

## Contents

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|                                                                                                      |      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| <i>Illustrations</i>                                                                                 | vii  |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i>                                                                               | xi   |
| <i>Permissions</i>                                                                                   | xiii |
| One Introduction                                                                                     | 1    |
| Craig E. Stephenson                                                                                  |      |
| Two Jung's Abstract on Nerval from <i>The Symbolic Life</i><br>( <i>Collected Works</i> , Volume 18) | 49   |
| Three Jung's Lecture on Gérard de Nerval at the Psychology Club, 1945                                | 51   |
| Four Minutes of the Discussion Following the 1945 Lecture                                            | 79   |
| Five Jung's Notes to the 1942 Lecture                                                                | 89   |
| Six Jung's First Notes on Nerval's <i>Aurélia</i> , 1942                                             | 107  |
| Seven Nerval's <i>Aurélia</i> (1855)                                                                 | 119  |
| Translated by Richard Sieburth (1999);<br>illustrations by Alfred Kubin (1910)                       |      |
| <i>References</i>                                                                                    | 197  |
| <i>Index</i>                                                                                         | 201  |

ONE

## Introduction

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*Craig E. Stephenson*

THE FRENCH ROMANTIC POET GÉRARD DE NERVAL EXPLORED THE IRRATIONAL with lucidity and exquisite craft, and Carl Gustav Jung regarded those explorations as a work of “extraordinary magnitude.” Like the German poet-philosophers Novalis and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Nerval rejected the rationalist universalism of the Enlightenment and privileged instead the individual subjective imagination as a way of fathoming the divine to reconnect with what the Romantics called the “life principle.” During the years of his greatest creativity, Nerval suffered from madness, for which he was institutionalized eight times, occasionally for extended periods. Eventually, at the request of his physician, Dr. Émile Blanche, he wrote his visionary memoir *Aurélia* in an ambivalent attempt to emerge from these episodes of insanity. In *Aurélia*, Nerval acknowledges the value of his medical treatment, and at the same time asserts that his doctor’s psychiatric strategies and scientific vocabulary relegate his visionary convictions to a mental illness from which he may be released only through atonement. He published the first part of *Aurélia* in *La Revue de Paris* in January 1855. The second part and then the entire book were printed posthumously in that same year.

Almost a century later, in 1942 Jung lectured on *Aurélia* for the Swiss Society for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy. Afterward, he reread and revised his interpretation with extensive handwritten notes, and in the summer of 1945, at seventy years of age and after a long illness, he presented an expanded version of his lecture to the more intimate circle of the Psychological Club in Zurich. World War II had only just ended. In his lecture, Jung introduced listeners to the importance of Nerval’s text. Contrasting an orthodox psychoanalytic interpretation with his own synthetic approach to the unconscious, Jung explained why Nerval was not able to make use of his visionary experiences in his own life. At the same time, Jung emphasized the validity of Nerval’s visions, differentiating the psychology of a work of art from the psychology of the artist. The lecture suggests how Jung’s own experiments with active imagination and the writing of *The Red Book* in-

fluenced his reading of Nerval's *Aurélia* as a parallel text to his own *Liber Novus*. Here, then, is a key to understanding Jung's argument about the significance of symbolism in modern thought.

The editors of the Collected Works published only Jung's one-paragraph abstract of the lecture in volume 18. The documents presented here offer a unique window into the stages of Jung's creative process as he responds to an essential Romantic text. They are arranged backwards: from the final, extensively revised 1945 lecture, through the schematic 1942 lecture, to the initial five pages of handwritten notes and Jung's marginalia in his copies of *Aurélia*—that is to say, back to Jung, with pen in hand, reading Nerval.

## *Gérard de Nerval*

### *NERVAL: THE MAN*

Gérard de Nerval was born Gérard Labrunie on May 22, 1808, in Paris. His father, Etienne Labrunie, had run away at the age of sixteen to serve in the revolutionary wars and in 1795 had sustained a crippling injury to his left leg. Undaunted, Etienne studied medicine and reenlisted in Napoleon's Grande Armée in 1806. In 1807, he married Marie-Antoinette-Marguerite Laurent, the daughter of Paris linen merchants. In May 1810, two years after Gérard's birth, Dr. and Mme Labrunie left France for Germany, where Dr. Labrunie would direct military hospitals. One day, after crossing a bridge heaped with cadavers, Mme Labrunie collapsed with a fever; she died and was buried in a local cemetery, in Silesia. Later, during Napoleon's chaotic retreat from Russia, Dr. Labrunie lost all mementos of his wife, including her letters and jewelry.

When Gérard's parents left for Germany, they sent their two-year-old son to live with his mother's uncle, Antoine Boucher, at Mortefontaine, in the Valois region. Boucher was a grocer and tobacco merchant, a warm family man, a free-thinker, and reader of both classical authors and works on the occult. At Clos de Nerval, on the site of an ancient Roman camp, he often looked for coins and pottery shards to add to his antiquarian collection. Gérard was six when his father retired from the army, set up his private practice in Paris, and reclaimed his son. In 1820, when Gérard was twelve, Boucher died. Gérard remained deeply connected imaginatively to this uncle and to the Valois region of his childhood.

A strict father, Labrunie enrolled his son in the prestigious Collège Charlemagne in Paris to study humanities and languages. The boy excelled, particularly in German, which his father spoke fluently. In 1826, finishing his studies at the lycée at the age of eighteen, Gérard published a number of volumes of political verse and, a year later, his French translation of Goethe's *Faust*, part 1.



Figure 1. Portrait of Gérard de Nerval. Nadar, between 1854 and 1855

Goethe praised this translation.<sup>1</sup> Hector Berlioz lifted passages from it for the libretto of his opera *La Damnation de Faust* (1846). Nerval also published translations of works by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, Novalis, and Friedrich von Schiller as well as other works by Goethe. The positive memories of his early childhood inspired several essays on the cultural and political significance of the local legends and ballads of the Valois, and led him to adopt a position much like the folk theory and subjectivism of philosopher and historian Johann Gottfried Herder. Dr. Labrunie did not approve of his son's literary accomplishments, however, and insisted on enrolling him in the medical school at the Clinique de l'Hôtel Dieu; in 1832, Gérard assisted his father during a cholera epidemic. Despite his financial dependence on his father, he increasingly ignored his father's ambitions and persisted with his writing. For the time being, he signed himself simply "Gérard," a nom de plume without a surname.



Figure 2. Mortefontaine, Valois region; Louis-François Casson, 1801

1. "He [Goethe] himself had taken up the latest French translation of his 'Faust,' by Gérard, which he turned over and seemed occasionally to read. 'Some singular thoughts pass through my head,' said he, 'on reflecting that this book is now read in a language over which Voltaire ruled fifty years ago. You cannot understand my thoughts upon this subject, and have no idea of the influence which Voltaire and his great contemporaries had in my youth, and how they governed the whole civilized world. My biography does not clearly show what was the influence of these men in my youth, and what pains it cost me to defend myself against them, and to maintain my own ground in a true relation to nature.' He praised Gérard's translation as very successful, although mostly in prose. 'I do not like,' he said, 'to read my "Faust" any more in German, but in this French translation all seems again fresh, new, and spirited' (Sunday, January 3, 1830). Johann Peter Eckermann, *Conversations of Goethe with Johann Peter Eckermann*, ed. J. K. Moorhead, trans. John Oxenford (New York: Da Capo, 1998), 341.



In 1834, Gérard's maternal grandfather died, and Gérard inherited thirty thousand francs. This windfall enabled him to travel in southern France and Italy, and after returning to Paris, to move out of his father's house and into a flat in the Impasse du Doyenné with a group of young bohemian writer friends. Like many of his companions, he devoted himself to the Paris theater scene, hoping to make a career as a playwright. In this he failed.

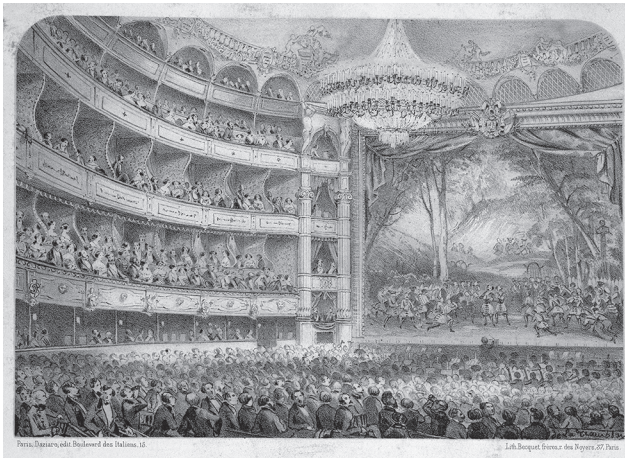


Figure 3. Opéra Comique. Paris, 1850–60



Figure 4. Jenny Colon, by Noël Léon Alphonse, 1837

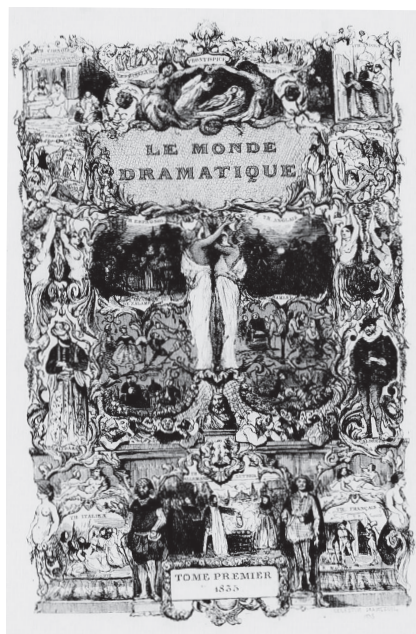


Figure 5. *Le monde dramatique*, volume 1 (frontispiece), by Céléstin Nanteuil, 1835

Gérard chose an actress, Jenny Colon, as the object of what translator Richard Sieburth (1999, xv) describes astutely as “a much-publicized infatuation.” Inspired perhaps by this unrequited love, he invested his inheritance in founding a theatrical magazine, *Le monde dramatique*, the first issue of which appeared in May 1835. Gérard also collaborated with Alexandre Dumas on an opera (*Piquillo*, 1836) in which Colon sang the lead soprano role. But by 1838, the magazine had foundered, and Gérard and his friends had to leave their lodgings when the building was condemned and requisitioned. To make things worse, Colon married her tour organizer. Having spent his inheritance, Gérard was increasingly forced to take on work as a drama critic and journalist in order to pay his debts. He joined Dumas in Frankfurt, working for him as a ghostwriter on a number of plays including *L'Alchimiste*; for only one, *Léo Burckhart*, did he receive any credit. In 1840, he began to translate the second part of Goethe's *Faust*. In December, he traveled to Brussels, where Colon was reprising the opera role that he had come to believe he had written for her.

