Weimar Classicism and the Image of Historical Time

by

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Conventions and Abbreviations

Life dates of individuals mentioned in this work are provided in parentheses at the first mention. Likewise, publication dates of works are provided parenthetically at first mention and thereafter as needed. German titles are used throughout; the English translation is provided parenthetically at first mention. Quotations from German texts are given first in German, then in English – translated by the author unless it is otherwise noted that an existing translation has been used – and thereafter excerpts from the quotations are in German or English as required by context. Where spelling in primary source texts does not conform to the standards of modern High German, I have preferred to leave it unaltered.

I have relied on several editions of the works of Goethe and Schiller. Abbreviated information regarding edition and volume is used in footnotes; complete information is included below and in the bibliography.

FA Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*. Frankfurter Ausgabe (Frankfurt edition). Ed. Dieter Borchmeyer et al. 40 volumes in 2 sections. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-.

SW Friedrich von Schiller. *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. Wolfgang Riedel et al. 5 volumes. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004.

W Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Werke*. Hamburger Ausgabe (Hamburg edition, paperback). Ed. Erich Trunz. 14 volumes. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000.

WA Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Goethes Werke*. Weimarer Ausgabe (Weimar edition/Sophienausgabe). Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1887-1919.

WuB Friedrich von Schiller. *Werke und Briefe*. Ed. Klaus Harro Hilzinger et al. 12 volumes. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1988-2004.

References to Schiller's *Wallenstein* include Act, Scene, and line number; page numbers are provided for the English translation. Page numbers are also provided for stage directions unless their location in the text is otherwise sufficiently clear from context. The edition used is also indicated for letters, which are cited by author, recipient, and date.

Introduction: History and Weimar Classicism

History as visual experience

This dissertation concerns the visual representation of history in the aesthetic theory and practice of Weimar Classicism. I argue that Weimar Classicism responded to a discomfort with history, generated by the perceived historical crises of the French Revolution and Revolutionary Wars, by formulating an aesthetic geared toward the stabilization of the experience of time and an idealized representation, in the work of art, of the moment in historical time.

Scholarship on European historical thought and culture in the period around 1800 has emphasized the perception of a break or transformation in historical consciousness following the political and social devastation of the French Revolution and the ensuing Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Studies in the language of historical narrative, in the emergence of new cultural practices and institutions including museum and preservation culture, and in memory and historical consciousness in a more general sense, identify new developments that do not merely emanate from the revolutionary period and wars of 1789 to 1815, but also refer back to this period with a sense of loss and a desire to recuperate the now distant and vanishing past for the benefit of a historically rootless present.[1] But the stress placed on the years immediately around 1800 and on the

[1]The transformation of historical writing between the 18th and 19th centuries is discussed in Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Hisotrical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), specifically 1-162; and F. R. Ankersmit, "The Dialectics of Narrativist Historism,"

watershed effect of the French Revolution and Wars upon the experience and representation of history, and foremost the persistent scholarly return to after-effects played out over the 19th century, also pique the curiosity about what went on before. I do not question the perception of a transformation or break in the consciousness of history, nor do I dispute the observation of effects upon thought and culture in the early 19th century. But I do wish to focus more attention precisely on the period of transition just around 1800 in order to gain a better understanding of how changes in thinking about history manifest themselves.

Reinhart Koselleck's research into the transformation of fundamental concepts of historical experience beginning in the mid-18th century offers productive insight into the nature of a change of consciousness before the French Revolution and Napoleonic conquest unleashed history upon an emerging national and then European stage. Koselleck isolates a series of important changes concerning the fundamental understanding of what history is, how it might operate, and how it is to be represented. Foremost, over the course of the latter half of the 18th century history comes to be understood no longer as a closed past containing a limited set of universally valid lessons and policy possibilities for the present and immediate future. Koselleck locates the causes for this change in the gradual decoupling of history from various institutional

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in *Historical Representation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 123-148. For a discussion of the memory crisis engendered by the transformations of the revolutionary period, with specific reference to France in the 19th century, see Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 3-4. Peter Fritzsche takes up the issue of a new consciousness of history and of the feeling of disconnection from the past in 19th-century Europe and America in *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 5. The influence on collecting practices is assessed by Susan A. Crane in *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 7. On the level of historical thought and the practice of the historian, see the general overview in Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 199-247; and for the development of historicism between the 18th and 19th centuries, see George G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 3-43.

guarantors such as the Catholic Church (which lost its unique authority during the Reformation); and the absolutist regime that also suffered a loss of authority owing to increasing political and social criticism throughout the 18th century.[2] The result was an unmooring of history from exclusive institutional frameworks of interpretation and its emergence as a problem of thought and an a mode of experience no longer bound to the content of that past but rather with a life of its own. Those who concern themselves with history at mid-century and after – university scholars, to be sure, statesmen, literary and cultural critics – increasingly understand history after 1750 as a temporal dynamic encompassing the past, present, and future. A crucial implication of this change of understanding is that, with the rise of philosophy of history, the content of the future is no longer limited by a series of probabilities to be drawn from the past, as if historical time admitted only a limited variety of changes over time; nor must it be subject to a prophetic legacy remnant from an age when a single Church was the universal guarantor of world history. In the latter half of the 18th century the future is understood to be open for the making, and therewith the present becomes the critical location for historically meaningful action.[3]

The challenge of this new expansiveness of history is reflected in changed thinking about the representation of history. Here Koselleck points to two significant transformations. The first concerns the etymology of the word *Geschichte* and its gradual replacement of *Historie* as a preferred term in historical discourse. Both the German

[2]Koselleck lays out the framework for these transformations in "Vergangene Zukunft der frühen Neuzeit," *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985). For a more in depth analysis specifically of the relationship between historical thought, political and social criticism, and the loss of absolutist authority, see also Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise. Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976).
[3]Koselleck, "Vergangene Zukunft der frühen Neuzeit," 34-35.

Geschichte and the borrowed term *Historie* had referred variously both to the event of the past and to its report. But *Geschichte* gradually assumed the exclusive referential role for both event and representation. With this linguistic concentration, the specific content of history (the event) elided with its formalization (the history as report or representation of events), rendering *Geschichte* both as the knowledge of the past and of its representational demands. *Geschichte*, history, becomes more than the sum of its constituent past events – the term *Geschichte* now signifies the totality of history, wherein the event is but a manifestation of historical time in the world. Moreover, the term *Geschichte* eventually collapses the singular *das Geschicht* and the plural *die Geschichten* into a collective noun (*die Geschichte*) suggesting the multitude of events, experiences, and stories that only begin to constitute history as such.[4]

For Koselleck, this etymological shift accompanies another transformation: recognition of the sheer subjectivity of the report of the historical event. The acknowledgement of the particularity of the individual's perspective, as witness to the event, entails a limitation of the historian's task to provide a mirror of the past, to render naked and reveal the truth of history. Such visual metaphors for the knowledge to be gained from history operate in a mode of transparency, whereby the work of the historian is simply to show – the essence of history thereby becomes visible. But the particularity of the historian's perspective entails a shift from the potential extreme visibility of history to the spectatorship of the historian. Detached from the interpretive framework of

[4]Koselleck, "Historia Magistra Vitae. Über die Auflösung des Topos im Horizont neuzeitlich bewegter Geschichte," *Vergangene Zukunft*, especially 47-56. Koselleck cites the observations of Johann Martin Chladenius concerning the role of the spectator in the generation of historical knowledge and the report about history. Chladenius himself focuses on the eye and on vision as the foremost sense associated with the embodied viewpoint on history. See Johann Martin Chladenius, "Vom Zuschauer und Sehepunckte," *Allgemeine Geschichtswissenschaft* [1752] (Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1985), 91-115. I discuss Koselleck and Chladenius on the subject of historical point of view in greater detail in Chapter 4.

traditional institutional guarantees; recognized as a distinct temporality and mode of experience; regarded more as a problem of thought and representation than as a management of facts for practical application – history now also becomes a matter of sensory reception. Knowledge of history begins with visual experience.

I do not want to think about history merely as visual experience, though. Rather, I want also to consider how aesthetics – in particular, theories and practices of visual representation – are recruited for the task of historical representation and the associated challenge of thinking through the meaning of history, even of formalizing the present experience of history in order to render it more manageable. This entails two inquiries into aesthetics. One concerns aesthetics in terms of theory of the work of art – in relation to my argument, this inquiry also concerns how the work of art functions as a device for the representation of history and the provision of knowledge about history. The other concerns the acts of sensory perception that constitute the initial core of the philosophy of aesthetics. Alexander Baumgarten (1714-1762) articulated his foundational philosophy of aesthetics as a science investigating perception and the possibilities for its perfection in his 1735 *Reflections on Poetry* (originally titled *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*). Aesthetics are distinguished from logic, which concerns the perfection of thought. While retaining the distinction of sense perception from thought, Baumgarten elevates the study of perception's cognitive possibilities to more equal status with logic. Moreover, he uses the work of art – foremost poetry – as the means to

explicate how sensate ideas can be rendered more clearly. The work of art functions as a device to sharpen and strengthen the cognitive potential of the senses.[5]

The return to the body as the site for the production of knowledge in experience in the eighteenth century, implied by the elevation of sensory cognition alongside logic, suggests that the aesthetic accompanies the increasingly empirical relationship to history.[6] The body and the senses, above all vision, become sites of engagement with the experience of the passage of time and of the change. This, at least, is the relationship I pursue in this work: the aesthetic as the honing of sense perception with regard to the sensory experience of history, and the use of the work of art as a means to sharpen the senses for the perception of history.

Weimar Classicism: the production of the historical image

I regard the aesthetic theories and practices of Weimar Classicism as attempts to deal directly with the experience of the passage of time. But my assertion of a specific historically-oriented project under the name of Weimar Classicism touches directly upon the question of whether and under what circumstances one may even speak of Weimar Classicism as a discrete cultural entity. Because the body of this work deals in greater detail with specific aspects of Weimar Classicism – aesthetic theory, theater, art-historical writing – I prefer at the outset to provide only the broad contours of Weimar

[5] Alexander Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus,* Karl Aschenbrenner and Willam B. Holtner, Eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 1-32.

[6] For an argument about aesthetics as a return to the body, see Martin Jay, "Returning to the Body through Aesthetic Experience: From Kant to Dewey," in Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 131-169.

Classicism as a historical and cultural phenomenon before discussing its relevance as a study in the visual representation of the experience of time and history.

The two most prominent figures of Weimar Classicism are Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832) and Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), whose collaboration from 1794 until Schiller's death has often been received as the foremost and defining gesture of Weimar Classicism. But Goethe and Schiller also worked with a host of associates – to name but the few who appear in this work: the artist and art-historian Johann Heinrich Meyer (1760-1832), the art scholar and librarian Carl Ludwig Fernow (1763-1808), and the linguist and diplomat Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835). The collective *Weimarische Kunstfreunde* (*Weimar Friends of Art*) is also periodically used to refer to a core group around Goethe, Schiller, and Meyer. The period of Weimar Classicism may be said to begin with Goethe's voyage to Italy in 1786 and end with Schiller's death. It reaches a high point in 1797 in the intense theorization about genre, poetry and the visual arts, centered on the vigorous promotion of aesthetic models drawn from European and foremost Greek antiquity; and in the publication in 1798 of its programmatic organ *Propyläen*, in which Goethe and Meyer presented their views on antique and contemporary art. It waned as the German public increasingly failed to demonstrate receptivity to Goethe's opinions concerning the arts, apparently preferring the early Romantic.[7]

Distinctions between Weimar Classicism and early Romanticism are perhaps a helpful – if not the single best – way to grasp the essential cultural and aesthetic concerns of the former. In short, Weimar Classicism has been received as a project to restore the

[7]For a general review of the chronology, figures, and central concerns of Weimar Classicism, see for example Simon Richter, "Introduction," *The Literature of Weimar Classicism*, Simon Richter, Ed. (Rochester: Camden House, 2005), 3-44.

essential integrity of sensual perception, a reaction to the rationalism of the German and European Enlightenments on the one hand and on the other to the more spiritual bent of Romanticism. I believe it would be inaccurate to distinguish Weimar Classicism from such other traditions on grounds that Weimar alone cared for the restoration of a whole individuality (regarded as necessary in view of the alienating, fracturing pressures of social and political transformation on the eve of the 19th century). For distinction, one must look rather to Weimar's manner of positing a source and a possibility for restored wholeness: in the adherence to a model of antiquity based in the idea that the Greeks had achieved a creative and healthy harmonization between the individual and society; in a cultural project geared toward the purification of the arts and their reactivation in public life on a more interventionist and energetic scale; and (at least in the realm of the visual arts) in the advocacy of an essentially sculptural work of art that would itself reintroduce into daily experience the variety of whole, sensually fulfilled presence that could reinvigorate human perception. One need of course not take Goethe at his word regarding his famed maxim that the Classical is the healthy and the Romantic is the sick, but the gesture of the maxim pinpoints the difference as the Classicists themselves saw it: Weimar Classicism focused its energy on the discovery, creation, and celebration of the complete, the perfect, the antique Classical, the universal, and the cosmopolitan; Romanticism, by contrast, turned toward the incomplete, the otherworldly, the mystical, the medieval, the Christian, and the German.[8]

[8]I borrow, and build upon, the idea of Weimar Classicism as an effort to reevaluate and elevate sensual perception from the commentaries "Die Wiederherstellung der Wirklichkeit. Goethes Kunstanschauung 1771-1805," FA I, 18:1007-1048 and "Die Ästhetik des Selbstseins. Goethes Kunstanschauung 1805-1816," FA I, 19:727-757. On distinctions between Weimar Classicism and Romanticism, as well as some commentary on the tensions in Weimar Classicism between cosmopolitanism and a German-specific project of cultural renewal, see Andreas Beyer, "Klassik und Romantik. Zwei Enden einer Epoche," in *Geschichte der bildenden Künste in Deutschland. Band 6: Klassik und Romantik*, Andreas Beyer, Ed.

Goethe and Schiller and their collaborators were operating at the intersection of time-specific concerns about culture and politics and various traditions that extended far beyond the city walls of Weimar and Jena (the central locations, along with Rome, for Weimar Classicism). On the one hand, their respect for the ancients, specifically the Greeks, was a legitimately European cultural phenomena – thus, Weimar Classicism is by all means kin to German and European Classicism. The Weimar Classicists also concerned themselves with questions central to German cultural identity (or, at least, high-cultural identity) since the time of Gottsched's theater reforms in the 1730s: questions into the possibility of a unique German literature and of German as a literary language; of the proper concerns for a German theater; of the status of the visual arts in Germany. But the events of the 1790s – the French Revolution and the Terror, the Revolutionary Wars and eventual Napoleonic Conquest (stretching of course into the 19th century), and their ensuing political and social transformations – also elicited from the Weimar Classicists a very particular concern for the status of the aesthetic and of art in their own time. Their relative traditionalism and their wholesale universalism are stamped by very contemporary historical pressures.

Weimar Classicism has been received as a flight from such pressures of historical change into the utopian embrace of art and antiquity. To be sure, there is a jarring disparity in the presence, on the pages of a single letter from Goethe to Meyer, of intense discussions of the theoretically strategic collecting of art objects *and* the latest news of the French military advances in Germany. Indeed, Goethe's words in one such letter from Weimar to Meyer in Florence seem a striking confirmation of a gesture of

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(Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2006). Goethe's maxim, HA 863, reads:"Klassisch ist das Gesunde, romantisch das Kranke." W, 487.

avoidance of the problems of the time: "bleiben Sie ruhig am Arno, wie ich an der Ilm und Saale auszuharren denke, bis die Weltangelegenheiten sich einigermaßen aufklären" ("just wait patiently on the Arno, as I plan to wait it out on the Ilm and the Saale, until world events clear up somewhat").[9] It is not difficult to read into these lines a flight from the vagaries of history into the timelessness of art, referenced by the aesthetic refuges of Italy, Weimar, and Jena. But recent work on Weimar Classicism has sought to *reread* Classicism's rhetoric about itself, indeed to read beneath the surface or along the edges of such rhetoric and to establish the presence and power of instabilities in Weimar's aesthetic consciousness – concerns about the representation of pain, suffering, violence, motion – that it seeks to contain in its art and theory.[10] For my part, I do not question Classicism's earnest promotion of an autonomous and universalizing aesthetic of wholeness, harmony, even beauty as the highest standard for the work of art. Rather, I read this aesthetic also as a response to an awareness of *historical* change, and as a strategy for the isolation and control of the moment and its subjection to a structural investigation in the interests of understanding motion through time and within the space of immediate experience.

[9]A criticism of Weimar Classicism's utopianism may be found in Heinz Schlaffer, *Faust zweiter Teil. Die Allegorie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1981). For the letter, see Goethe to Meyer, September 15, 1796, in *Goethes Briefwechsel mit Heinrich Meyer erster Band: Juli 1788 bis Juni 1797*, Max Hecker, Ed. (Weimar: Verlag der Goethe-Gesellschaft, 1917), 332-333.

[10]Two works I have in mind, which have productively influenced my own thinking about Weimar Classicism, are Martin Dönike, *Pathos, Ausdruck, Bewegung. Zur Ästhetik des Weimarer Klassizismus 1796-1806* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005); and Simon Richter, *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain: Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, Moritz, Goethe* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992). Dönike, building upon scholarship challenging the notion of Classicism as centered on an aesthetic best encapsulated by Winckelmann's "edle Einfalt und stille Größe," reads Classicism's work as essentially driven by the concepts of *Widerstrebung* and *das Gewaltsame*, which latter he understands as *vehemens*, to move beyond rhetorically established boundaries isolating the object as complete, at rest, or beautiful (Dönike, 2-9). Richter argues that Classicism's aesthetic of beauty is balanced by an equally present and influential aesthetic drawn from the expression of pain (Richter, 11).

That Weimar Classicism should betray a concern for history is not an innovation in reception. One can easily find a high degree of self-reflexivity regarding the presumed historical timeliness of the endeavor of Weimar Classicism in some of the public statements of Goethe and Schiller. Schiller's journal *Die Horen*, for example, announced itself in 1794 as a supra-political project dedicated to liberating the mind and reuniting the world "beneath the banner of truth and beauty" ("unter der Fahne der Wahrheit und Schönheit"). And Goethe's own *Propyläen* formulated the modest proposal in 1798 of promoting discussion of the arts among friends of art at time when the "art body" (*Kunstkörper*) of Italy was suffering the violent loss of those objects constituting the model for contemporary visual art – the assembled legacy of European antiquity that was being transported to Revolutionary Paris.[11] To judge from these statements alone, the actual project of Weimar Classicism might be too easily understood entirely as the open-ended and hopeful promotion of a cultured public sphere, upheld by the conviction that the aesthetic offers a necessary remedy for the imbalanced human psyche of the modern age.

In fact, these two statements bookend the publication in installments, in *Die Horen,* of Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (*On the Aesthetic Education of Humanity*, 1795). In this series of letters Schiller explicitly promotes the engagement with art and beauty for the purpose of recalibrating the relationship between the fundamental drives of the human mind and reactivating its potential for judgment. Schiller admits, however, that he projects a very utopian future in which humanity has regained its potential for wholeness both on the individual and social levels. Goethe may

[11] Schiller, "Ankündigung der Horen" [1794], SW, 5:870-873; Goethe, "Einleitung" [1799,] *Propyläen. Eine Periodische Schrift herausgegeben von Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Erster, zweiter und dritter Band.* Wolfgang Frhr. von Löhneysen, Ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965), 7-42.

have had a similar notion of the utopian unlikelihood of success in real transformation of the public sphere and human psyche when he remarked of the title *Propyläen* that it references merely an entrance (propylaia) to the temple: "Stufe, Thor, Eingang, Vorhalle, der Raum zwischen dem Innern und Aeussern, zwischen dem Heiligen und Gemeinen kann nur die Stelle seyn, auf der wir uns mit unsern Freunden gewöhnlich aufhalten werden" ("Step, gate, entrance, forecourt, the space between the interior and exterior, between the sacred and profane can be the only place where we will meet with our friends").[12] The project of *Propyläen* may occupy the heady aesthetic environment midway between the profane and the sacred, a slightly more interior space than what is common, a step closer to an inner sanctum, and thus also an elite space – but it can never fully enter the sacred space, it remains suspended. The historically-oriented project of Weimar Classicism appears in this light rather more as a cultural holding pattern, a preservative fluid for the wounded art body until it returns to consciousness. Another possibility is that, in pointing directly to the very *median* and anticipatory space occupied by Classicist public discourse, Goethe directly invites the reader to move beyond such rhetoric into the interior depths of the Classicist mind.

Indeed, Schiller constructs his utopian theory of the aesthetic education upon the idea that humanity's earliest recognition of the distinctness of the self vis-à-vis others, its first aesthetic act, occurs in the visual observation of self and other as distinct.

> Solange der Mensch in seinem ersten physischen Zustande, die Sinnenwelt bloß leidend in sich aufnimmt, bloß empfindet, ist er auch noch völlig eins mit derselben […] Erst wenn er in seinem ästhetischen Stande sie außer sich stellt oder *betrachtet*, sondert sich seine Persönlichkeit von ihr ab,

[12]Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Propyläen*, 7.

> und es erscheint ihm eine Welt, weil er aufgehört hat, mit derselben eins auszumachen.[13]
>
> As long as the human being in his first, physical state merely passively receives the world of the senses, merely feels, he is still fully one with the world […] Only when the human being in his aesthetic condition places the world of the senses outside of himself or *contemplate* it, does his personality separate itself from the world – and it appears to him as a world because he has ceased to be one with it.

Admittedly I take the situation Schiller describes very much out of its context in his thought in order merely to highlight that the foundational aesthetic act of the individual, in which the individual distinguishes the self from the surrounding world and begins to regard the world with a formalizing eye, occurs in a moment of considerable improbability. "Erst wenn, "Schiller writes – "only when, not until, only *if*" – aesthetic consciousness as the essential balancing of the drives of the human psyche almost does not occur. Its success is a matter of hypothesis. Regardless of the hope for success of the remedy of art, the very idea that the aesthetic is a basic and necessary category for human experience is grounded in a simple act of looking that might not happen. The contingency of this sensory act, its equal likelihood *not* to occur, is the source of an instability at the heart of Weimar's aesthetics, a threat to the open-ended project of aesthetic public discourse, and the object of a strategic aesthetics intended to regulate visual experience.

This disparity between the open-ended aesthetic consciousness espoused in rhetoric and the more desperate search for stability and the production of an image presupposing a particular visual prowess is most apparent in the review of works submitted to the *Weimarer Preisaufgaben*, competitions organized and judged by Goethe

[13]Schiller, Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen [1795], letter 25,SW, 5:651.

and Meyer between 1799 and 1805. Two stated purposes of the competitions were to cultivate and positively direct the talent of young German artists while demonstrating an unprecedented judgment of the real aesthetic quality of the work of art, and to submit the theory of the visual arts to a practical test.[14] Underlying these stated aims, however, is another concern: to cultivate the production of very controlled images of time. I take the 1800 *Preisaufgabe* as an example. The proposed subjects were drawn from Homer's *Iliad*: the first, from Book VI, concerns Hector's departure from his wife and child prior to fighting Achilles; the second, from Book X, concerns Ulysses' and Diomedes' attack on a Trojan camp to steal horses. "Es ist hier um mahlerische Wirkungen zu thun," notes the announcement: "It is a matter of painterly effects" – the production of an image that does not merely visually reproduce the content of the epic narrative, but rather reorders the content in a matter appropriate for visual representation by capturing the essence of the moment heavy with transition and evanescence, yet therewith also consolidating the particular context of the epic narrative into a singular visual impact.[15] Working through the review of the 1800 submissions, and specifically the commentary on submissions of *Abschied des Hectors* (*Hector's Departure*, the theme that received the larger number of entries), one finds a consistent return to positive characteristics: a pyramidal composition of closely grouped figures suggesting unity of motion; clarity of character; distribution of light and shadow highlighting the central figures; architectural and archaeological accuracy; the presence of "invention" (*Erfindung*), the artist's own original method of handling the scene; and the proper indication of the "pregnancy" of the moment, and

[14] Goethe, "Nachricht an Küntler und Preisaufgabe,"*Propyläen*, 524-532 and "Preisertheilung und Recension der eingegangenen Concurrenzstücke," *Propyläen*, 842-846.
[15]Goethe, "Preisaufgabe fürs Jahr 1800," *Propyläen*, 879-880.

therewith of the temporal stream in which such a moment emerges as both logical and graceful.[16]

These various individual criteria are employed by Meyer and Schiller, in their respective reviews of the submitted works, to define roughly a paradigmatic image. I use the term "roughly" because, as Meyer and Schiller move from the most lowly ranked to the winning submission, they find occasion to fault and praise all entries, even those among the best submissions. Accuracy in clothing and architecture, for example, might somewhat compensate for a flawed composition of figures. Works are good for varying reasons. But the overarching paradigm that emerges is of an image displaying a scene from history that is subtly noticeable. The comments on two versions of *Der Abschied des Hectors* – one highly ranked, the other the winning submission – suggest that these images' depictions of the very intimate passage of a moment in time is well conceived.[17] In each of the two, Heinrich Kolbe's well-received version (ill. 1) and Johann August Nahl's winning version (ill. 2), the figures are group centrally facing the viewer. Hector raises his son Astyanax into the air, commending him to the protection of the gods and also achieving a pyramidal composition that helps to mark these figures as at the center of an action. Nahl's version is placed in a context indicative of the next moment: Hector's departure from Troy to fight Achilles. Schiller writes of Nahl: "man sieht den Wagen Hectors, der Führer hält die Pferde an, ein Krieger ist näher getreten und setzt die Hauptscene mit der Handlung des Hintergrundes in Verbindung" ("on sees Hector's

[16]See Meyer's review, "Abschied des Hectors," *Propyläen*, 1013-1043, and Schiller, "An den Herausgeber der Propyläen," *Propyläen*, 1044-1061.

[17]Two or three submissions. The winning version by Johann August Nahl is numbered 26 in both Meyer's and Schiller's reviews (and Nahl's name is given – which is not the case with every review). The other submission must be by Heinrich Kolbe, given the two descriptions, but Meyer refers to it as number 25 and Schiller as 23. See Meyer, *Abschied des Hectors*, 1035-1037, and Schiller, *An den Herausgeber der Propyläen*, 1058-1061.

chariot, the driver holds the horses, a soldier has stepped closer and connects the main scene with the background"). Kolbe, by contrast, errs in placing his group outside the city walls, to which Meyer responds that it is only through well-conceived additional figures ("Nebenfiguren") that the work can be elevated to self-sufficiency ("Selbstständigkeit"). The specifics of the depicted moment – Hector's imminent departure and death – are not properly referenced in Kolbe's version: it remains unclear why the family would be outside the city walls acting as it does.

Meyer and Schiller concentrate on a specific and very precariously depicted moment – Hector's departure, his death, yet not an ostentatious occasion. Rather, the intimacy of the family scene should retain its capacity to be noticed within the context of a subtly referenced story. The presence of soldiers, the chariot, the horses, Hector's arms at his feet, the restrained emotionalism of the figures tell the looking eye that something is happening, that the opened gate in the background marks the immediate arrival of the next moment. But only if the eye is looking – the image, the action, cannot call attention to itself. Thus, while Meyer criticizes Kolbe's too emotional, pleading Andromache as *theatralisch* (theatrical), Schiller also praises his depiction of the nurse with her back turned to the viewer. She remains part of the central composition, focused on the central action as a spectator within the image, and a counterweight to Andromache. But with her back turned she also undoes the theatrics of Andromache gesturally: as she turns away in grief (her face remains unseen), she suggests that there is nothing there to be seen.[18]

[18]As I have suggested, the praise and criticism of submissions is not always consistent. Thus, despite that Kolbe's Andromache is found too emotionally conceived for a figure of such central importance in the composition and story, Nahl's nurse – on her knee, hands clasped in despair – fails in Schiller's opinion to bring the same debilitating theatricality into the image because she is a subordinate figure.

I believe that the aesthetics of Weimar Classicism – that is to say, the varieties of aesthetic thought and of theory concerning the work of art – are concerned with the representation of the moment in time in such a subtle, intimate, almost non-noticeable fashion. On the one hand, this aesthetic theory (to speak collectively for a moment) seeks to integrate the compelling moment in time into its theory of representation – the visual, the dramatic, and the epic operate, according to Goethe, Schiller, and Meyer, with different notions of temporality. My own argument is that, on the other hand, visual works of art are geared in various ways (the painting or sculpture, the drama) toward the nearly unremarkable visual sign of time's passage. With this effort, Goethe, Schiller, and Meyer posit an ideal beholder of the work of art – indeed, they play the part of their ideal beholder, whose eye is trained in the recognition or even, if it is called for, the avoidance of signs of the passage of time and the presence of history in the gesture, the detail, the finely calibrated interrelation of parts of the work of art. Therewith an idealized historical image also takes shape: the action that it very much there to be seen and that presupposes an observer who, however, must first learn to look.[19]

Chapter overview

In the three chapters that form the body of this work I will follow the traces of an aesthetic of historical representation through several Weimar Classicist works. My

[19]My thinking on this matter is greatly influenced by Jonathan Crary and Michael Fried. From Jonathan Crary I am inspired (perhaps by a selective reading of his work) to pay attention to how the body and, most importantly, the position of the beholder of the work of art is present in aesthetic writings as a matter of concern. See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), especially 1-66. Michael Fried's concepts of absorption and theatricality, applied to French painting of the 18th century, have been an equally productive instigation to thinking about the theatrical effects of the works of art described, idealized, and even created by the Weimar Classicists. See Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

method is largely inductive – to read into texts an argument about the experience and visual representation of historical time that is, I believe, present if not always the manifest first concern of the texts' authors. I have chosen to organize these readings as a thematic unfolding of the project of Weimar Classicism roughly chronologically from its conceptual beginnings in the mid-1790s to its perceived end midway through the first decade of the 19th century.

Thus, Chapter One does not start with Goethe's return from Italy in 1788 but rather with his visit to Frankfurt, the city of his youth, in 1797. It is here that Goethe first articulates the concept of the symbolic as a mode of experience occurring in the encounter with objects from the past and objects in time. The experience is fortuitous, for Goethe, Schiller, and Meyer had been devoting attention to the nature of representation, the limits and proper scope of the genres, and the choice of objects for representation. Accordingly, Goethe elaborates the symbolic into a representational mode for the visual arts that transforms particular temporality into a generic, idealized experience of time. The symbol is then taken up by Heinrich Meyer who, in his 1797 *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst* (*On the Objects of the Visual Arts*) makes it the pinnacle of an expansive, hierarchized categorization of objects for a visual representation that is based foremost in visual communication, less in generic representation and visual pleasure; and in which a more precise place is accorded the representation of time. Finally, Goethe's 1798 essay *Über Laokoon* offers a symbolic reading of the work of art yet that unwittingly reintroduces temporal particularity into the ideal moment of representation.

Chapter Two focuses exclusively on Schiller's work over the course of the 1790s and on his own visual engagement with history. This engagement begins with the narrative history *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* (*History of the Thirty Years War*, 1791-1792), over the course of which Schiller's approach as historian changes from one of a highly visual rhetoric to an increased *perceptual* reliance on great historical individuals whose actions seem to bring coherence and transparency to the content and meaning of history. The failure of this perceptual approach to make sense of the Imperial General Wallenstein leaves Schiller eager to take up the subject of Wallenstein's assassination in drama. In his subsequent aesthetic writings and in correspondence with Goethe and Meyer on the problems of representation and genre, Schiller develops or outright adopts techniques that assist in organizing the content of history for the purposes of dramatic reorganization. It might strike the reader as strange that I include a chapter on theater in a dissertation that concerns the de-privileging of ostentatious depiction. But my interest in Schiller is precisely the balance he attempts to strike in his drama between the demonstrative artifice of tragedy and the more discreet visual and *gestural* characterization of Wallenstein as a tragic figure. As a series of dramas that lay out and explore the dynamics of the historical moment both verbally and visual, Schiller's *Wallenstein* trilogy is also an exercise in retuning the beholder's (i.e. Schiller's) perceptivity to the subtle signs of a transformative moment in time.

Chapter Three takes up an issue studiously avoided in Chapter One and called into question in Chapter Two: the writing of historical narrative. The art-historical writing produced by the Weimar Classicists around 1805, when the project of Weimar Classicism had assumed a defensive posture against the rise of Romanticism, accordingly

undertakes in various ways to historicize the Classicist project while also still upholding the integrity of Classicism's approach to art. The major piece of work in this vein is the jointly composed *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert* (*Winckelmann and His Century*, 1805) – a multi-authored work that assesses the place of Winckelmann in the recent history of art in terms of his legacy as art-historian and as a model of human creativity. My intention here is to use the focus on how Weimar Classicists write the history of art – from Winckelmann's life (and death in 1768) to the death of the promising artist Asmus Jakob Carstens in 1798 – also as a history of Classicism, thereby narrating over a series of works their own concern for the future of Classicism as a variety of visual experience.

In conclusion I return to the issue of Weimar Classicism's discomfort with history and anxiety about change, and reflect on how this emotional charge manifests itself in Weimar's own aesthetic gestures toward itself, its idealized beholder, and the objects of its representation.

Chapter One

The Goethean Symbol and the Visual Representation of Time

Introduction

This chapter inquires into the status of the visual representation of time in the concept of the symbol developed by Goethe in the 1790s in conversation and collaboration with Friedrich Schiller and Johann Heinrich Meyer. Goethe attempts to compress the particularity of temporal context and cause into an idealized moment of visual apprehension in the work of art conceived as symbol. I argue that his attempt at compression bespeaks a desire to control the experience of time aesthetically. Yet a temporal tension remains even in Goethe's reading of the work of art, signaling its reopening to a more particularized reading in which narrative context and detail are of utmost importance in terms of the information mediated visually.

The symbol is a fraught category in Goethe's oeuvre, and the attempt at a straightforward definition risks damage to its many valences in varying contexts over the course of several decades of his work. Among three of Goethe's *Maximen und Reflexionen* that explicitly address the symbol, for example, one finds the following definition that originally appeared between 1818 and 1827 in the journal *Über Kunst und Altertum*: "Das ist die wahre Symbolik, wo das Besondere das Allgemeine repräsentiert, nicht als Traum und Schatten, sondern als lebendig-augenblickliche Offenbarung des Unerforschlichen" ("This is the true symbolism, where the particular represents the more

general, not as dream and shadow, but as a living and momentary revelation of the unfathomable").[1] Although this maxim postdates the foremost productive period of Weimar Classicism by more than a decade, it offers a preliminary foothold on the rich terrain of the Goethean symbol. We might understand the symbol as a particularized, sensually perceptible or even material instantiation of the general, the universal, or the ideal. To the receptive intuition, the symbol mediates between the empirical and those otherwise inaccessible laws or ideas that operate at the core of phenomena. Crystallizing out of Goethe's thought on the value of experience and intuition in reference to both the fine arts and the natural sciences in the 1780s and early 1790s, the symbol was mobilized over the course of the 1790s also as a conceptual defense of a classicist aesthetic favoring the sensual, material, or worldly experience.[2] Specifically in the realm of visual representation the symbol was opposed to allegory. For allegory was regarded as a mode of representation in which content referred to a conceptual source beyond the boundaries of the work of art and appealing to the intellect; the symbol, by contrast, was favored as a self-contained and sensually appealing representation of the ideal. In the mode of the symbol, the supersensual would become perceptible to the senses.[3]

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[1]Maxim 752, according to the organization of the Hamburg Edition, which also indicates that the maxim first appeared in print in *Über Kunst und Altertum* between 1818 and 1827. Maxims 749 and 750, from Goethe's unpublished papers, also address the distinction between symbol and allegory. See Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*, W, 12:470-471. This and all translations hereafter are my own unless otherwise noted.

[2]Some brief examples relating to the natural-scientific work include the famous 1817 autobiographical essay "Glückliches Ereignis," [W, 10:538-543] in which Goethe relates his 1794 demonstration of the symbolic plant to a skeptical Schiller; Maxims 746 and 747, [W, 12:470], both from the *Nachlass*, in which Goethe describes the appearance of natural law and its relation to beauty with the example of the bloom of the rose as exemplary of the "vegetable" law. Traces of a symbolic thinking about experience and knowledge are clearly evident already in Goethe's descriptions of his travels in Italy: for an example concerning his natural-scientific inquiries, see the entry "Auf dem Brenner, den 8. September, abends"; for his reaction to Rome, see "Rom, den 7. November." Goethe, *Italienische Reise* [W, 11:15-22, 130-131].

[3]Given its centrality to Goethe's thought, specifically concerning the visual arts, the symbol is defined and discussed at varying lengths in many works on Weimar Classicism and Goethe's conception of art. A basic contextualization of the role of the category of the symbol in Weimar Classicism may be found in Helmut

My interest in this chapter is to focus on the period from mid-1797 to 1798, during which time Goethe initially isolates the symbol as an intuitive category and proceeds to incorporate it into an aesthetic and visual program. In the first section I focus on Goethe's development of the concept of the symbol specifically as a category influenced by temporal experience yet increasingly stripped of its particular temporal register. Here I read his symbol against Schiller's concept of the sentimental; alongside symbolic representation in the epic *Hermann und Dorothea* (*Hermann and Dorothea*, 1797); and specifically as a variety of visual representation in his short 1797 essay *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst* (*On the Objects of the Visual Arts*). In the following section I turn to Johann Heinrich Meyer's longer 1798 treatise, also titled *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, in order to follow Meyer's extension of Goethe's thought on symbolic and visual representation. Here I hope to recuperate from Meyer's controversial work a more refined understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the visual representation of time. Finally, I return to Goethe's essay *Über Laokoon* (*On Laocoon*, composed in 1797, published in 1798). In this essay Goethe attempts to demonstrate the quintessentially atemporal and ideal nature of the sculpture Laocoon –

Pfotenhauer, "Weimar Classicism as Visual Culture," *The Literature of Weimar Classicism*, Simon Richter, Ed. (Rochester: Camden House, 2005), 265-293. I have found those sources most productive that provide a more complex perspective on what, to my mind, is otherwise an elegantly simple concept – the symbol. Thus, I have relied foremost on S. Heidi Krueger, who carefully distinguishes between varieties of symbolic representation in Goethe's work; Jürgen Fohrmann, who posits the symbolic as a mediating device between the ideal and the empirical; and the historical commentary of the entries "Symbol" in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe* and *Goethe-Handbuch*. See Jürgen Fohrmann, *Schiffbruch mit Strandrecht. Der ästhetische Imperativ in der ‚Kunstperiode'* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag 1998), 136-137; Heinz Hamm, "Symbol," in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden* volume 5, Karlheinz Barck, Martin Fontius, Dieter Schlenstedt, Burckhart Steinwachs, and Friedrich Wolfzettel, Eds. (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2003), 805-839; S. Heidi Krueger, "Allegory and Symbol in the Goethezeit: A Critical Reassessment," in *The Age of Goethe Today: Critical Reexamination and Literary Reflection*, Gertrud Bauer Pickar and Sabine Cramer, Eds. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1990), 50-68; and Robert Stockhammer, "Symbol," *Goethe-Handbuch* volume 4/2, Hans-Dietrich Dahnke and Regine Otto, Eds. (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 1998), 1030-1033.

without naming it explicitly as such, he clearly treats the Laocoon in a manner conforming to his later delineation of the symbolic. Yet he unwittingly also reveals how the visual work of art may be read as precisely the representation of time in a manner operating contrary to aesthetic convention, even as a template for the sensual recognition of the historical particularity of the event.

Some clarification of conceptual organization is in order at the outset. The thrust of this chapter is an examination of the symbol as a visual category. Of course the Goethean symbol is not an exclusively visual category, but also applies to verbal representation. That said, as I will demonstrate, a visual dimension is retained even in the verbal symbolic. Additionally, my argument centers on the persistence of time in a concept that otherwise often bespeaks the timeless or atemporal, and which at the same time functions as an idealized organizational corrective to the particular, the contingent, or the manifold of experience. Time in this discourse figures variously as the experience of time, as history, as narrative, even as longing. Thus, throughout this examination I will attempt to balance the visual, my primary focus, and its relation to time, in some instances alongside other organized conceptualizations of time and experience (epic and dramatic narrative, the sentimental); and always in contradistinction to varieties of empirical chaos that are the object of an aesthetic effort to control.

Goethe: symbolic vision and the reduction of time

Goethe's concept of the symbol originates in what he initially refers to as a kind of sentimentality. Goethe raises this issue of sentimentality in a letter written to Schiller during his travels through Frankfurt, the city of his youth, in August, 1797.

