

**KLEIST AND HOFFMANN IN DIALOGUE
WITH ENLIGHTENMENT**

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Word count: 81,543

List of Abbreviated Works

All page numbers given for E.T.A. Hoffmann's works refer to the six-volume Deutscher Klassiker Verlag edition of his complete works edited by Hartmut Steinecke and Wulf Segebrecht (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 1985-2004). Page numbers for Kleist refer to the Berliner/Brandenburger editions in 21 volumes, edited by Roland Reuss and Peter Staengle (Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1988-2000). In order to avoid overly long precisions in the text to these frequently cited works and for easy reference, I have listed the appropriate volume for each of the texts mentioned along with the abbreviated reference used in the thesis. Where applicable, I have provided a shortened reference in parentheses to the title used in the footnotes.

Hoffmann:

- II/1* (1993) *Nachtstücke - Das Majorat (DM), Die Jesuitenkirche in G. (DJ)*
II/2 (1988) *Die Elixiere des Teufels (DE)*
III (1985) *Fantasiestücke in Callot's Manier - Ritter Gluck (RG), 'Beethovens Instrumentalmusik'* (pp. 52-61).
IV (2001) *Die Serapionsbrüder - Der Einsiedler Serapion, Der Artushof (DA)*

Kleist:

- I/1* (2000) *Die Familie Schroffenstein (DFS)*
I/5 (1992) *Penthesilea*
II/1 (1990) *Michael Kohlhaas (MK)*
II/3 (1993) *Das Erdbeben in Chili (DEIC)*
II/5 (1997) *Das Bettelweib von Locarno (DB), Der Findling (DF), Die heilige Cäcilie oder die Gewalt der Musik (DHC)*
II/7 and 8 (1997) *Berliner Abendblätter I and II*
 'Über das Marionettentheater' (I, pp. 317-319; 321-323; 325-327; 329-331)
 'Allerneuerster Erziehungsplan' (I, pp. 128-129, 133-134, 138-139, 177-179, 182-185)
 'Empfindungen vor Friedrichs Seelandschaft' (I, pp. 61-62)
 'Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen' (II, pp. 23-26)
IV/1 (1996) *Briefe I*
IV/2 (1999) *Briefe II*
IV/3 (2010) *Briefe III*
II/9 (2007) *Sonstige Prosa*
 'Aufsatz, den sichern Weg des Glücks zu finden und ungestört – auch unter den größten Drangsalen des Lebens – ihn zu genießen' (pp. 9-24)
 'Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden' (pp. 25-32)

Kant:

Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 29 vols (Berlin: Georg Reimer and Walter de Gruyter, 1902-1980).

III (1904) *Kritik der reinen Vernunft (KrV)*

IV (1903) *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*

V (1908) *Kritik der Urteilskraft (KdU)*

VI (1907) *Metaphysik der Sitten*

VIII (1912) *Abhandlungen nach 1781*

Abstract

This thesis considers how Kleist and Hoffmann's fiction might be considered as responding to the perceived shortcomings of enlightenment. The two writers, despite the barriers of literary categorisations, have a striking affinity in their sense that notions of truth and knowledge are intertwined with social and political agendas, rather than forming part of some natural teleology. The thesis breaks new ground in viewing the texts within a more expansive discourse context as literary interventions within a broad, cross-society engagement with enlightenment, in its various streams and factions. The texts studied, I argue, represent thought experiments, not merely reflecting and re-articulating the influences of literary peers and historically significant events, but instead testing the real-world application of key enlightenment ideas.

The driving force for this thesis is the need to locate their work more rigorously in relation to enlightenment thought of their time than has previously been attempted. This is not so much a question of retrieving past influences, as one of viewing their work as being in dialogue with contemporary thought. Moving away from attempts using Kleist's letters to theorise the relation between Kleist and Kant, this investigation instead turns to aspects of Kant's philosophy to illuminate the texts. Hoffmann's relationship to enlightenment, too, is explored beyond the prism of Romanticism. Taking a more comparative approach than previous work on the two writers, I identify not only thematic commonalities, but also a parallel aesthetic, in which multiple narratives co-exist and where 'truth' is manufactured by the dominance of one particular narrative.

The notion of *Mündigkeit*, central to Kant's famous definition of *Aufklärung* offers a useful guiding concept for the investigation and captures the emancipatory promise of self-realisation and the positive trajectory of human progress at the heart of the miscellany of moral and political theories and philosophies collectively known as 'enlightenment'. The latter refers not to the historical period, but rather to a process of intellectual emancipation and an assemblage of ideals and values. As an intellectual movement, enlightenment was not, as is often assumed, monolithic, but encompasses conflicting notions of reason, freedom, and how its goals were to be achieved. Not only are the certainty and consequences of this intellectual emancipation evaluated in the texts, but I have also identified a radical questioning of the paradigms of thought which condition our understanding of narratives. Both Kleist and Hoffmann's texts are narratively complex, often with shifts in focalisation, jumps in time, occasionally, figures whose identity changes leave the reader uncertain whether they are dealing with more than one character, and depictions of events which resist clarification through conventional understandings of time, space and causality. This project seeks to reconcile these 'blind spots' with a broader critique of enlightenment, in which absolute knowledge is shown to be illusory and truth simply reflective of constellations of power. The spatio-temporal and causal frameworks foundational to rational understanding and used to make sense of the world are revealed to be inadequate.

Declaration

I confirm that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Acknowledgements

Among the many metaphors used to describe the PhD study journey, that of a marathon seems particularly fitting. Similar to running a marathon, a PhD draws not merely on intellectual athleticism, but on reserves of grit and determination. Just as completing a marathon requires refreshment and support provided by others along the way, so too is a PhD made possible by the encouragement and guidance of others. My gratitude is due first of all to my three brilliant supervisors, Professor Margaret Litter, Professor Stephen Parker and Dr Peter Cooke, whose discussions never failed to spark new ideas, sustain motivation and often redirected me to explore more deeply the previously unexplored corners of an idea. This thesis has benefited enormously from their great generosity with both their time and advice. Thanks must also go to my two independent reviewers, Dr Joel Smith and Professor Stuart Jones, whose perspectives have had a profound impact on the shape this project has taken. Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my wife, Katie, for her patience, sympathy and support through these years.

Introduction

This thesis considers the fictional works of the two writers as a contribution to the enlightenment debates of their time, not as whimsical inventions but as thought experiments that critically examine contemporary accounts of progress and faith in man's emancipation through reason. This faith was shattered by the bloody fallout of the French Revolution, representing not only a rebuttal of the assured progress of man, but an erosion of the cherished notions of previous *Aufklärer*, and it is imaginatively tested in the fictional worlds of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Heinrich von Kleist. The profiles of Hoffmann and Kleist, born in 1776 and 1777 respectively, reveal not only contrasts, but a striking number of parallels. Kleist came from an aristocratic military family, but left the army after seven years with the rank of lieutenant and enrolled at the Viadrina University in his hometown of Frankfurt an der Oder. His brief foray into academic life was succeeded by employment in the Prussian administration. This was not to last, however, as Kleist soon took an extended leave of absence to travel to Paris and Switzerland. It was not until 1808 with the publication of the literary journal *Phöbus* and later his *Berliner Abendblätter* that Kleist's literary career began in earnest. What happened next is well known: Kleist's suicide with terminally-ill Henriette Vogel on the shores of the Wannsee at the age of 34 marks the end of a restless existence which knew little success in his lifetime.

Unlike Kleist, Hoffmann's aspiration to become an artist - Hoffmann showed musical promise from an early age - remained constant throughout his life. If Hoffmann's bourgeois background with jurist family on both maternal and paternal sides - as well as his own career as a jurist - differs from that of Kleist, Hoffmann's life was similarly restless. Hoffmann's professional life took him to Glogau, Berlin, Posen, Plock, Warsaw, Bamberg, briefly to Dresden and Leipzig, and back to Berlin. The spread of his accomplishments in music, literature and art, juggled with his career as a jurist, arguably diminished his efforts in the eyes of his contemporaries: Goethe's estimation of Hoffmann was little better than that of the Prussian minister Schuckmann, who saw Hoffmann as a degenerate working to sustain his 'Weinhausleben'.¹

¹ Rüdiger Safranski, *E.T.A. Hoffmann: Das Leben eines skeptischen Phantasten* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1984), p. 11.

The parallel of greatest interest to this investigation, however, is that which emerges from their lives against the backdrop of turbulent social and political events: the fiction of both writers can be read as responding to enlightenment.² Enlightenment, by the contention of this thesis, should not be considered simply a chapter in history nor as reductive to Kant's famous definition, but viewed instead as a debate of many strands unified by notions of intellectual emancipation and an implicit teleology of progress. Central to the conception of enlightenment as a process is the claim by Kant that the vast majority of individuals find thinking for oneself, *Mündigkeit*, too difficult and dangerous. Kant blames 'Vormünder' for reducing people to 'Hausvieh' and discouraging them from daring to take steps without their 'crutch'. Responding to Kant's technical system - Schiller offers a similar assessment of this process of emancipation: 'Energie des Muths gehört dazu, die Hindernisse zu bekämpfen, welche sowohl die Trägheit der Natur als die Feigheit des Herzens der Belehrung entgegen setzen'. We are only too happy to let others take 'Vormundschaft' over our mind and embrace 'mit durstigem Glauben die Formeln, welche der Staat und das Priesterthum für diesen Fall in Bereitschaft halten'.³

In his famous essay 'Was ist Aufklärung?', Kant condemns the idea that people should continue to live as 'children' and repress their development to intellectual maturity with his amusing image of fully-grown adults who 'ja keinen Schritt außer dem Gängelwagen, darin sie sie einsperrten, wagen durften'.⁴ 'Faulheit und Feigheit' are the main reasons, according to Kant, why so many people remain 'unmündig' for their entire lives. Kant's image, although striking, expresses a similar sentiment to that voiced by others in the debate on the nature and desirable extent of enlightenment. Published in *Berliner Monatsschrift*, only five years before the explosive events of the French Revolution, Kant's essay offers an alluring vision of mankind primed to free himself from the fetters of his (self-imposed) superstition - but only if he has the courage to use reason. Such optimism in reason's power and faith in the assured progression of this intel-

² Throughout the thesis I differentiate between 'Enlightenment' and 'enlightenment'. The former refers to the associated historical period, also known as the 'long eighteenth century', spanning roughly from the 1680s to 1815; the latter, to the process of intellectual emancipation and an assemblage of ideals and values.

³ Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, ed. By Otto Dann and Axel Gellhaus, VIII (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992), Achter Brief, pp. 580-582 (p. 581).

⁴ Immanuel Kant, 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?', in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912), VIII., pp. 35-42 (pp. 35-36).

lectual emancipation contrasts sharply with the world experienced by Kleist and Hoffmann. Infrequently considered together, the two writers are nevertheless unified by their common experience of the turmoil of the turn of the century: the French Revolution and the ensuing Terror, the Napoleonic Wars, the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the defeat of Prussia to Napoleon in 1806 mark a litany of traumatic events, which appeared to represent a patent refutation of the belief in man's capacity for intellectual emancipation, freedom and equality. The French Revolution, in particular, marks the paradoxical experience of attempts to realise ideas of civil freedom and equality, with the state to act as guarantor. The very structures created to achieve these ends revealed at the heart of the project itself a conflict between rational ideas and empirical reality.⁵

This paradox did not escape contemporary commentators. In the ninth letter of his 'Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen' (1795), Friedrich Schiller raises the question: 'Die theoretische Kultur soll die praktische herbeiführen, und die praktische doch die Bedingung der theoretischen sein? Alle Verbesserung im Politischen soll von Veredlung des Charakters ausgehen – aber wie kann sich unter den Einflüssen einer barbarischen Staatsverfassung der Charakter veredeln?'⁶ This discordance between the cluster of abstract ideas collectively referred to as 'enlightenment' and the attempt to forcibly embed them within a political structure prefigures the difficulty of the practical application of enlightenment, explored in the subsequent literary experiments of Kleist and Hoffmann.

The two writers diverge in their critical reception: while Hoffmann's varied work is served by a correspondingly broad critical response, few critics have ventured to comment on Hoffmann's relationship to enlightenment beyond his position in the literary canon as a Romantic - itself often held to be a reactionary counter to the enlightenment's frigid rationalism, secularism and rootless cosmopolitanism. Kleist's relation with enlightenment, by contrast, has been commonly explored in his relation to Kant, taken as a proxy for the former.

Heinrich von Kleist's association with Kant is due in no small part to his so-called 'Kant Krise', which supposedly documents the crumbling of Kleist's faith in what can be reliably known. Discussion of this breakdown revolves around a small

⁵ Bernhard Greiner, *Kleists Dramen und Erzählungen: Experimente zum 'Fall' der Kunst* (Stuttgart: UTB, 2000), p. 2.

⁶ Schiller, Neunter Brief, pp. 582-587 (pp. 582-583).

number of extracts from Kleist's letters to his fiancée Wilhelmine von Zenge and his half-sister Ulrike.⁷ In his letter to Wilhelmine from March 18 1801, Kleist characterises the 'neuere[-] sogenannte[-] Kantische[-] Philosophie' using the example of someone wearing green eyeglasses:

Wenn alle Menschen statt der Augen grüne Gläser hätten, so würden sie urteilen müssen, die Gegenstände, welche sie dadurch erblicken, *sind* grün und nie würden sie entscheiden können, ob ihr Auge ihnen die Dinge zeigt, wie sie sind, oder ob es nicht etwas zu ihnen hinzutut, was nicht ihnen, sondern dem Auge gehört. So ist es mit dem Verstande. Wir können nicht entscheiden, ob das, was wir Wahrheit nennen, wahrhaft Wahrheit ist, oder ob es nur so scheint.⁸

Kleist laments that 'alles Bestreben, ein Eigenthum sich zu erwerben, das uns auch in das Grab folgt, ist vergeblich' - any attempt to gain knowledge for oneself is ultimately futile if our powers of perception are unable to mediate the true nature of the world.⁹

Within accounts of Kleist's life, Kleist's putative reading of Kant represents a fulcrum between a series of failed projects and abandoned ambitions, and his subsequent career as a writer. The crisis is frequently cited in secondary literature on Kleist and has been revisited in Günter Blumberger's recent authoritative biography and Tim Mehigan's edited volume *Heinrich von Kleist und die Aufklärung*, as well as more recently in his monograph, *Heinrich von Kleist: Writing after Kant*.¹⁰ For Mehigan, the breakdown represents a watershed in Kleist's life, prompting his decision to become a writer: Mehigan even suggests that Kleist's literary career resulted indirectly from his reading of Kant.¹¹ On the other hand, the hyperbolic quality of Kleist's letters often appears to uncomfortably straddle fact and fiction. Indeed, it is possible that in his letter to Wilhelmine, Kleist is simply seeking not only to dazzle her with his erudition, but also to mitigate his request later in the letter to go travelling.¹² For Blumberger, the crisis sig-

⁷ The letters in question are to Wilhelmine on March 18, 1801, and also to Ulrike on March 23, 1801. At the end of a letter to Ulrike on August 14, 1800 Kleist asks her to send him 'meine Schrift, über die Kantische Philosophie'. See Kleist, *IV/1 Briefe*, pp. 511-515; also pp. 151-155 (p. 155).

⁸ Kleist, *IV/1 Briefe*, pp. 495-509 (p. 505).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 506.

¹⁰ See the third chapter of Günter Blumberger, *Heinrich von Kleist: Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011), pp. 57-84.

¹¹ See Tim Mehigan, 'Kleist, Kant und die Aufklärung', in *Heinrich von Kleist und die Aufklärung*, ed. by Tim Mehigan (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2000), pp. 3-21 (p. 3).

¹² See Ilse-Marie Barth, Klaus Müller-Salget, Stefan Romans and Hinrich C. Seebad (eds.). *Heinrich von Kleist. Sämtliche Werke und Briefe* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991), vol. I, pp. 466, 470.

nals a ‘Totalitätsverlust’ - a loss of orientation.¹³ If our sense impressions tell us nothing of the true nature of the world, in what can we trust? Within the context of his later literary work, Kleist’s ‘Kant Krise’ represents an early reaction to his reading of Kant (most probably the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*): Kleist apparently was plunged into despair, believing his faith in the perfectibility of man through reason and his life plans to be in tatters. Yet Kleist’s denomination as a ‘Kantian’ does not withstand closer scrutiny and requires a closer look at Kant’s philosophy; those views set out in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, in particular in the ‘Transcendentale Ästhetik’, are most relevant to Kleist’s ‘crisis’.

The Kant crisis letters have long cast a shadow over Kleist’s relationship with enlightenment. Indeed, the importance and sincerity of this crisis has been called into question by Blamberger, reflecting a clear development in Kleist scholarship towards a wider consideration of Kleist’s relationship to Kant and the Enlightenment.¹⁴ James Phillip’s 2007 monograph *The Equivocation of Reason* goes further in considering not only the relation of Kleist’s work to Kant, but how Kleist’s work might be considered as a critique and elaboration of Kantian philosophy.¹⁵ This approach, which seeks to draw out affinities, rather than retrace influences, between the texts and Kantian philosophy is applied also in Steven Howe’s monograph *Heinrich von Kleist and Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Violence, Identity, Nation* (2012).¹⁶ Howe identifies in Kleist’s writing a discourse which, allied to the historical context of revolution and war, argues for Rousseau’s importance as an inspiration. Rousseau’s vision for an ideal state tacitly prefigures the destruction of existing constitutions, rights and conditions to reset the chess

¹³ Blamberger, p. 75.

¹⁴ See Blamberger, pp.73-77. This trend can be traced from roughly the year 2000 onwards. Bernhard Greiner’s *Kleist’s Dramen und Erzählungen: Experimente zum 'Fall' der Kunst* shows how Kleist’s texts emerge from his grappling with Kant’s philosophical-aesthetic positions - in particular, those in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Further examples can be seen in the edited volumes Tim Mehigan (ed.), *Heinrich von Kleist und die Aufklärung* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2000) and, later, Marie Haller-Neumann and Dieter Rehwinkel (eds.), *Kleist - ein moderner Aufklärer?* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005). The essays in the former consider the difficulty of placing Kleist in literary history and approach his literary works as readings of Kant. The latter views Kleist’s work as representing the ambivalence of life’s phenomena and argues that Kleist was a sceptic of enlightenment. A similar approach is taken by Tim Mehigan’s 2013 *Heinrich von Kleist: Writing after Kant* (New York: Boydell and Brewer): Mehigan argues that Kleist might be considered a somewhat unconventional Kantian and, further, viewed as a contributor to post-Kantian thought. An earlier outlier in scholarship on Kleist’s relationship with enlightenment is Ruth K. Angress, ‘Kleist’s Abkehr von der Aufklärung’, *Kleist-Jahrbuch*, (1987), 98-114. Angress illuminates Kleist’s intertextual references, in particular to Lessing, as a departure from enlightenment humanism.

¹⁵ See James Phillips, *The Equivocation of Reason: Kleist Reading Kant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

¹⁶ See Steven Howe, *Heinrich von Kleist and Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Violence, Identity, Nation* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012).

board on which the citizens stand. Rousseau is credited, in narratives of Kleist's life, with inspiring his flight to Switzerland. Kleist's personal identification with Rousseau, however, is not in doubt, nor is the relevance of the perceived shortcomings of the French Revolution and the misery of the Napoleonic wars as a driver for the political and ethical issues raised in Kleist's writings. What is required, I feel, is a stronger statement still of Kleist's fictional response to enlightenment, which strikes at the heart of the debate on its nature and extent - and, crucially, whether the progress of enlightenment narrative is teleological or fallible.

One notable strand of Kleist scholarship, in particular, grasps at this problem of knowing - *Erkennen* - and its vexed relationship with language. Emerging in the 1960s with Walter Müller-Seidel's landmark work *Versehen und Erkennen* (1967), Müller-Seidel's investigation is structured around a dyad of 'Versehen' and 'Erkennen', which he identifies as the defining features of Kleist's narratives. *Versehen und Erkennen* inspired a stream of studies focussing on language.¹⁷ Despite the erudition and breadth of Müller-Seidel's work - and indeed, the merits of critics in his wake - any criticism dealing in reductive dichotomies must be re-examined. Suggestions that Kleist's language scepticism is rooted in his reading of Kant have arguably since been debunked, but the challenge remains to link Kleist's problematisation of knowledge, inextricably bound by the possibilities of linguistic expression, to a broader consideration of Kleist's relation to enlightenment.

The term 'enlightenment', of course, cannot be discussed without some unpacking of its various meanings and associations. The Enlightenment is generally considered to span what has become known as a 'Sattelzeit', a term used by Reinhart Koselleck, refining the classic designatory triad of antiquity, Middle Ages, and the modern era, by describing a period from roughly 1750 to 1850.¹⁸ This period of transition, whose acme was the French Revolution, saw the rapid development of society, living conditions, and

¹⁷ See Walter Müller-Seidel, *Versehen und Erkennen: Eine Studie über Heinrich von Kleist* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1967). The practice of focussing attention on questions of subjectivity and antinomies in the texts gives rise to later deconstructionist readings. See Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia Press, 1984), Matthieu Carrière, *Für eine Literatur des Krieges* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1984), and Dieter Heimböckel, *Emphatische Unaussprechlichkeit: Sprachkritik im Werk Heinrich von Kleists. Ein Beitrag zur literarischen Sprachskepsistradition der Moderne* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2003). Also emerging from this branch of scholarship are those studies concerned with body language. Such studies typically view body language as an expression of some truth inarticulable in spoken language - body language is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

¹⁸ See Reinhart Koselleck, 'Einleitung', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, ed. by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, I (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1979), pp. xiii-xxvii.

mentalities of Europeans towards what we now recognise as modernity. Yet far from being reductive to Kant's famous definition, 'enlightenment' encompasses a heterogeneous farrago of moral and political theories. Among this diversity, however, is a set of unifying guiding aspirations of equality, justice and tolerance, as well as a vision of mankind freeing himself from the tutelage of others towards becoming rational individuals. While this thesis acknowledges the fraught endeavour of speaking of 'enlightenment' in any singular sense, a more exhaustive study of enlightenment and Kant, who features frequently throughout the six chapters, is not practicable within the scope and literary focus of this thesis.

Hoffmann's body of work is not only considerably larger than Kleist's literary oeuvre, but also more diverse, encompassing his writings on music and compositions. Hoffmann scholarship is correspondingly broad: the oldest and best-known body of Hoffmann criticism is psychoanalytical. In the second part of his famous 1919 essay 'Das Unheimliche', Freud examines *Der Sandmann*. Freud disputes Ernst Jentsch's earlier interpretation of the uncanny in the text as the distinction of inanimate and animate. Freud locates the uncanny in the return of repressed infantile material - expressed in *Der Sandmann* in Nathanael's fear of losing his eyes and the doppelgänger figure.¹⁹ Further, a succession of critical attempts have presented Hoffmann as prefiguring postmodernity in his array of narrative perspectives, which foreclose any resolution to the endless play of signification in the texts.²⁰ This approach has faced criticism for straying too far from the texts and failing to acknowledge that such polarities of thought are more strongly linked to the influential philosophies of Kant, Fichte and Schelling.²¹ One particularly noteworthy critic is Ricarda Schmidt, whose own approach aims to show

¹⁹ See Sigmund Freud, 'Das Unheimliche', in *Der Moses des Michelangelo. Schriften über Kunst und Künstler* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993); Ernst Jentsch, 'Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen', *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift*, 22 (1906), 195-198; 23 (1906), 203-205. Other studies in this tradition include: Karl Ochsner, *E.T.A. Hoffmann als Dichter des Unbewussten* (Frauenfeld: Huber, 1936); Dietrich Raff, *Ich-Bewusstsein und Wirklichkeitsauffassung bei E.T.A. Hoffmann* (Rottweil: Emmanuel-Verlag, 1971); Horst Daemrlich, *The Shattered Self: E.T.A. Hoffmann's Tragic Vision* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973); Susanne Olson, 'Das Wunderbare und seine psychologische Funktion in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Die Elixiere des Teufels*', *Mitteilungen der E.T.A. Hoffmann-Gesellschaft*, 24 (1978), 26-35.

²⁰ Noteworthy examples include Peter von Matt, *Die Augen der Automaten: E.T.A. Hoffmanns Imaginationslehre als Prinzip seiner Erzählkunst* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1971) and Detlev Kremer, *E.T.A. Hoffmann: Erzählungen und Romane* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1999).

²¹ See Hilda Meldrum Brown, *E.T.A. Hoffmann and the Serapiontic Principle: Critique and Creativity* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), p.5.

Hoffmann's writings, in their interweaving of musical and visual phenomena, as extending the aesthetic aims of early Romanticism.²²

Schmidt is not alone in her investigations into intermediality and desire to re-trace Hoffmann's contemporary influences. Kenneth Negus, in particular, shows how Hoffmann's figures, themes, and motifs contribute to an overarching structure that embodies creation and destruction in a mythology that is a fantastic distillation of the real world with which it is often in conflict. Taking a similar approach but a different focus, other critics have probed Hoffmann's interest in 'Romantic science' and contemporary writing.²³

Despite the striking biographical parallels, Kleist and Hoffmann are seldom studied together. While Hoffmann is usually hailed as a Romantic writer, Kleist is placed in a drawer all of his own within the German canon: such categorisations, while useful as points of orientation, are not a particularly productive way to look at literature.²⁴ Notwithstanding such divisions, both writers' works are characterised by the interplay of coherence and ambivalence, which reveal the inadequacy of rational modes of understanding. The splintered narratives of Hoffmann and Kleist elude straightforward reading and are open to multiple interpretations: the epistemological blind spots familiar to readers point to the apparent ontological instability of the events of the narrative, while the epistemological possibilities open to the characters mediate their access to the world depicted. Amongst the diverse trends in Hoffmann scholarship - aesthetics, musicology, psychoanalysis - few critics comment on their significance for Hoffmann's broader relationship with enlightenment. What follows is not an aetiological account of the writers' influences - such concerns are well served by existing works - but an at-

²² See Ricarda Schmidt, *Wenn mehrere Künste im Spiel sind: Intermedialität bei E.T.A. Hoffmann* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2006).

²³ See Altrud Dumont, 'Die Einflüsse von Identitätsphilosophie und Erfahrungsseelenkunde auf E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Elixier des Teufels*', *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 1.1 (1991), 37-48; Jürgen Barkhoff, *Magnetische Fiktionen: Literarisierung des Mesmerismus in der Romantik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995).

²⁴ For other examples of studies of both Kleist and Hoffmann see: Lucia Ruprecht, *Dances of the Self in Heinrich von Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Heinrich Heine* (2006). Ruprecht's study of dance and literature has a broad conceptual sweep, arguing that the three writers challenge the harmonious perfection of Winckelmann's Classicist ideal, by perverting its inert grace with movement and sensuality. Kleist's marionettes, uncanny 'pseudohumans', perform an ungainly mechanical dance and can be compared with Hoffmann's automaton in *Der Sandmann*. Critical interpretations on both Kleist and Hoffmann figure also in Andrew Webber's landmark study on the doppelgänger, *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (1996). The resistance of the texts to a single unifying interpretation informs Caroline Wagner's 2012 study *Subversives Erzählen: E.T.A. Hoffmann und Heinrich von Kleist*. Wagner observes similar poetological systems, but stylistic differences.

tempt to locate them as responses within a broader discourse network.²⁵ This thesis, in line with the approach of Mehigan, Phillips and Howe, posits that Kleist's texts should be considered not simply as reflective of enlightenment, but as responses in their own right. Focussing principally on the texts themselves, I attempt a more expansive reading than those of previous critics. In dialogue with these discourse networks, Kleist's fiction represents a testbed for many of their key tenets, questioning not only their practical application but also their relevance. Further, both writers reveal an awareness of the dogmatic nature of some forms of enlightenment, which are parodied in the 'rational' bourgeois figures, who often appear shallow and foolish. The characteristic ambivalence of Kleist's work should not merely be read as pessimism or nihilism, whose genesis can be retraced to his reading of Kant. Rather, this thesis views such ambivalence as the result of Kleist's thought experiments, in which the assured teleology of man's intellectual emancipation is challenged.