When Gérard returned to Paris, his emotional and financial difficulties overwhelmed him to such an extent that at the age of thirty-three, he experienced his first episode of insanity. He entered the sanatorium of Dr. Esprit

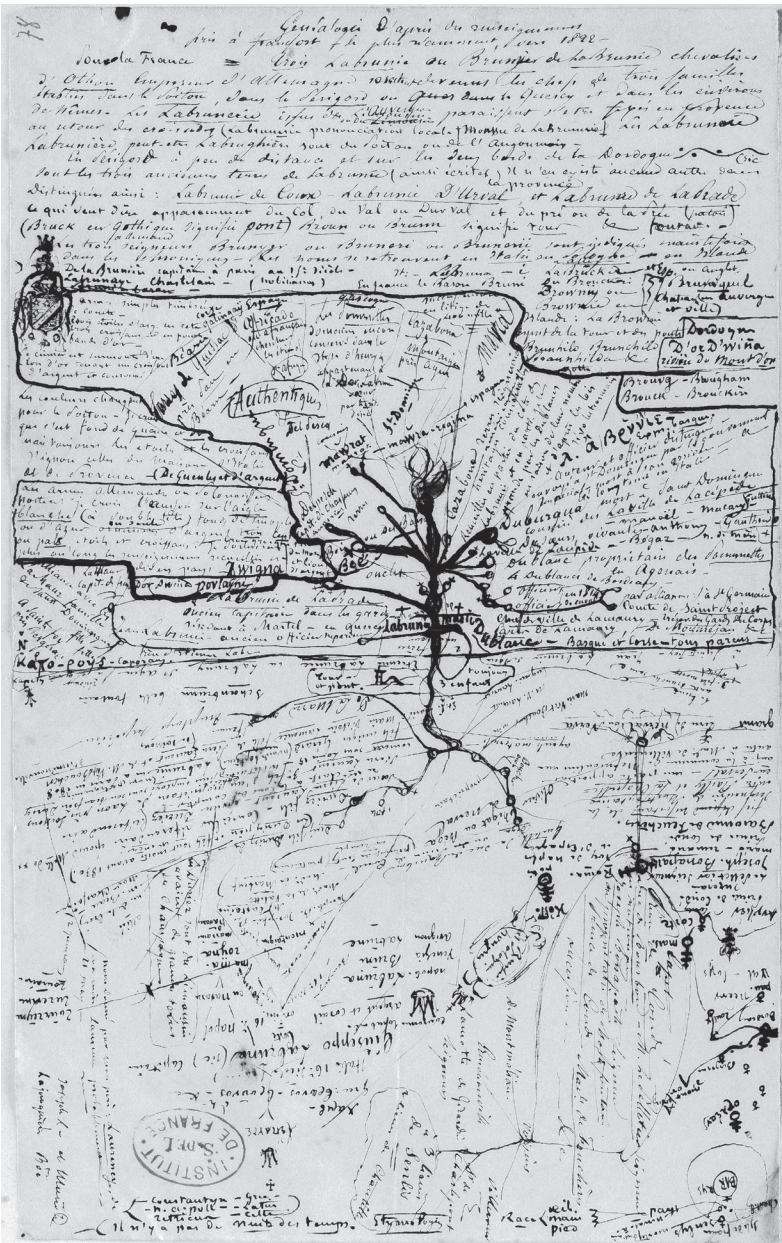


Figure 6. A fantastical genealogy, by Gérard de Nerval, 1841



Blanche in Montmartre, where he resided for nine months; the diagnosis was “*manie aiguë, probablement curable*.” During the time in Blanche’s sanatorium, he wrote an imaginary genealogical investigation that replaces his biological father with a mythical line of forebearers, establishing Gérard as the descendant of Napoleon’s brother Joseph Bonaparte and of the German knights of Emperor Otto I, founder of the Holy Roman Empire. The diagram silences the father while lending a voice to the son, replacing the conventional paternal line with a deeper continuity. By the time he left the sanatorium, he had emerged from his descent into the underworld of madness with a new aristocratic persona: “Gérard de Nerval.” Critics have pointed to possible significances of the name, from the most obvious—an alignment with his mother’s uncle and the Clos de Nerval—to an allusion to the Roman emperor Marcus Cocceius Nerva as an imaginary ancestor, and even to an anagram of his mother’s maiden name, Laurent.

Jenny Colon died in 1842. Intending to console himself, Nerval left Paris for Alexandria and Cairo. At the time he was reading books on history and ancient religions, and these readings and this journey correlated outwardly with the archetypal universe of dreams that he had discovered during his first descent into insanity. He returned to Paris in 1844.

Over the next eleven years, Nerval alternated between periods of great literary productivity and bouts of madness. He wrote a remarkable introduction to his translations of the poems of Heinrich Heine, who had become a close friend. He coauthored an opera (*Les Monténégrins*, 1849), a Hindu drama (*Le Chariot d’Enfant*, 1850), and his own Faustian play about the invention of printing, *L’imagier de Haarlem* (1851); none of these stage works met with any success. He also published a brilliantly subversive experimental serial novel (*Les Faux-Saulniers*, 1850/2009) and a moving account of nocturnal wanderings in some of the most squalid neighborhoods of Paris (*Les Nuits d’Octobre*, 1852). During this time, too, he wrote his masterpiece, a novella titled *Sylvie* (1853). But immediately after completing *Sylvie*, he was once more institutionalized, again for nine months, at the rest home of Dr. Émile Blanche, son of Dr. Esprit Blanche, in Passy; the diagnosis this time was “*délire furieux*.” The younger Dr. Blanche recommended that Nerval try writing his way out of his madness.

Thus began the “project” of *Aurélia*. Nerval rallied, and as well as working on *Aurélia*, he started to gather and publish a definitive edition of his works. Released in May 1854 from Blanche’s care, Nerval traveled again to Germany, but he had to be readmitted to the Passy clinic in August. In October, against Blanche’s wishes, he obtained an official discharge by appealing to friends and the Société des Gens de Lettres, who supported his suggestion that his confinement jeopardized his professional role as a writer. He continued to work on *Aurélia*, no longer for Blanche, but for publication in *La Revue de Paris*. Although Nerval was supposedly in the care of a great-aunt, he led a vagrant and solitary existence.



Figure 7. Antoine-Émile Blanche, 1880



Figure 8. 17 rue d'Ankara, Dr. Blanche's rest home, 1846

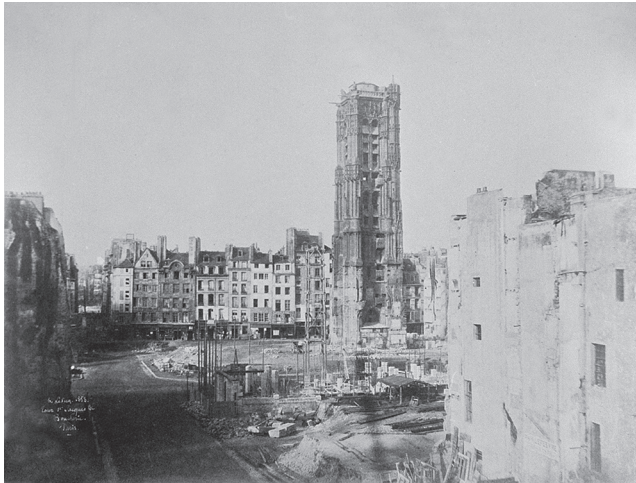


Figure 9. Tour Saint-Jacques la Boucherie, 1853



Figure 10. *Death of Gérard de Nerval, rue de la Vieille-Lanterne*, by Gustav Doré, 1855

On January 1, 1855, part I of *Aurélia* was published. Three weeks later, in the early hours of January 26, Nerval was found hanged in the fourth arrondissement of Paris near the fifteenth-century Saint-Jacques Tower, in the Rue de la Vieille-Lanterne. On February 15, *La Revue de Paris* published part II of *Aurélia*.

#### “AURÉLIA”: THE STORY

*Aurélia* narrates the outer and inner aspects of two phases of the protagonist's madness (see 120). In a city, the protagonist encounters Aurélia, a woman he has loved unrequitedly for a long time. Afterwards, back in Paris, at midnight, he comes across a pale, hollow-eyed woman who resembles Aurélia. They meet in front of a house with the same street number as his own age. In a dream, he witnesses a winged figure falling from above into a shabby Paris courtyard. The next day, as the protagonist awaits the repetition of the fateful hour that he imagines to be the hour of his death, a star leads him through the Paris streets. As he walks, he sheds his clothes, waiting to be separated from his body. Instead, he is arrested by a night patrol and eventually taken to a rest home. He describes a dream in which he visits the house of a maternal great-uncle, where he finds a talking bird that admonishes him for wanting to reside in the underworld. “You still belong to the world above,” says the bird. Later, the protagonist dreams that this uncle, as a younger man, guides him in an ascent to a remote mountain village where a Spirit menacingly opposes him. Finally, in a third dream, the protagonist encounters three women at his uncle's house and follows one of them outside. She transforms before his eyes and then disappears, the entire garden taking on her shape and then suddenly turning into a cemetery. Only later, the protagonist learns that Aurélia has died.

The protagonist describes how he is confined to Dr. Esprit Blanche's *maison de santé* in Montmartre (see 143). He recalls that in order to fix his thoughts, he painted the walls of his room with a series of murals in which the figure of Aurélia predominated as a divinity. He also remembers writing down a systematic history of the world—part memory, part dream, part visionary thinking—in which he witnesses creation and the appearance of a radiant goddess who guides the evolution of humankind. This world history includes the emergence of a Promethean half-divine, half-human race of fire, not of clay, and a revolution among the Spirits that causes terrible suffering for humanity. An Eternal Mother goddess weeps and dies repeatedly, while the outlawed race of fire, like a serpent eating its tail, encircles the earth, reconnecting itself into a wholeness that is steeped in human blood.

The protagonist then describes a second phase of suffering in the form of a severe personal relapse (see 151). Two events trigger the relapse. First,



he passes a certain house and hears a bird speaking, which reminds him of the earlier dream of his dead uncle. Second, climbing up to a friend's raised terrace, he falls, hurts himself, and faints; returning home, he is gripped by a fever and he associates his falling with having looked out over the Montmartre cemetery where Aurélia is buried.

Now the protagonist reflects on his dreams to understand what attitude he should take towards Aurélia. But instead of seeing her, he encounters the threatening Spirit from before, now in the form of an Oriental prince who is both his double and opponent. In a second dream, he enters a workshop where men are modeling clay into an enormous animal with giant wings. A beam of light pierces the animal's writhing body with purple flames, bringing it to life. In a third dream, the protagonist finds a crowd gathering for a wedding, and fears that Aurélia will appear and marry his rival. He prepares to make a sign that will defeat the rival, but a woman's scream awakes him. Part I ends with the protagonist asking if he should indeed attempt to delve into the mysteries of the universe and question the soul's immortality.

The descent in part I narrates both phases of madness and ends with the scream; part II begins at the bottom, looking upwards for God's pardon (see 160). While the protagonist hopelessly contemplates his death, he recalls that Aurélia died a devout believer in God; she could be his intermediary. He also remembers visiting a close friend who had been ill and spoke of God as consolation. He then reenvisions the bride and bridegroom in a union available only to the devout—a union to which he himself cannot aspire. He finds himself at the Montmartre cemetery, but cannot identify Aurélia's grave. Back home, he looks in a box of her memorabilia to find her last letter and the funeral certificate that would tell him where to find her grave. But then he burns these last documents. He contemplates his formative years—the facts that he never knew his mother and was cared for by his freethinking uncle—and wonders if his liberal education and study of different religions render him now irreconcilable to the Christian God. He listens to a friend of his own age recalling their shared experience of the July Revolution along with their political hopes, skepticism, and consequent social disillusionment. He recounts a series of failed meetings, including one with his father and another with a priest in the street who refuses to hear his confession, and he remarks how the sun is burning itself out and has only enough light to shine for three more days. At the home of a German poet, he tries to set his accounts in order, reimbursing the poet for a translation he hasn't completed, but the poet and his wife send for a cab and have him escorted to a clinic.

