical. The three Hardenberg brothers—Friedrich, Erasmus, and Karl—were all under the spell of Grüningen by autumn 1795. We can get a sense of their shared, giddy enthusiasm in the following second letter dated September 4 written by Erasmus to Karl. Friedrich, too, calls Grüningen "Elysium" in a letter to Karl written in the late autumn of that year. The signature "Fritz von Hardenberg, born von Kühn" is partly a playful acknowledgment of conspiracy (Fritz's engagement to Sophie was a "secret"; Fritz only wrote to his father of his intentions nine months later, in June 1796). Then, too, the semi-playful signature represents the extent to which Hardenberg had begun to redefine himself in the context of the Grüningen experience. It implies that he is both Sophie's brother and fiancé.

Characteristically, however, Hardenberg's enthusiasm and emotion is counterbalanced by sober judgment. In the third letter following, dated November 12, he cautions Erasmus to come to grips with his excessive enthusiasm and not to lose touch with the reality of Grüningen ("the dirtier reverse side," as he calls it), which would suggest that he himself never lost such a critical view. (Such critical distancing also appears in his brief portrait of Sophie, which he called *Klarisse*.) This third letter from November 12 also gives us a glimpse of how Hardenberg used his quiet moments during these months.

> Each day I have about three hours free in which I can do my own work. Urgent preparatory studies of importance for the rest of my life, significant gaps in my knowledge and necessary exercises of my intellect and thinking fill these hours for the most part. (IV, 159)

These "urgent, preparatory studies" refer partly to his notes and commentaries on Fichte's philosophy, later published under the title *Fichte Studies*. Sophie's nickname, Philo-Sophie, appears in his letters at this time. The Grüningen circle was aware of Hardenberg's preoccupations and of his temperamental bent. In such a context (prior to Sophie's sickness), the nickname Philo-Sophie seems somewhat of an innocent, fond, and affectionate joke.

Grüningen, June 1795
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Caroline Just in Tennstedt

> . . . Now comes the best part of my journey. When I went through Jena, I heard by chance that Hardenberg lived only two hours away. I had nothing to do and was curious to see Hardenberg's household. Hardenberg married and settled—that I would never believe! I came to the place, inquired at the house for him. A very simply dressed, wonderfully beautiful young woman led me in and asked me to wait. I didn't have much time to look around before he walked through the door. I could not contain myself when I saw his expression. I embraced him and identified myself. He was overjoyed to see me, and I was speechless with astonishment. I've lived with him [here] for eight days—his house is the happiest that I have ever seen. I've met a whole

crowd of people—they make up a gallery of the best human beings imaginable. The one whom I took to be a maiden is his wife. What grace and moral feeling, simplicity and variety, order and activity, love and humanity, nature and delicacy, art and taste!—the wonder-working hand of this woman conjoins all these qualities—But the others, her friends and sisters and the men, make a unified whole whose true value can only be grasped by understanding and feeling. (IV, 151)

Hubertsburg, September 4, 1795
Erasmus von Hardenberg to Karl von Hardenberg
Description of Grüningen contained in the letter to Karl

Consider the captain,[14] this jovial, jolly, hospitable, splendid man, joyful and happy to spread well-being and good humor to all who surround him, who combines activity, thrift, and precision with pleasure, celebration, and zest for life. Consider him as he makes his entrance with his cap raked to one side and declares with dry humor: *he who has no heart, has no courage*, or at dinner raises a glass *To the things we love*—

Consider the mother, the woman with the face of an angel, who could coax from a stone the deepest veneration, the most tender sympathy, the warmest devotion. Consider her endowed with the finest human emotions, with her love of domesticity and her general accommodating concern for the good of everyone, with her motherly attentiveness for anyone for whom she takes an interest, as she likewise expressed toward me in such a lovely manner: consider her, as she sits there and nurses her little Günter and smiles at him with such a full and loving look.—

Consider Sophie, that heavenly creature, with that great, charismatic, world-encompassing look with which she animates the loving (Fritz von Hardenberg), raises up the unfortunate, and shatters the evildoer—consider her, how she trumps all else in Fritz's life, how she paces the room back and forth with enchanting innocence as she whistles:—

Consider the friendliness and good nature worthy of adoration, the amiable charm and grace and goodwilling modesty, and you still have yet an unfinished portrait of the enchanting features of dear Caroline. Consider her, when she says: *You don't know—I can be very naughty!* and then tells the story of the key.—

Consider a woman in the purest brilliance of youth, in the fullness of immaculate beauty, brimful with the glow of the red rose and the snow-white lily—with the most beautiful black eyes in the world so that only Sophie can be their competitor, and who moreover from the quality of her heart is so charmingly amiable as *Mandelsloh*, consider how she communicates with her husband and knows how to respond to him.

Consider your own Fritzchen[15] whom I don't yet know. Prrrr! Consider that little offspring of the gods, *Mimmi*[16] and everything that lives, weaves, and breathes in Grüningen! And if this doesn't make you jolly, then you're no better than a load of dung. Amen. God give you and yours his blessing and send to us your love and friendship now and always. Amen, Amen. (IV, 390–91)

Tennstedt, November 12, 1795
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Erasmus von Hardenberg

Dear Erasmus,

. . . Your last letter was again delicious. It has a doubled charm for me—it entertains me and gives me matter to contemplate. I agree with your remarks concerning fanciful overenthusiasm, and only wish to remark parenthetically that I elevated Karl to "unknown heights" as a point of principle and that I would like to turn your attention to your own remarks concerning Grüningen.

You must not make Grüningen into a fixed ideal. Humanize it more. It would be a sad thing for you and Grüningen if one day a sudden change of attitude were to occur; and such a change is easily the case with persons of refined feeling who are passionate devotees.

I love the people in Grüningen as much as I love myself and you—but they are human beings, and after so long a sojourn among them as I have made, you would not be

able to avoid seeing the dirtier reverse side. I have seen that side, and after seeing it I am still tuned to Grüningen as previously. I saw it, however a priori beforehand and prepared myself for it. In this way I was not caught unprepared and reality did not gainsay my emotions. I will eternally love Grüningen, even if I never achieve my present hopes. As long as solitary, enfeebled hours do not come, I will remain steadfast and not allow disillusionment to shake my fundamental beliefs, but on the contrary abide in my former equilibrium. . . . (IV, 159)

In early November 1795, Sophie suffered the first eruption of the illness that claimed her life in the spring of 1797. The cause of distress was her liver. Her worsening condition led to three surgical procedures that began in July 1796 in Jena. In the latter stages of her decline, the illness moved to Sophie's lungs. The first symptoms of the crisis came on quickly, and they appeared to pass just as quickly. Hardenberg and Sophie's family were relieved. But the situation worsened episodically over the coming months. In the following letter, Sophie's death was not yet in view.

Grüningen, November 20, 1795
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Karl von Hardenberg
in Weissenfels

Dear Karl,

. . . These past few days have brought home to me vividly how very near to us is the loss of all our happiness and therefore how dangerous it is to speculate on happiness merely and how lasting peace is only possible by raising the soul over all the vicissitudes of fate, by tearing ourselves loose from everything that happens by virtue of the power of mere chance. At the beginning of the previous week — and the Pole Star were here.[17] We were quite pleased, and I abandoned myself to carefree rest after their departure. The previous Tuesday [November 17] was set as the deadline for the auditing of accounts—it was the anniversary date of my meeting [with Sophie]. The Saturday before I went home calmly in the afternoon and when Christel came with coffee she gave me the news—"there is a messenger here, and

> *Philosophie* [Sophie] is ill"[18]—even then I did not become particularly frightened—Nevertheless I hurried to the office and there learned from Just that Privy Councilor Eberhard von Sonderhausen had been sent for—Without more ado, I left and hurried to Grüningen—I entered the house and found everything in an uproar—Eberhard declared that the patient's situation was dangerous—the liver was seriously enflamed—the most excruciating pains since Monday, sleepless nights, burning fever—Already she had been bled twice—She was very pale and could not lie comfortably—but was cheerful and composed. I won't relate anything more. Now on Friday when I write this letter, all the danger is past. She's regained her appetite and improvement is underway completely. . . . (IV, 161)

Another important female confidante at this time was Wilhelmine von Thümmel, Sophie's stepsister, whom Hardenberg met about one year after his initial visit to Grüningen. A widow not yet thirty, Wilhelmine served as a lady-in-waiting for the Princess of Sondershausen.

As with other female confidantes such as Caroline Just, Hardenberg opened his heart to Wilhelmine with remarkable candor. "The need to communicate with a well-educated, feminine soul is so urgent, salutary, and natural to me that I view it as a very defined feature of my life," Hardenberg admitted (IV, 166).

Sophie's stepsister and Friedrich von Hardenberg met during November 1795 at the time of the first crisis in Sophie's health. Several letters followed that initial meeting. These letters shed light on Hardenberg's emotions and state of mind, as well as his feelings of attachment to Sophie and her family.

Weissenfels, February 1796
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Wilhelmine von Thümmel
in Sondershausen

> Excellent, gracious Lady,
>
> . . . Up to now you have gotten to know me only from a cheerful aspect—forgive my frankness—it would not please me if I didn't have better sides—or if I had only one such bet-

> ter side to cherish earnestly for the world, a side that might earn the agreement of everyone's respect and value. Looking back over my course through life, I espy many displeasing characteristics—my beginning is inconsequential—the hindrances are large and my powers are untried—but courage and conviction must not falter, and how could they falter with your friendship and good wishes at my side? I may be unlucky, for nature created me sensitive;—but the respect of better persons, who know me well, I hope never to forfeit. By chance an exceptional and lovely accident has led me into a family circle where I have found what I sought, where I will come to find what I scarcely dared hope to discover. What birth has denied me, good fortune has put in my path—I see in the midst of such fellowship what I miss in my own family circle. I feel that there are closer affinities than ties of blood—I find that chance is of a mood to lead me in a very motherly way—howsoever the usual humdrum order of things consigns me as much as possible to the evil tedium of the everyday. A fresh eye appraises rightly—Put yourself in my place—I have complete faith in your experience and in your unshakable trust in the face of misfortunes—but I must not reckon without taking all factors into account. . . . (IV, 166–67)

Around the time of the letters quoted previously, Hardenberg penned a fragment that shows how intensively he used the Grüningen months to grapple with ideas that would become the basis for his later activity as a poet. Hardenberg wrote the following fragment, "The Poet's Realm," during February/March 1796. At this time, he was just coming to the first anniversary of his engagement to Sophie von Kühn. In celebration of this anniversary, he had a ring inscribed with the words *Sophia sey mein Schuz Geist* (Sophia be my protecting spirit). Sophie's health was worsening; in summer 1796 she would undergo three torturous surgical procedures. Hardenberg's time of apprenticeship at Tennstedt with August Cölestin Just had come to an end, and he had returned to his family's home in Weissenfels with the intention of securing a position in the administration of salt mines under his father's supervision. His thoughts were on securing a steady income and place in the world.

"The Poet's Realm," written before Hardenberg had renamed himself Novalis, articulates briefly and declaratively an *Ars Poetica* that the later Novalis fragments and writings amplify. The fact that editors can now say with certainty that it originated in 1796 underscores the importance of the Grüningen period as a time of creativity and self-definition.[19]

[February or March 1796]
Fragment by Friedrich von Hardenberg

Goethe. Thümmel.[20] I myself.

Let the poet's realm be the world, pressed into the focus of his time. Let his plan and execution be poetic—i.e., poetic *nature*. He can make use of anything—but he must amalgamate it with spirit—he must make of it a whole. He must present the general as well as the specific—all presentation lies *in* oppositions, and his freedom to connect leaves him unconstrained. All poetic nature is *Nature*—the qualities of one pertain to the other. Although it is individual, it is of general interest. What good does it do us to have descriptions that leave the spirit and heart cold?—dead descriptions of dead nature—at the very least they must be symbolic, as nature herself, if they are not to be mere vagaries of personalized description. Either nature must be the vessel for ideas, or the soul must be the vessel for nature. This law must hold sway in the whole as in the part. In no way may the poet manifest the role of egoist. He must be a phenomenon unto himself. He is the imagining prophet of nature, just as the philosopher is the nature-prophet of the imagination. For one, the object is everything; for the other, subject. One is the voice of the Universal, the other the voice of the simplest singularity, of principle—one song—the other speech. In one, differentiation unites the infinite—in the other, multiplicity binds the most finite.

The poet remains eternally true—He perdures in the *cycles* of nature.

The philosopher transforms himself in that which perdures eternally—that which perdures eternally is only representable in change—that which changes eternally, only in fixity—completion—present moment. Its images are before and after. It alone is real.

> All deeds of the poet must be symbolic or affective / affective here means capable of arousing our feelings generally. / The symbolic is not affective without mediation—it occasions inner activity of the self—this fascinates and stimulates—the other charms and motivates. One is an act of spirit intellect—the other a suffering of nature—one goes from Seeming to Being—the other from Being to Seeming.
>
> One from imagination to intuition—the other from intuition to imagination.
>
> In former times the poet could be *all for everyone*—the circle was still drawn close—human beings were *more equal*—in terms of knowledge, experiences, customs, character—such a *less demanding* individual in this world of simple but powerful needs raised humanity gracefully above itself—to a feeling for the higher dignity of freedom—the openness to enchantment was still so fresh. (V, 9–10)

The soberest and most clearly focused portrait of Sophie was written by Hardenberg. It survives as a fragmentary sketch written shortly after her three operations in Jena, during the crisis of her illness in 1796. The title of the sketch, *Klarisse*, refers to Sophie. The name could have several connotations, including, as the editors of the historical-critical edition point out, "Clarissa" the heroine of Samuel Richardson's novel *Clarissa Harlowe* published in German from 1748 to 1753 and again from 1790 to 1793 or the Clarissa of Klopstock's ode "Die tote Clarissa" (IV, 734).

Weissenfels, August or September 1796
Klarisse: Description of Sophie by Friedrich von Hardenberg

> Her precociousness. She wishes to be pleasing to all. Her obedience and her fear of her father. Her decency and yet her innocent good nature. Her stiffness and submissiveness toward people whom she once cherished, or of whom she's afraid. Her demeanor during sickness. Her moods. The things she likes to talk about. Kindness toward strangers. Charitableness. Penchant for childish play. Affection for women. Her opinions. Sentiments. Clothing. Dance. Activities at home. Love for her siblings. Musicality. Her favorite things. Taste. Religiosity. Easy enjoyment of life. She likes to

read. Liking for women's work. / *She desires to be nothing*—she *is something*. / Her face—her figure—her *life*. her health—her political attitude. / Her movements. Her speech. Her hand. She's not much for poetry. Her demeanor toward others, toward me. Openness. / She has not yet arrived at self-reflection—arrived there too myself only at a certain point. With whom she has spent her years of life. Where has she been? The things she likes to eat. *Her behavior toward me*. Her fear of marriage. I must question her about her qualities—M[andelsloh] must also. / The ways she finds to be happy—to be sad. What pleases her most about people and things. Has her temperament awakened? What she said to Just. Her smoking. Her dependence on her mother, like a child. The anecdote with Selmnitz—about the *brothers*. Her impudence toward her father. Her confirmation. She once was slapped by Ma chère.[21] *Je reviens*. Her fear of ghosts. Her thriftiness. Heynemann. Three riders rode round the tower. How she wanted to restrain the thief. Her expression when she hears obscenities. Her talent for imitation. Her beneficence. Judgments about her. She is moderate—charitable. She is irritable—sensitive. Her desire to be refined—her aversion to vexation and gossip; Her attentiveness to strange opinions. Her spirit of observation. Love of children. Love of order. Desire to control. Her attentiveness and passion for *good manners*—she wants me to be liked everywhere. She got mad that I spoke to her parents too early and that I let my intentions be known too soon and too publicly.[22] She likes to hear stories. She won't let my affections bother her. My love often oppresses her. She is *cold* through and through.

> /Horrible gift of hypocrisy, gift of concealment
> of women generally. Her fine spirit of observation.
> Her genuine tact

/all women have that which Schlegel identified as the shortcomings of beautiful souls/

They are more accomplished than we, *more free* than we. For the most part we are better. They *perceive* better than us—their nature appears to be our art—our nature, their art.

> They are born artists. / They individualize, we universalize. / She does not believe in the life to come—but in the reincarnation of souls. She finds Schlegel interesting. She can't stand too much attention but pouts if she's overlooked. She has a horror of spiders and mice. She wants me to be happy all the time. I shouldn't see the wound. She keeps a formal distance. The "H" upon her cheek. Favorite foods: herb soup—beef and beans—eel. She likes to drink wine. Likes a show—loves comedies. She thinks more about others than herself. (IV, 24–25)

On January 9, 1797, Hardenberg received a letter with the news that his brother Erasmus had suffered a hemorrhage. Sophie had returned to Grüningen at year's end after several months in Jena following the unsuccessful operations on her liver. The outlook was grim. Adding to Hardenberg's distress: just prior to the news about his brother, he suffered an accident that broke his finger.

Faced with these adversities, he remained outwardly hopeful and wrote to Erasmus on January 20, 1797, that "care and a calm spirit strike me as the best means to your cure. In that respect, your letter filled me with optimism. It is written in a tone very reasonable and calm" (IV, 196). In regard to Sophie's health, he maintained the same tone of composed optimism: "[Her] wound has healed well, the fever is weak and at times gone—the discharge rather less, as well as the cough—her sleep is sound and continuous; she sleeps the greater part of the day. She doesn't perspire—her forces increase; the outlook is better—the feet are almost completely healed." On the same day, January 20, in a letter to Caroline Just, he wrote in a tone more intimate and realistic:

> How often since Michaelmas have I longed to be in Tennstedt. In the time between, it's gone very badly for me; that is why I haven't written—what good would it do me or you? The annoyances haven't ceased—and the old ones remain. Things worsened with Sophie—and here [in Weissenfels] there was nothing but disquiet, gossip, and foolishness—around New Year's I had the accident with my hand, and when I came home I found a letter written to me from

> Zillbach near Meynungen that my brother Erasmus lay mortally ill as a result of a deadly hemorrhage. Thank God that I heard from him again the day before yesterday that he's doing better. (IV, 197)

Hardenberg also summarized the situation earlier in a letter to his friend Friedrich Schlegel, with whom he was again in contact after a period of silence and separation.

Weissenfels, January 10, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Friedrich Schlegel
in Giebichenstein near Halle

> . . . My Sophie is a bit better than she was in Jena, and the doctors appear to be full of hope. She still gives me much cause for worry and concern. My aching hand disturbed the peace and pleasure of the few days that I could be in Grüningen. Yesterday I received the unpleasant news that Erasmus suffered a violent hemorrhage and lay dangerously ill in Zillbach. In a few weeks I probably must go there. It appears that cares and troubles have sworn against me. The troubles don't end. If I came to dear Sophie in this state of mind, disconsolate over my brother's difficulties, God knows what would become of me. . . . (IV, 194–95)

The winter months of 1797 were extremely difficult for Hardenberg. He had relocated to the family home in Weissenfels with the intention of pursuing a career in salt mine administration under his father's supervision. The family situation at Weissenfels was stressful and constrained, particularly in comparison to his memories of the idyllic months in Tennstedt/Grüningen. The arrival of his uncle (Friedrich Wilhelm von Hardenberg) increased the stressful atmosphere. Hardenberg had few confidants. In the following letter, he shares his thoughts with one of his female friends, Sophie's stepsister Wilhelmine von Thümmel. The letter shows stylistic traits and themes (such as antithesis) that will characterize his mature writings as Novalis. The two other letters, to his brother Erasmus and his friend Friedrich Schlegel, amplify these themes and state of mind and show the progression of his anxieties as Sophie's condition worsened.

Weissenfels, February 8, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Wilhelmine von Thümmel
in Sondershausen

. . . When you take into account the ongoing press of annoyances and impediments here, it will no longer seem strange that I feel satisfied to have accomplished only the things most necessary—I plunge myself as deeply as possible into the stream of human knowing in order to forget the dream world of fate and destiny, so long as I am submerged in those holy currents. There alone blossom the hopes that I forsake here otherwise—the reversals of this world become steps forward over there—the sword that wounds us here, there becomes an enlivening wand of magic; and the ash of earthly roses is the motherland of heavenly ones. Is not our evening star the morning star of the antipodes?

O! if the oracles are still at hand, then they speak from the trees of knowledge; thus they sound in us; thus we read them in the sibylline book of nature. My fantasy rises as my hope sinks; when hope is completely sunken and nothing remains but a marker that shows its absence, then my imagination will rise high enough to elevate me to a place where I can find what is lost down here. Early in life, I've learned to feel how precarious is my existence, and perhaps this feeling is the first living experience of the future world.