Romanticism, as a counter-rationalist response, is considered to be philosophically allied to German idealism, a movement which builds on the critical practices established during the Enlightenment to view the cognitive power of imagination as capable of transcending reason.²⁶ Beyond Hoffmann's status as a Romantic, however, the questioning of enlightenment's emancipatory trajectory is palpably represented in the hidebound bourgeois figures of his texts, whose trite views on art and professional life point to a criticism of popular 'enlightenment' values - often simply re-clad bourgeois ideals of propriety and virtue. Hoffmann's fiction itself explores and thematises such antagonisms at the heart of idealism, such as of poetry-life, ideality-reality. This element of critique is shared with Kleist. Hoffmann's texts are narratively complex, often with shifts in focalisation, jumps in time, occasionally, figures whose identity changes leave the reader uncertain whether they are dealing with more than one character, and depictions of events which resist clarification through conventional understandings of time,

²⁵ Excellent examples of works in this style include, for Kleist, see Blamberger's *Heinrich von Kleist: Biographie* and Ingo Breuer (ed.), *Kleist Handbuch: Leben - Werk - Wirkung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2009). For Hoffmann, see Detlef Kremer (ed.), *E.T.A. Hoffmann: Leben - Werk - Wirkung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2010), 182-213, and Ricarda Schmidt, *Wenn mehrere Künste im Spiel sind*. See also, Rüdiger Safranski, *E.T.A. Hoffmann: Das Leben eines skeptischen Phantasten*.

²⁶ Within histories of philosophy, German idealism is characterised by the quadrumvirate of Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Kant's critical or transcendental idealism should be distinguished from the later absolute idealism of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Generally speaking, absolute idealists hold that a single universal substance exists in nature. This substance or 'absolute' consists in the unity of the subjective and objective. Its universality in all nature reflects a kind of order or design created not by some separate deity but inherent in all matter itself.

space and causality. This thesis views the studied ambivalence of these texts, which repeatedly force the reader to think and be aware of the habits and assumptions guiding their interpretation, as a call to *Mündigkeit*.

The points of investigation of this thesis are guided by the overarching line of inquiry into whether Kleist and Hoffmann's fiction might be considered as responding to the perceived shortcomings of enlightenment. My analysis acknowledges the relevance of Kant's philosophy for Kleist's work, but seeks to move away from narrow attempts to theorise the relation between the two through Kleist's letters by using aspects of Kant's philosophy to illuminate the texts. Hoffmann's individual relationship to enlightenment is to be considered beyond his association with Romanticism, often oversimplified as the antithesis of the former. Of central importance is the question as to whether Kleist and Hoffmann demonstrate the notion of absolute knowledge to be illusory and 'truth' to be reflective of constellations of power. This is to be explored in the apparent inadequacy of conventional spatio-temporal and causal frameworks to understand the events depicted and also in the multitude of discordant narrative layers, which disorient the reader and withhold closure. The question as to whether and indeed how these perceived shortcomings translate into an aesthetic position is examined in the final section of the thesis. This thesis claims new ground in not only taking a comparative approach to the writers' work, identifying a common aesthetic in themes and narrative complexity, but linking these to a philosophical critique. By reading the texts as thought experiments, which examine the relevance of key tenets of enlightenment thought, I consider them as part of a broader discourse network.

Unsurprisingly, given the constraints of a PhD thesis, it is not possible to include all of Kleist and Hoffmann's works in this study. The notable omissions of all but one of Kleist's dramatic works as well as some of Hoffmann's best known works, such as *Der Sandmann* and *Der goldene Topf*, are justified by the study's focus on those texts particularly illustrative of its central thesis: namely, that such works can be read as a response to enlightenment, as broadly defined in this study. The short stories discussed provide a more manageable scope for this thesis and also lend themselves more readily to comparison with Hoffmann's novellas.

The thesis is divided into three parts: the first section, 'Mündigkeit', references Kant's famous definition of enlightenment in his essay 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?'. Focusing on Kleist, this section seeks to define the writer against the

backdrop of the Enlightenment and argues that his works do not merely reflect and re-articulate the influences of literary peers and historically significant events, but rather constitute a valid response to the perceived failings of enlightenment. Both Kleist and Hoffmann exploit fiction's capacity for experimentation and ambiguity to frame their scepticism towards any real-world notion of an intellectual awakening and self-determination.

The debate on the nature and desired scope of enlightenment to which Kant's essay responds was driven by the growing desire for a greater political agency. As chapter one 'Mangelnde Mündigkeit' discusses, despite its strong association with Kant's definition, the term 'enlightenment' cannot be used in any unqualified sense. Many commentators distinguish between *Bürger-* and *Menschenaufklärung*, the intellectual cultivation of man befitting his occupation and social status, contrary to the intellectual improvement of man per se.²⁷ Among the various understandings and applications of 'enlightenment', the central idea of an intellectual emancipation, of thinking for oneself and breaking free from unquestioned modes of thought remains constant. Kleist's *Die Familie Schroffenstein* and *Der Findling* challenge the social institution of the family as a place of stability and a propagator of critical thought; instead, the family is repressive.

Chapter two, 'Michael Kohlhaas: The Pursuit of Absolutes', continues this consideration of Kleist's texts as testing key tenets of enlightenment thinking. Kohlhaas is ostensibly a rational, self-determining figure cast in the mould of the enlightenment ideal - a citizen willing to stand up for his values and of irreproachable propriety and piety. This chapter, however, examines the satire in the literality of Kohlhaas's interpretation of redress and his pig-headed insistence on seeing it through, which escalates into a protracted and bloody conflict. *Michael Kohlhaas* is thus an experiment in which the enlightenment ideal of self-determination is pushed to its absurd conclusion.

Section two builds on the contention of section one that Kleist and Hoffmann's work challenges the notion of the ineluctability of progress, underwriting much enlight-

²⁷ See James Schmidt's *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), which usefully compiles a selection of contributions to the debate on the nature and scope of enlightenment. The terms 'Bürger-' and 'Menschenaufklärung' are employed by Moses Mendelssohn in 'Ueber die Frage: Was heißt aufklären?', see Schmidt, pp. 53-57 (55). Correspondingly, Kant declares in 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?' that public use of reason must be free and that the use of private reason must necessarily be restricted in civil posts, see Schmidt, pp. 58-64 (59-60). In a similar vein, Schiller distinguishes between practical and theoretical reason in the ninth letter of 'Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung', pp. 582-587 (pp. 582-583).

enment thought, by exposing the brittleness of socially constructed understandings of space, time, and causality - both within the text and for the reader. Chapter three, 'The Supernatural', examines Kleist's *Das Bettelweib von Locarno* and Hoffmann's *Das Majorat*. Irreconcilable with our understanding of space, time and causality, the supernatural events in each case escape rational comprehension. Both texts posit a series of events without causal connection: the reader projects his or her own causal understanding of the events onto the text. The reader's intuitive response is thus to read temporal continuity in the text as causal relation. Although the notion of a ghost is a familiar one, the experiences of physical confrontation with a presence beyond death related in both novellas are alien to the reader. In *Das Majorat*, the narrator's attempts to retrospectively rationalise the ghostly apparitions are undermined by the questionable reliability of both his own accounts and that of his great-uncle, also related by the narrator, and the manifest interests at play in the novella. The supernatural events and the dubious narrative explanations prompt the reader to reflect on their own reading practice and point to the inadequacy of the conventional frameworks through which we view the world. Considered from the critical angle of this thesis, the narrative 'friction' of the texts amounts to a call to *Mündigkeit* for the reader.

The fourth chapter, 'Metaphysics and Materiality', continues the previous chapter's consideration of epistemology in Kleist and Hoffmann's work by focussing on the religious narratives in Hoffmann's *Die Elixiere des Teufels* and Kleist's *Die heilige Cäcilie oder die Gewalt der Musik*. While Catholicism might conventionally be viewed as mystical and antithetical to Prussian enlightenment, the two texts display an ambivalent response to Catholicism which wavers between fascination and caricature. Analysis of the two texts reveals multiple narrative layers and competing causal explanations. In both texts, it is the Church's narrative which takes structural precedence and elevates the stories' strange events into a religious narrative of metaphysics. The narrative of redemption, particularly in *Die Elixiere*, establishes in the reader a certain trajectory of interpretation - yet such a unified account is called into question by the details drip-fed to the reader. Reason fails to emerge in either text as capable of providing satisfactory answers - by contrast, religious interpretations obviate the need for further uncomfortable consideration of events.

The final part of the thesis, 'Representational aesthetics', considers the development of an aesthetic programme in response to the perceived shortcomings of enlight-

enment. Beyond the rational sphere of the enlightened bourgeois, the imaginative realm accessed by the artist opens new epistemological vistas - yet, as Hoffmann illustrates, this proves to be treacherous. The fifth chapter is 'Beyond Mimesis'. Focusing on Hoffmann's *Die Jesuiterkirche in G.* and *Der Artushof*, this chapter draws parallels between Winckelmann's notion of mimesis and Hoffmann's 'Serapiontic principle'. The contrasting styles of painting in *Die Jesuiterkirche* and the artist's struggle to convert his flashes of transcendental inspiration into physically-present artworks correspond to a desire to produce art beyond the precedents of the material world. Alongside the comically stiff bourgeois figures in *Der Artushof*, the rationalist professor is treated with disdain by the narrator for his narrow worldview - yet those artists who appear to correspond to the Romantic conception of 'genius' too are satirised. The resulting picture is nevertheless not merely one of ambivalence, but one in which artists who are driven to push epistemological horizons are revered, and in which the dangers and difficulties of the realm of imagination are evident.

The final chapter, 'The Sublime', explores the role of the sublime as part of the writers' aesthetic toolkit in representing the uncertain teleology of man's intellectual emancipation. In Kleist's *Das Erdbeben in Chili*, the sublime opens new epistemological perspectives and a chance, in the destruction wrought upon the city and society, for *Mündigkeit*. As we see, however, no such emancipation takes place and the existing order is maintained. A different thematic approach is taken in Hoffmann's *Ritter Gluck*: instrumental music offers a conduit for the artist's visions - visions that are both wondrous and terrifying.

These various key concepts and ideas discussed in the individual chapters relate back to the concept of *Mündigkeit*, which frames the thesis and provides a means of conceptualising the writers' discourse network. Viewing the texts as thought experiments allows for a freer view of the role of literature in the debate on the nature and scope of enlightenment. This approach also offers a clearer view than hitherto suggested by previous critics of the parallels between Hoffmann and Kleist in themes, narrative structure and reader engagement.

Chapter 1

Mangelnde *Mündigkeit*

In line with this thesis's attempt to examine Kleist and Hoffmann's literary response to enlightenment, this chapter initially traces the scope of discussion of enlightenment and identifies the concept of *Mündigkeit* as a vector for critique of enlightenment. The latter represents a route into a broader consideration of enlightenment than Kleist's Kant crisis letters, orientated instead towards his literary works. This examination opens with *Über das Marionettentheater*, before turning to *Die Familie Schrockenstein* and *Der Findling*. The three texts, I argue, can be read as a challenge both to the fundamental assumptions and assured progress underwriting the concept of *Mündigkeit*, and to the notion of the bourgeois family as cultivating enlightenment values.

Discussion of the intersection of enlightenment values and the institution of the family requires an understanding of the spread of enlightenment debate and the emergence of the paradigm of *Mündigkeit*. In the December 1783 edition of *Berliner Monatsschrift* an article appeared in which Johann Friedrich Zöllner, a local pastor, responded to an earlier article written in support of civil marriage. In a footnote to his article, where he maintains that ecclesiastical marriage is in the interest of the state, he fulminates against the source of the confusion and questions 'Was ist Aufklärung?'.¹ Zöllner's seemingly innocuous question in fact contained within it several others, including whether the enlightenment of all citizens was possible - or even desirable, how quickly enlightenment should take place, whether enlightenment threatened to undermine the authority of sovereign and state, and the relation of the religious beliefs and existing social mores to enlightenment.

Such debates were not merely speculative nor restricted to intellectual circles, but were grounded in the perceived need for a more robust political agency than currently afforded by the monarchy. Frederick II's legacy is one of a benign monarch, whose understanding of the eighteenth-century *Zeitgeist* led to a loosening of censorship laws and a greater confessional tolerance in Prussia. This tolerance did not, however, extend to political debate, and the political system offered little space for expres-

¹ See Ehrhard Bahr, *Was ist Aufklärung?: Thesen und Definitionen: Kant, Erhard, Hamann, Herder, Lessing, Mendelssohn, Riem, Schiller, Wieland* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1974), p. 3. Zöllner's article was entitled 'Ist es rathsam, das Ehebündnis nicht ferner durch die Religion zu sanciren?', *Berliner Monatsschrift* 2 (1783), 516.

sion outside of the narrow confines of state bureaucracy and rigid social hierarchy.² The tension between the exigencies of society, the preservation of the status quo and deference before the King on the one hand, and, on the other, the ambitions and interests of the Enlightenment are clear in the somewhat contrived differentiation between *Bürgeraufklärung* and *Menschenaufklärung*. The former should be aligned with the occupation and status of the individual; the latter relates to the intellectual cultivation of man per se, rather than man as a citizen, and is thus free of any obligation to uphold the existing social order. Mendelssohn brands this distinction as ‘culture’ and ‘enlightenment’, two strands which form ‘education’: ‘culture’ is orientated towards practical matters, such as refinement and beauty in the arts, ‘enlightenment’ relates to rational knowledge and the facility to reflect on matters of human life.³ Similarly, Kant distinguishes between public and private uses of reason. Kant saw public reason as that of the scholar, ‘der durch Schriften zum eigentlichen Publikum spricht’: the public intellectual enjoys ‘uneingeschränkte Freiheit, sich seiner eigenen Vernunft zu bedienen und in seiner eigenen Person zu sprechen.’ Private use, somewhat counter-intuitively by contrast, is that exercised ‘in einem gewissen ihm [dem Bürger] anvertrauten bürgerlichen Posten oder Amte’.⁴ In some occupations, however, ‘ist es nun freilich nicht erlaubt, zu rasonnieren’: it is thus incumbent upon the employee to work in the interests of the community to serve the fulfilment of public objectives.

Not all shared in the praise of enlightenment and reason as a supreme guiding principle. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi argued that determinism and fatalism were the inescapable results of a system predicated on reason alone.⁵ This idea that enlightenment contained within itself the germ of its downfall - the danger that reason would solidify into dogma and seal itself off from criticism - is a familiar chapter in the story of the ‘Enlightenment’. The idea of a narrative of ‘Enlightenment’ gains structural concretion in its abutment of other historic events, which ostensibly provide tangible points of departure and conclusion. The trauma of the Thirty Years’ War and the ensuing mistrust of nationalism, and the French Revolution, which marks the unravelling of ideals central to

² See James Schmidt, *What Is Enlightenment?: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 4.

³ See Schmidt, pp. 53-54. Somewhat confusingly, Mendelssohn initially describes education, culture and enlightenment to be synonymous terms before explaining that ‘Kultur’ and ‘Aufklärung’ are components of ‘Bildung’. The latter term refers to the unification of selfhood and identity, mind and heart, within society through a personal process of self-cultivation.

⁴ Kant, ‘Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?’, in *VIII Abhandlungen nach 1781*, p. 37.

⁵ See Schmidt, pp. 12-13.

enlightenment, frame the period of intellectual, social and philosophical development referred to as the Enlightenment. Typical criticisms levelled at the Enlightenment are that it provided the moral and intellectual justification for imperialism and viewed nature as an object simply to be discovered and manipulated. Adorno and Horkheimer's seminal *Dialektik der Aufklärung* famously declares that the Enlightenment's attempt to banish mythology and irrational beliefs from the world was undone by its own dialectic, since 'Aufklärung ist totalitär wie nur irgendein System' and falsehood lies in the fact that 'der Prozeß von vornherein entschieden ist'.⁶ They decry 'Die Absurdität des Zustandes, in dem die Gewalt des Systems über die Menschen mit jedem Schritt wächst, der sie aus der Gewalt der Natur herausführt, denunziert die Vernunft der vernünftigen Gesellschaft als obsolet.'⁷ The horrors that followed the French Revolution constitute an expression of the Enlightenment's insolvency, which simply buckled under the weight of its own incoherence, following the horrors perpetrated in the First Republic government's instrumentalisation of violence and ferocious suppression of dissent. The lasting legacy of this period of rapid political, social and intellectual change is arguably the desire to impose rational order on the world - to establish forms from chaotic matter, simultaneously stripping them of their agential potential, as Adorno writes:

Um der abergläubischen Furcht vor der Natur zu entgehen, hat sie die objektiven Wirkungseinheiten und Gestalten ohne Rest als Verhüllungen eines chaotischen Materials bloßgestellt und dessen Einfluß auf die menschliche Instanz als Sklaverei verflucht, bis das Subjekt der Idee nach ganz zur einzigen unbeschränkten, leeren Autorität geworden war.⁸

Such a paradigm thus necessitates a vision of a universal progress for humanity to be accomplished through education, secularisation, political representation. As metaphysical accounts of humanity's relationship to the world retreated in the face of the catastrophe of religious wars in Europe, they were supplanted by reason as the main source of human meaning.⁹

⁶ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2000), p. 39.

⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno, p. 56.

⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno, p. 110.

⁹ See Russell Arben Fox, 'On Metaphysics and Nationality: The Rival Enlightenment of Kant and Herder', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49.5 (2006), 716-732 (p. 718).

The characterisation of both counter- and post-Enlightenment thinkers as ‘Romantics’ and ‘mystics’ can only be considered legitimate insofar as these figures typically considered that the prevailing methods of reason not only neglected the particularities of religion, but also needed to be complemented with aesthetic appreciation - rationality could not simply be isolated from the broader concerns of ontology. A more expansive ontological paradigm was not necessarily to be found in religious doctrine, but rather, perhaps, in the sublimity found in nature and art.¹⁰ Rationality, of course, was not merely a method of thought, but a paradigm shift which recast relations between individuals and political and religious institutions. Kant, like so many of his contemporaries, couched his concept of *(Un)mündigkeit* in metaphors of childhood, building on Christian values of unconditional obedience and deference owed to God the Father - or, more generally, the Church. Within such a relationship, man remains in a state of perpetual ‘childhood’, with no need to look further than religion for answers.¹¹ Kant challenges the idea that people should continue to live as ‘children’ and repress their development to intellectual maturity with his amusing image, acknowledged in the introduction, of fully-grown adults who dare not take steps without the support of a walking frame. The metaphor of a child’s development to adulthood is taken up later by Kant in his attempts to reconcile natural and moral teleologies in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*.

Kant distinguishes between an ‘ultimate purpose’ and ‘final purpose’ of nature: the former is something within nature for whose sake all other things exist; the latter is something external to nature for whose sake nature as a whole exists.¹² Sensory experience fails to grant us insight into either the ultimate or final purpose of nature; instead Kant argues that nature’s final purpose lies in man as a moral subject; i.e., man has a supersensible ability to choose purposes freely. The development of this facility is *culture* and involves being free to make choices without the influence of base drives and instincts.¹³ Man’s *Endzweck*, his development into a moral subject, is thus to be accomplished through his emancipation from physical wants and the ability to choose his own destiny freely. The condition under which nature is to reach its final purpose is ‘bürger-

¹⁰ See Fox, p. 722.

¹¹ See Terrence J. Reed, *Light in Germany: Scenes from an Unknown Enlightenment* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 6.

¹² See *KdU*, §82, pp. 425-426.

¹³ See *KdU*, §84, p. 435.

liche Gesellschaft'.¹⁴ *Nomos*, the political order, is thus in due course to supplant *bios*, organic life, as the locus of autonomous activity.

In contrast to the enlightenment conceptualisation of man as striving towards perfection, Kleist's aesthetic response censures the artificiality of ideology and its claims to natural authority. For Kleist, the social institution of the bourgeois family does not constitute a place of stability and propagator of the critical thought Kant describes, but rather, as we see in both *Die Familie Schroffenstein* and *Der Findling*, a place of repressive modes of thought with little opportunity for personal intellectual development.¹⁵ Indeed, Kleist's epistemic interest lies in depicting phenomena which appear to challenge Kantian aspirations to maturity. Kleist's first drama, *Die Familie Schroffenstein*, published anonymously in 1803, presents an image of a long-running feud between two families, which locks the different generations into a narrative of conflict, creating a prism through which characters interpret events and which renders them apparently unable to reason independently. Chronologically speaking, *Die Familie Schroffenstein* reads as an early response to Kleist's putative reading of Kant – not least due to the trenchant pessimism of the play's final act. Yet Kleist's position is not simply a reformulation of Kant's – instead it strips away the optimism of Kant's philosophy, leaving only its bleak starting premise.

Admittedly far from the best-known of his dramas, the play nevertheless deals with a number of themes shared with his later works,¹⁶ including among others the unreliability of representation in its various forms, the validity of legal contracts, and the opposition of nature and nurture. *Der Findling* (1811) shares many of these themes and, too, questions the role of the family within enlightenment teleologies of maturity, testing the enlightenment conviction that education and upbringing are able to overcome biological difference to create a virtuous citizen. *Der Findling* demonstrates that reason, purportedly embodied by symbolic institutions such as the law and religion, should neither be read as an unequivocally positive force, nor conflated with social convention.

¹⁴ *KdU*, §83, p. 432.

¹⁵ The social status and values of the recognisably 'bürgerlich' families are clearly an anachronism - *Der Findling* is set in the 14th century and *Die Familie Schroffenstein* in medieval Swabia.

¹⁶ See Seán Allan, *The Plays of Heinrich von Kleist: Ideals and Illusions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 52.

Über das Marionettentheater: The Irredeemable Loss of Grace

Kleist's response to enlightenment does not take the form of a programmatic treatise nor does it restrict itself to any single work, but instead constitutes a collection of themes, characters, and narrative techniques which reoccur throughout his work. His famous essay *Über das Marionettentheater*, which first appeared serialised in four issues of *Berliner Abendblätter* in December 1810, is a key text, which can be used to help illuminate Kleist's novellas and dramas. The text has been read variously by critics as a satire on contemporary theatre, a proto-Lacanian fable about the mirror stage, and an account of post-enlightenment man as fallen, having tasted the fruit from the 'Baum der Erkenntnis'.¹⁷ The essay describes an encounter with Herr C., a professional dancer, whom the narrator meets several times at a puppet theatre. Better described as a series of thought experiments than as a linear narrative, *Marionettentheater* presents a number of situations: a ballet dancer visiting a puppet theatre, a boy who sees in his reflection a similarity with the famous Roman 'Spinario' sculpture, and the story of the fencing bear, who parries every real attempt and simply ignores his opponents' feints.¹⁸ Each example portrays an ideal state, in which agency is unburdened by reflective consciousness: the puppets move with a grace beyond the realm of human possibility as they are freed not only from gravity, but also the conscious activity which governs the movement of human dancers.

Indeed, whereas the puppets represent nothing more than an aggregate of matter, unbridled by consciousness, we are matter *with* consciousness (or a soul if you prefer): God alone is 'der Punct, wo die beiden Enden der ringförmigen Welt [of matter and consciousness] in einander griffen [*sic*]'.¹⁹ Herr C. later explains what this means for grace: grace returns after knowledge has passed through the world of the infinite in the same way that 'das Bild des Hohlspiegels, nachdem es sich in das Unendliche entfernt

¹⁷ *Marionettentheater*, p. 322. See respectively, Richard Daunicht, 'Heinrich von Kleists Aufsatz *Über das Marionettentheater* als Satire betrachtet', *Euphorion*, 67 (1973), 307-322; and Alexander Weigel, 'Theaternot, Theaterkritik, Theatertraum: Heinrich von Kleist und das Theater seiner Zeit', *German Life and Letters*, 64.3 (2011), 437-454; Wolfgang Schmidbauer, *Die Entdeckung der narzisstischen Wunde* (Göttingen: Imago, 2011), pp. 157-172; and Lucia Ruprecht, *Dances of the Self in Heinrich von Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Heinrich Heine* (Ashgate, 2006), pp. 19-55.

¹⁸ The notion of Kleist's writing as 'thought experiments' has been explored by Tim Mehigan and Bernhard Greiner in relation to the character Penthesilea and Kleist's essay on Caspar David Friedrich. See Mehigan, *Heinrich von Kleist: Writing after Kant*, p. 61; Greiner, 'Zu Ende Schreiben: Ultimate Strategien im Schaffen Kleists', in *Heinrich von Kleist and Modernity*, ed. by Bernd Fischer and Tim Mehigan, pp. 11-22 (p. 16).

¹⁹ *Marionettentheater*, p. 325.

hat, plötzlich wieder dicht vor uns tritt'.²⁰ Perfect grace is thus to be found either in God, a being of infinite consciousness, or a body with no consciousness at all - a puppet.

Self-consciousness is the precondition for the development of humanity - yet Herr C. instead dreams of a return towards a pre-conscious state of paradise. This is tantamount to a rejection of *Mündigkeit*, given that Kleist's character locates a higher 'Grazie' - a moral quality usually reserved for conscious beings - in a lifeless puppet, thus disallowing the possibility of man ever reaching a similar state of perfection.²¹ The discussion between Herr C. and the narrator implies a continuum of self-consciousness decreasing with artistic skill, but even the greatest dancers cannot fully elude self-consciousness. The marionette is nothing more than a wooden doll, devoid of consciousness, yet polemically should be held aloft by Herr C. as an ideal of grace. Indeed, Herr C. reflects on how the final trace of consciousness in the puppets' performance might be erased: the puppeteer himself. In reply to the narrator's earlier suggestion that the work of the puppet-master is in fact rather dull and might be likened to playing a hurdy-gurdy, the dancer responds that the movements could indeed, 'vermitteltst einer Kurbel', be shifted 'gänzlich ins Reich mechanischer Kräfte'.²² The puppet's superiority over the human dancer is clear, since 'Die Puppen brauchen den Boden nur, wie die Elfen, um ihn zu streifen, und den Schwung der Glieder, durch die augenblickliche Hemmung neu zu beleben; wir brauchen ihn, um darauf zu ruhen, und uns von der Anstrengung des Tanzes zu erholen'.²³

The force of Kleist's article is unmistakably negative: human self-consciousness drives a wedge between man and his environment, separating his actions from his perceptions of the world. The lack of agreement between the two causes a loss of grace and provokes a yearning for naivety reminiscent of the longing to return to a state of nature and wholeness in Schiller's 'Über naive und sentimentalische

²⁰ *Marionettentheater*, pp. 330-331.

²¹ See Karol Berger, 'Die unheimliche Grazie: Eine Bemerkung über Kleists Marionetten', in *Kleist Revisited*, ed. by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Friederike Knüpling (Munich: Fink, 2014), pp. 111-122 (p.115).

²² *Marionettentheater*, p. 319.

²³ *Marionettentheater*, p. 323.

Dichtung' (1795).²⁴ This longing constitutes a reflex against man's relentless lust for knowledge.²⁵ Indeed, as Paul de Man writes, 'the idea of innocence recovered at the far side and by way of experience, of paradise consciously regained after the fall into consciousness, the idea, in other words, of a teleological and apocalyptic history of consciousness is, of course, one of the most seductive, powerful, and deluded topoi of the idealist and romantic period.'²⁶ Kleist parodies this topos in *Marionettentheater*, which forms an ironic statement on *Mündigkeit*: even if technology can bring the movements of a puppet closer to perfect grace, it ultimately brings man himself no closer to this pre-conscious state. Any such grace achieved through the operation is merely experienced vicariously.