> Ich habe indem ich meinen ruhigen und kalten Weg des Beobachtens, ja des bloßen Sehens ging, sehr bald bemerkt daß die Rechenschaft, die ich mir von gewissen Gegenständen gab, eine Art von Sentimentalität hatte, die mir dergestalt auffiel daß ich dem Grunde nachzudenken sogleich gereizt wurde und ich habe folgendes gefunden: das was ich im allgemeinen sehe und erfahre schließt sich recht gut an alles übrige an, was mir sonst bekannt ist und ist mir nicht unangenehm, weil es in der ganzen Masse meiner Kenntnisse mitzählt, und das Kapital vermehren hilft. [4]
>
> As I went along my way of calm and cold observation, indeed of mere seeing, I noticed very soon that my account of certain objects had a kind of sentimentality so striking to me that I was instantly moved to consider its cause, and I have found the following: what I generally see and experience connects quite well with everything else that is already familiar to me, and it is not unpleasant, because it accrues to the entire mass of my knowledge and helps to increase its capital.

He suggests that the sentimental feeling aroused in him by objects he encounters owes to their connection to everything he already knows – as if these objects stimulate a psychic capital already in Goethe's possession. But this experience of connection also instigates a shift in Goethe's mode of perception. In his own words, he overcomes "calm and cold observation […] mere seeing" by discovering that what he sees has personal meaning to him, indeed that it somehow already may be accounted for in the sum of experiences that constitutes his knowledge. This sentimental experience connects Goethe to the world around him.

Yet, after some examination of the sentimental feeling aroused in him, he concludes that the objects are in fact *symbolic*.

> Ich habe daher die Gegenstände, die einen solchen Effekt hervorbringen, genau betrachtet und zu meiner Verwunderung bemerkt daß sie eigentlich symbolisch sind. Das heißt, wie ich kaum zu sagen brauche, es sind eminente Fälle, die, in einer charakteristischen Mannigfaltigkeit, als Repräsentanten von vielen andern dastehen, eine gewisse Totalität in sich schließen, eine gewisse Reihe fordern, ähnliches und fremdes in meinem

[4]Goethe to Schiller, August 16-17, 1797, FA, 31:388-389.

> Geiste aufregen und so von außen wie von innen an eine gewisse Einheit und Allheit Anspruch machen.[5]
>
> Thus, I closely observed the objects that elicit such an effect, and noticed to my astonishment that they are actually symbolic. That means, as I hardly need say, they are eminent instances that, in a characteristic manifold, are present as representatives of many others, comprise a certain totality, summon a certain series, excite the similar and the strange in my spirit and thus, from without as from within, claim a certain oneness and allness.

It is clear that the symbolic object is the material crystallization in a single instance of a type, the particular that contains the print of the general, indeed a mediator between the manifold and the ideal. It is the present and "noticeable" (Goethe's terms in the letter are *genau betrachtet/bemerkt*) representative of a totality. Moreover, Goethe's narration of his discovery of the symbolic object is a compelling example of such an object's capacity to excite, as he notes: for in his descriptions of the sentimental and the symbolic he also narrates his own transformation from perceptive coldness to an empirical and cognitive emotion that entails a confusion of time (his customary cold observation is "soon" interrupted by the sentimental) and an ability to objectify mental processes (he is astonished to discover that the sentimental is actually the symbolic). The symbolic implies a *space* of experience, constituted between Goethe and his intellectual, emotional, and physical objects, and a *temporality* of perception.

The "space" (*Raum*) of his grandfather's house, one of two examples Goethe provides in the letter, assumes symbolic significance through its capacity as a conduit for the experience of historical time. Once the modest home of a *Schultheiß*, transformed by the industry of successive inhabitants into a market place and warehouse, eventually

[5]Goethe to Schiller, August 16-17, 1797, 389.

valued at several times its original worth, at the time of Goethe's writing, the location is largely in ruins following a bombardment of the city by the French in 1796.

> In so fern sich nun denken läßt daß das Ganze wieder von einem neuen Unternehmer gekauft und hergestellt werde, so sehn Sie leicht daß es, in mehr als Einem Sinne, als Symbol vieler tausend andern Fälle, in dieser gewerbreichen Stadt, besonders vor meinem Anschauen, dastehen muß.[6]
>
> To the extent we can imagine that the entire thing will be bought and restored by a new entrepreneur, you can easily see that it must stand there especially before my eyes in more than one sense, as a symbol of many thousand other instances in this industrious city.

The house attains the status of symbol as a space suggesting the passage of time and resonating with personal experience; and even, technically speaking at least, as a spatial object that may be entered and investigated from within – much as the city of Frankfurt, where Goethe announces his initial awareness of the symbolic object, is a larger site of personal past and present experience. Moreover, Goethe's ability to read the site of his grandfather's house symbolically owes to his own intuitive act (*Anschauen* – "viewing," also "intuition"[7]), by virtue of which he is able to penetrate beyond the site's present condition to imagine it objectively as residing at the juncture of past and future and within a nexus of commercial and productive activity ("in dieser gewerbreichen Stadt" – "in this industrious city") suggesting regeneration and motion across space.[8]

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[6]Goethe to Schiller, August 16-17, 1797, 390.

[7]I have chosen to translate "meinem Anschauen" as "my eyes" in the quoted passage largely in order to render it more fluidly in English. I mean it in the sense of "my eyesight, my viewing."

[8] Heinz Schlaffer discusses these passages at length and, leveraging his argument on their implicit observation of the transformative processes of industrialization and the proliferation of abstract exchange value, concludes that Goethe's symbolic ruminations indicate a willful regression to a classical poetics severed from modern experience. He reads in the attempt to formulate a symbolic category the latent operations of the allegorical, which, he believes, Goethe brings to open fruition only decades later in *Faust II* as a general commentary on the historical and economic transformations bridging the 18th and 19th centuries. See Heinz Schlaffer, *Faust zweiter Teil. Die Allegorie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1981), 1-38. For my part, I wonder whether a reading is secure that takes the ambivalences and unrevised theorizations of Goethe's transformative symbolic experience in Frankfurt more or less sincerely at their word with little recourse to Goethe's subsequent attempts to work

In this initial incarnation, the symbol is a device for organization and concentration. Goethe immediately concludes that in future it will be worth the experimental effort to pay attention not merely to remarkable or curious (*merkwürdig*) objects, but rather to significant (*bedeutend*) objects, objects pointing to something else; and that these latter ones seem to reconcile that contradiction that had reigned between his own nature and immediate experience – indeed, that the symbolic dimension of objects promises to render them as so many illuminating guideposts to the profound meaning at the basis of the empirical chaos of the world (in his letter Goethe resorts to the aggressive expression "der millionfachen Hydra der Empirie" – "the million-headed hydra of the empirical").[9] The symbolic object functions for Goethe not merely as a point of concentration of sentimental energy, even as its resolution; but also as the long desired principle by which to organize the manifold of experience.

This symbolic object, moreover, has emerged from sentimental experience. Indeed, the initial determination "sentimental" reveals a significant temporal register to the symbolic. In Schiller's response to Goethe, for example, he declares Goethe's to be a case of a sentimental manner of feeling or experiencing the world (*sentimentalische Empfindungsweise*), the very example of what the two had previously been discussing.[10] Additionally, Schiller observes that the significance of the object resides rather in the mind (*Gemüth*) receptive to meaning, not in the object itself. Indeed, whereas Goethe moves from the sentimental to the symbolic, Schiller develops his concept of the sentimental from a theory of the symbol. Yet this otherwise rather topographical

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the experience into an aesthetic category. Moreover, as I will argue, the rejection of the instability of modern experience is more or less the point of Goethe's category of the symbol.

[9]Goethe to Schiller, August 16-17, 1797, 390-91.

[10]Schiller to Goethe, September 7-8, 1797, WuB, 12:318.

distinction marks the beginning of an increasing reduction in the temporality of Goethe's symbol.

Schiller had written of the "symbolic act" in his 1794 review of the landscape poetry of Friedrich Matthisson.[11] His review is preceded by an exposition of the phenomenon of the poetic treatment of nature as an object possessing an interior life and purposiveness, as *beseelte Natur* ("animated nature"), and he wonders why the ancients had no such poetry. His conclusion is that the ancients did not poetize the natural world because they did not perceive in it the same operations of necessity and purposiveness they observed in the human world. The argument of the later *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (*On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*) is anticipated *ex negativo*: Schiller distinguishes between the ancient and modern poetic perceptions of nature, yet does not explain *why* the moderns persist in their investment of nature with the interior life, experience, and purposiveness of the human soul. He merely explains *how* the moderns accomplish this through the concept of the symbolic act. In the symbolic act the poet renders the incomprehensible and closed natural world with a unity and necessity that it seems to lack, thereby elevating the aesthetic dignity of nature and (by suggesting a harmonization between the operations of nature and those of human reason) providing moral pleasure. Schiller's terms are both *Symbol* (and the related *symbolisierend* and *Symbolik*) and variants of *Sinn* (*versinnlichen*, *Sinnbild* – these latter containing the German root *Sinn*, "sense").[12] His vocabulary underscores the nature of the operation he describes as the active investment ("vermittelst jenes symbolischen Akts – "by means of that symbolic act") of material and sensual experience with symbolic import, the creation

[11]Friedrich Schiller, *Über Matthissons Gedichte* [1794], SW, 5:992-1011.
[12]See for example Schiller, *Über Matthissons Gedichte*, 998-1000.

of a class of objects that will resonate sensually with our own expectations and thereby allow the mind to construct its own bridge to a natural world charged by human intellectual and emotional need.

Schiller omits the symbolic act, and therewith also its sensual register, to focus rather on humanity's investment in the concept of the natural in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*. Written in 1795/96, this treatise is directly referenced in the August-September 1797 correspondence with Goethe. The naive, as Schiller determines it, is the natural, the unaffected, the honest. The sentimental is not the opposite of the naive – rather, the naive distinguishes itself from the artificial, the cultivated, the restrictive forces culture brings to bear upon the individual. The sentimental is the quality of awareness of a lost natural state. Schiller's language invests sentimental perception with a consciousness not merely of time past, but of time initiated (in the development of civilization over the course of historical time) and of lost timelessness:

> Wir sehen alsdann in der unvernünftigen Natur nur eine glücklichere Schwester, die in dem mütterlichen Hause zurückblieb, aus welchem wir im Übermut unserer Freiheit heraus in die Fremde stürmten. Mit schmerzlichem Verlangen sehnen wir uns dahin zurück, sobald wir angefangen, die Drangsale der Kultur zu erfahren, und hören im fernen Auslande der Kunst der Mutter rührende Stimme. Solange wir bloße Naturkinder waren, waren wir glücklich und vollkommen; wir sind frei geworden und haben beides verloren. Daraus entspringt eine doppelte und sehr ungleiche Sehnsucht nach der Natur; eine Sehnsucht nach ihrer *Glückseligkeit*, eine Sehnsucht nach ihrer *Vollkommenheit*.[13]
>
> We see then in irrational nature only a happier sister who has remained in the maternal house from which we stormed away with the excessive courage of our freedom. We long painfully to return the moment we begin to experience the pressures of civilization, and in the distant country of art we hear the moving voice of our mother. As long as we were merely children of nature, we were happy and complete; we became free, and we have lost both. Here originates our two-fold yet very imbalanced longing for nature: a longing for its happiness, a longing for its completion.

[13]Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* [1795/96], SW, 5:708-9.

Schiller is skeptical regarding the possibility of a return to this lost natural state. What modern humanity has lost in terms of its connection to nature, and which is otherwise meagerly compensated for by an obsessive adherence to "the natural," it will rather regain and surpass in its drive toward the ideal. Indeed, Schiller argues that humanity *post naturam* is essentially in constant motion toward the unreachable goal of an ideal that consists in the reconstruction of lost natural experience and its reintegration into human existence. In contrast to the Greeks, whose eventual decline followed their complete, indeed unsurpassable, integration of human nature and social structure, the moderns have lost this initial relationship to nature. The search for this lost ideal is now the lawful lot of modern humanity and guarantees its historical progress.[14]

For Schiller the symbolic act is but one consequence of humanity's perceived distance from and therefore affective relationship with nature. He subsumes the act within a broader theoretical scheme in which the operative terms are of perceived movement through time away from the source of meaning and at the same time toward the unlikely rediscovery of this source. Indeed, in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* he refers not to the symbol even as an affective construction but rather to the heterogeneity and strangeness of the sign with regard to its intended signified; or, by contrast, in the case of naive expression, he refers to the sign's disappearance in the signified – even the basic elements of meaning underpinning the discourse of experience are in motion, either radically displaced or else vanishing.[15] Following this, Schiller's

[14]Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, 718.
[15]"Wenn dort das Zeichen dem Bezeichneten ewig heterogen und fremd bleibt" and, further, of the naive means of expression, "Eine solche Art des Ausdrucks, wo das Zeichen ganz in dem Bezeichneten verschwindet, und wo die Sprache den Gedanken, den sie ausdrückt, noch gleichsam nackend läßt." Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, 706.

critique of Goethe's sentimental experience (in their August-September correspondence) centers less on the site of his grandfather's house as a stable referential object and more on Goethe's own act of symbolic recognition as the sentimental awareness of loss.

Their different uses of the shared image of the house underscores marked differences in Goethe's and Schiller's approaches to the symbolic and sentimental. For Schiller writes of a departure from the home in nature, and of a subsequent longing to return home played out in the exile of *Kunst*, to be read as civilization or culture in an often negative sense, but of course also as art. Schiller thus discerns foremost in the realm of poetry the cleft between sign and signified, representational mechanism and meaning, which refigures a distance from natural origins. It is telling that Schiller's reference in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* is to a metaphorical home, for he identifies (and perhaps himself enacts) the sentimental essentially as a perceived over-arching human condition arising in an awareness of time past and unrecoverable – there is no home, merely the suspicion of an origin in nature rendered metaphorically as the wrongfully, even unnaturally abandoned mother's house. Goethe, by contrast, has indeed returned home – to a real (if no longer standing) paternal home, the leaving which is not problematized – in an act of completion occasioning in Goethe's mind the reflection on a variety of empirical representation that bespeaks universality. The resultant symbolic object, the endpoint of a sentimental voyage, is the material site of the house as visual sign of the universal. Time, however, figured as the personal and recent history of the house and its site, is compressed into the moment of its apprehension and then distributed across the space of the city: "so sehn Sie leicht," he writes to Schiller, "daß es, in mehr

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In English: "If the sign remains eternally heterogenous and strange to the signified,"and "Such a manner of expression, in which the sign disappears entirely in the signified, and where language leaves still naked, as it were, the thought it expresses."

als Einem Sinne, als Symbol vieler tausend andern Fälle, in dieser gewerbreichen Stadt, besonders vor *meinem* Anschauen, dastehen muß" ("you can easily see that it must stand there especially before *my* eyes in more than one sense, as a symbol of many thousand other instances in this industrious city" – my emphasis).[16] The history of the particular house becomes exemplary of a type of house and a type of experience existing in an immediately perceptible symbolic manifold. Goethe's symbolic object crystallizes through the concentration of time and space in the moment, and presents the personal intuition ("*meinem* Anschauen" – "*my* eyes") with the opportunity for a penetration to an ideal infinity that transcends time and the individual ("vieler tausend andern Fälle" – "many thousand other instances"). It renders its own moment of perception as a particular manifestation of eternity.

What constitutes this moment of symbolic perception? Foremost, it is a visual moment: Goethe's intuition of the site of the house as symbolically representative of space and time arises from his seeing the site itself. Indeed, a certain visual imperative lurks in Goethe's statement that the site "als Symbol vieler tausend andern Fälle, in dieser gewerbreichen Stadt, besonders vor *meinem Anschauen*, dastehen muß" ("must stand there especially before *my* eyes […] as a symbol of many thousand other instances in this industrious city").[17] Moreover, the imperative of this symbolic vision resides in its capacity to provide Goethe some respite from the confusion of the empirical: for the symbol represents a series. Goethe's choice of words is striking: "vieler tausend andern Fälle" ("many thousand other instances") – the single symbolic instance absorbs and equalizes the variegations of empirical detail and reissues them in a characteristic,

[16]Goethe to Schiller, August 16-17, 1797, 390.
[17]Goethe to Schiller, August 16-17, 1797, 390.

general type; the symbolic viewer is thus not obliged to tarry in a world of competing signs and details.[18] Indeed, in a striking reversal of Schiller's understanding of the sentimental as a longing fleshed out over time, Goethe's symbolic experience resides in a sidestepping of the destruction of Frankfurt to arrive immediately at the resolution of the historically particular in a generic, even quasi-cyclical regeneration – the son returns to a paternal home. In symbolic visual experience, time and particularity are stripped of their own informative immanence and reduced to the level of the accessory or merely circumstantial, a veneer of the particular still clinging to the universal.

Finally, the moment of symbolic perception is material. It requires, in this particular case, that Goethe see the physical remains of destruction at a site to which he is emotionally connected. The materiality of the site even threatens to undo Goethe's symbolic transformation of his experience into a glimpse into the universal. For, he wants to see the site as an instance of the promise of cyclical regeneration, a process that would override the destructive process that has produced the ruin. And yet, his symbolic desire is entirely activated by material remains that are themselves the product of another process, the destructive capacity of war. To be sure, Goethe's vision of regeneration comprises a history of development, exchange, revaluation, replacement, expansion – what began as the grandfather's house figures now symbolically as an energy drawn from the entire city and beyond, multiple particular histories of development. Yet just as Goethe articulates his experience as symbolic, he gathers this diffuse energy and history

[18]My understanding of the symbolic, as well as the sentimental, and even (below) Meyer's semiotics also as a mechanism for the management of, and foremost for the suppression of the detail as element of the empirical, owes to a reading of Naomi Schor's *Reading in Detail* – specifically the chapter "Gender: In the Academy," in which she demonstrates the progressive banishment of what she regards as the *feminized* detail in the 18th-century theorization of Neo-Classicism. See Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

into asingle material remain. Symbolic experience is also an act of condensation of infinite particularity into a single object that catches the attention and activates the sentimental imagination of the beholder. Strangely, Goethe's investment of the ruined site with symbolic import is an ambiguous act of holding on to the object at a moment at a very particular and materially specific moment in time in order to then remove it from time and disregard its particular, time-sensitive materiality. The symbolic experience is freighted with an anxiety about the transitory integrity of the material.

In subsequent correspondence the symbol develops from a device for the organization of experience to an aesthetic category. Indeed, in the weeks following their August exchange, Goethe's and Schiller's discussion of the symbolic is interwoven with the question into the determination of appropriate objects for poetic or visual representation, out of which the symbol emerges as a specialized category operative across genres. To Goethe's apparent despair at modern artists' consistent failure to choose their objects properly, Schiller responds on September 14 and 15 that the problem is indeed one of the bleeding together of the distinct spheres of visual and poetic representation; and that the modern poet, in the effort both to surpass a mere realism and yet also to remain within the bounds of the sensual, should best follow the example of the ancients, whose ability to reduce the empirical to the aesthetic stemmed from their very nature – an operation Schiller calls "absolute determination of the object" (*absolute Bestimmung des Objects*).[19] Schiller then sketches a brief poetics for the selection of the object, in which he expands upon the issue of the object's determinateness (*Bestimmtheit*):

[19]Schiller to Goethe, September 14-15, 1797, WuB, 12:321-22.

> So scheint mir der Begriff deßen, was man einen *praegnanten* Moment nennt sich vollkommen durch seine Qualification zu einer durchgängig bestimmten Darstellung zu erklären. Ich weiß in der poetischen Gattung keinen treffendern Fall als Ihren Herrmann [Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* – MA]. Hier würde sich vielleicht durch eine Art von Induction zeigen lassen, daß bei jeder andern Wahl der Handlung etwas hätte unbestimmt bleiben müssen.[20]
>
> The concept of that which one calls a *pregnant* moment seems to me to lend itself perfectly, by virtue of its qualification, for a thoroughly determined representation. I know no more accurate instance in the genre of poetry than your Herrmann [Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* – MA]. Here it might be possible to demonstrate, through a kind of induction, that with any other choice of plot something would have remained undetermined.

Schiller then builds upon this proposition (*Satz*): "Verbindet man mit diesem Satz nun den andern, daß die Bestimmung des Gegenstandes jedesmal durch die Mittel geschehen muß, welche einer Kunstgattung eigen sind" ("One should now join this proposition to the other, that the determination of the object must in every case occur through the media appropriate for a genre of art"). His two components for the choice of the appropriate object are thus: that the object be determined with reference to the means or medium of its representation (an exterior determination of aesthetic treatment); and that it be determined with reference to its *aestheticization* – the reduction of the empirical particularity of the object *and* its situation at a specific moment in time. The rendering aesthetic of the object is an act analogous to the naming of the symbolic object in the Goethean sense: the material object becomes typical of the universal, elevated above the real yet still within the bounds of the sensual, a presence bespeaking the inaccessible. It is also infused with the very specific temporality of the pregnant moment, such that it is now also situated at an immediately perceptible and critical moment in time that bridges past and future. As an aesthetic category, the symbol has diminished radically in terms of

[20]Schiller to Goethe, September 14-15, 1797, 322-23.

its initial temporal resonance, and is now placed within a temporality bound by the dictates of an idealized representation.

As an idealized aesthetic category, the symbol operates at a nexus of communicative demands. Its attendant questions concern how much of the particular context surrounding the symbolic needs to be known, and how much is already gathered into the tight embrace of the symbol. The extent of the reduction of the temporal varies between verbal and visual poetics. In fact, their correspondence on object and genre, in which the discourse on the symbol is couched, draws also from Goethe's and Schiller's own contemporary works, including the jointly composed essay *Über epische und dramatische Dichtung* (*On Epic and Dramatic Poetry,* 1797) and Goethe's recently completed epic poem *Hermann und Dorothea* (*Hermann and Dorothea* – to which Schiller refers in the correspondence – "your Herrmann"). In a later letter to Schubarth, Goethe wrote of the poem: "Alles, was geschieht, ist Symbol und indem es vollkommen sich selbst darstellt, deutet es auf das Übrige" ("Everything that happens is a symbol, and by representing itself completely it refers to the rest").[21] The poem casts a love story, between the son of an innkeeper and a refugee from the French occupation of the west bank of the Rhine, within the double context of world events (the French Revolutionary Wars) and the idyll of *bürgerlich* life in the German small town.[22] That Dorothea, a refugee, is welcomed by Hermann's family as his future wife, thereby also putting an end to argument between Hermann and his father, suggests that the destructive power of phenomenal historical events is resolved through the more fundamental strength of

[21]Goethe to Schubart, April 2, 1818, excerpted in "Nachwort zu ‚Hermann und Dorothea'," in Goethe, W, 2:747.
[22]In fact, Goethe referred to the work early as a "bürgerliche Idylle" and claimed after its completion that it combined elements of the epic and the drama. See Goethe to Schiller, early July 1796, excerpted in Goethe, W, 2:734; and Goethe to Schiller, December 23, 1797, FA, 31:464-467.

Heimat, cyclical family life, the passage of authority from one generation to the next, the first experience of love.[23] Indeed, in this light the symbol figures rather more as the successful avoidance of the particular details of context. We can instructively compare Goethe's own experience in Frankfurt: destruction is overcome through a symbol bespeaking a process of regeneration, even hope, understood as universal. As it happens, Goethe bases the story of *Hermann und Dorothea* on an account of the expulsion of Protestants from the city of Salzburg in the early 1730s. His choice to restage the story in his own time, against the often distant backdrop of events all too familiar, suggests an exercise in the symbolic control of the particularity of temporal context at a moment of extreme historical pressure – he has chosen to relocate a historical account in his own time, and therewith to make obvious the shift in the historical context occurring in the background of the love story, but also to keep this context at a distance.

Indeed, world history is significantly removed to the background in *Hermann und Dorothea*, figuring largely in the presence and reports of refugees who, with the exception of Dorothea, do not even enter the town in which much of the work is set. Yet a significant historical dynamic remains at the core of the work. To follow Goethe's (admittedly much belated) remark: everything that happens in the work is symbol; thus, the interaction between the town (the scene of tradition and a relative timelessness) and the refugees is the site of that mediation between the particular and the universal where

[23]Recent work on *Hermann und Dorothea* stresses that its apparent celebration of *Heimat* and *Bürgertum* is to be understood ironically and critically as the poetic depiction of tradition undergoing change; likewise as Goethe's attempt to render contemporary the Homeric epic by using it as a form to parody other specimens of German epic and idyllic literature. See for example the commentary on Goethe's epic, FA, 8:1124-1169; and Peter Morgan, *The Critical Idyll: Traditional Values and the French Revolution in Goethe's Hermann und Dorothea* (Columbia: Camden House, 1990).

Goethe locates the symbol. Goethe writes to Schiller in December, 1797, in an enumeration of the epic and dramatic qualities of the work:

> Daß es aus der dritten Welt, ob gleich nicht auffallend, noch immer genug Einfluß empfangen hat, indem das große Weltschicksal teils wirklich, teils durch Personen, symbolisch, eingeflochten ist und von Ahndung, von Zusammenhang einer sichtbaren und unsichtbaren Welt doch auch leise Spuren angegeben sind, welches zusammen nach meiner Überzeugung an die Stelle der alten Götterbilder tritt, deren physischpoetische Gewalt freilich dadurch nicht ersetzt wird.[24]
>
> That it has been, if not obviously, still sufficiently influenced by the third world, in that the great fate of the world is woven in, partly real, partly through characters, symbolically, and slight traces are given of the apprehension, of the coherence of a visible and an invisible world – which, I am convinced, steps altogether into the role of the old images of the gods, whose physical-poetic force is of course not replaced.

The "third world," a concept drawn from *Über epische und dramatische Dichtung*, is the world of fantasy, apparition, or fate that may be portrayed in the epic or drama.[25] The third world of *Hermann und Dorothea* is world history, an invisible world rendered visible in the presence of refugees on the Rhine's eastern bank – the poem's sign for historical time figures as an eruption into timelessness, refugees entering the *Heimat*, and also as that which must be seen. Accordingly the refugees are treated as spectacle. The symbolic dimension of the work is nourished in this curiosity about and attraction to the spectacle of the invisible made visible, by the energy generated between town and refugees.

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[24]Goethe to Schiller, December 23, 1797, FA, 31:466.

[25]The passage in its entirety reads: "Die *Welt* der *Phantasien*, *Ahnungen*, *Erscheinungen*, *Zufälle* und *Schicksale*. Diese steht beiden [epic and dramatic poetry] offen, nur versteht sich, daß sie an die sinnliche herangebracht werde; wobei denn für die Modernen eine besondere Schwierigkeit entsteht, weil wir für die Wundergeschöpfe, Götter, Wahrsager und Orakel der Alten, so sehr es zu wünschen wäre, nicht leicht Ersatz finden." The first and second worlds are the natural and physical, respectively. Goethe and Schiller, *Über epische und dramatische Dichtung* [1797], W, 12:250-251.

In English: "The *world* of *fantasies, forebodings, appearances, coincidences* and *destinies*. This is open to both [epic and dramatic poetry], but it is understood that they should approximate the sensual; whereby a particular difficulty ensures for the moderns, because we do not easily find a replacement for the miraculous creations, the gods, the prophets and oracles of the ancients, however much we might wish it."

The visibility of the verbal symbol, its resonance as spectacle, is inflected with modes of temporality. Goethe and Schiller work this out in *Über epische und dramatische Dichtung* in terms of the space and time of the poetic narrative – with particular reference to an audience whose experience is theoretically entirely dictated by the generic potential of epic and drama. The drama is the form of the event as it occurs; poet and audience are immediately implicated as historical actors and witnesses – the poet is described as a *Mime* (actor) – and the audience's imagination and intellection are displaced by sensual and emotional participation. The epic is the form of the event as past; the poet, removed but in control, opens its narrative space to the audience for a more leisurely imaginative examination. Moreover, both genres permit a narrative structure that may move within and beyond whatever series of events serves as the work's foundation – narrative may move around its object, not merely alongside it. The verbal symbolic of *Hermann und Dorothea* consists in the confrontation with and commentary on the spectacle of unfolding historical events, the effects of which resonate sensually from the traumatic report of the refugee to the quaint conversation over glasses of Rhine wine – a temporal resonance echoing against successive levels of remove, spectatorship, and experience. This verbal symbol is freighted, on the level of the witness/beholder within and the audience outside the narrative, with both the experience of vision and also the nuances of temporal experience – the pregnant moment to which Schiller referred is expanded, its internal dynamics explored from within.

These layers of visually mediated temporal experience that remain in verbal genres are reduced considerably in the visual symbol. Goethe initially works out the concept of a specifically visual symbolic representation in his brief 1797 sketch *Über die*

Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst (*On the Objects of the Visual Arts*). Here he details classes of appropriate objects for visual representation (the natural, the ideal, the series, the symbolic) and the proper methods for handling them. The object's self-determination through its own sensual presence (*sinnliches Dasein*) is the most advantageous criterion for visual representation; the ideal object is the highest of the advantageous objects, for it is stripped of its natural particularities and offered as a depiction of the universal. Furthermore, this ideal object does not become a work of art through treatment (*Bearbeitung*); rather, the ideal object confronts the receptive artist as an already fully or perfectly formed object ("der Bearbeitung schon als ein vollkommen gebildeter Gegenstand entgegen geht").[26] The ideal object is thus already an *eminently* visual object. "Das Erfordernis dieser ganzen Classe ist, daß sie sich beim ersten Anschauen sowohl im Ganzen als in ihren Theilen selbst erkläre" ("The requirement of this entire class is that they declare themselves in whole and in part at the first viewing") – the object presents itself to the artist, as the individual instance fully embodying the type; even as a type existing in perfect proportion to an eternal whole, as its own parts constitute a harmonious whole.[27] Sensual self-determination requires, then, in the best possible instance, that the object be *inherently* suited to visual representation through its immediate material universality – a quality recognized by the artist through intuition. The symbolic results when the artist responds properly to such an object.

Goethe emphasizes a self-contained and self-communicative capacity in the object. The communication between artist and object depends upon the artist's intuitive response to the discrete and suggestive sensual presence of the object, be it natural or

[26]Goethe, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst* [1797], WA I, 47:92.
[27]Goethe, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 92.

ideal. The resulting work of art functions visually and immediately ("beim ersten Anschauen" – "at the first viewing") as a self-contained unit. Yet the series of objects poses a problem, for the individual unit threatens to remain incomprehensible without exterior contextual explication. The immediately intuitable unity of the natural or ideal is lacking, and symbolic visual representation of time is thus difficult, if not impossible.

With the series, Goethe clearly has in mind historical representation in the generic sense: history, myth, story – the narrative series of actions. Their representation problematically defies his fundamental dictum of self-determination through sensual presence because each "object" relies on others and the constituent parts threaten the desired effect of self-containment and self-communication in the whole. Goethe admits the possibility of the cycle, however, provided that it remain unified in its variation on the theme of a single quality or affect – his example is the depiction of Apollo and the Muses or Niobe and her children, each a whole comprising parts linked thematically. Likewise, he concedes two possibilities for the series of actions. The first is the basis of the bas relief, the series of actions that will retain its interest or appeal only through its complete representation. His examples – "wie z. B. die Thaten des Herkules oder von Theilen einer Handlung, wie z. B. eines Bacchanals" ("as for example the deeds of Hercules or of parts of an action, as for example of a bacchanal") – suggest that the series is successful as historical representation either through its concentration on a discrete, typical event (the bacchanal) or by being well known and thematically unified (the deeds of Hercules). Indeed, this latter criterion – being well known and thematically unified – provides the sole justification for a critical issue, the representation of the single historical event, the moment in time. For Goethe cites as the other possibility those objects "die durch Fabel

oder Geschichte allgemein bekannt sind" ("which are generally known from fable or history").[28] The example is the single deed of Hercules on a carved stone, meaningless to anyone lacking knowledge of the entire story, yet the beholder would likely know this particular story. Goethe's various rules and examples indicate that for him the receptive intuition is threatened by the object that unfolds over time, the overriding criterion being the capacity of the object to enunciate, express, or explain itself clearly and immediately. The accompanying conclusion is that the historical object, the object in time, cannot convey its meaning sensually, and thus it cannot ever attain to the symbolic unless the temporal is reduced to a secondary status or its particularity is vetted by common knowledge. The (controlled) temporal modes of *Hermann und Dorothea* are absent in a visual object that permits no penetration and expansion of its moment; the temporal energy of the visual image is stilled.

The possibilities for a symbolic historical representation – for a visual representation of time – are thus harshly circumscribed by Goethe. Foremost, as we have seen, the object should determine itself through its own sensual presence. Likewise, the imagination is excluded from the particular poetry (*Dichtung*) of visual representation: for the visual artist is not the poet who works with the imagination; rather, the visual artist presents complete objects that require no imaginative reception. Goethe's comparison between symbol and allegory at the end of his sketch is instructive in this regard: the object rendered allegorically is not appropriate for visual representation precisely because it performs its work of representation or reference indirectly (Goethe's term is *indirekt bezeichnen* – "to denote/indicate/identify indirectly") – the imagination or the intellect must unfold the complex connection between allegorical object and

[28]Goethe, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 93.

meaning.[29] The symbol communicates directly to the senses of its beholder, thereby cutting short the otherwise necessary intellectual travel through the various particulars of interpretation; the allegory draws the beholder intellectually into its meaning outside of the material bounds of the work, and thus away from the work as visual presence. Goethe's argument tends toward the reduction of aesthetic experience to a single moment of visual communication. The resulting effect upon the historical object is its own reduction from narrative to instance, or its reification from specific event to type of event.

Yet Goethe's conclusions concerning the reduced possibilities for a visual representation of history bring him strikingly close to his point of departure in the temporally charged encounter with the site of his grandfather's house. His original experience was a visual encounter with a grand sweep of time gathered into the material object; in his subsequent reflections this temporal charge was quickly reduced from the personal, resonating between Goethe and the site of the house ("*meinem* Anschauen" – "*my* eyes"), and the immanent, retained in the history of the house; to the generic, as accessory to an idealized object of regeneration ("vieler tausend andern Fälle" – "many thousand other instances"). And the necessary temporal fluidity and reflexivity of the epic symbolic is absent – reflection on the visual apprehension of time occurs only long enough for the symbol to assert itself to the intuition. Thereafter, time as contingent, as a matter of personal experience, as destruction, as particular, has vanished into a history at the fringes of the visual work of art. This latter, the visual work of art, becomes the focus of an aesthetic apprehension that foremost generates receptive pleasure in sensual presence.

[29]Goethe, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 94-95.

Meyer: visual objects and the semiotics of the moment

Goethe lent his unpublished 1797 sketch to Johann Heinrich Meyer, whose own expanded version – the longer 1798 treatise also titled *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst* (*On the Objects of the Visual Arts*) – was published in their journal *Propyläen* and became the theoretical, and controversially received, foundation for the *Weimarer Preisaufgaben*, competitions for visual artists that lasted from 1799 to 1805.

Meyer's work has been regarded as a dogmatic schematization and confounding of Goethe's more fluid thinking on the nature of the visual object and its aesthetic treatment.[30] To be sure, he translates Goethe's representational distinctions into an extensive and seemingly rigid categorization of objects – the advantageous, the indifferent, and the resistant (*vorteilhaft*, *gleichgültig*, *widerstrebend*) – within which he works out a strict hierarchization of genres with critical recourse to noteworthy, if not always exemplary, works from antiquity through the Renaissance. But the differences between Goethe and Meyer (and the perceived lapses in logic in the organization of the latter's work) may be read also as commentary on the potential and limitations of symbolic visual representation, and most productively in terms of the representation of

[30] Helmut Pfotenhauer's helpful essay "Weimar Classicism as Visual Culture" is an example of the tendency to treat Goethe and Meyer as of a piece in their thinking, perhaps still as part of a tradition of looking at Meyer largely in the shadow of Goethe. Paul Weizsäcker argues already in 1886 for a reevaluation of Meyer's contribution to Goethe's work on the arts, yet within an interpretive scheme that still consigns Meyer the artist to secondary status in an intellectual history oriented toward the reception of "Litteraturdenkmale" – see Heinrich Meyer, *Kleine Schriften zur Kunst*, Paul Weizsäcker, Ed. (Heilbronn: Verlag von Gebr. Henninger, 1886), iii-li. With his own study of the *Weimarer Preisaufgaben*, Walther Scheidig represents the extreme of this tradition by regarding Meyer's work as excessively pedantic, lacking in original insight, and even a cause of some embarrassment to Goethe. See Walther Scheidig, *Goethes Preisaufgaben für bildende Künstler* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1958). In an essay in *Goethe und die Kunst* Ernst Osterkamp provides a more measured assessment that remains critical yet not damning of Meyer – see "'Aus dem Gesichtspunkt reiner Menschlichkeit.' Goethes Preisaufgaben für bildende Künstler 1799-1805," in *Goethe und die Kunst*, Sabine Schulze, Ed. (Stuttgart: Verlah Gerd Hatje, 1994), 310-322. A productive reading of the Goethe-Meyer relationship, in which the two are cast as equal participants in the aesthetic project of Weimar Classicism, is Martin Dönike's *Pathos, Ausdruck und Bewegung*.

time. Indeed, after Goethe drives the visual experience of time into the temporally limited aesthetic of the visual symbol, Meyer indicates the possibility of recuperating the temporality of this idealized visual experience through an aesthetic centered precisely on clarity in visual communication, entailing different possibilities for the representation of time.

Goethe had declared that one demands from the visual arts "deutliche, klare, bestimmte Darstellungen" ("distinct, clear, determined depictions").[31] Meyer goes a step further in circumscribing the proper limits of representation for all works of art:

> Man fordert von einem jeden Kunstwerke, daß es ein Ganzes für sich ausmache, und von einem Werke der bildenden Kunst besonders, daß es sich selbst ganz ausspreche. Es muß unabhängig sein, die vorgestellte Handlung, der Gegenstand muß, im Wesentlichen, ohne äußere Beihülfe, ohne Nebenerklärung, die man aus einem Dichter oder Geschichtschreiber schöpfen müßte, gefaßt und verstanden werden.[32]
>
> One demands from every work of art that it should constitute a whole for itself; and especially from a work of the visual arts that it express itself entirely. It must be independent, the presented action, the object must in essence be grasped and understood without exterior help, without the additional explanation that one would have to acquire from a poet or writer of history.

Meyer at once foregrounds the imperative of an autonomous communicative capacity to the visual work of art. The rigorously reduced status of time accompanying this autonomous communication becomes clearer in Meyer's strict categorical organization and hierarchization of objects for visual representation. To sketch this briefly: within the realm of the "advantageous" (*vorteilhaft*) objects we progress from the naturalism of the purely human depiction (*rein menschliche Darstellungen*) to one of a more universal

[31]Goethe, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 92.
[32]Johann Heinrich Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst* [1798], in *Klassik und Klassizismus*, Helmut Pfotenhauer and Peter Sprengel, Eds. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1995), 162.

character through the introduction of action and history. But history (*historische Darstellungen*) tends to resist or expand beyond the limits of visual self-expression and is thus either best avoided or, interestingly, reduced to the action as attribute that serves the clearer depiction of character (*Charakterbild*). Once part of the narrative of historical depiction, the action becomes the moment, and history becomes a chain of moments that clarify universal human experience. With the symbolic object, the highest in the category of the advantageous, we have the concept rendered in sensual form – action, if it is present, is entirely an attribute inhering in the depicted object. Story as an object for visual depiction is gone.[33]

Wilhelm von Humboldt's response to the published treatise, in a 1799 letter to Goethe, generates a productive reconsideration of the status of time in Meyer's thought. Humboldt avers that the criteria for visual historical representation, as laid down by Meyer, are perhaps too rigid. He writes:

> Nur weiß ich nicht, ob Sie nicht in Rücksicht der historischen ein wenig zu streng urteilen, wenn Sie verlangen, daß sie zugleich von den Motiven der Handlung Rechenschaft geben sollen. Da jedes historische Gemälde notwendig immer zugleich Charakterbild ist, da es außerdem, wenn es der Maler gut behandelt hat, schon dem bloßen Auge interessante und

[33]For his discussion of the entire range of *vorteilhafte Gegenstände*, see Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 163-187. Note that Meyer alters the more traditional hierarchy of genres for the arts developed in the 17th and 18th centuries by slightly downgrading historical representation to a status subordinate to a variety of portraiture (although, as I will argue below, *Charakterbild* and portraiture are not the same) and further below the conceptualism of the symbolic. For an overview of genre, with some explanation for the reigning prevalence of historical representation in the arts of the period, see Thomas W. Gaehtgens and Uwe Fleckner, Eds., *Historienmalerei. Zur Geschichte einer klassischen Bildgattung und ihrer Theorie* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1996), 12, 16-17. To put Meyer's categorical specificity in a larger context: Werner Busch argues that traditional genres were broken down over the course of the 18th century as artists grew increasingly critical of the received traditions in which they worked and also increasingly doubtful of art's capacity to depict. See Werner Busch, *Das sentimentalische Bild: die Krise der Kunst im 18. Jahrhundert und die Geburt der Moderne* (Munich: Beck Verlag, 1993), 7-17. Meyer appears at once to question the hierarchies of tradition, and to propose a new hierarchization of objects and modes of depiction that redefine the purpose of depiction.