How much I wish to live once more with you some day in Grüningen. In March I will certainly come there, and then I'll give myself the pleasure of fetching you. The fulfillment of those wishes will certainly make you happy, and me as well; that we may finally then cease to tremble in fear for dear Sophie's days, that I no longer have to live like a distracted actor whose weal or woe hangs on whether a blossom falls in this world or the other. . . . (IV, 201–02)

Weissenfels, February 26, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Erasmus von Hardenberg
in Zillbach

. . . Your decision to study algebra is without a doubt very healing. The sciences have wonderful healing powers; at the very least they quiet pains like an opiate and raise us

to spheres surrounded by eternal sunshine. They are the most beautiful states of freedom that we are permitted. Without this consolation I could not and would not live. How otherwise could I have observed so stoically Sophie's sickness over the last year and a half and otherwise have been exposed to so many annoyances. Let come what will; the sciences stand by me—with them I shall withstand all hardship. . . . (IV, 202–03)

Weissenfels, March 14, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Friedrich Schlegel in Jena

Your letter has found me in an inconsolable situation. I have come back from Thuringia with the almost certain firm belief that Sophie has only a few days to live. If only I could weep, but I find myself in such a numb, anxiety-ridden state of torpor that every fiber of my being is lamed. A sense of despair, whose end I cannot see, holds sway inside me. I feel overwhelmed by an indescribable loathing for all things present, past and future. I can distract myself only occasionally by working for a few hours. My head is in the most desolate state—nothing avails. The certainty of possessing her has become indispensable to me—now for the first time I feel how imperceptibly she has become the foundation stone of my peace, my activity, my entire life. This disgust for life is terrible—and I foresee no end. I had hoped that the sciences would offer me some relief—but here, too, all is dead, desolate, deaf, and immovable. Sleep is my only blessing—I sleep whenever I can. God only knows how this will end—I'd gladly see you—you with your strong views might put some life into things and sciences—O! only a spark of living spirit—this dull anxiety is a horrible condition.

Take care—dear, good Schlegel—with me, it's almost done—be happier than I—only a miracle can restore me to myself.

Greet warmly those closest you. Enclosed are the books you sent me—many thanks—just now I can't yet settle my mind on reading. . . . (IV, 204–05)

Weissenfels, March 22, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Karl Woltmann in Jena[23]

It is my sad duty to share with you the news that Sophie is no longer living. After unspeakable suffering, which she bore admirably, she died early on the 19th of March around 9:30. She was born on March 17, 1782, and on March 15, 1795, she gave me the certainty that she would be mine. Since November 7, 1795, she has suffered. Eight days before her death I left her with the firm conviction that I would never see her again—it was beyond my strength to witness helplessly the horrid struggles of a blossoming young life laid so low, the appalling anxieties of that heavenly being. I have never feared destiny—not until the last three weeks did I see it as threatening. It has become night around me, while I yet saw the gleam of morning. My despair is boundless, as my love. For three years she was my constant meditation. She alone bound me to life, country, and occupation. With her, I am separate from everything, for I hardly any longer have myself. But it has become night around me, and it seems as if I would soon depart, and there I would gladly, peacefully be at rest and see the many, well-meaning faces around me—I want to live completely in her spirit, soft and good natured, as she was. . . . (IV, 206–07)

Weissenfels, March 24, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Caroline Just in Tennstedt

I received your precious letters by early Wednesday. Rest assured that you have made a very deep impression on me and that I feel inwardly in the keep of a heart of great friendship. Those loving words, so painful overall, were yet inexpressibly pleasant when daubed like mild balsam on such wounds. Tuesday morning [March 21] I received the news of Sophie's passing from a messenger sent by my brother Anton. For as long as I have carried this prospect about with me, I have awaited this announcement each hour with life-tormenting hopelessness—thus, with the arrival of this horrible certainty, a terrible weight bore down upon me, which only the *hand that shatters all chains* could assuage. Until then there still

shimmered a faint glimmer of hope, which now suddenly vanished, abandoning me to a terrible, isolating darkness.

The hours of bitterest pain are past. Already I have grown accustomed to the prospect of the grave, to the feeling of emptiness, to the remembrance of former, lovelier times. I grow rapidly cold and stony—evil has overtaken me quickly, always, while the good has been slow. The pain has lamed memory, which tormented me the most, because it attracted me so strongly. The dear pictures of our first acquaintance are no longer so shattering; the shadows of my dreams, the touching but at the same time safe, hope-affirming scenes from her time of sickness—the painful disquiet as long as I knew she still suffered, these have prepared me for the present condition of stillness, which the weakness of my nerves has hastened. You know how it goes with weakened people—they cannot all at once savor the bitter joys of sorrow—when the first storms of weeping are past, their dulled consciousness registers indifference to present realities, and in vain do they long for the soft tears of aftersorrow. But even this involuntary calm is an object of my most tormenting thoughts—I would be all right if only I could simply weep quietly. I am living as in a dream; I understand so little of the things around me—everything proceeds in such a frightfully ordinary way that I often ask myself—is it all truly real? Haven't you simply lost your mind?

On Wednesday, fourteen days ago, I was happy for a few hours for the last time in this world. Sophie was doing better—and a few lighthearted afternoon hours flew by—Thursday morning she suffered the first attack of horrible anxieties in my presence. Just beforehand she scolded me, because my heart could not contain itself and had to weep. Already at that time, as I ran about the garden half dead with the terror of the belief that I would not find her again among the living, already at that time, when the event that ended her beautiful life loomed so near, I was fully resigned to the prospect I had envisioned. For that reason I summoned up the courage to go away on Friday morning—I could not possibly bear to be present at the terrible scenes that I foresaw were soon to pass. How often I have rued this decision, even

if calmer consideration justifies me. No wounds cut deeper, though they cut more painfully. The departure from her remains for me a perpetual riddle; as much as the memory of that departure even now bows me down, the departure was truly cheerful. As the horses were harnessed—with all consolation about the end torn from me, I took my hat—gone were tears and misgivings—my heart beat calmly—I embraced her warmly and long—I even thought that this would be the last embrace—she asked me to come soon again—bestowed greetings on everyone—I embraced everyone present quietly and joyfully—indescribably happy was my last glimpse of that incomparable, noble, heavenly countenance as I departed—and so it remained for me for a time—though the rest of the day was all the more torturing.

I will eternally feel the torment of her suffering. The martyrdom of this heavenly soul endures as a crown of thorns for my remaining days. May God, to whom I have prayed so beseechingly, ordain that those days be short. To be separated from her for an uncertain and perhaps very long period of time—this is a thought I cannot endure. If my grief were to dwindle to a soft flame, which so consumed me that with but a light breath of air I would crumble to a heap of ashes—is this not a wish that Sophie, too, would endorse? Her life, moreover, wove together my spiritual existence—and since this spirit has left, the body has begun to part company and return to its elemental origins. The forms of my inner life lie shattered—I live in ruins—soon all will lie leveled with the earth. One thing vexes me—that I still persist amidst living, cheerful human beings like a tombstone that disturbs their fleeting joys. But just for this reason will I learn to keep silent composure. What would my good brothers and sisters not suffer alone? If you and my friends would only have patience with me during these early times, when I would cling still so anxiously to her remembrance, when I feel the need to speak of her and feel so gladly the need to hear her spoken of—afterward I will certainly ask less of you in this way—and then only when I am completely tired, cold, and yearning to cast a glance toward the land of my past. Otherwise I must keep

watch for flashes of my former state of mind. I am no longer the same—and it seems to me, if you would have and hear it all, that I should not render myself completely unfit—although perhaps this will occur anyway. I am lost to myself—the most important years of my life, those years when I came into possession of my own nature, those years when I first began to live—those years I must tear up like a scrap of burned paper—if I am able. Grüningen, the cradle of my better self, has become my sepulchre—the lonely grave in the tiny cemetery—the six feet of dirt that lie upon that heaven-filled breast—that is what fills my imagination, which otherwise soared to paradise. Only that heavenly eye which will never again hold me in its mild, indescribably sublime gaze, only this has power beyond all other contemplations to draw me upward.

How often I now turn over the thought that openness to the intimations of heaven should at length have influenced her mood. She held her countenance so withdrawn—she was so lovely—so much before her time—my mother said, when she first saw her silhouette—"Her face pleases me in some indescribable way; she appears so pious, so still, as though she were not really made for this world." Don't you think, too, that she was too good for me? O! And am I not the distant cause of her death; on this I do not yet reproach myself. About my love, I need not blush—now she knows better, how heartfelt and peerless was my love for her—that I had only one wish, which encompassed all others: to make her as happy as I could. Good Just—your insight—O! and my poem on the occasion of her last birthday—how incredibly prophetic in the end.

On the 15th of March she told me for the first time that she would be mine. On the 17th she was born—on the 19th she died—on the 21st I received the news—might I not presume to believe that I would follow her on the 23rd. How happy I would be if I were to know that today, today a year from now, "you will be beside her." Already the thought makes me very joyful.

Your letter contains so many unforgettable passages—so many that stir my deepest emotions.

March 28 [letter continued]

God reward you for this warm sympathy you bestow on the fate of a human being, who has at least the goodwill to deserve the friendship of other true human beings. I have begun this new page a few days after I finished the other. Each day confirms the sad supposition of my progressive indifference. Since then I have wept no more—the softer mood diminishes even more—and the good moments of flashing cheerfulness are completely absent. My ideas are busy—my intellect has gained more than lost—but love, love is missing—and with love's absence, all is absent—for love gives all—but love takes all as well. What does it benefit me to be the loom for ideas—there is no substitute for the living. This much have I won—the *firm* hope that I have not lost her—and this hope would not be any stronger even were Sophie able to appear before me again. How unspeakably happy I would be here, if sometimes she were to appear to me—to comfort and strengthen me with but only a single loving glance. How transfigured and illumined the experience of my life would become. Yet I still do not surrender this hope—it hangs upon another, which I perhaps one day shall write to you about.

What you tell me about Sophie's invisible presence is a brilliant truth—her image should and must become my better self—the magic image that is illumined deep inside me by an eternal lamp and which will certainly save me from so many trials and temptations of evil and sin. In those transfigured hands I have sheltered the virtue of my heart—she shall be an example to me—around the dead wafts the spirit of eternal peace, and this spirit of harmony, love, heartfelt goodness, gentleness, and humility should waft on me as well, for how am I and the dead any different—am I not as good as dead already? You say that only the future can give comfort—yes! the true future, not the few remaining trouble-laden years—but the future that lies on the other side, the future that fills us with indescribable intimations in the varied tones of nature and her many forms.

As I write this, my heart begins to question quite warmly whether my complaints are not self-centered,

small-minded, and narrow. If I want to be a truly higher human being, should not an eternal cheerfulness animate my eyes and countenance—and heavenly enthusiasm fill my breast? Who am I that I complain of earthly things so bitterly? Should I not thank God that He gave me so early notice of my appointment to eternity? Is it not an appointment to an apostolic calling? Can I earnestly bemoan Sophie's fate—is it not an advantage for her—is not her death and my dying-after a betrothal in a higher sense? God has preserved her and me from the insidious infection of the ordinary—He has willed to bring her into a higher finishing school, to transplant this delicate flower under the sky of a better heaven, and He has willed that I, the stronger and coarser man, ripen in the earthly air. Should not God now demand from me true elevation of spirit, manly consummation, deepest trust in His love—an unwavering gaze toward heaven and my higher vocation, an eternal vow of chastity and faith in the innermost, germinal ideas of humanity?

Just so do these ideas enter into my awareness with an unusual warmth—I feel what I might become—but God sees how fragile and weak I am—can I dare hope that such ideas can find a place to root in this powerless soul and that they not merely pass away. Now life is once more in me—but will life be able to hold out against the deadened nerves, against the ordinary and the customary? Sophie knows what is good for me—she for certain prays to God on my behalf—and only then will my complaint expire, when such ideas lose their power to persist.

If only such light-filled moments were perhaps the touches of my Sophie—O! when will it please her to be with me eternally?

This sad letter closes more cheerfully than I had thought. I feel myself even now so high—higher than I felt before, except for one moment. It is an unusual contrast to my previous steadfast indifference, to my horrible coldness and lack of energy. Farewell—good woman—write to me soon—about each small detail of her last days—about

the circumstances of her death—about her grave. This summer I will certainly visit her grave. It will be my magnet and the holy abode of my healing. Perhaps I will then be able to weep.

Your friend, Hardenberg

And yet something else—I cannot write yet to Grüningen. I asked Danscour in the last little letter for a lock of hair from the deceased. Please take care of this for me, if Danscour has forgotten this request—and then ask the mother for that green piece of cloth that Sophie always wore during her sickness and the gray chemise that Sophie wore in Jena and perhaps wore at the very end. If the mother would care to accord me with still more tiny mementos, if there are any, by which I mean merely her notebook entries or something like that, things I can keep without being indiscreet, I'd prefer it even better. Her earthly self still lies so close upon my heart. (IV, 207–13)

Weissenfels, March 28, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Rahel Just in Tennstedt

. . . I can't lament Sophie—God has certainly dealt with her in a truly fatherly way—and hasn't he also dealt that way with my frequent prayers? Now Sophie knows that my wish to have her as my wife was the second of my prayers for her and that the prayer that lay most on my heart was the prayer for her perfection. When I lament, I do so because it is my fate that bewilders me. Should it be thus? So sudden a change is very painful—it is certain that I must forget my entire former existence—I loved the earth so much—I had so much joy from all the dear little scenes that stood before me—granted, this is now difficult to overcome—But shouldn't the summons of the invisible world, this lovingly full, drawing near to God and near to the most sublime feelings possible to a human being—couldn't this possibly serve as compensation? Compensation—that sounds a little harsh—Sophie understands how I use this word—everything still remains a matter of her

will. Believe me, God would be wroth were I to say to him: Father, I will no longer grumble, I will gladly do everything, I will also love you with firm, inner devotion—but only if you restore Sophie to me again. She is certainly one of your dearest daughters, and therefore it is certainly right that I live my life completely in her and yearn for her eternally. . . . (IV, 213–14)

Weissenfels, March 29, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to August Cölestin Just
in Tennstedt

It is for me a bittersweet observation, that unhappiness increases so very much our appreciation for friendship and love, or at the least appears to increase our appreciation. The joy of a quiet estate goes so unnoticed, but with the feeling of bereavement the soul at the same time first notices what a calm benefactress she has lost. The longing for Sophie has markedly increased through her death, and my feeling for friendship has likewise risen with it. Your gentle letters were very pleasant nourishment for the same reason.

. . . Just as I previously lived in the present and in the hope of earthly happiness, so I must now more than ever live completely in the genuine future and with faith in God and immortality. It will be very hard for me to completely separate myself from this world that I have studied with so much love; the renunciation will lead to many frightful moments—but I know that there is a strength in human beings that with careful nurturance can develop into an exceptional energy. You would have sympathy for me were I to tell you of all the contradictions of the past hours. There is much about it in Caroline's letter. I do deny that I am afraid of the heart growing hard and the soul drying out—the condition lies in the disposition of my nature. Soft and impressionable by nature, nonetheless my reasoning ability expanded more and more and without my noticing pushed the heart aside. Sophie has given the heart its lost throne once again. How easily might her death have failed to restore the usurper to power, who then certainly would have destroyed the heart in rage. I have already very much felt its cold indifference—but perhaps the

invisible world and its power that still slumbered in me have saved me. The idea of God becomes more dear to me each day—How would someone be consoled and comforted—if he had never heard of God, and such a one would be very unhappy until this idea became known to him. I hope for a similar experience, if I am permitted.

Admittedly, it is not possible for love to lead most human beings to take this step—a cold sense of duty steps into love's place. My concerns become proper official business.

In addition, it's all become too noisy for me everywhere. I will withdraw myself more and more—in this way the step into the grave will one day be more ordinary for me—the distance that separates me from it will thus become ever smaller. The sciences achieve a higher interest for me because I study them for a higher purpose—from a higher standpoint. In them—in vistas of the invisible world, in a few friends and in the duties of daily business—I will live until my last breath, which seems to me to be not so distant as I've often feared. (IV, 214–15)

Weissenfels, April 7, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Dietrich von Miltitz
in Siebeneichen

. . . Since the 19th of March, the maiden on whom my entire soul depended—my Sophie—is dead. No one now lives more assuredly for a happier future—She was the soul of my life—no one now more assuredly faces a barren prospect. My wishes and longings were like yours so limited—and yet fate discovered even these limitations to be too large and exiled me and you to a space no larger than the grave.

My father loved her fervently—he wept for the first time in many years when he learned of her death.

As for me, I now can be quiescent—the bitterest resignation shall find a place in me—but can I cease to complain of fate when each day we must await the passing of my brother Erasmus? Consider my good parents, for whom such a loss is so new, so sharp—who have scarcely recovered from the shock of my tragic fate—my siblings—the poor youth suffers unspeakably much—his lungs are most

probably attacked—if at the same time the seat of the illness may originally have been the abdomen. He's been here [in Weissenfels] for three weeks. It is here that his sickness took such a turn for the worse.

The grief for Sophie's death has made me numb—I suffer less than I otherwise would have suffered. Although he might soon be well again, my parents are yet in the most pitiful situation. To them I might be also a withered leaf that perhaps may fall from the stem—six weeks have made two happy families miserable and have transformed scarcely expressible hopes into an endless grief. . . . (IV, 216–17)

Tennstedt, April 13, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Friedrich Schlegel in Jena

. . . You can imagine how this region—the old witness to my joy and hers—works on me. Nevertheless, I have a secret joy to be so near to her grave. It draws me closer, and this attraction at times makes me inexpressibly happy. My autumn is there, and I feel so free, unusually strengthened—something still can come of me. So much can I assure you solemnly, that it's now completely clear to me what a heavenly event her death has been—a key to everything—a wonderful, forward step of destiny. Now so much can be set free, so much that was unripe can be brought to maturity. A simple, powerful strength has come into my awareness. My love has become a flame that consumes everything that's merely earthly. Your hope has proven correct—there is much more healing strength, perseverance, and fortitude in my soul than I suspected—a healing strength that drains away malady—perseverance that measures not the hours—fortitude toward everything that profanes my holy place. For four years I was at the university and for one year have I studied—I'm 25 years old and have lived only half a year.

. . . We must spend some close time together this summer. Perhaps I will come from here to Jena on a visit. (IV, 220)

Tennstedt, April 14, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Karl Ludwig Woltmann in Jena

. . . I must renounce my plans to spend this summer in Jena, pleasant and instructive though it may have been. The unexpected occurrence of the death of my brother Erasmus precipitated my departure, and I have chosen [to come to] Tennstedt—so painfully the memories touch me—because here I am surrounded by friends, and out of a desire to be near her grave.

I knew already of her sickness, my friend—but I didn't know that it would be so dangerous. Only not a long sickness—it is something horrible and useless, since only ideas but not bodily suffering build our character—especially when that suffering is so severe that the spirit cannot master it. My Sophie has had a beautiful death—beforehand there were some terrible days that she patiently and with good humor bore. With every minute she became more amiable—at the end joyful and prepared in knowledge of her death—a gentle pain bore her all at once beyond all fetters. In the last days her body already had passed over into complete dissolution unnoticed by her, the last night she fantasized—all at once she shook her head—smiled and said: "I feel it, I am foolish—I'm no more use in the world—I must go."

My friend—I'm the same—the best in me withdraws—the rest collapses into pitiful dust.

You are very right—I must not lose confidence in myself—for this reason alone I still hold fast to her. Confidence awakens daily in me steadfastly and strongly—it thrives now in sweet repose, which surrounds me. My powers have increased more than diminished—I feel it now quite often, how destined all this was to happen. I am satisfied completely—I won through to the power which overcomes death in a completely new way—unity and form have embraced my existence—already the seed of a future state of being germinates in me. This summer I will truly enjoy myself, be genuinely active, truly strengthen in love and inspiration—I will not come to her in sickness—but in the full

feeling of freedom—blithe, like a bird of passage. I am already able to appreciate things more keenly—colors are brighter against a dark background, morning draws nigh—my anxious dreams herald it. With what delight will I relate them to her, when I awaken and find myself in the old, long-recognized ancient world, and she stands before me—I dreamed of you; I loved you on the earth—you resembled yourself, too, in the shape of your earthly form—you died—and there followed an anxious short period of time until I followed after you.

. . . And now yet a little more. Goethe's fondness for that sublime picture of Sophie has done more to make me like him than all his outstanding works. Now I truly love him—he has a place in my heart. I do not mean to deceive you when I say that I could not have judged him the apostle of beauty if he had not been moved by that little picture—It is certainly not passion—I feel it too undeniably, too coldly, too much with my whole soul, that she was one of the noblest and most ideal figures that ever was or will be on the earth. The most beautiful of all human beings must have been like her. A picture by Raphael in [Lavater's] *Physiognomy* had the most poignant similarity to her that I have yet been able to find, notwithstanding that it is certainly not a perfect picture by him. . . . (IV, 221–22)

Tennstedt, April 16, 1797
Friedrich von Hardenberg to Karl von Hardenberg in Lucklum

. . . take heart, Erasmus has triumphed; the blossoms of the loving garland loose themselves here one by one in order to assemble more beautifully and everlastingly hereafter . . . (IV, 223)

Journal
April 18–July 6, 1797

Tennstedt, April 18, the 31st day[1]

18. 31. Tuesday. 3rd day of Easter Festival.

Early in the day, sensual stirrings. Many thoughts about *her* and about me. Philosophy rather bright and easy. The end thought stood rather firm—feelings of weakness—but [at the same time] extension and progression. Moritz.[2] At the table and afterward, rather bright and talkative. Just[3] played the song: *Sing o!* Song and zither accompaniment. An apt passage in the fourth book of *Wilhelm Meister* caught my attention—one of Meister's soliloquies.[4] Afterward I went upstairs and worked on memoirs. I was not in the mood for thinking or work; I never seem to be in the afternoons, for the most part—perhaps the socializing hinders me—all social gatherings, where I merely keep company, disagree with me.