Correspondingly, Terence Cave describes the essay as 'a secular mutation of the ancient story of the fall of man': in tasting the fruits of the tree of knowledge, the ensuing (self-)consciousness breaks the harmony man has hitherto enjoyed with nature - or, as Cave terms it, introduces 'cognitive dissonance'.²⁷ The secular turn of the loose knot of historical, political and intellectual events that we understand as 'Enlightenment' exposed religious metaphysics as a crutch for thought. Religion cements man's position in a rigid metaphysical order: natural science, by contrast, provided a rival view with its 'aetiological account of human cognition and its relation to the natural world'.²⁸ The thought experiments presented in Kleist's *Marionettentheater* posit a world in which eating from the very tree that prompted man's downfall might also offer a way of recovering our lost innocence, or 'Grazie'. The narrator's use of the subjunctive in the final lines, however, 'müßten wir wieder von dem Baum der Erkenntnis essen, um in den Stand der Unschuld zurückzufallen?',

²⁴ The topos of man as alienated from nature was established well before Kleist and notably presented by Schiller. While in Kleist's essay, the innovation of the mechanised puppets mocks the idea that man's lost self-consciousness can be overcome, Schiller claims that culture will lead us on a path of reason and freedom back to reclaim it: 'Wir waren Natur [...] und unsere Kultur soll uns, auf dem Wege der Vernunft und der Freiheit, zur Natur zurückführen.' (p. 706) Schiller distinguishes two forms of poetic writing: naive poetry is directly descriptive, unlike sentimental poetry, which is self-reflective and constructed around the poet's relationship to the material world. Rather than attempting to emulate antiquity's proximity to nature, Schiller instead advocates a balanced approach, approaching nature while retaining our use of reason. See Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, ed. By Otto Dann and Axel Gellhaus, VIII (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992), pp. 706-810.

²⁵ See Mehigan, *Heinrich von Kleist: Writing after Kant*, p. 90.

²⁶ Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 267.

²⁷ Terence Cave, 'Dancing with Marionettes: Kleist and Cognition', *German Life and Letters*, 70.4 (2017), 533-543 (p. 542).

²⁸ *Ibid.*

indicate his misgivings about the notion that grace could be restored by such means.²⁹

Any such message is conveyed through a mode of storytelling that Cave refers to as ‘the underspecification of phenomena’. The dancing puppets are one such example, whereby the audience or reader mentally completes the image hinted at by the events of the text. The audience’s experience of the puppet theatre is greater than the mere observation of wooden figures moving about; rather, it is a combination of storytelling and dancing, typically with musical accompaniment. Herr C. describes the way that the puppets follow the movements of the puppeteer’s fingers, ‘etwa wie Zahlen zu ihren Logarithmen’.³⁰ Herr C.’s technical description of mechanics of the puppets’ movement is at odds with the audience’s aesthetic experience of the show: this discrepancy is arguably a statement on the process of human cognition, in which the human brain ‘fills in the blanks’ according to their own nexus of beliefs and values. This underspecification of events is characteristic of Kleist’s fiction, as we will see in Kleist’s *Die Familie Schroffenstein* and *Der Findling*, in which the characters’ interpretation of events and impressions is clearly allied to their own family identity in the former and Nicolo’s self-love in the latter.

Die Familie Schroffenstein: The Intellectual Awakening that never was

The patriarchs of Kleist's first drama, *Die Familie Schroffenstein* are *unmündig* figures *par excellence*. Published anonymously to modest acclaim in 1803, the play is loosely cast in the mould of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* with two feuding families, the von Rossitz and the von Warwand (in actual fact two lines of the same family) locked in a cycle of tit-for-tat grievances over an inheritance claim. We learn that the body of the son of Rupert von Rossitz, Peter, has been found and two of the von Warwands’ men are caught nearby – one is killed on the spot, the other tortured in public. Rupert makes his family members each swear vengeance over the von Warwand family. Meanwhile, Ottokar von Rossitz and Agnes von Warwand, at first ignorant of each other’s identity, fall in love. In the fifth act, they meet in a cave in the mountains, but, hearing the footsteps of approaching men, swap clothes. Learning that Agnes is to meet Ottokar in the cave, Rupert, lusting for revenge, rushes to kill her. The apparent nihilism of the play can be read as an early response to Kleist’s ‘Kant Krise’. Just as Kleist lamented in

²⁹ *Marionettentheater*, p. 331.

³⁰ *Marionettentheater*, p. 319.

his famous ‘grüne Gläser’ letter, perception fails both to provide reliable information about the circumstances surrounding Peter’s death, and about the identity of his would-be killer from the torture of Sylvester’s man, creating a vortex of misjudgement, which ultimately leads the two fathers to unwittingly kill their own offspring. The play’s grisly denouement has been read both as a deeply pessimistic expression of the possibilities for human knowledge,³¹ and also as depicting the conflict between the agency of the individual, represented by the desire of Ottokar and Agnes, and the contractual world - in this case, a disputed claim to a will.³²

The action of the play is swept along by rumour and indirect communication. Elke Dubbels views rumour as an articulation of ‘die Macht der Menge, die *potentia multitudinis*, die mit Spinoza als Grundlage und Grenze jeder Staatsgewalt, der *potestas*, zu denken ist’ - the voice of *nomos*, the codes governing social and political behaviour.³³ Indeed, the calamitous actions of the ruling Schroffenstein patriarchs are directed by the unseen masses, hidden behind such vague expressions as ‘des Gerüchtes Stimme’, ‘was die Leute reden’, ‘Hast du's gehört? Aus seinem Munde?’, and ‘Alle sagens’ in the first scene alone.³⁴ The lack of unmediated dialogue between the Rossitz and the Warwand families is a recurrent source of misunderstanding, bypassing details which might otherwise have averted catastrophe. The role of this framework of assumptions and values in interpreting events is clear in the varying accounts of Peter’s death - the play’s opening scene is set shortly after and provides the initial picture of what has happened. That the suspicions regarding Peter’s death should immediately fall on the two Warwand men points to the inability of Schroffensteins of both camps to break out of the entrenched interpretation of events, fed by the history of adversary woven from previous quarrels. The church warden’s account of Rupert finding his son’s body invites Jeronimus and the audience to imaginatively reconstruct events, interspersing his account with Konjunktiv II: ‘Denk Dir, du seyst/ Graf Rupert [...] und giengst an einem Abend/ spatzieren [...] du fändest plötzlich dort/ Dein Kind, erschlagen’.³⁵ The scene of the dead boy, next to him two men from Warwand with

³¹ See Allan, p. 52.

³² See Anthony Stephens, ‘Im Spannungsfeld zwischen Tragödie und Komödie’, *Kleist-Jahrbuch* (2007), 339–347 (pp. 341–342).

³³ Elke Dubbels, ‘Zur Dynamik von Gerüchten bei Heinrich von Kleist’, *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie*, 131.2 (2012), 191–210 (p. 195).

³⁴ *DFS*, pp. 15, 18, 22, and 39.

³⁵ *DFS*, p. 21.

bloody knives, acquires definition from the history of a feud between the two families. The church warden tells Jeronimus how Rupert struck down the two men: ‘Der Eine, Herr, blieb noch am Leben, und/ Der hat’s gestanden.’³⁶ Pressed further, the church warden reveals the nature of the confession:

Kirchenvogt.
 Daß sein Herr Sylvester
 Zum Morde ihn gedungen und bezahlt.
 Jeronimus.
 Hast du’s gehört? Aus seinem Munde?
 Kirchenvogt.
 Herr,
 Ich hab’s gehört aus seinem Munde, und die ganze
 Gemeinde.³⁷

Jeronimus gradually chips away the layers of hearsay and embellishment in the church warden’s story to reveal the circumstances and content of the confession: namely, through torture and the man’s utterance, ‘Sylvester’. Perception elicits merely a ‘Schein-Beweis’ of foul play, since the name alone neither condemns nor exonerates Sylvester; yet it is seized upon by the Rossitz family as evidence of his guilt.³⁸ Learning of the accusations made against him in Rossitz, Sylvester wishes to accompany Rupert’s messenger Aldöbern to Rossitz to hear them from Rupert himself - ‘Ich muss mir Licht verschaffen’, he exclaims.³⁹ Sylvester’s scepticism is mirrored later on when Rupert hears that Johann has been killed in Warwand: ‘Mit eignen Ohren will ich’s hören. Bringt/ Den Mann zu mir.’⁴⁰ Despite this desire to hear the allegations and witness events personally, unmediated perception too fails to offer reliable knowledge. As Ottokar points out, ‘Mienen/ Sind schlechte Räthsel, die auf Vieles passen,/ Und übereilt hast Du die Auflösung.’⁴¹ The ambivalent value assigned to visual perception is clear in Ottokar’s understanding of beauty, which relies on the partial concealment of the object itself: ‘Alles Schöne, liebe Agnes,/ Braucht keinen andern Schleier, als den eignen,/

³⁶ *DFS*, p. 21.

³⁷ *DFS*, p. 22.

³⁸ See Hinrich Seeba, ‘Der Sündenfall des Verdachts: Identitätskrise und Sprachskepsis in Kleists *Familie Schroffenstein*’, *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 44 (1970), 64-100 (p. 79).

³⁹ *DFS*, p. 51.

⁴⁰ *DFS*, p. 115.

⁴¹ *DFS*, p. 31.

Denn der ist freilich selbst die Schönheit.⁴² Both Rupert and Sylvester, upon seeing what they believe to be their counterpart's offspring, exact their revenge without hesitation. The true identities of the figures are concealed from view by their borrowed clothes - the play's tragedy in the final act is precipitated not merely by the rash and barbarous actions of the two fathers, but also by their reliance on the initial appearance of the scene before them. Similarly, the fact that Peter's body is missing a finger is disregarded - a detail that is not easily explained by the interpretation that he has been murdered by two Warwand stooges at the bidding of their master, Sylvester. Indeed, while Ottokar mentions to Agnes that 'Der kleine Finger fehlte. - Mördern, denk/ Ich, müßte jedes andere Glied fast wicht'ger/ Doch sein, als just der kleine Finger', it is only when Ottokar discovers Barnabe and her mother brewing a potion using the boy's finger that the mystery is resolved.⁴³

In Barnabe's account in IV.3, she describes looking for herbs with her mother when they discover a drowned boy in the river, 'Wir zogen's drauf heraus, bemühten viel/Uns um das arme Wurm; vergebens, es/ Blieb todt. Drauf schnitt die Mutter die's versteht,/ Dem Kinde einen kleinen Finger ab'.⁴⁴ In the closing scene Ursula, Barnabe's mother, does not so much offer an account of the boy's death as an intervention when she throws the severed finger into the centre of the stage, and reveals that she cut the finger from a drowned child. The contrast between Rupert's version of events, Sylvester's emphatic denial of ordering his murder, and the witches' explanation that they cut the finger from a drowned boy underscores the corrosive nature of the feud, the worldview established and maintained by the two patriarchs, and its hold over both families and their vassals. Nevertheless, in V.1 Sylvius, the blind grandfather of Agnes, recognises his granddaughter through touch - despite her disguise. The scene does not suggest that haptic intuition somehow exceeds sight, but rather is an ironic token of the fallibility of empirical experience, underlining the unreliability of sense data and the need for these to be made intelligible using existing structures of meaning.

While the poisonous presence of the adversarial narrative is clear, the individual's role in perpetuating this worldview is more subtle. Much of the knowledge in *Die Familie Schroffenstein* is transferred laterally through rumour and imagination - a

⁴² *DFS*, p. 118; See Nancy Nobile, "'Sein Nahen ist ein Wehen aus der Ferne": Ottokar's Leap in *Die Familie Schroffenstein*', in *Heinrich von Kleist and Modernity*, ed. by Fischer and Mehigan, pp. 24-25.

⁴³ *DFS*, p. 112.

⁴⁴ *DFS*, p. 165.

pseudo-knowledge typically prefixed by markers, such as ‘als ob’, ‘wie’, and ‘mir kommt es vor’.⁴⁵ Such tags are characterised by their distancing effect from the speaker, who wishes to deflect responsibility for what they are saying. This process of externalisation is continuous with the dichotomous view of the two branches of the Schroffenstein family as detached from one another.

The readiness of the Schroffensteins to accept information uncritically contributes to the *Unmündigkeit* of the *dramatis personae*, which is all the more apparent in their failure to discern either a sense of a common good, or the futility of the feud.⁴⁶ For Kant, the former constitutes the first principle of his categorical imperative, the principle of universality. For a course of action to constitute a categorical imperative, it must be unbounded by selfish motives (i.e. hypothetical imperatives) and universally valid. We must behave in such a way that our conduct could qualify as universal law: put simply, we must ask ourselves what the world would be like if a particular action were universal.⁴⁷ Clearly, neither Rupert and Sylvester, nor their hot-headed vassals give much thought to what might happen if their actions were replicated by others. In IV.1, following Jeronimus’s death at the hands of an angry mob whipped up by Santing at Rupert’s behest, Rupert experiences a flicker of remorse:

Das eben ist der Fluch der Macht, daß sich
Dem Willen, dem leicht widerruflichen,
Ein Arm gleich beut, der fest unwiderruflich
Die That ankettet. Nicht ein Zehnthel würd'
Ein Herr des Bösen thun, müßt' er es selbst
Mit eignen Händen thun.⁴⁸

Jeronimus’s death reflects the danger of absolutism, where the caprices of a patriarch are unquestioningly fulfilled. Those who blithely follow without resistance condemn themselves to *Unmündigkeit*.

If the older generation fail to exercise their powers of reason and become *mündig*, there is hope in III.1 that the younger Schroffenstein dyad, Agnes and Ottokar,

⁴⁵ *DFS*, pp. 122-123.

⁴⁶ See Mehigan, *Heinrich von Kleist: Writing after Kant*, p.105.

⁴⁷ Kant sets out his categorical imperative in *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, see pp. 453-455.

⁴⁸ *DFS*, p. 140.

will break the circuit of revenge by resisting their families' will to exact vengeance on their counterparts. Ottokar calls upon Agnes to resist the 'Gespenst des Mistrans' and to trust in him.⁴⁹ To all appearances, this nascent understanding is cut short by the killing of the children, yet it remains ambiguous whether the two ever really stood a chance of escaping their 'Familiendenken' given their preoccupation with their parents' feud.⁵⁰ The young couple's vulnerability to nefarious influences is prefigured in Kleist's letter from Paris 29 July 1801, in which he writes to Adolphine von Werdeck. Kleist exclaims 'Und doch, wenn die Jugend von jedem Eindrucke bewegt wird und ein heftiger sie stürzt, so ist das nicht, weil sie keinen, sondern weil sie *starken* Widerstand leistet. Die abgestorbene Eiche, sie steht unerschüttert im Sturm, aber die blühende stürzt er, weil er in ihre Krone greifen kann.'⁵¹ What is essentially a quarrel between adults, seeps into the mindset of the children – witness Agnes's joy when she finds the water that Ottokar offers her is not poison, 'O wär es Gift, und könnt' ich mit Dir sterben!'.⁵² Moreover, the bizarre reconciliation scene at the play's close, following the murder of two children, marks the end of the feud, but not, however, the fathers' inauguration as *mündig* citizens. The dispute over the will, the apparent source of the feud, dissolves with the death of its beneficiaries.⁵³ The tableau presented is merely pseudo-cathartic, with laughter replacing the tears in a scene which might otherwise have come from a *comédie larmoyante*. Instead, Kleist's play presents us with a curious pastiche of comedy and tragedy which shows little regard for Aristotelian norms. The crass merriment of Johann, 'Bringt Wein her! Lustig! Wein! Das ist ein Spaß zum Totlachen! Wein!',⁵⁴ corresponds to the motif of forgetting.⁵⁵ Rupert's question to Santing immediately after killing his disguised son, 'Warum denn that ich's, Santing? Kann ich es doch gar nicht finden im Gedächtniß',⁵⁶ demonstrates the fleeting validity of the reasoning behind his actions.

Not only do the actions of the two Schroffenstein fathers fall short of the moral

⁴⁹ *DFS*, p. 102.

⁵⁰ Hans Neuenfels, 'Die Familie Schroffenstein: Soll man sie spielen, kann man sie spielen?', *Kleist Jahrbuch* (1984), 106–123 (p. 107).

⁵¹ *IV/2 Briefe*, pp. 69–81 (p. 81).

⁵² *DFS*, p. 102.

⁵³ See Seeba, p. 75.

⁵⁴ *DFS*, p. 207.

⁵⁵ See Peter André-Alt, 'Das pathologische Interesse: Kleists dramatisches Konzept', in *Kleist – ein moderner Aufklärer*, ed. by Marie Haller-Neuermann and Dieter Rehwinkel (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005), pp. 77–100 (pp. 80–81).

⁵⁶ *DFS*, p. 191.

standards of Kant's categorical imperative, they offer little prospect of learning from their errors. *Die Familie Schroffenstein* is thus not simply a statement of doubt towards the powers of perception, but of something altogether stronger: Kleist's scepticism is directed rather towards our ability to break out of *Unmündigkeit* and thereby attain a higher state of understanding - and that even if such an understanding were to be obtained that it might not be a lasting state, from which we could regress to our previous immaturity.

Central to *Die Familie Schroffenstein* is the disputed will, which grounds the play's events within a long-running conflict. The will dominates the play's setting, which critics have viewed as a postlapsarian world, where the contractual law of the 'Erbvertrag' has displaced natural morality and common sense.⁵⁷ The reliance on the contract displaces the use of reason and presents an obstacle to *Mündigkeit*.

The backdrop of Swabia in the Middle Ages scarcely conceals the relevance of the inheritance contract, given that property remained tied to male heirs in accordance with the *Allegemeines Landrecht* of Kleist's day.⁵⁸ The source of the conflict, the will, is mentioned only in act one by the church warden, who explains that there is 'ein[-] Erbvertrag/Kraft dessen nach dem gänzlichen Aussterben/Des einen Stamms, der gänzliche Besitzthum/Desselben an den andern fallen sollte.'⁵⁹ Yet this contract underpins not only the story's violence and suspicion, but proves to be ingrained in the behaviour of the Schroffenstein patriarchs. Learning that his illegitimate son Johann has been killed in Warwand, Rupert's response is to have Jeronimus killed, having heard from Santing that Jeronimus struck down Johann to protect Agnes. Later, he expresses his regret for failing to call off the mob who killed Jeronimus. His sadness at Johann's death, however, proves short-lived given that he fails to even acknowledge Johann's appearance in the final scene: no explanation is offered for Johann's sudden recovery and escape from Warwand. The feud's role as a framework of interpretation is evident in its use to retrospectively justify the killing of Jeronimus and also in the discrepancy between his contractually-grounded wrath that Johann had been killed by Sylvester and his complete indifference to finding his son alive in the final scene.

⁵⁷ See Nobile, pp. 23-24; Jochen Schmidt, *Heinrich von Kleist: Die Dramen und Erzählungen in ihrer Epoche* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), p. 35; p. 54.

⁵⁸ See Laurie Johnson, 'Psychic, Corporeal, and Temporal Displacements in *Die Familie Schroffenstein*', in *Kleist's Erzählungen Und Dramen: Neue Studien*, ed. by Paul Michael Lützel and David Pan (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001), pp. 121-33 (p. 130).

⁵⁹ *DFS*, p. 19.

The feud's contractual basis is also clear in Rupert's insistence that Ottokar speak the names of those upon whom he swears revenge. This reflects the centrality of language to the contractual world. Later in II.1, Ottokar refuses to tell Agnes his name, claiming that he does not know Johann:

Ottokar.
 Und kehrst nicht wieder?
 Agnes.
 Niemals,
 Wenn Du nicht gleich mir Deinen Namen sagst.
 Ottokar.
 Das soll ich jetzt - vor diesem Fremden. -

The importance assigned to the act of naming in *Die Familie Schroffenstein*, a constitutive act of contract-building, corresponds to a faith in the ability of language to communicate truth. The establishment of the contract locks the characters into a state in which thinking is guided by its terms, leaving little scope for *Mündigkeit*. In forcing Ottokar to name Sylvester, Rupert seeks to anchor the feud in a verbal contract with his son. Despite the imputed performative force of language in the contractual world, both Rupert and Sylvester's speech is characterised by a desire for visual apprehension of events, unmediated by the accounts of other witnesses.⁶⁰ Indeed, language has a veiling function in the metonymy of the two hamlets, Rossitz and Warwand, for the two branches of the Schroffenstein family.

The play is divided between these two hamlets and a third, liminal, vaguely defined space 'im Gebirge'. The latter remains, with the exception of the closing scene, unsullied by the presence of the feuding parents and serves as an escape from the burdensome reality of the omnipresent feud. The mountains, a place topographically raised above the two settlements, and the shelter of the cave constitute a *locus amoenus* for the Schroffenstein children, who each seek refuge there. Peter is found dead having drowned in a forest stream; Johann is saved from the water after falling from his horse, having veered off from his father's hunting party. Agnes likes to wander in the mountains and it is here that she saves Johann from drowning and meets with Ottokar. The latter, too, spends time in the mountains to seek the safety of the cave to meet Agnes.

⁶⁰ The performative nature of language is discussed also in the next chapter.

Despite Ottokar and Agnes's love for one another, commentators such as Laurie Johnson cast doubt on whether these places truly posit a plausible alternative world to that of their parents. For Johnson, the Schroffenstein children are the malfunctioning 'limbs of the patriarchal body rather than constructors of a failed but legitimate, beautiful alternative community'.⁶¹ While there can be no doubt that Agnes and Ottokar fail to communicate what they learn about each other's families and thus fail to prevent their fathers' murderous intentions, they are able to free themselves from their parents' perspective of events. The catastrophic close of the play marks the result of Kleist's experiment to introduce love into the uncharted waters of the contractual world.

Although Agnes and Ottokar grow close and become aware of their similarities, the two families are not interchangeable. While Rupert appears as the hot-headed, brutish counterpart to the more reasonable, 'enlightened' Sylvester, there remains a harsh symmetry in their actions in the fifth act. When Agnes and Ottokar come together their initial suspicion of one another yields to love when they discover that they are guided by near similar narratives of discord: Ottokar believes that Agnes's family murdered his brother; by contrast, Agnes claims, 'In meines Vaters Sälen liegt der Staub/ Auf allen Rüstungen, und niemand ist/ Uns feindlich, als der Marder höchstens, der/ In unsre Hühnerställe bricht.'⁶² Yet later, she is convinced Ottokar intends to poison her and interprets Johann's desperate advances, where he threatens to take his own life, as an attack. In their distrust and accusations, they begin to see their own reflection in their stichomythic exchange in III.1. Their romance is thus not merely a setting aside of the lens through which they see events, but a narcissistic declaration of love. Stripped of its humanistic import, the relationship shows not the rational awakening of *Mündigkeit*, but the recognition of similarity. While Ottokar and Agnes reflect one another, Rupert sees his reflection in the spring as 'Eines Teufels Antlitz',⁶³ corresponding to his own feelings of guilt after ordering the killing of Jeronimus and foreshadowing his murderous actions in the final act.

Sylvester's fainting at the end of act one does not, as the many fainting episodes in Kleist's work are often interpreted, bolster the thesis that Kleist's bodies are vessels of truth, susceptible to spilling over and outing the character's bad faith. Rather, his

⁶¹ Johnson., p. 124.

⁶² *DFS*, p. 57.

⁶³ *DFS*, p. 168.

fainting points to the absurdity of a conception of the mind-body relation as dual. Kleist does not pursue a philosophy of embodied mind or a harmonious dialectic of mind and body, as does for example Novalis, but rather explores the body's potential to destabilise the mind's rational function.⁶⁴ Sylvester's fainting fit demonstrates that the mind's rational command over the body is weak and marks a reassertion of nature over the rational patriarch. Laurie Johnson argues that this lack of control over the body releases Sylvester from self-consciousness.⁶⁵ I would argue that Sylvester's fainting serves to illustrate the fragility of the rational order and that the reasoned and sensible approach the reader has thus far associated with Sylvester is by no means unassailable. Indeed, the fainting fit marks a turning point in his behaviour, after which, aghast at Johann's apparent attempt on his daughter's life, he falls into a pattern of thought similar to Rupert, culminating in the killing of Agnes.

Any dichotomies between Rupert and Sylvester, Rossitz and Warward, fury and reason are disrupted by the presence of a third element. Jeronimus, a member of a third Schroffenstein house, floats between Rupert and Sylvester, not only conveying messages but delivering his condemnation of both Sylvester and Rupert, having heard each time only one side of the story. Further, there are three wanderers claiming to have witnessed the murder of Peter. No less than three men are known to have an amorous interest in Agnes: Johann, Ottokar, and Jeronimus. Finally, the play's third setting,

⁶⁴ Much has been written in relation to Kleist's blushing, fainting, and tongue-tied characters, whose non-verbal communications have been referred to as 'gestures'. Gestures have previously been attributed a psychological foundation (see Smith and Strotzki), who see body language as an uncontainable expression of inner conflict - or a kind of expressive 'surplus' that is beyond the capacity of language. Friederike Knüpling traces the development of this strand of criticism and highlights the continuity between Henri Bergson's observation in his famous essay *Le Rire* (1900), in which he views laughter as an involuntary expression of the soul's state and Kleist's gestures. Yet gestures can also be viewed as the product of agents of disunity, external forces which act upon the individual and suspend mastery of his or her actions: Lucia Ruprecht views teleological movement in the text as interrupted by a loss of balance. The falling body serves as an illustration of its vulnerability to gravity. Helmut Schneider talks of a 'gestural commentary', likening the body language of Kleist's figures to stage directions. Schneider acknowledges that body language is often emotional but warns against concluding that it communicates an inarticulable truth: these gestures cannot be unambiguously decoded. I would argue that these gestures provide the reader with a further narrative layer, which is at times discordant with the characters' actions and speech. In line with Schneider, however, I would challenge the assumption that Kleistian gestures constitute a bursting out of truth given that this would imply some kind of knowable and finite psychological substratum: Kleist's texts trade in equivocation. See David E. Smith, *Gesture as a Stylistic Device in Kleist's 'Michael Kohlhaas' and Kafka's 'Der Prozess'*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1976); Dietmar Strotzki, *Die Gebärde des Errötens im Werk Heinrich von Kleists* (Marburg: Elwert, 1971); also Friederike Knüpling's introduction in: Friederike Knüpling, 'Geste, Intensität, Ironie: Eine Einleitung', in *Kleist Revisited*, ed. by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Friederike Knüpling, pp. 7-23; Helmut J. Schneider, 'Standing and Falling in Heinrich von Kleist', *MLN*, 115 (2000), 502-518; Ruprecht, *Dances of the Self in Heinrich Von Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffman and Heinrich Heine*, pp. 47-59.

⁶⁵ See Johnson, pp. 126-127.

vaguely described as ‘im Gebirge’ offers a neutral meeting place for Johann, Agnes and Ottokar.

The lack of details surrounding the mountain location used by the Schroffenstein children to meet lends it an air of irreality, an impression bolstered by the play’s elisions and inconsistencies. At the end of act four, having been locked in the tower in Rossitz on the orders of his father, Ottokar jumps out of the window to fall fifty feet on to stone cobbles below. The curtain falls as he jumps and the next we see of Ottokar is not, as we might reasonably expect, his bloody remains on the cobbles, but instead swiftly approaching the cave where Agnes and Barnabe await. That Ottokar’s fall should take place hidden from view corresponds to the play’s underlying conflict between verbal testimony and eyewitness accounts: are we, as readers/viewers, to overlook this incongruity and assume that he makes it to the cave?

The danger of the jump is nevertheless made clear by Eustache: ‘Um Gotteswillen, spingen willst Du doch/ Von diesem Thurm nicht? Rasender! Der Thurm/ Ist fünfzig Fuß hoch, und der ganze Boden/ Gepflastert.’⁶⁶ Both Nancy Nobile and Anthony Stephens view the ‘wedding scene’ between Ottokar and Agnes as a dream - as Nobile writes, ‘A proto-modern construct that hovers between *Hoch-Zeit* and death on *schroffen Steinen*’.⁶⁷ Parallels between this scene and Johann’s account of his encounter with Agnes can be drawn. Johann falls from his horse only to find himself rescued by a beautiful bathing girl. Further, the meeting between Ottokar and Agnes, as Louis Gerrekens observes, poses a temporal conundrum: how does Agnes get to and from the mountains before her father comes round from his faint? Agnes is in Warwand with her family in I.2. At the end of this scene Sylvester faints.⁶⁸ In the next scene, at the beginning of act two, we find Agnes idly knotting wreathes, sat at the edge of the cave and speaking to Ottokar. In the next scene, Sylvester has only just come back to his senses - yet Agnes apparently ‘ist in ihrem Garten’.⁶⁹ The reality of Ottokar’s presence in the final scene is called into question by the inconsistencies surrounding his death. Ottokar is killed by his father, who, according to the stage directions, ‘zieht das Schwert aus dem Busen Ot-

⁶⁶ *DFS*, p. 178.