During a short period of recovery, the protagonist writes "one of his finest stories," and yet by the end of a month, he finds himself torn between waves of hope and despair. He is confined to the clinic of Dr. Émile Blanche, and begins to understand that this is an ordeal he must undergo as part of a sacred initiation into the mysteries of the goddess Isis, Venus, or even the

Virgin Mary. Blanche introduces him to a young man, a former soldier in Africa, who appears to be blind, deaf, and mute, and refuses to eat. The protagonist attends to this young man in an attempt to help his own recovery, and dreams of climbing up and down within a tower, from the sky to the depths of the earth and back. Suddenly, a side door opens, and a man resembling the soldier says, “Come.” A female divinity, who was Aurélia (in part I) and is now Isis/Venus (in part II), encourages him, saying that his vow of faith has been transmitted by this brother, the soldier, to the merciful Virgin Mary.

Next, the protagonist recounts a group of dreams of grace and pardon, gathered under the title “Memorabilia” (see 191): the Messiah appears between him and his beloved; the Icelandic gods Thor, Odin, Hela, and Balder present themselves; and the snake eating its own tail reappears, now in a more positive context. In the final passages, he recounts panoramic dreams that feature Peter the Great and envision France as an arbiter of the conflict between East and West, moving the world towards resolution and peace. Meanwhile, in his daily outer life at the clinic, the protagonist patiently sings his Valois songs to the young soldier, who eventually starts to see and talk. When he asks him why he continues to refuse food, the young man explains that his body is dead and buried, and he is now in purgatory, atoning for his sins. The protagonist recognizes his own self in these “bizarre ideas” and concludes that he is happy with the convictions he has gained from his own ordeals, which are now at an end.

#### AURÉLIA: COMMENTARY

The shift created by thinkers and artists that later generations came to call Romanticism was a revolt against both an old Christian cosmology and the mechanistic metaphysics that, for a time, replaced it. Christians of the Middle Ages had divided the universe into four strata: at the top, Heaven and the divine; then two middle realms of human nature; and finally, at the bottom, Hell. The upper human realm belonged to the spirit and the lower to the flesh, and sinners could ascend through both realms toward Heaven by mortification of the flesh. As Northrop Frye (2005, 85) astutely observed, the Romantics turned this Christian cosmos on its head. They argued that Reason had seated an imaginary divinity in an empty Heaven and that the true divine force lay in the previously condemned “infernal” world, closely linked to Nature. They still divided the human realm in two, but the upper realm of civilization was a world of artifice close to the empty heavens, and the lower realm of natural wilderness bordered the demonic world, to which humans must have access to reconnect with the life principle.

In the old cosmology, the ordinary or fallen world was imagined as existing beneath an ideal superior one. In the Romantic construct, this ordinary

world of experience sat on top of a powerful world to which humans are inescapably connected. Jean-Jacques Rousseau imagined this lower dark world as sympathetic, even benevolently maternal and inherently moral, and “natural man” as shaped by that benevolence and morality, though vulnerable to being misshaped by civilization. The Marquis de Sade portrayed the lower world as dangerous and predatory, and its “natural” laws as violent and deadly. In the generation after Rousseau and Sade, Victor Hugo rejected the one-sided tyranny of the beautiful conceived by the neoclassicists and instead demanded an aesthetic theory that would render legitimate everything the neoclassical era had excluded, particularly “the grotesque.”

Nerval looked outside France to the Germans for inspiration. He found that whereas Christianity had rendered the classical theme of descent into the underworld as diabolical, authors such as Goethe strongly privileged the imagination as a way of descending in order to fathom the divine. According to the conventional Christian cosmology, the underworld was where the banished gods presided, and their dwelling place could only be the Inferno; indeed, any human who lived before Christ resided there too. In *The Divine Comedy*, for example, Dante could imagine Virgil as his guide through Hell and part of Purgatory, but from there the ancient poet had to turn back, leaving Dante to journey upwards without him, by God’s grace, into Paradise. With the Romantic reimagining of the cosmos came a new valuing of the experience of descent. Now the individual aspired to transcend the limits of what was actual and artificial by descending into the sensual and sublime profundity of nature as well as by intuitively going down, through reverie and dreams, into the ancient and pagan depths of the mind—in Goethe’s *Faust*, for instance, to the realm of the “Mothers.”

Dante’s descent remains framed within a Christian cosmology, even though he rails against the corrupted aspects of its earthly manifestations. The English Romantic William Blake turns Dante’s Heaven and Hell upside down to such an extent that in the ironic dialogues in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, only a discerning reader can distinguish between angelic-looking demons aligned with a petrifying God called Urizen and fiery angels inspired by the youthful god Orc. But like Dante, Blake descends and ascends within a firmly framed cosmology, always with reference to “the great code,” the Bible. Percy Bysshe Shelley’s confrontations with the depths feel far more precarious because Shelley invented his own individual code; he descends without the protection of a communal frame of reference (Woodman 2005, 162). Likewise, at the core of German classical aestheticism, Goethe’s cosmology is idiosyncratic and “scholarly”; it is the cosmology of a nonbeliever (Bishop 2008, 20). Nerval’s descents, although informed by many precedents, also feel individual—so much so that he fears he cannot claim the consolation offered by the conventional patriarchal Christian Trinity. In Nerval’s texts, the dream is the inner gateway

to a nonrational life principle that is figured as a goddess, part pagan Isis and part Christian Virgin Mother. When Vyvyan Holland (1933, 12), Oscar Wilde's son, translated *Aurélia* into English, he retained Nerval's original title, *Dreams and Life*, while acknowledging in his introduction that the second title appropriately emphasizes the protagonist's hope that Aurélia, who died a devout Christian, might intervene on his behalf.

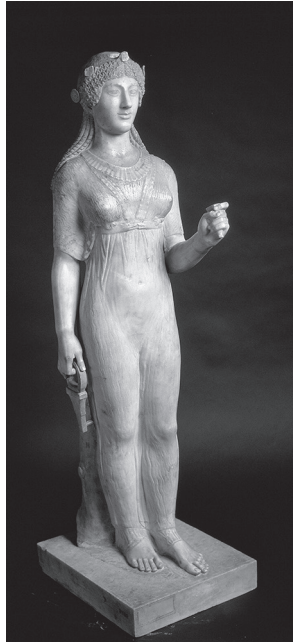


Figure 11. "Isis," first century BC, Roman

Even as Nerval directs his attention inwards, he is also a keen observer of the communal and individual outer life. Charles Baudelaire described Nerval as one of the few authors of his age who remained, even in death, "forever lucid."<sup>2</sup> That quality of lucidity informs *Aurélia* to such a degree that the portrayals of outer life match those of dreams and visions in their intensity and clarity. The protagonist travels out of Paris to the Valois in search of the life principle in the same way that he moves down into dreams. And the

2. "And even more recently—just a year ago from today, 26 January, when a writer of admirable honesty, great intelligence, who had been forever lucid, went discretely, without troubling anyone—so discretely that his discretion seemed like disdain—to set his soul free in the gloomiest street he could find—what nauseating homilies! what a refined murder!" (translation mine). Charles Baudelaire, "Edgar Poe, sa vie et ses oeuvres," in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1976), 2:306.



excursions in *Aurélia* become most precarious in the moments when these inner and outer realms begin to spill over into each other in Paris, the city of the poet's birth. In the most terrible instant of the story, overwhelmed by depression and melancholia, the protagonist witnesses a black sun and bloodred orb hovering in the vacant sky over the Tuileries.<sup>3</sup>

If an adjective such as “Nervalian” exists, it should refer not so much to Nerval's lucidity as to his syncretism. Nerval combines elements from different philosophies, religions, and mythologies, so that his use of a single word alludes to centuries of human experience. In a letter to Jenny Colon, he describes this as a curse:

What a beautiful story I would create for you, if my thoughts were more composed! But too many things present themselves to me at once as I write to you. ... There is in my head a storm of thoughts by which I am ceaselessly dazzled and enervated, years of dreams, projects, and anguish that long to be compressed into a phrase, into a single word.<sup>4</sup>

And in part II of *Aurélia*, the protagonist fears that this syncretism, rooted in a liberal education and his knowledge of many religions as well as his study of alchemy and the esoteric sciences, alienates him from the Christian God.

The compression Nerval the man describes as negative also characterizes Nerval the writer's greatest accomplishments as a poet. The compact brilliance of his sonnet series *Les Chimères* (1854) led Antonin Artaud to say that it could only be given diction—that is, not so much interpreted as voiced.<sup>5</sup>

3. Jung connects the alchemical figure of the *Sol niger* in masculine psychology with the alter ego and Brother Medardus figure in E.T.A. Hoffman's story *The Devil's Elixir*—a story that Nerval translated. C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, vol. 14 of *Collected Works* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), para. 229. With regard to Nerval's “black sun,” see Julia Kristeva, “Gerard de Nerval, the Disinherited Poet,” in *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University, 1989), 139–72.

4. Gérard de Nerval, “Lettres d'amour,” in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Jean Guillaume and Claude Pichois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1989), 1:721.

5. Artaud writes, “All these verses were written first of all to be heard, embodied by voices, and it is not even that their music illuminates them and that they then can speak by the simple modulations of sound, sound by sound, because it is only off the printed or written page that an authentic verse can acquire meaning, and what is needed is the space of breath between the flight of all the words. The words flee the page and take flight. They flee from the heart of the poet who pushes them with the force of an untranslatable assault and who no longer holds them in his sonnet except by the power of assonance, to sound out in identical guises but on hostile terms. And the syllables of the verses of [Nerval's] ‘Chimères,’ so difficult to bring to life, speak, but on condition of their being spat out again at every reading—because only then do their hieroglyphs become clear. And then all the clues to their so-called occultism disappear, rendered useless and noxious in the folds of the brain” (translation mine). Antonin Artaud, “À Georges Le Breton, Rodez, 7 mars 1946,” in *Lettres écrites*

In *Aurélia*, the protagonist's dream presents this way of working as traveling up and down in a great tower, like the Tower of Babel, gathering words. Nerval's references from so many contexts crystallize into a personal intertextual mythopoeia. He begins *Aurélia* with Virgil's *Aeneid* (book VI, 893–96) and the two gates of sleep: the gates of horn, through which true shades pass, and the gates of ivory, through which distorted, illusory dreams emerge. These first words introduce Nerval's Romantic dilemma: how best to discern what is vision from what is illusion, what is heaven from what is hell, what is divine sense from what is pathological madness. He also mentions Lucius Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, in which the lover suffers the humiliation of being changed into an ass and must endure a healing initiation into the mysteries of the goddess Isis. As well as referring to the *Divine Comedy*, Nerval invokes Dante's *Vita Nuova*, in which Dante has a prophetic dream of Beatrice's death. By implication, Aurélia, as the protagonist's Beatrice, promises a path towards a kind of enlightenment different from that of the *philosophes*, culminating in a redemptive vision of love and Goethe's Eternal Feminine. Nerval mentions Emanuel Swedenborg too, whose title *Memorabilia* he will borrow for the penultimate epiphanies of part II.<sup>6</sup> In all these works, listed as precedents in the opening paragraphs of *Aurélia*, Nerval sets up, before beginning his descent, the assurance of his protagonist's subsequent ascent at the end of part II.