19. [April] 32.

Early in the day, many thoughts about the resolution—wavered and turned it over—then philosophy. In the afternoon, bright—up to 2—philosophy. Afterward, went through my older notebooks[5]—then walking—in the evening finished going through the notebooks. A letter came from Karoline[6]—moved me a bit—a poem from Landvoigt[7]—a letter of condolence from Grüningen—I showed the Councilor's wife[8] Sophie's portrait. We spoke much about her. All in all, bright and composed today.

20 [April] 33.

Today I thought about Sophie quite a bit. Early in the day, out of sorts—toward midday, better. Afternoon, again that way—not really cheerful—but with more feeling than usual. Nonetheless, I worked on the memoirs con amore. In the evening, I read my old letters to [Caroline] Just. Later I was in good spirits, but still felt unwell. Even so, I had many good thoughts today, all in all. Early in the day, I wrote to the Captain[9] and congratulated little Caroline[10] in Grüningen on her birthday.

21 [April] 34.

Early in the day, sensual fantasies. Then rather philosophical, the Rockenthiens came. For the whole day I remained in an indifferent but pretty good mood, despite social gatherings. I sometimes felt not completely well. I read some in *Meister* in the afternoon and was struck by passages that shed light on my development up to now. I thought about Sophie often, but without inwardness—toward Erasmus, cold. I ate too much again today.

22. [April] 35.

No entry.

23. [April] 36. [Sunday]

Early today I felt much more reasonable than yesterday. Much good material written down. After lunch, coffee in the garden, rather calm weather inside me for once. Thought often about Sophie and the resolution. In the evening I browsed in Young's *Night Thoughts*—thought much about *Meister*—otherwise in the usual social mood. I am altogether much more content with myself today than yesterday.

24. [April] 37.

Head not entirely clear—but even so, I had an early *blissful* hour. My imagination was indeed lascivious at times—but I was pretty good today. In the afternoon my head was clear. *Meister* occupied me the whole day. My love for Sophie appeared in a new light. In the evening I again conversed very freely—yet in between I thought about my intentions. The resolution stood forth bravely.

With Sophie, it will get steadily better. I only must live more fully in her. Only in her memory am I truly well.

25. [April] 38.

Today, manly and well. In the morning, nothing but *Meister*; thought about Sophie often—full of courage and free. Downstairs, I talked a lot—although sometimes I said some sensible things.

In the evening, a lively impression of her death. On the whole I can be rather satisfied today. My head was clear and I felt exceptionally firm and manly.

26 [April] 39.

In the morning, busy with *Meister*. Afterward, excerpted. In the afternoon, worked in the office. On the whole I can be content—I even thought about her without emotion—I have become almost happy—but in a way not unworthy of her—now and then I thought of her in a manly way. In the morning I had the fatal, oppressive, irritable sense of an oncoming head cold. The resolution stood firm. It is hobbled by moderation and a tendency to talk too much.

27 [April] 40.

Early in the morning, *Meister*—thoughts clear and especially poetic at times. In the afternoon, read official documents—then to the doctor—a long conversation about my health, my goals, my view of life—he wanted to turn my thoughts in a new direction—cheerful in the evening—chatted a lot about politics. Thoughts of Sophie and Erasmus were at times quite lively. All in all, today was quite good. I must behave more like a man—have confidence in myself—not withdraw and be shy, fainthearted, and soft like a child. I must learn to bear pain and sorrow better.

28 [April] 41.

Early today, lively yearning. Afterward, *Meister*. Afternoon, report.[11] Letter from Karl.[12] Good and manly—lively remembrances. I must finish *Meister*. I must learn to finish things—To bring a thing to conclusion.

29. [April] 42.

Meister. Older notebooks. After lunch I browsed through old alchemical papers. Then Anton came.[13] We went into the newly purchased garden. Until evening, very spirited—[wrote] a poem about buying the garden.[14] Otherwise quite good. In evening, argued too passionately while eating. Heartfelt remembrances now and then.

30–43–4th May. 47

Sunday [April 30] I was quite good. Report and *Meister*. After lunch I received letters from home—from Zillbach, Hubertsburg, and Manteuffel. I asked the Councilor to give me money—then I went to Grüningen—On the way I was spirited and full of thoughts. I met only Danscour[15]—the others however soon arrived from Klingen. At night I slept restlessly. The following day it rained steadily. In the morning I wept very much—Again after lunch. All day I felt blessed by her remembrance. On May 2nd the good parents gave me as a gift the cup, the little pouch, and the flask that dear Sophie received for her last birthday. I was very moved—then I went to her grave and put some flowers on it, flowers that I received earlier from the Councilor's wife. At midday they were busy with a big pretzel-bake.

After lunch I rode back to Tennstedt. The day remained well suited to reflection. Yesterday, May 3rd, I didn't do too much—Afternoon I wrote four letters—to Schlegel—Woltmann, Mannteuffel and Slevoigt in Zillbach. The first two letters I sent to Jena with a messenger dispatched in the evening. That evening I received a letter from Kommerstedt. I had a late and quite lively conversation with the Councilor's wife, and as a consequence saw my beloved images only from a distance that evening and could not warm up to my cherished themes.

Today in the morning I thought of Sophie ardently—the resolution took on a somewhat more gloomy aspect. Then *Meister*. Then the letter to Slevoigt taken to the post—At lunch I spoke at times with calm presence of mind—then wrote upstairs on a variety of subjects and *Meister*—on a walk I talked much about reports—business visit to the salt mines—Miltitz and his affair.[16] Afterward I worked upstairs again. Then came Rüling, and I received a letter from father and Karoline. At dinner very spirited. Rüling had to tell about Stolberg. Gustchen Bran-

des, whom we wanted to visit afterward, was not at home—I ate a lot. Then I talked to Zedtwitz a bit. Afterward a general conversation—until I went upstairs. Now I feel cold and *all too much in the mood of everyday life*. Socializing doesn't agree with me yet. Strive only for the highest, enduring reflection and its mood. Oh, that I can remain so little on the heights!

5. [May] 48.

In the morning, as usual, thought of her. After that about critique. Then *Meister*. After eating, *lots* of political chatter. *Meister*. Went walking—clear and reasonable thoughts while strolling, especially concerning Goethe's observation that one so seldom knows and chooses the right means to one's goal, so seldom chooses the right path.[17] I seem now to want to be more firm and grounded. Evenings I ate *a lot*—I spoke with the Councilor's wife about Caroline. Later on I had dear Sophie's image in a lively way before me—in profile, next to me on the sofa—in green scarf—I prefer to picture her in characteristic situations and clothes. In the evening, for the most part, I thought about her *with quite lively inwardness*. I have reason today to be satisfied with everything. God has guided me lovingly so far—he will certainly continue to do so.[18]

6. [May] 49.

Meister. Afternoon, lively thoughts. Letters to father and Caroline. Letters from Woltmann and Schlegel[19] together with books. In the evening I read aloud from the journal *Deutschland*—mood very bright and free.

I can be content with my faithfulness and remembering. Thus pleased, I still couldn't fall asleep—as yesterday, I was restless.

7. [May] 50. [Sunday]

This morning I read the new publications. Then I excerpted from *Meister* and wrote down some thoughts. In the afternoon I went to church. Afterward I disputed with the Councilor over his and my religion—vigorously, but nonetheless cold, deliberately and exactly. Mosel came. I went walking—had many precise thoughts. Wrote them down at home and went to see Gustchen—There I felt quite well—She sympathized warmly with me. We shared our woes—I sought to calm her a bit—It is

a joy to see two people completely open to one another. Misfortune always brings human beings closer. I didn't think about Sophie very much tonight—except a few times, especially in the church, and with true devotion. In the morning I was somewhat sensual—I also discovered in myself an exceptional fear of falling deathly ill—She appeared to be somewhat present. I don't seem to be totally comfortable with my resolution. It appears so settled to me, it sometimes annoys me that it lies so far in the unreachable future, that it appears *so strange* to me.

8–9–10 [May] 53. Grüningen.

From the day before yesterday I don't remember much—It was, however, as usual. Early yesterday I drove here with the Councilor. Afternoons I did something—I translated from Horace—my remembrances were not very lively. Today I took something for my digestion—I didn't do anything in the morning but translate. I felt quite well. After lunch I had a lovely walk in the garden—the weather was beautiful—a lively remembrance of her—then I worked a little more—went walking—picked flowers and went to her grave. I was very well—although cold—nonetheless, I wept—the evening was very lovely—I sat for a time on her grave—the bells rang for evening—afterward I went back—wrote some reflections upstairs—went to eat—After eating I became very agitated again—I wept passionately at the place; I spoke with Ma chère.[20]

Evenings, talking with the Councilor about this and that.

In the morning the resolution was very distant—in the evening, much closer.

11. [May] 54.

In the morning, Philosophica. It was a beautiful morning—after lunch I slept—thunderclouds on the horizon—it became dark and stormy—I spoke again with Ma chère—moved like yesterday. Afterward the sky lightened again—I continued a critique of *Meister*—with thoughts of *Meister* and related subjects, I went walking in the beautiful weather—picked flowers—scattered these on her grave—I was with her intimately—this half hour I was very happy, very much at peace—very enlivened by her remembrance. In the evening I was quite spirited and enjoyed the beautiful evening for a long time with the others.

12. [May] 55.

Lively lascivious feelings from early morning to afternoon. I wrote some—read some letters from Thümmel[21]—started an answer to a specific point—slept after lunch—went to coffee as usual downstairs—then back up—and soon went walking. The weather was lovely and my head was well tuned. When I came home—I learned that the Selmnitzes were nearing the village—I went out to meet them—afterward at my beloved grave—where I remained until seven—and rather deeply meditative, but did not cry. At home in the evening I had some emotional moments in conversation with Ma chère. Then the father came[22]—we ate and went to bed.

13. [May] 56.

I got up early at 5:00. The weather was lovely. The morning went by; I didn't do much. Captain von Rockenthien and his sister-in-law and children came. I received a letter from Schlegel with the first part of the new Shakespeare translations.[23] After lunch I went walking—then coffee—the weather darkened—first a thunderstorm and then cloudy and stormy—very arousing—I began to read Shakespeare—I really became engrossed. In the evening I went to Sophie. There I was indescribably joyful—lightning-like moments of enthusiasm—I blew the grave away from me like dust—centuries were as moments—her presence was palpable—I believed she would appear at any moment[24]—When I came home—had some emotions in conversation with Ma chère. Otherwise I was very happy the entire day. Niebekker came in the afternoon. In the evening I had a few good ideas. Shakespeare gave me much to ponder.

14–15. [May] 57–58 [Sunday–Monday]

Both days I got up very early. Did hardly anything. Many lustful thoughts. The first day Mandelsloh came by early—I went to church—there I felt very well. In the afternoon some officers stopped by. In the evening I could only come to my peaceful place quite late—many people went there. Anton[25] also came by and remained until yesterday evening. Yesterday early I went to Ottenhausen—spoke with Römer. Afternoon, with Anton. After eating I spoke again with Ma chère with usual emotion. Both days there was much hustle and bustle in the

house. Yesterday evening I was at the grave and had some wild moments of joy. Mandelsloh came in the evening—rode off rather early, however. We sat in the living room together rather inwardly—sang a soft melody—*How Gently They Rest*. In the evening everyone went to bed early, and I conversed alone with Mandelsloh concerning Sophie and me. The resolution came often into discussion these days. My mother, father, and the method still trouble me. Thought much about Sophie; yet there was also no shortage of silly ideas.

16. [May] 59.

Today Mandelsloh left early. She, him [Friederica's husband], Anton, and Römer I won't see again. They all went to Günstädt—the day was beautiful—Early I chatted with [Sophie's] father and his brother. Around twelve [they] left. I mused a bit. Afterward I read Shakespeare—drank coffee—then went into the beloved picture salon—opened the cabinet—*saw the things that belonged to my Sophie*, read my letters and hers—Afterward I was completely with her. I went walking in the garden—got some milk—found Ferguson's *Moral Philosophy*[26]—read it in the church cemetery, where I also drank my milk—then I went walking again—then back to the grave again—now the father came—I got dressed—the Princess of Sondershausen came by[27]—with the others back from Günstädt—I was quite lively and fit at the table—

> The day was very lovely—the
> Evening was not suited to my head—

The resolution received new life, however—new firmness.

17. 18. [May] 60. 61.

Yesterday I didn't do anything. The princess stayed until afternoon. The Niebeckers and the Larisches came by. Most of the day in open air. In the evenings, went walking, and at the usual place. The afternoon was exceptionally lovely. The meal was served under the lindens with music and nightingale songs. I was very happy until toward evening. Thought joyfully about the resolution—about Sophie, too, quite often. At the grave I was rather ardent. I have reasoned a bit too much, today as well—gossiped about people, after my old habits. Today more than usual I was anxious with thoughts about Sophie—the entire day warm—and sleepy. I wanted

to do much—but nothing came of it. Rockenthien senior left early. The head all in all was clear—only toward evening, like yesterday, headaches. Toward evening during the walk and earlier in the parlor I had a few good thoughts. At the grave I was not moved—the resolution was lively.

I must live more and more only *because of her*—only *for her* do I live—for myself and others, not at all. She is the highest, the one and only. *If only I can be worthy of her in every single moment*—My main task should be to bring everything into relation to the idea of her.

19. [May] 62.

Early today, some colic. I didn't do much early on. The Captain and I busied ourselves over old files and documents. I found myself very sleepy. After eating I spoke with Thümmel—then dozed—chatted with Thümmel about divinatory topics in the children's room over coffee. The Selmnitzes came by—I wrote a little upstairs. On a walk I grasped a few clear ideas. At the grave I was reflectively thoughtful—but mostly unmoved. These memories have caused me again some anxiety for a few days—I feel inexpressibly alone at certain moments—such an appalling misery has befallen me. At the grave it occurred to me—that through my death I would show mankind such an example of devotion unto death—such love that I offer her makes this possible.

20. [May] 63.

The father traveled early today with Thümmel to Sonderhausen. I did little—was very sleepy. Early I spoke for a long while at the rose-planted grave with dear Caroline. I read *Romeo* again—

Grüningen
20. [May] 63.

I read with care the essays in Niethammer's *Journal*. In the afternoon I was able to think clearly. It was very hot, like yesterday. At the grave I pondered much, without really being moved—But this evening, as during the whole day, I felt the sorrow of her death—the loneliness of my situation—the horror of her loss.

Without her there is *nothing* left for me in the world—I really should not place value on anything any longer.

21. [May] 64. [Sunday]

Early, copied a little from Fichte—a bit too involved with my lustful thoughts. In the afternoon, the mother went to Weissensee with Caroline for the baptism. Friderieke Niebekker was there. I was inwardly active—went back and forth before my door for a long time—wrote—Mamsell came—I talked a lot about myself with her. Then I went to the grave—where I meditated and experienced indescribable peace. I debated the reasons for the resolution. In the evening we were quite lively—Günther entertained us—then I did a little walking and sang, completely lost in remembrance of Sophie.

Tennstedt. 22. [May] 65.

I packed up early—went once more to the good grave—and afterward went with the Rockenthien children (who went on to Langensalza) to Tennstedt. There I found much news—received a letter from my sister. Leisching had also just arrived. After eating I read the literary news and magazines with much interest. We went walking in quite splendid weather. On the way I spoke quite often with the Councilor concerning literary topics—my head was well tuned—I spoke better than usual and had clear views. In the evening, we again spoke a good deal, especially concerning my father. Later I felt restless because of Sophie—But nevertheless soon fell asleep. As the mortal pain subsides, the spiritual sorrow grows stronger, along with a certain calm despair. The world becomes ever stranger—I feel increasing indifference toward the things around me. The *brighter* it gets *around* me and *inside* me—

I only must not allow myself to begin to reason through my decision—Every attempt to ground in reason, every pretense of the heart is already doubt, hesitation, and *unfaithfulness*.

23. [May] 66.

This morning I was active—then I went walking—after lunch I read a bit—then I went with the two girls to Kutzleben—The weather was beautiful—cool—blue skies—crystal clear. I was in a very cheerful mood. On the way back I thought a good deal about *Meister*—At home I wrote as usual in haste and impatience two letters to father and Caroline; in the evening I went tired to bed. Got up early to take something to settle my digestion.

I must not analyze the decision any longer—and how I force myself to certain thoughts, through striving and [use of] certain means to attempt as well to stimulate myself to specific moods deliberately. Thus must I work from force of will—thus must I learn to transport myself into an intentional state of mind with the effort and enthusiasm of a beginner.

24. [May] 67.

Early yesterday I was very active—then I went walking. After eating I slept—then I went walking. The tenant Jäger came by and conversed with us for about an hour—then I wrote letters—to Jena—but not successfully. In the evening, I was content. Emotions did not arise, but nonetheless I thought much about her as usual.

25. [May] 68.

I woke up feeling dull—afterward, however, I was much inclined to thinking—I read through Hülsen,[28] who pleased me greatly—the Councilor came up—I told him my opinions concerning the French war—as usual hastily and confused. We went for a walk. The day was again unusually beautiful. In the afternoon I read in *Asmus*, where I found much that I liked—went for an uninspired walk—slept at home—*completely abandoned myself to lust*—wrote a letter without enthusiasm and found myself in a condition of dissatisfaction and doubt.

> I must at all events learn to assert my better self within the swirl of daily life and within the swirl of changing moods. *Incessant thinking about myself and that which I experience and undertake.*

I went walking once again, thought through my self-doubts and problems, found at home a letter from my father and was quite reasonable and cheerful with others that evening.

26. [May] 69.

Early Fichte's *Natural Law*—then wrote a report—sent off the message to Jena. After the midday rest, Fichte again—Went to Gustchen—took a walk—many good thoughts. At home I found Caroline ill. She soon felt better—in the evening I chatted about chemistry and mathematics. I thought of Sophie diligently—it became especially clear to me that the most elegant scientific views and suchlike prospects must not have

power to bind me to this world. My death will be a testament to my feeling for the highest—true self-sacrifice—not an escape—not an expedient. Also, I have noticed that it's evidently my destiny—I should achieve nothing here—in the blossoming of life, I should separate myself from everything—Only now must I learn to enjoy the best in everything as well as myself. I now learn to enjoy and know myself—but just for this reason I must depart.

27. [May] 70.

This morning I had a great deal of pleasure with Hülsen, whom I read and excerpted. He made me feel indescribably good. In the afternoon I sat in the arbor and read in Fichte's *Natural Law*. I had many good thoughts as a result—especially about morality. Then I went walking again with the Councilor—and in the evening after eating one more time. I thought about her a few times today—but distantly—not as usual.

28. [May] 71. [Sunday]

The whole day was very happy. It was the last day in Tennstedt. I was bright and buoyant the entire day, toward evening very cheerful and early very busy and productive—without lust—cold and without passion—all the same in faithful remembrance of my chosen one.

29. 30. [May] 72–73.

Yesterday morning the Councilor went to Stolberg. I worked a few hours—packed—received a letter from Schlegel and Woltmann—then went down, read Roman history—and departed Tennstedt in the afternoon at 3:30. I became very thoughtful. Between the border gate and Grüningen I had the joy of finding the true concept of the Fichtean "I." Lascivious feelings the entire day—a mood that pursued me today as well. This morning I spent rather sleepily—even so I still could think a little and read some Hülsen. In the afternoon I received a messenger and letter from my father—I settled my departure date for Thursday. At the same time there came an older letter from Schlegel, together with the third issue of Niethammer's *Journal*. In the afternoon it went better with writing and thinking—also, the lustfulness went away. In the evening, when I went to the beloved's resting place—my thoughts became depressing. These distracted me and hindered me from enjoying the quiet, sad pleasure of

her death. The decision stands firm—I turned over the difficulties of the undertaking with von Ende whether anyone had died from poisonous plants. The day was not unfruitful—but without much feeling.

[Wiederstedt]
31. [May] 1st June. 2nd June 74. 75. 76.

The last day in Grüningen I was very diligent. The Captain[29] came by—we talked about this and that—in the afternoon I went walking after some study. The weather was beautiful and I was in good spirits. I met the Magister and went with him to Topfstedt. On the way back I found some people by the grave. So I went home—packed up—conversed a bit more after eating with Ma chère and dear Caroline about the eternal good. Afterward I found a quiet place. There—without quite expecting it or seeing it coming—I was once more truly moved, very much with her inwardly. I once more swore on my decision—then I went to bed. Early yesterday the Captain went as far as Artern with me—I was much cheered up with the beautiful weather. In Sachsenburg we met some people carrying a drowned man. In Artern we ate at Semlers. I showed the Captain around and then we parted. On the way I had many thoughts. In Eisleben I saw Mindermann for a short time—also George and Wilke. In Wiederstedt I found everyone lively and well—and content. With a sincere prayer to Sophie, I went to sleep. Today I got up very early—my father went to Klosterrode. The Comtesse was very sick. I was busy very early. Then I chatted a few hours with mother and sisters—got dressed—read through a packet of documents from father—went walking in the garden with Caroline—and chatted again with mother and then with Landvoigt until it was time for lunch. The two officers whom I expected today did not come. After a nap, I read—went afterward with Landvoigt to the pastor—where I spent a few hours quite calmly and pleasantly. Father came—the Comtesse was doing better. I remained in conversation with Father over various topics for the rest of the evening. I found some letters from Karl and the old Brachmann.