⁶⁷ Nobile, p. 28; Anthony Stephens, *Heinrich von Kleist: The Dramas and Stories* (Providence, RI: Berg, 1994), p. 9.

⁶⁸ See Louis Gerrekens, *Nun bist Du ein verschloßener Brief: Wörtlichkeit und Bildlichkeit in Heinrich von Kleists “Kätzchen von Heilbronn” und “Familie Schroffenstein”* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1988), p. 284.

⁶⁹ *DFS*, p. 67.

tokar's'.⁷⁰ Yet shortly after, Agnes finds him 'Ein Schwerdt - im Busen - Heiland!'⁷¹ The erect sword in Ottokar's breast is unmistakably phallic and Agnes falls onto him in grief. The scene arguably represents the conclusion of Ottokar's phantasy, the end of his dream, and his death on the stony ground. Going beyond this interpretation of the play's final act, the irreality of the scenes raises questions about the nature of the reconciliation: if we view the culmination of Ottokar and Agnes' romance - their union - as hypothetical, the play then offers no real vision of life beyond the interpretative confines of the feud.

The play's conclusion, while hypothetically proposing a rather a disagreeable resolution to the feud, awkwardly combines high tragedy and low bathos. The two fathers' tragic and unexpected killing of their own offspring is tempered by the bizarre appearance of Ursula, who throws Peter's severed finger into the centre of the stage. Eustache's exclamation on seeing the finger, which in previous scenes was boiled in the witches' broth, 'Wenn eine Mutter kennt, was sie gebahr,/ So ist es Peter's Finger' provides a flash of dark comedy.⁷² The contrived restoration of peace between the two patriarchs is concluded by Rupert's offering a handshake 'mit abgewandtem Gesicht'.⁷³ The feud ends, not so much with mutual recognition of sleights from both sides, but the removal of the beneficiaries of the will. The family, in its obstinate focus on the disputed will and enforced swearing of oaths, represents a barrier to the characters' intellectual emancipation - rather than providing the stability and values that would equip the children for *Mündigkeit*.

Testing Nurture in *Der Findling*

The social institution of the family is central also to Kleist's novella *Der Findling*, in which it serves as a testbed for Kleist's inquiry into the Enlightenment notions of universal brotherhood and the capacity of education for erasing alterity. Nicolo, a plague-infected orphan, is taken in by the merchant Piachi during his travels. While Piachi's own son, Paolo, falls victim to the plague, Nicolo and Piachi survive. On returning to Rome, Piachi encourages Nicolo to fill the shoes of his dead son and eventually adopts him, later signing over his fortune to his son. As with Kleist's other short stories, the

⁷⁰ *DFS*, p. 192.

⁷¹ *DFS*, p. 194.

⁷² *DFS*, p. 204.

⁷³ *DFS*, p. 207.

opening of *Der Findling* is exegetical and represents a proposition to be tested in the narrative that follows. Piachi's adoption of Nicolo pits innate character against the enlightenment doctrine of the perfectibility of man through education. In this thought experiment, Kleist wishes to see whether education and exposure to bourgeois values can overcome biological difference. Nicolo is raised as an heir-in-waiting, educated in the requisite skills to take on Piachi's role in the business, and is soon bestowed with almost all of Piachi's assets. Such generosity, however, establishes a relation of debt between Nicolo and his parents, leaving little freedom to develop as an individual. The bourgeois idyll into which Nicolo is welcomed, far from being portrayed as a place of stability and virtue, is a place of repression. Nicolo's actions and indeed the story's dramatic denouement not only question the supremacy of bourgeois nurture over nature, but also extends to the reader the relevance of intellectual awakening, *Mündigkeit*, that we have discussed with relation to the characters of *Die Familie Schroffenstein*. Piachi's frenzied attack jars the reader into reflecting on their own moral expectations and habits of interpretation. Nicolo, too, shows a lack of critical perspective in his eagerness to read events as supporting his theory that Elvire is secretly in love with him. The final section considers Nicolo's links to the Carmelite monks and the bishop's concubine Xaviera Tartini as a channelling of institutional power - an authority Piachi seeks to smash in his killing of Nicolo and destruction of the decree.

The story's focus on the viability of the substitution of Nicolo for Paolo is tied to the motif of commerce, as Piachi, a merchant, seeks to make good his losses by adopting the boy, who 'ihm theuer zu stehen gekommen war'.⁷⁴ Having sent the boy to school, where he learns to read and write, as well as arithmetic, the merchant makes certain to capitalise on his investment by putting him to work as a clerk in his business, before signing over his assets to Nicolo when he retires. The boy's place as a substitute is clear: while his own son is still alive, Piachi 'unterhandelte noch, in der ersten Station, mit den Wirthsleuten' on how to get rid of the child.⁷⁵ It is only upon Paolo's death that the idea to take the orphan with him occurs to Piachi and indeed Nicolo, whose name is an anagram of *in loco*, is accepted without resistance by Elivre. Paolo, it seems, is no longer worthy of mention except using the pronouns 'jener' and 'derselbe': Nicolo is shown to 'das Bette, worin jener geschlafen hatte, zum Lager' and given 'sämmliche

⁷⁴ *DF*, p. 24.

⁷⁵ *DF*, p. 21.

Kleider desselben'.⁷⁶ Further to directing the boy down the career path clearly intended originally for Paolo, Piachi attempts to impress on Nicolo his own anti-clericalism - despite the boy's religious devotion. Piachi is pleased with the boy's behaviour with the exception of his 'Umgang mit den Mönchen des Carmeliterklosters, die dem jungen Mann, wegen des beträchtlichen Vermögens das ihm einst, aus der Hinterlassenschaft des Alten, zufallen sollte, mit großer Gunst zugethan waren'.⁷⁷ While Nicolo steps into the shoes vacated by Paolo, as an adopted child he is bound by a lasting debt of gratitude to Piachi and Elvire. Piachi and Elvire choose to heap more debt still upon Nicolo by giving him 'eine glänzende Ausstattung [...] wobei sie ihm einen beträchtlichen Theil ihres schönen und weitläufigen Wohnhauses einräumten'.⁷⁸ On reaching sixty, Piachi signs over his entire fortune, taking only a small sum for himself and his wife for their retirement. As Griffiths points out, Piachi's acts of generosity constitute a tacit means of control over Nicolo and stymie the boy's independent development.⁷⁹

The one-dimensionality of Nicolo's development as an individual is prefigured in Kleist's 'Allerneuester Erziehungsplan', published in the *Berliner Abendblätter* in 1810, which taps into contemporary debate on Prussian school reform, a discourse strongly influenced by Pestalozzi's ideas on education. Pestalozzi's system, articulated in the utopian novel *Lienhard und Gertrud*, rests on firmly Rousseauian ideals.⁸⁰ The innate equality and capacity for education within all children was a key tenet: if a child follows a plan of morally correct artistic education, he or she will unfailingly be transformed into a master work of education. A new generation of upstanding citizens would thus be created from children brought up in this way, who know neither difference nor barriers between different peoples and within their own communities: Kleist's essay constitutes a response to such notions. Kleist prefaces his tongue-in-cheek proposal to establish 'eine sogenannte *Lasterschule*, oder vielmehr eine gegensätzliche Schule, eine Schule der Tugend durch Laster', with a series of anecdotes intended to serve as analogies for his claims that virtue arises contrastively in situations of bad behaviour.⁸¹ His most

⁷⁶ *DF*, pp. 23-24.

⁷⁷ *DF*, pp. 24-25.

⁷⁸ *DF*, p. 26.

⁷⁹ See Elystan Griffiths, "Die unverhoffte Wirkung": Revolutionary Violence, "Beschränkung" and the Rewriting of the Domestic Idyll in Kleist's Works', *German Life and Letters*, 65.4 (2012), 399-420 (p. 418).

⁸⁰ For an detailed account of Pestalozzi's views on practical education and the instruction of children see Kate Silber, *Pestalozzi: The Man and his Work* (London: Routledge, 1973), pp. 185-205.

⁸¹ Kleist, *Allerneuester Erziehungsplan*, p. 182.

forceful analogy is that of neutrally charged bodies, when placed next to a charged body, become oppositely charged: ‘Es ist als ob die Natur einen Abscheu hätte, gegen alles, was, durch eine Verbindung von Umständen, einen überwiegenden und unförmlichen Werth angenommen hat; und zwischen je zwei Körpern, die sich berühren, scheint ein Bestreben angeordnet zu sein, das ursprüngliche Gleichgewicht, das zwischen ihnen aufgehoben ist, wieder herzustellen.’⁸² Kleist paints an amusing image of a school in which, ‘Lehrer angestellt werden, die in bestimmten Stunden des Tages, nach der Reihe, auf planmäßige Art, darin Unterricht ertheilen: in der Religionsspöterei sowohl als in der Bigotterie, im Trotz sowohl als in der Wegwerfung und Kriecherei, und im Geiz und in der Furchtsamkeit sowohl, als in der Tollkühnheit und in der Verschwendung.’⁸³ Yet in his postscript Kleist lays his cards on the table for all to see, signing off his essay with the argument, ‘das Kind ist kein Wachs, das sich, in eines Menschen Händen, zu einer beliebigen Gestalt kneten läßt: es lebt, es ist frei; es trägt ein unabhängiges und eigenthümliches Vermögen der Entwicklung, und das Muster aller innerlichen Gestaltung, in sich.’⁸⁴ The essay’s central message follows the old adage that you learn from your mistakes and is further thematised in *Der Findling*. His educational pathway chosen for him and Piachi’s wealth and property laid at his feet, Nicolo is left without room to develop as an individual with the Church - or more accurately, the carnal temptations of the bishop’s concubine - as his only outlet.

Elystan Griffiths builds on Helmut Schneider’s contention that Kleist uses the idyll to expose a ‘blind spot’ of enlightenment thinking, arguing that Kleist overturns the idea of the idyll as a progressive bourgeois milieu and bulwark against revolutionary instability to expose the genre’s obscuring of the structural violence and inequality in familial relations.⁸⁵ Indeed, unlike Goethe and Schiller, for whom the social institutions of the family, marriage and education offer something sturdy to hold on to during times of rapid social change, the Kleistian idyll of such institutions is repressive and stifling, with little room available for free, critical thinking.⁸⁶

⁸² *Allerneuerster Erziehungsplan*, p. 128.

⁸³ *Allerneuerster Erziehungsplan*, pp. 182-183.

⁸⁴ *Allerneuerster Erziehungsplan*, p. 184.

⁸⁵ See Helmut Schneider, ‘Verkehrung der Aufklärung: Zur Destruktion der Idylle im Werk Heinrich von Kleist’, *Kodikas/Code. Ars Semeiotica*, 11 (1988), 149–65 (p. 151); Griffiths, p. 399.

⁸⁶ See Griffiths, pp. 402-403.

The unfavourable portrayal of the bourgeois family and its accompanying moral and educational values in Kleist's writing appears in itself a rejection of enlightenment humanism. In *Der Findling*, the idea of bourgeois family and upbringing as an unshakable social foundation, capable of overcoming biological difference, is revealed to be an illusion. This rejection is bolstered by a further strand of criticism. Despite the seemingly open invitation to the reader to view Piachi and his wife as charitable Christians, who, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, adopt a poor orphan and provide him with an education, Kleist leaves enough minor, apparently trivial details for the reader to deduce that this is not so. Not only is Piachi left without an heir when Paolo dies, but Elvire, as we learn soon after, 'von dem Alten keine Kinder mehr zu erhalten hoffen konnte'.⁸⁷ Nor is Elvire the devoted wife and doting mother that she initially appears, as she remains obsessed with the Genoese knight who saved her from the burning building.

Indeed, Nicolo mistakenly believes Piachi's wife, Elvire, is infatuated with him after he spies her 'in der Stelle der Verzückung....', whispering the word 'Colino' - an anagram of Nicolo. Nicolo, learning that the object of Elvire's passion is in fact a portrait of a Genoese knight who saved her life as a child, hides in her room dressed as the man in the portrait and attempts to rape her. This passage is critical in challenging the assumptions of the reader: responding with remarkable composure, Piachi takes 'die Peitsche von der Wand, öffnete ihm die Thür und zeigte ihm den Weg, den er unmittelbar wandern sollte.'⁸⁸ Yet the reader's astonishment that the adoptive son could behave so wickedly is quickly surpassed when Nicolo 'plötzlich vom Fußboden erstand und erklärte: an ihm, dem Alten, sei es, das Haus zu räumen, denn er durch vollgültige Documente eingesetzt, sei der Besitzer und werde sein Recht, gegen wen immer auf der Welt es sei, zu behaupten wissen!'⁸⁹ Nicolo challenges the patriarchal order and attempts to throw Piachi out of his own home by obtaining a decree from the Church declaring him the legal owner of the property. The startling denouement follows with Piachi dashing Nicolo's brains out against a wall, before stuffing the decree in Nicolo's mouth. Piachi's contempt for Nicolo's decree conjures a powerful image of his disdain for the symbolic 'contractual' order of society. Yet ironically Piachi's role as a figure of paternal authority is legitimised by contract in his adoption of Nicolo. If patriarchal au-

⁸⁷ *DF*, p. 24.

⁸⁸ *DF*, p. 53.

⁸⁹ *DF*, p. 53.

thority is maintained and perpetuated through institutions, it appears split in *Der Findling*: Nicolo turns to the Church in order to obtain his decree, while Piachi appeals to the law.

Reason, ostensibly embodied by such institutions, is shown not be an unequivocally positive force as enlightenment doctrine would have it. In allowing Nicolo to triumph through the symbolic order before he is killed by the brute force of his adoptive father, Kleist not only questions the validity of institutionalised reason, but also our expectation that moral conventions and reason overlap. The story's pessimism, crowned with Piachi's execution for killing his thoroughly wicked adopted son, is not intended as an exhibition of injustice. Rather, Kleist presents us with the findings from his narrative experiment: reason - or rather that which purports to be reason - cannot counterbalance contingency. As readers, we certainly expect Nicolo to express gratitude towards his benevolent guardian by obeying his adoptive father – Kleist, however, cautions us to expect nothing of the sort. An inability to break out of mental habits locks man into *Unmündigkeit*. The plot of *Der Findling* rests on a series of such deceptions. Nicolo, hearing Elvire whisper 'Colino', believes himself to be the object of her love; Xaviera Tartini becomes jealous of Elvire on seeing the portrait of Colino, believing it to be of her lover, Nicolo. Further, when Elvire catches Nicolo with one of Tartini's maids, Nicolo wrongly believes her to be responsible for organising his wife's funeral cortège at the same time as his rendez-vous with the maid. While Nicolo's sensory impressions fail to fully grasp the events, Nicolo streamlines what he sees to fit his own theory that Elvire is in love with him. Nicolo's observations are thus shoehorned into pre-existing narratives. By such a reading, any attempt to break out of *Unmündigkeit* is destined to fail due to man's inability to transcend habits of thought.

The reader's mental habits are evident in the instinct to view the characters' moral worth in sharp relief from one another. Nicolo, who is described by the hospital's provost as 'Gottes Sohn', a boy who would be missed by no one, remains close to the Church throughout and strikes a bargain at the end of the novella to marry Xaviera Tartini, 'welche der Bischof los zu sein wünschte', in order to obtain a decree confirming his ownership of the property.⁹⁰ Andreas Gailus argues convincingly that Nicolo is an 'empty subject', providing a vessel for institutional authority. Manipulating his con-

⁹⁰ *DF*, p. 54.

nections to build and protect his financial interests as he does to obtain the decree, Nicolo is driven by pathological desire.⁹¹ Of greater polemical impact, however, is not so much Nicolo's ability to rally religious and legal institutions to his own advantage - the legal picture of Nicolo's ownership is in fact clear despite his wicked behaviour towards his parents - but rather the lack of integrity of the Carmelite monks whose interest in Piachi's fortune and the expedient conveyance of Tartini apparently trumps their Christian values and any expectation that they should lead by example.

The sharp contrast between the villainous son and the virtuous father, which guides the reader's moral assessment of the situation, is clouded by the merchant's killing of his adoptive son. Our expectations that Nicolo will dutifully cast himself in the mould Piachi provides are subverted and proved to be nothing further than habits of the mind. In this way, Kleist reveals the reader himself to be *unmündig* in failing to break out of the ingrained narratives which guide our expectations. The image of the merchant as an enlightened burgher, whose Christian values compel him to adopt an orphan boy, is shattered. The physicality and ferocity of the act underscores the explosion of Piachi's principles of morality and law. The ending of *Der Findling* is striking among Kleist's work, not merely in terms of the brutality of Piachi's smashing of his adoptive son's skull, but also because it refrains from the trite reconciliation found in Kleist's other stories. Piachi stubbornly refuses to receive the customary absolution before his execution, declaring 'Ich will nicht selig sein. Ich will in den untersten Grund der Hölle hinabfahren. Ich will den Nicolo, der nicht im Himmel sein wird, wiederfinden, und meine Rache, die ich hier nur unvollständig befriedigen, wieder aufnehmen!'⁹² The merchant's apparently insatiable appetite for vengeance forecloses any possibility of a return to the symbolic order of moral, legal and religious codes, within which Piachi has hitherto lived and that have provided the environment for his success as a merchant.

Nicolo's skull embodies the institution: Nicolo, equipped with his decree, personifies ecclesiastical authority and the power vested in language to establish and maintain legal ownership of the property. Gailus describes the killing as a collision of 'assertion, negation, speech and destruction'.⁹³ Speech, he argues, is made up of propositional

⁹¹ Andreas Gailus, 'Breaking Skulls: Kleist, Hegel, and the Force of Assertion', in *Heinrich von Kleist and Modernity*, ed. by Fischer and Mehigan, pp. 243-256 (p. 251).

⁹² *DF*, p. 56-57.

⁹³ Gailus, pp. 243-244.

content and assertoric force - in *Der Findling*, however, the two are not mutually supportive but instead stand in tension in Kleist's writing. This typically takes the form of an 'act of violent assertion' quickly followed by a seemingly contradictory orderly close to the story, thrust upon the shellshocked reader.⁹⁴ The product of this narrative flourish is not one of meaningful resolution, but a sense in the reader that the violence in the assertoric force of speech is directed in on itself, towards its propositional counterpart. The smashing of the skull and the follow-up act of stuffing the decree in Nicolo's mouth serve not only to silence him, but to force him to 'eat his words' and ensure the non-response of institutional authority.⁹⁵ The decree creates a vacuum of expression for Piachi, who attempts to locate himself beyond the authority of the law. Piachi's act thus posits a refusal to confine expression to the realm of language. Piachi defends his new position outside conventional linguistic authority by refusing to accept absolution and thus return to the linguistic order as a sinner seeking forgiveness.

Conclusions

The three texts discussed lend credence to the conception of Kleist put forward in this thesis as a post-enlightenment figure, whose work does not merely reflect the period of uncertainty and change during which Kleist lived, but constitutes a literary intervention in enlightenment debates worthy of critical appraisal in its own right. This chapter has brought the texts together and drawn out the connection of *Mündigkeit* as a paradigm for examining Kleist's response to enlightenment. In my reading of *Die Familie Schrockenfenstein* and *Der Findling* as thought experiments, a set up is provided that would appear to provide necessary ingredients for the cultivation of enlightenment values of tolerance, rationality and the perfectibility of man through education. The texts are thus revealed not as pessimistic or sceptical about possibilities of language to convey truth, but as part of a broader critique of the real-world application of enlightenment.

Über das Marionettentheater is a striking and instructive text, which offers a key to both Kleist's response to widely-held understandings of enlightenment and also his other works. That Kleist chooses to thematise the Romantic topos of enlightenment man as fallen, previously taken up by Rousseau and Schiller, is not in itself polemical. The latter view no possible return to a state of nature or naivety through regression, but

⁹⁴ Gailus, p. 244.

⁹⁵ Gailus, p. 252.

only through pursuit of culture or through self-reflection to achieve a kind of art consummated with nature. Kleist, by contrast, suggests that the door to paradise is locked and 'wir müssen die Reise um die Welt machen, und sehen, ob es vielleicht von hinten irgendwo wieder offen ist'. The mechanised dance of the puppets marks an attempt to regain grace through technological innovation - attained by the rationality of the *mündig* individual. Yet this process, to restore grace, must expunge the very self-consciousness by which it is activated. The essay's radical import lies in the suggestion that man's waking to consciousness and ensuing loss of grace can somehow be recovered by eliminating all traces of man in the production of the puppet's movements.

Kleist's position as neither a true Romantic nor as a convincing 'Kantian', as he is sometimes thought of in older scholarship, is perhaps evident in the irony that the crank-operated machine, of which Herr C. speaks, which controls the puppets' movements, is conceived and built by the conscious man who would seek to banish consciousness from aesthetic production. This apparent antipathy towards the Enlightenment's teleology of progress is also evident in *Die Familie Schroffenstein*, where the feud between the two families dominates the characters' interpretation of events. Although Ottokar and Agnes initially offer hope that the feud will be broken and that they will free themselves from their parents' views, any such notion of a critical awakening is a fallacy: the two simply see themselves reflected in one another, rather than truly recognise their differences. The characters' failure to perceive for themselves the nature of events and recognise the absurdity of the feud challenge the idea of an inevitable progression towards *Mündigkeit*. Their lack of success in communicating what they discover about Peter's death leads to catastrophe in the final act - a catastrophe, in part, due to Ottokar's misreading of the peril of their situation in the cave scene.

In *Der Findling*, Nicolo is not so much confined by his parents' worldview, as are Ottokar and Agnes, but stifled by their excessive generosity. Without the freedom to develop critically, Nicolo simply sees what he wishes to believe. Far from being an incubator for morally-virtuous enlightened citizens, the institution of the bourgeois family is shown to be repressive for Nicolo, while that of the law proves to be so for Piachi. Kleist thus challenges the popular enlightenment conception of the family as a place of stability and propagator of good morals as part of his testing of the assumption that an honest upbringing will iron out any innate nefarious characteristics. It would be wrong to conclude from these texts that Kleist is in some way an 'anti-enlightenment' or reac-

tionary figure; rather, Kleist seeks to highlight the underlying absurdity of its principles and assumptions held aloft as essential to man's critical liberation and questions, through his literary experiments. Thus, in *Der Findling* bourgeois education founders on the rocks of its prescriptive nature (and therefore its inadequacy to truly foster *Mündigkeit*), while the 'enlightened' Schroffenstein children are murdered by their own parents before they are able to successfully communicate their discovery.

Chapter 2

Michael Kohlhaas: The Pursuit of Absolutes

This chapter considers the rational self-determining bourgeois figure Michael Kohlhaas as a parody of popular enlightenment ideals. Kohlhaas embodies the propriety, piety, and willingness to stand up for his values espoused by proponents of bourgeois enlightenment. The tale's satire lies in the literality of Kohlhaas's interpretation of redress and the absurdity of the destruction unleashed by it. Kohlhaas's transformation from a citizen of untarnished virtue to a murderer constitutes a hypothesis for Kleist's thought experiment, which questions not only the practical application of enlightenment ideals of self-determination, but also what happens when these values are pushed to their conclusion. A sense of contingency diminishes any notion of Kohlhaas being capable of controlling his destiny: Kleist's experiment is overloaded with possible causal relations, bringing into focus the workings of the reader's own causal and moral expectations. An anachronistically Hobbesian figure in his awareness of the need for state power to be legitimate and consensual, Kohlhaas's search for justice highlights the constructed nature of the state, distinct from and imposed upon civil society.

Kohlhaas's literal understanding of justice drives his pursuit not of a symbolic redress, but the return of the very same horses in the same condition in which they were entrusted to the Junker's castellan, restored to health by the Junker himself. This understanding stands in conflict with existing legal frameworks and precedents - even though Kohlhaas's access to these is repeatedly obstructed in the tale - where justice offers a representative form of compensation to the injured party. The recalcitrant horse dealer, master of his critical faculties, pursues his own understanding of justice in defiance of the rulings of the court. Kohlhaas's guiding 'Rechtsgefühl' posits a Hobbesian ideological counterpoint to state power, and views freedom and equality as natural rights. In line with the Kantian teleology of man's emergence from his self-imposed intellectual immaturity, Kohlhaas ostensibly follows the optimistic trajectory of man striding resolutely towards a state of ever greater knowledge and moral rectitude.

Yet Kleist's texts often mark a breakdown and questioning of this teleology of progress. Given the diversity of what is understood by 'enlightenment', from the civil philosophy of Pufendorf and Thomasius to Kant's account of the transcendental

structures of cognition, any notion of enlightenment is inevitably tied to the avatars of its rival conceptions.¹ If the Enlightenment can be characterised as a time of optimism in reason's self-evident first principles - its capacity for criticism and justification of morality, religion, and state² - Kleist's rational bourgeois figure arguably represents a caricature of such popular notions, which were often closer to entreaties to common sense than to Kant's transcendental philosophy.³ Further, Kohlhaas's relative financial freedom as a trader and landowner places him in a growing class of self-reliant individuals, whose wealth was without corresponding political agency. Yet despite Kohlhaas being part of a rising bourgeois class, he is not, as might be assumed from his rebellion against the Junker, a political figure. The horse dealer abstains from offering any kind of manifesto, instead simply issuing his demands via Luther and respecting the integrity of state power. His battle is less a question of political ambition - a desire to enact change - and more a question of personal vengeance against the Junker. Kohlhaas turns to violence as a last resort having exhausted the legal channels available to him.

Indeed, any moral interpretation of the events by the reader is disrupted by the contingent forces at work in the text, which appear to both support and undermine the legitimacy of Kohlhaas's complaint. It is this element of contingency which transforms Kohlhaas from an upstanding citizen to a fearsome rebel and contrasts sharply with the story's opening idyll: 'Er besaß in einem Dorfe, das noch von ihm den Namen führt, einen Meierhof, auf welchem er sich durch sein Gewerbe ruhig ernährte; die Kinder, die ihm sein Weib schenkte, erzog er, in der Furcht Gottes, zur Arbeitsamkeit und Treue'.⁴

The narrator's description of Kohlhaas as a virtuous and peaceful burgher is paired with

¹ Ian Hunter considers the civil philosophy of Pufendorf and Thomasius as rival intellectual cultures to the metaphysical philosophies of Kant and Leibniz and contends that the former have been sidelined in favour of the latter by historians of philosophy. Hunter writes, 'Pufendorf developed a doctrine of natural law in which the exercise of political power was segregated from the sphere of life in which the pursuit of moral perfection took place. He thus sought to reconstruct moral philosophy by replacing the unified moral personality with a plurality of personae suited to the diverse 'offices' – religious and civil, private and public, ecclesiastical and political – of citizens in desecralised states.' (p. xi) Thomasius considered synthetic metaphysical reflection as 'discredited by its use in the defence of rival confessional theologies'; instead, 'mastery of specific civil sciences' should be encouraged. (p. 7) See Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

² See Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 1.

³ The notion of 'popular' or 'bourgeois' enlightenment represents not a unified progressive theory, but rather a catchall term for both writings of the *Popularphilosophen*, as well as the efforts of state officials and administrators, university professors, and pastors to broaden intellectual horizons and abolish prevailing prejudices and errors. In contrast to the enlightenment of Leibniz and Kant, this bourgeois form of enlightenment was more practically orientated, with an emphasis on modernisation over disruption of the existing social order.

⁴ *MK*, p. 63.

Kohlhaas's expectation that the rule of law will prevail, along with his own impressions of justice. His refusal to relinquish his claim is not mere stubbornness, but is driven by the integrity of his values. In his doggedness to expose injustice and see the Junker appropriately punished, Kohlhaas pushes the enlightenment ideal of the awakened burgher to caricature: Kohlhaas's actions do indeed succeed in securing redress and punishment, yet leave a path of violence and destruction in their wake.