At the same time, another, darker Romantic theme runs through the entire text: the tragic double or doppelgänger. Nerval had translated E.T.A. Hoffman's tale *The Devil's Elixir*, and had addressed the theme of the double in his own fiction in "The King of Bedlam" and "The Tale of the Caliph Hakim."<sup>7</sup> In part I of *Aurélia*, the protagonist's friends come to liberate him from prison, but collect the wrong man (see 127); likewise, in his dream the Spirit, who opposes the protagonist and reappears as an Oriental prince, steps malignly into the role of the devout bridegroom of Aurélia (see 152). As much as Nerval structures his text with the promise of reunion with a feminine life principle modeled on Dante's *Commedia* and Francesco Colonna's mythological romance, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, the tragedy of the double subverts the writer's use of these precursors by excluding the protagonist from the sacred marriage.

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*de Rodez* (1945–1946): *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 11:187. See also Richard Sieburth, "Introductory Note to 'The Gramont Manuscript' and 'The Chimeras,'" in *Gérard de Nerval: Selected Writings* (London: Penguin, 1999), 350; Robin Blaser, "Artaud on Nerval," *Pacific Nation* 1 (1968): 69.

6. Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Author's Memorabilia: The Swedenborg Library V10* (German-town, PA: Swedenborg Publishing Association, 1881).

7. See Gérard de Nerval, "The King of Bedlam," in *Gérard de Nerval: Selected Writings*, trans. Richard Sieburth (London: Penguin, 1999), 6–21; Gérard de Nerval, "The Tale of Caliph Hakim," in *Gérard de Nerval: Selected Writings*, trans. Richard Sieburth (London: Penguin, 1999), 22–58.



Figure 12. “Marriage Scene.” Francesco Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia Polophili*, 1499

Commencing part II with the epigraph “Eurydice! Eurydice!” Nerval explicitly frames his second movement in the tragic mode by alluding to Orpheus at the moment when he emerges from his descent into Hell, but fails Eurydice by looking back to her. Nerval’s protagonist seeks in dream the world of the dead in order to reunite with Aurélia, and in part II he longs to reconnect with her and reclaim her from the underworld. At the same time, Nerval describes his protagonist destroying the last physical remnants of Aurélia’s existence. With this sacrifice, the protagonist hopes to appease an angry patriarchal god, much as Nerval hopes to appease his father and Doctor Blanche by writing this book. The problem for Nerval as a possessed patient is that the doctor as exorcist intends the writing to expel Aurélia as life principle from his body and mind. The problem for Nerval as Orphic poet is that the same words that evoke her presence also objectify her to such an extent that he loses her forever (Butler 2011, 26).

At the time of his death, Nerval the man was regarded as a friend of many writers, but dismissed as a writer himself; he was seen as an emotional and financial failure as well as a madman. Shortly after his death, however, his literary fortune changed, and with the publication of his collected works, Nerval entered the French literary pantheon. Marcel Proust (1927, cited in Rinsler 1973, 140) acknowledged him as the inspiration for his own explorations of time lost and regained. André Breton claimed him as a forerunner of surrealism.<sup>8</sup> Umberto Eco (1994, 11) considers *Sylvie* “one of the greatest books ever written.”

8. In *Comoedia*, August 24, 1924, Breton writes, “If we must look for the origin of the word ‘surrealism,’ we would turn to Nerval, hesitating between ‘supernaturalism,’ ‘surnaturalism’ and ‘surrealism’” (translation mine). Robert Kopp, *Album André Breton* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), 99.

## AURÉLIA: AESCLEPIUS VERSUS HIPPOCRATES

The revolutionary force of Romanticism resided not in its rejection of Reason but rather in relocating the life principle in the depths, in the irrational underworld of the dead. The *Encyclopédie*, compiled by the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, described dreams as successions of images that represented universal ideas, but that were accessible to the mind only in sleep. For Samuel Formey, author of *Songe: Métaphysique & Physiologie* (1746) and the entry on dreams in the *Encyclopédie*, the absence of reason in dream states rendered them exclusively negative, their idiosyncratic subjectivity constituting mere “anarchy.”<sup>9</sup> The Romantic paradigm shifted this formulation by portraying irrational, subjective dreams as a reflective approach to the realm of the dead and the divine.

This Romantic shift coincided with changes in the study of mental alienation and medical management of the insane. In 1792, when Philippe Pinel (1745–1826) became the chief physician at the Bicêtre asylum for men, he began his now-iconic reforms. Inspired by the early Romantic arguments of Rousseau, Pinel emphasized the degree to which mental illnesses were caused by alienating social stresses, even while acknowledging the influence of specific inherited conditions and physiological damage. He eliminated bloodletting, purging, and blistering, and instead favored therapy that was mentally oriented, including close and friendly contact with the patient, discussions of personal difficulties, and programs of purposeful activities within a hospice setting. His assistant Jean-Baptiste Pussin unchained the patients at the Bicêtre, and a few years later followed Pinel to the Hôpital Salpêtrière, where they unchained the female inmates as well.<sup>10</sup> Pinel’s disciple, Jean-Étienne-Dominique Esquirol (1772–1840), succeeded him at the Salpêtrière and further developed Pinel’s work to achieve a more humane treatment of the mentally ill. Esquirol’s book *Des maladies mentales, considérées sous les rapports médical, hygiénique et médico-légal* (1838/1845) is regarded as the first modern treatise on clinical psychiatry.

9. “The imagination of the wakened state is a civilized republic where the voice of the judge puts everything in order; the imagination of dreams is that same republic in a state of anarchy” (translation mine). *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, etc., ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert (Chicago: University of Chicago, ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, Spring 2013 ed.), ed. Robert Morrissey, <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/>, 15:355, cols. 1–2.

10. Philippe Pinel, *Traité medico-philosophique sur l’aliénation mentale ou la manie* (Paris: Caille et Ravier, 1800). With regard to the controversy surrounding who precisely unchained the Bicêtre inmates, see Dora Weiner, “Le geste de Pinel: Psychiatric Myth,” in *Discovering the History of Psychiatry*, ed. Mark S. Micale and Roy Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 232–47.



Figure 13. This iconic but incorrect representation, titled *Philippe Pinel Setting Free the Insane at the Bicêtre Asylum*, was painted by Charles Louis Lucien Muller, 1840–50. The artist mistakenly represents Pinel as the protagonist, rather than Jean-Baptiste Pussin, the hospital superintendent.



Figure 14. Jean-Martin Charcot





Figure 15. Drawing by Jean-Martin Charcot, under the influence of hashish, 1853

Esquirol's student Jacques-Joseph Moreau (1845, 31) tried to further the understanding of dreams by studying the dream state induced by hashish, a fairly recent import from India. In the hashish dream state, he said, "I had to admit for delirium in general a psychological nature not only analogous but absolutely identical with dream-states." On at least one occasion, Nerval and other writers were invited to experiment with hashish at a private salon, and without warning found themselves exhibited in their drug-induced state to a group of doctors. In *La psychologie morbide*, published only four years after Nerval's death, Moreau (1859, 223) cited the first phrases of Nerval's *Aurélia* for a medical description of delirium as the overflowing of dream into real life "because from a psychic point of view, dream and delirium are one and the same." Moreau and other sleep and dream researchers such as Alfred Maury worked to identify the laws as well as the logic of dreaming as a means with which to counter the alienating effect of mental illness. Even Jean-Martin Charcot, the neurological pathologist, himself experimented with hashish in 1853 in his investigations of hysteria and hypnosis.<sup>11</sup>

Émile Blanche (1848) earned his medical degree from the Salpêtrière in 1848 with a thesis on how best to keep catatonic and other patients from starving by tube feeding them. For his clinic, Blanche rented l'Hôtel de Lamballe in Passy, the site of an old Turkish embassy, which included a park overlooking the Seine. His rich and famous clientele included Guy de Maupassant, Charles Gounod, Theo van Gogh, and the hypochondriacal

11. Christopher Goetz, Michel Bonduelle, and Toby Gelfand, *Charcot: Constructing Neurology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 25.

countess of Castiglione. Even though the patients were confined, Blanche ran the establishment like a rest home with, for instance, music and nourishing meals, at which he and his wife presided in a familial atmosphere of trust and affection.

When Dr. Blanche proposed to Nerval that he write the text that was to become *Aurélia*, he was applying “*un traitement moral contre une aliénation mentale*.” The word “moral” in this context denoted “mental” as opposed to “physical,” and only secondarily carried connotations of ethics or just social conduct (Murat, 2001, 36). Blanche recommended that Nerval the man engage Nerval the author to undertake a literary exercise that could lead him out of his alienating madness. Because *Aurélia* was written in response to Blanche’s prescription as a therapeutic exercise, it became for Nerval a demonstration that he was mentally competent and in control of his irrationality. He made this explicit in a letter to his father, Dr. Labrunie: “I am engaged in writing down and recording all the impressions occasioned by my illness. This will be a study not without utility for science and first-hand observation”<sup>12</sup> The next day, Nerval also defined the study in precisely these terms in a note to Blanche:

I can resign myself to rarely receiving visitors, but the sight of my father would give me the energy to continue a project which, I believe, can only be of great use and honour to your establishment and which is allowing me to rid my head of all those visions that had so long inhabited it. These sickly fantasmagorias will be succeeded by healthier notions, and I will be able to make my reappearance in the world living proof of your medical care and talents. It is above all morally that you will have healed me and you will have reintegrated into society a writer who can still be of some service; in me you have above all conquered a friend and an admirer.<sup>13</sup>

The passage draws attention to the difficult power dynamic operating in what we would now call the “transference” between patient and doctor. Nerval the author appreciated and complied with Blanche’s moral treatment, but Nerval the man railed against it and worked to subvert it. Nerval both acknowledged the value of Blanche’s treatment and, at the same time, feared it would sever him from the possibility of rejuvenation or rebirth. In another letter to his father after a relapse, Nerval writes, “At any rate, let’s

12. Gérard de Nerval, “À son père,” December 2, 1853, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Jean Guillaume and Claude Pichois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1993), 3:832; Gérard de Nerval, *Gérard de Nerval: Selected Works*, trans. Richard Sieburth (London: Penguin, 1999), 338.

13. Gérard de Nerval, “Au Docteur Émile Blanche,” December 3, 1853, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Jean Guillaume and Claude Pichois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1993), 3:833; Gérard de Nerval, *Gérard de Nerval: Selected Works*, trans. Richard Sieburth (London: Penguin, 1999), 339.

hope that Asclepius will save us from Hippocrates.”<sup>14</sup> Pitting the ancient Greek god-doctor who healed the sick through incubated dreams against the classical Greek doctor whose name still defines the mandate of scientific medicine, Nerval made explicit his concern that Blanche’s treatment left out something that ought not to have been left out.