> angenehme Stellungen und Gruppen darstellt, so dünkt mich, ist es genug, wenn es übrigens insofern durch sich allein verständlich ist, daß die physische Handlung vollkommen daraus klar wird, und daß diese auch schon an und für sich sinnlich oder moralisch bedeutend ist. Die historische Bedeutung kann dann freilich nicht viel mehr hinzufügen, als die Figuren unter den einmal bekannten Namen dem Gedächtnis fester einzuprägen.[34]
>
> Only I am not sure that you do not judge a little too strictly with respect to the historical when you demand that it should simultaneously account for the motives for the action. As every historical painting is necessarily always at the same time an image of character; and as, moreover, it depicts interesting and pleasing postures and groupings to the naked eye, if the painter has done it well – then it seems to me, it is sufficient, provided that it otherwise is comprehensible through itself alone, that the physical action becomes completely clear from that, and that this is also already in and for itself sensually or morally significant. Historical significance can admittedly not add much more then that the figures in their former names are impressed more securely on the memory.

Humboldt's reservation concerns the sensual or moral significance that might be gleaned from historical representation, and he emphasizes the interest or pleasure aroused through composition. The historical significance of the depicted event, he concludes, can add little more than the gloss of factual specificity to be gained from the particular story. Goethe concedes the point:

> Es würden wenig ganz reine und vollkommene Darstellungen möglich sein, auch wird man nicht einmal einen vollständigen Zyklus schließen können, sondern man wird, in mancherlei Rücksichten, sich hin und her bewegen müssen. Dabei wird die Regel, die Sie in Ihrem Briefe festsetzen, sehr leitend und dirigierend sein, daß nämlich wenigstens die physische Handlung vollkommen klar werde, und diese auch schon sinnlich und moralisch bedeutend, nicht weniger angenehm sei, daß man aber den eigentlichen Beweggrund und die nähere Bestimmung aus dem Gedicht zu erfahren habe.[35]
>
> Few entirely pure and complete depictions would be possible, nor will one ever be able to close a complete cycle, but rather one will have to move

[34]Humboldt to Goethe, March 18, 1799, in *Goethes Briefwechsel mit Wilhelm und Alexander v. Humboldt*, Ludwig Geiger, Ed. (Berlin: Hans Bondy, 1909), 65-66.
[35]Goethe to Humboldt, May 26, 1799, in *Goethes Briefwechsel mit Wilhelm und Alexander v. Humboldt*, 77-78.

> back and forth in many respects. In this regard the rule that you establish in your letter will be a guide and direction – that, namely, at least the physical action be completely clear, and if this is also already sensually and morally significant, then it is no less pleasing; but that the actual motivation and the more specific determination is to be learned from the poem.

Humboldt and Goethe emphasize the physical action of the image as the pleasing (*angenehm*) object of attention, and allow that one may turn to the text in order to learn the details of the story and the motivations to the depicted action. Indeed, the wording of Goethe's reply suggests that the successful image could retain an essential capacity to please despite an additional sensual or moral significance, as if the latter two might otherwise compete with the image's more fundamental task to provide pleasure: "und diese auch schon sinnlich und moralisch bedeutend, nicht weniger angenehm sei" ("and if this is also already sensually and morally significant, than it is no less pleasing"). The focus of historical representation is re-centered on the moment – indeed, in Goethe's response even the once acceptable cycle is now regarded as necessitating an unfortunate movement *among* images ("sich hin und her bewegen") rather than through them as through a series of actions across time. Moreover, Humboldt's observation that the image pleasing or interesting to the naked eye may also still retain a moral value suggests that he operates, at least where visual representation is concerned, with a model of history as collection of interesting or instructive events or individuals; and yet with the difference that, as a visual representation in which meaning is repositioned entirely in the physical action and moral impact of the image, historical representation has essentially no *historical* meaning. The omission of process, motivation, *Beweggrund* is acceptable: the recyclable *exempla* of history become the stuff of visual representation; historical time is

reduced to a series of recurrent moral themes; and history, visually represented, lacks novelty.

Goethe and Humboldt's correction of Meyer's argument concerning the representation of time is more than a matter of critical hindsight. Rather, Goethe and Humboldt revert in their correspondence to a conception of history as essentially without innovation.[36] This recourse to history as the source for sensual and moral pleasure, at the expense of an empirical knowledge of the passage of time, suggests that for Goethe and Humboldt the visual arts are a strategy for a control of the passage of time in an aestheticizing mode of denial. Aesthetically speaking, the critical visual issue is the moment that pleases and provides moral confirmation. Temporality as instability, unpredictability, and novelty, even when arising from the causal chain of a known *Beweggrund*, not only cannot be accommodated visually but ought to be suppressed outright.

Meyer does not differ substantially from Humboldt and Goethe: His interests do not lie in the reintroduction of historical time to visual representation. To go further: for Meyer the model of representation has been established, and it is foremost antique. No less, his intense focus on semiotic purity reveals an obsession with a visual sign that does not draw attention to itself as such, but rather that transcends its capacity as mediator, and thus also the work of art as material, in order provide direct access to meaning. In short, in many respects Meyer's thinking lacks even the modest novelty and flexibility of

[36]In this respect, Humboldt and Goethe seem to revert to a more or less "premodern" conception of history as the source for moral exempla, but lacking in innovation in terms of what the future holds. I draw this insight from Reinhart Koselleck's "Historia Magistra Vitae. Über die Auflösung des Topos im Horizont neuzeitlich bewegter Geschichte" in Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985).

Goethe's and Humboldt's. Yet the latters' critique still falls short of the heart of Meyer's argument. Indeed, his aesthetic commitments, his dogmatic position in the *Querelle des anciens et modernes,* and his extreme normativization of Goethe's thought on the visual object result in an illuminating focus on the sheer mechanics of visual representation. Most apparent, in this regard, is that Meyer detaches visual represention from its capacity to please; his treatise revolves more around the problem of clarity in visual communication, less so in its various limits with regard to sensual stimulation. The problem of the representation of time then becomes part of a larger examination of the problem of meaning. Meyer's understanding of the potential for the symbol as a conveyer of meaning, and his advocacy for a visual sign that the viewer can read, is radicalized and sharpened by his perception of a semiotic decay in Western visual representation. His treatise is an argument for the rejuvenation of modern Western visual language, in which the titular "object" is judged and ranked for its capacity to signify.

The object's appropriateness for visual representation – an issue to which Meyer devotes much attention – is certainly a question of generic categorization, but also of the treatment of the object. Meyer writes of the advantageous object, for example, both that "Das Werk liegt gleichsam schon im Keime" and that it "wächst unter der pflegenden Hand des Künstlers schnell hervor" ("The work lies already in its seed, as it were," and "it grows quickly under the caring hand of the artist").[37] Moreover, the issue of treatment recurs in the variation on basic genres that runs throughout Meyer's treatise. Portraiture, for example, figures under the names *Charakterbild* (image/picture of character) and *Bildnis* (portrait/likeness), the former an advantageous object, the latter indifferent; likewise, varieties of landscape occur in both categories – the significant difference

[37]Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst,* 163.

involves, essentially, the artist's treatment of the chosen object either in a naturalistic manner (the indifferent object) or with greater expressivity of the characteristic and general (the advantageous object).[38] Finally, and most importantly, Meyer concedes that genre may be difficult to determine, and that we might reevaluate the quality of the work of art depending upon the genre to which we assign it. In an extended observation on an antique work he refers to as the Medici vase (ill. 3), Meyer argues that the image that fails as historical representation is successful as *Charakterbild*.[39] His reasoning is in part that, despite his inability to fathom why the artists would depict Ulysses, Teresias, Alexander, and Diogenes altogether in the presence of Iphigenia, he can call the vase a successful work really only on the basis of its depiction of *Charakter* – whereas, as the historical depiction of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, it is flawed. But the indirect implication is that, regardless of the artists' intentions, we rely on a standard of judgment drawn entirely from the knowledge about representation that we glean directly from our reading of the work at hand. There is no historical representation or representation of character as such, merely objects we read in various ways. The categories are thus a heuristic guide to

[38]Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 172-173, 187, 192.

[39] "Wenn deshalb die Künstler der zwei Basreliefe der V. Albani, welche wir so eben als Beispiele angeführt haben, allenfalls nicht, wie man gemeiniglich dafür hält, Geschichten haben liefern wollen, sondern, aus einer uns unbekannten Ursache, und zu einem besonderen Zwecke notwendig fanden, den Ulysses mit dem Tiresias, den Alexander und Diogenes als Charaktere zusammen zu stellen, und diese ihre Absicht vielleicht ehemals unter Umständen deutlich war, so wäre ihnen nichts weiter vorzuwerfen, denn nur unter dem Titel eines Charakterstückes finden wir Ursache, jenes Basrelief der medicäischen Vase für gut behandelt gelten zu lassen, wollte man solches aber als die Geschichte von der Aufopferung der Iphigenia betrachten, so wäre es eine höchst fehlerhafte Darstellung." Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, in *Klassik und Klassizismus*, 196.

In English: "If therefore the artist of the two bas reliefs of the V. Albani, which we have just adduced as examples, in no case wanted to depict stories (as one typically believes), but rather, out of some cause unknown to us, and for a particular purpose, found it necessary to place Ulysses with Tiresias, Alexander and Diogenes together as *Charaktere*, and if this intention of theirs was perhaps formerly, and under different circumstances, entirely clear – then there would be nothing more to reproach them with, for it is only under the label of the *Charakterstück* that we find cause to agree that the bas relief of the Medici Vase is well handled. Should one wish to regard it as the history of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, then it is a highly flawed depiction."

the construction of images and the more accurate gauging of their visual impact, a set of templates for reading the visual for different kinds of information. The question now driving Meyer's rhetoric is: how can we draw meaning from the work of art?

Given his dictate that the work of art "sich selbst ganz ausspreche" ("express itself entirely"), we might conclude by way of answer to this question that meaning communicates itself. [40] Properly rendered, the advantageous symbolic image communicates its conceptual content in sensual and even three-dimensional, animated form. Here art

> gebietet selbst Ideen und Begriffen uns sinnlich zu erscheinen, nötigt dieselben in den Raum zu treten, Gestalt anzunehmen, und den Augen anschaulich zu werden; ja wir würden diese Wunder schwerlich für möglich halten, wenn nicht die Alten solche wirklich geleistet und in ihren Werken aufgestellt hätten.[41]
>
> itself commands ideas and concepts to appear to us sensually, compels them to enter the room, to assume form, to become visible to the eyes. Indeed, we would hardly consider such miracles possible, had the ancients not achieved them and displayed them in their works.

The properly self-communicating symbolic image functions as the material and entirely present embodiment of the conceptual that now enters the space already inhabited by the viewer – communication occurs through presence. Meyer defines this criterion against the model of antiquity. Indeed, he argues that the modern artist has lost the ancient capacity for symbolic representation because the moderns chose not to use the visual language of the ancients, in short, but then also failed to produce a new, modern visual-symbolic system of equal precision and vitality. The argument unfolds as follows: antique symbolic representation succeeded owing to the conceptual simplicity of the ancients; art has been unable to keep pace symbolically with the gradual expansion of the

[40]Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 162.
[41]Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 180.

conceptual realm, and the artist has resorted to the addition of signs or attributes to convey meaning; in the modern era the reliance on the additional sign or attribute has reached an extreme, and conceptual representation has become a matter of arbitrary semiotic approximation and guesswork owing to the lack of a standard symbolic code.[42] More information is represented less adequately.

How do we delineate the function of the symbolic in relation to the sign or attribute? Foremost, we might recall that for Goethe the symbol permits an intuitive penetration of the empirical world of particular details. Meyer drives this function exclusively into the dimension of visual representation: the modern chaos of signs and attributes renders the object resistant in terms of its capacity to communicate immediately – such objects do not appeal to "the sense of the eye" ("den Sinn des Auges").[43] The

[42]"Die symbolischen Figuren der alten Kunst sind, wie schon gedacht worden, sinnliche Darstellungen abstrakter Begriffe, es scheint indessen als habe die Kunst, so zu sagen, nicht genug Breite und Raum für eine große Zahl derselben, und ihre Deutlichkeit nehme in eben dem Maße ab, als die Charaktere sich einander mehr nähern. Je weniger der darzustellende Begriff an sich einfach und von den andern unterschieden war, je mehr mußte er durch beigelegte Attributen bezeichnet werden, da sie aber ihre Bedeutung nun nicht mehr ganz sich selbst, oder ihrer Gestalt, sondern zum Teil diesen beigelegten Zeichen dankten, so waren sie auch nicht mehr vollkommene Gegenstände [….] In neuern Zeiten aber ist alles gar übertrieben worden, man scheint zu glauben, es sei schon genug, wenn eine Gestalt nur dem Begriff, welcher vorgestellt werden soll, nicht grob widerspricht, und ist gewohnt, die Bedeutung aus den Attributen zu erraten, welche nicht einmal immer dieselben sind." Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 205.

In English: "The symbolic figures of ancient art, as we have already considered, are sensual depictions of abstract concepts, but it seems in the meantime as if art, so to speak, had not enough breadth and space for a large number of the same, and their distinctness diminished to the degree that *Charaktere* grow closer to one another. The less the concept to be depicted was simple in itself and differentiated from others, the more it had to be signified through additional attributes. But as they no longer had entirely themselves, nor their form, to thank for their meaning, but in part these added signs, they were no longer complete objects […] But in more recent time everything has become simply exaggerated. One seems to believe that it is sufficient if the form does not too crudely contradict the concept that is supposed to be represented, and one is accustomed to guessing meaning from attributes that are not even always the same."

[43]"Widerstrebend und unstatthaft für die bildende Kunst sind alle diejenigen Gegenstände, welche nicht sich selbst aussprechen, nicht im ganzen Umfange, nicht in völliger Bedeutung, vor den Sinn des Auges gebracht werden können. In einem Kunstwerke, welches an die wissenschaftlichen Kenntnisse des Beschauers appellieren muß, ist eigentlich nur die geringere Hälfte in dem Bilde selbst enthalten, dasselbe liefert uns nur eine gewisse äußere Gestalt der Dinge, welche der Künstler eigentlich hat darstellen wollen; den bessern Teil, die Bedeutung aber muß der Beschauer selbst dazu beitragen, und gewissermaßen das Werk vollenden. Aber wenn er auch die Kenntnisse besitzt, und überdies den besten Willen dazu, so wird doch im ersten Moment das Gemüt gehemmt sein, der Eindruck geteilt und geschwächt werden, und dieser

need to decipher meaning or receive communication from the image intellectually indicates that the work does not fulfill a fundamental criterion for the visual arts – primary meaning must not be supplied by the beholder but revealed. Moreover, the work that fails in this respect remains distant, an object of admiration (as work) but not of attraction or participation. Correspondingly, Meyer conceives of an artist whose skill resides in eliciting from the viewer an immediate and necessary reaction. Illegible or arbitrarily used signs or attributes that require time for their decipherment obstruct this kind of reaction and participation from the viewer. But, of course, the question is not merely one of a choice between signs; the aggressive sensual presence of the symbolic work of art, its freedom from the additional attribute, suggest that for Meyer the visual symbolic object *is* signification, pure and unobstructed communication of meaning. The moderns have failed to develop the pure visual signification practiced, as Meyer contends, by the ancients; analogously, for Meyer the most pressing aesthetic issue is the modern failure to read intuitively beyond the particular (figured here as the illegible or arbitrary sign or attribute), to grasp meaning within the sensual without additional exterior explication.

Moment ist der wichtigste, in welchem wir unwillkürlich entscheiden, entflammt oder abgekühlt werden; verstrich er umsonst, so ist der Zauber dahin und wir werden zwar die Kunst noch bewundern, aber niemals wieder lebhaften Anteil an dem Werk nehmen, nie uns von demselben angezogen oder hingerissen fühlen." Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 193.

In English: "Resistent and impermissible for the visual arts are all those objects that do not express themselves, that cannot be brought before the sense of the eye in their entire scope and their full significance. In an artwork that must appeal to the scholarly knowledge of the beholder, only the inferior half is itself actually retained in the image, this latter gives us only a certain exterior form of those things the artist actually wants to depict. But the beholder himself must supply the better part, the meaning, and, to a certain extent, complete the work. But even if he possesses this knowledge and, moreover, the good will to apply it, nevertheless his receptive disposition is obstructed in the first moment, the impression is divided and weakened – and this moment is the most important, in which we make an instinctive decision, in which we are inflamed or cooled. If this moment passes without effect, then the magic is gone and we will surely still admire art, but we will never again take an active part in the work, never feel ourselves to be attracted or carried away by it."

In Meyer's scheme even historical representation figures among those acts of signification that populate the advantageous category of objects, at the head of which reigns the symbolic. Here "historical" is to be understood in the wider sense of story: mythological, biblical, literary, historical - narrative, thus including both fact and fiction. For Meyer objects both pleasing and shocking are admissible. Regarding the latter, an example of which is the Laocoon group (ill. 4), the artist is protected against the charge of impropriety by the authority of the story – the artist has not concocted gruesome or disturbing subject matter, merely represented an existing story. Finally, whereas the single historical object may be unsuitable for representation owing to a lack of clarity in communication of meaning, the cycle of historical images is indeed permissible.[44] Meyer also explicity recommends those objects that make a "great effect" (*große Wirkung*): "und dem zufolge wären Gegenstände, wo Ernst, Traurigkeit, und Schmerz, wo das Pathetische und Tragische herrscht, für historische Darstellungen vor allen andern passend und bequem" ("and it follows that objects in which seriousness, sadness, and pain, where the pathetic and the tragic reign, are the most fitting and convenient [or comfortable – MA] for historical depictions").[45] Additionally, historical representation is essentially an act of displacement: the interesting subject matter transfers the viewer to other times ("Sie versetzen uns in andere Zeiten" – "They displace us into other times"). Thus, in the realm of the historical, visual communication of meaning occurs in a temporal mode of the expansion of perspective – the concentrated moment provides a glimpse beyond the moment of viewing – and the interesting figures we encounter thereby communicate more clearly to us when in a state of extravagant suffering, crisis,

[44]Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 167-168.
[45]Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, 167.

or at a tragic climax. On the one hand, Meyer's claims for historical representation read as more modest than Goethe and Humboldt's recommendations – the latters' "interessante und angenehme Stellungen und Gruppen" ("interesting postures and groupings") become "passend und bequem" ("fitting and convenient/comfortable") under Meyer's care, entirely a matter of a good fit between object and genre.[46] On the other hand, this good fit should still move the viewer, even transport the viewer beyond the moment of viewing. Appropriateness of object to medium in the genre of historical representation reintroduces temporality.

This occurs within what seems otherwise a curious nexus of affects. How can we reconcile the gravity of "Ernst, Traurigkeit und Schmerz […] das Pathetische und Tragische" ("seriousness, sadness and pain […] the pathetic and tragic") with "passend und bequem" ("fitting and convenient/comfortable")? We should recall the thrust of Meyer's argument: the best visual art (the advantageous category) not only foregrounds humanity, it represents human themes with visual precision. We may now read this alongside one of Meyer's own examples: despite the permission of suffering in historical representation, a model for which is the Laocoon group, he rules against scenes of martyrdom lest they offend the eye and sentiment. At issue is not the comparative truth of stories (Laocoon, for example, or martyrdom). Rather, Meyer's exception draws from his own injunction that historical representation involve the purely human (*auf der Basis des Reinmenschlichen der Handlung*), as well as his relation of historical representation with the representation of character in an intertwining of agent and action. Laocoon's visual impact is in the individual's body in a moment of suffering. By contrast, in the scene of martyrdom too much emphasis is placed on the inflicting of pain, the method

[46]Humboldt to Goethe, March 18, 1799, 65-66.

and devices used, and on the circumstances of martyrdom. Formally Meyer's concern is quite unmistakable: when faced with the historical image, the beholder must be able to penetrate the mass of subsidiary, obscuring, or even revolting details to gaze upon the significant essence of the moment. The exceptional status of the tragic or pathetic, then, seems to rest in its representation not of process but of moment, and of the expression of character that emerges in the suffering body – character defined through an action deeply informed by its placement in narrative.[47] The martyred body is the bearer of the details of pain, and martyrdom is suffering as event. The permissible suffering body incarnates the passage of time in a momentary eruption of passion; history, albeit still reduced to the most critical moment, is rendered sensual – suffering is temporal, the body a sign of history.

For Meyer the symbolic is but the purest in a series of visual significations including the visual representation of time. Goethe's qualifications regarding the visual

[47]Meyer clarifies his allowance for the tragic in 1797 correspondence with Schiller and Goethe concerning Alois Hirt's recent essay *Laokoon* (published by Schiller in the 10th issue of *Die Horen* in 1797). Hirt had argued that the acute representation of physical suffering in Laocoon gives the lie to a Winckelmannian reading of serenity in suffering, thereby calling into question the perceived representational priorities of the Greeks. Goethe's concern with this reading is the logical consequence of its questioning an aesthetic centered on the principle of beauty. The question then becomes: how can one acknowledge the benefits of Hirt's attention to the detailed charactierization of pain while also recuperating Laocoon as a beautiful work of art? Meyer responds to Goethe with the argument that tragic objects such as Laocoon are a permissible exception to the rule of beauty: it is not possible for the artist to render Laocoon realistically *and* in a manner pleasing to the viewer, for realism would repel the viewer. The artist must and may then depart from a standard of realism or the verisimilar. For a summary of this discussion, see Dönike, *Pathos, Ausdruck und Bewegung*, 86-95. It is obvious that the central concern of this discussion is to retain Laocoon as a model work of art – for it makes little sense that a work of art should be recuperated for an aesthetic of beauty on the grounds that the repelling qualities of its subject are not depicted with maximum realism – nor is this argument an adequate response to Hirt. It does, however, underscore that this discourse on Laocoon – and by extension Meyer's delineation of a category of historical representation accommodating the tragic – is foremost concerned with the disciplining of its preferred objects and their recruitment for a theory of representation that seeks to control the contingent, the passionate, the violent, the transitory. Simon Richter of course argues along similar grounds concerning Classicism's representation of pain in *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain*. He also helpfully traces the centrality of pain and the concern with the effect of terror in "German Classical Tragedy: Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, and Büchner," in *A Companion to Tragedy*, Rebecca Bushnell, Ed. ((Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 435-451.

representation of time result in a separation of knowledge of temporal context from the depicted and viewed moment, which later becomes a source for an extra-temporal moral and sensual stimulation. Temporal context as the particular content incarnating time's passage becomes an exterior matter. By contrast, Meyer isolates time in a limited category of representation that he considers semiotically successful because inherently communicative – he identifies a sign that signifies the passage of time. Specifically, the suffering body (and, by extension, the tragic and pathetic as instances of character in action) becomes this sign. The result is a re-temporalization of the sign in the realm of the visual aesthetic. Moreover, this temporalized sign stands out, in a category of representation (the advantageous) seeking the purely human and the concept rendered spatially, in its embodiment, not just materially, but even physically in the human form. Under pressure from Humboldt, Goethe had arrived at a somewhat fretful position regarding the diffusion of story across the many bodies of the cyclical work of art. Meyer draws time into a single suffering body.

Goethe's *Über Laokoon*: aestheticizing vision and the persistence of time

Despite Goethe's own efforts to reduce time in the visual arts to an idealized moment, a temporality remains operative in his practice of reading the work of art as symbol. His 1798 essay *Über Laokoon* is at once an exercise in the construction of a classical aesthetic of the momentary and ideal, and an indication of how the work of art, considered other than as an object for sensual pleasure, retains the imperative of a temporal and particularized reading. The tension reigning in the essay between these alternatives – the momentary and ideal on the one hand, the temporal and particular on

the other – is all the more compelling when considered in light of the circumstances of the essay's compositon and publication. The piece was published in 1798 in the first issue of *Propyläen*, a model of classicist aesthetic viewing practice also promoted as radically new in the history of German Laocoon reception, and accompanied by a crude illustration of the statue (ill. 5) – it lends a practical weight to the theoretical program of the journal.[48] But the essay was written in mid-1797, prior even to Goethe's enunciation of the symbol as he stood before the site of his grandfather's house, and in fact Goethe does not use the words symbol or symbolic in his reading of Laocoon. But his reading of the sculpture conforms to his later delineation of a visual symbolic work of art – it remains a practical model of a theory of the art work and of viewing. Yet the tension between this reading and the alternative reading lurking about the pages of the essay (the work of art resituated in its particular and temporal context) reveals the extent to which Goethe has foreclosed a different sensual and cognitive communicative potential in the work of art in the interests of an atemporal ideal. To the extent that we may consider the composition of the essay a pivotal moment in the prehistory of the symbol, a crucial developmental state in the evolution of a theory, it strikingly displays evidence of the very contingency and even affective compulsion of this evolution – the aggressive construction of an aesthetic.[49]

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[48]The advertisement for the first issue of the journal in the *Intelligenzblatt* of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, December 15, 1798, reads: "UEBER LAOKOON. Der in diesem Kunstwerk dargestellte Moment wird anders als bisher geschehen bezeichnet." Reprinted in Goethe, *Propyläen*, 1104.

In English: "ON LAOCOON. The moment depicted in this artwork is characterized in a different manner than has previously been done."

[49]My reading is informed by, if sometimes contradictory to, several examinations of Goethe's Laocoon essay. Neil Flax, for example, highlights Goethe's *formalist* reading of the work as an explicit challenge to a Diderotian *fabulist* reception of the work of art. For Flax, Diderot foregrounds the imaginative, literary, and often allegorical possibilities inherent in a relationship in which the painting denies the existence of the beholder, who responds by denying the existence of the painting. In Flax's assessment, Goethe proposes a reversal: the beholder foregrounds his/her presence before a work of art that is received and analyzed as a

In the essay Goethe argues that the Laocoon group exemplifies the highest potential of the visual arts in its sensually stimulating depiction of the pregnant moment – redefined by Goethe as a moment of transition. This moment of sudden transition is important: "der höchste pathetische Ausdruck, den sie [die Kunst – MA] darstellen kann, schwebt auf dem Übergange eines Zustandes in den andern" ("the highest expression of the pathetic that it [art – MA] can depict hangs in the transition from one state into another").[50] As he further argues, the aesthetic appeal of this transitional moment resides necessarily in the trace it still bears of the immediate past: "Bleibt alsdann bei einem solchen Übergange noch die deutliche Spur vom vorhergehenden Zustande, so entsteht der herrlichste Gegenstand für die bildende Kunst" (If the distinct trace of the previous condition remains in such a transition, then the most superb object for visual art emerges").[51] The aesthetic criterion for the sensual appeal of the Laocoon group, its particular *Anmut* (grace), resides in its quality as the expression of the trace during

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material composition structured around the dynamic of a narrative. As will become apparent, I disagree wth Flax's contention that Goethe responds to the grammar and syntax of the work of art – not because Goethe does not do this, but rather because he then elides this compositional-narrative syntax into a single moment of "optimal visibility" that should not require syntactic reading. See Neil Flax, "Fiction Wars in Art," *Representations* No. 7 (Summer, 1984), 1-25. Indeed, it is worth considering, as a pendant to Flax's grammatical argument, Ernst Osterkamp's contention that Goethe was unable to describe the image without irritation given his belief that the image was foremost subject to perception and intuition, not to the word – although Osterkamp also argues that Goethe then develops an *organic* method for describing Laocoon. See Ernst Osterkamp, *Im Buchstabenbilde. Studien zum Verfahren Goethescher Bildbeschreibungen* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1991), 1, 113-116. Inka Mülder-Bach highlights Goethe's unique contribution to the Laocoon discourse in his effort to regard the statue as a visualization of time centered on causality, rather than as structured around a dynamic tension in content – but I believe she does not draw out entirely the implications of this in relation to her other observation that the ahistorical ideality assigned the statue is a response to the Napoleonic looting of art objects. See Inka Mülder-Bach, "Sichtbarkeit und Lesbarkeit. Goethes Aufsatz *Über Laokoon*," *Das Laokoon-Paradigma. Zeichenregime im 18. Jahrhundert*, Inge Baxmann, Michael Franz, and Wolfgang Schäffner, Eds. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), 465-479. Finally, Simon Richter argues that Goethe's reading of Laocoon is profoundly anti-classical in its tendency to absorb and overcome previous readings, thereby becoming an allegory for the visual representation of the concept of *ut pictura poesis*. See Simon Richter, *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain*, especially 164-167. For my part, I argue that Goethe's urge is precisely to overcome this very dynamic present both in the sculpture and in his reading – hence the tension in the essay, as I see it, between atemporality and ideality on the one hand, and historicity and particularity on the other.

[50]Goethe, *Über Laokoon* [1798], in *Klassik und Klassizismus*, Helmut Pfotenhauer and Peter Sprengel, Eds. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1995), 156.

[51]Goethe, *Über Laokoon*, 156.

transition from one moment to the next, its material crystallization not merely of suffering but of the passage *into* suffering – trace and transition provoke a stimulating anticipation, the temporality is a mere function of *Anmut*. Indeed, as a reaction to archaeologist Alois Hirt's previous reading of the group, foregrounding the naturalism of the ancients, Goethe advocates the aesthetic idealization manifest in the sculpture, and by extension for a symbolic art in which the universality of suffering transcends its natural particulars in an art object autonomously providing stimulation. Although his essay takes its place alongside four decades of Laocoon reception, Goethe never refers directly to any of his theoretical predecessors (Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, Hirt); and the projected novelty of his approach only underscores the theoretical moment of the text as one claiming for itself a brief isolation in and against time. The text is presented without traces.

Yet Goethe's writing is deeply informed by a concern for its own historical moment. He produces his theoretical work of 1797 against the backdrop of Napoleon's removal from Italy of numerous works of art that constitute a Classicist canon.[52] Goethe focuses on this issue in a most provocative passage in which he states that the wounding of Laocoon by the snake is the primary cause of the sense of motion in the group ("die Hauptursache der ganzen Bewegung" – "the primary cause of the entire movement") – a detail, he continues, misrepresented during the restoration of the group but fortunately still preserved in the remains or traces of the serpent's mouth on the rear of Laocoon's leg, "wenn nur nicht diese höchst wichtigen Spuren bei der jetzigen traurigen Veränderung auch verloren gehen!" ("if only these most important traces are not lost as a

[52]See again the Introduction to this work, as well as Richter, *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain*, 164.

result of the current, unfortunate changes!").[53] Goethe's entire reading of the expressive moment of the Laocoon group relies on the preservation of a trace that might itself already have disappeared into history. The idea of the trace recurs in Goethe's use of a metaphor of a running child suddenly struck by a playmate and fallen to the ground – another image of trauma to the body. Goethe adopts a comparable posture in writing about the Laocoon group at the moment of its own removal from safe ground – indeed, his invective is typically phrased in terms of the assault upon and dismemberment of Italy as "art body" (*Kunstkörper*).[54] The text in its context is infused with a sensitivity to the moment in which, assaulted from several sides simultaneously (by archaeology and the spoils of war), Goethe's aesthetic must pick itself up off the ground and carry on.

The running child, a central metaphor in Goethe's essay for the trace retained in the transitional moment, also unsettles his claims concerning this moment. He writes:

> Man sehe ein lebhaftes Kind, das, mit aller Energie und Lust des Lebens rennt, springt und sich ergötzt, das aber etwa unverhofft von einem Gespielen hart getroffen oder sonst physisch oder moralisch heftig verletzt wird; diese neue Empfindung teilt sich wie ein elektrischer Schlag allen Gliedern mit, und ein solcher Übersprung ist im höchsten Sinne pathetisch, es ist ein Gegensatz, von dem man ohne Erfahrung keinen Begriff hat.[55]
>
> Let one imagine a lively child who, with all possible energy and passion for life, runs, jumps, and amuses itself, but who is more or less unexpectedly hit hard by a playmate, or otherwise violently wounded either physically or morally. This new sensation diffuses itself like an electric shock throughout all the limbs, and such a leap is pathetic in the highest sense – it is a reversal, of which one has no concept who has not also experienced it.

The visual weight of this image falls on the moment in which the "elektrischer Schlag" ("electric shock") of the blow strikes the child's body – it is a leap from one state to the

[53]Goethe, *Über Laokoon,* 155.
[54]Goethe, "Einleitung," *Propyläen,* 41.
[55]Goethe, *Über Laokoon,* 156.

next, the simultaneous experience of radical opposition. Accordingly, we are given to understand that the strike against the running child is unexpected (*unverhofft*), an occurrence of which one must have experience if one is to understand what is at stake.[56] Goethe stages this defining metaphor in the simplest of terms: the child is running before being struck, presumably by a playmate – the situation is highly natural, and there remains no temptation to wonder about the prehistory of the child's fall. Yet the metaphor raises a crucial question for Goethe's reading of the Laocoon group, specifically the inquiry into the prehistory of the moment in question.

Given his reference to personal experience, Goethe displays a striking lack of curiosity about such a prehistory. His willful disregard for anything other than the most mundane circumstances surrounding the moment rings as drily programmatic. He carries this preference for naturalistic interpretation of contextual circumstances into his reading of Laocoon: while prefering to reserve the depicted moment of the group for an aesthetic of ideal beauty, he insists that the work suffers no loss of aesthetic resonance if, for lack of knowledge of Laocoon's story, it is contextualized as the "tragic idyll" of a father and his sons, asleep in the open air, attacked by serpents "in accordance with their nature" ("ihrer Natur gemäß").[57] A tension in his reading becomes apparent. He praises the sculpture's act of *Entblößung*, its stripping away of all particulars to reveal the essential, yet then provides a context for the action that, however, sidesteps the essential particularity of cause and settles rather upon a situation of typical or generic quality. In defining the work's aesthetic contours, he also renders it very much a temporal object;

[56]Goethe, *Über Laokoon*, 156. For another discussion of this passage see also Richter, *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain*, 166-171.
[57]Goethe, *Über Laokoon*, 154.

the residue of temporal particularity, if persistent only in the weakest of terms, threatens to displace the sculpture from the symbolic realm.

Goethe exacerbates this tension between suppression and persistence of temporal particularity in his advice to the viewer – specifically in praising the group's exemplary aesthetic accessibility in the transition from darkness to light.

> Um die Intention des Laokoons recht zu fassen, stelle man sich in gehöriger Entfernung, mit geschloss'nen Augen, davor, man öffne sie und schließe sie sogleich wieder, so wird man den ganzen Marmor in Bewegung sehen, man wird fürchten, indem man die Augen wieder öffnet, die ganze Gruppe verändert zu finden. Ich möchte sagen, wie sie jetzt dasteht, ist sie ein fixierter Blitz, eine Welle, versteinert im Augenblicke da sie gegen das Ufer anströmt. Dieselbe Wirkung entsteht, wenn man die Gruppe Nachts bei der Fackel sieht.[58]
>
> In order to grasp the Laocoon's sense of movement correctly, one should stand at an appropriate distance before it, with clos'd eyes; one should open and close them again immediately. One will then see the entire marble in movement, one will fear, in opening the eyes again, to find the entire group changed. I dare to say, as it now stands there, it is a fixed bolt of lightening, a wave, turned to stone in the very moment it hits the shore. The same effect emerges if one sees the group at night by torchlight.

Having reduced the prehistory of the moment to a situation of disinterest (by virtue of which the serpents' attack, while utterly unexpected, is also entirely natural), Goethe now advocates closing one's eyes altogether, or viewing the statue by night in torchlight, thereby enhancing its quality as a moment without visible history or consequence. The traces of the immediate past may remain, but the tendency is not to question them, even to reduce the group in its entirety aesthetically to a trace in time experienced in a moment of intellectual dumbness and sensual passivity. To the extent, then, that this momentary trace is also an aesthetic ideal, an object stripped of particularity and exposed in its

[58]Goethe, *Über Laokoon*, 154. For the translation of "Intention" ("intention/purpose/purport") as "sense of movement," I borrow from the translation of Ellen von Nardoff and Ernest H.von Nardoff in Goethe, *Essays on Art and Literature*, John Gearey, Ed. (New York: Suhrkamp, 1986), 18.

universal essence, its extreme ideal visibility emerges from the equally extreme context of an obscuring blindness or darkness.

The balance of this initial layer of Goethe's reading is that the original narrativity of the work, its reference to the story of Laocoon and his sons to be found in Virgil and other sources, is replaced by a new narrative that is entirely contained in the work itself.[59] As "idyll" the work functions, under Goethe's care, as an embodiment of a generic storytelling, in which the causality of the attacking snakes becomes a primary motive force outside of any other sequence of events, an event merely setting a story in motion. The work is a total story, its imminent coherence detached from any other context – it becomes the item in a visual chronicle.[60]

In this regard the inclusion of an illustration of Laocoon (ill. 5) in the corresponding volume of *Propyläen* arouses curiosity. Goethe's general approach to the Laocoon is rather reverential – he describes his reflections as "occasioned by" ("bei Gelegenheit") the sculpture, but by no means an exhaustive attempt to master the work of art. His approach to Laocoon is not as if toward an object of analysis, but rather as if inspired by a presence that shares his own space of experience.[61] The illustration reverses this attitude by re-presenting the sculpture as mere image or icon. Goethe's general detachment of the sculpture from its narrative context, and his ideal relocation of it in a controlling darkness, is radicalized in the sculpure's two-dimensional rendering against a blank background, the damage of its age and the seams of production and restoration altogether omitted. The sculpture becomes an image to view, framed by the

[59]For versions of the Laocoon story, see Richter, *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain*, 24-26.
[60] My thinking on this point is influenced by Hayden White's "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 1-25.
[61]Goethe, *Über Laokoon*, 149.

page, held at a managed distance by the reader, adduced as evidence, its arousing presence eradicated.

But the included illustration also induces a reversal of the tendency of the argument toward de-particularization and generic temporality. The passage in which Goethe advocates blinking the eyes or viewing the work by torchlight also bears the traces of his effort to produce an aesthetic model balancing both the extreme visibility of an ideal moment and the possibility of extended deconstruction and cognitive investigation. A fragment from the 1770s, the decade following his first encounter with plaster reproductions of the group in Leipzig or Mannheim, reveals Goethe engaged in a direct, even physical, effort to understand the dynamics of the group's composition:

> durch alles auch <?> der große Verstand im kleinsten am merkwürdigsten.
> Der Altste
> Die Köpfe müssen alle ganz allein in der Lage beurteilt werden in der sie stehen einzeln tut keiner seinen Effekt. Der Kopf des jüngern Sohns ist abscheulich wenn man ihn auf ein Postament grad stellt und herrlich wenn man ihn abgenommen auf den Tisch vor sich hin legt. Der ältere Just das Gegenteil. Der Alte steht in der Gruppe und will auch so stehend angesehn sein. Furcht und Streben sind herrlich mit einander verbunden. Man schaue den übertriebnen Stirn Drang des Knaben. Man schaue die über der Stirn vorstrebende Locke. Es ist Angst in dem Munde Aber feste Angst. Teilnehmende gegenwürkende Angst. Der Kopf schon jugendlich beschoren. Der Jüngere hat die Haare noch weiblich hinten aufgebunden und über der Stirn in einen Knoten vereinigt. Er will notwendig zurückgelehnt angesehen sein.[62]

> through everything also […] the greatest understanding in the smallest the most curious.
> The oldest
> The heads must all be judged only in the position in which they stand individually none exerts its effect. The head of the younger son is hideous if one has removed it and lays it on the table. The older Just [sic] the opposite. The old man stands in the group and wants to be seen so. Fear and exertion are joined together magnificently. One should see the exaggerated pressure in the forehead of the boy. One should see the lock

[62]I include the fragment as it is reprinted in *Klassik und Klassizismus*, 621-622.

> of hair reaching out over the forehead. There is fear in the mouth, but firm fear. Participating, counteracting fear. The head already trimmed youthfully. The younger still has his hair tied in back in the feminine manner and gathered over the foreheard in a knot. He needs to be seen leaning back.

This fragment predates the essay by two decades, and yet it might be the piece to which Goethe had intended to return in formulating a response to Hirt's work.[63] In substance the two works are not mutually contradictory; rather, more striking is that with the fragment we can see Goethe literally idling among the pieces of the group, imagining various elements separated from the composition, and dwelling on details that would likely go unseen in the momentary glimpse or at night by torchlight. Indeed, such details (of the forehead, the hair, the mouth, the apparent desirability that one piece be exhibited as if leaning back) tend toward an emphasis on particularity and even the natural that is incompatible with the aesthetic ideal of the moment. The fragment reveals Goethe attempting to penetrate the particular in order to see and understand how the ideal is constructed – the emphasis is on cognitive process rather than immediate intuition.