All in all, I have the happy expectation in my soul that I can resolve this more easily than I thought. Human beings think that they are more indispensable than they are. My mother gets little pleasure from me—likewise my father. My siblings, especially the older ones, will learn to do without me. In short, my disappearance will make less of an impression on anyone than I feared.

3. 4. 5. [June] 77. 78. 79. [Saturday–Monday]

My father left early—then I was busy—killed a few hours chatting with Bek and Karoline—then I went walking a little, and until it was time for lunch I was with Bek discussing business and walking him around the estate. After lunch, Elten stopped by for a while—I walked around—read, wrote, and in the evening went walking with Landvoigt.—Yesterday the whole day went badly for me. I was in the fresh air for almost all late morning. The afternoon passed with similar useless activities—I began to doubt and to question without end. In the evening I went with Karoline to the pastor. Early this morning I had a headache. The doubts and uncertainties continued—I did very little—was very desirous. This afternoon it is somewhat better.

The weather since yesterday afternoon is cold and damp—now and then I forgot myself in conversation with Landvoigt; *otherwise I am almost always composed and calm in my outward appearance*. I thought of Sophie as before. The resolution stands firm. This evening toward dinner time and afterward I conducted myself very calmly and composedly and thoughtfully listened to the pastor and spoke with him.

6. [June] 80.

Today Inspector Senf stopped by early;[30] went away again soon. I was diligent and in good spirits all day. In the evening I had a sweet, spirited, highly animated hour of remembrance. Whoever flees pain no longer wants to love. The lover must feel this gap eternally and keep the wound open always. God grant me to feel eternally this indescribable pain of love—the melancholic remembrance—this courageous longing—the manly resolution and the firm and fast belief. Without my Sophie I am absolutely nothing—With her, everything.

In the evening I was with Bek—calm and satisfied.

7. [June] 81.

Today I was busy with my old papers—my head was clear—After lunch parents and Sidonie came back from Gnadau. I went walking a little afterward.—Evenings I was with father and then I went quite late to the pastor, after an enthusiastic quarter hour of joyful remembrance and longing. I thought of Erasmus with emotion when Father spoke of him.

8. [June] 82.

Early today I anticipated the hour of remembrance—read and wrote only a little—sent Karl a letter. I went around with Father the entire day. My resolution stood completely unshaken. It only needs to be reasoned through a bit more.

9. [June] 83.

The entire day was spent in forest and field. The lascivious fantasies of the morning led to an explosion in the afternoon. I had a headache in late morning. Afternoon I felt in good spirits—also in evening very given to thoughts. At table I chatted and talked very much—*after my usual custom*. The only good thing I found today—the idea of indescribable loneliness, which since the death of Sophie has surrounded me—*with her the whole world has died for me*. Since then I no longer belong here.

10 [June] 84.

In the morning in Eisleben—lively and clear—Came back for lunch. On the way I told Father many things about Grüningen. In the afternoon I was in a very good mood—very calm and spiritual. I wrote quite a bit and busied myself with my old papers until evening. After eating I was with Father. [French] Republicanism has awakened in me again. I only thought briefly about Sophie.

11. [June] 85. [Sunday]

Mindermann was here today from Eisleben. Bek was in my room the entire morning. Only early and in the afternoon at coffee did I have time to write a little and read.

In the evening I had some lively remembrances. I am looking forward impatiently to autumn. I must be on my guard against fear, i.e., against willful delusions. Joyfully like a young poet will I die.

12. 13. [June] 86. 87.

Yesterday Rimrodt was by. On both days I did little and thought nothing. I was with Father the entire time. On both days I looked forward with enthusiasm to solitude and impending escape.

She is dead—so will I die—the world is desolate.

Even my philosophical studies should no longer interfere. In deep, clear-spirited calm, I will await the moment that calls me.

14. [June] 88.

He who excludes her, excludes me. *The engagement was not for this world.*[31] I am not destined to be fulfilled here—All [my] talents are only touched upon and potential.

The entire day passed without my doing anything—I felt horribly dull and good for nothing. Bodily indisposition—changeable weather—lifestyle as usual—society—idleness—too little occupied with her—that is the cause of my discontent.

15. [June] 89.

Today I feel the same dullness and discontent—my father went away early today—only after I slept a little more before eating did I feel once again lively in my old sentiments and memories.

Without her, what do I have? May I never forget the moment early in the morning at nine o'clock on March 21st when I read Anton's letter and the terrible words—*our departed Sophie*—and afterward in the letter of the Councilor—*our transfigured friend*. God in heaven—how can it happen that I often feel only halfhearted and cold?

Diary
From 16th to 29th June. [Weissenfels]

On the 16th (Friday) I felt terribly dull and unhappy—also in the morning of the 17th—here there awoke suddenly after satisfaction of my fantastical desires *Vis et Robur.*[32] I decided henceforth to choose vigorous bodily activity and be on guard against lethargy. The consequence was that I went that same afternoon in stormy-bright weather with Landvoigt to Ballenstedt. We visited Rimrodt—on the way I spoke a great deal with Landvoigt about Schlegel and about myself. The other morning at 4:30 we went with rather tired legs in sunshine to Thale. The beautiful route became unpleasant for me. After a short rest and refreshment we climbed the marvelous Rosstrapp.[33] The way down did me in. After lunch we drove back to Ballenstedt and spent a lively evening in the

garden. The next day we went back to Wiederstedt. We spoke about philosophy quite a bit—I knew my way about and spoke quite passionately. From Quenstedt—where the pastor and his wife met us, hiking became very difficult for me and my throat was sore from so much talking. In the afternoon I recuperated in Wiederstedt, so much so that I spent time there pleasantly in the garden and was quite good company.

On Tuesday [June 20] the children left with Landvoigt. Tuesday and Wednesday I spent lethargically without many thoughts. I did little but read the Endorf files. I spoke a good deal with Elten and was generally in good spirits and entertained everyone. The same for the entire return journey. Wednesday afternoon I spoke with Elten for about one hour about my situation. Thursday afternoon we traveled in fine weather to Köthen—where I picked up at the bookstore a copy of the *Kampanerthal*[34] and the *Mückenalmanach.*[35] Early Friday we arrived in Dessau in rainy weather. In the afternoon the sky brightened, however, and we traveled to Wörtlitz in splendid evening weather. Saturday was also lovely—that day we completed our tour of the garden, which we started the first evening. In the afternoon the prince went boating with music and company in a gondola. Sunday we saw the castle, the Gothische Haus, and traveled that evening in lovely weather with Minister of War von Viereck and his wife in the gondola. Karoline was sick the entire day. I read the *Kampanerthal* with enthusiasm all day. Poland brought me from Weissenfels a letter from Schlegel, which set my philosophical powers in motion. On Monday we went to Halle and on the way saw the Georgium [gardens] in Dessau, I at times had clear thoughts. Tuesday [June 27] in the afternoon we arrived here in good shape. The sofa on which my blessed brother had suffered so much moved me greatly. In the afternoon I pulled myself together and by evening felt bright, thoughtful. In the morning [June 28] I wrote down some philosophical thoughts of value—read in Schelling's *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, went with my father to Kösen—wrote in the afternoon to Karl—went to Severin and in the evening to bed with *Hamlet*. Today early I read in Schelling's *Ich*[36]—in Schlegel's *Greeks*,[37] and did the accounts for father. After eating I again read in *Greeks*—went walking and fantasized about what I would do if I were the Elector of Saxony. At home I spent time with the book-fair catalog—attempted an overview of the same. Tired from this activity I went outside again—the weather was beautiful—and made literary plans. I especially like the

idea of a journal under the title *Contributions to a Scientific History of Humanity*.

Historical and philosophical overviews, as for example my plan for the ordering of the book-fair catalog, captured my interest and struck me as very useful. My head was very clear this evening. I feel that in many respects I have advanced. I have also gained in memory, ability to observe, and expression. My steady-mindedness, however, must increase very much. There are still too many gaps. My resolution stands completely unchangeable. Since my journey to Rosstrapp I am again rather satisfied with myself—it must however always improve—steady-mindedness and calm are the main things. Take into consideration that you need to behave cautiously and pleasantly toward father—be careful in communications with Schlegel—exercise continuous, mindful attention—always have dear Sophie in front of your eyes—do not forget the brevity of three months—don't do too much—be moderate—and don't indulge your tendency to playing tricks and frivolous activities—it doesn't become you anymore—in the least of things, moderation.

Christ and *Sophie*

30th June. 104.

Yesterday evening in bed I remembered Sophie very vividly. We went to Dürrenberg. Afternoons I read a little in Schellings *Ich* and went afterward walking—came home with many thoughts—wrote—and chatted for the rest of the evening with the parents in Caroline's room.

1st July. 105. [Saturday]

In the morning, I read Schelling. Then I wrote with rather dull wits to the Councilor. After eating I finished the letter and one other to Grüningen. Then I went walking—the evening was as lovely as it gets. I had a few ideas about aesthetics, but my head was too dull to think them through. In the evening I wrote to Schlegel. I thought of Sophie quite often—seldom moved—with inwardness. It appears to me that I should give my memories more time and contemplation and live more outwardly in her remembrance.

I ate too much again today. O, without manners and moderation I will not become a better person.

2nd July 106.–6th July 110.

Sunday morning, Schelling. Then, accounts for Father. Afternoons to Mertendorf—evening not well—received Schelling's *Ideas*[38]—Monday morning [July 3] to Dürrenberg—in the evening met Böse—then came Schlegel and Langermann. Since then much is discussed—polemics—joked and commented until the next day—this style of living ruins me completely. Wednesday [July 5] the day of the first operation,[39] I would have enjoyed myself. Tuesday Langermann praised the merits of cherry liqueur. Early today an earnest conversation about suicide with Langermann. Afternoon drove to Gosek. I will go on to Kösen, to be alone. She remains always my only possession. Mankind is no longer suitable for me, just as I am no longer suitable for it.

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Autobiographical and Biographical Testimonies

Excerpts from a Letter by Friedrich von Hardenberg to Finance Minister von Oppel in Dresden, Weissenfels, end of January 1800

. . . I now come to the end of your letter, where you urge me to make public some details of my personal circumstances. Your amiable goodness of spirit encourages me to let you know something of the story of my last years. May your friendly interest in my personality allow you to receive this as evidence of my complete trust, and it would please me greatly if you were to approve of my actions. My uncle, who is a member of the German Order, bestowed much attention on me since my childhood, and he maintains a special interest in my education.[1] My father since his youth stood in the closest relationship with this man who was in every respect a worthy individual. His relationship to his brother was more like that of a son to a father than as one brother to another. My uncle's character is one of unshakable integrity and of the strictest adherence to fundamental principles. His intellect bears the cultured stamp of an old-fashioned man of the world, but so, too, his narrow-mindedness. Good fortune spoiled him—he never felt the pinch of material needs; therefore, he never learned to bear the limitations of basic necessities and never learned how the heart and mind can compensate for the thousand comforts of the good life. He grew up in the greater world and lived continuously in its circles. Lacking imagination, accustomed to judging the needs of the heart from the perspective of clever reason and inclined to submit to the pretensions of outer appearance and glamour, he lost over the course of his life a sense for [the heart's] demands and sacrificed his opinion and family to his inclinations.

From childhood on he gave me opportunities to satisfy my vanity and promised that brilliant success would follow from my lively nature. He flattered me with the most pleasing hopes of playing a role in the world, and he certainly would have warmly supported such a choice of direction in life. Despite my father's submissive attitude to my uncle and despite my father's similarity to him in many casts of mind, he differed quite markedly from my uncle insofar as he taught us by precept and by example to scorn outward appearance. Through his example and exhortation he taught us to disdain superficial brilliance. He encouraged us to be diligent and moderate and expressed pleasure when we followed the inclination of our hearts without regard for the opinion of the world. He commended to us the benefits of a quiet, domestic estate and urged us often never to make decisions or act solely on the basis of interest and ambition. My uncle put great emphasis on the prerogatives of station and birth, my father smiled at both. I went to school filled with the vain hopes of my uncle and enflamed with a desire to enter the greater world. I hoped to find my way to this Eldorado by means of a rich marriage, and I thought that it wasn't really necessary to make a thorough study of jurisprudence. Luckily, from my earliest years I had an inextinguishable attraction to the literary arts, and this had occasioned already many conflicts with my worldly ambitions. My uncle often ridiculed the arts and humanities, and although I was careful not to show my true colors, secretly I remained loyal to these disciplines.

In Jena I became well acquainted with outstanding scholars and acquired a love for the muses, all the more so as the fashion of democracy at that time made me revolt against the old beliefs of the aristocracy. Philosophy interested me, but I was far too flighty to bring this interest farther than to acquire a facility with philosophical terminology. I went to Leipzig and successfully situated myself in a charming society which led me back to my earlier attitudes and wishes and enlivened my sense of vanity. My heart awoke there with a lively passion for a young woman, whom you well know. Madame Jourdan in Berlin helped me to find a middle way out of this dilemma, namely to a career as a soldier. The prejudices of the world hindered me somewhat from this match, and yet I could lead a free and poetic life. First, however, I quarreled with my uncle. My beloved distanced herself from me after I had already taken steps to change my situation, and my parents employed every means to alter my decision. They succeeded in their efforts, and I was more or less compelled to go to Wittenberg to

take up again the completion of my legal studies. My misfortune awakened my ambition, and my good fortune led me to excellent teachers—so that in five quarters I made up for lost ground and was able to take my examinations. I owe to this period my ability to devote myself with exceptional diligence to tedious and unpleasant subjects. In the meanwhile, my uncle reconciled himself with me and began to renew his old scheme to include me in his projects. Minister Hardenberg[2] appeared kindly disposed to me, and I saw myself finally drawing near to my former goal of assuming a career in the greater world. In the time during which the minister's plans were gestating, my father sent me to Tennstedt so that I might acquire practice in the discharge of written tasks through employment in an office. I was not long in Tennstedt before I made the acquaintance of the unforgettable maiden to whom I owe thanks for my character. She was poor and not from a noble family—now the time of frivolity and foolishness was over, and at the threshold of maturity I saw myself greeted by the noblest being and bound to her for eternity. My father knew nothing of my relations for as long as I remained in Tennstedt. During this time I enjoyed the teaching of my friend Just and pursued with great zeal the study of Saxon law. My studies on the side were dedicated to old topics dear to my heart and to a more strenuous investigation of Fichte's philosophy. In the meantime, the former plans with the Minister [Hardenberg] were abandoned—my father wished to have me with him and desired no indebtedness to his relative. I gladly assented because I recognized that the shortest path to the possession of my beloved lay in proximity to my father and in accepting his plan to have me undertake training in the administration of salt mines. At first my father was not happy about my engagement, which he discovered when I came home. Nevertheless, his heart was not insulted by her low station and lack of material possessions, and he recognized the beneficial change she had brought about in me. With time as he came to know her better, he showed the most tender sympathy for her. She became deathly ill—in the last months of her life my uncle learned of the engagement and renounced all ties of friendship to me. He became angry with my father and agitated him to turn against me. My distress was indescribable—a horrible quarter year went by during which my uncle remained in Weissenfels and embittered the lives of everyone, particularly mine. His presence made it especially difficult for me to visit my beloved. My good siblings sympathized inwardly and painfully, and my late brother

[Erasmus] fell out of favor with my uncle as a result of his impertinent love for me. Because of this, the last healthy days of his life were marred by grief and care. She was torn from life during my uncle's stay with us, and in a short time my brother followed her. The deep pain of my father, my bottomless grief, the tears of my family, and the many considerations of the role he played during these days must have deeply shaken my uncle. My ill will toward him has long been extinguished. Every hateful emotion disappeared with the blossom of my life, and those holy ashes will long hold the embers of my heart and my longing for peace and love. Since then my uncle has remained completely separate from me and nurtures the greatest annoyance toward me. You already know what now followed in my outer situation and in respect to my activities, but you still were not aware of an event that brightened the summer of my life and secured a new surety of direction and put my outer relations and inner principles on a firm and unalterable foundation.

You can certainly imagine the destitute condition of a heart that for three years lived in most tender bonds of relationship when it finds that relationship suddenly extinguished—and the aversion such a heart might feel toward activities and situations associated with that relationship.

Through Thielmann's friendship[3] I became more closely acquainted with the Charpentier house. I still often experienced bouts of deep sorrow and anxiety, which made that environment of heartfelt sympathy and mild, calm sociability very desirable. I believed that I didn't have long to live, and for this reason bound myself with redoubled inner ardor to the companionship of friendly individuals. You know Julie Charpentier, and so it will not surprise you that the soft, modest nature of this affection-worthy woman exerted an immense attraction on my temperament and influenced me to open myself to her trust. Over time she became indispensable to me, without my having suspected that I should allow our relationship to assume a more formal character. Her father's illness revealed her splendid heart in fullest clarity. The tender solicitude with which she nursed him through many a night damaged her health, and in the summer of [17]98 she herself was overtaken with by a terrible illness, facial pains. I had gone to Teplitz to recover from an illness brought on due to grief over the death and loss of another old friend—the governess of my Sophie [Jeannette Danscour]—and I returned to find Julie in this miserable situation. Only now did the idea to dedicate my life to her really seize hold of me

in a passionate way. I saw that without a loving helpmate at my side, life and my participation in worldly affairs would become and remain a crushing burden—Julie's entire situation presented itself vividly before my eyes—and I knew that I would never find a truer, more trustworthy, or more tender wife. I felt that a situation moderating my industry would be advantageous for me. And no other woman would help me bear this better. I became convinced that I would not shirk any sacrifice for her sake and that through my decision I would spare her an unpleasant future. By assuming new challenges I hoped to better bear old attachments. I saw the former difficulties, but also the altered circumstances. I entrusted myself to activity and providence and offered Julie my hand in marriage. Right from the start I intended to make my father my first confidant and advisor. I recognized that his outlook favored me, recognized that he greatly prized openness, and entrusted myself to the absence and distance of my uncle, who no longer wanted to maintain his old sympathy for an estranged nephew. My plan did not succeed. My father learned of the engagement too early, and by chance my mother and siblings were also informed. But fate proved kind to me and to them due to the benefit of Werner's[4] friendship and yours. My mother and siblings were in sympathy with my decision, and Julie's parents were content with my association with her. I took no formal steps with them. But at first my father disapproved of my decision, and this forced me to complete silence. He appears now to have altered his opinion, and I hope to soon enjoy his blessing and consent. I respect his scruples, which arise solely from his fatherly desire to do the right thing. He sees himself unable to support me indefinitely and doesn't trust me to maintain myself in a confining situation, such as likely stands before me in the next few years. He fears that I will fall into financial distress, and this makes him hold back his approval.

He would be completely justified, were Julie not a woman whose love for me would lead her to endure any discomfort and any constrained circumstance, or were I to be a person of expensive appetites. Her friendship has brought me four hundred Reichstaler. If my father gives me a hundred talers for the first few years and the access to his garden and free use of his store of coal, then I have resources equivalent to those needed to sustain the livelihood of an even larger family. The changes in my family will perhaps soon improve my father's outlook, and if I should incur a few debts I believe that the security of my future income will make it easy to pay them back. I do not desire to

live any better than other honest, upright persons—I am well informed about the cost of living—and I can use my free hours for profitable literary work (something I confide only to you). My reward for these thousand tediums is an elevated consciousness, Julie's love, and the thanks and approval of my many excellent friends.

You now know everything, and now I can finally tell you how boundlessly grateful I am to you, how happy you and Julie make me, and how much gratitude this excellent woman also feels for you. You spread a brilliant blessing over our lives, and certainly this beneficent sharing in the lives of a grateful pair brings you joy. I know that my friend Werner cherishes Julie inwardly and will rejoice in my choice, even though he is distant from the elder Charpentier, whom I revere as the father of my beloved, without taking notice of his relations and opinions.

Excuse the formality of my narration—I had to make you well acquainted with my situation in order to give you proof of my true and heartfelt trust.

Accept it kindly—and rest assured of my faith in the friendship of your heart and of my faith in the lifelong persistence of your goodwill, to which I remain

Your respectful and inwardly devoted friend
Friedrich von Hardenberg
(IV, 308–14)

Karl von Hardenberg
Biography of His Brother Novalis
1802

On the second of May in the year of our Lord Jesus Christ 1772, Novalis was born on an estate in the Duchy of Mansfeld. He was the first son and the second child of pious parents; during the first childhood years he was sickly, although he did not suffer any severe sickness until his ninth year. During those first nine years he also did not show promise of any extraordinary talents, and only the excellent love and tender solicitation of his mother distinguished him in any special way from his other brothers and sisters. His only companions for play consisted of his one-year older sister and two younger brothers. In his ninth year he suffered an attack of dysentery, which resulted in a disruption of his digestion that could only be overcome through the most painful medications and a wearisome and extended period of recovery.