The tale documents a bitter pursuit of justice, which departs from an interruption of the eponymous hero's usual activity of selling horses. The dispute erupts when Kohlhaas delivers the performative utterance, 'das *sind* nicht meine Pferde, gestrengter Herr! Das sind die *Pferde* nicht, die dreißig Goldgülden werth waren! Ich will meine wohlgenährten und gesunden Pferde wieder haben!'⁵ The lack of success of Kohlhaas's repeated attempts to have his complaint heard through legal channels and his wife's death, seemingly caused by the Junker's attendants, motivate Kohlhaas to take matters into his own hands. Kohlhaas, with the help of a small group of men, destroys the Junker's castle and kills his servants. Amassing greater support, Kohlhaas leads his growing mob to attack Wittenberg, where he demands that the Junker give himself up. Martin Luther intervenes to secure an amnesty for Kohlhaas - yet the Junker uses his influence to have the horse trader thrown in jail. Despite the Elector of Brandenburg's efforts to secure Kohlhaas's release, the Kaiser in Vienna intervenes at the Elector of Saxony's request. Kohlhaas is sentenced to death, but before he is executed, he is presented with his two horses, restored to full health. Now satisfied, Kohlhaas accepts his fate. Just before he is beheaded, however, Kohlhaas produces a small piece of paper containing a prophecy regarding the Elector of Saxony given to him by a gypsy woman and, to the Elector's horror, swallows it.

Responding to common interpretations of Kohlhaas as a political figure and attempts to determine the legitimacy of his actions, this chapter views the text as being riven by two competing visions of justice and redress. and examines *Michael Kohlhaas* as a satirical thought experiment in which the practical application of rational bourgeois values is pushed to its extreme conclusion. Scholarship on *Michael Kohlhaas* is both extensive and diverse. Two broad directions can be distinguished: the first revolves around the story's genre as a form of case study, and often draws parallels to Schiller's

⁵ *MK*, p. 21.

Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre. The second, larger body of work addresses various questions revolving around justice and morality in the text, including whether Kohlhaas can be considered to be a terrorist and whether his behaviour is justifiable given the circumstances.⁶ While the character of Michael Kohlhaas was famously inspired by the historical figure Hans Kohlhase, he is prefigured literarily by Schiller's Christian Wolf in *Der Verbrecher*. Bernd Hamacher views *Michael Kohlhaas* as a commentary on Schiller's tale, in which Kleist reveals the limitations of criminal psychology.⁷ Arne Höcker views the two texts' affinity instead in the emergence of the case study as a genre, mediating between the general and the individual. The narrative case study seeks to disseminate knowledge and contribute to debate by popularising a case with broader interest.⁸ Yet while the two bear comparison in terms of genre and, to a certain extent, plot, a crucial difference lies in the fact that *Der Verbrecher* pivots around Wolf's symbolic choice between shooting his nemesis Robert or the stag beside him; in *Michael Kohlhaas* this element of choice is replaced by the contingency of the unhappy events for Kohlhaas and his drive for justice.

Commentators have found in *Michael Kohlhaas* many of the essential ingredients to support widely-held views on Kleist, such the underlying violence in his texts, and the inadequacy of language to convey truth - and his Kantianism.⁹ The latter translates as an epistemological scepticism, of which the genesis is traced to Kleist's 'grüne Gläser' letter, in which Kleist appears to lament the loss of the 'thing-in-itself' - a position in fact closer to Cartesian relativism, which places the locus of certainty in the existence of the world within one's own consciousness, than to Kant's account of the transcendental structures of cognition. Despite the inconclusive evidence for a Kantian basis for the pessimism of Kleist's texts, these passages are sometimes held up as documenting a turning point in his outlook.

⁶ Examples of the former include: Bernd Hamacher, 'Geschichte und Psychologie der Moderne um 1800 (Schiller, Kleist, Goethe). "Gegensätzliche" Überlegungen zum *Verbrecher aus Infamie* und zu *Michael Kohlhaas*', *Kleist- Jahrbuch* (2006), 60–74 and Arne Höcker, 'In Citation: "A Violation of the Law of Boundaries" in Schiller and Kleist', *Germanic Review*, 89.1 (2014), 60–75. For examples of the latter, see Jeffrey Champlin, 'Reading Terrorism in Kleist: The Violence and Mandates of "Michael Kohlhaas"', *German Quarterly*, 85.4 (2012), 439–454 and Wolfgang Wittkowski, 'Is Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas a Terrorist? Luther, Prussian Law Reforms and the Accountability of Government', *Historical Reflections/ Réflexions Historiques*, 26.3 (2000), 471–86.

⁷ See Hamacher, p. 63.

⁸ See Höcker, p. 64.

⁹ See respectively Elizabeth Krimmer, 'Between Terror and Transcendence: A Reading of Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas*', *German Life and Letters*, 64.3 (2011), 405–420, Zachary Sng, 'The Poetics of the Middle in Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas*', *Germanic Review*, 85.3 (2010), 171–188, and Henry Pickford, 'Thinking with Kleist: *Michael Kohlhaas* and Moral Luck', *German Quarterly*, 86.4 (2013), 381–403.

Central to much critical work on the text is the legitimacy of the horse trader's actions and the validity of his legal position. Any attempt to conclusively determine the legitimacy of Kohlhaas's actions is fraught and scholarly interpretations have acknowledged that the ambivalence of Kohlhaas's moral position is in fact intrinsic to the story's message.¹⁰ The text is often related to contemporary political theory and law, often with reference to the historical setting of Hans Kohlhase and also to the Prussian society, from which Kleist was writing.¹¹ The novella thematises the relation between natural law, the notion that certain rights and values inhere in human nature, which, for Kohlhaas, form a kind of bourgeois constitution, and the receding reality of such ideas in his world.¹² Indeed, Klaus-Michael Bogdal points out the continuity of justice between the setting of *Michael Kohlhaas* and Kleist's contemporary Prussia: neither the penal code, based on the 'Constitutio Criminalis Carolina', nor legal practice had substantially evolved since the 16th century. Even with the dissolution of the German Reich in 1806, Napoleonic 'Code Civil' was not universally imposed - Kohlhaas's Saxony notably did not adhere to the 'Code Civil'.¹³ Such critical attempts cast light on the novella's backdrop, whose violence is viewed as a means to raise questions on the legitimacy of both Kohlhaas's and the state's actions - yet often, as Jeffrey Champlin argues, these discussions overlook the story's victims.¹⁴ Responding to Wittkowski's inquiry, 'Is Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas a Terrorist?', Champlin posits that Kleist's novella separates violence from discursive attempts to frame it within a particular causal system: political, historical and narrative schemas of representation are bypassed.¹⁵ Indeed, the horse dealer's violent campaign against the Junker von Tronka, which draws

¹⁰ See Mark-Georg Dehrmann, 'Die problematische Bestimmung des Menschen: Kleists Auseinandersetzung mit einer Denkfigur der Aufklärung im 'Aufsatz, den sichern Weg des Glücks zu finden', im *Michael Kohlhaas und Der Herrmannsschlacht*', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 81.2 (2007), 193-227; Karl-Heinz Maurer, 'Gerechtigkeit zwischen Differenz und Identität in Heinrich von Kleists *Michael Kohlhaas*', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 75.1 (2001), 123-44. For Dehrmann, at stake is not the question of whether Kohlhaas acts legally but rather of the fate of moral sense in a fragile world. Kohlhaas reacts to the disparity between his own ideas of righteousness and codified justice. Maurer observes that it is precisely the impossibility of any co-existence of the two opposing forms of justice that gives the story its momentum. See also Sng and Pickford.

¹¹ Kleist's familiarity with the Prussian Civil Code was due to his work as a civil servant. Two examples of attempts to locate *Michael Kohlhaas* within contemporary legal systems can be seen in Theodore Ziolkowski, 'Kleist's Werk im Lichte der zeitgenössischen Rechtskontroverse', *Kleist-Jahrbuch* (1987), 28-51; and Klaus-Michael Bogdal, *Heinrich von Kleist: Michael Kohlhaas* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1981).

¹² See Bogdal, p. 8.

¹³ Bogdal, p. 36.

¹⁴ See Champlin, pp. 442-43.

¹⁵ See Champlin, p. 439.

in hundreds of supporters, and whose demands for redress call attention to the inequality and corruption of the judicial system has stirred debate on whether it is appropriate to describe Kohlhaas using the modern label ‘terrorist’.¹⁶ The idea of a political rationale behind the actions of a terrorist differentiates them from other forms of criminal behaviour. Yet the notion of a ‘terrorist’, with its connotations of fanaticism and irrationality, can also be used to disconnect the actor from any causal sequence or circumstantial background, which might allow for identification with or sympathy for the figure. Freed from any traceable causal nexus, the figure in question is labelled as mad and irrational. While the terrorist's interests lie in wreaking seemingly gratuitous destruction, Kohlhaas embodies the oxymoron of the ‘good terrorist’.¹⁷ Indeed, the novella clearly documents the genesis and unfolding of his rebellion, encouraging the reader to share in the horse dealer's sorrows.

Attempts to categorise the protagonist as a ‘terrorist’ are thus neglectful of the reader's support for Kohlhaas and the story's careful documentation of grievances suffered by him. A moral advantage cannot be cleanly attributed to either complainant or defendant: the picture in *Michael Kohlhaas* is complicated by the intrusion of contingency. As Henry Pickford points out, Kohlhaas's moral status is rocked by events and circumstances beyond his control, which alternately appear to support and counter Kohlhaas's claim.¹⁸ Karl-Heinz Maurer distinguishes the two opposing forms of justice in *Michael Kohlhaas*: the law, which condemns Kohlhaas to be executed and which separates transgression and punishment, and the chthonic form of justice pursued by Kohlhaas, abstracted from his understanding of natural justice. Building on Pickford's contention that Kohlhaas's moral position is not merely of his own making and Maurer's view of competing visions of justice in the text, I view the story as a literary experiment in which the opening paragraph's implicit hypothesis that Kohlhaas's overly sharp sense of justice drives him to murder is put to the test. The unvarnished literality of Kohlhaas's interpretation of redress and the resulting chaos and destruction is a satirical rejoinder by Kleist to enlightenment assumptions that rationality and fairness will prevail, and fits, as this thesis argues in contrast to previous critics, within a broader

¹⁶ Martin, Champlin, and Wittkowski grapple with the term in their work. See Elaine Martin, ‘The Global Phenomenon of “Humanizing” Terrorism in Literature and Cinema’, *Comparative Literature and Culture*, 9.1 (2007), 232-42.

¹⁷ Martin, p. 2.

¹⁸ See Pickford, pp. 385-87.

challenging of enlightenment assumptions.

Any reading of *Michael Kohlhaas* as a satire, incorporating its attendant elements of irony and parody, must be considered with respect to its broader meaning for Kleist. Ostensibly a challenging of the characters' narrow assumptions, which swiftly lead to disaster, the satire of *Michael Kohlhaas* is bound to parodies of the historical figures of Hans Kohlhase and Martin Luther. Both are brought to life from their historical stasis: Kohlhaas, in his desire to see justice served, is apparently blind to the violence and destruction caused by his mob; Luther, while condemning Kohlhaas's actions, fails to grasp the horse trader's argument during their meeting and appears primarily motivated by a wish to preserve order.

The crisis at the heart of the story is Kohlhaas's challenging of the verbal agreement to leaving horses as collateral. The problematisation of language is a feature of Kleist's work more generally: Kleist's use of language, beyond his famous predilection for hypotaxis, has been explored in his letters and both non-fictional and fictional writings.¹⁹ These are unified by a common anxiety about the ability of language to represent, its potential for misunderstanding and a fascination with its performative functions. The import of Schiller's claim in his 'Kallias' letter of 28 February 1793 that 'Die Sache und ihr Wortausdruck sind bloß zufällig und willkürlich (wenige Fälle abgerechnet), bloß durch Übereinkunft miteinander verbunden', is later echoed by Kleist, who declares in a letter to Ulrike, that 'es giebt kein Mittel, sich Andern ganz verständlich zu machen'.²⁰ Kleist's doubts about the ability to make oneself understood through an apparently arbitrary linguistic system presages the sentiment of his 'Kant crisis' letter only two months later. Kleist's scepticism towards language is demonstrated most obviously in his 1805 essay 'Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden', which posits solving problems that cannot be overcome through meditation by discussion with others.²¹ The interlocutor's understanding of the conversation topic is largely immaterial: what matters chiefly, rather, is the protagonist's own speech - in contrast to the Socratic method, which is founded on a cooperative dialogue to encourage critical thinking. This combative form of discussion advocated by Kleist should arguably not be viewed in isolation, but drawn out in relation to the repeated thematisation of performativity in his fiction.

¹⁹ For a list of critical works in this tradition, see footnote 17 of the introduction.

²⁰ See Kleist's letter to Ulrike, 5 February 1801, pp. 489-490. See Schiller's letter to Gottfried Körner 25 January 1793 in Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, ed. By Otto Dann and Axel Gellhaus, VIII (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992), pp. 318-329 (p. 328).

²¹ Kleist, *II/9 Sonstige Prosa*, pp. 25-32.

In *Michael Kohlhaas*, the same legal codes, both invoked by Kohlhaas to seek redress and used by his adversaries to imprison and sentence him to death, are bound up in language. In the clash between the symbolic level at which justice operates and the literal amends Kohlhaas pursues, the horse dealer appears incapable of operating at the level of the former. Kohlhaas's insistence on an 'undoing' of the transgression reflects an anxiety about the loss sustained in moving from transgression to symbolic compensation and punishment. This unease about the catastrophic consequences of this loss arguably ties into a Romantic paradigm of aesthetic expression. This apprehension of loss is also apparent beyond the fictional realm in Kleist's letter to Wilhelmine, in which he explains that any attempt to paint a picture of his feelings comes with the caveat 'daß es bloße Kopie ist, welche das Original nie erreicht, nie erreichen kann'.²² The perceived inadequacy of a copy, either to represent Kleist's emotions or to make good an injury, is exaggerated to absurd proportions.

Michael Kohlhaas, merchant, family man, rational bourgeois

Kohlhaas is famously described in the novella's opening lines as 'einer der rechtschaffensten zugleich und entsetzlichsten Menschen seiner Zeit'.²³ Beyond the piety and virtue of the opening idyll where Kohlhaas is presented to the reader, the other side of the narrator's paradox is explored: Kohlhaas's actions emerge from a sense of rejection by the judicial process. Kohlhaas views himself as an outcast, one 'dem der Schutz der Gesetze versagt ist'. Those who would deny him the basic protections and assurances needed to be able to ply his trade give him 'die Keule, die mich selbst schützt, in die Hand'.²⁴ Kohlhaas's words prefigure those of Hobbes writing just over a century later than the historical figure of Hans Kohlhase, who declares, 'The obligation of subjects to the sovereign, is understood to last as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them.'²⁵ Kohlhaas's Hobbesian view of the state as failing to fulfil its duties towards him implies a social contract between state and citizen - yet, as Kant argues, such a contract has no material basis, rendering the act of rebellion absurd since the state is simply the embodiment of a general will. Kohlhaas's actions, viewed from such a perspective, can however be justified by locating the protagonist beyond

²² Kleist, *IV/1 Briefe*, 'Brief an Wilhelmine 20 August 1800', pp. 177-195 (p. 180).

²³ *MK*, p. 63.

²⁴ *MK*, pp. 151-152.

²⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 153.

the authority of an elite which fails to serve this general will. Although Kohlhaas's values appear to be roughly Lutheran in his piety and avoidance of moral debt, Lutheran orthodoxy dismisses the individual's right to resist authority. While Luther calls for better and equitable treatment from rulers for their vassals, explaining to them the nobility's 'christliches Amt und Werk', he maintains the position found in Romans 13, 1-2: 'Jedermann sei Untertan der Obrigkeit, die Gewalt über ihn hat. Denn es ist keine Obrigkeit ohne von Gott; wo aber Obrigkeit ist, die ist von Gott verordnet. Wer sich nun der Obrigkeit widersetzt, der widerstrebt Gottes Ordnung; die aber widerstreben, werden über sich ein Urteil empfangen'.²⁶ This position is echoed in contemporary thought for Kleist in Kant's social and political philosophy.

While moral frameworks are usually rooted in religious metaphysics, providing an explanatory system for the existence of God, providence and the alignment of a code of behaviour with God's will, Kant instead sought to ground moral law in the individual's own legislative powers. Kant wished to relocate the basis of morality away from a metaphysical realm to freedom itself: while metaphysical systems promulgate morality 'top-down', Kant instead saw the freedom in which morality was founded as a way to avoid the notion of human responsibility from being undermined by natural necessity. For Kant, moral law is a product of reason, independent of any characteristic of human nature, manifested as a 'categorical imperative'. Morality boils down to the choice between different courses of action, allowing two kinds of motive to be distinguished: selfish ones and rational obligations. Unlike 'hypothetical imperatives', actions which are only applicable in order to fulfil a particular desire, categorical imperatives are unbounded by conditions and are therefore universally valid.

Within such a schema, for an action to be 'wrong' the individual must have been free to act differently. Kant holds not only that all rational beings have a fundamental right to freedom, but also a duty to accept a social contract, which serves to realise and protect that freedom.²⁷ Rebellion against the state is nonsensical, as Kant characterises the state as an embodiment of what is right - that is not to say that the state is always fair or that the state determines what is right by virtue of its power - rather, the state's legitimacy derives from 'eine[m] allgemein gesetzgebenden Willen[-]', in an echo of

²⁶ See Martin Luther, 'Der Christ in der Welt', *Die Werke Martin Luthers*, ed. by Kurt Aland, VI (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967) pp. 9-51.

²⁷ Kant's discussion of the individual's obligations take place in his *Metaphysik der Sitten*, p. 320.

Rousseau's general will.²⁸ This centralising force of the state is needed to establish an understanding between citizen and state - a construct setting out moral limits to the sovereign's legislative scope. While grievances against the state may be aired using reason, no rebellion against the state can be justified - even when a new state is created by sweeping aside the old, the new state's legitimacy is undermined ethically by the means of achieving it.²⁹ Only passive resistance is possible: Kant's loophole entails citizens' obedience to their sovereign in whatever does not stand in conflict with their own inner morality. Kohlhaas's own moral sense clearly rejects the sovereign authority, granting him license to disregard calls for him to simply collect his horses and pipe down. Nevertheless, in line with Kant, Kohlhaas fails to articulate any alternative political world-view beyond his dissatisfaction with the current one.

Kohlhaas is an anachronistically modern figure in the story's sixteenth-century Saxony. Kohlhaas's sentimentalism, the idea that our moral understanding of the world is not acquired, but formed through emotional response to everyday experience, relates to enlightenment notions of self-determination. Eighteenth century philosopher Johann Joachim Spalding's work *Über die Bestimmung des Menschen* (1748), represents a key text in enlightenment thought and source of inspiration for similar works later, such as Fichte's *Bestimmung des Menschen* (1800). The narrator of Spalding's text explains that we should not act blindly, but rather to the best of our abilities: in order to do that, we must know our purpose and destiny. The narrator then considers the best maxims by which to live.³⁰ The narrator discerns drives and emotions that are independent of his own pleasure and benefit. He concludes that although an action is clever and worthwhile if to his own advantage, it is noble and good when it is for others.³¹

Such a moral development is evident in Kohlhaas, whose own moral intuition guides his response to the Junker's behaviour. Dehrmann draws comparisons with Kleist's 'Aufsatz, den sichern Weg des Glücks zu finden und ungestört – auch unter den größten Drangsalen des Lebens – ihn zu genießen' and *Die Hermannschlacht*. The essay on happiness is something of a talisman within Kleist scholarship, helping to furnish the familiar 'Kant Krise' narrative in which Kleist's optimism in man's ability to know the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 322-323.

³⁰ See Michael Printy, 'The Determination of Man: Johann Joachim Spalding and the Protestant Enlightenment', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 74.2 (2013), 189-212, (p. 192).

³¹ See Printy, pp. 192-193.

world crumbles upon his reading of Kant. The essay represents an early work, written in 1799 for his friend during his military years, August Otto Rühle von Lilienstern, and is most commonly cited for its rather trite line ‘die Tugend ist die Mutter des Glücks, und der Beste ist der Glücklichste’.³² Kleist's argument that there can be no better incentive to virtue and no more beautiful and noble path to happiness than that of virtue seems to be lifted straight from Spalding and the *Popularphilosophen*. Such an idea that virtue leads to happiness is however lampooned in *Michael Kohlhaas*, whose life as upstanding citizen is destroyed by the capriciousness of the Junker and Kohlhaas's simple desire to have him brought to justice.

The idea of self-determination, put in Kantian terms, is *Mündigkeit* - the awakening of the independent thinker. Kleist questions the nature of man's self-determination by highlighting the highly subjective quality of many values associated with enlightenment. The disparity between Kohlhaas's notion of justice and the institutionalised justice problematises the practical application of *Mündigkeit*: enlightened bourgeois Kohlhaas unleashes chaos. Kohlhaas's individual justice seeks erasure of the crime, uncoupling punishment from a symbolic order, in which transgression and penalty are separated - the tension between the two concepts of justice provides the story's impetus.³³ Yet Kohlhaas is no martyr for an alternative political worldview, but rather an everyday hero empowered by his freedom, as a landowning merchant, from immediate physical needs to pursue justice.

Moral ambiguity: The narrator's shifting presentation of Kohlhaas and the contingent

The tension between the righteousness of the rational burgher and his violent actions naturally raises the question of whether Kohlhaas's actions are justifiable given the state's failure to dispense justice. Yet the ambivalent moral status of Kohlhaas's behaviour is further confused by the narrator's inconsistent presentation of the protagonist and the intrusion of contingent events. The narrative structure and its components guide the reader's view of the protagonist's moral stance. The body language of both Kohlhaas and the Junker tacitly offers a moral commentary on the events - and one which sits uncomfortably with the shifting view of Kohlhaas presented by the narrator, which

³² Kleist, *II/9 Sonstige Prosa*, pp. 9-24 (p. 13).

³³ See Maurer, p. 124.

appears to bend to the shape of public opinion. Kohlhaas is presented at times a hero, at others, an unreasonable quarrel-seeker. Into the mix of narrative elements is thrown the intrusion of supernatural events, whose influence neither unequivocally supports nor undermines Kohlhaas. An air of wrongdoing hangs over the conflict's point of departure, the new tollgate and the castellan's demands for a travel permit: the spurious and apparently arbitrary requirement to produce such documentation, despite Kohlhaas's protest that he 'siebzehn Mal in seinem Leben, ohne einen solchen Schein, über die Gränze gezogen sey',³⁴ is in itself unremarkable given the story's historical setting of the Holy Roman Empire with its patchwork of rulers and contested borders. Rather, it is the steward's suggestion to the Junker to buy 'ein Paar Rappen [...], die er, wegen Pferdemanngels, in der Wirthschaft gebrauchen zu können glaubte',³⁵ which becomes suspect when Kohlhaas is obliged to leave the two black horses behind as a security. What initially appears to the reader an abuse of power is later confirmed as such: the two horses are emaciated and in poor health after being put to work in the Junker's fields and Herse recalls his beating by the Junker's men at the castle. As the narrator explains, 'Die Rechtssache war in der That klar. Der Umstand, daß die Pferde gesetzwidriger Weise festgehalten worden waren, warf ein entscheidendes Licht auf alles übrige; und selbst wenn man hätte annehmen wollen, daß die Pferde durch einen bloßen Zufall erkrankt worden wären, so würde die Forderung des Roßkamms, sie ihm gesund wieder zuzustellen, noch gerecht gewesen seyn.'³⁶

The narrator's claim, however, is at odds with the reality that the rest of the narrative presents. Kohlhaas duly pursues his complaint through the official channels: after waiting a year, Kohlhaas learns that his suit against the Junker has been rejected due to the intervention of the Junker's family. A second attempt with the support of the local governor also fails and so too does a third, which results in the death of his wife. As the impossibility of penetrating the old boys' network becomes clear, Kohlhaas seeks to obtain justice by his own means. When the horse dealer first hears that his complaint will not be heard from his lawyer after almost a year of waiting, he sheds a tear in what is a peripatetic moment, marking a withholding of justice via the legal channels available to him and his pivot to violence. The governor notices 'daß Kohlhaas eine Thräne auf den

³⁴ *MK*, pp. 66-67.

³⁵ *MK*, p. 69.

³⁶ *MK*, pp. 92-93.

Brief, den er bekommen und eröffnet hatte, fallen ließ', betraying his loss of faith in the judicial system.³⁷

Although the story revolves around Kohlhaas's complaint and pursuit of justice, the plot is punctuated by a number of turning points, such as the meeting with Luther, in which Kohlhaas is visibly moved by Luther's reprimand, the chaotic scenes in Dresden's town square at the sight of the emaciated horses at the heart of the dispute which has brought the state to its knees, and the Elector of Brandenburg's intervention.³⁸ Each constitutes a significant moment in the unfolding course of justice: Kohlhaas's refusal to forgive the Junker, as Luther proposes, preserves the integrity of his complaint. Kohlhaas's demands for the rehabilitation of his horses are legitimate and to cede ground would amount to an admission of culpability for the escalation of the matter. Kohlhaas's fear that the validity of his complaint will be undermined is evident earlier, 'so oft sich ein Geräusch im Hofe hören ließ' when Kohlhaas worries that his horses will be returned to him 'abgehungert und abgehärmt' and thus lend the Junker the appearance of fairness.³⁹ Later in Dresden, the sorry state of the horses awakens a 'höchst gefährliche Stimmung im Lande', as the public are scandalised that such a trivial matter, however valid Kohlhaas's grievance may be, has taken on such excessive proportions for the sake of two such wretched horses - the incident causes public opinion to further harden against the horse dealer, which holds that his claims should sooner be dismissed than satisfy 'seine[n] rasenden Starrsinn[-]'.⁴⁰

Kohlhaas's tears mark not only a moment of bitter deception, but also of an awareness of a rift between personal expectations of justice and the practical application of justice in the state of Saxony. While the jurisdiction of the legal code is inscribed linguistically, that is to say, the authority of the law derives from performative functions of language, a deficit between the law and its implementation emerges during the novella, threatening to undermine the law.⁴⁰ Although both Kohlhaas and the Junker are notionally governed by the same legal code, the Junker uses his position to evade justice and punish the horse dealer. Body language, as it does elsewhere in Kleist's work,

³⁷ *MK*, p. 96.

³⁸ See Benno von Wiese, *Die deutsche Novelle von Goethe bis Kafka: Interpretationen*, I (Düsseldorf: Bagel, 1965), pp. 53-59.

³⁹ See Von Wiese, p. 49.

⁴⁰ See Sng, pp.183-184.

furnishes a rival narrative beyond the spoken interactions in the text.⁴¹ Despite the Junker's protection from law, the Junker's blushing - something of a Kleistian trademark - betrays his culpability: challenged by Kohlhaas about the travel permit, he responds 'mit einem verlegenem Gesicht, indem er abging: ja, Kohlhaas, den Paß mußst du lösen.'⁴² It is, in fact, the castellan who demands the travel permit and the steward who encourages the Junker to buy the two horses - before complaining that Kohlhaas should leave at least them behind as a security: the Junker, despite his obvious impertinence, merely seems to go along with things. Later, under siege in Dresden by angry residents as the city burns, the Junker refuses to give himself up to Kohlhaas. Inside the house, the Junker is found falling from one fainting fit into another while two physicians try to bring him round. The Junker's fainting symbolises the infirmity of his moral position, in contrast with the familiar metaphor of standing upright, which represents not only moral rectitude, but also individual autonomy. By contrast, the Junker's actions rely on his social position and network of influential people.⁴³ Kohlhaas thus emerges as a heroic figure in relation to the cowardly Junker.

Despite such impressions, Kohlhaas's moral position is far from assured. Later, having plundered and set fire to the city of Dresden no less than three times, Kohlhaas is overwhelmed reading Luther's letter. Luther, seemingly unaware of the exact circumstances surrounding Kohlhaas's complaint, rebukes the horse trader: 'Das Schwert, wisse, das du führst, ist das Schwert des Raubes und der Mordlust, ein Rebell bist du und kein Krieger des gerechten Gottes, und dein Ziel auf Erden ist Rad und Galgen, und jenseits die Verdammnis, die über die Missetat und die Gottlosigkeit verhängt ist.'⁴⁴ Kohlhaas, who reveres Luther, is visibly moved by the letter: 'Eine dunkle Röte stieg in sein Antlitz empor; [...] wandte sich, mit ungewissen Blicken, mitten unter die Knechte zurück, als ob er etwas sagen wollte, und sagte nichts'.⁴⁵ Kohlhaas's blushing and speechlessness betrays a realisation that he has overstepped any legitimate claims to seek justice from the Junker: in his desire to seek redress from the Junker, Kohlhaas has wrought a path of destruction with little regard for those

⁴¹ For a short bibliography of works relating Kleistian body language see footnote 60 in the previous chapter.