In the fragment and preceding passage, Goethe reintroduces the concept of space as an area occupied by the object and to be entered and explored by the beholder. Goethe's directions to the beholder in the essay mimic his use of the third-person imperative in the fragment: "man schaue" and "stelle man sich" – "one should see" (also "let one look") and "one should stand" (or "let one stand/place oneself"). In the fragment, these imperatives accompany a manipulation of parts effecting the virtual deconstruction of the group into its particulars for the purpose of gauging the success of the composition ("Die Köpfe müssen alle ganz allein in der Lage beurteilt werden in der sie stehen einzeln tut keiner seinen Effekt" – "The heads must all be judged only in the

[63] *Klassik und Klassizismus*, 617.

position in which they stand individually none exerts its effect"). And thus when in the essay Goethe directs the reader "stelle man sich in gehöriger Entfernung, mit geschloss'nen Augen" ("one should stand at an appropriate distance […] with clos'd eyes"), he issues the command to adopt an experimental spatial relationship with respect to the work, one that is changeable (subsequent commands in the essay include "Gehen wir nun weiter," "Let us now continue" and "Denken wir," "Let us think/imagine" – expressions of figurative, intellectual motion).[64] Furthermore, we might imagine that this entire passage is but a précis of current aesthetic practice: *if* one were to adopt the appropriate position, close and then briefly open the eyes, and behold the group as if it were in motion, *then* one would experience the very effect achieved at night and by torchlight – and, given this reading, we might then wonder if his description "wie sie jetzt dasteht, ist sie ein fixierter Blitz, eine Welle, versteinert im Augenblicke da sie gegen das Ufer anströmt" ("as it now stands there, it is a fixed bolt of lightening, a wave, turned to stone in the very moment it hits the shore") is intended only as the highest aesthetic praise, or merely one of several receptive possibilities. The entire passage suggests both an experimentation with an art of the ideal moment and also the limitations of this approach.

Goethe has argued that Laocoon may be read as a tragic idyll with no loss of aesthetic resonance to the depicted moment, and that this ideal of the moment is best experienced by blackening out the narrative context of the group. But his argument hereafter is divided. The initial implication – that the Laocoon group, if treated as a work of art conforming to the highest aesthetic standards, will behave as such and reveal its exemplarity – is undermined by a secondary implication that one need not treat the work

[64]Goethe, *Über Laokoon,* 158-159.

in this manner, in which case it will reveal something else entirely. One need not adopt a position of willed blindness to the prehistory and consequences of the statue's depicted moment – Goethe himself has made this clear, if indirectly. Even if he does suppress an essentially more hermeneutic approach to the work, his fragment indicates that an exploratory encounter with its constituent parts has nonetheless been informative for his ability to read the moment depicted in the group, that his own intuitive prowess lies less in the distanced reading of signs or the appreciation of the symbol than in the personal, even tactile deconstruction and experimental manipulation of the object. Finally, terms such as *versteinert* (turned to stone) and *fixiert* (fixed) echo elsewhere in the essay as *Ruhe* (calm) and *Einheit* (unity), and yet the reception of the statue as either fixed, frozen, turned to stone, or at least calm and unified is contradicted by Goethe's decisive judgment that the entire work may be seen as "in movement" provided one treats it as if it has a past and future, regardless of the necessity of this context. The doctrine that this highly visual moment is the only one appropriate for visual representation and aesthetic idealization, such that even its context is rendered irrelevant, is undermined by our attention to this wider temporal context, even by our mere requirement that such a context exist only negatively in the interests of an aesthetic proof of ideality.

This situation rings less paradoxical, however, if we consider Goethe's statement that the "ruhiger Gegenstand […] in sich selbst geschlossen" ("still object […] closed in itself") is the first and dearest of the objects of the sculptor, but that the artist eventually moves to the "leidenschaftlich-bedeutenden" ("passionate-significant"), a category comprising exemplary works like the Laocoon group.[65] According to the logic of Goethe's argument, this latter category, including also Laocoon, is of a higher aesthetic

[65]Goethe, *Über Laokoon*, 152. See also Dönike, *Pathos, Ausdruck und Bewegung*, 116.

caliber precisely in its depiction of passion, suffering, and motion, even if these latter are subjected to an aesthetic distancing and subsumption beneath the dictates of sensual beauty.

Goethe thus also points to an area for aesthetic representation outside of the realm of the beautiful and complete or closed. *Geschlossen* bears the latter two meanings, "complete" in the sense of self-containment, and "closed." As we see just above, the first object of the sculptor is "in sich selbst geschlossen": closed within itself, contained, complete. Yet, of course, in time the artist abandons such an object and takes up the "passionate." Is this latter an incomplete object? Two possibilities suggest themselves: the one, that this latter object is a greater representational challenge to the artist because the *leidenschaftlich* (passionate) both rubs against the intended closure, and the *bedeutend* signifies more explicitly than the mere "ruhiger Gegenstand" ("still object"). The other possibility, though, is that closure and completion are obstructions to the viewer. In his instructions to the viewer of sculpture Goethe advises, naturally, that the viewer occupy a suitable distance "with clos'd eyes" (*mit geschloss'nen Augen*). Closure is a matter for the object in question *and* for the viewer. But Goethe also explores, if indirectly, the territory outside of this paradigm for viewing sculpture: with closed eyes one remains forcibly unaware of the context informing the passionate moment briefly glimpsed. Indeed, the potential acts of the imagination or the intellect that occur when the eyes are closed must always again be contradicted by the reappearance of a moment that, in its ideality, never changes. Closure may indeed play a vital role in the aesthetics of beauty, but it brings with it the danger that one might, so to speak, remain blind to additional aesthetic possibilities once the standard of beauty has been dismantled.

Indeed, when we speak of the visual representation of the moment and of suffering, as is the case with the Laocoon group, closure or completion seems to obstruct our ability to gain knowledge from our vision – a situation to which Goethe possibly refers in his usage *geschloss'nen* (clos'd), the elided form suggesting that with respect to the representation of the moment in time a norm of closure does not bring completion but rather entails a loss. When the work of art does more than radiate beauty, when it represents the possibility of a sensually mediated knowledge for which beauty is irrelevant, then its closure is an obstruction. It must open itself to the beholder. This Goethe makes clear in his own subsequent compositional analysis of the group – he is able to substantiate his temporal argument only with recourse to an extended, analytical, and deeply physically involved reading of composition. In the face of the history of the moment, he must keep his eyes open.

Goethe declares Laocoon's wound the *primus movens* of the expressivity of the group, the stimulus that not merely sets in motion what we see specifically but also acts as the central temporal focus. He continues: "Wenn wir nun die Hauptfigur in diesem Sinne gefaßt haben, so können wir auf die Verhältnisse, Abstufungen und Gegensätze sämtlicher Teile des ganzen Werkes mit einem freien und sichern Blicke hinsehen" ("Once we have grasped the main figure in this sense, we can look upon the interrelations, gradations, and oppositions of all the parts of the work with a free and secure gaze").[66] This language suggests a more aggressive and intimate observation: we are decidedly no longer dealing with an aesthetic of the momentary glimpse or the torch-lit experiment; rather, when we know the compositional importance of the wound, we can thereafter actively (hinsehen – "to look at") and freely wander over the group in its

[66]Goethe, *Über Laokoon*, 157.

entirety and pay attention to structural details – interrelations, gradations, and oppositions. Goethe proceeds in this very direction: he muses over the object as such; examines the individual figures; returns to the idea of a *doppelte Handlung* (the doubled/two-fold action of simultaneous struggle and suffering) established earlier, thereby reiterating some of what he has just stated; returns again to the idea of the tragic idyll and reflects on its relation to the depicted moment; indeed, he declares outright that one might even think ahead into the future in order to see how the depicted moment is unique in its transitional quality.[67] Goethe departs from an aesthetic of beauty in his indication that the sensual ascertainment of pain is the key to our knowledge of the group's temporal dynamic, and proceeds to open up the closed work of art in order to complete it at his intellectual leisure.

Goethe initiates this opening by reading time in suffering. For, the reaction of each of the three figures in the group marks a temporal perspective and, the three taken together, a total temporality. Goethe notes that the experience of suffering, one's own or another's, elicits fear, terror, and sympathy (*Furcht, Schrecken, Mitleid*). Here he adheres to a discourse established by Aristotle and modified by Lessing. So Goethe: fear and sympathy are appropriate for poetry, while terror is suited to the representation of the transitional moment at which one becomes aware that suffering is at hand ("das unerwartete Gewahrwerden gegenwärtigen Leidens" – "the unexpected becoming aware of present suffering").[68] Terror, Laocoon's emotion and ours on his behalf, is a reaction

[67]Goethe, *Über Laokoon*, 157-159.

[68]Lessing's commitment to a principle of *Mitleid* (sympathy - *eleos*) in tragedy (taken from Aristotle's couplet *phobos* and *eleos*) led him to translate *phobos* as "fear" rather than "terror" – thereby founding an aesthetic grounded in the viewer's sympathy not for a terror-inspiring protagonist, but at least for one whose actions might arouse fear or provoke a sympathetic fear. Goethe follows up on this by including both terror (*Schrecken* – the original *phobos*) as well as fear (*Furcht*) in his reading of Laocoon, allowing

of the present; we feel pity for his younger son, who, because he was attacked first and is now beyond salvation, registers the past; and in the elder son, who looks on while trying to extricate himself from the first coils of the serpent, we recognize both the fear of coming danger and the hope for escape, two orientations toward the future.[69] In the Laocoon group, then, we have a complete time frame of past, present, and future. This expanded temporal context helps to soften the impression of terror, Goethe argues; but then it also diminishes the solitary impact of the moment by couching it in a narrative framework that also helps the viewer to recognize the moment of terror, the moment appropriate for a visual representation of pathos and thus the moment that needs to be seen.

Of course, this emotional-temporal dynamic is inherent in the group, an extended compositional embodiment of the trace in the moment of transition. Here also the tension in Goethe's reading is clear: the completed time frame, a device intended (according to Goethe) to soften the impact of terror, is thematically closed in its circulation around a central focal point from which the temporality of the group radiates sufficiently to balance the composition. At the same time, however, the balancing and completing effect of this temporality is the result of reflection – the moment in its immediate temporal resonance has been deconstructed, its parts evaluated for their capacity to elicit an emotional response. But with the elder son Goethe also implicates the beholder as participant, thereby further breaking down the contained composition of the group and opening it to the contingency of reception. Our own emotional response to the elder son already wavers between hope and fear, his own and ours for him. Thus our own

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fear and sympathy to contain terror in an ideal and formally circumscribed moment. For details of the reception of Aristotle, see Richter, "German Classical Tragedy," 437-439.

[69]Goethe, *Über Laokoon*, 158-159.

implication in the emotional-temporal dynamic begins to undo the compositional closure of the group by introducing the contingency of an open future.

Goethe's reading of the sculpture fully enters this contingent territory in a brief final section of the essay in which he addresses whether Virgil's depiction of the Laocoon episode, in the *Aeneid*, merits its often damning comparison to the sculpture. Goethe finds the two incomparable on grounds of genre: in short, Virgil must, in accord with the dictates of his medium (the epic) dwell on the details of narrative. Goethe's argument reads as follows:

> Da einmal der unglückliche vertriebene Aeneas selbst erzählen soll, daß er und seine Landsleute die unverzeihliche Torheit begangen haben, das bekannte Pferd in ihre Stadt zu führen, so muß der Dichter nur darauf denken, wie die Handlung zu entschuldigen sei? Alles ist auch darauf angelegt, und die Geschichte des Laokoons steht hier als ein rhetorisches Argument, bei dem eine Übertreibung, wenn sie nur zweckmäßig ist, gar wohl gebilligt werden kann. So kommen ungeheure Schlangen aus dem Meere, mit Kämmen auf dem Haupte, eilen auf die Kinder des Priesters, der das Pferd verletzt hatte, umwickeln sie, beißen sie, begeifern sie; umwinden, umschlingen darauf die Brust und Hals des zu Hülfe eilenden Vaters, und ragen mit ihren Köpfen triumphierend hoch empor, indem der Unglückliche unter ihren Wendungen vergebens um Hülfe schreit. Das Volk entsetzt sich und flieht beim Anblick, niemand wagt es mehr ein Patriot zu sein, und der Zuhörer, durch die abenteuerliche und ekelhafte Geschichte erschreckt, gibt denn auch gern zu, daß das Pferd in die Stadt gebracht werde.[70]
>
> As the unfortunate, expelled Aeneas is himself supposed to be narrating that he and his fellow people committed the inexcusable error of bringing the famous horse into their city, the poet must only consider how this action is to be excused? Everything is invested in this, and the story of Laocoon stands here as a rhetorical argument in which an exaggeration, provided it is to the point, surely can be permitted. And so monstrous snakes come from the sea, with crests upon their heads, they rush to the children of the priest who had spurned the horse, coil around them, bite them, poison them with venom; coil around and constrict the breast and neck of the father, rushing to help; and rise up triumphantly with their heads, while the unfortunate one cries in vain for help in their coils. The people are terrified and flee at sight of it, no one dares to be a patriot any

[70]Goethe, *Über Laokoon,* 160-161.

> more; and even the listener, terrified by the bizarre and repulsive story, gladly admits that the horse should be brought into the city.

Goethe couches a brief visual description of the attack itself deep within its narrative context. His point, of course, is that Virgil's own description of the scene is a necessary rhetorical device intended to explain, in short, the fall of Troy. Virgil had license to do what the sculpture may not: tell the story in detail, even repulsive exaggeration. But as a final pendant to Goethe's opening remarks in his essay, on the nature of fine works of art, this passage effects a final unbalancing of his argument on behalf of the Laocoon group as object of the intuition. Indeed, his conclusion advocates strongly for that other reading of the sculpture that has for the duration of the essay lingered in the shadow – in which Laocoon is repositioned in his particular context and read as historical revelation.

The status of the beholder varies critically between Goethe and Virgil. The elder son is no longer the foremost witness, for in Virgil's account both sons are attacked first, then the father. A future-oriented beholder is removed in this version from the central spectacle entirely and relocated in the distanced observation of the Trojans. But this is not structured aesthetic vision; Aeneas is a unique beholder, for he reports not on sculpture but on an actual (if still fictive) event; moreover, an event that was disastrously misinterpreted by all who witnessed it. Laocoon is suddenly relocated in a wider temporal nexus of cause and effect that extends beyond the limits of the statue, and the particulars of which must be known – the sculpture presents the beholder with the opportunity to see "history." This visibility of history is not merely contained in the composition of the work but spreads beyond its limits. Aeneas' narrative forms part of an unfolding of event and reception that extends, through his own retelling, even to the

reader in a series of shifts in temporal orientation radiating from an original visual experience.

Conclusion

My contention has been that the work of art functions in the theory of Weimar Classicism as a template for the visual perception of time and history. The initial temporal charge of the symbol, present in Goethe's experience in Frankfurt, is diminished over the course of further reflection as the symbol itself is recruited for aesthetic representation. Ultimately the visual symbol of the work of art, while hovering close to its origins in visual experience, is a representational device of radically rediced temporality, allied to an aesthetic concerned foremost with sensual stimulation. Meyer's achievement is to isolate and clarify the mechanics and therewith the intent of symbolic representation as a matter of semiotic clarity and legibility, while simultaneously defining a model for the visual representation of time in the suffering body as incarnation of time's passage. These clarifications to Goethe's theoretical delineation of the visual symbol reside, surprisingly, in Goethe's own pre-theoretical, exemplary reading of the Laocoon group: the exclusive beauty of the art object is maintained only at the expense of its capacity to communicate the particularity of temporal context. The original temporality of the symbol is retained only if the work of art is approached with an eye for more than beauty.

The symbol remains a tense representational device. Does it organize and reduce in the interests of pleasure or for the communication of information? Rather, as the symbol travels from experience to theory, and between the verbal and visual, it marks

the use of aesthetics – specifically visual representation – as a means both to organize and control the field of temporal contingency and particular detail and thereby to communicate in an exclusively visual manner. The consistent emphasis on a reception determined by the self-expressivity or self-communication of the work of art – retained by Meyer, for example, likewise at the heart of Aeneas' story – suggests an irritability, even discomfort with time and a desire to reduce it, if still acknowledging its inescapable immanence, to the fully comprehensible moment, indeed even to master and overcome to movement of history.

Goethe's inclusion of the story of Aeneas at the end of his essay undoes this effort at mastery. Indeed, Goethe's own poetics provide the key. With Aeneas we have the moment of visual reception, and its attendant charge of correct interpretation, couched within layers of poetry referencing various layers of experience and reception. The story of the fall of Troy unfolds in the emotionally charged narration of the event after the fact, by Aeneas as dramatic poet and actor in the event; and the reader of the poem has the opportunity to reflect on a chronology of events in the meta-temporal space of epic narrative. Goethe's own reader is thus located at the end of a chain of aesthetically mediated receptive acts that open the initial event to successive waves of interpretation and reaction. As the temporality of Goethe's personal moment of symbolic reception in Frankfurt disappears – beginning with his shift from his own intuition to the universal import of what he sees – the symbol starts to gather up a poetic of historical reception and representation, drawn from the particular, that is eventually suppressed in the theory of the visual symbol. It reasserts itself when Goethe looks away looks differently at the work of art.

Chapter Two

Schiller's *Wallenstein* and the Visibility of History

Introduction

This chapter is about Schiller's attempt to represent history as a visual phenomenon. My focus is Schiller's approximately decade-long shift, over the course of the 1790s, from prose narrative history to historical drama. I argue that the legibility and reliability of the historical actor as visual sign, an underlying and increasingly problematic theme of *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* (*History of the Thirty Years War*, 1791-92), becomes a central focus of Schiller's aesthetics in the mid-1790s. Ultimately Schiller makes the historical actor as sign a central representational issue of the *Wallenstein* trilogy.

I want to turn to Kant briefly in order to clarify the concept of the historical sign as I use it in this chapter. In his 1798 essay "Erneuerte Frage: ob das menschliche Geschlecht im beständigen Fortschreiten zum Besseren sei?" ("A Renewed Attempt to Answer the Question: 'Is the Human Race Continually Improving?'") Kant defines the *Geschichtszeichen* (sign of history) as a sign of humanity's essential moral disposition to improvement.[1] The power of this disposition lies in its capacity as a vehicle or conduit

[1]Immanuel Kant, "Erneuerte Frage: ob das menschliche Geschlecht im beständigen Fortschreiten zum Besseren sei?" *Werkausgabe XI: Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik, und Pädagogik 1*, Wilhelm Weischedel, Ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1977), 357-360.

for the progress of reason in human affairs; and the recognition of this disposition means also recognition of the fundamental respect for reason, on the part of humanity, that guarantees a better future. The sign of history is thus also bound up in a semiotics of reception, through which successive waves of spectacle and observation signify humanity's openness to and enthusiasm for improvement. Kant's language is not only visual but dramatic: he writes of *Zuschauer* (spectators, an audience), *Spiel* (play), and of the *Teilnehmung der Spielenden* (the participation of players). The event inspiring Kant is the French Revolution, and the corresponding sign of history emanates from the spectators' ability to perceive, beneath the obscuring layers of the Terror and Revolutionary War, the slow advance of republicanism with its guarantee of peace. The brunt of his argument is that we are allowed to believe in a future endowment of peace and constitutional government because we observe the enthusiasm of others for such a future. Additionally for Kant this sign of history, the culmination of processes of reception, legitimates his act of predicting the future (his terms are *weissagen* and *vorhersagen* – to predict, foretell, augur). Yet despite the rational trajectory of his argument, constructed carefully from an inquiry into the knowledge we can gain from acts of reception, the *Geschichtszeichen* is also an affective construction: an emotional response to a perceived need for historical foresight, despite recognition of the empirical limits of such foresight. The sign of history is a phenomenon, indeed a series of *visually* perceptible phenomena, pointing to something we might take as a law of historical change. By locating a mechanism for historical change in the receptivity to a sign of humanity's moral disposition to progress, Kant also grounds (by virtue of his own

argument) the present as the primary vantage point for a highly visual interpretation of history.

The presentism and visuality of Kant's later concept are already found in Schiller's 1789 inaugural lecture at the University of Jena, *Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?* (*What Is and to What End Does One Study Universal History?*). Universal history, according to Schiller, is the study of the historical origins of the present moment. Schiller employs explicitly visual language to describe the endeavor of universal history: he presents pictures (*Gemälde*) of competing and incompatible notions of historical work and the point of view (*Gesichtspunkt*) from which they are to be evaluated; he speaks of the instructive and entertaining spectacle (*lehrreiches und unterhaltendes Schauspiel*) that is demonstrated (*zeigen*) in the world-wide discoveries of European explorers; and he considers the possibility of reconstructing humanity's origins in the mirror (*Spiegel*) of peoples perceived as primitive.[2] The sheer import of the past and the possibilities for its research and knowledge manifest themselves in a visual revelation in the present.

The methodology of the universal historian is to construct a chain of connections from the present into the past; where existing sources fail, the philosophical understanding (*philosophischer Verstand*) must compensate in order to fill in gaps. But Schiller warns explicitly against constructing an artificial coherence or teleology – despite his passionate rhetoric on behalf of the study of history, he does not accommodate

[2]Friedrich Schiller, *Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?* [1789], SW, 4:753-754. To clarify: Schiller's lecture predates Kant's essay by nine year – whether Schiller knew the essay in or after 1798, I do not know. Nor, for that matter, whether Kant knew Schiller's 1789 lecture. Schiller did of course rely on Kant's earlier 1784 *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in Weltbürgerlicher Absicht* and the 1786 *Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* (both published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*), as well as *Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Prinzipien in der Philosophie*, published in 1788 in *Teutscher Merkur*. A list of known sources for Schiller's lectures may be found in SW, 4: 1055-1056.

a need to know the future and thus assigns no historical role to affect. In the 1789 address his recurring visual vocabulary is limited: terms such as *lichtvoll, Hinblick, Schauplatz* (enlightening, view, scene) operate at the level of rhetoric, they describe no fundamentally *perceptive* quality in the engagement with the past. Likewise, when Schiller argues that the study of history inspires the optical illusion (*optisch täuschend*) that the brevity of the life of the individual is expanded into the longevity of the species (*Gattung*), he issues merely a prompt for recognizing the present significance of universal history and the effect universal history may have on the individual's understanding of the self.[3] His visual rhetoric centers on the contemporary relevance and promise of universal history, but the work of the universal historian is confined to the sober research of historical sources and the application of the understanding.

Kant and Schiller explicitly mix the visual and the verbal, yet there is a difference in their thinking about the role of vision in the acquisition of knowledge about history. Kant configures the historical event as a spectacle or drama, whose spectators (more likely readers of news than actual visual spectators) submit to an immediate enthusiasm for the meaning of the event and enter into a direct emotional relationship with history, predicated upon the belief in a better future. The drama of history carries such spectators from their own present into the future. And Kant's dramatic *visual* language – spectator, play – suggest an imaginative enthusiasm and a sense-receptivity to the event that is not incompatible with verbal reportage yet goes beyond it to place the reader as spectator in the immediate presence of history. Curiously, at roughly the time of Kant's writing Schiller would also theorize dramatic poetry along similar lines in 1797 (in the essay *Epische und dramatische Dichtung*, discussed in the previous chapter), as the verbal form

[3]Schiller, *Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?* SW, 4:765.

instigating an affective, immediate, present- and future-oriented bond between audience and actor. But in 1789 it is Schiller himself who intends, with his inaugural address, to appeal to his audience's enthusiasm and carry it headlong into the discipline of universal history. Yet universal history is largely a backward-looking discipline – it excavates the pre-history of the present, and Schiller's visual language of enthusiasm is replaced by the words of the source and the reason of the historian.

Schiller's attitude toward the visual will shortly change, as he recognizes the visual sign of history as a sign of meaning and a fundamental dynamic in historical movement and experience, rather than merely an affective instigation to historical research. In what follows I consider the problematic role of the historical actor as sign of history in *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* (*History of the Thirty Years War*). Then I focus on Schiller's aesthetic writings of the 1790s, most specifically on what I term an aesthetic of *Charakter* (character) and its application to the perception and evaluation of individual action. Thereafter I turn to the *Wallenstein* trilogy. First I examine how anticipation of action is built up over the course of the first two parts, *Wallensteins Lager* and *Die Piccolomini* (*Wallenstein's Camp* and *The Piccolomini*), specifically in a discourse on speech, action, and vision. Then I focus on Act III of *Wallensteins Tod*, in which the conflict between Wallenstein's speech and gesture visually reveals an antagonism between individual and historical situation. In conclusion, I comment on the ostentation of Wallenstein's dramatic speech and Schiller's dramatization of subtle gesture.

Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs: the historical actor as visual sign

Already in 1786 Schiller professed an interest in the great individuals of the epoch of the Thirty Years War.[4] At the time, he was writing *Geschichte des Abfalls der vereinigten Niederlande von der spanischen Regierung* (*History of the Revolt of the Netherlands against Spanish Rule*, 1788), his first long prose historical narrative set in the 16th century – the Age of Religious Wars, a period that had initially attracted him when he wrote *Don Carlos*, and which became fertile ground for his interest specifically in questions of philosophy and representation of history. The status and significance of the historical actor also changes across these projects. The sheer length of time Schiller spent working on *Don Carlos* is attributable to the shift in emphasis in the drama from generational conflict in the vein of *Sturm und Drang* to a more intense concentration on the role of the individual in a given historical situation. Characterization, although complex, is still often rooted in opposing ideal types that collide against one another. In *Abfall der Niederlande* the characterization grows more psychological, suggesting a deeper interest in the motivations of actors who however, in the end, may still strike the reader as more or less fixed types reacting predictably under given circumstances.[5] In *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* Schiller gives more attention to the development of character in the context of a situation; yet this attention does not remain consistent over the course of the narrative.

This development owes to biographical and methodological transformations. Schiller wrote *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* in installments for the *Historischer*

[4]Schiller to Christian Gottfried Körner, April 15, 1786, excerpted in Schiller, WuB 4, 586.
[5]Transformations in Schiller's historical characterization may accompany the development of his dramatic characterization. A former tendency to regard Schiller's dramatic figures as representations of his political commitments or as types of the idealist or realist has yielded to the observation that Schiller preferred, after his period of historical and aesthetic work, to produce dramatic characters developing in given historical situations. See, for example, Lesley Sharpe, *Schiller and the Historical Character: Presentation and Interpretation in the Historiographical Works and in the Historical Dramas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 1-2, 48-51.

Calender für Damen from 1790 to 1792. During this period his own work as professor of history at Jena was coming to an end owing to ill health; likewise, he confessed an increasing interest in aesthetics and Kantian philosophy, and eventually a desire to cease work as a historian. Thus, the work is transitional in that Schiller's own interests were undergoing transformation, his patience and stamina for historical research faltering. Indeed, four of the five books detail only roughly the first half of the war, and Book 4 is given over to the relatively short period from the death of Gustav Adolf (1632) to Wallenstein's assassination (1634). The alterations in his attentions and intensity as a writer of history owe much to variations in his own interest in the material and his available energy; but they are also compelling as the model of a historical methodology itself undergoing rapid transformation. A shift is quickly discernible in Schiller's authority as historical narrator: from interpretive command of the rich panorama of events and rhetorical confidence in their representation, to an increasing reliance on the *perceptibility* of the historical actor as a form of historical movement and perfect embodiment of the meaning of history. Thus the initial portrayal of a balance of forces at work in the events leading up to the Thirty Years War (political self-interest, religious ideology, German nationalism and freedom of conscience and national-self-determination, Habsburg imperialism, and the creation of a system of sovereign and mutually cooperative European states) develops into an examination of historical actors at work, and shortly emerges as the history of two actors, Gustav Adolf and Wallenstein.

This shift is manifest in the application of a language of light, clarity, vision, spectacle, and phenomenon. In fact, the story as Schiller tells it may be described as a series of illuminating moments constructing a larger event of progressive significance.

Already in the opening pages of Book One Schiller allows the destructive and constructive forces of the war to coalesce in a single light-producing causal relationship: "So wie die Flamme der Verwüstung aus dem Innern Böhmens, Mährens und Österreichs einen Weg fand, Deutschland, Frankreich, das halbe Europa zu *entzünden*, so wird die Fackel der Kultur von diesen Staaten aus einen Weg sich öffnen, jene Länder zu *erleuchten*" ("Just as the flame of devastation found its way out of the heart of Bohemia, Moravia, and Austria to *ignite* Germany, France, and half of the Europe, so the torch of culture will open its own way out of these states to *illuminate* those lands").[6] And when he immerses the reader in the details of individual actors, he analyzes their various successes and failures with respect to the ability to exercise far-sightedness regarding the progressive significance of the war. The case of Henry IV of France is exemplary. What Schiller calls Henry's "lichtvolle Politik" ("enlightened politics") is precisely his ambition to dislodge Habsburg Austria from its tyrannical position of power and replace it with a balanced state system. Henry's intentions are "enlightened" because, as "spectator to the unrest in Germany" ("Zuschauer der Unruhen in Deutschland"), he has been able to discern the root cause of the problem in Austria's immoderate ambition.[7] Henry's enlightened plan is compared to the "chimerical" (*schimärisch*) fantasies of others who desire a similar end yet lack the means or ambition to undertake such a campaign. Henry is thus called a "statesman" (*Staatsmann*), a term Schiller reserves elsewhere for those keenly political minds who replace the fallen *heroes* Gustav Adolf and Wallenstein, but which nonetheless registers as compatible with the penetrating vision and enlightened policy of Henry in contrast to the "robbers" (*Räuber*) who,

[6]Schiller, *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* [1791-92], SW, 4:366. Occasionally cited parenthetically as *GDK* with page number. English translations are my own.
[7]Schiller, *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs*, SW, 4:407-408.

according to Schiller, Henry must unfortunately rely on to see his plans through. Henry desires a non-religious international cause against Habsburg tyranny; his German allies are blinded by their own religious prejudice and interest in self-aggrandizement (*Religionshaß, Vergrößerungsbegierde*), the very dynamics that Schiller naturally finds operative in the Thirty Years War and yet incompatible with its progressive position in history.

Henry is depicted as the historically far-sighted actor, able to penetrate the obscuring particularity of the moment to see into and thereby influence the future. "Jeder große Mensch will für die Ewigkeit gearbeitet haben" ("Every great man desires to have worked for eternity") is the motto under which Schiller evaluates Henry's plan. When it fails at his assassination, he writes: "Ravaillacs Messerstiche retteten Österreich, um die Ruhe von Europa noch um einige Jahrhunderte zu verspäten" ("The stab of Ravaillac's knife saved Austria, only to postpone Europe's peace by several centuries").[8] Schiller couples death and historical significance here as he will for Gustav Adolf and Wallenstein – the rhetorical implication is that Henry's far-sightedness is most evident at his death, indeed that Henry's ability to change the course of history becomes most incontestably clear when his light is extinguished, that events after Henry occurred as they did explicitly *because* of his absence. Henry's significance as a figure of interest in the history of the war is founded largely in the moment of his violent disappearance. Schiller's method is to join the creative and destructive into a single compelling focal point: Henry's own creativity, his ability to *make* history, is connected directly to his assassination just as the creative forces unleashed by the war (*Erleuchtung*, illumination) are generated by the war's destructive capacity (*Entzündung*, the lighting of a fire).

[8]Schiller, *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs*, SW, 4:408-409.

Schiller's use of this dual imagery of the creative and the destructive is also of course visual: the war both enflames and illuminates; Henry's politics are enlightened, he disappears. Schiller models his initial method as historian in *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* in his authority to discern and interpret, within the landscape of events, visually compelling signs of historical progress otherwise obscured by destruction, even as they linger on the verge of disappearance. As historian, he makes visible – on the level of event and then of actor.

Gustav Adolf, the King of Sweden and eventual leader of Protestant forces in Germany, is treated also as an eminently readable sign. Indeed, Gustav's selflessness, devotion to the German-Protestant cause against Habsburg-Catholic tyranny, his fairness with his allies and those he has defeated, and foremost his series of victories render him the embodiment of historical movement. In Book Three Schiller provides an overview of Gustav's progress as a highly visible phenomenon in the visual panorama of the war.

> Man erlaube mir, in einer kurzen Übersicht den siegreichen Marsch Gustav Adolfs zu verfolgen, den ganzen Schauplatz, auf welchem *er* allein handelnder Held ist, mit schnellen Blicken zu durcheilen und dann erst, wenn, durch das Glück der Schweden aufs äußerste gebracht und durch eine Reihe von Unglücksfällen gebeugt, Österreich von der Höhe seines Stolzes zu erniedrigenden und verzweifelnden Hülfsmitteln herabsteigt, den Faden der Geschichte zu dem Kaiser zurückzuführen.[9]
>
> Allow me to follow Gustav Adolf's victorious march in a brief overview, to rush with quick glimpses over the entire scene on which *he* is the only active hero; and only then, when Austria, pushed to the extreme by Swedish fortune and bent beneath a series of disasters, descends from the height of its pride to humiliating and desperate measures for assistance, to lead the thread of the story back to the emperor.

This passage is a compendium of Schiller's transformed methodological techniques. He writes here as elsewhere of *Schauplatz* – the scene of spectacle – yet here Gustav Adolf's

[9]Schiller, *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs*, SW, 4:547.

actions unify the dispersed scenes of the war into a single area of action dominated by him. The war is now his war, he is "the only active hero" – his action (*handeln*) generates the story of the war (*Handlung* – plot, narrative), and is also coded here as a thread (*Faden*) connecting several points of the story (from Gustav Adolf's various exploits, back to the Emperor) into a single plot-like development. Moreover, Gustav is an extremely visible figure, his unifying and directing action is discernible immediately (*Übersicht, mit schnellen Blicken* – overview, the quick glimpses) over a large area. Previously, illuminating figures like Henry IV emerged from and acted within a context of various and often competing motivations, in a history construed as the historian's act of sorting through details and judging on the basis of an omniscient historical hindsight. Now Schiller portrays the war as Gustav Adolf's personal spectacle. And Schiller's vision as historian comes to rest on the unifying and significant actions of his protagonist.

Schiller endows Gustav Adolf with the historical literacy he also found in Henry IV – a historical far-sightedness suggestive of Gustav Adolf's ability to comprehend the deeper dynamics of his historical situation. As Gustav Adolf succumbs to his own grandeur, Schiller describes the problem as one of inverted vision – excessive *Zuversicht* or over-confidence in his abilities compounded with an increasing feeling that his is a divine cause: "gern verwechselte er *seine* Sache mit der Sache des Himmels, erblickte […] in sich selbst aber ein Werkzeug der göttlichen Rache" ("He gladly mistook *his* cause for a divine cause, saw […] in himself a tool of divine vengeance").[10] Eventually Gustav Adolf no longer models the far-sightedness Schiller finds in Henry IV; rather, his own gaze is turned entirely inward. His death is timely, then, for it upholds the status of his actions as *Erscheinung* (appearance, phenomenon) of the higher, progressive

[10]Schiller, *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs*, SW, 4:541.

historical forces operative in the war – he remains, almost in spite of himself, a clear, legible sign. Astonishingly (in contrast to his depiction of both Henry and Wallenstein), Schiller casts aside speculation that Gustav Adolf was assassinated by one of his own and concludes:

> Aber durch welche Hand er auch mag gefallen sein, so muß uns dieses außerdordentliche Schicksal als eine Tat der *großen Natur* erscheinen. Die Geschichte, sooft nur auf das freudenlose Geschäft eingeschränkt, das einförmige Spiel der menschlichen Leidenschaften auseinander zu legen, sieht sich zuweilen durch Erscheinungen belohnt, die gleich einem kühnen Griff aus den Wolken in das berechnete Uhrwerk der menschlichen Unternehmungen fallen und den nachdenkenden Geist auf eine höhere Ordnung der Dinge verweisen. So ergreift uns Gustav Adolfs schnelle Verschwindung vom Schauplatz, die das ganze Spiel des politischen Uhrwerks mit einemmal hemmt und alle Berechnungen der menschlichen Klugheit vereitelt.[11]
>
> But through whatever hand he may have fallen, this extraordinary destiny must appear to us as a deed of *great nature*. History, so often reduced to that joyless business of dissecting the monotonous game of human passions, sees itself repaid from time to time with phenomena that fall into the calculated clockwork of human affairs like a clever trick from the heavens and point the reflective spirit toward a higher order of things. In such a way are we grasped by Gustav Adolf's sudden disappearance from the scene, which all at once obstructed the entire play of the political clockwork and foiled the calculations of human cunning.

Gustav Adolf remains semiotically transparent and thus reliably legible. And Schiller suggests here why he has come to rely so strongly on Gustav Adolf: "Die Geschichte […] sieht sich zuweilen durch Erscheinungen belohnt" ("History […] sees itself repaid from time to time with phenomena"). Because Schiller has elevated Gustav Adolf in the narrative to the level of the great, history-making individual, Gustav Adolf then becomes a model for the transparency that Schiller desires as a historian.

Wallenstein undoes this transparency. He is a figure of unclear intentions and ambiguous loyalty. Deposed as general in the Imperial armies owing to court intrigue, he

[11]Schiller, *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs*, SW, 4:636-637.

demonstrates his loyalty to the Emperor by retiring to Prague. Schiller devotes an entire page to describing the extent of his palace, the numbers of attendants and pages, the luxury and sumptuary, the magnificent seclusion of Wallenstein's retirement before summarizing: "In dieser prahlerischen Dunkelheit erwartete Wallenstein still, doch nicht müßig seine glänzende Stunde und der Rache aufgehenden Tag" ("In this ostentatious obscurity Wallenstein awaited, quietly but not idly, his shining hour and the dawning of the day of revenge").[12] The image is a striking reversal of that of Gustav Adolf in terms of visual quality and semiotic transparency. For, Gustav Adolf's action alone succeeded, in Schiller's eyes, in uniting the many centers of gravity and extremes of the war into a single meaningful narrative. By contrast, Wallenstein's retirement casts a visually brilliant image but he himself is secluded to the point of invisibility, and his anticipation of action (revenge – figured here as a bright future in contrast to the dark present) frustrates the forward motion of the narrative by standing outside of it (Wallenstein does not act, he waits to act). Yet the metaphors of light Schiller employs to describe Wallenstein's secret ruminations – the shining hour, the dawning day – also suggest that for Schiller eventual action will still be meaningful.

Nevertheless, after he has recounted the details of Wallenstein's conspiracy and assassination at the end of Book Four, Schiller must admit his dissatisfaction with the resultant image of the man, not least owing to the partiality of his sources.

> Denn endlich muß man zur Steuer der Gerechtigkeit gestehen, daß es nicht ganz treue Federn sind, die uns die Geschichte dieses außerordentlichen Mannes überliefert haben; daß die Verräterei des Herzogs und sein Entwurf auf die böhmische Krone sich auf keine streng bewiesene Tatsache, bloß auf wahrscheinliche Vermutungen gründen. Noch hat sich das Dokument nicht gefunden, das uns die geheimen Triebfedern seines Handelns mit historischer Zuverlässigkeit aufdeckte, und unter seinen

[12]Schiller, *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs*, SW, 4:491-492.

> öffentlichen, allgemein beglaubigten Taten ist keine, die nicht endlich aus einer unschuldigen Quelle könnte geflossen sein. Viele seiner getadeltsten Schritte beweisen bloß seine ernstliche Neigung zum Frieden […][13]
>
> For in the end one must admit, to the assessment of justice, that the story of this extraordinary man has been transmitted to us by not entirely faithful pens, and that the duke's treason and his design on the Bohemian crown are based on no rigorously proven fact but merely upon conjecture of probability. The document remains as yet unfound that would reveal to us with historical reliability the secret springs of his actions, and among his public and generally verified deeds there is none that could not ultimately have emanated from an innocent source. Many of his most reproved steps attest merely to his serious inclination toward peace […]

Wallenstein is one of two men in the narrative who tower over the events of their time and act as forces of history, yet with his death we are at a loss. Up to this point in his narrative Schiller has rather painstakingly charted the course of his conspiracy; suddenly this detailed narrative becomes utterly unreliable, and our need to understand Wallenstein grows with his increased obscurity. No less: whereas Gustav Adolf vindicates the efforts of the historian, Wallenstein merely reproduces obscurity by calling into question the nature of those sources that transmit his story. The documents attesting to Wallenstein's guilt as a conspirator are belied by the intuition that matters might have been different. Finally, Schiller's dissatisfaction in his depiction of the events leading to Wallenstein's assassination must be also be understood as a failure in the structure of historical movement in the narrative, for the extreme legibility that connected the lives and violent deaths of Henry and Gustav into particular (if also differing) moments of profound historical understanding is in the case of Wallenstein utterly absent. In the place of certainly about the operation of history, Schiller now has only speculation and doubt.