Now his spirit and intellectual capacities appeared to awaken all at once. His father, a very active man, was often away traveling due to the demands of his far-flung business interests, so that the most important aspects of his eldest son's education devolved to the ministrations of his mother and tutor. His mother's gentle calm and the religious mood of both parents, which quite naturally permeated the entire household, made the deepest impression upon his mood of soul, and this attitude and cast of mind accompanied him until the very last moments of his life.

He was very diligent in his studies and already knew his way around Latin and Greek with fair mastery in his twelfth year. Many poems also date from this time. Poetry and fairy tales were his favored reading during periods of leisure; the latter he also relished telling to his brothers and sisters. Thus it is perhaps worth relating that the three brothers, each by his own testimony, very much enjoyed playing the following game: each was a spirit of heaven, water, or earth, and every Sunday evening Novalis related new events occurring in their respective domains, events that he knew how to elaborate in the most graceful and varied ways. This play was continued without interruption for three to four years. He read the story with the greatest enthusiasm.

In 1789 he went to secondary school and the following year in autumn to Jena. In 1792 he quit this university for Leipzig, where he studied alongside his second brother [Erasmus]; the year after he went

to Wittenberg and there he ended his studies in autumn 1794. In this year of his life there occurred an interesting interruption in the usual routine. On the occasion of the outbreak of the war with France, there awoke suddenly in his heart a strong desire to enter the military, and this desire was only quelled with the greatest difficulty by the united efforts of his parents and relatives. Several acquaintances and friends from this time—among whom the first most deserving of mention is Fichte and the next Friedrich Schlegel—made an enduring impression on the path of his literary career and his life.—After he left Wittenberg he went to Tennstedt in Thuringia in order to gain experience in the practical affairs of business under the direction of the resident District Officer Just. Soon this worthy man became one of his warmest friends, and Novalis was nowhere so happy as in his house, especially as Just became married shortly afterward to an amiable widow whom Novalis knew and very highly regarded from his previous time in Wittenberg where she had been the wife of one of the professors.—Not long after he came to Tennstedt, he became acquainted with Sophie von Kühn from the nearby estate of Grüningen, and that first moment of seeing her set the course of his resolution for eternity. Sophie was of such tenderly deserving loveliness and exalted appearance that already at that time when she was in her thirteenth year one could not help but to recognize her native affinity to heaven.—The true springtime of his life fell in the early months and summer of 1795, during which he spent every free day in Grüningen. In late autumn of this year Sophie fell deathly ill with a fever caused by a stabbing pain in her side. Just shortly before this, her parents had bestowed on him their consent to marriage.—She recovered after a few weeks but kept the pain in her side, which oftentimes was insufferable.—The illness of the beloved bride naturally affected Novalis very much; yet, he was comforted by the advice of the physician, who judged that the pain would lead to no serious consequences.—Shortly after her recovery Novalis went to Weissenfels and became an auditor for a provincial department of which his father was director. He passed the winter of 1795–1796 in attention to constant occupations of business, and the news from Grüningen was reassuring.—Early in the year he was there a few times and for the most part found Sophie well.—During this time, the second brother [Erasmus] had to abandon his studies for reasons of health, and he dedicated himself to the career of hunting and forestry conservation in a distant locale. The third brother [Karl] was a soldier

and had to mobilize for a campaign in the early part of this same year.—After these, Novalis had around him at his parents' home besides them only his two older sisters [Karoline and Sidonie]; the other brothers and sisters were too young to keep him company. In summer, when he contemplated with untroubled thoughts the approaching alliance with his fiancée, Sophie, he received the unexpected news that she was in Jena for an operation. She herself had wished that he should receive this news only after the operation.—He hastened to Jena and found her ill from a liver tumor. The most competent physician had performed the surgery, and when the situation at first presented signs of improvement, the doctor promised a very slow recovery. Soon the operation had to be repeated, and the physician feared, sadly aright, that she had too little strength to give hope for a recovery.—Sophie bore all this suffering with indescribable patience and true heroism. Novalis was often in Jena with his siblings and parents (the two brothers had in the meantime returned), and together with the entire family, who loved the dear maiden beyond measure, he still hoped for her recovery. In December Sophie wanted to go back to Grüningen. Novalis asked his second brother [Erasmus] to make the journey with her, and he accompanied her back there with Sophie's mother and sister, who had nursed Sophie in Jena.—Novalis now spent his time going back and forth between Grüningen and Weissenfels. Unfortunately he found Sophie continually worse. At the end of January the second brother [Erasmus] also came back to Weissenfels very ill.—Naturally, a mood of great sadness held sway in the house, where the death of two beloved persons was expected any day.—The 17th of March, 1797, was Sophie's fifteenth birthday, and toward the afternoon on the 19th she passed away in the arms of her sister and her devoted nurse and governess Mlle. Danscour.—The third brother had to give him the news.—After eight days and nights of weeping, he traveled to Tennstedt in order to be closer to his beloved Grüningen and in the company of his dear friends.—On the 14th of April his second brother [Erasmus] passed on to a better world.—Novalis wrote the third brother, who had traveled to Niedersachsen: *take heart, Erasmus has triumphed; the blossoms of the loving garland loose themselves here one by one in order to assemble more beautifully and everlastingly hereafter*. From this moment the two brothers were joined in trust even more intimately than before.—Novalis remained in Thuringia for a few weeks and came back to his previous occupations comforted and with true clarity of mind.

He now pursued his concerns with greater enthusiasm than ever, since from this point on he viewed himself as merely a stranger to the earth.—Many of his fragments, including the *Hymns to the Night*, date from this time, and even more so from the autumn of 1797.—In December he went to Freiberg and in the course of the coming year made the acquaintance of Julie von Charpentier. He became betrothed to this lovely maiden, who alone could take the place of his lost Sophie. There he wrote *Faith and Love* and many other fragments, among which *Pollen* can be included. In Freiberg, his love for mining and natural science also grew ever stronger. In this regard most especially, his trusted interchange with the great geologist Werner contributed greatly.—Early in 1799, [Jeannette] Danscour, previously mentioned, died as a result of her continued, faithful yearning for Sophie. Shortly afterward my brother returned from Freiberg to his home and father and waited for his appointment, which until 1800 he fulfilled as an assessor [of salt mines] assigned to the Provincial Department under his father's direction and as the director of the office for Thuringia.—The year 1799 saw also the beginning of his relationship with Ludwig Tieck, a relationship that was for him without a doubt the most remarkable and pleasant of his life. He saw [Tieck] often during this year in Jena, along with the two brothers Schlegel and Ritter;[5] the latter friendship he cherished very much on account of Ritter's childlike love for nature.—In this year there also awoke in him the idea for *Ofterdingen* and for the remaining projected poetic works, about which he often spoke with his friends in Jena, and especially with Ludwig Tieck, the most trusted of this circle. He was very diligent and worked ceaselessly to fulfill his duties as a civil servant. In autumn of 1799 his oldest sister married. After this marriage he was obliged for business reasons to relocate to a solitary location in the district of the *Golden Pastures* in Thuringia at the foot of the Giffhäuser mountains. There he lived for a time, and in this place the greater part of *Ofterdingen* was brought to completion. There, his circle of acquaintances consisted of two persons: the first was Julie's brother-in-law[6] and the other a clever man[7] to whom the first introduced him and from whose library, especially from the collection of old chronicles, *Ofterdingen* owes much in the early part of that year.—In April 1800 his relatives observed in respect to his pale and thinning features a significant alteration in his health, a change of which he was not at all aware. The suspected cause was a chill brought on while riding home on a cold

night after first overheating himself by standing too close to a blazing fire.—In August, when he was just preparing to ride back to Freiberg for his wedding, he coughed up some blood, which the doctor judged to be merely an insignificant hemorrhage. This repeated at intervals. In October, he traveled with his parents and brother [Karl] to Dresden. The latter went from there to visit their married daughter in Oberlausitz, and Novalis remained with his brother in Dresden.—At the beginning of November, Novalis learned that his fourteen-year-old brother [Bernhard] had accidentally drowned. The shock of this news brought on a violent hemorrhage, and from that moment the physicians diagnosed his illness as fatal.—Julie soon came to Dresden in order to share the nursing of him with his two brothers [Karl and Anton].—At this time [November 9, 1800] Sophie's mother passed away.—At one point Novalis wished to travel from Dresden to a southern climate to visit his friend Herbert in Klagenfurt. But the physicians forbade the journey.—In January 1801 he longed for the company of his parents, and at the end of this month he traveled back to Weissenfels with his second brother [Karl] and Julie, who refused to leave him.—His condition worsened, but without the onset of pain, as overall the entire illness remained free of significant physical torment.—The most skilled doctors from Leipzig and Jena were brought in for consultation.—During his illness he quite often read religious literature, which included, in addition to the Bible, the writings of Zinzendorf and Lavater, which he always had loved. He also continued to work partly on official business and partly on his own poetic projects. In this way, for example, the second sonnet of the *Miscellaneous Poems* ("Alle Menschen seh ich leben") was written during the period of his sickness. In the last weeks and days he remained convinced of an eventual recovery due to the fact that the coughing had diminished and that, with the exception of tiredness, he did not feel ill. When he was not reading, he spent time contemplating his projects, so that a few days before his death he could make the remark: *When I am better again, then you will learn what poetry can truly be; I have so many wonderful poems and lyrics inside me.*—From the 19th of March, Sophie's death day, he became noticeably weaker. Many of his dearest friends came to visit him during this time. Friedrich Schlegel came on the 21st of March.[8] Novalis was extremely glad to see him, and conversed with him daily at length about their varied endeavors. Early at six o'clock on the 25th of March, after a restful night, he asked his brother for two books and

browsed in them a bit. Then he asked for some food and conversed until about eight o'clock. Toward nine he asked his brother to play something on the piano, and he fell asleep listening. Friedrich Schlegel came into the room, and Novalis remained asleep until around noon. Without the slightest stirring, he died. His face was as kind and friendly in death as it was when he was alive.

(IV, 531–35)

August Cölestin Just
1805

Friedrich von Hardenberg
Assessor of Salt Mines in Saxony and Designated Department Director in Thuringia
Born May 2, 1772
Died March 25, 1801

When one uses the word genius to characterize another human being, one usually means that this person has exceptional intellectual, scientific, or artistic abilities that allow him to achieve something extraordinary. If one means to say that these abilities are directed toward a specific art or science, then one says more specifically: "So-and-so has a poetic, scientific, or mathematical genius." If one wants to designate these abilities more generally in respect to arts and sciences, one does so by saying: "So-and-so has genius." An even higher appraisal of individual ability is meant in those cases when one says of someone that *he is a genius*. Were one to direct this comment toward a particular discipline or object and say that "So-and-so is a philosophical, artistic, technical, or mathematical genius" then without doubt this means: "all the abilities of his spirit are by nature so directed and focused that in whatsoever area he exerts himself he stands forth above others as a self-motivated original or virtuoso." If one says generally "this man is a genius," then I think one cannot properly give this statement any other meaning than: "this person possesses outstanding spiritual abilities to learn every sci-

ence easily, to penetrate a subject to its depths, to seize upon it with certainty, order it with wisdom, and judge it with the soundest critical faculties; he possesses these same strengths in all his spiritual faculties, the same ease in directing these strengths and abilities toward this or that object, and the same joy and love in their employment."

I have adverted to the meaning behind this expression to draw attention to a young man whom I had the opportunity to observe for several years of his short life but precisely in those years during which his spirit came to maturity: *Friedrich von Hardenberg.*

And were one to ascribe to "genius" such commonly attributed faults—as, for example, that "genius" is superficial; that it cannot direct itself with constancy toward one particular object; that it sets aside the earnest concerns of human knowledge in favor of those more agreeable; that it lives in its own world of ideas and is not at all at home with practical affairs of daily life—then I would have to stipulate that insofar as Friedrich von Hardenberg was concerned such commonly attributed "faults" were in no sense true. Hardenberg desired to learn everything on a thorough and scientific basis; he excluded no object of human knowledge from his field of interest. In this regard, he also made himself at home in the daily affairs of practical life, and he did not shy away from learning the ins and outs of tedious details and trivialities that one who is thoroughly versed in practical affairs must needs comprehend and master. All things great and small he bound as one for the sake of Beauty and Goodness, the more so with nature, friendship, and a heart susceptible to love, which stood in the greatest harmony with his spirit. He neither forgot his heart nor his head, but he kept the two in balance and knew how to rightly value and to discern the hearts and the heads of others.

His early death seemed to all those who knew him to be a tragic loss for science and humanity. The liberal, multifaceted, varied, and often heterogeneous education that he received undoubtedly contributed greatly to his exceptional natural abilities. Born to the estate of an aristocrat, he was the son of a good, understanding, distinguished, and affluent father, a man who stood in cordial relation to others of like nature, men whose good birth, dignity, means, connections, intellectual gifts and knowledge elevated them above others. Such merits early became part of his nature, while at the same time he avoided those disadvantages of character that often shadow privilege. While not misjudging the different levels of social status, his free-thinking spirit made no distinction of prejudice between the educated

and uneducated classes. His temperament appropriated only two advantages of the aristocracy: a sense for hospitable friendship and a liberal attitude of spirit and education, the latter of which he demonstrated so admirably.

Born on the second of May in 1772 in Wiederstedt on a family estate in the Duchy of Mansfeld, he did not show much promise in his first years. Sickly in body, his spirit likewise had yet to awaken. He loved his sister, who was a year older and with whom he was educated, with inner devotion, and he loved likewise his two younger brothers. His sister deliberately learned the basic elements of science in order to encourage him to study it out of love. And she succeeded. The pious sensibility that predominated in his parental house had a significant influence on him quite early, although we only can observe that this bore fruit in the last years of his life. His tirelessly active father, who with restless industry always kept himself busy and for whom the duty of his profession and love for humanity was sacred, was unable to attend to the education of his firstborn son due to his multifaceted and in part far-flung business interests. The mother, whose pious mood harmonized with the father's and to whom our Friedrich clung with childlike devotion, began to educate him in the first years of his childhood, alone and with the help of her oldest daughter. This activity was continued and brought to conclusion by a tutor. In the ninth year after he overcame a serious illness, his intellect began to awaken, and he made exceptional progress, especially in regard to the classical languages and history. Poems and fairy tales were his favorite relaxation. His three other siblings were his only social contacts. His parents, in inclination and opinion, were friends of the Herrnhüter Brotherhood, and they felt at home and content there. Who could blame them for wanting to pass this on to their children?

With the eldest daughter, their wish was fulfilled, though not at that time with their oldest son. He was enrolled as a student at Neudietendorf, a Herrnhüter community between Erfurt and Gotha—there to be educated as a preacher. His childlike sensibility, his aesthetic as well as pious soul would have benefited. But how could his alert and high-spirited mind, which was struggling with science, accept the narrow limitations with which Belief circumscribes research and knowledge? Far more welcome must have been the sojourn in Lucklum in [the] vicinity of Braunschweig, where he lived for a year with his uncle, the Commander [Friedrich Wilhelm] von Hardenberg. This man pos-

sessed a well-educated mind and large body of well-ordered knowledge. Surrounding him was a wonderful collection of the best and newest literature and writings of all kinds. Uncle and library together, and the uncle's connection with wise and good men of his time and his deep wisdom coming from experience (combined with his exquisite tact and courteous way of life), helped foster the youngster in his multifaceted education. The uncle was of a sufficiently independent cast of mind to resist the bedazzlements of outer merits and distinctions, and he was able to see the human everywhere and thus gather to himself nourishment for spirit and heart.

The time neared for Hardenberg's university studies. To prepare him thoroughly for this effort, his father dispatched him for a year to Eißleben where, under the capable hand of the well-respected teacher Jani, he studied classical languages, a subject whose current neglect in the halls of our universities one must lament.

Having hitherto pursued his education under the watchful eyes of his parents, house tutor, uncle, and Jani, Hardenberg now entered the academic world on his own. In autumn of 1790 he went to Jena; then, with his second brother Erasmus, to Leipzig; and finally to Wittenberg, where he concluded his studies in 1794. A notable characteristic of his education is the fact that he always went his own way, heedless of any instructor's advice to the contrary. As a result, he undoubtedly gained in independence, original point of view, freedom of inquiry, and rapid progress toward his goals.

A fortunate constellation of favorable circumstances profited his education exceedingly. At that time in Jena, under the impulse of Reinhold and Fichte, Kant's philosophy had begun its development. Hardenberg became more closely acquainted with Fichte, who had been fostered in his lower school and university education by Hardenberg's father and noble mother. From Fichte, he received those first kindling sparks of genius. However, he also came under the sway of the philosophical spirit of Schelling during the time in Leipzig when Schelling expounded his philosophy to several friends. Yet, inasmuch as Hardenberg appeared completely at home with the spirit of critical philosophy, so much so that one might have suspected this to be the only place he could dwell, at the same time he found rich nourishment for his aesthetic-poetic genius from various individuals in Jena and Weimar. The spirit of the age brought into circulation of discussion around that time the ideals of freedom and equality, human rights,

and the founding ideas of the state. For this reason, Hardenberg's favorite studies were now philosophy, the literary and fine arts, and politics in this understanding of the word. However, he did not neglect his studies of jurisprudence in Leipzig and Wittenberg. At the same time, he must have achieved a competent knowledge of mathematics and chemistry, as his later studies indicate.

After Wittenberg he went to Tennstedt. In accordance with his father's intention, he sought an introduction to the practical affairs of life. From that time onward we became the most devoted friends, and we remained so until his death. From that time onward I can write about him from the standpoint of personal knowledge, where previously I can only report what I learned from the perspective of unfamiliar witnesses. I was supposed to have been his teacher, but he was mine. Not merely for the fact that in those areas where my experience outstripped him was I forced to exert all my energies to keep pace with his eager spirit whose research never rested content with the known, the common, or the everyday, but also for the fact that this spirit ever sought out the finest, most hidden, and deepest aspects [of a subject]. His spirit liberated me from the one-sidedness and pedantry to which an official of many years so easily becomes enamored. Insofar as my feeble abilities permitted, his conversation and writings forced me to enlarge my outlook and elevated me to that realm of ideals that always ranged before his intellect. And he awakened inside me a nearly comatose aesthetic sense.

Who would have suspected, however, that this young man, in order to complete his education as an administrator, would not shirk from the labor of redoing the same clerical work twice or three times over until it met my approval—or that he would copy whole pages of similarly phrased or slightly altered sentences in order to master the variety and precision of administrative language—or that he would undertake the most everyday practical tasks with a zeal equal to those activities for which his spirit was better fitted?

He did nothing by halves; what he set his mind to do, he did completely. Nothing was done superficially; he was thorough in everything. By this means he came to possess that wonderful condition of balance for all his spiritual qualities and that ease with which he undertook everything and brought it to excellent completion. He read a new book in one quarter of the time that we ordinary mortals would need for the effort. After finishing, he laid it aside as though he had never cracked

the binding. Weeks or months later, when the book came into discussion, he possessed the ability to muster its entire contents, to hold forth its most salient points, to pass a clear judgment on its value, and to say whether he would recommend the book to this or that of his friends, and why. This was his manner of reading, working, and studying—as well as his manner with people. Thus he was able to achieve all those things that he achieved in his short life. He was well acquainted with all the most recent scientific and literary/artistic publications to appear within his province and time. He had read and studied the most noteworthy of these. By this means he was able to come into a personal relationship with many famous learned individuals and also to know the style and manner in which they developed their studies and writings. (I remember this particularly in regard to Jean Paul and Lafontaine.) His favorite work of literature was at that time in 1795 Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. He knew it nearly by heart. I believe one can observe this fondness, perhaps, in his novel *Ofterdingen*.

At that time (and I believe until his death) there were three things of utmost importance for him: *Consistency* in thinking and behavior, *Beauty* and *Aesthetics*, and *Science*.

The priority that he gave to the first of these three things led him astray from time to time. For example, his desire to follow thoughts to their logical and consequential endpoint led him to praise Robespierre's Reign of Terror, whose horrors he otherwise would have loathed. As another example, in his last years of life he held forth in a long description on the inner logic of hierarchy in a wonderfully pleasing manner for a pious Catholic friend who was with him in my company at the time. This long description of the logical justification of hierarchy had woven through it the entire history of the papacy. With all the richness of reason and image that his intellect and fantasy could martial, he spoke like a panegyrist for papal authority. His words were a rich feast for the Catholic soul.

He had the same partiality for Beauty. Even though his inner being was not tuned to the rational, commonsense aspect of the Christian religion, the Bible was nonetheless of highest value to him for its aesthetic virtues. And just for this reason he could fall in love with a religion that worshiped the Madonna, the Mother of God.

Fichte gave the word science a new meaning, and this meaning had great value for my friend. His wish and striving was not only to lead all that men had formerly called science and art back to a founding

principle in order to advance a true science but to bring all sciences and arts into unity. He was convinced that the one should offer her hand to the other in a sisterly way and that a wonderful unity bound them as one. For this reason, he excluded no subject from his research or studies. (For example, he once took lessons in church history in Wittenberg.) And while he could not study everything, it is nonetheless a testimony to his outstanding genius that he wanted to study everything and make of it one universal science.