⁴² *MK*, p. 70.

⁴³ See Schneider, p. 504.

⁴⁴ *MK*, pp. 145-46.

⁴⁵ *MK*, pp. 147-48.

caught up in the violence. Body language thus sits alongside the narrated events, in which the narrator at times is omniscient, revealing Kohlhaas's innermost thoughts and feelings, and at others, expresses wonder at what is going through his mind.⁴⁶ The narrator notes that before reaching the new tollgate, Kohlhaas 'überschlug eben, wie er den Gewinnst, den er auf den Märkten damit zu machen hoffte, anlegen wolle'.⁴⁷ He also captures Kohlhaas's indignation, where he 'schäumte vor Wuth' on learning that his complaint will not be heard - yet remains impassable in the market place, where he identifies his horses with the knacker.⁴⁸

These inconsistencies of narrative agency and presence combine with the apparent ambiguity of the narrator's own view of Kohlhaas to unsteady the reader's initial impressions of him as a man of exceptional virtue and righteousness. Zachary Sng highlights a trend in critical work on *Michael Kohlhaas* to focus on the novella's beginning and ending - perhaps unsurprising given their symmetry.⁴⁹ The subtitle, 'Aus einer alten Chronik', locates the story in a distant time, but also implies a process of retrieval and selection from archival obscurity. Correspondingly, the novella closes with the narrator's invitation to the reader to consult history to find out more about what happens to the Elector of Saxony and Kohlhaas's progeny, who grow up not in Saxony but Mecklenburg. Yet although Kleist launches the text from the secure ground of historical records, the text instead exploits fiction's freedom to generate ambiguity. The fluctuating investment of the narrator in the protagonist's thoughts and emotions attracts and repels the reader's sympathy with Kohlhaas, creating a veiling and unveiling irony in the text, implying both detachment and sympathy.⁵⁰ Indeed Kohlhaas, with the exception of his immoderate attack on the Junker's castle, is anything but 'terrible' - despite the narrator's sensationalist claim at the novella's outset that Kohlhaas was at once one of the most righteous and fearsome men of his day.

Beyond the narrator's assertions, we learn of the state of the popular mood from Luther in his letter to the Elector of Saxony, in which he points out that 'Die öffentliche Meinung [...] sey auf eine höchst gefährliche Weise, auf dieses Mannes Seite, dergestalt, daß selbst in dem dreimal von ihm eingeäscherten Wittenberg, eine Stimme

⁴⁶ See Wittkowski, p. 472.

⁴⁷ *MK*, p. 64.

⁴⁸ *MK*, p. 100.

⁴⁹ See Sng, p. 171.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

zu seinem Vortheil spreche'.⁵¹ Luther's metonymy, 'eine Stimme', posits a totality - a unanimous support for Kohlhaas.⁵² The narrator's voice, however, reflects and aligns itself with the opinions and fanaticism of the public. The narrator's initial appraisal of Kohlhaas as a man whose 'Wohltätigkeit' and 'Gerechtigkeit' is well-known to his neighbours and whose sole fault is to have carried one virtue to excess, later cools to describe Kohlhaas's actions to take justice into his own hands as an 'allzuraschen Versuchs'.⁵³ Such an estimation stands in direct contradiction to the protagonist's strenuous and exhaustive efforts to pursue justice through official channels.⁵⁴ Elsewhere, the narrator voices his judgement of Kohlhaas, quietly suggesting that Kohlhaas's burial of Lisbeth contravenes class boundaries: Kohlhaas organises a funeral, the narrator finds, 'das weniger für sie, als für eine Fürstinn, angeordnet schien', with such lavish accoutrements, the narrator enumerates, as 'ein eichener Sarg, stark mit Metall beschlagen, Kissen von Seide, mit goldnen und silbernen Troddeln, und ein Grab von acht Ellen Tiefe, mit Feldsteinen gefüttert und Kalk.'⁵⁵ Kohlhaas's actions, even in the burial of Lisbeth, are presented as those of a bourgeois with ideas above his station.

Alongside the narrator's shifting presentation of Kohlhaas, a lurking sense of contingency in the events of the novella propels the moral ambiguity in the tale. Kleist's familiar phrase 'es traf sich' is, of course, present in *Michael Kohlhaas*, where it marks not only the introduction of an unexpected circumstance, but also the intrusion of a new agency - one which bears no visible face and intervenes without warning in human affairs. The story of *Michael Kohlhaas* recounts a litany of chance events - a heaping of contingent occurrences - which drives the rest of the plot. The intrusion of the new tollgate into the horse dealer's usual activity of selling his horses in Saxony represents a tipping point for the horse dealer with the rest of the narrative given over to the resulting escalation.

As the Junker and his family close ranks and obstruct Kohlhaas's case, they disrupt the legal channels through which complaints are conveyed upwards, compromising the coherence and integrity of the legal system, on which the social and

⁵¹ *MK*, p. 160.

⁵² See Bogdal, p. 40.

⁵³ *MK*, p. 284.

⁵⁴ See Wittkowski, p. 473.

⁵⁵ *MK*, p. 115.

political structure depend. Any system of authority requires a balancing of means and ends - yet the presence of a mythical force in the text posits an agency without motive. The prophecy given to Kohlhaas by the gypsy woman is one such instrument: Kohlhaas does not use the prophecy, which the Elector of Saxony strongly desires, as a bargaining chip, but instead destroys it in a final gesture of enmity towards the Elector. The rational Kohlhaas's departing act can also be read as contempt for such superstition, given that he apparently disregards the leverage at his disposal, which he could use to attempt to lessen his sentence. The validity of the gypsy's prophecy is tested by the Elector of Brandenburg, who demands a sign to prove the truth of the fortune she will tell him. She predicts that the roebuck kept in an enclosure in the park will come towards them in the market place. To his surprise, the gypsy's prediction is realised when the roebuck comes up the street - not of its own accord as he has the animal slaughtered with the intention of destroying her credibility, but dragged up by a butcher's dog. This mythical force is perhaps most obvious in the lightning bolt which strikes just beside Kohlhaas as he is about to command the destruction of a cloister. The timing of the lightning strike appears anything but random and implies supernatural intervention to protect the cloister and its occupants. Indeed, the number of chance occurrences makes them significant. The element of contingency, embodied by the mythical forces of the gypsy's prophecy and the lightning strike, thus overloads the narrative with possible causal relations which are not fully integrated into the story, thus, weakening any sense of Kohlhaas being able to control his fate. Such events draw attention to the workings of the reader's own causal and moral expectations, which are frustrated by the story's equivocal close.

While the narrative refrains from ascribing the unexplained forces at work any definite moral stance, the ends of Kohlhaas's quest are clear, directed at securing both redress for himself and punishment for the Junker. Against the backdrop of his principled stand against the Junker, violence looms as an omnipresent reality. The violence exacted upon Kohlhaas by the state sparks his anger and drives his will to see his vision of redress implemented. In turn, this leads to a violent campaign launched by Kohlhaas, costing the lives of numerous innocents during the assault on the Junker's castle and laying waste to Wittenberg. Kohlhaas's execution at the novella's close constitutes a closing violent act intended to definitively quash and invalidate the disorder unleashed by Kohlhaas and his supporters - an action needed to repair the

state's damaged social contract with its citizens. Kohlhaas seeks 'Bestrafung des Junkers, den Gesetzen gemäß; Wiederherstellung der Pferde in den vorigen Stand; und Ersatz des Schadens, den ich sowohl, als mein bei Mühlberg gefallener Knecht Herse, durch die Gewalttat, die man an uns verübte, erlitten.'⁵⁶ Kohlhaas's desire for revenge, although at first directed towards the despised Junker, extends to the Junker's superior, the Elector of Saxony.

Yet as Elisabeth Krimmer points out, Kohlhaas later wishes to make for the Levant or the East Indies with his children and wishes simply to cut his losses: earlier, during his interview with Luther, Kohlhaas concedes that it may have been better to simply take the horses back and restore them to health in his own stables, if it were not for the fact the dispute had already cost him his wife and he did not wish her to have perished in an unrighteous quarrel.⁵⁷ The horses by now have become totemic for the binary conflict between Kohlhaas, along with his supporters, and the Junker and those who protect him. The reader should not, as Krimmer notes, seek to 'streamline the welter of contradictory information'; rather, Kohlhaas's vacillating motivation contributes to the story's message of contradiction.⁵⁸ As the story reveals, it is perfectly possible for the individual to be both an upstanding citizen and one of the most terrible men of his day. Kohlhaas's desire for amends from the Junker is not merely a claim for compensation. His demand exceeds material and political concerns to gain metaphysical significance in his call for 'restitutio in integrum'. The latter indicates not only a legal term, but also a theological concept referring to a prelapsarian state.⁵⁹ Writing a decree immediately after his wife's burial, Kohlhaas commands the Junker, '*die Rappen, die er ihm abgenommen, und auf den Feldern zu Grunde gerichtet, binnen drei Tage nach Sicht, nach Kohlhaasenbrück zu führen und in Person in seinen Ställen dick zu füttern.*'⁶⁰ The horse trader's insistence that the very same horses be returned and restored to health personally by the Junker corresponds to a very literal notion of justice, in which the transgression must not only be made good, but erased by 'undoing' the act in order to attain a prior state.

⁵⁶ *MK*, p. 153.

⁵⁷ Kohlhaas's desire to flee and regret at the loss of his wife should not be confused with a change in his values; indeed, Kohlhaas remains true to his original vision of justice.

⁵⁸ Krimmer, p. 408.

⁵⁹ Krimmer, p. 410.

⁶⁰ *MK*, pp. 116-117. Italics are my own.

The political Kohlhaas

In *Michael Kohlhaas* violence emerges as an underlying human reality, underpinning both the law as decreed by the sovereign authority, and Kohlhaas's rebellion. The message thus is that the enlightened burgher's values, when asserted with conviction, lead to a storm of destruction. Kohlhaas's own nexus of justice and punishment is framed by the themes of representation and substitution present throughout the text. Before his behaviour is chastened by Luther's letter, Kohlhaas pairs his murderous behaviour with claims that he is 'einen Statthalter Michaels, des Erzengels, der gekommen sei, an allen, die in dieser Streitsache des Junkers Partei ergreifen würden, mit Feuer und Schwert, die Arglist, in welcher die ganze Welt versunken sei, zu bestrafen.'⁶¹ Michael is mentioned in the book of Daniel, although is best known for leading God's armies against Satan in the Book of Revelation. Kleist's choice of name for his protagonist, deviating from his historical source of Hans Kohlhaase, is by no means accidental, inviting comparison between the archangel and the justice fighter. The name 'Michael' comprises the Hebrew interrogative 'mi' and 'ka-el', 'like God', meaning 'who is like God?'.⁶² Correspondence between the divine and the human is not posited, but posed as a question: in the face of a corrupt justice system, who has the authority to rule? Anxiety about the legitimacy of representation is echoed elsewhere in the text in the character of Johann Nagelschmidt, who claims to be acting in Kohlhaas's name. The ruffian gathers together the horse dealer's remaining troops and claims to be his lieutenant - a proxy. Using the cover of protecting the Elector's amnesty, Nagelschmidt and his men burn and plunder.

Kohlhaas's claims to be a divine representative intersect not only with his identification with Lutheranism, but also with Luther himself, who secures an amnesty for Kohlhaas. Despite Kohlhaas's reverence for Luther, their meeting is somewhat discordant, with Luther apparently failing to grasp Kohlhaas's side of the argument, before agreeing at the end of their meeting to grant Kohlhaas's request to receive the Eucharist - only to attach the condition that Kohlhaas forgive the Junker and collect his horses. Luther's ineffectual entreaties to Kohlhaas to forgive his enemy are arguably primarily

⁶¹ *MK*, pp. 140-141.

⁶² See Sng, p. 174.

motivated by a desire to preserve public order.⁶³ Nevertheless, Luther and Kohlhaas appear to be cut from the same cloth. There is a certain parallel between Kohlhaas's battle for justice, exposing the nepotism at the heart of the justice system and Luther's fight against the venal practice of selling indulgences. Kohlhaas also echoes the ambivalence of the historical Luther, whose translation of the bible and his view of justification as a matter of faith alone is appended with his antagonistic views towards Jews and his calls for the rebels to be crushed during the Peasants' War.

Ironically, perhaps, the figure truest to the historical Luther in the text is neither Kohlhaas nor Luther himself, but Lisbeth.⁶⁴ Luther's translation of the bible extended the practice of hermeneutics beyond the clergy - yet Kohlhaas fails to successfully interpret his wife's dying gesture, where she takes the bible out of the hand of the pastor 'und zeigte dem Kohlhaas, der an ihrem Bette saß, mit dem Zeigefinger, den Vers, "Vergieb deinen Feinden; thue wohl auch denen, die dich hassen."'".⁶⁵ Kohlhaas's immediate thought, 'so möge mir Gott nie vergeben, wie ich dem Junker vergebel!', is swiftly followed by his decision to sell the house, send his children 'in einen Wagen gepackt, über die Gränze',⁶⁶ and to gather his farm hands to launch an attack on the Tronkenburg. While Lisbeth follows the Lutheran religion 'nach dem Beispiel ihres Mannes',⁶⁷ Kohlhaas himself does not derive his sense of justice from scripture, but rather his own inner moral sense. Kohlhaas's justification for violence lies neither in a defence of divinity, under threat from the state, nor from religion itself, but rather in the sense of failure in the state's obligations towards him.

Kohlhaas's view of a tacit social contract between state and citizen being violated is evident in his claims to be viceroy of the archangel Michael, seeking to build a better order of things. Such a relation posits a kind of ethical authority beyond that of the state and indeed, Kohlhaas, in a bizarre turn, goes as far as signing his manifesto 'Gegeben auf dem Sitz unserer provisorischen Weltregierung, dem Erzschlosse zu Lützen.'⁶⁸ Despite his consideration of the state as having failed in its obligations to-

⁶³ See Seán Allan, *The Plays of Heinrich von Kleist: Ideals and Illusions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 62.

⁶⁴ See Jean Wilson, 'Luther and Kleist: Breaking New Ground', in *Literature of Luther: Receptions of the Reformer*, ed. by A. Edward Wesley and J. Christopher Edwards (Oregon: Pickwick, 2014), pp. 50-59 (p. 57).

⁶⁵ *MK*, p. 115.

⁶⁶ *MK*, p. 117.

⁶⁷ *MK*, p. 114.

⁶⁸ *MK*, p. 141.

wards him, Kohlhaas, in line with the Lutheran view of the the indebted party as being in need of forgiveness, ensures that others remain in his debt rather than the reverse.⁶⁹ Kohlhaas initially appears happy to shrug off the Junker's spurious demands for a travel permit when he gets to Dresden and discovers 'daß die Geschichte mit dem Paßschein ein Märchen sei'. Kohlhaas 'lächelte über den Witz des dürren Junkers' - it is only when he returns to the castle to collect his horses that he starts to sense that he is being unfairly treated.⁷⁰ Moreover, Kohlhaas embodies the hackneyed cliché of the honest and phlegmatic German, the 'deutsche Michel':⁷¹ as the castellan becomes increasingly impertinent and threatens to set the hounds on him, Kohlhaas, in a wickedly humorous moment, calmly contemplates the idea of throwing the man into the mud, but resists because his 'Rechtsgefühl, das einer Goldwaage glich, wankte noch'.⁷² Determined to learn the full story, Kohlhaas waits to see what his groom Herse, who was expelled from the castle for insolent behaviour, has to say.

Nevertheless, despite the aura of rationality and fairness surrounding Kohlhaas, his attack on the Junker's castle is unmitigatedly brutal. Herse shows neither restraint nor mercy as he sets upon the castellan and the steward 'mit Hieben und Stichen'.⁷³ Kohlhaas himself seizes Hans von Tronka and throws him to the floor with such force 'daß er sein Hirn an den Steinen versprützte'.⁷⁴ Meanwhile another of Kohlhaas's grooms, along with three others, gets to work looting the castle, as Herse merrily throws the bodies of the castellan, steward, and their wives and children from the windows of the keep. As the violent campaign takes on a grander scale, Kohlhaas takes the step of fixing a notice to the doorpost of the church. The gesture not only mimics Luther's famous act of nailing his *Ninety-five Theses* to the door of Wittenberg's castle church, but parodies it: Kohlhaas simply demands the surrender of the Junker and fails to advance a

⁶⁹ See Wittkowski, p. 478.

⁷⁰ *MK*, p. 73.

⁷¹ Both Dirk Grathoff and Günter Blamberger make reference to Kohlhaas as a 'deutscher Michel', albeit merely in passing. Blamberger suggests that Kohlhaas, the honest 'deutscher Michel', is transformed into a fanatic and terrorist. This assessment seems somewhat inaccurate, however, as Kohlhaas in fact remains stubborn and boneheaded until the end, if perhaps eventually aware of just how much his defiance has cost him - it is precisely this insensate contrariness which amplifies and prolongs his dispute. See Günter Blamberger, 'Nur war Nicht Aufhört, Weh zu Thun, Bleibt im Gedächtniss', *Kleist Jahrbuch*, (2011), 37-42, (p. 41); Dirk Grathoff, *Kleist: Geschichte, Politik, Sprache. Aufsätze zu Leben und Werk Heinrich von Kleists* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2000), p. 63.

⁷² *MK*, pp. 76-77.

⁷³ *MK*, p. 118.

⁷⁴ *MK*, p. 119.

manifesto for civic or military action, countering any notion we might have of him as a political figure.

The grand symbolism of his fixing of the notice is ironised by its absence of political ambition and the reprise of his mantric demands for the Junker's surrender. While Kohlhaas's growing band of supporters initially lends his cause an air of popular support, this notion is quickly dispelled by their behaviour, which forces him to hang 'ein Paar Knechte, die in der Gegend, wieder seinen Willen, geplündert hatten'.⁷⁵ Kohlhaas's failure to articulate an alternative political vision indicates not only that his followers are motivated by the opportunity to wreak havoc, but also that, for Kohlhaas, such violent displays are a means to an end: unable to obtain the justice he seeks through the courts, Kohlhaas pursues retribution himself. The horse dealer's lack of political vision should not, however, be conflated with the justification for his violent behaviour. The tensions between the Kohlhaas's behaviour and the various circumstances appearing to mitigate and legitimise it remains unresolved in the text - this ambiguity is part of Kleist's critical armoury.

Conclusions

Michael Kohlhaas presents what initially appears to be a fictional embellishment of a historical case, which conscientiously documents the causal background to Kohlhaas's uprising. What at the outset is described as a clear legal picture becomes obscured by the horse dealer's violent intervention and his claims to represent a God-given justice. Kleist presents a would-be hero of self-determination, ready to stand up for his own moral code - a *mündig* citizen. In the dark humour of Kohlhaas's iron-clad propriety and the irony that such correctness could unleash so much destruction, Kohlhaas represents a parody of the enlightenment ideal of the rational bourgeois, empowered by his own critical faculties to develop his own views on the responsibilities of the state and justice, and to call out the abuse of power of the Junker and his associates. While Kohlhaas dies with the satisfaction that justice has finally been served with his horses restored to health, his servant compensated, and the Junker sent to prison, Kleist ends the story on a characteristically ambiguous note when the Elector of Brandenburg has Kohlhaas's sons enrolled in his school for pages and dubs them knights; the narrator notes that Kohlhaas's descendants can be found - not in Saxony - but in Mecklenburg, an act of

⁷⁵ *MK*, p. 117.

apparent resignation and submission to the Saxon status quo.

The reader's shifting identification with Kohlhaas, as the narrator segues from sympathy to disapproval, is further disrupted by the strong element of contingency in the story, beginning with the unexpected impediment for the horse dealer through to the gypsy woman's apparently serendipitous visit to Kohlhaas to warn against divulging the prophecy to the Elector, posits a force beyond the rational worldview of both Kohlhaas and the law, highlighting the fragility of the codes and contracts which form the social fabric. The justice Kohlhaas seeks, a kind of levelling or return to a prior moment in time, contrasts with the existing system of symbolic redress. The conflict is talismanic for the struggles of the *mündig* citizen - someone who, to paraphrase Kant's famous introductory line of 'Was ist Aufklärung?', has the courage to use his intellect and reason independently.

Yet Kleist's novella is no glib encomium of popular enlightenment ideals; rather, Kleist experiments with the notion of a natural moral orientation and sense of justice in man to expose the incoherence of such vague concepts. While the need for these concepts to be rooted in a firm and stable ontology and cosmology is not in question, Kleist raises doubts about the correspondence between our own individual interpretations of these concepts, recognising that the ground is not firm but constantly shifting. The absurd lengths Kohlhaas goes to in order to achieve his vision of justice, at enormous personal cost, is at the heart of this deeply satirical novella. There is a brilliant irony in the absence of political ambition behind Kohlhaas's campaign - the growing mob, proclamations, and nailing of demands to the church's doorpost give all the appearances of a political movement aimed squarely at the Junker and the rotten cadre who impede the horse dealer's access to justice yet in reality aims no higher than ensuring Kohlhaas gets the compensation he seeks.

Chapter 3

The Supernatural

Considering further the notion of an emancipatory trajectory of *Mündigkeit* set out in section one, this chapter considers Kleist's *Das Bettelweib von Locarno* and Hoffmann's *Das Majorat* as exploring the epistemological frameworks which govern the rational worldview. In their depictions of apparently supernatural events, the texts point to the inadequacy of conventional understandings of space, time and causality to make sense of the world. The Kantian view of time and space as intrinsic to sense impressions and indelibly imprinted with human subjectivity is arguably substantiated by the struggles both of the characters within the tales and readers to make sense of the ghostly events. The rationalist view of the world as discoverable and open to enquiry is ultimately limited by our situated perspective, which provides only a monochrome picture of reality.

The narrative aporias opened up by the texts' strange events are mitigated by an intuitive reading process, whereby the inconsistencies and disunion within the tales are smoothed over by a causal narrative projected by the reader. The reader is thus led to view the ghostly apparitions as vengeful retribution for a character's earlier misdeeds. In contrast to the long-standing association of Kleist with Kant, this intuitive reading process of Kleist's text more closely resembles Hume's view that we understand our experiences causally through past experiences. This catalogue of experience and our moral outlook form the basis of mental habits, which facilitate our everyday judgments.¹ Unlike previous critical work on the two texts, this interpretation seeks to highlight this reading process as integral to the texts' narrative structure. Considered within this thesis's broader examination of enlightenment critique, this process also delivers a performative function of the texts, by focusing the reader's attention to the story's epistemological 'gaps' and assumes a certain discursive function representing a call to think critically - a call to *Mündigkeit*.

This chapter and the next form section two, 'Time, Space and Causality', which builds on the idea explored in the previous section of Kleist challenging confidence in the knowability of the world and the positive teleology of man's intellectual emancipation underwriting much enlightenment thought. It argues that if enlightenment, under-

¹ See David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 44-53.

stood as a process of awakening into rationality, relies upon the elaboration of critical modes of thought and discovery, it is also premised on the world being inherently knowable. Such a conventional epistemological view of the world demands a particular understanding of time, space and causality: the familiar Newtonian understanding of time and space, as linear constants which flow uniformly without relation to anything external, permeates our everyday understanding of time and space and corresponds to the numerous orientational metaphors we use to conceptualise time. Representations using rivers, roads, clocks, railway lines assume a passive relationship with time and founder on the tension between an individual's orientation in an objective world and 'the very notion of an event in an objective world'.² As Mark Currie points out, the very objectification of time in such a manner requires a subject - time is often wrongly conceived of as the river itself, but is in fact better thought of as an individual watching the river, standing at some point on the river bank.³ It is therefore more accurate to speak of epistemological frameworks, aware that these socially constructed notions of space, time and causality shape our everyday understanding of the world. There can be no monolithic truth derived from sensory impressions; rather, any account of reality reflects and is situated in relation to power relations in society. The narratological implications of this indefinite nature of truth are explored in Kleist's *Bettelweib von Locarno* and Hoffmann's *Das Majorat*. Shifting the critical focus away from moral questions surrounding the hauntings in the texts, this approach centres on the epistemology of the texts and their relation to Kleist and Hoffmann's enlightenment response.

The Green Epistemological Lenses

The texts reinforce both the Kantian notion of space and time as a priori intuitions, fundamental and inseparable from experience, and also the tendency, described by Hume as habits of the mind, of reading temporal continuity as causal relation. An epistemological picture emerges in which a subjectively grounded understanding of space and time is married to a causal understanding based on past experiences. Both texts revolve around a haunting - a ghostly event that reoccurs several times in each tale and poses a challenge to conventional (i.e. rational) notions of time, space and causality. In each case,

² Mark Currie, *The Unexpected: Narrative Temporality and the Philosophy of Surprise* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 28-29.

³ See Currie, *The Unexpected*, pp. 28-29.

this event is wrapped in two narratives - in *Das Bettelweib*, the Marquis' treatment of the beggar-woman and her death, and the subsequent hauntings; in *Das Majorat*, in which *Das Bettelweib* appears as an intertext, the haunting at the beginning and the history of the entail, a legal agreement concerning a substantial estate, at first glance hang together causally. However, I argue that this relation, in line with Hume, is an assumption made by the reader rather than a deduction from the evidence in the text and that this is an instance of the cognitive processing to make intelligible an event which lies beyond our conventional spatio-temporal and causal understanding of the world.

Literary creation is not a solitary affair, but one of interaction, passive or active, which is untroubled by conventional measures of time - or for that matter, space. The creative process is not completed once and for all by the writer's final stroke of the pen, nor by his or her death, but unfolds in its renewal in the mind of the spatially and temporally distant interlocutor. A text's power to prompt reflection derives from the reader's engagement with the questions they raise. Far from lending credence to all subjective interpretations, a finer-grained discussion of the reader's role in shaping the text acknowledges that individuals typically share a set of capabilities, traits, attitudes and values which are used to make sense of the world.

This chapter considers the aspects of the narrative which guide the reader's thought process in establishing a causal relation. Yet the reader's intuitive response to *Das Bettelweib* is also challenged by the text's irregularities. Considering not only the formal aspects of the texts' narrative structure, this chapter explores the reader's role in creating a causally coherent picture of events reflective of his or her own moral values and catalogue of past experiences. We use these heuristics to impute motives or goals behind the actions in a work of fiction, which we use to link the narrated events. My contention is that both Kleist and Hoffmann's texts represent thought experiments on the limits and processes of rational epistemology, providing the reader with a series of events which hang together in time, but which are not, upon closer consideration, causally connected.

The sense that all narratives follow a conventional trajectory was theorised by Todorov, who saw narratives passing from a state of equilibrium to disequilibrium, be-

fore reaching a final stage where equilibrium is restored, albeit on a different footing.⁴ Jerome Bruner's 'dialectic of canonicity and breach' is built on similar premises, where an implied master narrative is 'breached' - albeit often by means of a stock scenario.⁵ Yet much of Kleist and Hoffmann's narrative force consists precisely in exploding the equilibrium only for it to never be reinstated - as we have seen in *Der Findling*. Indeed, if Kleist does offer the reader a return to order, it is undermined by the artificiality and irony of the situation, as is the case of the closing tableau of familial bliss in *Die Marquise von O....* or the joyful ending of the feud in *Die Familie Schrockenstein*.