Nerval the author realized to what extent the psychiatric strategies relegated Nerval the man’s imagination, steeped in religious visions, to a kind of scientific purgatory, with the irony that he would only be permitted release from the *maison de santé* through a psychiatric-sanctioned version of confession. The problem had already presented itself during his first long hospitalization. In 1841, Nerval had written a letter to Alexandre Dumas’s wife, a well-known actress who was also a friend, in which he presented his predicament as a patient:

Seeing as how there are doctors and police inspectors here whose business it is to keep the field of poetry from invading public thoroughfares, I was only allowed to be released and to mingle among reasonable folk once I had formally admitted that I had *been sick* which costs a lot to my self-esteem and my honesty. Confess! Confess! They shrieked at me, as they used to do to sorcerers and heretics, and to settle the matter, I allowed myself to be classified as afflicted with a malady defined by doctors and variously labelled Theomania or Demonomania in the medical dictionaries. ... But I resign myself to my fate, and if I do not fulfil my predestination, I will accuse Doctor [Esprit] Blanche of having spirited away the divine Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

The medical dictionaries referred to by Nerval would have included the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales* (1812–22) in which Esquirol repositioned diagnoses such as theomania and demonomania, replete as they were with religious connotations, within the contexts of civil law and medical illness.<sup>16</sup> In his letter, Nerval picked up this diagnostic language and cleverly pitted its religious etymology against its use by his doctors. He characterized the elder Doctor Blanche, whose first name was Esprit, as a medieval inquisitor trying to “spirit away” the divine in Nerval the man’s experiences of

14. Gérard de Nerval, “À son père,” October 21, 1853, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Jean Guillaume and Claude Pichois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1993), 3:817; Gérard de Nerval, *Gérard de Nerval: Selected Works*, trans. Richard Sieburth (London: Penguin, 1999), 336.

15. Gérard de Nerval, “À Mme Alexandre Dumas,” November 9, 1841, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Jean Guillaume and Claude Pichois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1989), 1:1383; Gérard de Nerval, *Gérard de Nerval: Selected Works*, trans. Richard Sieburth (London: Penguin, 1999), 330–31.

16. In English, see theomania (under “Monomania”) and demonomania in Jean-Étienne-Dominique Esquirol, *Mental Maladies: Treatise on Insanity*, trans. E. K. Hunt (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1845), 319–76, 235–52.

the irrational; Blanche imprisoned and tortured his patient like a medieval exorcist attempting to expel a demon. The implication is that in casting out demons, science risked banishing the entire irrational realm, including an understanding of the life principle of rebirth and its potential for psychological healing.

Around the same time, in a letter to a friend, Nerval described his lucid madness in a more direct, honest, and less ironic manner:

O my dear [Victor] Loubens, how surprised you must have been by the sorry commotion I made several months ago. But imagine my own surprise when I suddenly awoke from a dream of several weeks that was as bizarre as it was unexpected. I had been mad, that much is certain, that is, if one can apply the sorry term “madness” to my condition, given the fact that my memory remained entirely intact and that not for a single moment did I lose my reasoning powers. For my doctors it was indeed a case of madness, even though they tried to dress it up for me in polite synonyms; and for my friends as well there was no doubt but that this was the case; for me alone it was merely a kind of transfiguration of my habitual thoughts, a waking dream, a series of grotesque or sublime illusions which held so many charms that all I wished to do was to immerse myself in them forever. ... I thought I myself was God, and I merely considered myself trapped in some sorry incarnation.<sup>17</sup>

This letter brings to mind the winged figure in *Aurélia* that the protagonist witnesses crashing down into the sordid courtyard—a god image trapped in the squalid lowlife of Paris. The emotional candor in this second letter is terrifying when compared to the irony in the first.

During Nerval's 1853 hospitalization, his relationship with his father may have exacerbated the problem of his ambivalence toward Dr. Émile Blanche. When Nerval was a young man, the more the cold father exercised his authority, insisting that his brilliant young son complete his medical studies, the more the son identified with his bohemian friends and a life connected to the theater. Only much later did he begin to recuperate the positive memories of his experiences as a medical student. In a letter he wrote to his father while under Blanche's care, he recalled, “I am a little bit of a doctor, having followed two years of courses at the École and the Hôtel-Dieu clinic.”<sup>18</sup> It was just such a shift that Blanche apparently sought to promote when he introduced him as lay healer to

17. Gérard de Nerval, “Fin de 1841,” in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Jean Guillaume and Claude Pichois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1993), 3:1487–8; Gérard de Nerval, *Gérard de Nerval: Selected Works*, trans. Richard Sieburth (London: Penguin, 1999), 331–32.

18. Nerval, “À son père,” 3:816.

a fellow inmate. Bearing witness to the delusions of the soldier provoked not only Nerval's compassion but also a gradual identification with that part of himself that had taken care of cholera victims alongside his father long ago.

Thus, one problem in *Aurélia* is the ambiguous way the medical definitions insinuate themselves into the text, in which Nerval the writer admits the pathological nature of the experiences that Nerval the man recounted for Blanche. If the text narrates a pathological descent in part I into the Paris night and into dreams, then is the confinement to the asylum and its Hippocratic language the key to the ascent and cure with which part II concludes? This would render *Aurélia* the emblematic psychiatric tale of the successful resolution of a moral treatment, with Blanche's therapeutic writing project even reconciling the protagonist with the doctor/father. But in such a strict reading, the hermeneutical loss would be too great. Nerval the writer claims a positive potential in locating his text in a Romantic narrative of descent into death and life, a rejuvenation in the protagonist's journey back to the nurturing childhood setting of the Valois, and finally a reimagining of the psychiatric confinement as an ordeal imposed not so much by Blanche as by the divine feminine figure of Isis/Venus/Mary. He casts *Aurélia* herself as the protagonist's lost star, his Beatrice intervening on his behalf. And he takes up the language of prophecy and vision in the passages of part II identified as "Memorabilia."

*Aurélia* portrays the tension between the doctors (including the young doctor incarnated in the protagonist himself) who use discursive words to exorcise and "spirit away the Spirit," and the Romantic poet who forges a metaphoric language with which to engage with the dead and the divine. At the end of part II, Nerval asserts that the protagonist has taken up a more active attitude, not simply submitting to his dreams and visions, but working to render them meaningful. He concludes *Aurélia* with these words:

The treatments I had received had already returned me to the renewed affection of my family and friends, and I now had a healthier view of the world of illusions in which I had for some time lived. All the same, I am happy with the convictions I have acquired, and I compare this series of ordeals I have undergone to what, in the eyes of the ancients, was represented by the idea of a descent into Hell.<sup>19</sup>

Nerval's text ends, then, with "happy" assurances to Blanche, but also with the counterrational phrase "all the same." These last sentences maintain

19. Gérard de Nerval, *Aurélia*, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Jean Guillaume and Claude Pichois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1993), 3:750. See 196.



the powerful contradiction between what the Hippocratic would call “illusions” and what the Asclepian might call “convictions.”

Of course, the history of *Aurélia*’s publication skews its reception. Readers of *La Revue de Paris* could read part I simply, but part II was published only after the announcement of the author’s death. Has any modern reader not read *Aurélia* as a psychobiographical story? Is it possible to read Nerval’s textual assurances at the closing of part II without bringing to bear what is known about his terrible last days? Because of this history, we have come to read *Aurélia* as a cautionary tale, and assess Nerval’s Romanticism and possibly also Blanche’s treatment as a tragic scientific experiment.

## *Jung and “Aurélia”*

### *JUNG AND THE FRENCH*

In January 1854, at the Hôpital Salpêtrière in Paris, Jules Baillarger (1854) presented his hypothesis of a double-form madness, characterized by alternating poles of depression and mania. Jean-Pierre Falret (1864) challenged this diagnostic innovation with a prior scientific claim, based on work undertaken in 1850. This work had identified a circular madness that moved through three stages: mania, melancholy, and lucidity. The German psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin didn’t identify manic-depressive psychosis until 1899, and Eugen Bleuler created the diagnostic category of schizophrenia only in 1908. Even so, the double- or triple-form controversy informed debate in Paris at the time of Nerval’s last hospitalizations. When Charcot and Émile Blanche both died in mid-August 1893, the world-famous neurologist was eulogized for his cutting-edge clinical brilliance yet also disparaged for his Napoleonesque theatricality, while the old-school doctor, son of the mental alienist, was remembered not for theoretical innovation but instead as a generous and compassionate practitioner (Murat 2001, 132, 354).

In 1902, Jung quit the Burghölzli sanatorium in Zurich and attended lectures by Pierre Janet in Paris at the Collège de France.<sup>20</sup> From Janet’s famous cases of Lucie, Marcelle, and Justine, Jung acquired the notion of charting a divided self into numbered mental states. For example, Janet (1907, 89) described an *abaissement du niveau mental* in which the conscious interests of Marcelle’s no. 2 state diminished, and the inferior parts of her mental

20. Pierre Janet, “1902–1903, Les émotions et les oscillations du niveau mental,” in *Leçons au Collège de France, 1895–1934* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 2004), 37–41. For contemporaneous lectures in English, see Pierre Janet, *The Majors Symptoms of Hysteria: Fifteen Lectures Given in the Medical School of Harvard University* (New York: Macmillan, 1907).

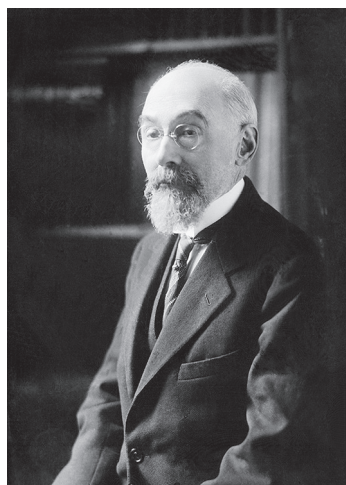


Figure 16. Pierre Janet

functions, the no. 1 or instinctual side of the personality, prevailed over the ethical—the infantile over the mature. Jung reworked this eventually into his theory of autonomous unconscious complexes that acquire energy withdrawn from the conscious personality (designating ego consciousness as no. 1 and the “Other” or Self as no. 2).<sup>21</sup> Jung also found Janet (1907, 35), like his predecessor Charcot, employing the analogy of the religious concept of possession to portray the mental suffering caused by a fixed idea tyrannizing the brain: “To make yourself heard, you must dream with the patient and speak to him only words in accordance with his delirium. As the patient perceives nothing except the idea he is possessed of, he remembers nothing except that one idea.”

21. “How does an autonomous complex arise? For reasons which we cannot go into here, a hitherto unconscious portion of the psyche is thrown into activity, and gains ground by activating the adjacent areas of association. The energy needed for this is naturally drawn from consciousness—unless the latter happens to identify with the complex. ... The intensity of conscious interests and activities gradually diminishes, leading either to apathy—a condition very common with artists—or to a regressive development of the conscious functions, that is, they revert to an infantile and archaic level and undergo something like a degeneration. The ‘inferior parts of the functions,’ as Janet calls them, push to the fore. ... This too is something we see in the lives of many artists. The autonomous complex thus develops by using the energy that has been withdrawn from the conscious control of the personality.” C. G. Jung, “On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry,” in *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, vol. 15 of *Collected Works* (1922/1931; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), para. 123.