The love for science and aesthetics made it difficult for him in his twenty-fourth year to settle down to practical life but for the fact that a feeling for beauty and a sensibility for domestic happiness and harmony, which had nourished him from his early years at home, had given him some inclination in this direction. On a business trip that he undertook with me, he made the acquaintance of a thirteen-year-old girl named Sophie von Kühn. She was a girl who already possessed the character of an adult, who, with the charm and grace of a beautiful youth, united spirit and dignity in a way seldom achieved. This lovely creature became his Madonna. The hope of winning her offered him the hope for domestic happiness such as his parents enjoyed, and this happy estate could only be achieved if he allowed himself to be initiated into the routines of a practical occupation. In this way his wishes came into harmony with his father's. It was decided that the Duchy's salt mines and their administration would be the first realm of activity. In order to better fulfill his duties, he took a course in chemistry at Langensalza shortly before leaving Tennstedt. He studied the chemical properties of salts (that part of Chemistry he thought most necessary for his career) under the direction of the famous chemist Wiegleb.[9] Ten to twelve days were all that he required to master the subject. Wiegleb, who was certainly a competent instructor in his discipline, ever after mentioned Hardenberg's name with highest respect.

In February 1796 Hardenberg began his training in the salt works. The local directorship was staffed by his father; by Heun, the Minister of Mines; and by Senff, the present Minister of Mines.[10] Each had distinguished himself in his field: the first through tireless activity with which he sacrificed time, health, personal advantage, and his own best interests; the second (who was the oldest of the directors) through the excellence of his writings so that my friend Hardenberg called him the archivist of the salt mines; and Senff through his long-acknowledged overall service to the salt works, but particularly in the area of technology.

Hardenberg sought to learn from each of them. For this reason, at his father's request, he also studied every detail and peculiarity worthy of notice at each mine in order to gain greater competency. His practical life still left him time to devote to science. In addition to the great store of ideas and knowledge that he carried in himself and which he had increased through reading and conversation with learned individuals, he also had the unusual but admittedly sad occasion during these months in 1796 to visit his beloved Jena, where he kept company with several learned friends, among these most especially Friedrich Schlegel.

For in the meantime his beloved Sophie had fallen ill. A tumor had worked its way inward to the liver. The court physician Stark's most skillful procedures and medicines could not arrest its spread or growth. For several months Sophie lived with her mother and sister in Jena while wavering in her recovery. It was in Jena that my friend's parents became acquainted with this lovely maiden and learned to love her. They cared for her with the most dedicated parental feelings. In this manner, love drew Hardenberg to that place where he otherwise would have gone only for the sake of knowledge and friendship.

Still sick, Sophie returned to her parent's Grüningen estate in Thuringia, where he visited her from time to time. Her sickness afforded him opportunity to become better acquainted with medicine and healing. Sadly, his knowledge only confirmed what he suspected: that her sickness would end in death. He fought against this certainty with all his heart, which could not conceive of losing her. That sentence whose meaning to him we can understand only in context of these events—"That which an individual desires, he can achieve"—falsely led him to believe that his Sophie could not die. This conflict between head and heart raged in him when he saw his Sophie for the last time. This experience quelled the strife. Sophie died on March 19, 1797.

With this event, his life seemed annihilated. However, it was not truly annihilated; it only underwent a transformation and took a new direction. His first letters to us in Tennstedt testified to his bottomless grief, but they also testified to his powerful spirit, which even in the grip of a difficult fate could find in events the call to new and higher thoughts and perspectives. Here is the first letter he wrote to my wife, who was his friend for many years. [See letter to Rahel Just dated March 28, 1797.]

The next day, he wrote to me from Weissenfels the following the letter also. [See letter to Just dated March 29, 1797.]

Around this time, his brother Erasmus, with whom Friedrich had shared his education, heart, and mind, returned to his parents' home deathly ill from the Forestry Institute in Franken where he had gone to study after the university. His condition was such that his death appeared possible any day. Friedrich, with the agreement of his parents, who worried about the life of their eldest son, decided to return to Tennstedt to seek refuge and solitude with us in our home. His heart was deeply wounded; his fantasy was excited but not wild; it was still under the control of his powerful intellect. Shortly after his arrival in Tennstedt, about five days before Easter, he still did not feel strong enough to visit Sophie's home and grave at least for a few more weeks. But on the evening before Easter he felt ready to make the trip, and he did. He celebrated Easter morning at Sophie's grave, perhaps with an eye to those festivals of resurrection celebrated by the Pietists. He returned home to us more cheerful and at peace. But that same afternoon he received the news of the death of his dearly beloved brother [Erasmus]. Even then we did not hear any complaint, nor did we witness any tears. He spoke about this and related matters with reason and feeling, and he had enough presence of mind to discuss other situations clearly and levelheadedly. The continued existence of his two Beloveds and his eventual reunion with them were the controlling thoughts of his soul. This idea can be substantiated from the lovely words that he wrote to his third brother Karl: "Take heart, Erasmus has triumphed; the blossoms of the loving garland loose themselves here one by one in order to assemble more beautifully and everlastingly hereafter." His fantasy flattered him with the hope that within a year he would be reunited with those dearly departed ones, and this hope comforted him and at that time became a certainty. His enthusiastic imagination found rich materials for study in Lavater's writings,[11] which at that time he loved above all else. All the more excusable, then, becomes his wish to mark Sophie's death day as the dawning point of a new era for himself, or his wish to worship her possessions as relics, or other excesses of imagination that he engaged in. But in all these excesses his reason kept the upper hand. For several weeks during his stay in Tennstedt he worked and wrote for the entire morning without any slackening of energy. His subjects, I believe, were nature, philosophy, immortality. For the remaining hours of his day, he enjoyed the awakening springtime and quiet routine of the household in which he participated cheerfully, sometimes to the point of jokes and

humor. Thus he surprised us one day by presenting a humorous, satirical poem on the subject of the purchase of a garden—the poem a product of a few hours work. Only the last few verses revealed the more serious mood that dominated his soul at that time.

After several weeks, Hardenberg returned to Weissenfels. He hoped to rest and to recuperate by taking time for some short journeys, which he intended to do both for himself and for the sake of his mother and eldest sister, who were deeply depressed by the recent deaths. One of these short journeys, which he undertook with his old house tutor Landvoigt in the region of Rosstrapp, he shared with me in a letter. This letter, through its lively description, reminds one of his novel *Ofterdingen*. It also gives testimony to the strength of his reason, which he exercised during this period when his heart and fantasy were so deeply shaken.

He alternated his time that summer between his father's house, the salt mines, and small trips to visit his friends. In this way he regained the balance of his higher faculties, and his body was strengthened. In autumn 1797 the thought of reunion with his beloved was still uppermost in his mind, but no longer with the same passionate certainty with which he formerly had held this belief. He recovered his taste for life—notably a life lived for science and knowledge. He felt himself once more in that condition of freedom that had been his lot before meeting Sophie.

There were two areas of study that he wished to pursue more than anything: pharmacopoeia and mining. Preference inclined him to the one; duty inclined him to the other. He had already acquainted himself with the prevailing systems and newest discoveries of the healing arts, and he sought to ground these upon one simple principle in order to achieve systematic certainty. But the wishes of his father and the love he felt for his family, for whom as eldest son he felt duty bound to care, determined him on a course for Freiberg in order to undergo an education for a future position in the administration of the Duchy salt mines. This move to Freiberg occurred in December 1797. Now he dedicated himself nearly exclusively to the studies of physics, chemistry, higher mathematics, geology, metallurgy, mechanics and other sciences that were taught at the Mining Academy. His most excellent instructor was Werner, whom he preeminently designated as his Teacher. Thus passed the year in which he had believed he would die. He continued to live, nonetheless. His longing recalled him to

Thuringia to mark the anniversary of Sophie's death at her grave. Love for her remained constant and strong in his soul, even though she had lost the position of dominance occupied previously. His heart required the proximity of a feminine soul to which it could confess. This was also necessary to him in order that he might settle upon a practical life in a field of professional activity and realize domestic happiness. Julie von Charpentier, the daughter of a mine administrator, first earned and won his attention and then his love due to her educated understanding and her gentle and noble heart, whose companions were grace and beauty. His love for Julie was not the sort of passionate love that he had felt for Sophie; it was much calmer, but not in that sense any less warm, and it was a love given for life. Her companionship gave him nourishment for head and heart. And thus his residence in Freiberg had a twofold value for him.

His love for Julie did not cause him to neglect the muses; he remained true to these old friends. This fact is attested to by various poetic works: *Flowers*, *Faith and Love* or *The King and Queen*, *Pollen*, and *Hymns to the Night*, which he composed at this time. He published these under the pseudonym Novalis in the *Journal for Prussian Monarchy* in June and July 1798 and in the Schlegels' *Athenaeum* in 1798 and 1800.

In the meantime things came together to form a firm plan for his future life. He wanted to live in Thuringia and hoped to secure a position there that would give him enough income to devote energies to science, friendship, and the quiet joys of house holding. For this reason he returned in summer 1799 to Weissenfels to accept a position as assessor for the Salt Mines Administration. His first wish was fulfilled, and besides that he had the task to take care of all the legal matters of the salt mines.

From this time date two very interesting acquaintanceships. The first, with Ludwig Tieck, whom he loved greatly, occurred in the summer of 1799. He took counsel with Tieck over future plans for his poetry, and he loved him as a poet and as a human being. Those were joyous days that he spent with Tieck and Tieck's brother-in-law Reichardt at Reichardt's estate near Giebichenstein. These two acquaintances—Tieck and Reichardt—secured him in his vocation. A greater part of the winter of 1799/1800 was spent at the Saxon salt mines in Artern. At that time two men lived in this small town, and they deserve honorable mention: Major von Funk and Cavalry Captain Thielmann. Both were members of the Saxon Cavalry Regiment. Liberal in

disposition, cultivated in spirit, possessed of more than a merely superficial acquaintance with the most recent trends in philosophy and literature and possessing as well a library of the best contemporary writings—such qualities soon attracted our Hardenberg to these individuals, and they to him. Each found his match; gain and pleasure won for all. Even so, the relationship did not distract him from his duties at the salt mines, though to be sure he was more the attentive, silent observer. He spent many hours in the mines with an attitude of distraction, like one who inhabits other realms, and yet even then his spirit worked toward every possible practical improvement. Among other examples, I particularly recall that he assembled meteorological observations in order to obtain greater exactitude in the data needed for the mines and that he studied manufacturing techniques related to salt production from a technical, chemical, and economic perspective. Who can say what levels of excellence he might have achieved in this profession? In the case of Hardenberg, who died while still an apprentice, one can only guess and surmise what masterworks might have crowned his later years of maturity. Such a mood of grief and mourning informs the words spoken to me by Heun, the Minister of Mines, shortly after Hardenberg's death: "Oh, you have no idea what we have lost with him!"

In 1800 a position became vacant in the Directory of Mines for Thuringia. This vacancy gave Hardenberg the hope of bringing to fruition his life's plan. In obtaining this position, his range of activities became extended. The numerous and varied activities of a mine director would have offered his active and well-educated spirit many useful outlets for its energies. His ties to the salt works were unchanged, but neither of these two positions fettered him with those chains of industry that often cause a practical man to renounce the sciences and arts. With all this, he could now look forward to marrying Julie, and with Julie in his arms he could also look forward to the enjoyment of domestic bliss. Fate was favorably inclined to him; his request was granted; his letter of application was accepted; nothing was lacking but to take occupancy of the position. But already in the summer of 1800 sickness took hold of him and accompanied him to Dresden. The unexpected and tragic death of a younger brother [Bernhard] greatly upset him, and he suffered a hemorrhage of the lungs. His healthy soul inhabited his ailing body for only a few more months. In Dresden he received loving care and attention from his two grown brothers Karl and Anton; later in Weissenfels

he received tender care from Karl and from his fiancée, Julie, who accompanied him to Weissenfels with her father, upon his request. All their loving care and medical help was in vain. Wholly free from pain, he took himself for exhausted rather than for mortally ill, and he looked forward to recovery in the coming spring. His spirit did not sicken with his body. He read voraciously, particularly in the Bible and in Zinzendorf's and Lavater's writings. He worked at official tasks and literary projects. The arrival of Friedrich Schlegel, his best and dearest friend, on March 21[12] brought him great joy. Each day they spoke to each other about their projects. On the 25th he fell quietly and peacefully asleep to the melodious tones of the piano. He had asked his brother Karl to play something on the keys. He did not awaken again. He died in his sleep in the company of his brother and his friend Schlegel. Who can know the root cause of his untimely death? One can only surmise that his body was unable to bear the intensity of his zealous spirit and was consumed as a result. His friends mourned him. And, as I said before, those who knew him better saw his death as a loss for science and mankind.

The strength and liveliness of his fantasy were one of his most salient characteristics. Through these it was possible for him to grasp everything easily and to clearly and firmly conceive and hold things in his thoughts. They involved themselves in everything that he did. He named them the primary element of his existence, and he also conceded that they strongly influenced his religious outlook. [Just then quotes from a letter by Hardenberg dated December 26, 1798.]

> . . . when I rely less on documented certainties, less on the literal meanings, and less on the truth and formality of history; when I am more certain in myself to follow the influences of higher inspirations and to build from myself a path to the ancient [archetypal] world; when I learn to see in the history and teaching of Christianity the symbolic prefiguration of an all-embracing and apt world religion—the purest example of religion that has appeared in history—and in truth the most perfect revelation of mystery; moreover, when I am able to set at peace from this standpoint all the conflicting theologies as more or less equally felicitous revelations, to stand them in unity together in marked parallel with the developmental history of humankind and to intimate their ordering as a series of ascending complexities—when I do this you would not fail to recognize in the construction of this religious point of view the most precious element of my existence: imagination. . . . (IV, 270)

With each passing year, religion became more a necessity to his nature. A few months before his death, in November 1800, he wrote:

> . . . When not troubled by bodily distress, which does not occur all that often, my mood is bright and still. Religion is the vast Orient inside us, which is seldom clouded. Without it I would be hapless. Thus all is conjoined in a great unity—peaceful thoughts, united in one calm, eternal faith. (IV, 341)

After Sophie's death, he had a preference for Lavater's and Zinzendorf's writings, for Catholic devotional literature, and for the writings of Jakob Böhme. From these and from the manifold relationships of his early life as well as from the high value that he set upon aesthetics and beauty, it is understandable and excusable to find in his poems entitled *Spiritual Songs* passages that one would not have expected from a mind of the Enlightenment. Who is able to read these lines from his poem to Jesus without feeling inspired, along with the poet, with a true feeling and sense of conviction for the Christian religion?

His spiritual songs are only a portion of a projected hymnal that he meant to write with Ludwig Tieck during the last years. Perhaps not without cause, he found the newer poetry of his contemporaries much too intellectual to move the heart. Even in Gellert's poetry he found a scarcity of that fantasy which for him should open the way to the heart. If he granted too much play to fantasy, keep in mind that these poems were first attempts. After Sophie's death, a belief in God and Immortality was an essential need of his nature, as one can see from the above-cited letters written shortly after his return home. To these two beliefs, the belief in Jesus later made friendly partnership. And now his fantasy and his aesthetic sense turned a devotional glance to Maria.—

His fantasy created for him a far-reaching concept of poetry. For him, all of nature was poetical, and in Jakob Böhme he found the highest poetry. I was not able to follow the highest flights of his intellect. A person initiated into contemporary poetry will understand him. It appears to me as at least partly true that the expert can find his thoughts about poetry in his *Ofterdingen*. His friends Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich Schlegel have published his writings under the assumed name *Novalis*. One would do him a disservice, however, to judge these as fully rendered masterpieces or to read them as expressions of the entire human being. He only occupied himself with writing as a means of

self-improvement. He wrote to me that "writing is a matter of secondary importance. They should better judge me for the main thing—practical life. If I am good, useful, active, loving, and true, then I should have leave to write an unuseful, difficult sentence. The scribbles of unknown persons are not harmful, for they are read by few and are soon forgotten. I use my writing as a means to self-development. By this means, I learn to think and work through a subject with diligence—that is all that I demand from it. If I happen to win the approval of a knowing friend, then I have exceeded my expectation. In my opinion, to achieve full self-development requires that one surmount many steps: one should be a tutor, professor, artisan for a time, as well as an author."

His lively fantasy coexisted with calm reason. How else could he have had the desire and strength to plumb the depths of speculative philosophy? But the study of philosophy was only a means and not an end. He set limitations to speculation, and Jacobi's letter to Fichte spoke clearly to his heart. In February 1800 he wrote to me that "philosophy now keeps peace with me on the bookshelves." [Just quotes from a letter by Novalis dated February 23, 1800.]

> . . . Philosophy now keeps peace with me on the bookshelves. I am glad that I have surmounted this sharp peak of pure reason and am over it, and I'm glad that I now live with body and soul in the varied, quickening land of the senses. The memory of those surmounted hardships makes me happy. It belongs to the apprentice years of my education. Practice of cold logic and epistemological reflection is indispensable—one must only not forget the grammar of the authors or lose track of the big picture while playing at rules and methods. One can value philosophy very highly without turning her into a landlady or housekeeper and living solely at her behest. Mathematics alone makes no soldiers or engineers; philosophy alone does not make a human being. . . . (IV, 321)

He wished to be a human being in the noblest meaning of the term. His calm intellect disposed him to judgments that were liberal and nonpartisan. He set apart the writer from other human beings, but he set the friend above both. The most trenchant criticisms of the writer did not antagonize him; however, he could not conceal his disapproval when one attacked the writer as a human being. In the com-

plete works of Xenien there were only two pieces of which he disapproved, because they denigrated the moral value of the writer. The famous Kotzebue drama in which his devoted friend Friedrich Schlegel was criticized so meanly did not make him cross because in this case one writer only libeled another and Schlegel had thrown down the gauntlet first. Thus, he respected Schlegel's novel *Lucinde* as a work of art while at the same time he would have been embarrassed to place it in the hands of an honorable young woman.

Good-heartedness was a lasting quality of his character. It was woven so intimately into his whole being that one cannot conceive of him without this. It gave value first to his fantasy and intellect and then to his personality. If his fantasy, in the manner of his own expression, was good-hearted, so too was his good-heartedness reasonable. These qualities speak in his writings and in his letters. They reveal themselves in his religion, in his inner devotion to his parents, siblings, beloveds, and friends, and in the pleasure that he took from a harmonious household and from the quiet joy of sociable acquaintances. In this respect he was so completely lacking in arrogance or pretension that he seemed created for love and friendship.

In the interchange with strangers or in large sociable gatherings he was often quiet for hours in order to be all the more attentive an observer of the scene. But in trusted circles he was all the more talkative. Conversation was an essential need of his nature. One could listen to him for an entire evening without becoming tired. He knew how to endow the most common everyday objects with interest. And how visible to his friends was the richness of his fantasy, the sharpness of his intellect, the ardor of his affection! He suffered contradiction amiably and was never cross as a result. If he uttered but a single paradoxical sentence, he never let it pass, and cut a good figure of a sophist. He was tall, well built, slender; his eyes showed spirit; his mouth friendliness. His outer appearance was simple and plain; he abhorred ornamentation.—As he said himself, he happily inhabited the realm of the senses but not the realm of sensuality, for the inner human being directed the outer individual. And thus he created an invisible world in the midst of the visible. This was the land of his longing. Thereunto he has returned, fully completed!

Just.
(IV, 536–50)

Ludwig Tieck
Biography of Novalis
1815

Foreword to the Third Edition of *Novalis' Writings*

Friends of these writings often have expressed the desire to know something about the life circumstances of Novalis. When in particular the character of an author reflects itself so clearly and purely in his work as does the author's character here, then it is natural for a reader to feel curious about that author's outward circumstances and life events and those persons the author loved. To such friends of Novalis who did not know him personally, I ask indulgence to offer a small portion of information gathered from remembrances of an intimate but only brief acquaintance with the deceased.

The author's father, Baron von Hardenberg, was Director of the Saxon Salt Mines. In his youth he was a soldier, and he retained in later years a predilection for a soldier's attitude. He was a vigorous, tireless, active individual with an open and forthright character, a true German. His pious sensibility made him a member of the Herrnhüter Brotherhood; nevertheless, his nature remained cheerful, hardy, and upright. The author's mother belonged to the same pious brotherhood. She was a mother of noble devotion and Christian gentleness, qualities that helped her bear with touching resignation the fate of witnessing the deaths of her flourishing, well-educated, and highly promising circle of children.

On May 2, 1772, Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) was born on a family estate in the Duchy of Mansfeld. With the exception of a sister born one year earlier, he was the oldest of eleven siblings. The family consisted of seven sons and four daughters, who all bore distinction of intellect and character and who were bound to one another with the most beautiful and unconstrained love, a love which also bound them to their parents while at the same time each remained a true individual. Friedrich von Hardenberg was very sickly in his first years of childhood, although he did not suffer any major or specific illnesses. He was dreamy, quiet, and showed only small evidence of intellect. He kept him-

self apart from other children and only the extraordinary love that he bestowed on his mother set him apart from his other brothers and sisters. His mother, his older sister Caroline, and his two slightly younger brothers Erasmus and Karl were his only companions. In his ninth year he contracted a dangerous case of dysentery that completely ruined his digestion. The illness necessitated extremely painful medication, and it was overcome only after a long and wearisome period of recovery. At this point his spirit seemed to awaken from slumber, and he suddenly showed himself to be a lively, active, and intellectually promising child. Due to far-flung administrative responsibilities that often kept him on travels away from home, Hardenberg's father had to leave the most important details of his son's education to the mother and tutors. The mother's tender calm, her lovely religious feeling, and the pious mood of both elders, which was felt throughout the household, made the deepest impressions on his character and blessed him for his entire life. He was now extremely diligent. Already by age twelve he possessed a rather good knowledge of Latin and something of Greek. Reading poetry was his favorite recreation during free time. Above all he loved fairy tales, and he set himself to task quite early to practice their invention with his brothers. For a few years, he launched an exceptional pastime with his brothers Erasmus and Karl: each one impersonated a spirit-genie—one the genie of heaven, [an]other the genie of water, the third the genie of earth. On Sunday evenings Novalis told them the most diverse and marvelous stories about their respective realms. Various poems also date from this time.