By the end of Book Four, Schiller's *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* has become a reflection on the obscurity of historical knowledge. Indeed, the trajectory he

[13]Schiller, *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs*, SW, 4:688.

establishes over the course of these first four of the five books – from pan-optic and omniscient narrator whose task is to see, to the actor whose visual actions provide knowledge, to the actor whose visual obscurity obstructs knowledge – suggests that for Schiller ultimately the foundation of historical knowledge itself is now the visibility and legibility of the historical actor as sign of history's meaning. Because the actor as sign – at times clear and legible, at times obscure and illegible – is now the medium for the transmission of meaning, the explicit representation of history (as narrative) is now a different challenge: the representation of the historical actor. In this regard Wallenstein, although obscure, is nevertheless a clearly delineated representational problem.

Aesthetics and the transition from history to drama

This representational problem involves historical actors at that moment in time when their action has reached a peak not only in its ability to influence circumstance but also in its susceptibility to the contingency of circumstance. In the three cases discussed above – Henry IV, Gustav Adolf, and Wallenstein – this peak resulted in death. Indeed, at least with regard to Henry IV and Wallenstein, Schiller makes clear that their assassination, the instance in which it becomes clear that they are no longer in control of their circumstances, is the result of their ambition. The coupling of death and historical significance, of extinguishing and illumination, yields a pivotal moment in historical time incarnate with extreme clarity in the action and reaction of the individual. Schiller devotes his attention to the representation of individual action in time – to the aestheticization of the historical actor – in his aesthetic thought of the 1790s.

In order to reprise the stakes of aestheticization, I want to jump ahead briefly from the early 1790s, when Schiller finished *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* and began his aesthetic work in the wake of his reading of Kant, to 1797 when his work on the *Wallenstein* trilogy was already underway. During this later period he also participated with Goethe in the project of defining the respective spheres of operation of the various genres: the dramatic, the epic, the visual. In the letter to Goethe dated September 14-15, 1797 (also discussed in the previous chapter) Schiller lays out a process he calls *absolute Bestimmung des Gegenstands* (absolute determination of the object), and explains as well *why* he finds this process necessary. Foremost, absolute determination of the object involves the selection of an object appropriate for the genre; the reduction of the empirical particularity of the object to the point where the object now mediates general or universal truths; and the placement of the object in the most fitting moment in time – what Schiller calls the *praegnanter Moment* (pregnant moment).[14] This process of absolute determination is intended to render the object suitable for poetic representation while still maintaining its particular, sensual, empirical qualities – lest the poet otherwise draw too heavily on the imagination at the expense of experience (however abstracted in its passage into the work of art). Its overall import is that it renders the particular objects of the empirically known world as vehicles for the representation and knowledge of the universal. When Schiller admits that his rendering of Wallenstein's assassination in *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* is unsatisfactory, he formulates a representational problem that he eventually works through to the point of a theory of representation articulated in the 1797 letter – how to make sense of Wallenstein the man, at a moment in history that seems to define him yet that remains unclear.

[14]Schiller to Goethe, September 14-15, 1797), WuB, 12:321-323.

Moreover, the moment of Wallenstein's assassination with its attendant and unanswerable questions will become the object of the *Wallenstein* trilogy. Schiller in fact had no little difficulty disciplining the vast material at his disposal for the trilogy, but eventually found the solution to his problem, in part under the influence of Goethe's 1797 essay *Über Laokoon*, by structuring the trilogy around its own pregnant moment as a dramatic turning point – as it were, he returns, by way of an Aristotelian concept contested by Lessing and Goethe, to his own earlier historiographical practice of privileging the moment in historical time at which charismatic agency meets an end that it has summoned itself.[15] Lessing regarded the pregnant moment as the moment anticipating that which ought not to be represented visually – the pregnant moment is the moment of anticipation, also sometimes of fear. Goethe by contrast argued in his essay on Laocoon that the pregnant moment is transitional and thereby also of the highest aesthetic order in its capacity to stimulate the senses. Schiller explains in a letter to Goethe on October 2, 1797 how he regards the status of this moment in the drama.

> Der Moment der Handlung ist so prägnant, daß alles was zur Vollständigkeit derselben gehört, natürlich ja in gewißem Sinn nothwendig darinn liegt, daraus hervor geht. Es bleibt nichts blindes darinn, nach allen Seiten ist es geöfnet. Zugleich gelang es mir, die Handlung gleich von Anfang in eine solche Præcitipation und Neigung zu bringen, daß sie in steetiger und beschleunigter Bewegung zu ihrem Ende eilt. Da der Hauptcharakter eigentlich retardierend ist, so thun die Umstände eigentlich alles zur Crise und dieß wird, wie ich denke, den tragischen Eindruck sehr erhöhen.[16]
>
> The moment of the action is so pregnant, that everything pertaining to its completion must in a certain sense naturally lie in it and proceed from it. Nothing blind remains, it is open in every direction. At the same time I succeeded in bringing the action immediately from the beginning in such a

[15]Ilse Graham discusses the Goethe-Schiller correspondence concerning *Über Laokoon* and Schiller's return to work on *Wallenstein* in October, 1797 in *Schiller's Drama: Talent and Integrity* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1974), 245-283.
[16]Schiller to Goethe, October 2, 1797, excerpted in Schiller, SW, 4:621-622.

> precipitation and decline that it rushes to its end in constant and accelerated motion. As the main character is actually retarding, it is the circumstances that bring everything to crisis and this, I think, will quite elevate the tragic impact.

If Lessing theorizes the correct moment for representation (a moment of anticipation), and Goethe theorizes the representation of the moment (the sensual stimulation of transition), Schiller dramatizes what occurs within this moment. He opens it up to scrutiny as his primary aesthetic object, and he offers a dramatized narrative of what occurs within its tight confines that will precipitate a rapid end.[17] Indeed, his effort at the total exposure of the moment – such that, in his words, there is no blind spot, everything is open – entails as well a nearly three-dimensional approach to time in space. In referring to Wallenstein as a retarding force, Schiller employs the vocabulary of epic narrative time he and Goethe had explicated in *Über epische und dramatische Dichtung* to describe movement within narrative: the central action accelerates and the main character slows down, inducing a tragic clash that is unfolded in an extended present realized spatially on the stage.

But, as a dramatization for the stage, this moment will be presented both visually and verbally. The acceleration from beginning to tragic end occurs not only through action performed for spectators, but also through language that comments on action, summons action, seeks to prevent action, arouses reaction. And yet this language is part of a visual spectacle. As I have suggested, and will subsequently argue, Schiller's problem – for the solution to which he turns to the structuring device of the pregnant moment – is that of the representation of the historical actor at a moment in time when

[17]For this comparison of Lessing and Goethe, see Inka Mülder-Bach, "Sichtbarkeit und Lesbarkeit. Goethes Aufsatz *Über Laokoon*," in *Das Laokoon-Paradigma. Zeichenregime im 18. Jahrhundert*, Inge Baxmann, Michael Franz, and Wolfgang Schäffner, Eds. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), 474.

this actor's actions, even fatal actions, seem to clarify the meaning of events, to provide coherence. This problem grows more acute with Wallenstein, for his death does have the same clarifying, ordering effect of the deaths of Henry IV or Gustav Adolf. The pregnant moment of the drama is not unfolded through dramatic language alone, but also through action – specifically, action that is also meaningful, even in its capacity to rub against the language of the drama.

I turn to the concept of *Charakter* in order to consider how the pregnant moment of the drama may also be unfolded through action. *Charakter* and *das Charakteristische* are prominent concepts in the aesthetic thought of the period, referring to a category of knowledge about the psychic constitution or essence of the individual to be gained sensually from the individual's expressive action.[18] Contemporary to Schiller, for example, Heinrich Meyer defines *Charakterbild* (the image of character) as that category of visual representation in which action serves the better to represent the essential nature of the human subject depicted. Meyer writes in *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst* (*On the Objects of the Visual Arts*, 1798): "Es sind Abbildungen vom Menschen selbst, von seinem Wesen, seinem Innern, nicht nur eine unbedeutende Ähnlichkeit mit der äußern Gestalt derselben" ("They are illustrations of humanity itself, of its essence, its interior, not only an insignificant similarity to the latter's exterior form.")[19] The act

[18]For a general overview of the concept *Charakter* see Thomas Bremer, "Charakter/das Charakteristische," *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, Volume 1, Karlheinz Barck et al., Ed. (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler Verlag, 2000-), 772-794.

[19]Johann Heinrich Meyer, *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst*, in *Klassik und Klassizismus*, Helmut Pfotenhauer and Peter Sprengel, Eds. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1995), 173. I should point out that Meyer's is by no means the reigning understanding of *Charakter* in the period. Writing also of the arts, specifically of the concept of *das Kunstschöne* (the artistically beautiful, the beautiful in art), Alois Hirt describes *Charakteristik* more as a matter of appearance than of an inner essence conveyed visually. But this should not be taken as superficial by comparison with Meyer's understanding. For Hirt, *Charakteristik* is achieved in the work of art when parts retain their object-specific individuality while also tending toward the completion of a whole suggesting of the purposiveness

breaks through the potential deception of appearance to reveal interior motivation and define the actor. It is useful to recall that in Meyer's scheme of representational modes (discussed at greater length in first chapter) *Charakterbild* is close to yet evaluated more highly than *historische Darstellung* (historical depiction). The latter uses the individual actor as a visual device for representing time; the former uses the action in time to express the individual. This couplet is reminiscent of Schiller's own historiographical penchant in *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs* for focusing on the creative-destructive moment in time at which individual action is overcome by a historical dynamic of its own making, whereby the significance of action itself and of the role of the individual grows most clear. Meyer's privileging the image of character over the image of time accords with his search for a stable symbolic in visual representation. For Schiller, however, the drama concerns the passage of time marked by the disappearance of the great individual – the task of understanding the passage of time is inseparable from the revelation of individual motivation. *Charakter* becomes an aesthetic site for reducing the complex interplay of human action and reaction to a sign of the passage of time incarnate in the active individual.

I believe that Schiller offers a model for gauging *Charakter* in action and gesture in the essays *Kallias oder über die Schönheit* (*Kallias or On Beauty*, letters from Schiller to Körner, dated 1792-1793, first published in 1847) and *Über Anmut und Würde* (*On Grace and Dignity*, 1793). He does not explicitly address the issue of *Charakter* in these essays; rather, his focus is beauty. His basic contention is that beauty is freedom given in appearance to the intuition. Natural beauty and the beauty of art occur as the result of a

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of the work of art. See Alois Hirt, "Versuch über das Kunstschöne" [1797] in *Die Horen* Jahrgang 1797 (Weimar: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 2000),623-659.

complex of natural determinations or aesthetic regulations (Schiller's general term is *Technik*, technique or technology) – form is a product of an array of external influences. But a judgment of beauty may not inquire into this underlying technique or technology – beauty must appear as freely determined by the object, as *heautonomous* (self-legislated), not as the result of heteronomous influence. On the human level, grace is the appearance of beauty in movement and action that may be intuited as the sign of harmony between human will and purpose. Grace as the unintended effect of action must also appear as the result of a heautonomous concordance between material circumstance (what Schiller refers to as *Materie des Willens* and as *Zweck*, matter/material of the will and purpose) and psychic state (*Form des Willens* and *Gesinnung* – form of the will and attitude/disposition) – when the action is graceful, the actor appears to will what is also necessary, to be psychically disposed toward the exterior constraints of action.[20] Notwithstanding the emphasis on beauty and grace – the essays' contributions to Schiller's inquiry into the objective ground of the judgment of beauty – what remains is a theory for gauging the momentary relation between will and constraint *visually* in the sensual impression left by action. When the central question concerns beauty and grace, Schiller expressly demands that the technical dynamics of beauty and grace be of no concern to the intuition. Nevertheless, he delineates a visual technique for inquiring specifically into action as the product of an interplay between the will of the actor and the heteronomy of exterior forces that influence the will, a technique focused on the body and expressive motion of the actor as indicative of the psychic disposition of the actor.

[20]Schiller, *Kallias oder Über die Schönheit. Briefe an Gottfried Körner*, SW, 5: 394-433. See especially the section dated "Jena, den 23. Februar 1793" (408-426). And Schiller, *Über Anmut und Würde*, SW, 5:434-435.

The actor also becomes the locus and particular, performative embodiment of the confluence of motives that can induce change over time.

Schiller's more purely philosophical inquiry into beauty is accompanied, even underpinned and substantiated by an inquiry into the visual experience of the general made flesh in the actor in the embodiment of conflict between will and constraint.[21] In this respect Schiller's attention to the body and to gesture as signs that convey meaning is very much a part of the concern for the status and technique of the actor initiated earlier in the 18th century. It has been argued that Schiller (among others) abandoned the naturalism associated with *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* and taken to an extreme in the dramatic production of *Sturm und Drang*, in favor of a more symbolic understanding of the function and appearance of the actor as staged embodiment of a generalized human experience. In *Über Anmut und Würde* he even expresses skepticism that the stage actor will ever be able to learn or properly imitate the gesture expressive of the state of the soul from within the medium of acting itself – when it comes to grace, to true expressive and revealing gesture, the actor must draw from human experience. The stage actor is now but an abstraction and formalization of the human condition of will struggling with necessity.[22] Schiller refashions the actor on the stage as the formal site and visual object for observing the *general* forces operative in the movement of history, incarnated in the individual and rendered most perceptible at the moment of their most intense interaction.

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[21]John Guthrie's recent study of the role of gesture in Schiller's dramas, for example, places this inquiry in several contexts, including Schiller's medical studies, and also the reforms of acting undertaken in the 18th century, involving an increasing naturalism and attention to gesture. See John Guthrie, *Schiller the Dramatist: A Study of Gesture in the Plays* (Rochester: Camden House, 2009), especially 1-46. For more information on the German theater, the acting reform, and the attention to the actor's body, see also Michael Sosulski, *Theater and Nation in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007) and Erika Fischer-Lichte, *History of European Drama and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

[22]Schiller,*Über Anmut und Würde*, SW, 5:451-452.

***Wallenstein*: speech, vision, and action**

With the *Wallenstein* trilogy, Schiller brings together these strands of thought in a portrayal of the great individual not merely at a pivotal or pregnant moment in time, but visibly working against the current of the moment. Moreover, by dramatizing a moment in time, he thereby expands this moment into an unfolding series of constituent developments – the passage of time is rendered visible in stage actors enacting a moment in historical time. Moreover, the meaning of action and the search for an authority that will sanction correct action are configured as a tension between words – historical narrative, debate, even the individual word – and vision stimulated variously by the deceptive sign or the sign signifying real transformation in the dynamics of power that constitute the moment.

The structure and development of the trilogy reflect and sort out this interplay by concentrating on those around Wallenstein *before* concentrating on Wallenstein himself, while simultaneously modeling an anticipation of the future that ultimately devolves upon Wallenstein. In *Wallensteins Lager* (*Wallenstein's Camp*) the army, camped before Pilsen (Wallenstein's winter quarters) debates Wallenstein's reputation and speculates on his future course of action. As the title *Die Piccolomini* (*The Piccolomini*) suggests, the second part concerns the machinations of Wallenstein's closest and most trusted advisors, among them his oldest comrade Octavio Piccolomini and Octavio's son Max, who also enjoys the unique paternal affection of Wallenstein. *Wallensteins Tod* (*Wallenstein's Death*) presents Wallenstein at the moment in which his plan (to defect from imperial service and ally himself and his forces with the Swedes) has been discovered and he is

forced to take decisive action. Matters climax in *Wallensteins Tod* as Wallenstein is also confronted by conspiracies and ambitions developing over the course of the trilogy: several of Wallenstein's confidants, foremost Octavio Piccolomini, defect to the imperial cause; Max Piccolomini is rejected as an appropriate suitor for Wallenstein's daughter; and Wallenstein's soldiers, refusing to ally themselves with the Swedes, take up arms against their general.

The *moment* of the drama begins far in advance of this climax, however. The tension between anticipation and action gains momentum already from the beginning of *Wallensteins Lager*. Here the army is camped and inactive before the city of Pilsen; Wallenstein and his generals are in Pilsen; his wife and daughter have just arrived, as has the imperial ambassador Questenberg. Pilsen is the stage upon which history will presently unfold, and the growing army is an audience left to its own devices and distractions.

Schiller stages the impatient, and spectatorial, anticipation of the army in terms of the search for reliable signs and the distraction of the unreliable. In Scene 2, for example, the Sergeant-Major (*Wachtmeister*) and Trumpeter (*Trompeter*) wonder why the army has received doubled pay despite that it is camped and inactive. The Trumpeter avers that it is in honor of the arrival of Wallenstein's wife and daughter, to which the Sergeant-Major responds: "Das ist nur der Schein" ("That's just for show").[23] In his opinion, the increase in pay is intended to induce the army at Pilsen to welcome and entertain new soldiers arriving from throughout the empire – which leads to further speculation on why the army and its leadership are amassing in full force, and why an

[23]Friedrich Schiller, *Wallensteins Lager*, 2.58, SW, 2. Translation: Friedrich Schiller, *Wallenstein's Camp*, in *The Robbers and Wallenstein*, translated by F.J. Lamport (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1979), 177.

imperial ambassador has arrived (he is identified not by name but by his wig and gold chain of office). Speculation on the meaning of events is configured in terms of a distracting *Schein* (show, appearance) that obscures the real dynamics of the moment, referenced by the term *Werk* in the Trumpeter's declaration: "Ja, es ist wieder was im Werke!" ("Yes, there is something in the works again!").[24] Their success in focusing attention on an event of significance is immediately undone in the brief Scene 3 in a dispute over jewelry and gambling that appropriates and debases the language of appearance, sign, meaning. The Sharpshooter (*Scharfschütz*) and Croat (*Kroat*) argue over a necklace. The Sharpshooter offers the Croat a fine blue cap which he claims to have won "im Glücksrad" ("on the wheel of fortune"). His reasoning is merely: "Es ist mir nur um den schönen Schein" ("I only want it for the show").[25] The two exchange as the Sharpshooter declares to the Trumpeter and Sergeant-Major: "Wir tauschen hier! Die Herrn sind Zeugen!" ("We're exchanging here! The gentlemen are our witnesses!").[26] The "Glücksrad" announces a revolution in the use of basic elements of discourse, and their continued recycling throughout *Wallensteins Lager*, adding as well the notion of chance that undermines the decisiveness sought by the Sergeant-Major and Trumpeter in Scene 2. Scene 3 pushes the discourse on historical events (the arrival of the duchess and daughter, the gathering of the armies, the presence of the Viennese ambassador) in a banal, even distracting direction, figured in the Sharpshooter's admission "Es ist mir nur um den schönen Schein" ("I only want it for the show"). For, this utterance is in drastic opposition to the Sergeant-Major's previous dismissal of the arrival of Wallenstein's family as *Schein*, an event of no real explanatory meaning and one that obscures a truth.

[24]Schiller, *Wallensteins Lager* 2.65.
[25]Schiller, *Wallensteins Lager* 3.100. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Camp*, 179.
[26]Schiller, *Wallensteins Lager* 3.104.

Formerly employed rhetorically to signal distraction from the true inner working of the moment, *Schein* is now the preferred object of attention. The "show" of the ritual arrival of the duchess and daughter, or of the necklace, become routinized as the standard of "appearance"(another translation of *Schein*) – what appears is now called into question, and a more concerted viewing (the *zeugen*, witnessing, of the Trumpeter and Sergeant-Major) become deceptive and debased acts.

The distraction of vision and the preference for the superficial in the search for meaning are symptomatic of a lack of action in the camp. The soldiers present themselves as men of the deed, not the word, and so the winter's inactive anticipation of what Wallenstein will do assumes the form of a torrent of words. Indeed, *Wallensteins Lager* is given over entirely to the depiction of soldiers talking, yet typically without resolving the issue of what the future holds. Wallenstein's own motto is cited by the *Wachtmeister* for the purpose of legitimating discussion – "So sagt er, ich hörts wohl einigemal, / Ich stand dabei. »Das Wort ist frei, / Die Tat ist stumm, der Gehorsam blind«, / Dies urkundlich seine Worte sind" ("I heard him say so a number of times. / Now let me see – Yes: 'Speech is free, / Action is silent, obedience blind,' / Those are his very words, you'll find").[27] Yet the freedom of speech also sanctions the absolute variance of the word, its incapacity to convey meaning, in contrast to the wordless, unreflective deed. The speech of the First Trooper (*erster Jäger*) in Scene 6 exemplifies the conflict between word and deed while also underscoring the soldier's expectation of action.

ERSTER JÄGER. Lief ich darum aus der Schul und der Lehre,
Daß ich die Fron und die Galeere,
Die Schreibstub und ihre engen Wände

[27]Schiller, *Wallensteins Lager*, 6.338-341. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Camp*, 187.

In dem Feldlager wiederfände? –
Flott will ich leben und müßig gehn,
Alle Tag was Neues sehn,
Mich dem Augenblick frisch vertrauen,
Nicht zurück, auch nicht vorwärts schauen –
Drum hab ich meine Haut dem Kaiser verhandelt,
Daß keine Sorg mich mehr anwandelt.[28] (*WL* 6.238-247)

FIRST RIFLEMAN: Did I run away from my desk in the school
Only to find the same labour and rule,
The narrow study, the toil and the cramp
Awaiting me here in the soldier's camp?
I want to live well, not have too much to do,
Every day of my life see something new,
Cheerfully seize the moment, in sum,
Not brood on the past, nor on things to come –
That's why I've sold Ferdinand my skin:
In the face of care I can merrily grin.

The freedom of speech is a quality of its variability and its association with the specific and troubling over-stimulation of choice and an excess of thought. In the motto, free speech is contrasted with the deed and an obedience stripped of sensual and expressive faculties (silence/muteness, blindness). In the First Trooper's speech, the life of action is optically enticing but also given over to an immediacy of sensory stimulation at the expense of an expanded faculty of vision (a shift described in temporal terms such as *Alle Tag, dem Augenblick, Nicht zurück, nicht vorwärts* – translatable as "every day, the moment, not backwards, not forwards"). Despite that the soldiers appropriate Wallenstein's sanctioned freedom of the word when they argue, they prefer a life of action in the present moment, without the care associated with the word: "Drum hab ich meine Haut dem Kaiser verhandelt, / Daß keine Sorg mich mehr anwandelt" ("That's why I've sold Ferdinand my skin: / In the face of care I can merrily grin.").

[28]Schiller, *Wallensteins Lager*, 6.238-247. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Camp*, 184.

The relationship between the deed and the moment bears upon the understanding of historical movement operative at the root of these discourses. In "selling his skin" to the emperor the First Trooper is no more free than he was in the servitude of schooling. But in referencing a freedom from the confinement of the walls of the school (likened to imprisonment) and the freedom from deliberation configured temporally as a carelessness about time, the First Trooper formulates a crude definition of freedom as residing in action and movement in the present. This unreflective and temporally careless action nonetheless is held to resonate in time and to make history, as the Second Trooper (*zweiter Jäger*) attests in another monolog recounting the exploits of the *Holkische Jäger*: "Wo wir nur durchgekommen sind – / Erzählen Kinder und Kindeskind / Nach hundert und aber hundert Jahren / Von dem Holk noch und seinen Scharen" ("Everywhere we have left our trail, / Generations will tell the tale/ For a hundred years and a hundred more / Of Holk and his men and their deeds in this war").[29] History takes the form speech or words long after the fact, but it is the deed – action, motion, the clearly visible and easily interpreted ("Wo wir nur durchgekommen sind" – also translatable as "Wherever we have merely passed through") – that makes history in a moment in which one trusts oneself entirely to the present.

In their inactivity, configured in an excess of speech and debate, the soldiers sentimentalize the active life of the past and await the deeds of the future. Their inactivity is figured in terms of endless speech about action, and speculation on current events that seeks unsuccessfully to determine the nature of the moment from visual signs. The fundamental problem is not that vision itself is unreliable, nor for that matter that the army lacks visual prowess. Already in Scene 2 a discussion of appearance and meaning

[29]Schiller, *Wallensteins Lager*, 6.212-231. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Camp*, 184.

led the Sergeant-Major and Trumpeter to the conclusion that events of importance ("Ja, es ist wieder was im Werke" – "Yes, there is something in the works again") are occurring beneath a layer of distracting signs (*Schein*). But events past, present, and future revolve around Wallenstein, who is physically absent, His abstract presence is figured in speech about him, references to him that avoid naming him directly (he is more commonly referred to as *der Fürst, der Friedländer* – the Prince, Friedland); and his own image on a coin adduced in the final scene of *Wallensteins Lager* as proof of Wallenstein's authority. As men of action the soldiers have not doubted the source of authority; yet when camped and enjoying an unusual leisure of endless talk, they cast about desperately for signs of the authority that will inspire action, indeed for any sign of meaning. If the soldiers suffer an excess of inactive talk, they also suffer an unusually high degree of visual stimulation without satisfaction – in a reversal of Wallenstein's motto, with no one to obey the army is no longer blind. It becomes rather an audience impatient for the spectacle that will restart the forward motion of time.

Schiller redeploys the motifs of *Wallensteins Lager* in *Die Piccolomini* – the meaning of signs, the conflict between word and vision, the interpretation of the image. Yet the situation is from the outset of the second part of the trilogy quite different: whereas the camp is as a stage and the army an audience, in the Pilsen town hall we have actors on the stage, the active objects of the army's anticipation. Schiller describes the scene in the initial stage direction as "*Ein alter gotischer Saal auf dem Rathause zu Pilsen, mit Fahnen und anderm Kriegsgeräte dekoriert*" ("*A large old Gothic room in the*

Town Hall of Pilsen, decorated with banners and other warlike trophies").[30] The town hall is the current seat of power and location of those actors whose authority and decision influence the outside world, including the camp, an interior world in which the outside world is discussed, even influenced, yet at a distance, and – as will be demonstrated – often *literally* not clearly seen. If the camp is prey to an excess of visual stimulation, the town hall will often suffer from the lack of it.

For example, the arrival of the duchess and daughter at Pilsen is described by Isolani, one of Wallenstein's generals, in terms of delightful visual distraction in Act I Scene 1. "Und siehe da! der Herzog sorgt dafür, / daß auch was Holdes uns das Aug ergötze" ("But look! The duke has taken care to find / Some fairer object for our eyes as well").[31] Isolani's expression of visual delight is accompanied, however, by a parallel conversation between Illo and Buttler concerning the absence of some of Wallenstein's other generals. The stage direction reads: "Illo (*der nachdenkendgestanden, zu Buttlern, den er ein wenig auf die Seite führt*)" ("Illo [*who has been standing musing, to* Butler, *drawing him aside a little*])." While the imperative of vision ("Und siehe da!" – "But look!") locates a distracting spectacle, the hushed private conversation is accompanied by reflection and the probing of details in order to arrive at a truth: "Wie wißt Ihr, daß Graf Gallas außenbleibt?" ("How do you know that Gallas will not come?").[32] That these instances occur simultaneously on the stage signals a development in *Die Piccolomini* that distinguishes it from *Wallensteins Lager*: whereas in the first part the army as a whole works through its visual and verbal search for knowledge, authority, and action, in

[30]Friedrich Schiller, *Die Piccolomin*i, Act I Scene 1, SW, 2:315. The English is from Friedrich Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, in *The Robbers and Wallenstein*, translated by F.J. Lamport (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1979), 220.
[31]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, I.1.38-39. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 220.
[32]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, I.1.40. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 220.

Die Piccolomini the stage is occupied by competing versions of knowledge and competing attempts to direct action. What the army seeks in the first part is enacted on stage in the second in a dramatization of attempts to instigate action and move history, with its own accompanying dynamic of verbal disagreement and the insignificance of the word, keen insight and impairment of vision.

As in *Wallensteins Lager* so too in *Die Piccolomini* the problematic aspect of vision is not unreliability but rather a susceptibility to distraction on the part of the beholder and the need for a penetrating visual prowess. This becomes explicit in a private conversation between Questenberg and Octavio Piccolomini. Questenberg professes shock to discover the imperial army's exclusive loyalty to Wallenstein, thereby emphasizing that his eyes, closed in Vienna, are now open: "Wir sahens nur mit Höflingsaugen an, / Die von dem Glanz des Throns geblendet waren; / Den Feldherrn hatten wir noch nicht gesehn, / Den allvermögenden, in seinem Lager" ("We saw these things with our courtiers' eyes, / Still blinded by the throne's imperial blaze; / The general himself we had not seen, /All-powerful, encamped amidst his troops").[33] Questenberg contrasts a vision that suffers impairment or distortion both physically (the vision of Wallenstein impaired by the optical brilliance of the imperial throne) and cognitively (in the courtiers' imagination that authority emanates from the throne), with the more direct vision of experience. Furthermore, Questenberg's experience in camp invites comparison with the experience of others: the visual capabilities of Wallenstein's soldiers are, as we have seen, severely burdened by over-stimulation and thus waver between the perception of *Werk* and the distraction of *Schein*. For Questenberg, the visual experience of the camp has been one of perceptive penetration that succeeds in

[33]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, I.3.289-292. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 229.

recognizing and understanding the implications of a basic semiotic and power realignment: "Hier ist kein Kaiser mehr. Der Fürst ist Kaiser!" ("Here is no Emperor more. The Prince is Emperor!").[34]

Yet Questenberg's visual prowess falters shortly thereafter, during a confrontation with Max Piccolomini. It becomes clear to Octavio that his son, who has just escorted Wallenstein's wife and daughter from Carinthia to Bohemia, has fallen in love with Thekla, the daughter. Max reveals this indirectly in passionate terms of having seen peace in lands hitherto untouched by war – a contention Octavio and Questenberg do not dismiss; indeed, Questenberg emotionally corroborates the veracity of this vision. Questenberg also confidently dismisses as delusion Max's expressed devotion to Wallenstein and his harsh criticism of the Viennese court, after Max has left the scene, and pleads with Octavio: "und wir lassen ihn in diesem Wahn / Dahingehen, rufen ihn nicht gleich / Zurück, daß wir die Augen auf der Stelle / Ihm öffnen?" ("and shall / We let him thus deluded go, not call / Him back straightway, that here and now his eyes / Be opened?").[35] Octavio has recognized that his son loves Thekla and that his loyalty to Wallenstein is stronger, and thus responds: "*Mir* hat er sie jetzt geöffnet, / Und mehr erblick ich, als mich freut" ("It is mine that he has opened, / And what I see, I do not like!").[36] Questenberg's complaint is described in the stage direction as "*Dringend und ungeduldig*" ("urgently, impatiently"), a gestural echo of the "*Heftigkeit*" (vehemence, passion) with which Max has defended Wallenstein; Octavio by contrast is described as "*aus einem tiefen Nachdenken zu sich kommend*" ("*rousing himself from profound thought*"). Just as earlier Isolani's momentary visual stimulation was contrasted with the

[34]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, I.3.294. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 229.
[35]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, I.5.584-587. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 239.
[36]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, I.5.587-588. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 239.

"*nachdenkend*" (musing, reflective) Illo, so also here the passion and despair of Max and Questenberg leave them ignorant; whereas Octavio exercises a vision distanced from its object by reflection and thus demonstrates an understanding of a new problem that will complicate his own plans for action. As if to drive home the point that Questenberg is now impaired by his inability to see what has just been revealed before his eyes, Schiller has him questioning Octavio further about the latter's rapid alterations in speech: "Besinnen Sie sich, Freund, / Daß Sie in lauter Rätseln zu mir reden" ("Consider now, my friend, / These are but riddles that you speak to me").[37] And whereas previously Questenberg's visual perceptivity was sharpened by moving through the camp itself ("Der Gang, den ich in Ihrer Seite jetzt / Durchs Lager tat" – "as through the camp I walked /Beside you"[38]), here the confusing veneer of detail provided by Octavio – why is it too late? to whom do we now go, to Wallenstein or to "her"? – prohibits movement. The result that Questenberg must be led away by Octavio into a future now less clear (the direction reads "*Er führt ihn weg*" – "He leads him away"[39]).

Wallenstein himself demonstrates varying degrees of perceptivity with regard to verbal representation and visual prowess. The bulk of Act II Scene 7, for example (featuring Questenberg's official audience with Wallenstein) demonstrates the intertwining of two competing versions of history. Questenberg's version emphasizes Wallenstein's repeated failure to act; and Wallenstein's is a catalog of complaints about mistreatment at the hands of the court. Wallenstein responds to Questenberg's narrative with impatience: "Den Eingang spart," "Zur Sache, wenns beliebt," and "Ersparen Sies, uns aus dem Zeitungsblatt / Zu melden, was wir schaudernd selbst erlebt" ("No

[37]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, I.5.601-602. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 239.
[38]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, I.3.295-296. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 229.
[39]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, 334.

introductions," "To business, if you please," and "You need not read the chronicle to me / Of horrors we have seen with our own eyes").[40] Eventually he professes not to recognize the events Questenberg describes (the fall of Regensburg); when Max explains to him that his army was in Silesia at the time, fighting the Swedes and Saxons, he declares: "Recht! Über der Beschreibung da vergeß ich // Den ganzen Krieg" ("Good! Why, his description made me quite forget / The war *we* fought").[41] Wallenstein contrasts the veracity of his own experience of the past with an abstract and unfamiliar narrative reconstruction of events. The implication, echoing the stakes of the endless talk of *Wallensteins Lager*, is the incompatibility of word and action – underscored by Wallenstein's impatient "Zur Sache, wenns beliebt" ("To business, if you please"), an utterance that ends debate about the past and its accompanying verbal excess.

Questenberg's ultimatum, by contrast – the emperor's request for eight regiments to accompany the Spanish *infanta* to The Netherlands – is greeted with explicitly visual language.

> WALLENSTEIN. Ich merk, ich merk – Acht Regimenter – Wohl!
> Wohl ausgesonnen, Pater Lamormain!
> Wär der Gedank nicht so verwünscht gescheit,
> Man wär versucht, ihn herzlich dumm zu nennen.
> Achttausend Pferde! Ja! Ja! Es ist richtig,
> Ich seh es kommen.
> QUESTENBERG. Es ist nichts dahinter
> Zu sehn. Die Klugheit räts, die Not gebeuts.
> WALLENSTEIN. Wie, mein Herr Abgesandter? Ich solls wohl
> Nicht merken, daß mans müde ist, die Macht,
> Des Schwertes Griff in meiner Hand zu sehn?[42]

> WALLENSTEIN: I see, I see – Eight regiments! Yes, yes!
> A cunning plan, good Father Lamormain!
> Were it not schemed with such accursed cunning

[40]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, II.7.1021, 1038, 1059-1060. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 256-257.
[41]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, II.7.1088-1089. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 258.
[42]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, II.7.1232-1241. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 263.

I might have thought a fool made such request.
Eight thousand horse! Yes, yes, I see what lie's
Behind it.
QUESTENBERG: I assure you there is nothing
To see. Prudence, necessity command it.
WALLENSTEIN: What, sir ambassador? Should I not notice that
Your masters tire of seeing it is I
Who wield the sword, the power, in my hand?

The dispute becomes a contest over what is to be seen and how it is to be interpreted, in which the two men circle around the issue of the moment in time and speculate on its architecture. According to Questenberg, evident necessity is the influential factor; for Wallenstein, conspiracy to remove him from power a second time is the fundamental, hidden dynamic. The *visual* argument between Wallenstein's and Questenberg becomes a matter of, literally, conflicting visions, even of a conflict over the power to produce historical spectacle: the spectacle of retaining power, figured in the sight of the sword in Wallenstein's hand; or the spectacle of regaining power, figured in the draining away of Wallenstein's forces for the emperor's use.

Die Piccolomini is about what may be seen or not seen. The inexplicable absence of allies, the secret love affair; the shift of allegiance that is the subject of private conversation, contrasted with the public and dramatic performance of power, confidence, and loyalty – the dramatic currents of the second part of the trilogy collide beneath the surface, only to become fully and simultaneously visible in *Wallensteins Tod*. At the same time, these currents gather about Wallenstein, who is also largely unseen in *Die Piccolomini*, appearing in Act II only long enough to demonstrate confidence in his authority. The exchange with Questenberg in Scene 7 – "den Eingang spart," "Zur Sache, wenns beliebt" ("No introductions," "To business, if you please") – indicates Wallenstein's sheer impatience with the past and narrativization, the desire to get things

moving again. Wallenstein's brief presence on the stage in *Die Piccolomini* suffices to reassert his dominance in the drama as the actor who calls conflict down upon himself through the power of his own ambition. Indeed, in Act II Scenes 5 and 6 he clearly demonstrates a confidence in his own power, the ramifications of which are that he may or may not even be playing a game with his closest confidants, and that he may even disregard propitious circumstances to act when he sees fit:

> WALLENSTEIN. Die Zeit ist noch nicht da.
> TERZKY. So sagst du immer.
> Wann aber wird es Zeit sein?
> WALLENSTEIN. Wenn ichs sage.[43]
>
> WALLENSTEIN: The time is not yet come.
> TERZKY: So you say always.
> When will the time be come?
> WALLENSTEIN: The day I say.

Wallenstein claims for himself the authority to produce the circumstances most propitious for action – no less than the power to control time. His commands to Questenberg indicate an impatience with anything other than his own ability to decide not merely what will happen, but when it will occur, and thus also to hold all others in a state of anticipation until he chooses to act. Yet, as is immediately revealed, he bases his own authority on the abstracted vision of astrology, another power he claims for himself owing to the circumstances of his birth and thus also to the exclusion of those nearest him ("Du kannst in *die* Geheimnisse nicht schauen" – "You are not able to look into *those* secrets"[44]). Wallenstein's power of vision is radically at odds with the visual prowess of those around him. Thus, while *Die Piccolomini* unfolds as a contest of ambitions figured in conflict between speech and vision, Wallenstein absents himself to follow his own

[43]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, II.6.958-959. Translation: Schiller, *The Piccolomini*, 254.
[44]Schiller, *Die Piccolomini*, II.6.969.

visual pursuits in astrology. At the opening of *Wallensteins Tod* he is appropriately secluded in an astrological observatory regarding the illustrations of planets when Terzky brings news that their conspiracy has been discovered.

Schiller's Laocoon: *Wallensteins Tod,* Act III

While *Wallensteins Lager* and *Die Piccolomini* thematize an anticipation of action from the absent Wallenstein, in *Wallensteins Tod* Wallenstein is present on the stage, increasingly isolated from those he has relied on, and forced to take action. Those dynamics that have developed secretly over the course of the first two parts of the trilogy come rapidly to light in the first acts of *Wallensteins Tod*. Wallenstein learns that his conspiracy has been discovered; and, in part under the considerable pressure of Illo and Terzky and the psychological manipulation of the Countess Terzky, he agrees to an alliance with the Swedes. Likewise, Octavio secures the loyalty of Isolani and several other of Wallenstein's generals as well as, more importantly, of Colonel Buttler, who insists despite his break with Wallenstein that he will stay behind with the general but will not disclose why ("Die Tat wirds lehren" – "The deed will show").[45] In the climactic Act III it becomes clear that Octavio has betrayed Wallenstein and that Thekla loves Max Piccolomini, who in turn rashly hopes to possess her despite her father's dynastic ambitions and Max's own disinclination to follow Wallenstein into treason. Previously Wallenstein's authority manifested itself in his ability to control and move others, now those in whom he has invested his power turn against him. Wallenstein loses physical extensions of his will, and his ability to act is reduced to what he himself can do

[45]Friedrich Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, II.7.1180, SW, 2:448. Translation: Friedrich Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, in *The Robbers and Wallenstein*, translated by F.J. Lamport (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1979), 364.

when an act of the will is also a reaction against forces of constraint. Just as Schiller concentrates on a compelling moment in time by expanding it into a dramatic sequence of events, so in the reduction of the scope of the trilogy to Wallenstein Schiller focuses not merely on an operative visual sign of history – rather, he offers a sign constituting itself in action and reaction.

Concentration on the isolated Wallenstein is at its most intense in Act 3. Schiller dramatizes this in direct visual confrontation and the command to act. In Scenes 6 and 7 Terzky calls Wallenstein to the window to point out to him the inexplicable movements of his soldiers: "Niemand weiß die Ursach, / Geheimnisvoll, mit einer finstern Stille, / Stellt jedes Korps sich unter seine Fahne" ("No one can tell the cause. / In secrecy and with mysterious stillness, / Each corps assembles underneath its standards").[46] Illo enters in Scene 8 to report that the Tiefenbach regiment swears loyalty only to Octavio Piccolomini in the emperor's name. His entrance marks a tendency in Act III for characters to move rapidly on and off stage, between the inside and outside worlds, bridging the distance between the event and its comprehension until, eventually, all characters are in direct confrontation on the stage simultaneously. Moreover, his news elicits from Terzky the plea to Wallenstein to shoot mutinous soldiers: "O gib Ordre!" ("Oh, will you give the order!").[47] Wallenstein is caught between the revelation of a loss of power , which appears to him *visually* in the panoramic sight from his window of a reorganization of his camp, and the need to respond with an action (shooting his own soldiers) complicit in this very loss.