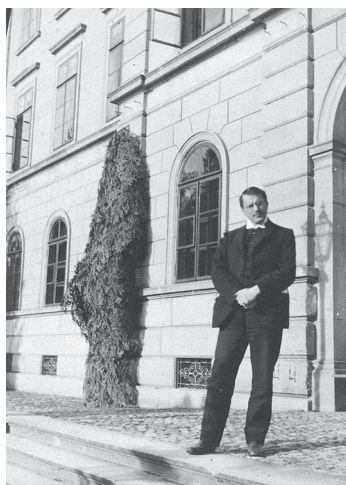


Figure 17. C. G. Jung in front of the Burghölzli sanatorium

Jung came to evaluate Janet's position as too rationalistic, and he credited Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer with the first attempts to abreact the blocked affect and integrate the repressed contents into consciousness, rather than working merely to excise or exorcise symptoms from the unconscious sufferer.<sup>22</sup> Still, Jung identified his work with Janet's theorizing of dissociation as the psychological norm, with the self defined as a wished-for unity between consciousness and a protean-like multiplicity of unconscious mental processes. In hysteria, such a synthesis is undermined. For the insane in general, the *abaissement* into myriad infantile and instinctual functions happens involuntarily. With artists, such a dissolution of consciousness is the result of deliberate training.<sup>23</sup> Freudian psychoanalysis ultimately rejected Janet's dissociationism, but according to John Haule, Jung countered with an archetypal form of dissociationism in which analysts deliberately use their own dissociability and the possibility of archetypes to forge connections within the disconnectedness of the patient.<sup>24</sup>

22. "The medieval theory of possession (toned down by Janet to 'obsession') was thus taken over by Breuer and Freud in a more positive form." C. G. Jung, "In Memory of Sigmund Freud," in *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, vol. 15 of *Collected Works* (1939; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), para. 62.

23. "In Janet's psychology this phenomenon is known as *abaissement du niveau mental*. Among the insane it happens involuntarily, but with [James] Joyce it is the result of deliberate training." C. W. Jung, "Ulysses: A Monologue," in *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, vol. 15 of *Collected Works* (1934/1952; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), para. 166.

24. John Haule, "From Somnambulism to the Archetypes: The French Roots of Jung's Split with Freud," *Psychoanalytic Review* 71, no. 4 (1984): 635–59, in *Carl Gustav Jung: Critical Assess-*

Jung's 1902 trip to Paris was one of the happiest times of his life in terms of free inquiry. For the most part, he frequented both the museums and Paris slums, absorbing the dichotomies between the opulence of the collections at the Louvre and misery such as he had never before witnessed clinging about the neighborhoods north of Les Halles. And he read French novels "in order to approach closer to the French spirit, outwardly so foreign, inwardly so familiar to me."<sup>25</sup> Nerval, the poet/playwright/translator and editor of *le monde dramatique* as well as the disinherited mad wanderer, would have been the perfect companion to both sides of Paris. It is not known if Jung ever discussed Nerval with Janet or Théodore Flournoy, the Geneva specialist in the paranormal whom Jung cited in his medical dissertation and with whom he maintained a positive exchange of ideas until Flournoy's death in 1920; their correspondence is lost. Emma Jung-Rauschenbach, who was far better read in French history and literature than her husband, may have encouraged Jung in his reading of Nerval, although there is no reference to Nerval in the letters they exchanged while Jung stayed in Paris.<sup>26</sup>

In the last of his many revisions of "On the Psychology of the Unconscious," Jung ([1917/1926/1943] 1953/1966, para. 122) introduces Nerval's *Aurélia* into the text to illustrate a discussion of his synthetic or constructive method, showing how a reductive analytic approach breaks down symbolic material into its components:

The process of coming to terms with the unconscious is a true labour, a work which involves both action and suffering. It has been named the "transcendent function" because it represents a function based on real and "imaginary" or rational and irrational data, thus bridging the yawning gulf between conscious and unconscious. It is a natural process, a manifestation of the energy that springs from the tension of opposites, and it consists in a series of fantasy-occurrences which appear spontaneously in dreams and visions. . . . A classical account of such a proceeding is to be found, for example, in Gérard de Nerval's autobiographical fragment, *Aurélia*.

In this essay, Jung explores the problem of when and how to work psychotherapeutically with archetypal material from the unconscious without breaking it down and translating it directly into consciousness. He acknowledges that many individuals may lack the mental and spiritual

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ments, ed. Renos Papadopoulos (London: Routledge, 1992), 238–60. On Janet's importance to Jung, see also Sonu Shamdasani, "From Geneva to Zürich: Jung and French Switzerland," *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 43, no. 1 (January 1998): 115–26.

25. Carl Gustav Jung, English translation of draft of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Countway Library of Medicine, Boston, 183.

26. Andreas Jung, personal correspondence, December 24, 2012; Thomas Fischer, personal correspondence, February 8, 2012.

capacities to master the psychological events taking place within them, and thus will require medical help.

With regard to medical psychology, in his *General Psychopathology* Karl Jaspers (1997, 27), taking up Wilhelm Dilthey's terminology, distinguished between Kraepelin's "explanations" (*Erklären*), which worked to discern natural laws acting impersonally through causal connections to produce mental disorders, and "understanding" (*Verstehen*), the "meaningful connections" which worked to demonstrate that mental disorders emerged because of individual and social conflicts. Jaspers articulated the critical epistemological divide between these two methods to which psychiatrists were disposed as well as the danger of mistaking one for the other. For his psychopathology, Jaspers looked to Nerval's *Aurélia* for subjective phenomenological descriptions of crystal clear insight and inflated feelings of possessing strength or power along with a demonstration that the experience of psychosis is not necessarily unpleasant. Jaspers (*ibid.*, 115, 120, 423) considered Nerval to have been schizophrenic or perhaps schizoaffective—or in any case, someone within the schizophrenia diagnostic spectrum.

Jung became convinced that psychiatry functioned at its best in a middle ground between science and history, in service of the whole human being.<sup>27</sup> Mental disorders originated in brain disease, he thought, but also emerge as consequences of conflict between an individual's desires and life circumstances. Jung came to articulate an interpretative pole almost exclusively because he regarded contemporary psychiatric practice as overidentified with brain science; if the conflict between empirical and interpretative psychiatry were more balanced, he said, he would not have felt obliged to take such a strong position. The result of his choice was to identify his psychotherapeutic work with the dynamic interpretative epistemology of understanding rather than with explanations. And the best way to understand was to employ a deliberately equivocal language of psychopathology, describing mental suffering as caused by autonomous complexes that were simultaneously spirits or gods. Unfortunately, as a

27. "It will assuredly be a long time before the physiology and pathology of the brain and the psychology of the unconscious are able to join hands. Till then they must go their separate ways. But psychiatry, whose concern is the total man, is forced by its task of understanding and treating the sick to consider both sides, regardless of the gulf that yawns between the two aspects of the psychic phenomenon. Even if it is not yet granted to our present insight to discover the bridges that connect the visible and tangible nature of the brain with the apparent insubstantiality of psychic forms, the unerring certainty of their presence nevertheless remains. May this certainty safeguard investigators from the impatient error of neglecting one side in favor of the other, and, still worse, of wishing to replace one by the other?" C. G. Jung, "Schizophrenia," in *The Psychogenesis of Mental Disease*, vol. 3 of *Collected Works* (1958; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), para. 584.

(continued...)



# Index

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Note: Page numbers in *italic type* indicate illustrations.

- aestheticism, 83
- Africa, 147, 149, 151
- Agathos Daimon, 64, 98
- alchemy: and anima mundi, 72, 73, 74, 103, 111; and bird of Hermes, 62, 62n24; and colors, 55, 55n11; Enigma of Bologna and, 46; in first notes, 110; and gardening, 64, 65, 66; Hermes and, 62, 62n24, 64, 68, 69; identity of lowest and highest in, 63n26; Jung's interest in, 40, 40n; Nerval's knowledge of, 64, 64n29; in Swiss lecture notes, 93, 98; in Zurich lecture, 63–64
- alcheringa time, 62, 62n23, 98
- Alphonse, Noël Léon, portrait of Jenny Colon, 5
- Amphitryon, 154
- Andreae, Johann Valentin, 57n16
- anima: as alchemical figure (anima mundi), 72, 73, 74, 103, 111; in *Aurélia*, 134; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 80–83, 85–86; in editor's commentary, 46; in first notes, 108, 109, 112; Haggard's figure of, 58n17; in Jung's abstract on Nerval, 49; in Swiss lecture notes, 92–93, 97, 100, 105; in Zurich lecture, 57, 63
- animals: as double of genius, 75–76; inner man vs. animal man, 58n16; souls of the dead appearing as, 62–63, 96–98, 109, 129, 130. *See also* bird; llama
- animus, 85–86, 134n25
- antiquity: in discussion after Zurich lecture, 82; in first notes, 108; in Swiss lecture notes, 93; in Zurich lecture, 57–58
- Apollon, 192, 192n68
- Apuleius, Lucius, *The Golden Ass*, 17, 120
- art, psychology of, 1, 40–41
- Artaud, Antonin, 16, 16n5, 41
- art brut* (outsider art), 42
- artist, psychology of, 1, 27n, 28, 33. *See also* psychological mode; visionary mode
- ascent, theme of, 11, 17, 25, 44, 94, 135
- Asclepius and the Asclepian approach, 23, 26, 39, 46
- Asia, 60, 95, 127, 149, 151
- Aurélia (character from Nerval's *Aurélia*): in *Aurélia*, 11–13, 120–23, 141, 143–44, 152, 154, 156, 160, 164–67, 171; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 81, 85–87; in editor's commentary, 15, 17–18, 25; in first notes, 107–8, 111; in Jung's abstract on Nerval, 49; name of, 120n5; in Swiss lecture notes, 72n34, 90–91, 93, 103–6; in Zurich lecture, 52–54, 56, 58, 71–72, 75–77
- Aurélia* (Nerval): as cautionary autobiography, 26, 40; composition of, 52n3; editor's commentary on, 13–19; English translation of, 15; illustrated translation of, annotated by Jung, 119–96; Jung and, 29, 31, 35–36, 41–42, 47–48; Jung's first notes on, 107–12; Jung's Swiss lecture on, 89–106; Jung's Zurich lecture on, 51–87; Kubin's illustrations for (*see under* Kubin, Alfred); phenomenology of psychological states in, 30; publication of, 1, 11, 26; reception of, 26; relationship of, to Nerval's madness, 1, 9, 18, 22, 25–26, 39, 46; story of, 11–13; visionary passages in, 35
- autonomous complexes, 27, 27n
- avis Hermetis*, 62, 62n24, 97