He gave himself to things with a zeal that perhaps was excessive, and he had an insatiable desire for books and stories. In 1789 he became a student at the gymnasium, and in the fall of the following year he went to study in Jena. Here he remained until 1792, when he became a student at the University of Leipzig with his brother Erasmus. In the following years he went to Wittenberg to finish his studies.

During this time, around the outbreak of the French War, his life took a powerful and unexpected turn in that he suddenly was seized so strongly with a desire to enlist in the military that only the combined entreaties of his parents and relatives could calm him down again.

At this time he made the acquaintance of Friedrich Schlegel, with whom he soon formed a warm friendship. He also met Fichte. These two intellects had a great and enduring influence on him for the

rest of his existence. Around this time he studied [Fichte's] *Science of Knowing* with tireless enthusiasm. After he left Wittenberg, he went to Arnstadt [Tennstedt] in Thuringia to gain practical administrative experience under the mentorship of District Councilor Just. This excellent man was soon one of his most trusted friends. It was not long after his arrival in Arnstadt [Tennstedt] that he met Sophie von Kühn at a neighboring estate. The first glimpse of this beautiful and wonderfully endearing creature was decisive for the rest of his life. Yes, one can even go so far as to say that the feeling that penetrated and animated his soul became the content of his entire life. The expression that we already see evident in [Sophie's] childhood pictures is so gracious and spiritually endearing that we perforce must name it supraearthly or heavenly. Typically, when we behold this transfigured and nearly transparent face, we feel seized by an anxiety that it is too tender and delicately constructed for this life. Death or immortality are what regard us so meaningfully through those brilliant eyes, and only too often does swift mortality confirm the fearful presentiment of this truth. Even more touching are such natures when they have laid their childhood happily aside to blossom toward virginal maidenhood. Everyone who knew our friend's wondrous beloved shared in agreement that no description could do justice to the charm and heavenly gracefulness in which this other-earthly being was woven, to the beauty that she radiated or the affecting majesty of her aura. Novalis became a poet as soon as he merely spoke of her. She had just concluded thirteen years when he met her; spring and summer of 1795 were the blossoming time of his life. Every hour that he could win free from his professional duties he spent in Grüningen, and in late autumn of that same year he won from her parents their consent for marriage. Soon afterward Sophie fell deathly ill with a fever that announced itself as a pain in her side. Although she would recover in a few weeks, the pain persisted on one side of her body. Its insufferable persistence darkened many lovely hours. Novalis became very distressed as a result of his beloved's illness, but he took consolation from the testimony of her doctor that the pains portended nothing serious.

Shortly after her recovery he went to Weissenfels and accepted a position as assessor in the department that his father supervised. Winter 1795/1796 passed in the occupation of professional tasks, and the news from Grüningen was almost always reassuring. In spring 1796 he traveled to Grüningen and found his bride in the appearance of

health. At this time, however, his brother Erasmus fell ill and had to abandon his studies to dedicate himself instead to a forestry position in a distant region. The next eldest brother Karl was a soldier and had to post himself to active duty early that year. Novalis lived quietly all the while in his parents' household with his two older sisters—the other siblings were not yet grown up. In summer while at home and in joyful anticipation of the approaching marriage with Sophie, he suddenly received news that she had gone to Jena to have an operation. It was her desire that he know nothing about her health or the dangerous operation until the crisis had passed. She suffered from a life-threatening tumor of the liver. He hurried to Jena and found her there in pain. The doctor, who was renowned for his skill, offered hope for only a very slow recovery, although the immediate prospect was for improvement. In spite of this, the operation had to be repeated, and at this point the doctor began to fear that the patient might not have the requisite strength to recover. Sophie bore her ordeal with extreme courage and indescribable patience. Novalis consoled her. His parents came to Jena as well and wished for nothing so fervently as for this dearest being's recovery. His brothers arrived, too, and everyone sought to mitigate her pain and suffering. In December Sophie wanted to return to Grüningen. Novalis asked his brother Erasmus to accompany her. Erasmus did so, along with her mother and sister who had nursed her in Jena. He accompanied them to her home and afterward returned to the Forestry Institute in Franken [Zillbach].

Novalis varied his residency between Weissenfels and Grüningen. He must have felt it painful to endure finding Sophie in worsened health with every visit. At the end of January 1797, his brother Erasmus returned home very ill. The mood of the house was very somber as day by day they awaited the death of these two dearly loved individuals.

March 17 was the fifteenth birthday of his beloved. On March 19 toward midday she passed away in the arms of her sister and her true and devoted governess, Mlle. Danscour. No one dared to share this news with Novalis. Finally his brother Karl accepted the task. The grief-stricken Novalis shut himself away; after three days and nights of weeping he traveled to Arnstadt [Tennstedt] in order to be with his dear friends and closer to that beloved plot of ground in which lay the remains of that most precious being. On April 14 his brother Erasmus left this world as well. Novalis wrote the news of this death to his brother Karl, who had been called away on a journey to lower Saxony:

> . . . take heart, Erasmus has triumphed; the blossoms of the loving garland loose themselves here one by one in order to assemble more beautifully and everlastingly hereafter . . .

During this time Novalis lived only within his pain. It came naturally to him to view the seen and unseen worlds as one and to view life and death as separated only through the yearning each had for the other. At the same time, however, life became transfigured, and his entire essence overflowed as though in a bright, unconscious dream to a higher level of being. His essence and all his imaginative creations can be explained from the holiness of pain, ardent love, and the pious longing for death. It is also very likely that this time of deep mourning planted the seed of death in him, were it not already his general fate to be torn too early from our midst.

He remained in Thuringia for many weeks. Consoled and truly transfigured, he returned to his professional duties, which he pursued more vigorously than before, even though he viewed himself as a stranger upon the earth. From this time date the majority of his writings—some sooner, some later, but for the most part during the autumn of this year—an example of which we have published under the title "Fragments," as well as the *Hymns to the Night*.

In December of this year he went to Freiberg. His love of physics and mining engineering awoke to new activity through the acquaintance and instruction of the famous [Abraham Gottlob] Werner. Here he met Julie von Charpentier, and perhaps it will strike everyone except his closest friends as strange that he became engaged to her as early as 1798. Sophie (as we see from his works) remained the center of his thoughts. He adored her almost more in her absence, as though she were visibly near to him, but he still believed that in a certain measure kindness and beauty could remedy loss. At this time he wrote *Faith and Love*, *Pollen*, various fragments, and *The Apprentices of Sais*.

Early in 1799 [1798] Sophie's governess died, and this affected him very deeply, since he knew that her death was occasioned by her longing for her dearest Sophie. He returned soon afterward to his father, who secured him a position in Thuringia as an assessor and administrator.

Now he visited Jena regularly, where he made acquaintance with A. W. Schlegel and sought out the company of the congenial Ritter,[13] whom he loved exceptionally and whose talent in experimentation he greatly admired. In the summer of this year I first encountered him

during a visit to my friend Wilhelm Schlegel in Jena, and our acquaintance quickly became trusted friendship. Those days were wonderful that we spent with Schlegel, Schelling, and other friends. On my return trip I visited him at his home and met his family. Here he read to me from *The Apprentices of Sais* and many other fragments. He accompanied me then to Halle, and we still enjoyed several cheerful hours at Reichardt's house in Giebichenstein. At this time there arose in him the first thoughts about *Ofterdingen*. At that time he also wrote some of his *Spiritual Songs*, which were to make up one part of a Christian hymnal, to be accompanied by a collection of sermons. He was otherwise quite active in his official duties. All that he chose to do he undertook with love, and even the most trifling tasks were not without meaning for him.

When I and Friedrich Schlegel were living in Jena in 1799, Novalis visited us easily and saw his friends for shorter and longer periods of time. His oldest sister was married in this year and the wedding was celebrated at an estate near Jena. After this marriage our friend resided for a longer period of time in a solitary locale in the Golden Pastures of Thuringia at the feet of the Kyfhäuser mountains, and in this solitude the greater portion of *Ofterdingen* was written. At that time he lived primarily in the companionship of two men: the presently known General Thielmann (brother-in-law of his bride) and General von Funk. Thielmann introduced him to Funk. The time spent in friendship with Funk was valuable to him in more than one respect, for he could make use of the library of this well-read man. Among those volumes he first came upon the legend of Ofterdingen early in that same year. Funk's excellent biography of Kaiser Friedrich II made him interested in this individual, whom he wanted to picture in his novel as a model of kingliness.

In 1800 Novalis was again in Weissenfels. On February 23 he wrote to me:

> My novel is fully underway. Twelve bound sheets are about finished. I have the whole plan for it pretty much completed in my head. It will consist of two volumes—the first hopefully done within three weeks. It contains the indications and foundations for the second part. The completed work should be the apotheosis of poetry. In the first part, Heinrich von Afterdingen matures to readiness as a poet—in the second part he is transfigured as a poet. It will have many

> similarities to *Sternbald*[14]—but not the lightness of touch. Though perhaps this deficiency will not be unfavorable to the contents. In any event, it is a first attempt—the first fruit of reawakened poetry in me, whose resurrection owes the greatest debt to your friendship.
>
> . . . I am reading Jakob Böhme in connection with it, and I begin to understand him in the way that he needs to be understood. One sees in him primarily a powerful springtide with its arising, formative, and powerful forces that bring to birth the world from within—a true chaos full of dark desire and wonderful life—a true and thorough microcosm. It pleases me very much to have made his acquaintance through you—all the better then that the *Apprentices* rest for now—that book needs to be revised from a completely fresh perspective—it should become a true, truly sense-imaginative novel of nature. But first *Heinrich* must be finished—one thing at a time, otherwise nothing gets completed. . . . (IV, 322)

When I left Jena in the summer of 1800 I visited my friend for a while at his parents' home in Weissenfels. I found him well and cheerful, and his appearance had not changed, although those close to him were somewhat worried for what they took to be signs of paleness and increasing thinness. He himself was more attentive to his diet than usual; he drank little or no wine, ate no meat, and nourished himself primarily on milk and vegetables. We went riding or walking daily, and even during fast walks up the hillsides I could detect in him no shortening of breath or weakness of lungs. For this reason I tried to argue him out of his habits, because I thought it was foolish, silly, and a sign of misplaced anxiety for him to avoid wine and hearty meals. He was filled with excitement for plans for his future happiness; his residence had already been furnished, and in August he wanted to celebrate union with his bride. Just as enthusiastically did he speak of plans to finish *Ofterdingen* and other books. His life appeared ready to unfold amid the richest activity and love. When I took leave of him I could not have suspected that I would never see him again.

During the time in August that he wanted to travel to Freiberg for his wedding, he began to cough up blood, which the doctor diagnosed as a hemorrhage and of little importance. But the malady seized him in its grip and the symptoms recurred periodically. His marriage was postponed, and at the beginning of October he went with his brothers and parents to Dresden. They left him there with his brother Karl in Dresden and went on to visit their married daughter in Ober-

lausitz. He was obviously weaker. In November, the news that his young, fourteen-year-old brother [Bernhard] had drowned by accident caused him such a shock that he suffered a severe hemorrhage, at which point his doctors declared the condition fatal. Soon afterward his fiancée came to Dresden.

As he became weaker he longed earnestly at one point to travel to a southern climate; he made plans to visit Herbert, a friend of his who lived in Klagenfurt, but the doctors advised against this change, perhaps because he was too weak and exhausted to bear the exertion. The year went by, and in January 1801 the wish to be with his parents again became so strong that he returned to Weissenfels at the end of that month.

The best doctors from Jena and Leipzig were sought for advice, but his condition worsened with every week, although he was almost completely without pain the entire time. He attended to his professional obligations and wrote a great deal for himself in his notebooks. He also attempted some poetry. The second sonnet of his assorted poems was written at this time, for example the one beginning "Alle Menschen seh ich leben" [I, 420]. He read the Bible avidly, as well as Zinzendorf and Lavater.

The closer he came to death, the more certain he became of his imminent recovery. The coughing grew less; with the exception of weakness, he did not feel really sick. With the arousal of hope and longing for life, new talent and fresh energy appeared to rise in him. He contemplated his projects with renewed enthusiasm. He laid plans to completely redo *Ofterdingen*, and shortly before his death he said: "I have just now for the first time experienced what poetry is. Numberless poems and stories have arisen in me—all of them completely different from what I previously wrote."

On March 19, the death day of his Sophie, he was strikingly weaker. Many of his friends visited him. To his great joy, on March 21[15] his oldest and truest friend Friedrich Schlegel came to visit him from Jena. The two conversed very much, primarily about their mutual projects. During these days he was very animated and his nights were peaceful; he enjoyed rather restful sleep. On March 25, early around six o'clock, he asked his brother to fetch him various books, in which he browsed. Then he ordered his breakfast and spoke with liveliness until eight. Toward nine o'clock he asked his brother [Karl] to play something for him on the piano, during which he fell asleep. Friedrich

Schlegel came soon afterward into his room and found him very peacefully in slumber. He remained asleep until noon, at which time he took leave of this world without the slightest movement. His usual friendly countenance looked unaltered, the same as if he were still alive.

Thus did he die, before he yet had completed his twenty-ninth year, our friend whose wide, embracing knowledge, philosophical genius, and poetic talent must inspire adoration and wonder. His fatherland could have expected extraordinary things from one who so outpaced his contemporaries, had not an early death overtaken him. Even so, his remaining, unfinished works have had much influence. Many of his great thoughts will fascinate future generations. Noble spirits and deep thinkers will be illumined and enkindled by the sparks of his genius.

Novalis was tall, thin, and of noble proportions. He wore his light brown hair in falling locks, which at that time was less common than now. His brown eyes were bright and brilliant, and the complexion of his face, particularly his forehead, was almost transparent. His hands and feet were a bit too large and with fine expression. His demeanor was typically cheerful and good-natured. For those who only judge people by the common standard, according to manner and ambition, or by the standard set by fashion, Novalis is invisible. To the more discerning eye, however, he manifests the phenomenon of Beauty. In profile and expression, his face closely resembled St. John the Evangelist, as we know that face from the lovely, large painting by Albrecht Dürer, found in Munich and Nuremberg.[16]

His speech was lively and loud, his gestures large. I never saw him tire; even when our conversations went late into the night, he only broke off with reluctance to have some sleep, and even then he read a bit beforehand. He was a stranger to boredom. Even in the company of oppressive or mediocre persons he infallibly would seek out someone who could impart to him some new aspect of knowledge that he could use, small though it might be. His friendliness and openness to communication made him loved by everyone; his virtuosity in the art of social exchange was so great that lesser heads never recognized how far above them he towered. Just as on the one hand he gladly revealed in conversation the depths of his soul as though he were speaking under the sway of invisible worlds, so on the other hand he was cheerful as a child, jested with unconstrained joy, and gave himself to jokes and social pleasantries. Without vanity or learned arrogance, and a stranger

to affectation and cant, he was a genuine and true human being, the purest and loveliest incarnation of a high, immortal spirit.

His essential studies for many years were philosophy and physics. In the latter his observations, conclusions, and insights often outpaced his time. In philosophy he chiefly studied Spinoza and Fichte, but afterward he sought in his own way to unify philosophy and religion. In this respect, he found the writings of the Neo-Platonists and mystics very important. He had an excellent knowledge of mathematics, mechanics, and most especially mining engineering; otherwise, he had little interest for specific arts. He loved music very much, although he had only a superficial knowledge of it; he was only slightly drawn to sculpture and painting even though he could express the most original ideas and intuitions about these arts. I recall, for example, an argument about landscape painting in which I could not at first comprehend his point of view but which afterward the great landscape painter [Kaspar David] Friedrich in Dresden did much to truly realize in his own painting. In poetry Novalis was truthfully a stranger; he had read very few poets and had not devoted much study to literary criticism or poetics. For a long time, Goethe was his chief poet of study. He loved *Wilhelm Meister* above all other works, though one might scarcely conclude this from the harsh comments concerning this work in his fragments. From poetry, he demanded that which is closest to it: soul and inspiration. Thus, although he knew relatively few works of poetry, he did not suffer under the burden of imitation or models of authority. This explains why he found many writings to be true and endearing which others more well-read dismissed as trivial: for him, even the weakest colors could reveal something original, close, and meaningful for which he could strive. Those wonderful stories that we now term fairy tales [*Märchen*] come closest to his mode of representation. He saw the deeper meaning in them and sought to express this in varied ways in his poetry. To him it was natural to find wonder in the ordinary and to find as ordinary the strange and the supernatural. Thus everyday life enfolded him like a fairy tale. That region, which for most people exists only as a zone to be grasped as a distant or perhaps doubted intuition, was for him a beloved homeland. Undeterred by other examples, he discovered a new mode of representation. In the manifold complexity of relationship as well as that aspect of love and faith which for him was simultaneously an instructress, wisdom, and religion, Novalis alone among his contemporaries has a similarity to

the divine Dante, who discovered in the moment of extreme crisis, deepest grief, and loss the wellspring of his poetry and outlook. Novalis sings to us this fathomless, mystic song, very different from those many others who imitate him, who use mysticism for its ornamental value. For this reason his novel [*Ofterdingen*] is consciously and unconsciously merely the representation of his character and destiny, as he himself put it in the second part of that same book: "character and destiny are but a single concept."

His life thus rightfully assumes a miraculous aspect. We are seized by a special shudder—much like the thrill that comes to us in a fairy tale—when we hear that of his many sisters and brothers, only two males yet survive. The noble mother, who for several years has mourned her departed husband, has withdrawn in silent dedication to the sanctum of her pain and her religion.

(IV, 551–60)

Timeline of Events

Year	*Month*	*Day*	*Event*
1791	April		First publication, "Klagen eines Jünglings," appears anonymously in Wieland's *Neuen Teutschen Merkur*. Hardenberg under influence of Schiller.
	October		Begins studies at university in Leipzig at age nineteen.
1792	January		Meets Friedrich Schlegel in Leipzig. Schlegel writes about Hardenberg enthusiastically to his brother.
1793	January		Highpoint of affair with Julie Eisenstuck in Leipzig. Emotional and family crisis. "Fritz the flirt." As part of the crisis and recovery, Hardenberg decides to become a soldier.
	March		Return from Leipzig to Weissenfels. Decides to continue studies according to father's plan and at urging of both parents.
	April		Begins concentrated studies in Wittenberg to finish law degree.
1794	June		Finishes law studies and graduates.
	August/ September		Karl begins love affair with "Frtizchen" von Lindenau. The three brothers spend time together in Weissenfels in high spirits.

Year	*Month*	*Day*	*Event*
	October	25	Hardenberg arrives in Tennstedt; he meets Just and Just's niece Caroline.
	November		Begins official duties in Tennstedt.
		17	During a journey with Just and his niece, Hardenberg visits Grüningen. **Meets Sophie von Kühn.**
			Journal entry of ride to Grüningen.
	December		Back and forth to Grüningen, when duties permit.
		25	Tennstedt. Christmas.
1795	January–November		Visits Grüningen as often as possible.
	March	15	Unofficial "secret" engagement to Sophie.
		17	Sophie's thirteenth birthday.
	April	5	Easter in Grüningen.
	May	2	Twenty-third birthday in Grüningen.
		Late	Meeting of Hölderlin, Hardenberg, and Fichte at Friedrich Niethammer's in Jena.
	October		**Beginning of intensive work on Fichte and notebooks that became the *Fichte Studies*.**
	November	7	Sophie ill, first time.
		14	Hardenberg learns of Sophie's illness and hurries to Grüningen. Meets Wilhelmine von Thümmel, Sophie's stepsister.
		17	First anniversary of meeting Sophie. End of duties in Tennstedt.
		20	Hardenberg in Grüningen; all appears well with Sophie.
	December		Father secures Friedrich a job in salt mine administration; he will work under his father's supervision.
		31	Sophie suffers a relapse.