Given the tendency of Kleist and Hoffmann's tales to upend reader expectation, a more productive approach would thus be that of David Herman, whose *Story Logic* works towards an account of narrative understanding as a process of building and re-shaping mental models of the world. The activity of the story recipient, as Herman terms readers, viewers and listeners, consists of breaking down the world presented into its participants and circumstances and matching these against an inventory of narrative microdesigns - a set of principles upon which interpreters rely.⁶ The second element of this activity seeks to locate the events in relation to narrative macrodesigns, broader design principles which determine the feel of the narrative world depicted.⁷ The interest in the reader's investment in narrative production intersects with that body of scholarship in narrative studies known as 'reader response theory'. The latter does not represent a unified theory, but rather a number of approaches which seek to understand texts by considering its 'output'. In other words, the psychological effects and the text's meaning are significant only for their realisation in the reader's mind.⁸ Georges Poulet's claim that the reader delivers the text from its materiality yet becomes a prisoner of the au-

⁴ Todorov's well-known theory identifies five stages of narrative progression: equilibrium, disequilibrium, acknowledgement, repairing of the damage, and finally a move to a new state of equilibrium. See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans by Richard Howard (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 108-119.

⁵ Jerome Bruner, 'The Narrative Construction of Reality', *Critical Inquiry*, 18 (1991), 1-21 (pp. 11-13). A story 'must be about how an implicit canonical script has been breached, violated, or deviated from'. The breach of the canonical, however, may be highly conventional and influenced by narrative traditions, such as familiar narrative events 'the betrayed wife, the cuckolded husband, the fleeced innocent' etc.

⁶ See David Herman, *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative* (Lincoln, Neb.; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), p. 6-7.

⁷ See Herman, *Story Logic*, p. 7.

⁸ See Jane P. Tompkins, 'An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism', in *Reader-response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. by Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. ix-xxvi (p. ix).

thor's consciousness assigns the reader a largely passive role.⁹ Wolfgang Iser, by contrast, considers the reader as a co-creator, supplying a portion of the work which is merely implied by the author.¹⁰

The idea that the reader 'fills in the blanks' has already been considered in chapter one in relation to the audience described in *Über das Marionettentheater*, for whom the experience of the show is greater than simply the observation of the puppets' movements. Recent work in psychology by Daniel Kahneman offers some insight in this respect. The central postulate of Kahneman's hugely influential work, summarised in *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, is that human cognition can be divided into two spheres: intuitive, effortless, 'fast' thinking on the one hand, and laborious, concentrated thinking - slow thinking - on the other. Kahneman identifies a number of cognitive biases underlying this division, some of which are pertinent to an unguarded reading of Kleist's *Das Bettelweib* and Hoffmann's *Das Majorat*.¹¹

Space and time have long been linked to causality as conditions of knowledge: Aristotle held time to be relational - the measure of one physical process against another;¹² in his *Principia*, Newton posited absolute space and that time flows uniformly without relation to anything external, allowing laws of motion to be derived that are applicable to both terrestrial and celestial bodies.¹³ Amongst this diversity, however, time and space always retain their place as epistemological conditions. Life is our window into temporality: our interaction with time is conditioned by its embodied

⁹ See Georges Poulet, 'Criticism and the Experience of Interiority', in *Reader-response Criticism*, ed. by Jane P. Tompkins, pp. 41-49 (pp. 41-45).

¹⁰ See Wolfgang Iser, 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach', in *Reader-response Criticism*, ed. by Jane P. Tompkins, pp. 50-69 (51-52).

¹¹ An 'unguarded' reading, I argue, corresponds to the natural, effortless reading of the layperson, in contrast to the studied, slow reading of the literary critic. I return to this distinction in due course. See Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin, 2011), pp. 19-38.

¹² See Aristotle, 'On the Heavens', in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation, One-Volume Digital Edition*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 986-989. Aristotle's relational understanding of time views time as the measure of one physical process against another (see *Physics*, VIII). This view is weakened by the implication that no change means that time stands still. The very objectification of time as a river - or indeed, any orientational metaphor - inevitably entails a certain subjectivity. The implicit eyewitness in such metaphors underscores the logical co-dependence of subjectivity and temporality. A similar position is a key tenet of Einstein's relativity: light travels at the same speed in all frames of reference. Lightcones are used to schematically represent the path of a flash of light moving through spacetime. Within one particular observer's lightcone, the order of events is definite - yet for another, moving relative to our first observer, the order of events differs. If Einstein is right, all of the observers are correct. There is no such thing as a singular time; rather, there is a plethora of times, one for every individual frame of reference. See Stephan Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (London: Bantam, 1995), pp. 17-38.

¹³ See Isaac Newton, *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, trans. by I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 408-415 (p. 408).

‘artificial’ form in everyday life – we conflate the measurement of time with the concept of time itself. If time and space condition our perceptions and these in turn are predicated on their relation to some outer world, time and space indirectly bear upon our ontological valuations, our assessment of what is real.

Philosophical debates on time and space fall into roughly two camps: those taking a metaphysical approach, interested in the fundamental nature of time and space, and those concerned with the how they relate to knowledge. Exemplifying the former, in the famous correspondence between Leibniz and Clarke, a supporter of Newton, Clarke posits that space exists necessarily as an absolute, unmodified by bodies within it - rather than being simply the absence of matter.¹⁴ For Leibniz, by contrast, space has a reality distinct from intuition as the order of abstract relations among objects. These relations depend on the mind, i.e. they are ideal. For Leibniz, then, there can be no a priori relation of space, as it is derived from our perceptual experience of things.¹⁵

Although bodies and events are variable and changing, the relations constituting time and space must be fixed and continuous. By contrast, Kant’s approach to time and space is concerned with epistemology and is firmly in the second camp. As Eric Watkins explains, Kant is neither an ‘arch-epistemologist’, concerned solely with epistemic conditions, nor a truly descriptive metaphysician, trying on the basis of conceptual analysis to describe what the world must be like. Kant is instead interested in establishing a kind of metaphysical foundation as the necessary presupposition of fundamen-

¹⁴ See Clarke’s second reply to Leibniz in Henry Gavin Alexander (ed.), *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence: together with extracts from Newton’s ‘Principia’ and ‘Opticks’* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), pp. 20-24 (p. 22).

¹⁵ See Leibniz’s third paper in Alexander (ed.), *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*, pp. 25-30 (pp. 25-26).

tal epistemological principles.¹⁶ Within Kant's account time and space are a priori intuitions, allowing data to be ordered by relations. These forms must stand at the ready, a priori, in the mind.¹⁷ Kant later delivers the accompanying caveat that relations are not real, since 'durch bloße Verhältnisse doch nicht eine Sache an sich erkannt [wird]: also ist wohl zu urtheilen, daß, da uns durch den äußeren Sinn nichts als bloße Verhältnißvorstellungen gegeben werden, dieser auch nur das Verhältniß eines Gegenstandes auf das Subject in seiner Vorstellung enthalten könne und nicht das Innere, was dem Objecte an sich zukommt.'¹⁸ Within Kant's philosophical system human subjectivity is inseparable from the spatiotemporal and causal 'stamp' on all sensory impressions. Here Kleist's famous statement about seeing the world through 'grüne Gläser' fails to fully convey Kant's argument: Kleist equates the imposition of the green eyeglasses with a loss of the absolute - an impassable barrier between perception and things in themselves. Yet Kant would surely argue that it is the structure of the glasses which matters. Kleist, in his obsession with the thing in itself, misses the point that Kant's project aims to describe the transcendently grounded structures of cognition (specifically, the possibility of a priori synthetic judgement) - *not* to uncover the nature of the noumenal world.¹⁹ While Kleist vents his frustration at the apparent unknowability of the world in itself, he fails to grasp the value Kant locates in appearances.²⁰

¹⁶ See Eric Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 12. Kant's views on time and space are set out in the 'Transzendente Ästhetik' of his first *Kritik*: key passages include A19-22/B34 (p. 50); A26/B42 (p. 55); A51/B75 (p. 75). Here, Kant maps the science of the principles of sensibility, through which we perceive objects. Kant claims that time and space are pure a priori intuitions, through which we apprehend phenomena. That is to say, if we abstract the contents of sensibility, there remains a pure intuition we know as space. Equally, time is not conceived of empirically: it is the a priori *condition* of all phenomena - in it alone can we apprehend phenomena. Shorn of our own particular subjectivity, the idea of time vanishes as it is rooted in the perceiving subject. Particular points in time or regions in space are represented as subdivisions of an all-embracing spatial and temporal realm which only becomes representable by introducing boundaries. Positions in time and space can thus never be perceived except through causally and dynamically related objects. Idealism, broadly defined is any doctrine that holds that reality is fundamentally mental. By contrast, Kant's transcendental idealism preserves the independence and reality of objects in the world, while asserting that their properties (for example, causal and spatiotemporal properties) are such because our minds are so structured that these are the categories we impose upon experience. It should be noted that the precise nature of Kant's transcendental idealism is a subject of considerable debate in Kant scholarship. Henry Allison notably views transcendental idealism as essentially the logical consequence of Kant's claim that human knowledge is governed by universal and necessary conditions which determine what we recognise as an object; Guyer emphasises the ontological aspect of Kant's theory, maintaining that things in themselves are not in space and time - rather, spatiotemporality merely characterises objects as they *appear*. Cf., Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 9; Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 333-344.

¹⁷ See Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, p. 351.

¹⁸ Kant, *KrV*, pp. 69-70 (B67).

¹⁹ See James Phillips, *The Equivocation of Reason: Kleist Reading Kant* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. xi.

²⁰ See Phillips, pp. 3-4.

Central to understanding Kant's argument is his notion of truth. While truth may be conventionally considered to be the consonance of concepts with objects i.e. of representations with the represented, Kant posits that truth consists in the consonance of objects with our concepts - our perceptions 'agree' with universal and necessary concepts which allow us to perceive general relations in experience. That is to say, experience supplies the rules and is the source of truth.²¹ Kant thus dispels the association of appearance with illusion: appearances, instead, are an essential part of experience and thus of truth. Kleist's interpretation of Kantian philosophy is thus misguided both in its application of Kant's philosophy and also as evidence that Kleist can be considered a Kantian. That is, of course, not to suggest that Kleist was not influenced by Kant: Kleist's later writings can typically be read as a more mature response to Kant. The view described in the Kant crisis letters is more akin to scepticism, the belief that there is an unbridgeable gulf between appearance and reality.

With regard to the two texts, the notion of a ghost is a challenge both to space because it represents something immaterial, and also to time, since it is the presence of someone after they cease to physically exist. The need to explain its presence reflects a drive to establish some form of causal relation in order to make sense of it in time and space. Evident in the two texts discussed here, however, are additional levels of spatiotemporal understanding: while philosophical models of time, space and causality attempt to define the parameters of experience, our understanding is arguably more profoundly shaped by the layers of socially acquired models of time, space and causality - our 'everyday' understanding of the world. Reinhart Koselleck distinguishes between chronological time, referring to questions of dating on the basis of a unified temporal measure, and historical time, which is conjugated by human behaviour and social and political actions, along with institutions and organisations. These help define a particular understanding of time, which in turn determines the course of life and the individual's worldview.²²

While natural chronology provides an initial framework for ordering a collection of incidents into an event, events are ultimately narrated with respect to historical time - with its underlying spatial impression.²³ As readers, then, we experience the text

²¹ See Kant, *KrV*, pp. 248-249 (A 318/B 375).

²² See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: on the semantics of historical time*, trans. by Keith Tribe (Cambridge, Mass.; MIT Press, 1985), p. xxvii.

²³ See Koselleck, p. 105.

through our own repertoire of spatiotemporal and causal structures: any notion of a core narrative, unsullied by our own response, is a fallacy. The causal connections between the various elements in the two texts examined are, viewed through Hume's sceptical lens, doubtful in their legitimacy - instead, they serve to make us aware of the processes by which we make sense of events which do not readily fit into our rational worldview and as such might be viewed as an appeal to the reader for *Mündigkeit*.

Das Bettelweib von Locarno: A Tale of Projected Blame

Kleist's *Bettelweib von Locarno* begins with an old woman found begging at the gate of the castle which belongs, as we are told, to a Marquis and lies at the foot of the Italian alps. She is accommodated in one of the castle's unused rooms, where the Marquis finds her on returning to the castle from a day's hunting. Uncharitably, the Marquis orders the old woman to get up and move to a spot behind the stove. As she struggles to get up, she falls over and crawls to the stove, where she then expires. After some time, the Marquis's fortunes decline and he seeks to sell the castle. A prospective buyer, a Florentine knight, is lodged in the room where the old woman died. In the middle of the night, the man rushes from his room, terrified, claiming that the room is haunted. He describes how he heard a ghostly presence as if somebody were getting up from a bed of straw, slowly walking across the room, and falling down. The Marquis (later accompanied by his wife, a servant, and a dog - significant for its heightened senses and freedom from human cognitive structures) put the knight's claims to the test several times and experiences the same ghostly event. The Marquis, apparently maddened by the haunting, sets fire to the castle and dies in the blaze.

In considering our reading process, we can paraphrase Heraclitus by saying that we cannot read the same story twice - or, to be precise, we cannot return to a text with the same set of assumptions, expectations and judgements as we had the first time around. The very act of telling a story, told out loud or with our internal voice, is one of transformation.²⁴ The idea that stories are not simply 'consumed' passively, but structured cognitively was familiar to Barthes, who wrote 'Tout laisse à penser, en effet, que le ressort de l'activité narrative est la confusion même de la consecution et de la con-

²⁴ See David Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2009), p. 6.

séquence, ce qui vient après étant lu dans le récit comme causé par'.²⁵ Barthes's suggestion here echoes strongly Hume's understanding of causality as a mental habit, which processes consecution as causal linkages, operating beyond linguistic and semiotic constellations. Kleist, it would seem, understood that human intuition is capable of producing an image of the world greater than the sum of those impressions granted to us. *Das Bettelweib*, as with other tales by Kleist, establishes an horizon of expectation to guide such intuitive readings: the reader intuits that a causal explanation will follow the opening description of the ruin; also, that the apparently harsh treatment of the beggar woman by the Marquis will be punished; and that the noises of the 'haunting' are a repetition of previous events. Kleist thus invites the reader to infer the story's communicative goals and moral trajectory.

Hoffmann's *Das Majorat* comprises a proliferation of narrative perspectives which obscure a unified version of events of the tale. Like *Das Bettelweib*, an intuitive reading of the tale suggests that the housekeeper Daniel returns as a ghost due to his guilt or as a punishment - yet the reliability of the accounts supporting this view are riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions.

Given its popularity and appeal as a ghost story, it is not surprising that *Das Bettelweib* has attracted continued scholarly attention. At stake is the contrast between the reader's intuitive understanding of the story and more focused critical readings, which challenge the causal relation assumed between the death of the beggar-woman and the 'haunting' later in the narrative. Stefanie Marx distinguishes two different stories combined into one narrative: the idea that the old woman has returned as a ghost is an 'Erkenntnisleistung', which corresponds to the reader's own moral judgement.²⁶ This distinction is upheld in more recent scholarly interpretations, which follow the line of a disconnect between the death and haunting later on: Daniel Hempel focuses on the text's ability to evoke the uncanny and the ways in which this is achieved;²⁷ others, such as Novero, focus on the play between perception and reason and the story's paranormal

²⁵ Roland Barthes, 'Introduction à l'analyse structural des récits', *Communications*, 8 (1966), 1-27 (p. 10).

²⁶ Stefanie Marx, *Beispiele des Beispiellosten: Heinrich von Kleists Erzählungen ohne Moral* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1994), pp. 56-57.

²⁷ See Daniel Hempel, 'The Haunting Primacy of a Ghost Story: Secondary Thoughts on the Hermeneutical Challenge of Kleist's *Das Bettelweib von Locarno*', *German Quarterly*, 89 (2016), 313-327.

phenomena.²⁸ Critics such as Mary Howard and Günter Blamberger offer a further strand of criticism in seeking to exonerate the Marquis of wrongdoing by showing that his treatment of the beggar-woman is not, given the feudal relations between him and the woman, unduly harsh - nor can he be held responsible for her death, given that she slips and falls on the hard floor.²⁹ In contrast to previous critics' focus on the uncanny and sociological approaches, my reading of the text locates the story as an experiment testing the epistemological frameworks underwriting our cognitive process as part of Kleist's enlightenment critique.

After slipping over and seriously injuring herself, the old woman crosses the room with difficulty, 'unter Stöhnen und Ächzen', and dies.³⁰ During the alleged haunting, this sequence of dragging, dropping down, and dying is repeated several times. While it initially seems that time is repeating itself, each account of this phenomenon varies slightly with diegetic inconsistencies, creating tension within the narrative.³¹ Indeed, on one occasion the sound 'als ob ein Mensch sich von Stroh, das unter ihm knisterte, erhob'³² can be heard, while later it is the 'tapp! Tapp!'³³ of crutches. The apparent impossibility of the reoccurrence of past events and indeed, that the agent of these events should be a ghost (the knight affirms 'hoch und theuer [...], daß es in dem Zimmer spuke'),³⁴ clashes with the testimonial clout of having been corroborated by the knight, the Marquis and his wife, the servant, and the dog's barking. The plot of the story centres around this conflict between the evidence in favour of a ghost and the scepticism of the Marquis and his wife, who feel the need to put their fears to 'einer kaltbütigen Prüfung'.³⁵ Their cool rationalism is at odds with what is presumably a medieval setting – suggested by the Florentine knight and the closing sentence: 'und noch

²⁸ See Cecilia Novero, 'Following in the Tracks of a Dog: *The Beggarwoman of Locarno* Revisited', *German Studies Review*, 38.3 (2015), 491–508; also, Holly Yanacek, 'Investigating the Unexplained: Paranormal Belief and Perception in Kleist's *Die Heilige Cäcilie* and *Das Bettelweib von Locarno*', *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 45.2 (2012), 163–178.

²⁹ See Mary Howard, 'Chaos and Consequence in Heinrich von Kleist's *Das Bettelweib von Locarno*', in *Das schwierige neunzehnte Jahrhundert*, ed. by Jürgen Barkhoff et al. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), pp. 355–363; Günter Blamberger, *Heinrich von Kleist: Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011), p. 440.

³⁰ *DB*, pp. 9–10.

³¹ See Howard, p. 355.

³² *DB*, p. 12.

³³ *DB*, p. 14.

³⁴ *DB*, p. 10.

³⁵ *DB*, p. 12.

jetzt liegen [...] seine weißen Gebeine [des Marchese] in dem Winkel des Zimmers, von welchem er das Bettelweib von Locarno hatte aufstehen heißen'.³⁶

To be clear, the anachronistic rationalism of the Marquis and his wife amounts to a desire to test the knight's claim and, sure enough, they hear the noises that the knight described, '[ein] Geräusch, als ob es auf Stroh gelegen, im Zimmerwinkel aufgestanden, mit vernehmlichen Schritten, langsam und gebrechlich, quer über das Zimmer gegangen, hinter dem Ofen, unter Stöhnen und Ächzen, niedergesunken sei.'³⁷ Yet, as Hempel observes, the couple merely attempt to confirm the knight's assertion, rather than trying to rationalise the mysterious noises without recourse to paranormal explanations.³⁸ The dog's barking, which initially appears to offer independent proof of a ghostly presence in the room, does not truly transform the ghost's existence from dubious appearance to irrefutable fact.³⁹ In the couple's search for evidence to support their proposition, the reader participates vicariously in the experiment, listening out for the nocturnal tapping and groaning.⁴⁰ Far from offering true verification of our suspicions, the dog serves as a conduit for human fears and emotions.⁴¹

The paranormal phenomenon at the centre of *Das Bettelweib* is an experience which falls outside of our existing mechanisms of comprehension. As Yanacek explains, 'a paranormal event sometimes results from misinterpretations of normal or anomalous experiences'.⁴² The sounds have no agent visible to the human eye and no further clues to their source other than their similarity to those made by the beggar woman at the beginning of the story. Conditioned by the tale's Gothic beginning, readers thus attribute the sounds to the deceased old woman, who returns as ghost. While the sounds reproduced later in the narrative are not identical to those of her death, they share a recognisable pattern of movement and similar syntax: 'unter Stöhnen und Ächzen' becomes 'unter Geseufz und Geröchel',⁴³ while a form of the verb 'niedersinken' appears in three out of the four descriptions. One of the cognitive biases identified by Kahneman is what he terms the 'availability heuristic', which describes a tendency to 'assess the relative

³⁶ *DB*, p. 15.

³⁷ *DB*, pp. 10-11.

³⁸ See Hempel, p. 315.

³⁹ See Hempel, p. 315.

⁴⁰ See Yanacek, p. 177.

⁴¹ See Novero, p. 496.

⁴² Yanacek, p. 166.

⁴³ *DB*, pp. 10, 12.

importance of issues by the ease with which they are retrieved from memory'.⁴⁴ The beggar-woman's sequence of dragging, dropping down, and dying in the first part of the tale remains fresh in the reader's mind, enabling the reader to quickly recognise the similarity of the noises in the second part of the narrative and forge a link between the two.

The similarity of the two sets of sounds grants them a sense of the importance owing to their availability in the reader's mind. Despite these intratextual links, the reader's intuition that a ghost is behind the disturbances belies the lack of reference to a ghost in the text. Instead the noises are ascribed to an agent - 'etwas, das dem Blick unsichtbar gewesen'; later described as 'jemand, den kein Mensch mit Augen sehen kann'.⁴⁵ Kleist declines to add any flesh to these bones which might conclusively confirm or dispel this theory. Yet while the reader causally links the Marquis' behaviour towards the woman and the unexplained noises in the second part of the narrative, there is no indication in the narrative that the Marquis is at all aware that he is implicated in her death.

The ellipsis between the old woman's death and the story of the 'haunting' is key in shaping this particular intuitive reading of the tale: the marker 'Mehrere Jahre nachher'⁴⁶ elides a stretch of years, which would no doubt have contained details and events that would diminish the causal link suggested by the juxtaposition of her death and the hauntings.⁴⁷ Herman often refers to 'communicative goals', those things about which the interpreter draws inferences, within his efforts to 'develop a characterisation of the model underlying people's intuitive knowledge about stories'.⁴⁸ These goals are necessarily reflective, I argue, of the cognitive bias Kahneman calls 'framing'. Framing refers to the context in which information is presented. Kahneman uses the example of a surgeon explaining that an operation has a mortality rate of 10% compared to saying that the same operation has a survival rate of 90% to illustrate the impact of framing on emotions.⁴⁹ *Das Bettelweib* is framed in such a way that the temporal distance between the two contiguous narrative sections is smoothed over. The ruin described at the beginning of *Das Bettelweib* is not only a prolepsis providing the reader with a glimpse of the

⁴⁴ Kahneman, p. 8.

⁴⁵ *DB*, pp. 10, 14.

⁴⁶ *DB*, p. 10.

⁴⁷ See Hempel, p. 319.

⁴⁸ Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*, pp. 17, 28.

⁴⁹ See Kahneman, p. 88.

story's outcome, but establishes a mode of enquiry in which the reader is called upon to fill in the blanks. Strikingly perhaps, this *intuitive* reading is not derailed by the numerous irregularities in the tale, underscoring the power of our own assumptions and values in constructing an understanding of the events. For instance, it seems odd that the infirm old woman should be housed upstairs, on the second floor; odder still, that the castle's prospective buyer should be housed in the same room - a room described both as 'leer-stehend' and 'prächtig eingerichtet'.⁵⁰ While it could be legitimately argued that such details constitute 'Erzählersünden',⁵¹ such inconsistencies provide clues to the critical reader: Kleist's text alerts the reader to their own biases and assumptions and offers a reminder that our understanding of events is constructed by the narratives we project onto them.

The story thus comprises two key elements: first, the Marquis's harsh treatment of the old woman and second, some years later, his attempts to sell the castle, which are frustrated by the apparent hauntings. It is irresistible to read the two elements as being causally linked, the Marquis's financial difficulties and descent into madness being the grim punishment for his earlier behaviour. These two temporally distant events are linked only by the marker 'Mehrere Jahre nachher',⁵² yet the creation of a causal link over and above purely temporal succession is in fact a moral conclusion of the reader - a conditioned response to narrative, which stems from our expectation that narrative elements hang together causally and are not simply juxtaposed. The agent behind the mysterious nocturnal events is at no point credited as the beggar-woman in the text; rather, the latter assumes this position within our own nexus of crime and justice.⁵³ Despite our instinctive sympathy for the beggar-woman, she is no martyr and an unfeeling aristocrat is not to blame for her death. Her accident is not focalised through the Marquis and it is possible that he experienced her death differently. The similarity of the noise of the woman dying and that of the haunting may therefore be unknown to the Marquis, given that we do not know whether, after giving her his orders, he was present to see her fall and subsequent death.⁵⁴ Indeed, the Marquis's sole encounter with the woman is when

⁵⁰ Hempel, pp. 320-321.

⁵¹ Robert Leroy, Robert, and Eckart Pastor, 'Die Brüchigkeit als Erzählprinzip in Kleists *Bettelweib von Locarno*', *Études germaniques*, 34 (1979), 164-75 (p. 172).

⁵² *DB*, p. 10.

⁵³ See Marx, p.57.

⁵⁴ See Hempel, p. 316.

he returns from a hunt and finds the woman already installed in the castle. At no point is he explicitly made aware of the beggar-woman's fragile health and his command to the woman 'aus dem Winkel, in welchem sie lag, aufzustehen, und sich hinter den Ofen zu verfügen',⁵⁵ hides perhaps good intent: the stove would be, of course, the warmest place in the room. Moreover, her injuries are sustained from slipping on the smooth floor; that is to say, her death is accidental.⁵⁶

Further, in contrast to *Das Majorat*, *Das Bettelweib* is distinctly unspooky. First published in Kleist's daily newspaper, *Berliner Abendblätter*, alongside news items, the tale is remarkable for its lack of sensationalism. As Günter Blamberger remarks, the style of *Das Bettelweib* is closer to the police reports published in *Berliner Abendblätter* than a true ghost story.⁵⁷ The sober style of the text and lack of entertainment value is anomalous for the genre and withholds any narrative judgement - the moral judgement and thus the causal link is instead the reader's own. The tale of 'The Final Judgement' in Matthew's gospel,⁵⁸ in which those who failed to do good deeds and help others in life are punished, illustrates this idea within Christian thinking and perhaps also relates to our need, as readers, to search for meaning in death. The beggar-woman's death, stripped of such judgements, appears absurd and senseless. The protagonist of the tale, the Count, is not wracked with guilt; rather, it is far more prosaic money troubles, which force him to try and sell the castle. The episode with the old woman instead constitutes a caesura in the lives of the Marquis and his wife: the repetitive 'haunting', given its lack of escalation, is anticlimactic and resembles more closely a psychological trauma than the vengeful actions of a ghost. It thus seems that the reader's assumed causal explanation, while perhaps allowing us to attempt to position the ghost in time and space (i.e., the beggar-woman has died and then returned as a ghost because of the Marquis's coldheartedness), is undermined by other elements in the story. Beyond the presence of a ghost, *Das Majorat*, to which we will now turn, shares with *Das Bettelweib* parallels in its multi-layered narrative and the temptation for the reader to align the story's events with their own moral compass.

⁵⁵ *DB*, p. 9.

⁵⁶ See Blamberger, p. 440.

⁵⁷ See Blamberger, p. 439.

⁵⁸ Matthew 25. 40.

Narrative reliability in *Das Majorat*

Hoffmann's *Das Majorat*, like *Das Bettelweib*, presents the reader with an ostensibly Gothic tale - yet the causal sequence explaining the run up to the events and the identity of the ghost is weakened by the inconsistencies in the accounts relayed by the narrator. More convincingly Gothic than Kleist's soberly presented tale, *Das Majorat*, published in 1817 within the *Nachtstücke* collection, offers a number of connections with Kleist's tale. Not only do *Das Majorat* and *Das Bettelweib* share strong thematic similarities - hauntings, castles, madness - but also employ similar diversionary tactics, creating multiple narrative layers, which disorient and distract the reader from fixing on a central event.