- Baillarger, Jules, 26  
 Balder, 13, 193  
 Baudelaire, Charles, 15  
 Beatrice. *See* Portinari, Beatrice  
 Bega, Carl, 129n18  
 Bega, Olivier, 129n18  
 Bell, Georges (“Georges”), 171, 177, 177n57  
 Berlin, Isaiah, 44  
 Berliner Zauberpapyrus, 64n, 98, 110  
 Berlioz, Hector, *La Damnation de Faust*, 4  
 Bertin, Louis François, 179, 179n58  
 bird: in *Aurélia*, 11–12, 151; in first notes, 109, 111; in Swiss lecture notes, 96–98, 103; in Zurich lecture, 62–63, 75. *See also avis Hermetis*  
 black sun. *See Sol niger*  
 Blake, William, 35, 39, 120n3; *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 14  
 Blanche, Antoine-Émile, 1, 8–9, 9, 13, 18, 21–26, 36–37, 39, 44, 46, 179n60  
 Blanche, Esprit, 6, 8, 11, 23–24, 143n29  
 Bleuler, Eugen, 26  
 Bock, Baron de, *Essai sur l’histoire du sabéisme*, 152n37  
 body: life’s attachment to, 56; separation from, 11, 13, 59, 82, 94–95, 109, 181  
 Bonaparte, Joseph, 8  
 Bonaparte, Napoleon, 2, 8, 179  
 Boucher, Antoine, 2, 8, 129n18  
 brain, 30, 30n, 63–64, 97–98, 109, 130  
 Breton, André, 19, 19n8  
 Breuer, Josef, 28  
 Byron, George Gordon, Lord, *Manfred*, 160n46  
  
 cabbala, 145, 161, 181  
 Casson, Louis-François, Mortefontaine, Valois region, 4  
 Castiglione, countess of, 22  
 Cathen, Roland, 83  
 Catherine, empress of Russia, 195, 195n  
 Catherine the Great, 195, 195n  
*cauda pavonis*, 55, 55n11, 92, 108  
 Charcot, Jean-Martin, 21, 26, 27; drawing by, under influence of hashish, 21; photograph of, 20  
 Chenevard, Paul (“Paul\*\*\*”), 56, 92, 124n11  
 Christianity: in *Aurélia*, 76, 151, 161, 162, 164, 169, 173, 175–76; cosmology and metaphysics of, 13–14; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 82; in first notes, 108, 111; in Jung’s marginalia, 125n13; Romantic rebellion against, 13–14; in Swiss lecture notes, 93, 105; in Zurich lecture, 57  
 Christopher, Saint, 173  
 collective consciousness, 39, 44  
 collective unconscious: composition of, 58n17; in first notes, 109; in Jung’s abstract on Nerval, 49; Kubin and, 34; in Swiss lecture notes, 98; in Zurich lecture, 63  
 Colon, Jenny, 5, 6, 8, 16, 120n5, 122n7, 143n28, 152n36, 189n62  
 Colonna, Francesco, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, 18, 18, 39, 80, 80n2, 93, 98, 108  
 Correggio, 188  
 Cousin, Jean, the Elder, *Eva Prima Pandora*, 45  
 Creation, 75, 103, 111, 144  
 Crimean War, 195n  
  
 daemon. *See* winged figure  
 Dante Alighieri: *The Divine Comedy*, 14, 18, 39, 120; *Vita Nuova*, 17, 52, 52n6, 90, 120, 120n4, 143n28  
 death: as alchemical figure, 67; in *Aurélia*, 123, 130–31, 138, 143, 145, 147, 149, 151–52, 160, 162, 164–65, 167–68, 176, 192, 196; doppelgänger associated with, 60, 95, 127; dreams in relation to, 120; in first notes, 108, 109; in Swiss lecture notes, 91–92, 94–95, 99, 103; in Zurich lecture, 54, 57, 59–61, 71–72  
*Decimaquinta Figura*, “Mercurius in the form of the god of revelation,” 69  
 Delacroix, Eugène, *Jacob Wrestling the Angel*, 38  
 Delay, Jean, 31  
 delirium, 21  
 depression, 26  
 descent, theme of, 8, 12, 14–15, 17–18, 25, 40, 42, 44, 70, 196  
*De Secretis Naturae*, “Sow your gold in the white foliate earth,” 65  
 Dilthey, Wilhelm, 30  
 discussion after Jung’s 1945 Zurich lecture, 46, 47, 79–87  
 dissociation, 28, 33  
 divided self, 26–27, 44, 46

- doppelgänger: in *Aurélia*, 127, 152, 154, 156; defined, 85n12; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 85; in editor's commentary, 17–18; Jung and, 44; origin of motif of, 127n16; Romantic theme of, 17; in Swiss lecture notes, 95, 103–4; in Zurich lecture, 60, 75. *See also* the Other
- Doré, Gustav, *Death of Gérard de Nerval, rue de la Vieille-Lanterne*, 10
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, 32
- double. *See* doppelgänger
- dreams: Asclepius's therapeutic use of, 23; in *Aurélia*, 11–13, 120, 123, 138, 141, 143, 166–67, 189–95; death in relation to, 120; and delirium, 21; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 79–80; in editor's commentary, 15–18; Enlightenment conception of, 19; in first notes, 107–8, 110; interpretive structure for, 55n9; in Jung's abstract on Nerval, 49; Romantic conception of, 19; in Swiss lecture notes, 90–91, 101–2, 105–6; the unconscious and, 29, 52; universal ideas appearing as, 19; in Zurich lecture, 54–55, 70–72, 76–77
- Dreams and Life* (English translation of Nerval's *Aurélia*), 15
- Dubuffet, Jean, 42
- Dumas, Alexandre, 23, 77n38; *L'Alchimiste*, 6, 64n29; *Léo Burckhart*, 6; *Piquillo*, 6
- Dürer, Albrecht, *Melancholia*, 37, 37, 54, 91, 124, 124n10
- earth, descent into, 63–64, 64n27, 98, 109, 130
- Eco, Umberto, 19
- Elisabeth, 68
- Elisheva, 68n
- Ellora, 189, 189n63
- Elohim, 134n24, 144–45, 144n31, 149, 161, 161n
- Encyclopédie*, 19
- Enigma of Bologna, 45–46
- Enlightenment, 19, 44, 160n45
- Eros, 39, 40, 44, 92, 108, 191
- Esquirol, Jean-Étienne-Dominique, 19–21; *Des maladies mentales, considérées sous les rapports médical, hygiénique et médico-légal*, 20; *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, 23
- Esquiros, Alphonse, 42
- Eternal Feminine, 17, 120n3. *See also* Great Mother
- Eternal Mother, 11, 151. *See also* Great Mother
- Eurydice, 18, 58, 59, 93, 94, 108, 109, 160
- explanation, 30
- explosion, of the personality, 79n, 83
- Falret, Jean-Pierre, 26
- Fates (Parcae), 71–72, 72n33, 101–3, 110
- Fierz-David, Linda, 46, 80, 80n2
- Flamel, Nicolas, 64n29
- Flournoy, Théodore, 29
- Fludd, Robert, “The anima mundi,” 74
- Formey, Samuel, 19
- fourfold cosmologies, 40
- France: in *Aurélia*, 13; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 84–85; in editor's commentary, 35, 39; Germany compared to, 14, 84–85
- Franz, Marie-Louise von, 79, 79n, 84
- Freud, Sigmund, 28, 41, 44
- Frey, Liliane, 86
- Frye, Northrop, 13, 44
- Gates of Sleep, 120, 120n2
- Gautier, Théophile, 189n62; *Le Chevalier double*, 152n38
- Gayomart, 63, 63n26, 97
- genius. *See* winged figure
- Georges. *See* Bell, Georges
- Germany: in discussion after Zurich lecture, 84–85; in first notes, 108; France compared to, 14, 84–85; Nerval's travels in, 51, 93; in Swiss lecture notes, 93; in Zurich lecture, 60–62
- Gilli, Gertrud, 83
- Gluck, Christoph Willibald, *Orfeo ed Eurydice*, 160n43
- God: in *Aurélia*, 12, 36, 76–77, 105, 138, 160–62, 164, 167–69; in editor's commentary, 16; in first notes, 112; names and, 68, 68n; Nerval's identification with, 24; in Swiss lecture notes, 105; in Zurich lecture, 76–77
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 1, 14, 55, 89, 92, 107; cosmology of, 15; and the Eternal Feminine, 17; *Faust*, 2, 4, 4n, 6, 14, 39, 51, 57n16, 58–59, 81, 86, 89, 93–94, 107–9, 108; “*Geheimnisse*” [“The Mysteries”], 85, 85n11
- Gorgon, 59, 81, 94, 109

- Gounod, Charles, 21  
Granada, 151  
Great Mother, 82, 97. *See also* Eternal Feminine; Eternal Mother  
Gretchen (character from Goethe's *Faust*), 58, 61, 63, 81, 85, 93–94, 97, 108–9  
the grotesque, 14  
guilt: in *Aurélia*, 121, 166; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 80, 84–86; in Zurich lecture, 52
- Haggard, Rider, 58, 58n17  
hashish, 21  
Haule, John, 28  
Hecate, 57–59, 82, 93, 94, 97, 108, 109  
Heine, Heinrich, 8, 36, 44, 51, 89, 107, 173, 173n51, 176  
Hela, 13, 193  
Helena, Saint, 195, 195n  
Herbelot, Barthélemy d', 145n33;  
    *Bibliothèque orientale*, 145n32  
Herder, Johann Gottfried, 4  
Hermes, 62, 62n24, 64, 68, 69, 97. *See also* Mercurius  
Hippocrates and the Hippocratic approach, 23, 25–26, 36, 39, 46  
Hoffman, E.T.A., 32, 44; *The Devil's Elixirs*, 16n3, 17, 120n5  
Holland, Vyvyan, 15  
Hôpital Salpêtrière, Paris, 19–21, 26  
Hospice de la Charité, 179, 179n59  
Houssaye, Arsène, 189n62  
Hugo, Victor, 14  
hysteria, 28
- individuation, 72n34, 102, 103, 110  
insanity: double-form, 26; therapeutic treatment of, 19–23. *See also* Nerval, Gérard de: madness of  
the irrational/nonrational, 1, 15, 19, 23–24  
Isis, 13, 15, 15, 25, 64, 82, 97, 98, 120n3, 179, 185  
island, 64, 75, 97–98, 110
- Jacobi, Jolande, 83, 87  
Jaffé, Aniela, 47, 85–86  
Janet, Pierre, 26–29, 27  
Jaspers, Karl, 30  
Jesus Christ, 192, 193
- Joyce, James, 44; *Ulysses*, 34  
Jung, C. G.: abstract on Nerval from *The Symbolic Life*, 49; and *Aurélia*, 29, 31, 35–36, 41–42, 47–48; *The Black Books*, 39; first notes on *Aurélia* (1942), 107–12, 113–17; Freud compared to, 44; on Kubin, 32–36; lecture on *Aurélia* for Zurich Psychological Club (1945), 1, 46, 51–78 (*see also* discussion after Jung's 1945 Zurich lecture); *Liber Novus*, 2; marginalia of (*see* marginalia, from Jung's copy of *Aurélia*); *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, 45; and Nerval's *Aurélia*, 1–2; notes for lecture on *Aurélia* for Swiss Society (1942), 1, 41, 41n, 47, 57n16, 89–106; in Paris, 29; and Philemon, 37, 38; photograph of, 28; and psychiatric practice, 29–30, 30n; psychological theories of, 26–28, 32–33, 39; *Psychological Types*, 32; *Psychology and Alchemy*, 40; “On the Psychology of the Unconscious,” 29; *The Red Book*, 1, 38, 39–40, 40n, 42, 47; on *Sol niger* and Hoffman's “The Devil's Elixir,” 16n3; “The Transcendent Function,” 33  
Jünger, Ernst, *On the Marble Cliffs*, 46, 85  
Jung-Rauschenbach, Emma, 29
- Keller, Tina, 83  
Klopstock, Friedrich Gottlieb, 4, 51, 89, 107  
Kraepelin, Emil, 26, 30  
Kubin, Alfred, 31–36, 32, 44; *Die andere Seite (The Other Side)*, 31–36; illustrations for *Aurélia*, 32, 41, 119–22, 124–26, 128, 130–33, 135–36, 139–40, 142, 146–50, 153, 157–59, 163–64, 166, 168, 170, 172, 174, 177–78, 180, 182–83, 186, 190, 192–94, 196  
Kubin, Hedwig, 32, 32, 138n
- Labrunie, Etienne (father), 2, 4, 18, 22, 24, 169, 173, 176n56  
Laurent, Marie-Antoinette-Marguerite (mother), 2, 8, 169, 176, 177, 189n  
Lawrence, D. H., 61, 96  
Leonardo da Vinci, 41  
life principle, 1, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19  
llama: in *Aurélia*, 155; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 80–81; in first notes, 111; as Nietzsche's nickname for his sister, 80, 80n3; in Swiss lecture notes, 104; in Zurich lecture, 75–76