[46]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.7.1595-1597. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 382.
[47]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.8.1647. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 384.

The rest of Act III depicts Wallenstein's struggle to act alone and also to hold on to the power he has invested in others. Buttler's return to the stage, just after Wallenstein has learned of Octavio's betrayal, leads to an exchange in which Wallenstein variously comes to terms with the loss of one confidant while holding on to another. It is no secret that Buttler also has foresworn loyalty to Wallenstein; indeed, in an earlier show of prescience Wallenstein himself had expressed his suspicion of Buttler. Now in Scene 10 Buttler's appearance is taken as a sign of loyalty. The gestures indicated in Schiller's stage directions underscore the sheer physicality of Wallenstein's dependence: "*geht ihm mit ausgebreiteten Armen entgegen und umfaßt ihn mit Herzlichkeit*" and "*sich auf seine Schultern lehnend*" ("*going to meet him with outstretched arms and embracing him warmly*" and "*leaning on his shoulder*").[48] He speaks of the wound Octavio has inflicted upon his breast: "Kein Schild fing deinen Mordstreich auf, du führtest / Ihn ruchlos auf die unbeschützte Brust" ("There was no shield to meet your blow, you struck / With murderous stroke my unprotected breast").[49] But his wounded breast does not prevent him pressing Buttler close to it: "Komm an mein Herz, du alter Kriegsgefährt!" ("Come to my heart, my old comrade-in-arms!").[50] Wallenstein's bitter elegy to Octavio is a sentimental merging of their identities: "In *einem* Feldbett haben wir geschlafen, / Aus *einem* Glas getrunken, *einen* Bissen / Geteilt" ("We two have slept in one bed, / Drunk from one glass, and shared one bite of bread").[51] But on the occasion of the loss Wallenstein promptly replaces the former double with the new: "ich stützte mich auf ihn, wie ich / Auf *deine* treue Schulter jetzt mich stütze" ("I leant upon his shoulder, as I now

[48]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, 467. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 386.
[49]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.9.1685-1686. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 385.
[50]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.10.1689. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 386.
[51]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.10.1696-1699. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 386.

/ Upon your loyal shoulder bear my weight").[52] Ultimately Wallenstein recounts Octavio's treachery as the case of a single moment of affectionate, even physical trust on Wallenstein's part and murder on the part of Octavio: "Und in dem Augenblick, da liebevoll / Vertrauend meine Brust an seiner schlägt, / Ersieht er sich das Vorteil, sticht das Messer / Mir listig lauernd, langsam, in das Herz!" ("And in the very moment when in love/ And trust my breast is beating at his own, / He takes advantage of me, thrusts his knife / With slow and stealthy cunning in my heart!").[53] That Wallenstein immediately thereafter buries his face in Buttler's chest (the stage direction reads "*Er verbirgt das Gesicht an Buttlers Brust*" – "*Hiding his face against* Butler's *breast*") indicates the persistence of a debilitating, even obscuring reliance on others to the disadvantage of his own decisiveness. This reliance is figured also as an obstruction of vision: having looked out the window, Wallenstein now hides his face.

The subtle interplay of intimate gestures between Wallenstein and Buttler develops into open confrontation and self-declaration over the course of the following scenes. Having received the news that several cities including Prague, from which he had hoped for loyalty, have defected, and that he has been outlawed, Wallenstein's reaction is self-oriented and self-disciplining. He dispenses momentarily with the language of reliance and betrayal. The stage direction first indicates this: "*Terzky und Illo zeigen Schrecken und Wut. Wallenstein bleibt fest und gefaßt stehen*" ("Terzky *and* Illo *show fear and rage.* Wallenstein *remains standing firm and composed*").[54] He reviews his situation with a distinct immobility and a lack of his previous emotionalism.

Es ist entschieden, nun ists gut – und schnell

[52]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.10.1698-1699. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 386.
[53]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.10.1700-1703. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 386.
[54]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, 469. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 388.

Bin ich geheilt von allen Zweifelsqualen,
Die Brust ist wieder frei, der Geist ist hell,
Nacht muß es sein, wo Friedlands Sterne strahlen.
Mit zögerndem Entschluß, mit wankendem Gemüt
Zog ich das Schwert, ich tats mit Widerstreben,
Da es in meine Wahl noch war gegeben!
Notwendigkeit ist da, der Zweifel flieht,
Jetzt fecht ich für mein Haupt und für mein Leben.[55]

It is decided, well and good; and fears
And doubts may torture other breasts than mine;
How swiftly once again my spirit clears!
It must be night for Friedland's stars to shine.
With hesitant resolve, uncertainly
I drew my sword, when still my choice was free;
Necessity now speaks, all doubts take flight,
Now for my head and for my life I fight.

With this language Schiller conjures a strikingly aestheticized image of the individual, clearly defined by the contours of inner doubt and exterior constraint, consciously reduced to the necessary action of the body. Wallenstein becomes visible, finally yet momentarily, as an individual with clearly comprehensible motivation for his actions, at the moment when his isolation and the loss of power he had invested in others are at their most extreme. Thereafter he appears alone on the stage triumphantly addressing the absent Octavio: "Den Schmuck der Zweige habt ihr abgehauen, // Da steh ich, ein entlaubter Stamm! Doch innen// Im Marke lebt die schaffende Gewalt" ("My leafy branches you have hacked away, / A naked trunk I stand! But here within / My inmost marrow springs the vital power").[56] The allusion to the free breast, the tree shorn of branches, and the creative power in the marrow is a striking reversal of the language and gesture of dependence that previously dominated. Wallenstein describes his moment as a return to individual creativity:

[55]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.10.1740-1748. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 388.
[56]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.13.1791-1793. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 390.

Es ist der Geist, der sich den Körper baut,
Und Friedland wird sein Lager um sich füllen.
Führt eure Tausende mir kühn entgegen,
Gewohnt wohl sind sie, unter mir zu siegen,
Nicht gegen mich – Wenn Haupt und Glieder sich trennen,
Da wird sich zeigen, wo die Seele wohnte.[57]

The spirit shapes the body for its dwelling,
And Friedland soon will fill his camp about him.
Yes, lead your men in thousands bold to meet me,
Often they tasted victory beneath me,
But not against me – Part the head and limbs,
And you will see in which the soul was dwelling.

Wallenstein combines rhetoric of the reassembly of his forces around him, which he figures as the body constructed by the spirit, with imagery of the destruction of the body, the separation of head and limbs, the visual location of the soul. The two premises are indivisible in his statement: the body is simultaneously constructed or reconstructed *and* pulled asunder in a destructive act revealing the source of strength within, the character made visible.

Yet the visual cue for this self-declaration and self-demonstration is stillness: *bleibt fest und gefaßt stehen* – Wallenstein "remains standing firm and composed," sculptural in his presence, the aestheticization of the will to act. The dramatic, reactive implications of this visceral rhetoric are played out in Wallenstein's subsequent confrontation with his own soldiers and Max. A delegation of the Pappenheimer, a regiment hand-picked by Wallenstein and dear to him, enters the stage to question Wallenstein about his intentions toward the emperor and the Swedes. One private refers to his desire to join the *Korps*: "Die Ehr, mein Feldherr, / Um die ich bat, bei diesem Korps zu dienen" ("I had the honour, sir, / For which I asked, of serving with this

[57]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.13.1813-1818. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 391.

corps").[58] The *Korps* is the body (*Körper*) Wallenstein hopes to reassemble around himself, to fulfill his ambition to incarnate his power physically in others. His exchange with them echoes the intimacy of his constriction with Buttler: he flatters them and seeks to persuade them of the righteousness of his cause while artfully evading their demand for a simple, direct answer. His loses the Pappenheimer, who become convinced that he will break with the emperor. Thereafter he loses Max Piccolomini, to whom the Pappenheimer swear allegiance and for whose sake they violently assault the town hall from without. The loss of the Pappenheimer marks the repeated dissolution of the body, the pulling apart of head and limbs to which Wallenstein has alluded ("Wenn Haupt und Glieder sich trennen, / Da wird sich zeigen, wo die Seele wohnte" – "Part the head and limbs, / and you will see in which the soul was dwelling"). But the loss of Max touches Wallenstein more deeply ("dich habe ich *geliebt*" – ""but you I *loved*"[59]) – the loss is figures not as the loss of an extension of power, but as a blow to that interior strength Wallenstein has refered with his language of the naked trunk, the marrow, and the soul. His character is in the end depicted not in any eventual action undertaken by force of his own will; rather, it is depicted in the his inextricable and all too deeply felt connections to others that, despite their breaking, reinforce Wallenstein's unreadiness for action. His moment of clarity occurs as a function of his occlusion within a network of authority and allegiance that now fails and exposes him.

Yet Wallenstein also rejects Max. The movement and gesture of their confrontation render visible the persistent relationship of pushing away and grasping that defines action and reaction under constraint. In Act 23 Wallenstein releases Max to the

[58]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.15.1836-1837. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 392.
[59]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, III.18.2157.

Pappenheimer (again assembling on stage), on the condition that they no longer fire upon the town hall – he physically obstructs Max from touching Thekla or himself, as stage directions indicate: "*tritt zwischen Max und Thekla, welche sich während dieser Zeit festumschlungen gehalten*," "*Er will seine Hand fassen. Wallenstein zieht sie zurück*," "*Max versucht es noch einmal, sich der Thekla zu nähern. Wallenstein verhindert es*" ("*parting* Max *and* Thekla, *who have remained all the while in a close embrace*," "*He tries to take* Wallenstein's *hand*. Wallenstein *draws it back*," "Max *tries once more to approach* Thekla. Wallenstein *prevents him*").[60] The directions in Scenes 23 and 24 stress the staging of a conflict between the desire for and refusal of physical contact: Wallenstein keeps himself and Thekla at a distance; Max turns to Countess Terzky, who turns away; the generals and Buttler remain unmoved (*dastehn* – to stand there) by Max's pleas; while Max himself moves from one party to the other, emotionally moved (*zweideutig*, *unschlüssig*, *schmerzvoll* – ambivalent, undecided, with pain), before allowing himself to be led off stage by the Pappenheimer; Wallenstein is immobile (*unbeweglich*).

Schiller treats Wallenstein as a Laocoon-like figure. The compelling, even stimulating moment of the work is one of physical struggle between opposing forces figured in willed self-liberation and the necessity of constriction. The physical and emotional gestures of the sculptural Laocoon are of simultaneous defense against attacking serpents and agony that he cannot rescue his sons. He dwells, across the expanse of theoretical observations made upon him, at a moment in time between an immediate past to be pushed away and an immediate and hoped for future, within an aesthetic time of absolute stimulation in the midst of violence and despair; and he is taken

[60]Schiller, *Wallensteins Tod*, 493-494. Translation: Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death*, 413-415.

as both signification of a centered stability of soul characteristic of the antique appreciation of beauty, and the very model for a disciplined appreciation and production of the arts. Wallenstein's eventual assassination is not meant to be a secret to the audience – indeed, it is a foregone conclusion. But Wallenstein's aestheticized passion in Act III is a visual display and exploration of how the great individual comes to his end. Wallenstein's gestures of variously pushing away (the emperor, Octavio and Max Piccolomini) and pulling back toward himself (Buttler, Thekla, Max Piccolomini, the Pappenheimer) demonstrates a quality fundamental to his motivations, the continuous reconstitution of his power in an extended body of others executing his will, a process swollen with the possibility of complete physical destruction. Wallenstein's language throughout Act III betrays a suspicion of the extreme violence to be committed upon the body in his references to the breast and the marrow, the head and the limbs, the soul and the bowels – a violence intimately bound with the signification of character in action under duress. His gesture, bodily movement, and reference to the body mark his fundamental antagonism to the situation in which he finds himself. His body renders the movement of time visible in conflict and suffering.

Conclusion

I do not want to read too much intention into Schiller's portrayal of Wallenstein. To be sure, that he takes up Wallenstein as a dramatic project just as his historical writing arrives at a representational impasse, is suggestive of a conscious shift in representational strategy. And the move from a visualizing history to the drama also suggests an essential acceptance of an explicitly *visual* problem in the experience and understanding of history.

Finally, Schiller's formulation of aesthetic concepts for the representation of the individual, directly (the application of tragedy, the situation in the pregnant moment) or indirectly (the development of a method of reading gesture that might also focus on conflict between will and necessity) underscores a certain setting of the stage for a representation of Wallenstein as a visual lesson in the acquisition of historical knowledge.

In conclusion, I argue against too much pedagogical intentionalism in Schiller's portrayal. Rather, I suggest that he stages Wallenstein's assassination as he does in order to provide himself greater clarity regarding the unfolding of events. The extreme anticipation of *Wallensteins Lager* and *Die Piccolomini* ensure that Wallenstein's protracted presence on stage in *Wallensteins Tod* will occur as confrontation. The visual cues emanating from the first two parts of the trilogy – the spectatorship of the camp, the search for visual certainly in the Town Hall – precede more ostentatious visual confrontation in the third part, especially in Act III in which the forces arrayed against Wallenstein are either seen from a window or present themselves to him on stage. Yet Schiller opts to stage Wallenstein's own resistance, his "retarding" effect, rather in a more subtle play of gesture that is not undone but rather fortified by his dramatic speech about the body. Schiller draws attention to the gestures of a man who does not know that he cannot master his situation – his gestures of embracing enemies and pushing away allies are more telling than his direct language of the will. The fall of Wallenstein, so occluded in the historical record, becomes in Schiller's hands a process marked out by the radical opposite of ostentation and will, in movement that points toward an end.

Chapter Three

The Age of Winckelmann: Classicism as History

Introduction

This chapter focuses on Classicist art-historical writing and on a specifically Classicist visuality. Its context is the waning of the project of Weimar Classicism in the first decade of the 19th century. With the deaths of Herder (1803) and Schiller (1805) two members of the *Weimarische Kunstfreunde* were lost. At the same time half a decade's *Weimarer Preisaufgaben* came to an end in 1805 on a note decidedly inauspicious for the fortunes of Classicism: after years of controversial reception from young artists more allied to Romanticism, Goethe awarded part of the first prize to Caspar David Friedrich for a works submitted in apparent disregard of the preferred criteria for the competition. The defining features of Weimar Classicism – the project of an aesthetic renewal founded on the antique and foremost Greek model, and the theorization and advocacy of the work of art as the complete material embodiment of sensual experience – retreated before the growing appreciation for the Romantic, which the Classicists perceived as the indulgence of the spiritual at the expense of the legitimacy of the sensual. Classicism as a strategy for the representation and understanding of the passage of historical time thus threatened to become history. Classicism reacted to its perceived marginalization by treating itself as both classical and historical: its present-oriented aesthetic engagement gave way to a

narrative of self-historicization in which a model for aesthetic production and reception retreats from the present.[1]

In this process of self-historicization, the Classicists look back to Johann Joachim Winckelmann. In his own groundbreaking 1764 *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (*History of the Art of Antiquity*) Winckelmann establishes lines of thought about the work of art and its history that, I believe, set the tone for his later appreciation by Goethe and Meyer. Foremost, Winckelmann intends his own history of art to be more than "bloße Erzählung der Zeitfolge und der Veränderung in derselben […] meine Absicht ist, einen Versuch eines Lehrgebäudes zu liefern" ("no mere narrative of the chronology and alterations of art […] my intention is to provide a system").[2] Winckelmann's system presupposes a cyclical rise and fall in the arts – indeed, in focusing on the art of antiquity, Winckelmann isolates a single cycle in history that begins, at least as far as the remains of ancient art allow, with Egyptian art, reaches a pinnacle of development in the art of the Greeks, and enters a period of decline in Roman appropriation and imitation of Greek models. Crucial for his innovation in art history, Winckelmann declares that one must be able to see the remains of antique art in order to understand its historical development: the previous reliance on reproductions of ancient works and on existing and faulty histories has produced an errant knowledge of ancient art that can be remedied only by recourse to the object itself. Winckelmann's approach fuses a systematic consciousness

[1]This interpretation of Classicism in the first decade of the 19th century as a project in retreat may also be found in Andreas Beyer, "Klassik und Romantik. Zwei Enden einer Epoche" in *Geschichte der bildenden Künste in Deutschland. Band 6: Klassik und Romantik*, Andreas Beyer, Ed. (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2006) and in the essay "Die Ästhetik des Selbstseins. Goethes Kunstanschauung 1805-1816" in the commentary to Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche* I/19: *Ästhetische Schriften 1806-1815*, Friedmar Apel, Ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 1998), 727-757.
[2]Johann Joachim Winckelmann, "Vorrede," in *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* [1764] (Baden-Baden: Verlag Heitz GmbH, 1966), ix. This and all English translations of Winckelmann are from Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006), 71.

of historical time and development, the cycle, with direct viewing of the work of art. In this respect, the term *Lehrgebäude* (system, scheme – literally a structure for teaching) gains from its etymology, for Winckelmann's scholarship draws upon his own presence in Rome, at the center of the remains of antiquity: in his study the spatial location of the work of art coalesces with a systematic understanding of time gleaned from the visual engagement with the work itself. The surviving works of antiquity, viewed personally and comparatively – and most importantly, together – yield their own historical secrets to the inquiring and systematizing eye.

For Winckelmann beauty is the mark of the style of the work of art and thus also that quality that enables the viewer to place works of art in their proper place in historical development. Beauty – specifically the beauty of Greek works, the highest achievement of style in antique art – is thus a heuristic tool and a category which, despite its enhancement and decline in art over the course of a historical cycle, still has a universal value. Beauty provides historical knowledge. Yet Winckelmann also declares: "die Schönheit ist eins von den großen Geheimnissen der Natur, deren Wirkung wir sehen, und alle empfinden, von deren Wesen aber ein allgemeiner deutlicher Begriff unter die unerfundenen Wahrheiten gehöret"("Beauty is one of the great mysteries of nature; we all see and feel its effect, but a general and clear concept of its essence remains among the undiscovered truths").[3] Indeed, Winckelmann provides no definition of beauty, despite its centrality to his concept of style. Rather, he suggests that the experience of the beautiful resides in the motion of the eye over beautiful, moving forms:

> […] denn diese Werke haben alle eine Elliptische Figur, und hierinn bestehet die Schönheit derselben. Je mehr Einheit aber in der Verbindung

[3]Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 142. Translation: Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 192.

> der Formen, und in der Ausfließung einer aus der andern ist, desto größer ist das Schöne des Ganzen. Ein schönes jugendliches Gewächs aus solchen Formen gebildet ist, wie die Einheit der Fläche des Meers, welche in einiger Weite eben und stille, wie ein Spiegel, erscheint, ob es gleich allezeit in Bewegung ist, und Wogen wälzet.[4]
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> […] for all these works have an elliptical shape, and herein resides their beauty. The greater the unity in the combination of forms, and in the flowing of one from the other, the greater the beauty of the whole. A beautiful youthful creature is fashioned from such forms like the unity of the surface of the sea, which from a distance appears flat and still, like a mirror, even though it is constantly in motion and rolls in waves.

Beauty resides in forms that appear to move perpetually around several points and to encompass several forms within a single contour. The movement inherent in beauty, or at least in that which appears beautiful to Winckelmann, is reciprocated in the eye of the beholder, which must also move over the beautiful form, as Winckelmann notes later in a continuation of his metaphor of the sea:

> Der erste Anblick schöner Statuen ist bey dem, welcher Empfindung hat, wie die erste Aussicht auf das offene Meer, worinn sich unser Blick verlieret, und starr wird, aber in wiederholter Betrachtung wird der Geist stiller, und das Auge ruhiger, und gehet vom Ganzen auf das Einzelne.[5]
>
> The first sight of a beautiful statue is, to him who has feeling, like the first view of the open sea, wherein our gaze loses itself and becomes fixed, but after repeated contemplation, the soul becomes more still and the eye quieter and moves from the whole to the particular.

Beauty, it seems, is a concept of allure, for it resides at an unfathomable depth within the work of art, from which it radiates an energy that captures the eye with its motion, and the eye responds by exploring the surface of the beautiful form. Linked to beauty as its highest characteristic, style is that quality in the work of art that can command the attention of the eye and induce an experience of still, visual examination. Historically,

[4]Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 152. Translation: Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 197.
[5]Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 288. Translation: Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 263-264.

the best work of art is one that draws the gaze toward itself and holds it in an act of sensual-rational investigation into the source of its motive energy.

To be sure, this abstraction of Winckelmann's thinking does not do justice to the full force of his legacy and influence on his Classicist successors. But these two strands of his thought – the history of art as a history of the cyclical development and decline of styles defined by their power to command the quiet attention of the eye and mind – are fundamental for Weimar Classicism's later understanding of itself both in terms of its defense of a kind of visual representation and its historical self-understanding. For, in the first decade of the 19th century Weimar Classicism perceived the decline precisely of the kind of art it favored, and very much so in terms of the relationship between the work of art and the eye. Moreover, Winckelmann's presence as beholder in his own history signals the sheer importance for Weimar Classicism of the relationship between the beholder of the work of art and the Classicist eye on the one hand, and on the other the work of art as visual object marking the passage of time. After Winckelmann, to look at art means to measure the passage of time in objects and the effect they exert on their beholder.

In this chapter, then, I consider how Weimar Classicism's art-historical writing reflects a consciousness of Classicism as a style receding into the past, and how it also attempts to safeguard images that would preserve a certain way of looking. I begin with Goethe's 1805 sketch for a life of Winckelmann, part of the book project *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert* (*Winckelmann and His Century*) in which Goethe wavers between an idealization of Winckelmann and a historicizing approach to Weimar Classicism. Thereafter I examine Meyer's appraisal of the achievement of Winckelmann, specifically

in terms of the renewal and spread of good taste Meyer perceives in the arts following Winckelmann, in his own contribution to the Winckelmann project, *Entwurf einer Kunstgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (*Plan for a History of the Art of the Eighteenth Century*). Finally, I turn to Carl Ludwig Fernow's 1806 *Leben des Künstlers Asmus Jakob Carstens* (*Life of the Artist Asmus Jakob Carstens*), in which the creativity of the Classicist artist is withdrawn from the material world and relocated in individual imagination. In conclusion I consider the historical image of Classicism as a characteristic history drawn from the interpretation of Classicism's own expressive motion in time.

Goethe's Winckelmann: the perspective on history

The 1805 book *Winkelmann und sein Jahrhundert*, a biography and history of art jointly composed by Goethe, Meyer, Carl Ludwig Fernow, and Friedrich August Wolf marks a decisive turning point in the life of Weimar Classicism while also making clear the ambivalence felt by the *Weimarische Kunstfreunde* toward Classicism's loss of momentum. This ambivalence is amply demonstrated in the biographical component of the project, *Skizzen zu einer Schilderung Winkelmanns* (*Sketches for a Portrayal of Winckelmann*). The *Skizzen* consist of three parts: a thematic treatment of Winckelmann's life, written by Goethe; Meyer's assessment of Winckelmann's legacy for the history of art; and Wolf's comments on an array of subjects pertaining to Winckelmann's education and work. Goethe's intention was to lay the foundations for a proper biography – as it is, his admittedly fragmentary contribution presents Winckelmann largely in a symbolic mode. Winckelmann's life, ambitions, temperament,

relationships, and accomplishments are depicted as characteristic of a type of human nature, as the model of fully actualized individual creativity. Indeed, as often as not a thematic chapter is introduced with reference to the *Mensch*, to a human experience that then glosses some specific aspect of Winckelmann's life and work. In the "Eintritt" ("Entrance"), for example, we read:

> Findet sich hingegen in besonders begabten Menschen jenes gemeinsame Bedürfnis, eifrig, zu allem, was die Natur in sie gelegt hat, auch in der äußeren Welt die antwortenden Gegenbilder zu suchen und dadurch das Innere völlig zum Ganzen und Gewissen zu steigern; so kann man versichert sein, daß auch so ein für Welt und Nachwelt höchst erfreuliches Dasein sich ausbilden werde.
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> Unser Winkelmann war von dieser Art. In ihn hatte die Natur gelegt, was den Mann macht und ziert.[6]

> When, on the other hand, that common need is found in people of exceptional talent, eagerly to seek out in the exterior world the counter-images corresponding to everything nature has laid in them, and thereby to elevate their interior fully to the whole and the certain: then one can be assured that an existence will be formed that will be most pleasing for the world and for the posterity.
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> Our Winckelmann was of this kind. Nature had laid in him that which makes and adorns the man.

Winckelmann is a compelling, even stimulating model for human creative potential, and his example remains instructive even half a century after his death. Indeed, in the final chapter ("Hingang" – "Death") the untimeliness of his murder is downplayed in favor of an interpretation of his death ("ein kurzer Schrecken, ein schneller Schmerz" – "a brief

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[6] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Skizzen zu einer Schilderung Winkelmanns," *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert*, FA I, 19:177-178. This and all translations are my own unless otherwise noted. The reader should also note that in this and other period writings, Winckelmann's name is commonly spelled "Winkelmann." I prefer to leave this usage uncommented in quotations.

The chapters of Goethe's contribution to *Skizzen zu einer Schilderung Winkelmanns* are as follows: Einleitung, Eintritt, Antikes, Heidnisches, Freundschaft, Schönheit, Katholizismus, Gewahrwerden griechischer Kunst, Rom, Mengs, Literarisches Metier, Kardinal Albani, Glücksfälle, Unternommene Schriften, Philosophie, Poesie, Erlangte Einsicht, Spätere Werke, Papst, Charakter, Gesellschaft, Fremde, Welt, Unruhe, Hingang. In English: Introduction, Entrance, The Antique, The Pagan, Friendship, Beauty, Catholicism, Becoming Aware of Greek Art, Rome, Mengs, Literary Career, Cardinal Albani, Strokes of Good Fortune, Writings Undertaken, Philosophy, Poesy, Knowledge Gained, Later Works, Pope, Character, Society, Strangers, World, Unrest, Death.

terror, a quick pain") emphasizing that his achievement is guaranteed for posterity. He dies "als ein vollständiger Mann" ("as a complete man"), and his early death inspires others to carry on his work ("Daß W. früh hinwegschied, kommt auch uns zu Gute" – "It is a benefit to us that W. departed early"). Winckelmann is *vollständig*, both complete and closed, iconic and distant in his death, and yet still present in his legacy, which he figuratively breathes out from his grave ("Von seinem Grabe her stärkt uns der Anhauch seiner Kraft" – "The breath of his power strengthens us from his grave"). Winckelmann is both past and present, dead and still living.[7]

This ambivalence regarding Winckelmann's status in time is transferred to Classicism as such in Goethe's introduction to *Winkelmann und sein Jahrhundert*, where Goethe describes the relationship between the past of the *Weimarische Kunstfreunde* and the present of the Winckelmann. "Nicht daß sie [die *Weimarischen Kunstfreunde* – MA] auf gewisse Vorstellungsarten beschränkt hartnäckig einerlei Standpunkt behauptet hätten," he declares; rather "gestehen sie vielmehr gern durch mannigfaltige Mitteilung gelernt zu haben" ("Not that they [the Weimar Friends of Art – MA] would have insisted

[7]Goethe et al., *Skizzen*, 211-212. Meyer and Wolf are decidedly more critical of Winckelmann, if still positively so – they are willing to focus on the shortcomings of his research. I will deal with Meyer in greater detail below; and while I otherwise prefer to pass over Wolf's contribution to the project, I will mention here that he also adopts a decidedly different attitude toward Winckelmann's death, eschewing Goethe's gesture toward immanent redemption. Specifically, Wolf believes that a later Winckelmann could have returned to the enthusiastic yet flawed work of the 1750s and 1760s to correct and enhance his own earlier methodology ("wo er wie ein Seher so viele größere und kleinere Erscheinungen in Einen Blick aufnimmt, als Deuter und Dolmetscher ihm nachzugehen" – "wherever he records so many greater and smaller phenomena in a single glimpse, like a seer, then also to follow as an interpreter and translator." *Skizzen*, 232. Indeed, Wolf even proposes a possible collaboration with Lessing.

It should be noted that Goethe's contributions to *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert* were among the last to be finished. The idea for the project itself dates to at least 1799, when the Duchess Anna Amalia gave Goethe a collection of letters from Winckelmann to her own late secretary, Hieronimus Dietrich Berendis. Meyer's own contribution (the single longest section of the work) was first conceived in the mid-1790s and drafted by 1804. The book project thus developed over the course of the life of Weimar Classicism as a coherent aesthetic initiative and was completed only as Classicism began its defensive retrenchment halfway through the first decade of the 19th century. For details, see the commentary in Goethe, *Ästhetische Schriften 1806-1815* [FA I 19], 762-764.

stubbornly and narrowly upon one single viewpoint, rather they admit to having learned happily through diverse communications"). [8] The activities of the *Weimarische Kunstfreunde* are portrayed retrospectively as the exchange of opinions of a group alive with and nourished by the interactions of its constituent members just as it, in turn, interacts with cultured German society as a whole. The tension in the moment of writing this introduction, between the living past and the perceived terminus of the present, is evident in the reference to *Standpunkt* (viewpoint). Goethe observes, for example, that previous writings – including *Propyläen*, written reviews of the *Weimarer Preisaufgaben*, contributions to the *Jenaische Literaturzeitung*, and his own 1803 *Das Leben des Benvenuto Cellini* (*The Life of Benvenuto Cellini*) – exerted some influence on the whole of German culture despite that they were never published in a single volume. His contention is that the group has historically neither adopted a single perspective on aesthetic matters nor attempted to produce any unified program; rather, that the group's active contribution to the arts in Germany has occurred through the diversity of opinion, mutual stimulation and influence, and a generalized and very public communication of opinion through journal literature and the art competition. *Winkelmann und sein Jahrhundert* is a significant departure from this previous practice: the multi-authored initiation of a critical edition of the work of Winckelmann, the forefather of German Classicism and the symbolic representation of the very Classicist mode of being. Whereas previous work had operated in the mode of a diverse reception of the antique and Renaissance past that was unified only in its agreement regarding the relevance of antique and Renaissance art for contemporary art practice, *Winkelmann und sein Jahrhundert* renders this contemporary and living Classicism as a thing of the past.

[8]Goethe, "Vorrede," *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert*, 12.

Goethe's use of the term *Standpunkt* is a direct and very contemporary reference to the problem of historical representation posed by the individual's relationship to history. Goethe nuances this problem in a manner that explains both the ambivalent symbolic reception of Winckelmann and the ambivalence in Classicism's self-consciousness. Foremost, the term *Standpunkt* signals the assumption of a subjective position toward and perspective of historical events. Reinhart Koselleck argues, for example, that the very modern historical concept of *Standort* or *Partei* (position/perspective, party) first occurs with a shift over the course of the 18th century away from a belief that the work of the historian functions as a mirror to reflect the past, and toward a recognition that the historian's own subjectivity is reflected in the work of history – that the entirely subjective understanding of history is a necessary accessory to the discovery of a historical world unmoored from the past and channeling through the present.[9] Metaphors of the mirror, the reflection, and the display of the naked truth of history (*Spiegel*, *wiederspiegeln*, *speculum vitae humanae*, and *nudité* – terms cited by Koselleck from sources ranging from antiquity to the period around 1800) underscore the visual charge of this shift by describing the work of history as, essentially, a work of vision and observation.[10] The work of Johann Martin Chladenius is influential in this respect: in his essay "Vom Zuschauer und Sehepunckte" ("Of the Spectator and the Point of View," in his 1752 *Allgemeine Geschichtswissenschaft*) he breaks down the varieties of historical experience to categories of variously embodied and interested *visual* spectators. The charge of Chladenius' argument is that any historical narrative is the

[9]Reinhart Koselleck, "Standortbindung und Zeitlichkeit. Ein Beitrag zur historiographischen Erschließung der geschichtlichen Welt," in *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985), 176-207.
[10]Koselleck, "Standortbindung und Zeitlichkeit," *Vergangene Zukunft*, 178-183.

product of an entirely subjectively determined attitude toward the event visually experienced.[11]

Chladenius' "Sehepunckt," Koselleck's "Standort," and Goethe's "Standpunkt" are close and perhaps functionally equivalent terms (Koselleck also interchanges "Standort" and "Perspektive"). Yet Goethe also seems to collapse into "Standpunkt" concepts of an active seeing ("Sehepunckt") and a passivity of being seen, and therewith to recognize the historical implications of adopting a perspective, a tension between remaining outside of history and becoming part of it. Of Winckelmann, for example, he writes: "Sobald er nur zu einer ihm gemäßen Freiheit gelangte, erscheint er ganz und abgeschlossen, völlig im antiken Sinne" ("Once he has achieved the freedom appropriate for him, he appears entire and closed, fully in the antique sense").[12] Winckelmann in the exemplary creative mode is phenomenally whole, complete, antique; by assuming the plastic expressive qualities of ancient sculpture, he becomes a work of art and is thereby closed. Because the Winckelmann project is also a self-reflexive project for Classicism, it reveals Classicism wavering consciously between its aggressive, strategic aesthetics of looking, and becoming the object of vision, the finished work in history.

There is another sense of closure implied by Goethe's reference to Winckelmann in sculptural terms. Whether, to reprise Goethe, Winckelmann is ideally closed, or still breathing from the grave, he has become an art-historical object. Sculpturally, he also becomes a visual object – he "appears" in an ideal sense. At the same time the references, variously, to sculpture and to the grave suggest the end of motion. The alluring motion of the work of art that had so captivated Winckelmann at mid-century,

[11]Johann Martin Chladenius, "Von Zuschauer und Sehepunckte," in *Allgemeine Geschichtswissenschaft* [1752] (Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1985), 91-115.
[12]Goethe et al., *Skizzen*, 180.

when he elicited a new wave of Classicism from antique objects radiating an unfathomable and remarkable, sublte dynamism, threatens to be stilled in the early 19th century, in the interests of preserving Winckelmann as a monument to a mode of being and seeing and as an exemplary object.

Meyer: history and taste

Winckelmann's achievement occupies a central place in Meyer's two contributions to *Winkelmann und sein Jahrhundert*. The approximately ten pages he appends to Goethe's *Skizzen zu einer Schilderung Winkelmanns* assess Winckelmann's achievement in the context of aesthetic and art-historical knowledge in the 18th century. And with his *Entwurf einer Kunstgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, the longest single section of the project, he takes several steps back in order to capture in broader perspective the situation of the arts from the late 16th century to his own time in the early 19th century. The legacy of Winckelmann's work is crucial to, if barely articulated in, Meyer's conception of the history of art – in the *Entwurf* Meyer consistently postpones a more detailed discussion of Winckelmann for the *Skizzen* that follow. One finds in Meyer's addition to the *Skizzen* for the most part a corroboration of Winckelmann's achievement in Winckelmann's own terms:

> Die schönen in Griechenland und später zu Rom entstandenen Monumente betrachtete Winkelmann zuerst unter kunsthistorischen Beziehungen, nach Kennzeichen des verschiedenen Geschmacks und Arbeit der verschiedenen Zeiten. Wir behaupten keineswegs, daß solches jedesmal mit unverbesserlichem Erfolge geschehen; doch zeigte er, und zeigte zuerst, wie die Antiken, nach offenbaren Merkmalen, in einer steigenden und sinkenden, von dem Geschmack, dem Styl und der Arbeit geregelten Folge, zu ordnen sind; auf welchem Wege allein die in schriftlichen Nachrichten so mangelhaft auf uns gekommene Geschichte der alten Kunst nicht nur vollständiger, sondern auch – und dieses dürfte der

> wesentlichste Nutzen und Vorzug derselben sein – gleichsam lebendig in den Monumenten selbst dargestellt werden kann.[13]
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> Winckelmann first observed the beautiful monuments arisen in Greece and later in Rome in an art-historical regard, according to the characteristic of varying taste and the work of different times. By no means do we assert that this occurred in each instance with a success not calling for improvement. Yet he showed, and was the first to show, how the ancient works are to be ordered according to evident features, in a rising and sinking sequence regulated by taste, style and work. In which manner the history of ancient art, come down to us so deficiently in written sources, can be depicted in the monuments themselves not only more completely, but also – and this might be the most essential use and advantage of it – alive, as it were.

Meyer credits Winckelmann for instituting a better understanding of the rise and decline of the arts, judged visually in conjunction with literary sources; and with the development of a concept of style that helps to place the work in historical time on the basis of its appearance. Winckelmann's declared method of allying literary research with direct visual engagement – the art-historical with the aesthetic – has proven the right combination of powers, despite Meyer's perception of some errors. More critically for Meyer, though, the work of art now, when regarded carefully, declares its own historicity – to the trained eye, history lives in its relics. By extension, through Winckelmann Meyer ascribes to the work of art the function of quickening history itself, of reviving a spirit of the times past for the later viewer. Meyer holds the work of art to be a site of concentration not merely for a history that might still live and communicate itself, but alsofor an eye of the beholder trained to be aroused by such works. In this respect, the work also influences its own time, for its may determine the possibilities for receptivity and the prowess of visual perception.

[13]Goethe et al, *Skizzen*, 217

Meyer's historical understanding of art in the 18th century is to no small extent a history of the fortunes of visual perception. Analogously, for Meyer Winckelmann occupies a rare position in the recent history of the study of ancient art – he arrives on the scene, as it were, between an excess in historical knowledge and an excess in visual engagement. Meyer summarizes the situation prior to Winckelmann with recourse to the example of his renowned predecessor Anne-Claude-Philippe de Tubières, comte de Caylus (1692-1765). Problematic for Caylus, the writer about antiquities, is that he was in Paris rather than in Rome; despite his perceived feeling for the work of art, he relied foremost on texts; he adopted the reigning belief that Etruscan and Greek artists borrowed from their Egyptian forebears; and he fell under the influence of art practices predominant in Paris at the time, for which Meyer typically reserves only harsh criticism – the so-called "mannerist school of painting" (*manieristische Malerschule*). In short, for Meyer the comte de Caylus, Winckelmann's most illustrious immediate predecessor, enjoyed little chance to overcome the wrong-headedness of the time concerning the arts and antiquity. By contrast, Winckelmann profited from a period of preparation in Dresden (Meyer states that Paris at mid-century offered no advantage in terms of the study of antiquities, the implication is that Dresden was at least somewhat more appropriate) prior to his arrival in Rome, where his subsequent friendship with Mengs brought him directly into the world of antiquities. And yet, although Meyer regards Winckelmann's work as a solid foundation for further research, he does not find that Winckelmann's successors have made much progress. Specifically, if his predecessors suffered inexperience with the work of art, those who follow him display to Meyer an excessive sensitivity to exterior characteristics at the expense of the "spirit of art" (*der*

Geist der Kunst), resulting again in erroneous conclusions. More than merely the matter of a successful hybrid of the literary and the visual, Winckelmann's greatest accomplishment seems to be the development of a visual technique drawing upon both the history and the materiality of the object, and balancing the exterior and the inner essence of art – a technique that has largely been lost since Winckelmann's death.[14]

Indeed, the rare evanescence of Winckelmann's method bodes ill for the study of antiquities and the practice of art.

> Ein geübter Geschmack allein wird, ohne hinlängliche Bekanntschaft mit der alten Literatur, nicht überall ausreichen, noch weniger sind bloß gelehrte Kenntnisse zulänglich, wenn sie nicht durch richtigen Geschmack unterstützt und von der Fähigkeit begleitet sind, den Geist der Alten, den höhern poetischen Gehalt ihrer vorzüglichsten Kunstgebilde aufzufassen. Hätte Mengs literarische Kenntnisse besessen, und minder ängstlich die Formen verehrt, wahrscheinlich würde mehr Harmonie zwischen seinen frühern und spätern Meinungen, über die berühmtesten antiken Statuen, zu bemerken sein. (*WJ/Skizzen* 220)
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> A practiced taste alone, without sufficient familiarity with the ancient literature, will not always be enough; less so mere learned knowledge if it is not supported by the right taste and accompanied by the ability to perceive the spirit of the ancients, the higher poetic content of their most best works of art. If Mengs had possessed literary knowledge and been less timid in his respect for forms, it is likely that more harmony would be noticeable between his earliest and later opinions concerning the most famous antique statues.

Taste (*Geschmack*), a sense for the arts activated by the object itself, must be accompanied and balanced by the literary, a knowledge of the history of the arts. This good advice applies surely to the researcher into antique art – curiously, it applies to the artist as well. To be sure, Mengs was a theorist of and writer about the arts, but he was also a practicing artist and teacher. Winckelmann's legacy applies both to the theoretician and the practicing artist; the disappointing progress made since

[14]Goethe et al., *Skizzen*, 212-219.