Year	*Month*	*Day*	*Event*
1796	January	Early	Hardenberg in Tennstedt; he goes to Langensalza to study chemistry with Johann Christian Wiegleb.
		31	Hardenberg leaves Grüningen.
	February	5	In Weissenfels for new job.
	February		"The Poet's Realm"
	March	15	On anniversary of engagement, Hardenberg has the engagement ring engraved with the words: "Sophia sey mein Schuz Geist."
		17	Sophie's fourteenth birthday.
	June	Mid	Father gives consent to engagement with Sophie.
	July	4	Sophie goes to Jena for treatment of her condition, a tumor of the liver.
		5	Sophie's first operation.
		8	Hardenberg writes letter to Friedrich Schlegel to announce engagement.
		10	Hardenberg learns of Sophie's trip to Jena and her operation.
		Mid	Hardenberg in Jena.
	July/ August	29–6	Friedrich Schlegel in Weissenfels with Hardenberg; Schlegel complains about the excessively religious atmosphere.
	August	7	Friedrich Schlegel in Jena; visits Sophie.
		15	Hardenberg in Jena. Sophie's second operation.
	September	10	Goethe visits Sophie in Jena.
		End	Sophie's third operation. Goethe visits Sophie in Jena.
		End	**End of work on *Fichte Studies*.**
	November	10	Hardenberg's uncle comes to Weissenfels for an extended visit until March 17. His presence adds to the tense atmosphere.
		12, 13	Hardenberg with Sophie in Jena.

Year	*Month*	*Day*	*Event*
1796 (*cont.*)	December	3	In Jena. Hardenberg sees Sophie and Friedrich Schlegel.
		15	Erasmus escorts Sophie and family back to Grüningen upon Hardenberg's request.
		25	Weissenfels. Christmas.
1797	January	2–9	Hardenberg breaks his finger.
	March	1–10	In Grüningen. Alarmed at Sophie's condition.
		9	Sophie deathly ill.
		10	Hardenberg sees Sophie for the last time. Return to Weissenfels.
		11	Erasmus arrives in Weissenfels deathly ill.
		15	Second anniversary of engagement.
		17	Sophie's fifteenth birthday.
		18	Hardenberg's uncle leaves Weissenfels.
		19	**Death of Sophie.**
		21	Hardenberg receives news of Sophie's death.
	April	12	Hardenberg goes to Tennstedt.
		14	Death of Erasmus. Good Friday.
		16	Hardenberg visits Sophie's grave for first time. Easter Sunday.
		18	**Beginning of Journal.**

Notes

Introduction

1. For discussion, see O'Brien; Neubauer; and Uerlings.

2. For discussion, see William Arctander O'Brien's *Novalis: Signs of Revolution.*

3. For discussion, see Richard Samuel's introductory essay in volume 4 of the historical-critical edition.

4. For discussion of the derivation of the name Novalis, see Paul Kluckhohn's introductory essay "Friedrich von Hardenbergs Entwicklung und Dichtung" in volume 1 of the historical-critical edition as well as remarks by Heinz Ritter in *Der unbekannte Novalis.*

5. Readers familiar with the spiritual scientific writings and lectures of Rudolf Steiner are especially sympathetic with this connotation of the name Novalis as "herald of a new age." Steiner lectured on Novalis repeatedly; his wife, Marie Steiner, produced and performed Novalis's poetry in speech recitations and eurythmy, often as an artistic adjunct to Steiner's lectures. Important lecture titles include *Novalis der Seher* (Berlin, December 22, 1908) and *Novalis der Verkünder des spirituell zu erfassenden Christus-Impulses* (Köln, December 29, 1912). Anthroposophists have continued in this interpretative vein, deepening and extending Steiner's indications. For discussion, see Friedrich Hiebel's *Novalis: Deutscher Dichter, Europäischer Denker, Christlicher Seher;* Heinz Ritter's *Der unbekannte Novalis;* and Sergei Prokofieff's *Eternal Individuality: Towards a Karmic Biography of Novalis.* For discussion of Novalis and Anthroposophy, see Sophia Vietor's "Novalis und die Anthroposophie."

6. Hardenberg coined the term *magical idealism* in July 1798 in a fragment that reads:

> Similarity and dissimilarity of Asmus and Ligne and Voltaire. Jacobi, too, belongs to the transcendental empiricists. To be an empiricist means to see thinking as conditioned by the influence of the outer

> world and things—empiricists are passive thinkers—who wish to have philosophy given to them. Voltaire is a pure empiricist and so are many of the French philosophers—Ligne leans imperceptibly toward the transcendental empiricists. These make the transition to the dogmatists—from there to the visionaries—or transcendental dogmatists—then to Kant—from there to Fichte—and finally to magical idealism. (II, 605)

For discussion of Hardenberg's magical idealism as philosophical concept, see Manfred Frank's "Die Philosophie des sogenannten magischen Idealismus."

7. Psychology, as an empirical science, would of course have little to do with a strictly transcendental idealist attitude. But one can speak of a *transcendental subjectivism* in the special sense, for example, that Edmund Husserl employs the term in *The Crisis of European Sciences*: "The whole transcendental set of problems circles around the relation of *this*, my 'I'—the 'ego'—to what is at first taken for granted to be—my soul—and, again, around the relation of this ego and my conscious life to the *world* of which I am conscious and whose true being I know through my own cognitive structures" (98).

8. For discussion, see Manfred Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* (137–54).

9. An important influence on Hardenberg's aesthetic revision of Fichte's philosophy was his prior and ongoing acquaintance with the writings of the Dutch philosopher Franz Hemsterhuis (1721–1790).

10. Goethe's novel played an important and well-documented role in the process of identity construction that occurred following Sophie's death in 1797. Goethe's hero, Wilhelm Meister (and behind him the Shakespearean hero Hamlet), rehearses various identities and roles. This concern with identity formation in response to necessity (*Meister*) and outer crisis (*Hamlet*) mirrors the concerns of Hardenberg following Sophie's death. For discussion of Hardenberg's reading of *Wilhelm Meister* during 1797, see Hans Joachim Mähl's "Novalis' Wilhelm-Meister-Studien des Jahres 1797"; for discussion of Shakespeare and *Hamlet* in relation to the events of 1797, see Helmut Rehder's "Novalis and Shakespeare."

11. Novalis refers to the situation mentioned by Karl in his letter to Erasmus dated September 18, 1794, from Weissenfels: "Our current affairs are much as they were; that means; we play the role of Young Masters of Weissenfels and are one and all in love with the same girl, and O Wonder; we carry ourselves off in that manner quite well" (IV, 578).

12. For discussion, see Regula Frankhauser's *Des Dichters Sophia: Weiblichkeitsentwürfe im Werk von Novalis.*

13. In a poem ("M. und S.") that Heinz Ritter-Schaumburg (*Novalis und seine erste Braut*) believes Hardenberg wrote shortly after he first met Sophie and her older sister, Friederike von Mandelsloh, in November 1794, Harden-

berg refers to Sophie in comparison to her sister as a riddle (*Rätsel*). "Siehst du die beide, so siehst du das Rätsel neben der Lösung. / Einzeln ist jede für sich Rätsel und Lösung zugleich" (To see them both, is to see riddle next to response. / Alone is each for herself at once: riddle and response) (I, 391).

14. Johann Gottlieb Fichte's relationship to the Hardenberg family makes a curious tale. It is related by Monica von Miltitz in her small book *Das Schloß Siebeneichen*. Monica was a descendent of Friedrich von Hardenberg's cousin, Dietrich von Miltitz (1769–1853), whose family owned the castle Siebeneichen near Dresden, which Hardenberg frequently visited and where he most likely drafted works such as *The Apprentices of Sais* and chapters of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Dietrich was fostered by Friedrich von Hardenberg's father following the death of Dietrich's father in 1774. Concerning Dietrich's father, Ernst Haubold von Miltitz (1739–1774), and the father's relationship to Fichte, Monica von Miltitz tells the following tale:

> Ernst Haubold died at the baths in Pisa and memory of him would no doubt have been forgotten had it not attached itself to a small event that has been often related but which here is related for the first time in entirety. One Sunday Ernst Haubold visited his sister who was married to Count Hofsmannsegg in Rammenau. Naturally the distance between Oberau and Rammenau, which lies near Pulsnitz, caused him to miss the morning church services. That was distressing to the good Protestant, who felt himself earnestly obligated to observe his churchly duties. This may have seemed even more distressing due to the fact that the church in Rammenau was noted for its preacher, who was known far and wide. But the sermon proved not completely lost due to the fact that in the town square Ernst Haubold encountered a young boy herding cows. This lad, due to his quick intellect and exceptional gifts of memory, was able to repeat the entire sermon with youthful liveliness and full detail. Miltitz was so impressed by the exceptional, young barefoot preacher that he advised the official in Rammenau to find a new cowherd: young Johann Gottlieb Fichte (for such was the lad's name) should instead be destined for learning and perhaps one day become a preacher or scholar. It was quickly arranged that Miltitz should undertake the care and fosterage of the boy, who was provided for amply even after Miltitz's death. At first he gave the lad over to the instruction of Pastor Krebel in Niederau until the boy was ready to advance to intermediate schooling. The Miltitz family paid for the lad's later university education as well, and Fichte often spent many pleasant days of vacation at the castle Siebeneichen.

Monica von Miltitz fails to mention in this paragraph that after the death of Ernst Haubold von Miltitz in 1774 his cousin Heinrich Ulrich Erasmus von Hardenberg, Friedrich von Hardenberg's father, undertook Fichte's patronage in his cousin's stead.

15. Hardenberg became engaged to Julie von Charpentier (1776–1811) in December 1798.

16. "Here we stand as witness to the decisive experience of Friedrich von Hardenberg, the act of freeing his inner being from the limiting chains of space and time, the moment of birth of a higher supra-earthly consciousness. Here begins a new epoch of his existence; here the genius seizes upon his mission. He has found his new and unique way forward. And thereupon or soon thereafter he names himself with a new name, a symbol of his essence, under which he will be known from thence forth. That which we understand by the name Novalis was born in this hour" (Ritter 73).

17. For discussion, see Paul Kluckhohn's "Einleitung der Herausgeber" in volume 1 of the historical-critical edition; also see Heinz Ritter's *Novalis' Hymnen an die Nacht*.

18. This is Sergei Prokofieff's thesis in his book *Eternal Individuality: Towards a Karmic Biography of Novalis*: "The individuality who worked in his last earthly incarnation under the name Novalis is, possibly to a greater extent than any other human individuality, the key to the mysteries of both the most distant past and the furthest future" (1). Prokofieff's work is based on the spiritual scientific research of the founder of Anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner. Steiner's "Last Address" to the members of the Anthroposophical Society in Dornach on September 29, 1924, was devoted to Novalis; it brought to culmination the "karmic" reading of Novalis's biography (Novalis's previous incarnations) that Steiner had begun to develop two decades earlier. These incarnations include Adam, Phinehas, Elijah, John the Baptist, and Raphael. Sergei Prokofieff is presently a member of the Vorstand of the Allgemeinen Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft in Dornach, Switzerland.

19. For discussion of *nachsterben*, see August Langen's *Der Wortschatz des deutschen Pietismus*. Several of the recurrent and critical words in the journal have Pietistic overtones: for example, *nachsterben* (to die after), *heiter* (cheerful), *Heiterkeit* (cheerfulness), *lüstern* (lustful), *Lüsternheit* (lust), *Besonnenheit* (presence of mind), *Gelassenheit* (resignation). For discussion of Hardenberg's situation and thoughts of suicide, see Richard Samuel's remarks in "Einleitung des Herausgebers" on page 42 in volume 4 of the historical-critical edition.

20. From *Pollen*: "Freilich ist die Besonnenheit, Sichselbstfindung" (II, 421) (In truth, to be clear-minded is to find oneself); from *Teplitz Fragments*: "Licht ist Vehikel der Gemeinschaft—des Weltalls—ist dis ächte Bessonenheit in der geistigen Sfäre nicht ebenfalls?" (II, 619) (Light is the medium of community—of cosmos—is this not likewise true of inner clarity in the spiritual realm?).

Selected Letters and Documents: 1792–1797

1. Schlegel's insignia (IV, 776).

2. Novalis refers to the situation mentioned by Karl in his letter to Erasmus dated September 18, 1794, from Weissenfels: "Our present affairs are much the same as before; that means: we play the masters from Weissenfels and are all in love with the same girl, and O wonder! we carry it off very well" (IV, 578).

3. Christiane Friderike (Fritzchen) von Lindenau (1771–1833); Karl and Friedrich had fallen in love with the same young woman; an awkward situation for all involved.

4. Erasmus was studying forestry.

5. Christian Friedrich Brachmann (1771–1846): friend of Friedrich von Hardenberg, brother of Louise Brachmann, who was a close friend of Hardenberg's sister, Sidonie. Hardenberg recommended Louise Brachmann's poetry to Schiller in 1798.

6. Translation: I was astonished and my hair stood on end.

7. Erasmus wrote the italicized lines in Latin.

8. Sophie's sister Susanna Friederica (Fritzchen) Christiane Dorothea von Mandelsloh (1774–1849).

9. Akduarunses = Viceactuarius (IV, 996). Sophie's writings contained many errors in spelling.

10. Sophie's sister Friederike von Mandelsloh

11. Sophie's sister Caroline von Kühn

12. ". . . ging ich auf das Feuwerg." [??]

13. Caroline, Sophie's sister.

14. Sophie's stepfather.

15. Karl von Hardenberg's girlfriend, Friderike von Lindenau.

16. Sophie's younger sister, Wilhelmine von Rockenthien.

17. Hardenberg replaced the name of the first person with a dash and refers to the other person by the nickname "Pole Star."

18. "es sey ein Bote da und die Philosophie sey krank."

19. For discussion, see Richard Samuel's introductory remarks in the historical-critical edition (V, 3–8).

20. Novelist Moritz August von Thümmel (1783–1817).

21. Sophie's governess, Jeannette Danscour.

22. Novalis asked Sophie's father for permission to wed Sophie in June 1796.

23. Professor of history in Jena; friend of Hardenberg. Woltmann visited Sophie when she was in Jena for her surgeries.

Journal

1. April 18 was the thirty-first day after the death of Sophie von Kühn.
2. Friedrich Christian Moritz, acquaintance from Langensalza (V, 887).
3. Caroline Just.
4. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, bk. 4, chap. 19. In this chapter the hero grapples with a decision regarding his path in life. It is a moment of crisis and resolution. "The desires and hopes that a young man cherishes in his heart would seem to be what he knows best; and yet, when they suddenly appear before him and are, as it were, pressing in upon him, he retreats from them, not recognizing them for what they are."
5. Hardenberg appears to be referring to the notebooks now known as the *Fichte Studies* that date from the year 1795. These begin with the title "*Bemerkungen*" (Notes, Comments, Remarks, or Observations). Other passages in the journal bear out the idea that during the weeks of this journal Hardenberg returned to these older notebooks. This is especially evident in the entry dated May 19 concerning the "true nature of the Fichtean I."
6. Hardenberg's younger sister Karoline.
7. Tutor for the Hardenbergs in Weissenfels.
8. Rahel Just.
9. Captain von Rockenthien, Sophie's stepfather.
10. Sophie's sister, Caroline.
11. "Report" (*Bericht*): he seems to be referring to official reports, perhaps related to supervision of salt mines.
12. Hardenberg's younger brother: Gottlob Albrecht Karl von Hardenberg, 1776–1813.
13. Another younger brother: Georg Anton von Hardenberg, 1781–1825.
14. Hardenberg's mentor, August Cölestin Just, had purchased a garden plot recently.
15. Sophie's governess at Grüningen from 1787, Jeannette Louise Danscour, "Ma chère."
16. Hardenberg's cousin Dietrich von Miltitz became engaged to an English innkeeper's daughter, Sarah-Anne Constable. Hardenberg's father opposed the engagement and worked to undermine it. The marriage took place anyway in 1796.
17. *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, bk. 6: "I admire a person who knows with certainty what he wants and pursues that goal steadfastly with a sense of purpose. Whether that purpose is base or noble, deserves blame or praise—that is only a secondary concern. Believe me, my dear, the greater part of ill luck and what the world commonly calls evil arises because people mistake their true goals or, if they aim correctly, fail to work diligently to achieve those

aims. They are like those who day dream of building a mansion with materials and efforts scaled to produce a cottage."

18. Richard Samuel draws attention to information shared by Friederika von Mandelsloh in a letter written in 1846:

> [Novalis] was at all times visibly disposed to illness and suffering and his early death could be foreseen. After Sophie's death he kept himself closed up in her room often for an entire day, alone with his grief. The fears of those who attended him about how he was getting through this time of bereavement prompted Sophie's sister to climb the stairs to check on him. No sooner had she opened the door to the room than she stood stricken with horror, for she thought she saw the dead one [Sophie] on her bed as she had lain there at the hour of her death. The explanation was that Novalis had spread out on the bed the long gray dress in which Sophie had died. The cap that she had worn and the small book she had last been reading were laid open upon it, so that he could call to mind a view of her reading and hold this sight fast in his memory. (IV, 605)

During the weeks of mourning, Hardenberg apparently attempted to alter his moods and state of mind through a series of deliberate mental/spiritual exercises. Whether medications played a role as well is an open question. Certain words and phrases in the journal and letters suggest an interest in pharmaceuticals and their role in altering human consciousness.

19. Excerpt from letter by Friedrich Schlegel in Jena dated May 5, 1797, to Friedrich von Hardenberg in Tennstedt:

> . . . You cannot believe how completely and closely I am with you, and how completely I can enter into your present situation and state of mind. But I assure you that I could often feel envious to have had such a loss myself. You cannot believe how oppressively I feel that emptiness that shall perhaps always remain. Don't view this as an outer expression of hypochondria but as the old result of my experience and reason.
>
> . . . The messenger is already here again for the second time. I embrace you warmly and truly, old and dearest friend. How lovely it would be if we two could sit alone together for a few days and philosophize, or, as we always preferred to say—fichtisize? (IV, 480–82)

20. Jeannette Danscour, Sophie's governess.

21. Wilhelmine von Thümmel, Sophie's stepsister.

22. Herr von Rockenthien, Sophie's stepfather.

23. Letter from Friedrich Schlegel dated May 7, 1797, that included the first volume of A. W. Schlegel's translation of Shakespeare with *Romeo and Juliet*. Schlegel wrote:

> When I received yesterday a copy of my brother's Shakespeare, I immediately thought: this is something for you. . . . I think that Romeo will attract

> you. You will only really first get to know him in this translation. Were I Körner, I would say: "Even Goethe can't match it." But since I am Fr. Schlegel, I will tell you: "Friend, this is more than poetry." I read it again today, and the tears flowed copiously. At the same time it scorched me, as "when fire and powder ignite in a kiss." It is a passionate, heavy thunderstorm on the freshest day of a luxuriant spring; the rose of life, but with the thorn, which is sharp and goes to the mark. . . . Understand all that I have said to you in a spiritual sense. Because here is Sense, Spirit, Soul, Sensibility. (IV, 482–83)

24. Central moment of the third hymn in *Hymns to the Night*.

25. Friedrich's younger brother, Anton.

26. Adam Ferguson, *Institutions of Moral Philosophy* (London, 1767).

27. Wilhelmine von Thümmel was a lady-in-waiting to the princess; the two came together.

28. August Ludwig Hülsen (1765–1810), a student of Fichte. He lived in Jena from 1794 to 1797 and worked on the Schlegels'*Athenaeum*.

29. Sophie's stepfather.

30. Erdmann Friedrich Senff (1743–1813), member of the salt mine administration.

31. The only sentence in the journal that is written in Roman script (IV, 741).

32. Translation: Strength and vigor.

33. Mountain in the Harz region.

34. Novel by Jean Paul, *Das Kampaner Thal oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele*.

35. Publication attacking the *Xenienalmanach* of Schiller and Goethe.

36. F. W. J. Schelling, *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen* (1795).

37. Friedrich Schlegel, *Die Griechen und die Römer: Historische und kritische Versuche über das Klassische Alterthum* (1798).

38. F. W. J. Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797).

39. Sophie's first operation in Jena was on July 5, 1796.

Autobiographical and Biographical Testimonies

1. Friedrich Wilhelm von Hardenberg (1728–1800).

2. Karl August von Hardenberg (1750–1822); Prussian cabinet minister, 1792; peace negotiator at the Treaty of Basel, 1795; Minister in Berlin, 1797; Prussian chancellor, 1810.

3. Johann Adolf Thielmann (1765–1824).

4. Abraham Gottlob Werner (1749–1817), director of Freiberg Mining Academy.

5. Johann Wilhelm Ritter (1776–1810).

6. Johann Adolf Thielmann.

7. Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand von Funk (1761–1828).

8. Schlegel actually arrived on the 23rd.

9. Johann Christian Wiegleb (1732–1800).

10. Friedrich Wilhelm Heun (1741–1813); Erdmann Friedrich Senf (1743–1813).

11. Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801).

12. Just repeats Karl von Hardenberg's misdating of Schlegel's arrival.

13. Johann Wilhelm Ritter.

14. Ludwig Tieck, *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798).

15. Schlegel arrived on March 23.

16. Detail of John the Evangelist in Albrecht Dürer's *The Four Apostles* (1526). Alte Pinakothek Museum, München.

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Select Bibliography

The translations of the letters, journal, and other materials in this text are based on the materials contained in the German standard historical-critical "third" edition (*Novalis. Schriften: Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*). All translations contained in this State University of New York Press edition are by the author unless otherwise noted. Reference to materials in the historical-critical edition is made by citation to volume number and page number (Roman and Arabic numerals).

The following bibliographic references, while not exhaustive, should enable the reader to situate the materials in this edition within the context of Novalis and German early romantic scholarship. For a more complete bibliographic overview of Novalis reception and scholarship current as of 1991, a reader would be advised to begin with Herbert Uerlings's *Friedrich von Hardenberg, genannt Novalis*.

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