- Lorelei, 61–62, 62n22, 129n18  
 Lot's wife, 59, 94, 109  
 Loubens, Victor, 24  
 lucidity, 15–16  
 Lucretius, 160, 160n44  
 lysis, of a dream, 35, 49, 55, 55n9, 79, 92, 103, 108, 111
- MacGregor, John, 42  
 mania, 26  
 marginalia, from Jung's copy of *Aurélia*, 47–48, 125n13, 130nn19–21, 131n, 134n23, 138n, 155n41, 196n75  
 Marguerite, 61–63, 70, 80, 96–97, 109  
 Mary. *See* Virgin Mary  
*mater natura*, 72  
 Maupassant, Guy de, 21  
 Maury, Alfred, 21  
 Meier, Carl Alfred, 81, 84–85  
 melancholy, 37, 55–56, 92, 108, 189n  
 Mercurius, 63n26, 69, 73, 74, 97, 98, 109. *See also* Hermes  
 Messiah, 13, 192  
 Meursius, Jan, 186, 186n  
 Mnemosyne, 54, 91, 123, 123n9  
 Modernism, 42  
*Le monde dramatique* (magazine), 6, 6  
 Moors, 151  
 Moreau, Jacques-Joseph, 21  
 Mörike, Eduard, 64, 98, 110  
 Muller, Charles Louis Lucien, *Philippe Pinel Setting Free the Insane at the Bicêtre Asylum*, 20  
 Müller, Georg, 32  
 multiplication, 86, 131n  
 Museum of Natural History, 177
- Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon): Interior of the Catacombs, Paris, *ii*; Portrait of Gérard de Nerval, 3  
 nature, 13–14  
 Nazi Germany, 46  
 neoclassicism, 14  
 Nerva, Marcus Cocceius, 8  
 Nerval, Clos de, 8  
 Nerval, Gérard de: adopted name and persona of, 8; *L'Alchimiste*, 6, 64n29; art of, 7, 8, 42, 43, 72, 143–44, 143n30; birth and youth of, 2, 4; *Carnet de Voyage en Orient* [Voyage to the Orient], 51, 134n26; *Le Chariot d'Enfant*, 8; *Les Chimères*, 16; death of, 11, 26, 41, 49, 77, 77n38, 89, 106, 107; “El Desdichado,” 124n10; fantastical genealogy by, 7, 8; *Les Faux-Saulniers*, 8; Franz on, 79n; *L'Imagier de Haarlem*, 8; Jung's regard for the work of, 1; “The King of Bedlam,” 17; *Léo Burckhart*, 6; life of, 2–11; literary works and translations by, 2, 4, 6, 8, 17, 51, 89, 107; *Lorely: Souvenirs d'Allemagne* [Lorelei: Memories of Germany], 51; madness of, 1, 6, 8, 22–26, 49, 52, 123n8, 143n28, 143n29, 176–96; *Les Monténégrins*, 8; *Les Nuits d'Octobre*, 8; “Pandora,” 45; *Piquillo*, 6, 122n7; “Political Assembly for Catherine de Medici,” 42, 43; reception of, 18–19, 42; *Le Rêve et la vie*, 189n62; *Sylvie*, 8, 19, 120n5, 129n18, 176, 176n54; “The Tale of the Caliph Hakim,” 17; *Vers dorés* [Golden Verses], 51; young adulthood of, 5–6. *See also* *Aurélia* (Nerval)
- Nicholas of Cusa, 186, 186n  
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 59, 80, 80n3  
 Noah, 134n24  
 the nonrational. *See* the irrational/nonrational  
 nostalgia, 44  
 Novalis, 1, 4
- Odin, 13  
 old man: in *Aurélia*, 130, 135; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 84; in first notes, 109–10; in Swiss lecture notes, 97–98, 100; in Zurich lecture, 63–64, 64n30, 67–68, 70  
 old woman: in *Aurélia*, 137; in first notes, 110; in Swiss lecture notes, 101; in Zurich lecture, 70  
 Opéra Comique, Paris, 5  
 Orient: in *Aurélia*, 124, 152, 154, 195; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 85; in first notes, 108, 111; Nerval's travels in, 51; in Swiss lecture notes, 92, 93, 103; in Zurich lecture, 56, 58, 75  
 Orpheus, 18, 46, 58, 93, 108  
 the Other: in *Aurélia*, 152, 154; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 86; in first notes, 111; in Jung's theory of the self, 27; in Swiss lecture notes, 103–4; in Zurich lecture, 75–76. *See also* doppelgänger  
 Otto I, Emperor, 8



- Pandora, 45, 46  
 papyrus, 64, 64n30, 98, 110  
 paranoia, 44  
 Parcae. *See* Fates  
 Paul \*\*\*. *See* Chenevard, Paul  
 Pauli, Wolfgang, 40, 44  
 Pegasus, 81  
 Peter the Great, 13, 193, 193n72, 194  
 philosophy: in *Aurélia*, 35, 123, 160; Kubin  
   on, 32; materialist, 160n45; in Swiss  
   lecture notes, 91; in Zurich lecture, 54.  
   *See also* science  
 Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni, 186, 186n  
 Pinel, Philippe, 19–20, 20  
 Pleyel, Mare, 122n6, 122n7  
 Poe, Edgar Allan, 32  
 Portinari, Beatrice, 17, 25, 53, 76, 90, 120n3,  
   120n4, 120n5, 121, 143n28  
 postmodernism, 42  
 Prinzhorn, Hans, 42  
 Prometheus, 45  
 Proust, Marcel, 18–19  
 Prud'hon, Pierre-Paul, 186  
 Psychological Club, Zurich, 1  
 psychological mode, 34  
 Pussin, Jean-Baptiste, 19, 20
- Queen of Sheba, 143n30
- the rational/Reason, 1, 13–14, 87  
 rebirth and restoration, 44, 46, 81, 145  
 regression, 36, 44  
 religion, 35–36, 105, 112, 151, 161, 169, 181.  
   *See also* Christianity; God  
 restoration. *See* rebirth and restoration  
 reunification. *See* unification/reunification  
 Reusner, H., 46  
*La Revue de Paris*, 1, 8, 11, 26, 119n  
 romance, 44–45  
 Romanticism, 1, 13–14, 19, 44  
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 14, 19  
 Rue d'Ankara, 9
- Sade, Marquis de, 14  
 Saturn, 64, 66, 98, 110, 189n  
 Saturnin, 189, 189n, 192  
 Saturnin, Saint, 189n  
 Schärf, Rivkah, 82, 85
- Schiller, Friedrich von, 4  
 schizophrenia, 26, 30, 83, 86, 94, 98, 109  
 Schmid, Marie-Jeanne, 47  
 Schmitz, Oskar A. H., *Märchen aus dem  
 Unbewussten*, 34  
 Schopenhauer, Arthur, 44  
 science: alchemy in relation to, 40; in  
   *Aurélia*, 160–61; critiques of, 36, 40,  
   44–45, 47, 76, 105, 111; in editor's  
   commentary, 24, 36; in first notes, 111;  
   psychiatry in relation to, 30; in Swiss  
   lecture notes, 105; in Zurich lecture, 76.  
   *See also* philosophy  
 self: in *Aurélia*, 120; collapse of, 55–56; in  
   discussion after Zurich lecture, 83; Jung's  
   concept of, 39, 92; as unity of conscious  
   and unconscious aspects, 28; winged  
   figure as, 49, 55; writing about, as therapy,  
   39. *See also* divided self  
 self-absorption (*Ichbefangenheit*): defined,  
   53n8, 86n14; in discussion after Zurich  
   lecture, 86; in Swiss lecture notes, 90; in  
   Zurich lecture, 53  
 seven, 68, 86, 100, 134, 134n23, 134n24, 144  
 shadow: in discussion after Zurich lecture,  
   81–83; melancholy in relation to, 56n13;  
   in Swiss lecture notes, 106; in Zurich  
   lecture, 78  
 Shamdasani, Sonu, 39  
 Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 14  
 Sieburth, Richard, 6  
 Société des Gens de Lettres, 8  
 soldier, 13, 25, 36, 189, 195–96  
*Sol niger* (black sun), 16n3, 98, 110, 124n10,  
   175  
 Sosia, 154  
 soul: in *Aurélia*, 12, 120, 125, 127–29, 131,  
   137, 154, 160, 185, 189; in discussion  
   after Zurich lecture, 81; in first notes,  
   109–11; God in relation to, 161; in Swiss  
   lecture notes, 94–99, 104–5; transformed  
   into animals, 62–63, 96–98, 109, 129; in  
   Zurich lecture, 59–64, 67, 76–77  
*Splendor Solis*, “Conjoining of Sun and  
   Moon,” 73  
 splitting, 33, 35–36, 39, 86  
 star: in *Aurélia*, 11, 124–25, 128; in first  
   notes, 109; in Swiss lecture notes, 92–94,  
   96; in Zurich lecture, 56–57, 59, 61  
 Stolcenberg, Sticio de, “Mercurius as the  
   Sun-Moon hermaphrodite,” 74

- superior thinking functions, 32–33
- surrealism, 19, 19n8
- Swedenborg, Emanuel, 17, 39, 120, 120n3
- Swiss Society for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy (S.G.P.P.), 1, 89
- Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum*, “Saturn waters the earth,” 66
- symbols and the symbolic, 46–47
- syncretism, 16–17, 145n32
- synthetic/constructive method, 29
  
- Tannhäuser, 57n16, 93, 108
- tarot, 149n
- Thomas, Una, 86
- Thor, 13, 193
- time, 62, 62n23, 96
- Tour Saint-Jacques la Boucherie, 10
- transference, 22
- triad, theme of, 57, 57n15, 70–71, 82, 93, 94, 101–2, 108, 109
- Turba Philosophorum*, “The Virgin is Mercurius,” 73
  
- uncle: in *Aurélia*, 11–12, 129–34; in editor’s commentary, 36; in first notes, 109; Nerval’s, 2, 8, 129n18, 169; in Swiss lecture notes, 96, 97, 99–100; in Zurich lecture, 61–63, 67–68
- unconscious: in *Aurélia*, 52; autonomous complexes of, 27; dreams and, 29, 52; in first notes, 107; Kubin and, 33–34; meanings found in, 47n; psychiatric approaches to, 29; in Swiss lecture notes, 90, 93; in Zurich lecture, 58, 61, 62. *See also* collective unconscious
- understanding, 30
- unification/reunification, 28, 35, 39–40, 46, 49
- universal ideas, dreams as, 19
  
- van Gogh, Theo, 21
- Venus, 13, 25, 185
- Villar, Abbé de, *Comte de Gabalis*, 145n32
- Virgil: *The Aeneid*, 17, 39; in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, 14; Fourth Eclogue, 189n
- Virgin Mary, 13, 15, 25, 82, 175, 176, 177, 179, 185, 191
- visionary mode, 34–35
- Voltaire, 4n
  
- Wilde, Oscar, 15
- winged figure: in *Aurélia*, 11, 123–24; in editor’s commentary, 37; in first notes, 108; in Jung’s abstract on Nerval, 49; in Swiss lecture notes, 91–92; in Zurich lecture, 54–55, 76n35
- Woodman, Ross, 39
- Wordsworth, William, 39
  
- youths: in *Aurélia*, 137; in discussion after Zurich lecture, 46, 85; in first notes, 110; in Swiss lecture notes, 101; in Zurich lecture, 70
  
- Zoroastrianism, 145n32, 152n37