Winckelmann is evident both in the scholarly work upon antiquity and in the course of a general taste for the antique and its reproduction in contemporary art. Because this progress has not been guaranteed, all things from representation and a knowledge of proper models, to knowledge about representation as such and the very preference for particular images are still troubled and contested territory in Meyer's time.

Whereas the practice of art receives only this final reference in Meyer's contribution to the *Skizzen*, it is the focus of his *Entwurf einer Kunstgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (*Plan for a History of the Art of the Eighteenth Century*). Meyer's rationale for this work echoes Winckelmann's own propensity for innovation in *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*. Meyer observes for example that any history of art aspiring to be more than a chronicle is quickly surpassed, given its indebtedness to the reigning taste of the time of its writing. Meyer's proposed solution calls for a comprehensive history of modern art treated critically in accordance with modern views: "die ganze Geschichte der neuern Kunst, neuern Ansichten gemäß, kritisch behandelt."[15] Meyer's own contribution is altogether more specific: to focus on the best known works of contemporary art to be found in Rome, the location of the highest European achievement in art. To the extent that Meyer demonstrates "modern views" and a critical approach throughout his history, he does not satisfactorily explain at the outset how his history will differ from previous histories other than that it will not be merely a chronicle. What about his critical approach will effect a lasting change in the way the history of art is understood? A key to the answer to this question may be found subsequently in his explanation of his choice of Rome, the center and gathering place (*Mittelpunkt, Sammelplatz*) for the best in contemporary international (i.e. European) art. Such a

[15]Meyer, *Entwurf einer Kunstgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 17.

selection is most obviously concordant with contemporary interest, he avers:"denn alle Angaben, die nicht bloß historisch sind, sondern Kunstwerke betreffen und Urteile enthalten, sollen sich auf wirkliche Anschauungen gründen" ("for all information not merely of a historical nature, but concerning works of art and their judgment, should be based on actual viewing").[16] The critical history of art requires access to and visual judgment of the work of art.

Meyer conceived his plan for a history of eighteenth-century art during his trip to Italy in 1795-1797, so he writes of his own experience viewing contemporary art in Rome. But Rome as a showcase for antique works surely figures here as well. Although conceived earlier, Meyer's history appeared in 1805 as part of a larger project that is stamped with the efforts of Weimar Classicism. Indeed, the *Weimarische Kunstfreunde* understood their aesthetic project also as an effort at the salvation of Europe's antique heritage at a time when Europe's other great nations of art, France and Italy, were at odds following Napoleonic conquest. Weimar thereby becomes the location for the latest return of the antique spirit. This shift in location between Winckelmann and Meyer, from the focus on antique art in Rome to the focus on Classicism and Rome from Weimar, signals also a shift in historical perspective. Winckelmann positioned himself in Rome as an aesthetic site in an effort to define the nature of a style originating in antiquity and recurring throughout the lifespan of Western art. With Meyer, by contrast, we have an effort to gauge the historical progress in a diffusion of style beyond the limits of Rome – an effort judged in accordance with the category of taste as a heuristic device for measuring the widespread reception of the work of art that Winckelmann himself experienced in Rome. Thus, whereas Winckelmann had positioned *himself* as a central

[16]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 18.

point of perspective in the circularity of the historical development of art, the bridging of the two centers of Rome and Weimar in Meyer's work suggests that art is again in motion between centers. Meyer attempts in his plan to trace the contours of this motion. "Actual viewing" describes, then, not merely Meyer's own credibility as a critical historian of art, it also indicates a test of contemporary art's participation in a history now measured in terms of taste.

Taste plays a significant role in Meyer's historical periodization. It first appears in his foreword (*Geschmack, Geschmacksbegriffe* – taste, concepts of taste), and eventually in section headings (for example, "Literatur der Kunst und allgemeine Übersicht des Zustandes in Geschmack und Kunst bis gegen das Jahr 1750" – "Literature on Art and General Overview of Conditions in Taste and Art to the Year 1750"). Having divided the history of art under his purview, from the late 16th to the early 19th century, into discrete blocks of time over the course of which he chronicles and narrates the decline of the arts and taste to a low point in the first half of the 18th century, Meyer then establishes a caesura at roughly the mid-18th century with what he calls the renewal of good taste. Meyer closes the section on 1750 with the observation that, upon exterior evaluation, the condition of art and taste at mid-century proves as poor as at the outgoing 16th century, yet their inner disposition had improved. Among other causes for this improvement in inner disposition, he includes that "Raphaels Werke wurden schon wieder fleißiger studiert und so entwickelte sich allmählich im Stillen der Keim eines besseren Geschmacks" ("Raphael's works were already being studied again with greater diligence, and so there developed gradually, in the stillness of the seed, a better taste").[17] Much as for Winckelmann style functioned as a category for gauging the cyclical

[17]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 93.

recurrence of the beautiful as a mark of high quality in artistic achievement, for Meyer changes in taste indicate the return to appropriate models for the arts.

Not only is taste a central category for Meyer, it is also a foremost concern of the aesthetic thought of the 18th century. But 18th-century discourse on the aesthetic, specifically the determination of criteria for the arts, is often concerned with the normative determinations of generic limitation and the appropriateness of objects – the brunt of its energy is the generation of a proper work of art. The concept of taste relocates inquiry into the aesthetic in the receptivity of the beholder (in the case of the visual arts).[18] In other words, within the realm of taste we speak not only of good art, but also of a positive receptivity to good art. As Meyer makes clear in his observation on the renewed study of Raphael, for him the taste of the artist is both a receptive and a productive category, a vehicle for the imitation and transmission of methods of representation and of general attitudes toward the task of art. For this reason he is considerably fretful for the condition of taste – for, it determines to what extent the best art of the past will influence the artistic endeavor of the present. Likewise, it is in light of an improvement in taste that Meyer is able, like Winckelmann, to praise Mengs and also the sculptor Antonio Canova – although, unlike Winckelmann, he also reserves considerable criticism for the limits of their work. Whereas in terms of production they are limited by the circumstance of the historical condition of art at mid-century, the import of their work as a whole resonates more positively:

[18]For an overview of the history of the development of the concept taste in its international scope and in relation to the development of a concept of art as autonomous, see "Geschmack/Geschmacksurteil" in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, Volume 2, Karlheinz Barck, Martin Fontius, Dieter Schlenstedt, Burckhart Steinwachs, and Friedrich Wolfzettel, Eds. (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2003).

> Die ganze Geschichte zeigt, wie die Kunst immer nur stufenweise Fortschritte gemacht, und wenn wir ihren verfallenen Zustand unter Solimen, Conca und den Marattischen Schülern wohl betrachten; so begreift man leicht, daß ihr, auf einmal alle mittlern Stufen überspringend, die Ausübung des Höchsten nicht ganz gelingen konnte; aber der Geschmack, der nicht zu schaffen, sondern nur zu vergleichen und zu wählen braucht, hätte kaum besser gefördert werden können.[19]
>
> All history shows how art has always progressed only step by step; and if we can easily observe its fallen state under Solimen, Conca, and the students of Maratti, then we can easily understand that art cannot simply leap over all intermediate stages at once in order to achieve success in its highest exercise. But taste, which does not need to create but rather only to compare and to select, could hardly have been better promoted.

If the actual work of Mengs and Canova does not yet demonstrate a wholesale ascent of the arts back to their former heights under, variously, Raphael and the ancients, still their adherence to a proper model in its various historical manifestations reflects hopefully on the future progress of the arts. Taste, not itself creative but discriminating and judgmental, in essence serves to purify reception and accustom it to the standards set by an ever improving work of art.

It is, however, not sufficient to suggest that the renewal of good taste occurs merely in the return to acceptable models. Imitation is but the technical beginning of a process that should also include the development of an intellectual and sensual capacity for invention in the artist. Moreover, Meyer's occasional reference to the "spirit" of art amply indicates that the exterior and the mechanics of production are but one aspect of the creative process.[20] One must look to Meyer's overview of the general rise and

[19]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 168.

[20]In the first "Nachricht an Künstler und Preisaufgabe" announcing the first *Weimarer Presiaufgabe* in 1798, Goethe and/or Meyer clarify that invention (*Erfindung*) is the process, both intellectual and sensual, by which the artist determines the theme of the work – Goethe and Meyer prefer an invention in which all is oriented toward the central matter or object of the work, and simplified to appeal to and exercise a greater effect upon the mind. Invention is distinguished in the "Nachricht" from expression (*Ausdruck*), drawing (*Zeichnung*), and arrangement (*Anordnung*), the latter two in particular being considered more

decline in the arts in order to understand precisely what transformation is marked by the modest shift in taste. In an early section of the *Entwurf*, after he has sketched the condition of the arts in the 16th and 17th centuries and just prior to entering the 18th, Meyer offers some observation on transformation in taste. According to him, historical data suggest that the most productive influence on the arts is "allgemeiner Hang, Enthusiasmus, besonders von religiöser Art als der mächtigste und dauerndste" (general inclination, enthusiasm, especially of the religious variety as the most powerful and the most enduring").[21] This seems initially to be a complicated set of criteria, for Meyer notes that with the Greeks such enthusiasm was as much patriotic as it was religious, whereas in the case of medieval art his judgment falls more exclusively on the side of the religious, even the mystical: "Düstre, mönchische Ideen scheinen dem Künstler wenig hinderlich zu sein, denn er bearbeitet, erheitert und verschönert dieselben" (Gloomy monkish ideas seem no great obstacle to the artist, for he works them over, brightens them, beautifies them"). Yet what seems to unite the two endeavors is the drive to represent – a drive figured among the Greeks as "National-Ehrgefühl und Ruhmbegier," for the Catholic Middle Ages as "Religionseifer" ("a feeling of national honor and desire for fame," "religious fervor"). Indeed, he argues that the *Heilige* (saints) of Medieval art could not later be replaced with anything comparable after the 16th century. At that later point, Meyer concludes: "Die Künste waren Mode, sie – gefielen vielleicht, doch man bedurfte ihrer nicht mehr notwendig" ("The arts were fashion, they – were pleasing, perhaps, but one no longer needed them").[22] Mere pleasure and fashion are for Meyer

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matters of technique and scientific knowledge than of talent. See "Nachricht an Künstler und Preisaufgabe" in *Propyläen*, 529.

[21]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 46-47.

[22]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 47-48.

insufficient circumstances for the cultivation of proper representation. On the contrary, for Meyer the implication is that pleasure is not a necessity, that a previous drive to represent discernible in the patriotism and religiosity of the Greeks and the desire to visualize and beautify the conceptual in the Catholic Middle Ages signaled a simple need for the arts that vanishes when pleasure becomes their foremost task.

One discerns in Meyer's conclusion, even in his use of the dash suggesting a moment's consideration, his own judgment of taste. His evidently low estimation of pleasure nourishes his severe criticism of what he refers to generally in discussion of post-Renaissance art as *Manier* – a light, quickly executed, even naturalist representation suitable for a world lacking that drive to represent that he discerns in antiquity and the Middle Ages. The examples Meyer adduces under the rubric of *Manier* – virtuosity in the superficial representation of emotion, painting by torchlight to the praise of admirers, painting with the tips of the fingers rather than with the brush, serve to prove his point:

> Alle diese und mehr ähnliche Beispiele, die überflüssig anzuführen wären, zeigen unwiderlegbar, daß die Kunst fortdauernd unter immer drängendere Umstände sich beugen mußte, daß der gedeihliche Ernst derselben entflohen war, die echte Liebe zum Guten immer lauer, das Gründliche weniger gefordert, das bloß Scheinbare hingegen als vollgültig angenommen wurde. Die Künstler suchten, so oft es gelingen wollte, durch Neuheit zu reizen; und so wurden in der Malerei die besten Kräfte bald auf leere Fertiglosigkeiten, bald auf den Pomp reicher Kompositionen und schimmernder Farben verwendet, bald auf übertriebene Effekte, oder zerfließende Weichheit in unbestimmten Formen, oder auf geleckte mühselige Glätte etc.[23]
>
> All these and more similar examples, which would be superfluous to introduce, demonstrate incontestably that art had to bow continuously under ever more pressing circumstances, that its vigorous seriousness had fled, the true love of the good grown more lukewarm, the thoroughness less demanded, and that by contrast the merely apparent was accepted as valid. Artists sought, as often as it was possible, to stimulate through novelty. And so the best strengths in painting were soon wasted on empty

[23]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 55.

> and incomplete projects, on the pomp of rich compositions and shimmering colors, on exaggerated effects or melting softness in indeterminate forms, or on laborious, licked smoothness etc.

The image Meyer conjures of *Manier* is of a representative practice striving to meet the demand for virtuosity and stimulation in visual representation ("durch Neuheit zu reizen" – "to stimulate through novelty") through the constant development of an ostentatious technique at the expense of conceptual content. The result for Meyer is an art of the *bloß Scheinbare* – of the merely apparent, with little or no effort to penetrate or overcome the phenomenal world. By contrast, his previous statement on the art of antiquity and the Middle Ages suggests what he finds appropriate for visual representation. *Das Heilige, düstre mönchische Ideen* (the holy, gloomy monkish ideas) – such content is not phenomenal, it is rather conceptual, even expressly removed from direct experience, occluded, mysterious; and the image of the medieval artist working over and beautifying the conceptual is in essence the image of the artist rendering the concept in sensual and empirically accessible form. Meyer's somewhat inarticulate dismissal of *Manier* as an art of fashion – "sie – gefielen vielleicht" ("they – were pleasing, perhaps") – suggests then also a dismissal of the art of the merely apparent, of novelty, and of stimulation as hardly an art, difficult even to define in terms of art, the end of true representation and the rise of technique as spectacle. Thereby he also dismisses the *Manierist* and the public reception that institutionalizes such art, collapsing both into the periodizing category of the general decline of taste from the 16th to the mid-18th century.

Decline and renewal in the arts and in taste are matters of the reception and adoption of appropriate models. *Manier* flourishes owing in part to the lack of more serious models for imitation and an environment in which technical virtuosity and

superficiality are acceptable. The temptation to imitate and compete with others in the virtuoso rendering of stimulating visual effects through unconventional methods engenders its own motive energy – what Meyer calls the "Strom der Manier" ("the current of mannerism") easily overwhelms the few, such as the Caracci brothers, Guido, and Domenichino, who strive in vain to uphold the standards of the "noblest and highest" ("dem Edelsten und Höchsten").[24] It is against this backdrop that the transformation in the inner disposition of the artist, which for Meyer occurs with the turn to Raphael and the Greeks as models, can be understood as a true, if quiet, revolution in the progress of the arts and of taste, for with this turn the artist chooses, despite public acclaim for the novel and for stimulation, a model that bespeaks the more serious representative task of art. With respect to this revolution in taste, Winckelmann appears in Meyer's hands rather as *primus inter pares* among a generation of scholars and artists turning to antiquity for inspiration and opening their collections to study: Caylus, the English artist Gavin Hamilton, Winckelmann's Roman patrons the Baron Stosch and the Cardinal Albani, Mengs, Lessing. The import of the turn to antiquity is clarified by Meyer as follows:

> Die Kunst der Alten ist erhaben, groß, schön, über der Natur im Reich der Ideen schwebend. Und doch läßt sich das Schöne ihrer Formen teilweise in der Wirklichkeit wiederfinden. Die Antiken dringen sich daher dem jungen Künstler nicht zu unbedingten Mustern auf, sondern setzen ihn vielmehr gegen die Natur in Freiheit, zeigen ihm den Weg sich derselben zu höhern Zwecken zu bedienen.[25]
>
> The art of the ancients is sublime, grand, beautiful, hovering above nature in the realm of ideas. And yet the beauty of its forms can sometimes be found again in reality. The ancients, then, do not force themselves upon the young artist as unconditional models, rather they set him free against nature, they show him the way to use nature for higher purposes.

[24]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 54-55.
[25]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 112.

Here Meyer deploys and reverses the terms of his criticism of *Manier*. The latter was entirely given over to the superficial and phenomenal, the model objects for the development of technical virtuosity geared toward stimulation – *Manier* was altogether a matter of technique, and taste was reduced to delight. The antique model, in Meyer's estimation, lures the artist back to the conceptual world and promotes an artistic practice that aims not merely to represent the natural but the ideal in sensual and empirical form. The artist is liberated from the representation of the merely apparent and encouraged to pursue a goal that is beyond visual stimulation and delight.

The promise inherent in this moment of transformation in taste proves weak, however. As we have seen, in his assessment of Winckelmann's legacy in the research into antique art Meyer discerns a slackening of the standard of Winckelmann's visual method, and he discerns this slackening likewise in the practice of art post-Winckelmann. In order best to gauge the stakes of Meyer's opinion concerning the practice of art, I want to return to his statement on Winckelmann's achievement – specifically that now "die in schriftlichen Nachrichten so mangelhaft auf uns gekommene Geschichte der alten Kunst nicht nur vollständiger, sondern auch […] gleichsam lebendig in den Monumenten selbst dargestellt werden kann" (the history of ancient art, come down to us so deficiently in written sources, can be depicted in the monuments themselves not only more completely, but also […] alive, as it were).[26] As I have suggested, this statement is of interest foremost as the identification of a method for reading the historical charge of the work of art visually in the work itself. The potential result is that "actual viewing" ("wirkliche Anschauungen," to use Meyer's preferred term) overcomes defects in the written record

[26]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 217.

of history, indeed surpasses the limits of the written record. Of course Winckelmann and Meyer both advocate the hybrid approach of the literary and the visual, yet this joining of forces leads, under the most optimal circumstances, to the possibility of a visual engagement that is entirely historically fulfilling. Winckelmann's hybrid method entails the education of the eye and mind for a constant *visual* reception of the historicity of the physical and cultural world.

Meyer places the artist alongside the historian and antiquarian when he charges that research and practice since Winckelmann have failed to uphold Winckelmann's standard. What this means for the artist is, I believe, explicated by Meyer in his comments on contemporary history painting and most specifically on the work of Jacques-Louis David and his followers – but this must also be placed in the context of other contemporary developments of concern to Meyer, including the status of history painting, the varying selection of models, and an increasing preference for grandeur. Meyer initially notes that after Mengs' (1728-1779) death there was little history painting worthy of attention and few painters possessing the ability to elicit "remarkable phenomena" ("merkwürdige Erscheinungen").[27] Indeed, toward the end of his *Entwurf* he reiterates that history painting in his time clearly wavers between adherence to beautiful form on the one hand and grandeur and energy on the other – two categories that cannot easily coexist in the work. Meyer subsequently predicts the more frequent appearance of the colossal both in painting and in sculpture. How he arrives at the colossal is unclear – his previously preferred term has been "the grand" or "grandeur" ("das Große, die Großheit") or "the powerful" ("das Kräftige"). It seems, at least, that the colossal is a compromise of sorts between the preference for beautiful form and a

[27]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 117.

more energetic style demanding form and color incompatible with the beautiful or delicate. Indeed, Meyer sees in the colossal a medium for the "character of greatness" ("Charakter der Größe"). The clear if rather blunt implication is that forms will simply swell in size or adopt a more aggressive, ostentatious presentation in order to maintain their beauty while mediating greatness. The threat contained here for the task of history painting, the representation of "remarkable phenomena," is likely the loss of the remarkable – and here the German *merkwürdig* should be emphasized, its meaning reducible to "worthy of notice" or "worth remembering." Indeed, the verb *merken* (to notice, remember, mark, realize) recurs centrally in Meyer's discussion of history painting: "In der Geschichtsmalerei ist das Hauptaugenmerk der besten Künstler noch die schöne Form" ("In history painting the primary focus of the best artists is still the beautiful form").[28] Painters of history devote their attention and reproductive effort to the occurrence or phenomenon in a beautiful form not only meriting but even requiring attention – the beautiful historical form draws in the eye. The remarkable as Meyer uses the term suggests that which merits concerted attention, a second glance even, an effort to realize that one is looking at something of note, a commitment to memory. The colossal, by contrast, expands to confront the eye – not only does it lack remarkability, its visibility is the assault of the inescapable.

Meyer's concern about the colossal surely figures in his general anxiety regarding the relationship between artist and model. Indeed, the problem for him is not merely a new preference for the expansiveness of the grand at the expense of the subtlety of the beautiful – this tendency bleeds into the reception of antiquity and Renaissance art as well. The colossal Juno Ludovisi is increasingly preferred to the "canonical" Belvedere

[28]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 175.

Antinous, for example, and the energetic and grand style of Michelangelo and da Vinci supplant Raphael.[29] The return to the beautiful form of canonical antiquity and the Renaissance, initiated by Mengs yet never raised sufficiently above the level of imitation, now cycles through a historical series of forms, with the result that in Meyer's time, and to his eye, a regression is discernible in the turn to the grand, earlier antiquity, the early Renaissance. In a move reminiscent of the entire visual charge of *Manier,* the artist's eye in Meyer's time seems to him to be overcome by an eclecticism that threatens to sever it from its proper object, the trace of the conceptual or ideal in the natural and empirical world, represented in a manner that forces the eye to work.

His commentary on French painting makes clear that for Meyer this shift is not a matter merely of progress in the development of the arts, but rather that it relates directly to the experience and representation of contemporary history as well. His overall assessment of David and his circle is that their warrior-like or even theatrical style – mask-like ("maskenhaft'), with the gestures of the actor ("die Figuren sich wie Schauspieler gebärden")[30] – and their preference for Roman history owes to their political affiliations. The contention is two-fold: that the art of David and his circle is intimately linked to contemporary history (the French Revolution, the Revolutionary Wars, the rise of Napoleon); and that it, like the colossal, is an act of disrupting the eye's power of attention, of overwhelming the eye with gestures and effects geared toward an all too visible experience.

Meyer breaks this down into issues of composition, content, and thought in a longer discussion of David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1784 – ill. 6), an earlier work that

[29]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 163.
[30]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 163.

captured the attention of Rome long before it appeared. Meyer stages the story of the work's reputation, debut, composition and content in a manner suggestive of a lesson in the fragility of taste. Owing to the positive reception of the previous *Belisarius* (1781), expectation is high for David's next work; those who have seen the artist at work report "miraculous things" ("Wunderdinge"); attention is at a fever pitch by the time the work is presented to the public: "Nie ist wohl ein Gemälde mit solchem Zulauf und lauterem Beifall geehrt worden" ("It is unlikely that any work has ever been honored with such popularity or with louder applause").[31] Meyer himself concedes that the composition and technique merit praise: thorough and solid drawing, clearly expressed forms, an inner dynamic of conflicting emotions, powerful color, tasteful depiction of the fold of the garment, good distribution of figures in the space of the painting. The visual effect of the work is almost entirely what one should demand.

Yet Meyer discerns at the heart of the work – at the level of *Gedanke* (thought), slipping into the central event (*Handlung*) of the image, and even infecting the gesture of the figures – the unmistakably theatrical. His final judgment: "man vermißte ungern in einem Kunstwerk von so vielen Verdiensten die schöne Wahrscheinlichkeit, das völlig Ungezwungene, die natürliche Einfalt, womit die Kunst ihren Produkten allein wahres bleibendes Interesse, welches im öftern Anschauen nur immer erhöht wird, verschaffen kann" ("regrettably one misses in a work of art of such merit the beautiful verisimilitude, the entirely unforced, the natural simplicity through which alone art can guarantee her products that true, lasting interest that will only increase with frequent viewing").[32] David's *Oath of the Horatii* is an attention-commanding tour de force of technique, visual

[31]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 122-123.
[32]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 123.

stimulation, even knowledge of antiquity, yet it fails precisely because of its ability to capture the eye so immediately through an underlying indebtedness to the theatrical. Again, Meyer argues for an art that repeatedly draws the eye in to penetrate natural and familiar form, the verisimilar or probable, the unforced or unstaged, in order to discern what lies behind the phenomenal in the conceptual realm of the work. In this respect it is interesting that he uses the term *Gedanke* (thought) rather than the equally common and roughly equivalent *Erfindung* (invention) when isolating and discussing the underlying organizational dynamic of David's work. For, *Gedanke* allies the basic foundation of the work of art to the conceptual, to the thought that is to be rendered in sensually perceptible form. The implication is that for Meyer the theatrical is the foundation of David's work – its quality in terms of content, composition, and technique is entirely betrayed by a basic return to simulation, to the "merely apparent" Meyer discerns and virulently detests in *Manier*. The unfortunate difference is that with David this simulation is no longer mediated in a merely superficial technical virtuosity; rather, it has concealed itself in the trappings of good taste – even, possibly, in the best taste to be found in contemporary painting.

How can we define Meyer's position regarding the representation of history, between the repeated "actual viewing" of the beautiful form and the verisimilar on the one hand and the theatrical and colossal on the other? In a previous chapter I argued that Meyer advocated a symbolically clear communication in the work of art, not foremost beauty and repeated viewing – yet the two need not be considered incompatible.[33] In his

[33]One should also bear in mind that Meyer's earlier *Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst* was in 1798 a completed and published text in which Meyer attempted, despite his own innovations, to work over Goethe's ideas; whereas the *Entwurf*, although conceived even earlier, was finished later at a moment when

assessment of Winckelmann's legacy, he highly esteemed the potential for the work of art to communicate its own historicity. Certainly this act of communication has a decidedly scholarly side – it implies that knowledge of antiquities so advanced under Winckelmann that knowledge of style could accompany the scholar in the field as a tool of measurement, as it were, not merely reside in the library. But the communicative act also resonates into the production of new works of art through the very act of turning to an antique model for the purposes of creative rejuvenation. The appropriate style in not merely "antique" – rather, it is *historically* beautiful, the Belvedere Antinous rather than the Juno Ludovisi, the pinnacle of Greek style rather than its evolutionary precedent, a representation that entices both eye and mind rather than merely exposing itself to the eye. Moreover, the return to this style accompanied a shift away from the mere appearance of *Manier*; naturalism and stimulating effect were to be supplanted by the return to and move beyond the limits of nature into the ideal and the conceptual as it might be experienced. Beauty and verisimilitude together are the hallmarks of the work of art that embodies the ideal or conceptual, that which is beyond empirical nature, in a formally perfect and sensually empirical natural likeness. It is not colossal but subtle, not theatrical but, rather, simply *there*. It does not grasp the visual attention of the viewer; rather, in its subtle, formal perfection it represents an object presupposing a viewer, even demanding a viewer, and challenging any viewer to look. The return of good taste marks a moment in historical and art-historical time at which the eye may be trained to look under its own motivation and to recognize what deserves to be seen, whether in the historical world or in the landscape of art.

Classicism was already in decline. Thus, that Meyer could have simply changed his thinking in the interval is also hardly unlikely.

The juncture of history, especially contemporary history, and history of art is most obvious in Meyer's treatment of the French school. As he writes it, the recent history of French painting in Rome accompanies the recent history of the French in Rome. For Meyer this means the dissolution and displacement of Roman collections of antiquities to France.[34] To be sure, among the concluding remarks of his *Entwurf* he claims to remain unconcerned whether, for example, Laocoon or the works of Raphael are in Rome or Paris – the presence of good art has never proven to be an unconditional impetus to the production of good art. It is, rather, the damage to the study of antiquity that Meyer laments.[35] Yet Meyer has argued for much of his *Entwurf* that the transformation in taste at mid-century owed largely to the turn to antiquity, and in fact his understanding of good taste resides in the latter's capacity to promote comparative criticism. With the removal of works of art from Rome, a crucible for the refinement of taste, even for its very activation, is lost: "denn die Bequemlichkeit, die bedeutendsten Monumente zu vergleichen und aus der Vergleichung Schlüsse zu ziehen, fällt größtenteils weg" ("for the convenience of comparing the most significant monuments and drawing conclusions from comparison is for the most part lost").[36] Moreover, the actual withdrawal of French artists from Rome in 1793 occurred during an ongoing dispute between two parties Meyer calls the atomists, those whose creative judgment favors the detail at the expense of the whole, and the totalists, who privilege the whole to the detriment of the detail. The loss of the best works of antiquity – specifically, the dissolution of their collection in Rome and their dispersal as disembodied parts – is part of a series of events amounting to

[34]Specifically following an armistice between France and the Vatican in 1796 and the eventual Treaty of Tolentino in 1797. See the commentary to Meyer, FA I/19, 795.
[35]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 174.
[36]Meyer, *Entwurf*, 174.

the fracturing of taste on the level of the reception and production of art, with grave (if, curiously, unuttered) consequences for the future of the arts.

Fernow on Carstens: the Classicist imagination

Carl Ludwig Fernow's 1806 biography *Das Leben des Künstlers Asmus Jakob Carstens* (*The Life of the Artist Asmus Jakob Carstens*) demonstrates an extreme sensitivity to the fragility of Classicism in the early 19th century. Like the *Skizzen zu einer Schilderung Winkelmanns*, Fernow's *Leben* recruits biography to elegize the passing of a highpoint in the history of the arts – in the case of Fernow's work, of course, it is the very recently deceased German artist Asmus Jakob Carstens (1754-1798), who had also been a close friend to the writer and tutor Fernow during their time together in Rome from 1794 to Carstens' early death in 1798 at the age of forty-four. The two works, on Winckelmann and on Carstens, share a depiction of the life of the scholar or artist who somehow reaches a pinnacle in his resonance for posterity just prior to an untimely death, culminating in a legacy that is belatedly, and then only just, recognized. Likewise, both works have been regarded as markers of a fundamental reorientation of the Classicist attitude in the first decade of the 19th century: away from the programmatic effort to influence taste on a wide-scale, and away from the associated cultural and political projects centered on the development of the arts in Germany, the salvation of antique heritage, and the reactivation of the individual and social capacity for aesthetic receptivity and judgment; and toward the individual as the lone, enduring, even the only possible site of the sensual and creative receptivity cultivated by Classicism. In this regard Goethe's symbolic Winckelmann becomes a model not only of creative humanity

but also and foremost of a type of preserved and safeguarded individuality. Fernow's Carstens similarly demonstrates a retreat into the individual, which bears sweeping implications for the image of Classicism as it disappears.[37]

Fernow's biography draws in part on his friendship with Carstens, and so Fernow may perhaps rightfully boast a degree of faithfulness to his subject, as he does in the preface to the work.[38] Yet it is naturally heavily stamped by Fernow's own concerns. By his own admission he has taken Carstens' development as an artist and the formation of his talent as his primary objects, in accordance with a conviction expressed at the outset of the work that the life of the artist consists really only in the development and application of his talent – and that all exterior biographical circumstances matter in the history of art only to the extent that they influence the artist's contribution to the autonomy of art. Fernow's perspective on the place of the arts in contemporary society, and Carstens' role in this vision, become clearer over the course of the preface. In short, the arts are no longer needed, merely propped up for representative exploitation and banalization by the aristocracy, while aspiring artists are disciplined in the art of imitation at the academies at the expense of their imaginative capability.[39] For Fernow, Carstens' individuality, dedication foremost to his imagination, and lack of conventional training, promise an antidote to the ailing condition of the arts. The biography is in intervention into the history and current state of art.

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[37]See the essay ""Die Ästhetik des Selbstseins. Goethes Kunstanschauung 1805-1816" in the commentary to Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche* I/19: *Ästhetische Schriften 1806-1815*, Friedmar Apel, Ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 1998), 727-757.
[38]Carl Ludwig Fernow, *Carstens, Leben und Werke. Herausgegeben und ergänzt von Herman Riegel* (Hannover: Carl Rümpler 1867 – 1975 reprint), 36. Translations are my own.
[39]Fernow, *Carstens*, 34, 38-40.

The biography is also very much the product of visual acts of judgment. Fernow describes Carstens as a "merkwürdige, wenngleich nur von wenigen bemerkte, Erscheinung" ("a remarkable phenomenon, if noticed only by a few").[40] Carstens' life and work are significant events in the history of art, deserving the attention and representation that have previously been lacking; and, by implication, Fernow is a special person for having taken an interest in Carstens. Indeed, he strikes a decidedly aestheticizing posture toward his late friend: his full attention (*Augenmerk*) had been directed toward the course of Carstens' development as an artist; his depiction of Carstens enjoys a high degree of character and individuality owing to Fernow's "long and intimate acquaintance" ("lange und innige Bekanntschaft") with his "object" ("Gegenstande").[41] Carstens himself is the object of Fernow's aesthetic and historical imagination, an object to be explored intimately and rendered characteristically on the page for the benefit of art's history and social health, his difficult life and early death "an arousing spectacle for the beholder" ("ein erhebendes Schauspiel für den Beobachter").[42] Carsten's life, art practice, and death become the object of an aestheticizing and historicizing judgment on the part of Fernow – Carstens must act the part of the Classicist.

The extent to which Fernow actively refashions Carstens as a model Classicist in accordance with his own aesthetic preferences, is revealed in a comparison of the long, narrative biographical section of the work and the final section comprising a thematic

[40]Fernow, *Carstens*, 35.
[41]Fernow, *Carstens*, 36.
[42]Fernow, *Carstens*, 34.

overview of Carstens as artist.[43] Much of the biographical narrative casts Carstens in the midst of a struggle for influence between the models of Michelangelo and Raphael – between on the one hand the grand, powerful, energetic, even exaggerated, and on the other the graceful, calm, and harmoniously balanced. That Carstens' work throughout his career bears obvious traces of the influence of Michelangelo (as well, for example, as of the influence of the French school, regarded by Fernow as followers of the Michelangelist tradition[44]) – that, in other words, Carstens' actual work does not follow Fernow's own normative vision of Classicism – means that Carstens' productive life as an artist must be carefully managed and transformed by Fernow. The fundamental dynamic of the narrative is, then, that Carstens abandons his youthful adherence to the grand, energetic, even violent representation symbolically embodied in the work of Michelangelo and, once in Rome, turns to the ideal beauty of Raphael. Correspondingly, whereas Fernow applies direct speech from Carstens in the narration of his early life, once Carstens arrives for his second and extended stay in Rome direct speech is replaced by Fernow's observations – in Rome Carstens is subject to Fernow's direct visual observation, his gesture matters more than his speech.[45] Carstens' life is now Fernow's product, and with the fate of Carstens' art in the balance (between Michelangelo and Raphael), Fernow must interpret the period in Rome in accordance with the stated ambition of his biography – to demonstrate Carstens' contribution to the development of art's autonomy. The result, however – laid out in the final section of the work, an

[43]Martin Dönike provides a helpful overview and interpretation of the biography – see Dönike, *Pathos, Ausdruck und Bewegung*, 314-340, 370-374.
[44]Martin Dönike argues for the influence f Michelangelo and the French school on Carstens' work in a detailed examination of the presence of what he calls *das Gewaltsame* in Carstens' work over the course of his life as an artist and directly in defiance of Fernow's often willful reinterpretation. See Dönike, *Pathos, Ausdrcuk und Bewegung*, 314-340, and specifically 327.
[45]Dönike, *Pathos, Bewegung und Ausdruck*, 316-317, 320-321.

overview of Carstens as artist – is a striking collapse of the developmental trajectory of the biography into an a-historical series of images of Carstens himself as the supreme embodiment of a radical autonomy.

Several gestures on the part of Fernow in this final section foreground the image of Carstens as a figure of extreme distinction against the historical backdrop of the more widespread practice of Classicism. For example, in the first and third thematic sections of the overview, titled "Stil" and "Wahl des Stoffes" ("Style" and "Choice of Subject Matter") respectively, Fernow argues that Carstens adhered more closely than his predecessors to the model of pagan antiquity. Fernow reconfigures the Classicist trope of the model in a novel manner: he suggests, for example, that Carstens surpasses even Raphael in his dedication to an antique model; and he stresses repeatedly the pervasiveness of Biblical themes in such predecessors – the mark of an art practice that is now simply outdated, as he argues both here and in his *Bemerkung* ("Comment") included in Meyer's history. Yet he argues further that the biblical as well as the pagan antique are equally distant models, in part given their implication in religious representation. They are both therefore essentially out of place in an age in which art must stand on its own without the institutional and ideological support of religion. But he returns nonetheless to a defense of the antique model based in its more inherent capacity to promote autonomy: antique art, he argues, was more influential on the development of religion in the ancient world and thus retains its capacity to act as art should: "Simbolik des Übersinnlichen durch die schönsten würdigsten Bilder der Natur" ("a symbolic of the

supersensual through the most beautiful and worthiest images of nature).[46] Christian art, by contrast, has been too enslaved to the "mythology and martyrology" ("Mitologie und Martirologie") of religion, too beholden to the Church's need to tap into and control the popular mind, and steeped in the representation of subjects not suitable for art – the foolish, the ugly, the disgusting ("oft albernen, oder häßlichen und ekelhaften Inhalts").[47]

Fernow also argues that Carstens decided largely against models from Roman antiquity and in favor of the Greek given the latter's simplicity, quiet grandeur ("ruhige Größe"), and pure ideal beauty, and the former's penchant for pomp, ostentation in costume, and comparative "rawness" ("Roheit").[48] Fernow avers even that Carstens' innovation in the choice of subject matter, in comparison to other artists who allegedly reproduce from a more or less fixed series of subjects for historical painting, owes to his unique knowledge of antique sources: "Daß *Carstens* so viele neue Gegenstände behandelt hat, war eine natürliche Folge seiner vertrauteren Bekanntschaft mit den alten Schriftstellern, die wohl wenige Künstler so aufmerksam und wiederholt gelesen haben" ("That Carstens dealt with so many new objects was a natural consequence of his more intimate acquaintance with ancient writers, which few other artists likely read so attentively and so repeatedly").[49] Fernow himself repeatedly returns to the basic elements of the Classicist education and arsenal: Greek antiquity, simplicity and beauty, the knowledge of antique literature. Yet in doing so he clearly betrays a tendency to detach Carstens from the context of a reigning and oft recommended practice, suggesting

[46]Carl Ludwig Fernow, *Leben des Künstlers Asmus Jakob Carstens, ein Beitrag zur Kunstgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, in *Klassik und Klassizismus*, 487-488. Note that this edition contains only the final section of the biography, the overview. Translations are my own.
[47]Fernow, *Leben*, 486-487, 493.
[48]Fernow, *Leben*, 492-493.
[49]Fernow, *Leben*, 494. Fernow concedes later in the overview that other contemporary artists, German and Italian, have indeed drawn more from antique literary sources over the course of the preceding decade, and acknowledges the increasing translation of classical works into German. See Fernow, *Leben*, 509-511.

instead that Carstens was the only artist or one among a severely limited number of artists thoroughly treating the antique Greek model.

The future of an autonomous art thus seems precarious in Fernow's work, preserved as it is almost entirely if not uniquely in the figure of Carstens. And Fernow's Carstens is a strange vehicle for its transmission, for he consistently flouts the conventions of art practice. His preference for Greek simplicity over Roman pomp and ostentation, cited by Fernow as indicative of Carstens progressive style and taste, proves also symptomatic of the problem of Carstens' incomplete training in the arts. The example also showcases Fernow's method of managing a troubling object, Carstens, and fashioning him into a model in his own right. In a section titled "Beiwerk" ("Accessories") Fernow unfolds a two-part argument concerning the representation of costume, prop, architecture: Carstens lacked appropriate training in the rendering of such accessories; he also preferred simplicity in such matters. One implication is that Carstens' preferred a style that helped him to avoid what he had not yet mastered. Fernow's conclusion sublates the two circumstances, Carstens' lack of training and the possible motive for his preferences, and resorts instead to the claim of a distinctive virtue that rings almost intentional:

> Nie verfiel er in den bei neueren Künstlern, besonders der französischen Schule, die das Theatralische liebt, so gemeinen Fehler, aus unverständiger Prachtliebe Szenen aus den Zeiten des frühen, kunstarmen Altertums mit einem Grunde von reicher und prächtiger Architektur, z. B. Szenen aus dem Zeitalter des *Romulus* mit Tempeln und Säulenhallen korinthischer Ordnung aus dem Zeitalter *Augusts* oder *Hadrians* zu verzieren. Seine Gebäude waren immer, wie das Zeitalter seines Gegenstandes sie foderte […][50]
>
> He never succumbed to that error so common among modern artists (especially the French school that loves the theatrical), that

[50]Fernow, *Leben*, 508.

> incomprehensible penchant for the sumptuous that would adorn scenes from the times of earliest antiquity, so spare in art, with a background of rich, magnificent architecture – e.g., scenes from the age of *Romulus* with temples and halls columned in the Corinthian order from the age of *Augustus* or *Hadrian*. His buildings were always as the age of his object required them […]

In this passage Fernow groups together several tendencies – a penchant for the sumptuous, the theatrical, an erroneous representation or even knowledge of antique history, the practices of contemporary artists and the French school – into a generalized gesture of decay in modern representation that is both incomprehensible in itself and purposefully absent in Carstens' art. By comparison, Carstens' art is purposeful and logical – all in the image is as the object requires it. The previously noted (and thereafter still repeatedly noted) lack of a complete formal training is trumped, although hardly seamlessly, by the conclusion that Carstens' shortcomings were of little matter, if not actually virtuous and even intentional elements of style and taste.

But despite what Fernow considers a distinguishing object-centeredness to Carstens' art, he also praises Carstens for what amounts to a wholesale withdrawal from the actual, material object. Specifically, and with reference to an academic practice he regards as debilitating to the artist in training, Fernow emphasizes Carstens' indebtedness to the imagination and to invention over imitation.

> Das Eigene seines Kunststrebens bestand vornehmlich darin, daß er nicht den gewöhnlichen Weg der zur eigenen Erfindung allmählich fortschreitenden Nachahmung ging, sondern sogleich mit dem Erfinden begann; indem er die Kunstwerke, so wie die Gegenstände der Natur, die ihm zu Vorbildern dienten, nie nachbildete, sondern bloß, durch unablässiges aufmerksames Betrachten, Form und Charakter derselben mit der Einbildungskraft aufzufassen, und das so Gelernte dann in eigenen Erfindungen wieder anzuwenden strebte.[51]

[51]Fernow, *Leben*, 512.

> The unique aspect of his artistic ambition was foremost that he did not follow the usual path of a gradually progressing imitation in order to arrive at his own invention, but rather began immediately with invention – by never reproducing the works of art that, like objects of nature, served as his models. Rather, he strove to apprehend their form and character with the imagination, through constant, attentive observation, and then to apply what he learned to his own inventions.

Carstens took inspiration from the object, but he did not work from the object or model directly. Rather, Fernow argues that he impressed the object upon his imagination and drew later from this stock. Given Classicism's general advocacy of a correct model and its concern for a representation that joins the ideal and the material, it is striking that Fernow should decouple the object from representation and require, as it were, that all perception be filtered through the artist's imagination. Fernow's terminology suggests more precisely where his thinking differs from that of his peers, for he uses the verb *nachbilden* (to produce an image from, to form from) as well as the more frequent *nachahmen* (to imitate). Indeed, elsewhere he uses *nachzeichnen* (to draw from).[52] He draws attention not merely to the action of working with a model or object, but to their technical reproduction in visual or plastic media as the first stage in the progress of imitative education from the copy to a new original. The intervention of the imagination permits the artist to avoid the crudest imitation in direct reproduction and move immediately to a new original.

Direct observation becomes a new intermediate stage in the creative process, replacing the process of imitation. *Nachzeichnen* and *nachbilden* conjure their own image of a part by part reproduction, whereas Carstens' constant and attentive direct observation seems to concern only one object or model as an entirety and the stocking of the imagination with formally whole inspiration. Fernow clarifies this in an earlier

[52]Fernow, *Leben*, 489.

passage in the section "Zeichnung" ("Drawing"): "Er studierte bloß betrachtend, indem er den Gegenstand seines Studiums oft und allseitig aufs genaueste beobachtete; die Gestalt nebst dem Charakteristischen desselben seiner Einbildungskraft einzuprägen" ("He learned merely through observation, by viewing the object of his study frequently and in detail from all sides, in order to impress form as well as the characteristic of the object upon his imagination").[53] Indeed, Carstens' adherence to the object and to the production as a whole is further evidenced in his errors cited by Fernow: errors in proportion and perspective owing, again, to his lack of formal training, resulting in details appearing flawed to the "scrutinizing gaze of the judge of art" ("der prüfende Blick des Kunstrichters").[54] But Fernow balances the errant detail in Carstens' work against his success with larger-scale qualities such as unity of character, significance, and living expression of figures ('Einheit des Charakters," "Bedeutsamkeit," "lebendigen Ausdruck seiner Gestalten") – qualities Fernow finds seldom achieved elsewhere despite the most correct drawing – and concludes that Carstens' attention to the whole compensates for error in the part.

Yet, an additional layer in Carstens' engagement with the object accrues to this practice in Fernow's discussion of Carstens' talent for expression. The context is familiar: Carstens' facility in expression, especially in physiognomic expression, compensates for other reputed limitations in his scope as an artist. Fernow describes the process by which objects enter Carstens' sphere of interest:

> Fähig, alles auszudrücken was ihn lebhaft und innig gerührt, oder durch ein hohes Interesse begeistert hatte, zog er, bei einer vielseitigen Empfänglichkeit, Vieles mit Glück in seinen Kreis; und eigentlich lag außerhalb desselben nur das, was der natürlichen Stimmung und

[53]Fernow, *Leben,* 489-490.
[54]Fernow, *Leben,* 490.

> Empfindungsweise seines Gemüts als unbedeutend oder fremdartig widerstand.[55]
>
> Capable of expressing everything that had actively and intimately moved him or motivated him through a high degree of interest, he was fortunate to draw much into his circle through a versatile receptivity; and in fact only those things remained excluded that struck his natural temperament and sensibility as insignificant or strange.

The active image of Carstens intensively examining the object is shaded by a curious stillness. Indeed, when the discussion concerns expression, one of Carstens' talents as an artist, Fernow injects into the imaginative and inventive process a stage of mere openness to the field of objects that might capture Carstens' attention and move him. Moreover, this new image of Carstens "fortunately" ("mit Glück") drawing favorable objects into his circle – that which is familiar and meaningful to him and thereby accords with his disposition – suggests a more naturalized and even impersonalized process of attraction by virtue of which objects are transformed by the inventive imagination only after coming into contact with the immobile, receptive artist. Carstens' talent is stretched between two curious extremes: on the one hand, he remains "actively and intimately moved" by objects of interest; on the other, his skill is reduced to a Midas touch of sorts, the creative reflex of an artist selectively transforming the world in accordance with his, or Fernow's, imagination.

This stillness also informs Fernow's evaluation of Carstens' best expressive works: still scenes in which action (*Handlung*) is reduced to "beautiful figures and significant physiognomies" ("schöner Gestalten und bedeutender Fisiognomien").[56] To be sure, Fernow credits Carstens with other varieties of expressive representation, including the heroic and pathetic, and "quiet scenes with a particular moment"

[55]Fernow, *Leben,* 498.
[56]Fernow, *Leben,* 500.

("ruhigeren Szenen mit bestimmten Moment"). But the category of the quiet scene "without a particular moment" is for Fernow the most compelling.[57] Curiously, he adduces in greatest detail the examples of *Orfeus* and *Homer* (ill. 8) in order to argue that, despite the presence of crowds listening to song in the images, "actually nothing is *done*, something merely *occurs*" ("wo eigentlich nicht *gehandelt* wird, wo bloß etwas *vorgeht*").[58] Moment is reducible to action, thus scenes without action (or at least without the more expressive actions, the heroic and pathetic, one might more readily associate with historical painting) cannot be located in time: "und man kann sie als stehende Erscheinungen betrachten, die der Künstler vor das Auge des Betrachtenden rückt" ("and one may regard them as still apparitions, which the artist places before the eye of the beholder"). Fernow's obvious preference for the still and timeless also informs his high evaluation of physiognomic expression; for with the physiognomic, the expressivity of action (*Handlung*) may also be reduced to the facial expression as the mediator of character and individuality. Figures in the image then truly become *Gestalten* (forms), radiating an expressing individuality only in the barest traces of movement in the face.

Fernow's conception of the imagination is also informed by his preference for the still. Moreover, his preference for the still, and therewith for the reduced expressivity of the physiognomic, suggests an inclination toward the sculptural. His thinking on the basic medial distinctions between painting and sculpture is such that the painted scene may recede into the illusionistic depth of the canvas and expand to encompass a multi-

[57]Dönike, for example, cites this high estimation of the still scene, despite a preponderance of the heroic and pathetic in the oeuvre, as evidence of Fernow's very willful reinterpretation of Carstens' work. Dönike, *Pathos*, 328-330.
[58]Fernow, *Leben*, 500.

temporal narrative space before the viewer; whereas sculpture, not a medium for depth and the dynamic use of space, manifests the ideally beautiful with a characteristic particularity in a single concentrated formal presence.[59] The painted acts, or enacts, but the sculptural occurs. Moreover, his references to the sculptural imagination bring into full circle his vision of Carstens' inventive and transformative receptivity. For, Carstens' is a *plastic* genius; indeed, his imagination is as a crucible for the production of the ideal image: "alles, was er bildend dachte, sich in seiner plastisch dichtenden Fantasie kunstmäßig gestaltete" ("everything that shaped in his mind formed itself into art in his plastic-poetic imagination").[60] That Carstens as artist would reveal a particular kind of scene to the eye of his viewer, even a "still apparition," does not necessarily ring as incompatible with wider Classicist theory. It is, rather, the process by which this occurs in Fernow's depiction of Carstens' practice that is novel: his highest productivity consists in the filtering of objects through the imagination and projecting them to the viewer in plastic idealization, the rendering still of a world increasingly populated by new objects communicating quietly to the viewer in discretely expressive stasis.

The visual impact of Carstens' actual body of work – separated from Fernow's selective interpretation – rubs perhaps closer to Fernow's estimation than he liked. By and large the oeuvre is dominated by graphic works, many preparations for painting, many unfinished. And as one moves through the catalog of remaining works one notices a wealth of portraits and profiles from his earlier years and a preponderance of large-scale sketches as Carstens' life draws to its end (ill. 9). The crispness and intimacy of the earlier production is gradually overtaken by a fragmenting monumental, suggesting that,

[59]Dönike, *Pathos*, 370-371 – Fernow articulates this thinking in an earlier (1797) essay, *Über den Zwek, das Gebiet und die Gränzen der Malerei* (*On the Purpose, the Sphere, and the Limits of Painting*).
[60]Fernow, *Leben*, 489.

as Carstens' "plastic-poetic imagination" receded from the world around him fully into the invention of an antique ideal, the sculptural presence withered as well. This effect is perhaps unwittingly referenced in the biography in the role played by Rome as the site of the preferred object for Carstens' inventive imagination. For, whereas the biographical narrative devotes roughly half of its length to Carstens' residence in Rome in the years leading to his death, in the final overview Rome itself is barely present – introduced merely in reference to Carstens' ability to walk down the street in order to draw inspiration. The *literary* effect of this shift in the status of Rome as center for Classicist inspiration, between narrative and final overview, is the suggestion that once Carstens' was in Rome, he overcame even Rome. That he himself became the center of what remains of Classicism. The balance of Fernow's biography is that Classicism withdraws from the world and is relocated entirely in the individual imagination, creativity is detached from the material demands of the object and cultivated in invention; and an image of the ideal is projected, in place of the enhancement of the ideality of the particular and familiar. In Carstens' life Fernow tells the story of Classicism as a radical and autonomous visual transformation of the world, in which the actual history of Classicism is reduced severely to the fragmenting body of work of the artist as isolated embodiment of the ideal.

Conclusion

As we have seen, in his biographical sketch Goethe portrays Winckelmann in a symbolic sense as both dead and living, the uniquely creative individual and the inspirational model for a type of creativity. These two tendencies culminate in his

allusion to Winckelmann as sculpture, the finished work of art that itself still demands imitation. Yet the biography, despite years of preparation, remains somehow, in Goethe's terms, necessarily fragmentary. But with the fragmentary biography one has a form of representation that remains inadequate – its fragmentary nature need not impinge upon the integrity of its object. Whatever Winckelmann was, Goethe finds himself unable fully to say – his image must remain incomplete at the moment of its production. It is, as it were, born into decay.

The writings under focus in this chapter constitute a series of attempts to come to terms with and adequately represent an object. Moreover, they unfold across half a century of Classicism in the form of a chain reaction. Winckelmann's search for the source and nature of beauty in a visually charged concept of style becomes the center of Meyer's history of the decline, rise, spread and uncertain future of taste. Meyer's concern for the visuality associated with types of representation is reconfigured in Fernow's biography as an imaginative vision severed from the material world and located entirely in the individual, just after Goethe himself relocates Winckelmann's historic achievement more in Winckelmann himself as exemplary presence (even as corpse) in the history of Classicism than in Winckelmann's scholarship. The history of the rise and fall of Classicism becomes a history of vision, of the eye's seeking out, examining, and ultimately abandoning its object in favor of an inward observation of the invention of the mind. Accompanying this is a history of art as a history of motion – from the alluring motion of the expressively beautiful as the hallmark of a recurring style signifying the cyclical movement of history; to a good taste found both aesthetically in the repeated return of the eye to the work of art, and historically in an antique spirit, for better or for

worse, transgressing the limits of Rome; to the near absence of motion in a world of forms stilled by the mind of the artist.

The history of Classicism as a story based in motion and vision means the history of Classicism also as a characteristic history – an attempt to grasp and render coherently the developing essence of Classicism over time in its own expressive and characteristic gestures. In light of Goethe's appraisal of his own biography as fragmentary, one notices that the central concern for Winckelmann, Meyer, and Fernow is a visual sensitivity to the relic, the remain, the fragment of a now vanished (or vanishing) whole, the recuperation of that harmony between part and whole taken as the quality of the best art. Classicism's gesture of looking is also the betrayal of desperation for the lost: for lost beauty, lost taste, the loss of Rome, the loss of Carstens, even loss of self.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have argued that Weimar Classicism is a response to a discomfort with the passage of time and the contingency and uncontrollability of history. To be more specific: the figures we commonly associate with Weimar Classicism – Goethe, Schiller, Meyer, Fernow – acknowledge historical change in differing ways and respond to it with representational and cognitive strategies intended to confer a mastery over time and a knowledge of processes by which history occurs. "History" in this regard means the changes occurring in European society during the 1790s and the early 19th century owing to the French Revolution: the perception of political instability, social transformation, and cultural condensation around exclusive national cores. But history also has another meaning here: emerging from the perception of social, political, and cultural changes going back decades prior to the 1790s, yet taken as peaking around 1800, it also indicates a more general and dramatic sense of transformation over time that leaves in its wake the destruction of the familiar while promising an open yet also unknowable future. History is not merely the event or a series of events; it is also a process by which time passes.

The Classicists' response to the experience of this process is to turn to forms of representation drawn from the idealized reception of European antiquity and held to be universally valid and even psychically healing in the effect they exercise upon the beholder (the viewer, the listener, the reader – also the artist). My focus in this work on

visual representation has been in part a recognition of the status accorded to theater and the visual arts among the collaborators of Weimar Classicism. But the eminent status of visual representation in Weimar Classicism is itself also a response to a concern about the experience of history and a desire to reproduce images that provide sensory stabilization in the face, literally, of the passage of time.

The desire for sensory stabilization is also a response to what I have called the improbability of a properly aesthetic vision. In his *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* Schiller acknowledged the sheer unlikelihood of the important visual transformation that renders the world as object of the subject's senses. This moment of the individual's self-detachment and visual distancing from the world is for Schiller the birth of humanity's faculty for formal play with the content of experience. It is also, unfortunately, a moment of such fragile improbability that it becomes the foundation of a set of strategies through which the Classicists would stage this improbable moment between an aesthetic subject and the world through the work of art.

The distinctions between the works of Kolbe and Nahl (ill. 1 and 2) in the 1800 *Weimarer Preisaufgabe* drive home the point that the art work is a strategic site. While Kolbe's Andromache succumbs to the pathos of the moment in a show of emotion deemed unbefitting a figure of her stature, the nurse looks away. Nahl's Andromache seems rather to bask in her husband's heroism and in the joy of raising a son who might inherit this quality; it is the nurse who displays emotion. These images contain a central action (the family scene) and a spectator (the nurse). We might imagine the nurse not only as the spectator to an event, but as an idealized aesthetic spectator. When, then, Schiller praises Kolbe's nurse for balancing, in a gesture of modesty, the emotionalism of

Andromache, he also implicitly praises a gesture expressing taste: the nurse turns away from the ostentatious visual display. Nahl's nurse, by way of contrast, demonstrates a reverential attitude toward the spectacle of confidence and composure provided by Andromache and Hector. The implication is twofold: as central elements of a work of art, Nahl's Andromache and Hector merit a passionate reaction; as figures referencing a transitional moment in time, they command attention *because* they model a discretion that almost entirely conceals the import of the moment itself. They are both the paradigm of a visual sign of historical transformation that is difficult to see but must be seen; and the reaffirmation of an anxiety aroused by the possibility of sweeping change – an anxiety preferring a small-scale, containable, and entirely representable history.

That Nahl's three main figures are rendered with a greater sense of their physical dimensions (they display light, shading, a nearly three-dimensional contour) against an unfinished and flat backdrop, underscores that this is an exemplary representation. Hector, Andromache, and the nurse depart from their historical context and become universal, stable, sculptural forms. The moment captured in the image – a pregnant moment in time owing to its being poised on the verge of passage and transformation – assumes an additional existence of its own outside of its context. Its evanescence becomes fixed and materialized in universal and commendable gestures that themselves reorient its implicit narrative inwards into a closed story that will securely repeat itself for the viewer.

The story I have told about Weimar Classicism is a story about the importance of looking the right way in order to be receptive to such a moment. It is also about the cultivation of images that sharpen the perception for such moments. To be sure, this also

implies the attempt to contrive such instances of visual engagement. Goethe's initial symbolic experience, for example, occurs at the sight of the destroyed location where his grandfather's house had formerly stood. Goethe places the current destruction of the site into a series of destructive moments that becomes a story of regeneration. The site's recent destruction during French bombardment of the city is overcome: the ruin now embodies a transformative process whereby it already prefigures the structure that will replace it – a structure that, as Goethe implies, will be of greater value. Moreover, Goethe attempts to naturalize human history by recasting the destruction of war as a matter of cyclical regeneration. The ruin is removed from the context of martial destruction and is now regarded as bearing, in its very materiality as ruin, the elements of a larger narrative in which causality – now a cycle of regeneration, no longer the transitory instance of a particular destructive act – is already entirely embedded in the object itself. Goethe makes a similarly naturalizing effort with the Laocoon group: to read its narrative power not as the climax of a sequence of unusual and violent events, but rather in terms of quasi-natural occurrences and causes that do not arouse curiosity because they are more of the order of natural law.

The tension between the experience of destruction and its re-inscription into a symbolic experience increases between Goethe's experience in Frankfurt and his description of Laocoon. For, in Frankfurt Goethe ponders how one might recuperate a poetic object from the symbolic experience – reframed, the question concerns how art might be produced from an individual experience that arouses sentiment. Goethe's work on Laocoon indicates the extent to which the viewer must go in order to safeguard the aesthetic quality of the experience – by forcing out particularity and reinvesting the

object of vision with a new narrative dynamic that is directed entirely inward towards its own harmonious balance within the work of art.

Schiller likewise betrays an attraction to the single moment in time in *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs*. Indeed, his historical narrative becomes a sequence of such moments in which great historical actors, whose actions seem to reveal the meaning of history, suddenly disappear from the world stage. Schiller as historian ponders the significance of the sudden disappearance of a charismatic agency that seems to make history. The work of the historian, correspondingly, becomes an act of perception – in Schiller's case, this perceptivity is obstructed by a historical actor, Wallenstein, who remains almost invisible behind the obscuring glare of his reputation. With the *Wallenstein* trilogy Schiller adopts a different approach, focusing explicitly on and dissecting the problematic moment of representation – Wallenstein's own disappearance. By staging Wallenstein as a figure operating at cross purposes to an accelerating chain of events, he is able to focus on physical movements that betray Wallenstein's unreadiness to move at the speed of the narrative. Wallenstein's body reveals to the eye that he will fail to do what he says he will do. Schiller constructs the tragedy in such a way – in the conflict between expectation, intention, and will – that the historically pivotal moment of Wallenstein's death is prefigured and visibly legible in subtle gesture.

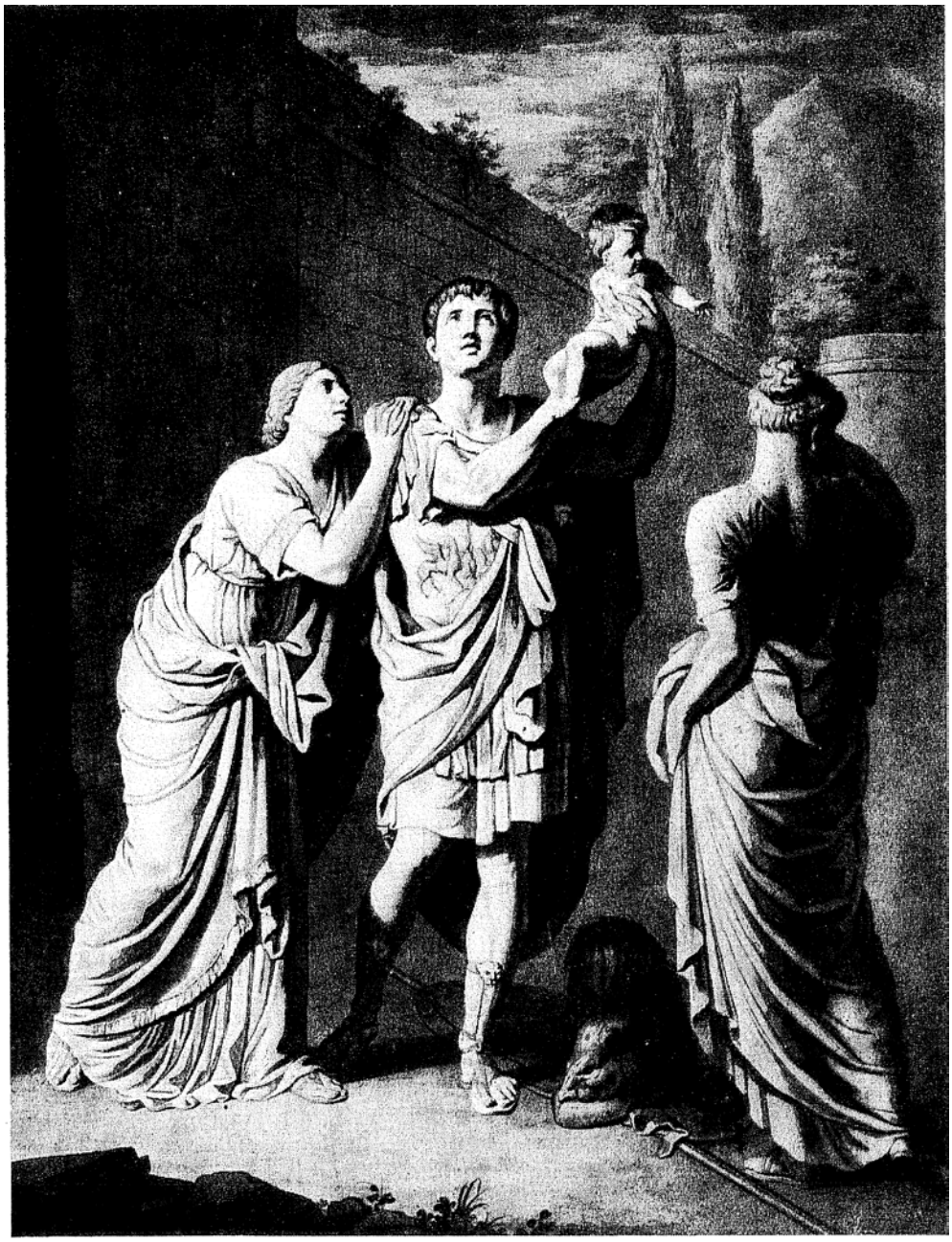
Regarded comparatively, Goethe cultivates an ideal and symbolic moment of *almost* neutralized temporality, in which the particular details of uncontrollable experience are submitted to a sensually manageable narrative coherence at the expense of their original temporal context and causal relations. Schiller, by contrast, opens up and explores the nature of the moment in time, exposing (or staging) its causal dynamics as

something potentially visible. Goethe commends control over time to the power of the viewer; Schiller subjects the viewer to time's hidden details. Each is a gesture of acquiring mastery over the experience of time. Common to each as well is a concern for the passage of time in the dissolution or disappearance of a body. Goethe's effort to maintain the ideality of Laocoon in a moment prior to death is also a symptom of his concern for the dismantling of the "art body" of Europe's antique heritage in Italy. Schiller's prose historical narrative moves from physical disappearance to physical disappearance. The *Wallenstein* trilogy reenacts one such disappearance in the drawn-out anticipation of death, in which the process by which Wallenstein disappears is manifested in his bodily movement on the stage and underscored by Wallenstein's own language of the destruction and reconstitution of his body. The origin of aesthetic awareness in Schiller's *Ästhetische Erziehung* occurs in the visual formalization of the subject's physical distinction from the world – a visual formalization that is safeguarded in ideal terms in the permanence of Hector's departure, forever just prior to his death and physical mutilation. Weimar Classicism's anxiety about time's passage is itself embodied in or projected into actual or sculptural bodies that would populate the lived world with instances of time fixed just prior to its passage into a future understood as destructive.

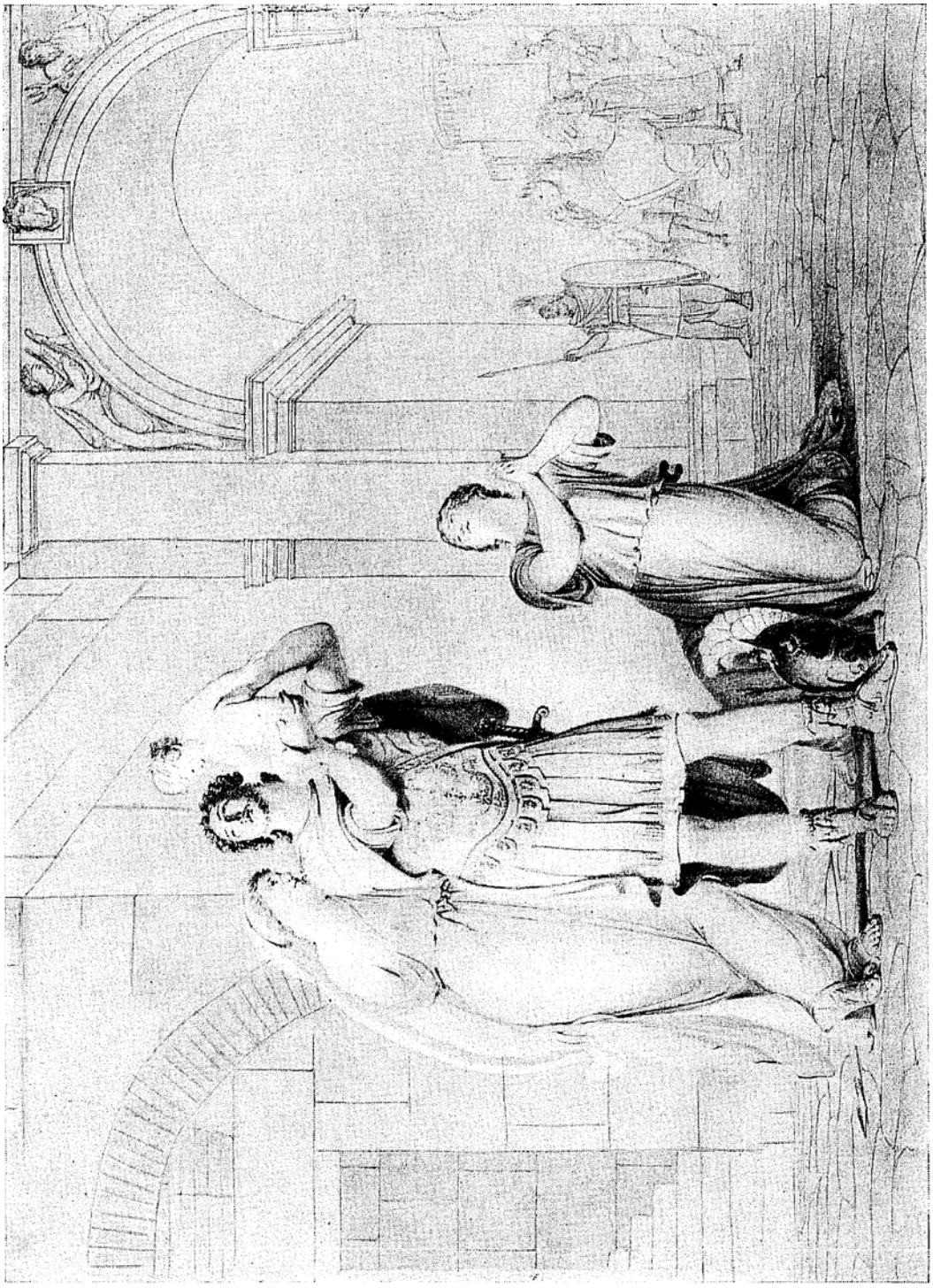
With its turn to art history in the first decade of the nineteenth century, Weimar Classicism begins to stage its itself as a body capable of vanishing into the passage of time. Goethe's rendering of Winckelmann as both a sculptural, closed form and a still-living presence (yet already in the grave) betrays an uneasiness about inevitable movement into a post-classical future and the loss of the formal stability promised by the

model of antiquity. Meyer's criticism of the theatricality of French painting reflects as well a desire to retain a visual representation that reproduces subtly mobile forms emanating from higher, stable, universal ideas – he expresses grave reservation about a visual representation he deems designed to assault the eye, preferring instead that which discreetly activates, captures, and sharpens the attention of the viewer. Fernow goes a step further in his depiction of Carstens as an artist using the material object as a stimulus to the creative imagination. Fernow revives the late Carstens as an embodied instance of the retreat of the physical world of Classicism into the stable confines of the mind. The balance of these historical approaches is that Classicism, perceived to be on the verge of dissolution into time, is preserved as an idealizing, if also unstable, projection on to a world definitively in the throes of change.

Throughout this work I have attempted also to portray Weimar Classicism – decidedly, if disputedly, a literary- and cultural-historical category – also as a complex of movements and gestures in reaction to the passage of time. Where there is a disparity between Weimar Classicism's utopian rhetoric of an aestheticized public sphere waiting out the vagaries of history, and the comparatively more tarnished development of its thought and practices regarding visual representation, I believe that this disparity reveals a fundamental character of Weimar Classicism as a project activated by anxiety about time, about the inevitable loss of the stable and familiar, and about the dissolution of the self.

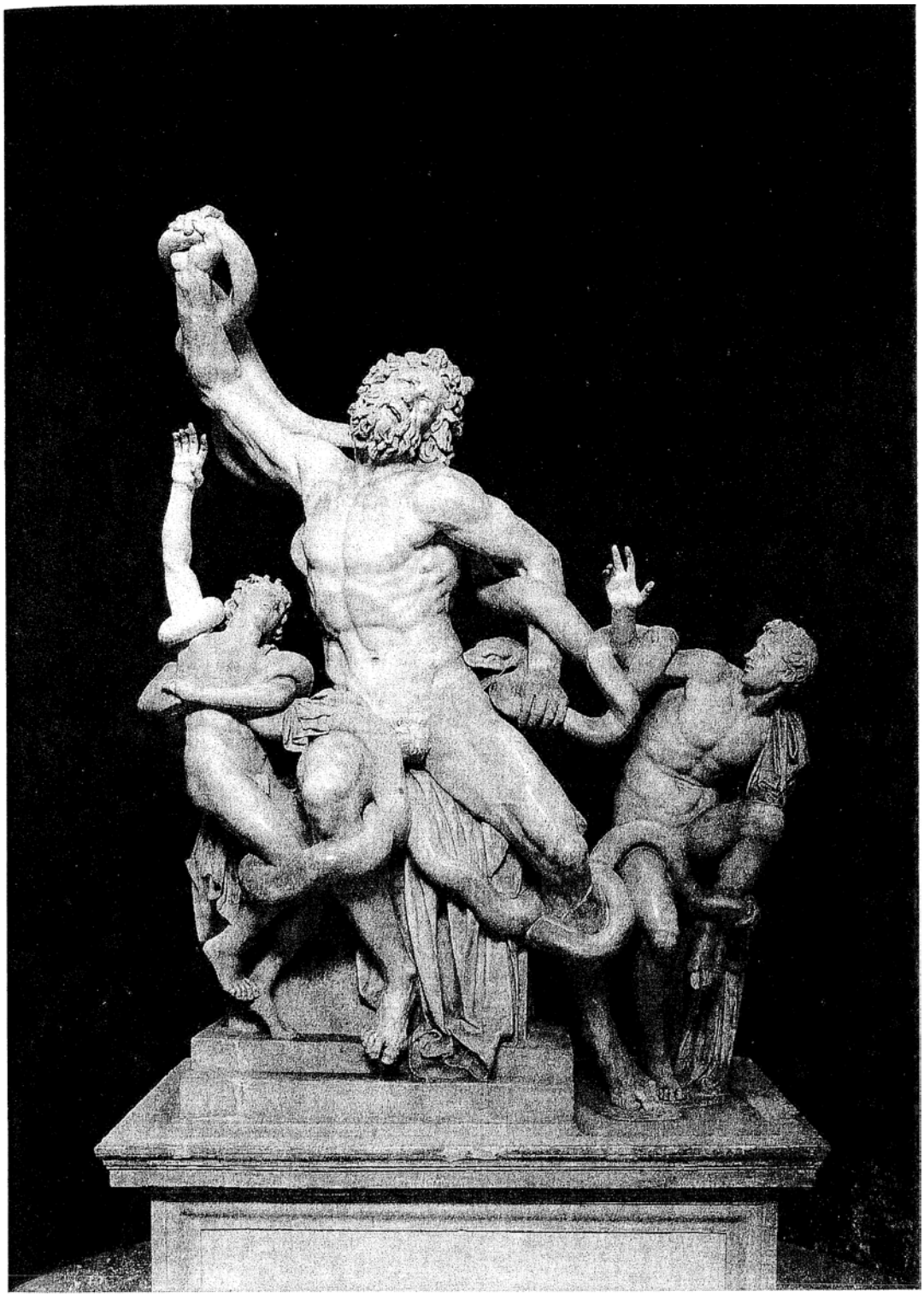


1. Heinrich Kolbe, *Hectors Abschied*, 1800, Klassik Stiftung Weimar



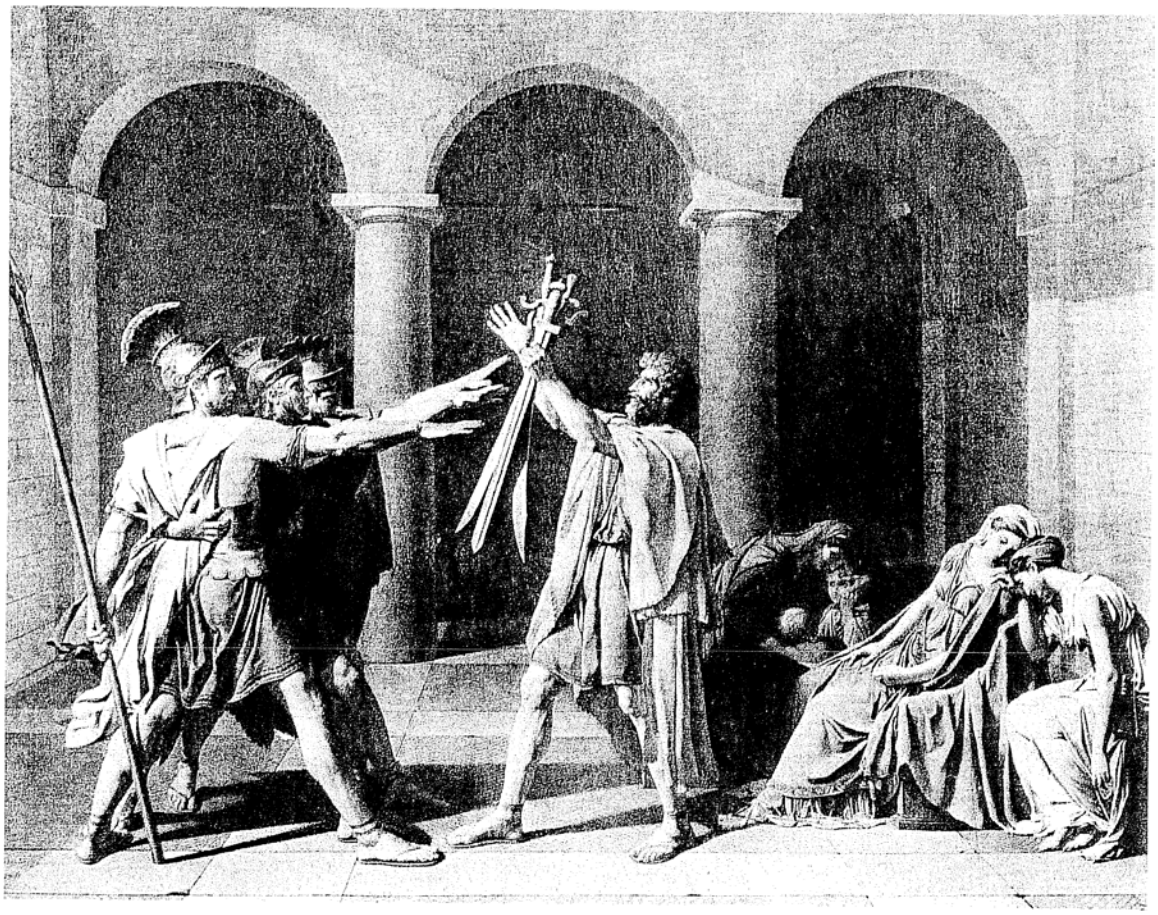
2. Johann August Nahl, *Hectors Abschied*, 1800, Klassik Stiftung Weimar

3. Medici Vase, 1st Century BCE, Uffizi, Florence

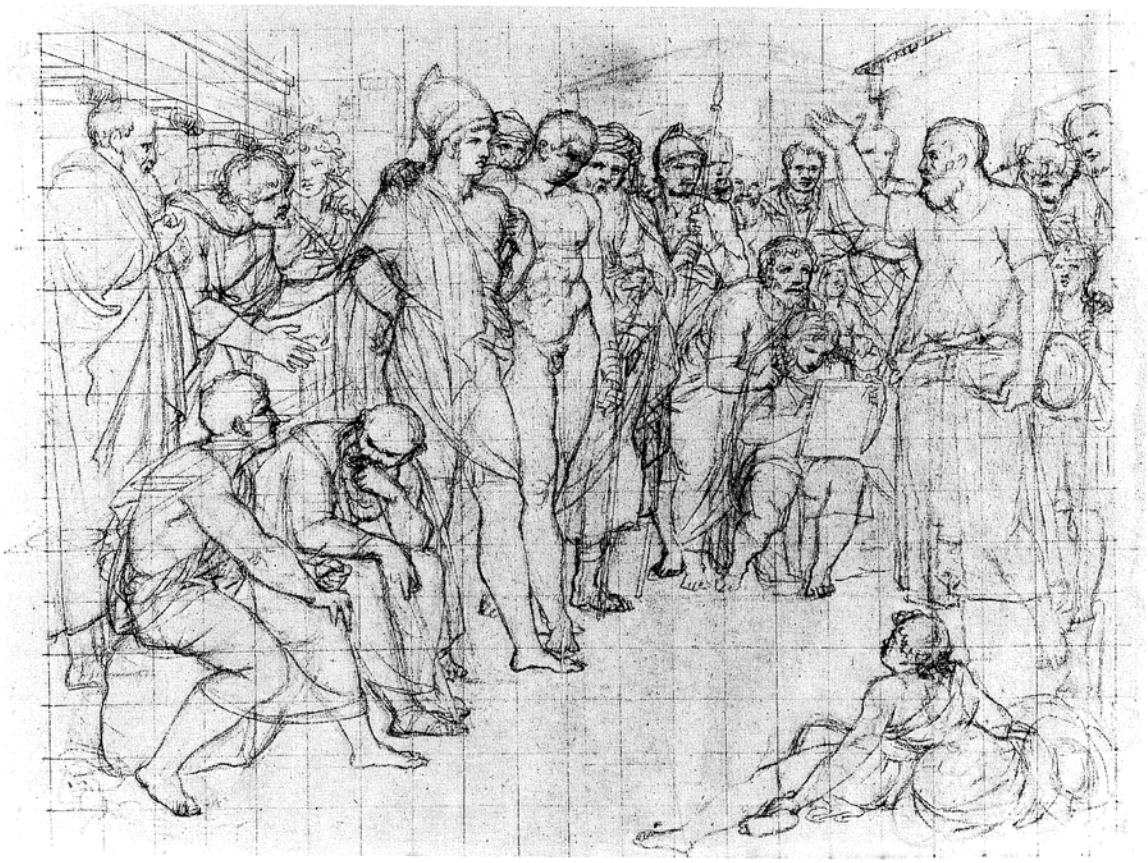


4. Laocoon (with outstretched arm,
as the statue was known in the 18th century),
Vatican Museum, Rome

5. Johann Christian Ernst Müller, after Conrad Horny, *Laokoon* (print included in the first edition of *Propyläen*), 1798



6. Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of the Horatii*, 1784, Paris, Louvre



7. Asmus Jakob Carstens, *Homer Sings to the Greeks*,
ca. 1796, Klassik Stiftung Weimar

8. Asmus Jakob Carstens, *Portrait Miniatures*,
ca. 1784-1788, Klassik Stiftung Weimar

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