While *Das Bettelweib* contains only two narrative elements, *Das Majorat*, a considerably longer text, comprises a number of foci. The text is split into four sections which operate on different temporal levels, some of which are focalised by different characters. The largest section is the first part, which starts in the manner of a conventional ghost story, before quickly giving way to the story of Theodor's awakening as an adult and his relationship with Seraphine, the Baroness. This account of Theodor's stay as a young man at the castle in R..sitten is introduced as a flashback, which is then followed by Theodor's account of his great-uncle's illness and recovery the following winter, along with the latter's decision to resign from his duties as the legal counsel of the entailer. Shortly before his death, V. (the great-uncle) relates the history of the entail and the death of Seraphine, which Theodor reports almost verbatim to the reader. In the final part of *Das Majorat*, returning from St. Petersburg, having fled the ravages of the Napoleonic wars, Theodor travels past R..sitten, where he finds the castle in ruins and in the hands of the state. Coupled with this plurality of narrative perspectives is a dizzying character constellation: while the estate changes hands several times among the R. family - not least due to continued feuds between father and son, and son and brother - the 'satellite' figures of V., Daniel, Franz, and Theodor seem anything but peripheral, emerging as actors in the plot.⁵⁹

Unlike some of Hoffmann's better known texts, critical interest in *Das Majorat* has been fairly muted. Several existing interpretations examine the literary allusions in the text: most obviously, Theodor notes in his account of the ghost that shortly before he

⁵⁹ Peter König, 'Der poetische Charakter des Rechts: *Das Majorat* von E. T. A. Hoffmann', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 31.2 (2006), 203–17 (pp. 207-208).

had indulged in numerous glasses of punch and been reading Schiller's *Geistersseher*. Yet other allusions are to be found: Gerrekens points out the similarity in the description of the ghost to Kleist's *Bettelweib von Locarno*, yet fails to develop the link further;⁶⁰ Diebitz points out the continuity of Hoffmann's text with Arnim's slightly later *Die Majoratsherren* within broader discussion of the contemporary topicality of such legal instruments, intended to preserve the wealth and status of the family line.⁶¹ By contrast, Jennings's paper focuses on the text's portrayal of the haunting as objectively existent and posits a connection between Theodor's exalted state and an increased libidinal energy, characterised among Hoffmann's characters by frenetic activity, hallucinations and delusions.⁶² The narrative structure of *Das Majorat*, too, has attracted critical interest, with Theodor narrating not only the first and last parts, but also relating his uncle's account, preceded by the caveat 'beinahe mit seinen Worten'.⁶³ Despite Theodor being the only narrator, Gerrekens finds there to be an array of narrative perspectives, which throw up enough inaccuracies and contradictions to raise questions about the uncle's professional conduct. More recently, Peter König considers the narrative structure of the text, arguing that the text offers criticism of the entail and its social consequences: at the heart of the story are the antagonistic interpretations of the intentions of the entail's founder by the servant Daniel and V.⁶⁴ Interestingly, Stefan Diebitz, in his wide-ranging analysis of *Das Majorat*, argues that the carefully staged horror of the text does not constitute its purpose; rather, the story's element of horror provides a vehicle for Hoffmann to explore his favourite themes of artistic production and expression, fate, as well as generally protest against bromidic enlightenment reductions of human activity uniquely to the field of reason. Linking these inconsistencies and perspectives to the broader critique of enlightenment identified in this thesis, I argue that the foregrounding of the supernatural distracts from the vested interests and legal concerns at play in the story.

The hauntings at the beginning of *Das Majorat* are, chronologically speaking, the appearances of the ghost believed to be that of the caretaker, Daniel. On the ghost's

⁶⁰ See Louis Gerrekens, 'Von erzählerischer Erinnerung und literarischer Anamnese: Eine Untersuchung zu E. T. A. Hoffmann: *Das Majorat*', *Etudes Germaniques*, 45.2 (1990), 152–183.

⁶¹ See Stefan Diebitz, "'Überhaupt eine gehässige Sache": E. T. A. Hoffmanns Erzählung *Das Majorat* als Dichtung der Hybris und der Niedertracht', *Mitteilungen der E.T.A. Hoffmann-Gesellschaft-Bamberg*, 32 (1986), 35–49.

⁶² See Lee B. Jennings, 'The Anatomy of Spuk in Two Tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann', *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 17.1–2 (1984), 60–78.

⁶³ *DM*, p. 246.

⁶⁴ See König, p. 212.

second apparition, V. performs an ad-lib exorcism and the haunting stops. What follows is not so much an investigation or elucidation of the event, as the reader might expect; indeed, Theodor goes on to give a lengthy account of the remainder of his stay in R..sit-ten and, in particular, of his courtship of the Baroness. Nevertheless, following the terror of his first night at the castle, Theodor is quick to search for rational explanations for the ghostly apparition. In his retrospective account, Theodor stresses the gaudiness of the room with its ‘schwerem Getäfel, [die Decke] mit fantastischer Bilderei und bunt-gemaltem, vergoldetem Schnitzwerk [verziert]’. By the flickering light of the fire and the moon ‘das wilde Gewühl blutiger Bären- und Wolfsjagden’ and ‘in Holz geschnitzte Tier- und Menschenköpfe’ are animated ‘in graulicher Wahrheit’.⁶⁵ These decorations become a powerful stimulant when coupled with the numerous glasses of strong punch drunk by the young man, along with his reading of Schiller’s *Geisterseher*, a novel fragment and early example of German Gothic fiction. Theodor’s attempt to retrospectively rationalise the event in this way exhibits a further example of Kahneman’s biases: namely, that of ‘optimism’ or ‘loss aversion’. Excessive confidence is born from a pre-disposition ‘to overestimate how much we understand about the world and to underestimate the role of chance in events. Overconfidence is fed by the illusory certainty of hindsight.’⁶⁶ Theodor’s admission, ‘daß ich viel Punsch getrunken und in Schillers Geisterseher gelesen’,⁶⁷ and later his unquestioning stance towards the ‘haunting’, give himself a certain responsibility or ownership of what happened: if Theodor either himself is to blame for his experience, or he accepts the reality of the haunting, then he gains a certain amount of control over the event. In focusing on the known element of the event and suppressing that for which there is no satisfactory explanation, Theodor is arguably overconfident in his own account.

Theodor’s attempt to rationalise events is linked to a state of mental agitation, activated by some external factor. As Lee Jennings points out, such states typically involve infatuation with an unattainable individual, anger, or alcohol and may lead to ‘an activation of inner images resulting, in extreme cases, in hallucination or delusion’.⁶⁸ Markus Muller highlights the affinity between the protagonist of *Das Majorat* and the rather more famous Nathanael in *Der Sandmann* - a similarity alluded to by earlier crit-

⁶⁵ *DM*, p. 206.

⁶⁶ Kahneman, p. 14.

⁶⁷ *DM*, p. 210.

⁶⁸ Jennings, p. 61.

ics, such as Kenneth Negus, for whom Theodor's immature character allows him to be easily led along a path leading to danger, confusion and discredit.⁶⁹ He is also naively unaware of the danger of his courtship of Seraphine and the lack of subtlety in pursuing her at the Baron's castle - a folly for which the great-uncle reprimands the young man: 'Wisse - daß dein Beginnen, so harmlos wie es scheint, die entsetzlichsten Folgen haben kann [...] Hol der Teufel deine Musik, wenn du damit nichts besseres anzufangen weißt, also empfindelnde Weiber hinauszutrompeten aus friedlicher Ruhe.'⁷⁰ Theodor's experience of the haunting and his courtship of the Baroness, Jennings argues, reflects a state of exaltation or libidinal energy, which induces an upsurge in poetic creativity. This increased flow of vivid mental images elicits, depending on the character in question, hallucinations, eloquence, delusions. Entry into such a state, where perception of a higher world is a function of libido risks contamination by carnal lust.⁷¹ The relation between the haunting and Theodor's love-object, Seraphine, is manifest in the way the narrator's passion for the Baroness becomes apparent shortly after the event.

If this combination of elements transforms Theodor's senses in such a way that he becomes more receptive to the supernatural, the rational explanation of the haunting as the product of one individual's mind is undermined.⁷² The great-uncle also experiences the haunting, where he appears at the time to be having a nightmare, and the following night interacts with the ghost. Indeed, when Theodor initially recounts his experience to his great-uncle, Theodor, far from receiving the mockery he expects, is told that the apparition is neither the product of Theodor's reading material, nor the punch, since he too saw 'den graulichen Unhold, wie er hereintrat, wie er kraftlos an die vermauerte Tür schlich, wie er in trostloser Verzweiflung an der Wand kratzte, daß das Blut unter den zerrissenen Nägeln herausquoll'.⁷³ With the great-uncle's roguish humour suspended and the confirmation that he too has witnessed the same ghostly apparition, the event takes on a dimension of objective reality - yet it is not until V.'s account of the history of the entail many years later that an explanation is offered for the haunting.

⁶⁹ See Markus Muller, 'To Die Is Not a Laughing Matter: Mimetic Desire and Sacrifice in E.T.A. Hoffmann', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 41 (2006): 108-123 (pp. 111-112); Kenneth Negus, 'The Allusions to Schiller's *Der Geisterseher* in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Das Majorat*: Meaning and Background', *German Quarterly*, 32.4 (1959), 341-55 (p. 347).

⁷⁰ *DM*, pp. 224-225.

⁷¹ See Jennings, pp. 61-63.

⁷² See Jennings, p.65.

⁷³ *DM*, pp. 210-211.

Although Theodor stresses that he had been reading Schiller's *Geisterseher* before witnessing the haunting, his description of the incident itself bears a closer resemblance to the beggar-woman in Kleist's text: 'da geht es leise und langsam mit abgemessenen Tritten quer über den Saal hin, und dazwischen seufzt und ächzt es, und in diesem Seufzen, diesem Ächzen liegt der Ausdruck des tiefsten menschlichen Leidens, des trostlosesten Jammers'.⁷⁴ Could it be that the narrator is furnishing his narrative realm by drawing from a well-known intertext? It certainly seems that Hoffmann admired *Das Bettelweib* as we hear Lothar in *Die Serapionsbrüder* praising Kleist's ability to conjure the uncanny with recourse only to an old beggar woman. Lothar explains 'daß das Grauenhafte oft mehr im Gedanken, als in der Erscheinung beruhe.' He cites Kleist's *Bettelweib von Locarno* as an example of a tale, which in itself has little horror - rather, it is 'die wunderbare Färbung des Ganzen, welche so kräftig wirkt. [...] Er durfte keinen Vampyr aus dem Grabe steigen lassen, ihm genügte ein altes Bettelweib.'⁷⁵

The portrayal of the haunting as objectively extant is unusual among Hoffmann's tales, given that testimony from Theodor - a visionary figure with many counterparts in Hoffmann's fiction - is supported by his great-uncle, an older, more experienced character, who represents a no-nonsense foil to his great-nephew. Yet, as in *Das Bettelweib*, neither attempts to offer a non-paranormal explanation for the incident. Stefan Diebitz suggests that contemporary ideas on magnetism could explain Daniel's sleepwalking. Daniel's guilty conscience is activated at night, where his dreams gain such an intensity as to wake his muscle systems, enabling him not only to walk but to perform tasks as physiologically complex as unlocking doors, lighting candles and saddling a horse.⁷⁶ While the contemporary relevance of theories of mesmerism and their interest to Hoffmann are clear, they do little to explain Daniel's appearance as a ghost, where he reproduces the same routine as he did as a sleepwalker.⁷⁷ In line with the ap-

⁷⁴ *DM*, p. 208.

⁷⁵ *Serapionsbrüder*, pp. 1118-1119.

⁷⁶ See Diebitz, p. 37.

⁷⁷ Jürgen Barkhoff explores the contemporary literary interest in mesmerism at the turn of the nineteenth century in *Magnetische Fiktionen: Literarisierung des Mesmerismus in der Romantik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995). Barkhoff's monograph builds on the earlier work of Annelise Ego, by expounding the attractiveness of the concept of magnetism for the Romantics in its physical-metaphysical dual nature. Literature, Barkhoff contends, with reference to Hoffmann and Kleist, overcomes the deficiencies of scientific discussion of animal magnetism. See also Ego's *Animalischer Magnetismus oder Aufklärung. Eine mentalitätsgeschichtliche Studie zum Konflikt um ein Heilkonzept im 18. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1991).

proach of this thesis, if we consider *Das Majorat* as a refutation of the trite conviction that the beacon of human reason could illuminate all things, then Hoffmann's representation of horror shows that reason cannot explain all actions and events and is not impervious to the supernatural.

Daniel makes two appearances as a ghostly sleepwalker in V.'s story, each time following the same ritual of approaching the bricked up doorway to the collapsed tower and scratching at the wall, before leaving the castle and leading a horse out of the stable, conversing with an invisible interlocutor, then returning the horse to its stable. These actions mirror those observed by the great-uncle on the night of Wolfgang's death, where he sees Daniel, awake this time, 'wie er die Stalltür öffnete, in den Stall hineinging, und bald darauf ein gesatteltes Pferd heraus brachte.'⁷⁸ The person to whom sleepwalker Daniel speaks is presumably Hubert, Wolfgang's brother, whom V. recognises that night. The continuity of Daniel's actions as a ghost adds to the sense of indeterminacy between the live sleepwalker and the dead ghost. The first time V. witnesses Daniel's sleepwalking he follows him and observes what he is doing; the second time, Baron Roderich too witnesses the sleepwalking caretaker, who drops dead when Roderich exclaims 'Daniel! - Daniel! - was machst du hier zu dieser Stunde!'⁷⁹ Daniel is rudely treated by Wolfgang, who believes Daniel is withholding information on the whereabouts of his father's treasures. The housekeeper plots revenge with Hubert, next in line to the estate and who admits after Wolfgang's death that he had wished for it. Daniel's sleepwalking, where he re-enacts the activities of the night of the murder, appears to represent the bursting out of repressed guilt through dreams. Nevertheless, the reader's natural assumption that Daniel is Wolfgang's murderer is somewhat dubious. While we learn of Daniel's behaviour from Theodor's rendering of V.'s account, the description of this event is unsubstantiated: Daniel is reported as saying to Hubert, who prepares to mount the horse that Daniel has saddled up and led out of the stable for him, 'Ich dachte, Freiherr Hubert, du bliebst auf dem Majorat, das dir in diesem Augenblick zugefallen, denn der stolze Majoratsherr liegt zerschmettert in der Gruft des Turms!'⁸⁰ It remains unclear how the great-uncle could have possibly heard this conversation. Further, having allegedly observed Wolfgang getting up at night to

⁷⁸ *DM*, p. 261.

⁷⁹ *DM*, pp. 277-278.

⁸⁰ *DM*, p. 282.

open the door leading to the collapsed tower and gaze longingly into the depths, where, as Daniel assured him, considerable treasures lay buried, the Baron is sent plummeting down by Daniel, who cries “‘Hinab mit dir, du räudiger Hund”, [...] mit einem kräftigen Fußstoß’.⁸¹ While the evidence appears to be stacked against Daniel, the episode is clearly embellished with a certain amount of creative license, given that V. was not present yet knows Daniel’s words to the unfortunate Wolfgang - an inconsistency redolent of *Das Bettelweib*.

The questionable reliability of the great-uncle’s account is hardly mitigated by his professional conduct, either. While we learn of Wolfgang’s secret marriage with a Swiss woman beneath his social class from the opening of Hubert’s will, the great-uncle is made aware of the union before Wolfgang’s death by the latter’s angry outburst: ‘nimmermehr werde ich’s zugeben, daß Hubert auch nur eine Minute in meinem Hause verweile, sobald ich mein Weib hergebracht!’.⁸² The great-uncle thus knew straight away that Wolfgang ‘sich ohne Wissen des Vaters schon verheiratet hatte, und daß in dieser Heirat auch der Grund des Bruderzwistes liegen mußte.’⁸³ A secret marriage gives rise to the possibility of children and therefore to a possible heir - yet knowing this, the great-uncle confirms Hubert as holder of the entail after Wolfgang’s death.⁸⁴ Later, after the death of Hubert, the great-uncle introduces Roderich as the true heir, much to the chagrin of the younger Hubert - yet the legal counsel’s judgement appears to be based solely on Hubert’s will.⁸⁵ The reader’s trust in V.’s account falters not only on the suspicion of negligence in the great-uncle’s work, but also on the numerous irregularities in the text. He claims that Daniel tries to prevent himself from sleepwalking by fitting a bolt to his door - yet a bolt fitted to the *inside* of the door would surely do little to prevent the sleepwalker from leaving the room. Further, on arriving in R..sitten with his great nephew, V. is informed by Franz that his usual room is unavailable as ‘die schwere, getäfelte Decke des Gerichtssaales mit gewaltigem Krachen eingestürzt [ist]’.⁸⁶ Shortly before, the great-uncle describes ‘die Wohnung, die er ein für allemal gewählt, da sie warm, bequem und so abgelegen sei [...] dicht neben dem großen

⁸¹ *DM*, p. 252.

⁸² *DM*, pp.258-259.

⁸³ *DM*, p. 259.

⁸⁴ See Gerrekens, p. 158.

⁸⁵ See Gerrekens, p. 159.

⁸⁶ *DM*, p.204.

Gerichtssaal im Seitenflügel [...] da wäre ihm jedesmal seine Residenz bereitet.’⁸⁷ This does not tally with his account of events later in the story, where he states, ‘V. wohnte in einem etwas abgelegenen Zimmer, dessen Fenster nach dem Schloßhofe herausgingen.’⁸⁸

These inconsistencies draw attention to the story’s unusual presentation: each of the four sections refers to a different point in time. The first section, narrated in the first person by Theodor, depicts the events of a stay in R..sitten in the autumn of 179- with his great-uncle; the second, narrated in the same way, depicts the great-uncle’s illness and recovery over the winter of that year and into the summer of the next. The third section is the great-uncle’s account of events at R..sitten from 1760 to 179-; and finally, the last section of Theodor’s chance return to R..sitten on his way back from war (presumably a reference to the Napoleonic Wars). While the overall trajectory of the novella is towards uncovering the identity and motivation of the ghost at the beginning, relatively little is made of the intrusion of the supernatural into the rational world. Correspondingly, a further bias identified by Kahneman is ‘substitution’, a tendency for the brain to exchange a challenging question for a simpler one. This reflects Kahneman’s view that human thought processes are fundamentally lazy and seek to minimise ‘slow’ thinking.

In *Das Majorat*, Theodor’s focus as a narrator skirts around the thorny task of considering the possibility of a ghost and the reality of his experience, favouring instead an account of the story behind the ‘haunting’ and his romance with Seraphine. It is striking that, beyond Theodor’s initial excuse that he had drunk too much punch and been reading a ghost story - seemingly to forestall the hearty mocking his great uncle would be sure to mete out, no further questions are raised about the reality of what he witnesses and the descriptions in his great uncle’s account. Theodor veers from the narrative expectations he generates in the reader at the beginning of the story: Theodor describes Roderich riding along the beach, where ‘man wollte aus der Ferne bemerkt haben, wie er in die Wellen hineinsprach und dem Brausen und Zischen der Brandung zuhorchte, als vernehme er die antwortende Stimme des Meergeistes.’⁸⁹ Shortly after, focalising Roderich’s innermost feelings, he explains ‘Die leiseste Erinnerung an seinen dortigen Aufenthalt erfüllte ihn mit Entsetzen, aber alles sein Leben Verstörende, was

⁸⁷ *DM*, pp. 202-203.

⁸⁸ *DM*, p. 260.

⁸⁹ *DM*, pp. 199-200.

ihm dort geschehen, schrieb er lediglich der Schuld der Vorfahren zu, die die Ahnenburg böslich verließen.’⁹⁰ The reader is thus led to expect that what follows will explain Roderich’s imputed supernatural powers and the guilt of his forefathers who wickedly left their ancestral home.

The presence of the supernatural is to some extent explained in relation to V’s history of the entail and goes beyond the hauntings. Each of the successive Majoratsherren undergoes changes in appearance and character as they take over the estate: V. talks ‘von dem rauhen, wildem Wesen’ of Roderich, the founding father,⁹¹ while Wolfgang, filled with greed, cannot tear himself away from the collapsed tower, where he later falls to his death. Hubert, despite his jealousy of Wolfgang, is devastated by his death and claims he can never again be happy. Similarly, Roderich, Wolfgang’s son from his secret marriage to a Genevan noblewoman, is excused by his wife, Seraphine: ‘O wie muß Ihnen der Baron so stürmisch, so rauh vorkommen [...] nur während des Aufenthalts in diesen finstern unheimlichen Mauern, nur während des wilden Jagens in den öden Föhrenwäldern ändert er sein ganzes Wesen’.⁹² This change has come about, as the great-uncle warns, ‘erst seit der Zeit [...], als er Majoratsherr wurde, vorher war er ein sanfter, bescheidener Jüngling.’⁹³ These changes apparent in each of the successive holders of the entail suggest the possibility of some dark force. So too does the troubled mental state of the Baroness, which is brought on by the stay at the forbidding castle. Seraphine’s ‘Nervenzusammenfall’ marks the weakening of her defences against the encompassing melancholy of R..sitten, brought into abeyance by Theodor’s musical ‘Zauberkreis’.⁹⁴ Roderich, known to have furnished a room with telescopes and other astronomical equipment, divines a cosmic order for his descendants - any deviation from this, such as Wolfgang’s secret marriage to Julie, are grave injuries to this order. In founding the entail, the Baron attempts to translate this constellation into the everyday world by inscribing his descendants’ destiny in a legal order. Thus the fate of Wolfgang (and his line) emerges as an act of vengeance carried out by the loyal servant, Daniel, from Roderich, who serves as a mediator of a higher order. While the appearance of the ghost posits an event beyond conventional spatiotemporal and causal understanding, the

⁹⁰ *DM*, p. 200.

⁹¹ *DM*, p. 202.

⁹² *DM*, p. 230.

⁹³ *DM*, p. 214.

⁹⁴ *DM*, pp. 238, 240.

notion of a ghost is not completely unfamiliar to the reader. Indeed, the ‘paranormal’ itself represents a paradigm of causal explanation - albeit hardly a satisfactory one - for precisely such events do not comfortably align with our everyday understanding of the world. Viewing the event as paranormal marks the abdication of our rational enquiries into the mysterious event.

Distracting the reader from the event itself, the play of higher forces is also thematised in the story’s focus on the genesis of the entail. That the legal institution, as we learn, has the star-gazer Roderich as its founder, is not without importance: stars are conventionally associated with fate and the incalculable. As Diebitz argues, Hoffmann’s tale reveals a paradox of how the supposedly rational activity of Roderich’s astronomy, when overlaid with the legal apparatus of the entail, has the power to divert its beneficiaries away from reason.⁹⁵ Indeed, Roderich’s house soon comes to an end when the last holder of the entail, Roderich, loses his wife Seraphine and leaves no heir. The family’s destruction is not brought on by supernatural forces, but is precipitated by the human emotions unleashed by the legal contract. If Roderich’s founding of the entail has some kind of cosmic inspiration, any hopes of regaining such visions are dashed by the collapse of the astronomy tower and death of Roderich. In the final scene of *Das Majorat*, returning from war in Russia many years later, Theodor sees the the castle in R..sitten with the tower now rebuilt as a lighthouse. Theodor is at first confused, believing to see ‘einen großen funkelnden Stern’, moving closer, ‘gewahrte ich wohl an der roten flackernden Flamme, daß das, was ich für einen Stern gehalten, ein starkes Feuer sein müsse’.⁹⁶ Theodor initially mistakes the lighthouse for a star: the source of illumination is not celestial, but man-made. The novella’s closing scene thus offers an allegory for the entail itself - the latter has the appearance of a celestial origins, yet the legal structure it inspires is made by man - and proves to be a source of misfortune.

The misery unleashed by this legal structure constitutes a social-critical dimension of Hoffmann’s text, shared with Achim von Arnim’s *Die Majoratsherren*, published slightly later in 1820. Arnim’s text revolves around the injustice of a girl swapped at birth by the previous holder of the entail with the son of a woman of the court in order to avoid passing the estate to an unfavored cousin. With echoes of the great-uncle’s history of the entail in *Das Majorat*, the narrator exclaims ‘Überhaupt schien das Ma-

⁹⁵ See Diebitz, p. 37.

⁹⁶ *DM*, p. 283.

jorat wenig Segen zu bringen, denn die reichen Besitzer waren selten ihres Reichthums froh geworden, während die Nichtbesitzer mit Neid zu ihnen aufblickten.⁹⁷

The contrast here between *Das Majorat* and *Das Bettelweib* becomes clear as one of haunting as punishment, as we see in Daniel's ghastly sleepwalking - both when he is alive and later as a ghost - and of haunting to punish, as seen in the apparent haunting of the Marquis. Ghosts, then, come in two varieties: unsaved sinners, unable to expiate their terrible crimes, and vengeful victims of such crimes.⁹⁸ In both cases, ghosts are hybrid creatures, operating between this world and another. What connects the two, however, is the reader's assumption not only that there is a causal connection between the two events of the narrative, but also that these are the work of an agent, who can be identified and whose reasons comprehended. This reflects a wider need for the reader, and indeed certain characters in *Das Majorat* to construct narratives, which are aligned to our own moral trajectory, in order to make sense of the world - even if the evidence of the connection between events is uncertain.

Tzvetan Todorov uses the term 'fantastic' to describe the liminal state experienced by the reader when faced with events which cannot be reconciled with the laws of everyday reality.⁹⁹ The witness to the event must either accept that the event is in fact an illusion - in which case the laws of reality remain unchallenged, or allow that the event really did take place and that our knowledge of the nature of reality is inadequate.¹⁰⁰ This hesitation between a natural and supernatural explanation of events is an essential component of the reading process of the 'fantastic'. The reader occupies a third space between an allegorical mode of reading, in which the reader knows that the events or characters are not to be taken literally, and poetic interpretation, in which the pure semantic contribution of each sentence is weighed.¹⁰¹ Both forms of writing generate particular expectations in the reader which dissuade us from looking for the fantastic - instead, the fantastic is to be found precisely at the level of everyday reality.¹⁰² The fantastic, in freezing of the reader's ability to determine the reality of events, challenges intuitive modes of thought - the causal picture built on temporal sequence and the heurist-

⁹⁷ Archim von Arnim, *Erzählungen* (Stuttgart, Reclam: 1991), p. 212.

⁹⁸ See Blamberger, p. 439.

⁹⁹ See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975).

¹⁰⁰ See Todorov, p. 25.

¹⁰¹ See Todorov, p. 32.

¹⁰² See Todorov, pp. 58-74.

ics used to make fast judgements about the world. Such a picture is at once revealed to be inadequate and yet also alluring in its capacity to obviate revision of our understanding of reality.

The hauntings themselves are epistemological fault lines calling at once upon the familiar concept of a ‘ghost’ and the alien experience of encountering its physical realisation. In line with Todorov, the notion of a ghost posits an incompatibility with rational modes of thought: a ghost is both a physical presence, capable of producing audible, visual or kinaesthetic effects perceptible to humans, and yet also marks a continuation of agency and spatial presence in conflict with the everyday understanding that these qualities cease upon death. The reality of this presence in *Das Bettelweib* is verified by the experiment conducted by the Marquis, where the ghostly presence is witnessed not only by the Marquis, but also his wife, a trusty servant and a dog. The overall suggestion created in both texts is one of an unfathomable power, whose avatar, the ghost, seems to undermine our rational assumption that no such things exist. Theodor claims that he is gripped ‘von einer unbekanntten Macht’ and had strayed close to the edge of the precipice of madness.¹⁰³ The great-uncle, as a prelude to his history of the entail, explains that with age comes a certain second sight, ‘daß [erst] im Hellsehen des Alters sich deutlicher das Walten der unerforschlichen Macht zeigt.’¹⁰⁴ For Kenneth Negus, the ‘Geisterwelt’ is primarily a threat to youth and one whose power diminishes with age.¹⁰⁵ It certainly appears that Theodor, with his naive courtship of the Baroness and drunken behaviour, lacks V.’s maturity of thought; unlike his great-uncle, however, Theodor is not already initiated in the story of the entail at the time of the haunting at the beginning of the story - this account of the entail’s history in fact provides a framework of understanding for the haunting at the beginning of the story. V.’s claim that age accords a clearer perspective into the workings of the unfathomable is thus weakened by the fact that he already knew the story behind the ghostly apparitions at the beginning of the novella.

¹⁰³ *DM*, p. 210.

¹⁰⁴ *DM*, p. 246.

¹⁰⁵ Negus, p. 350.

Conclusions

Returning to Kant's claim that what we receive through outer sense tells us nothing of the true nature of the world - simply knowledge of the *relation* of the object to the perceiving subject, we can draw parallels with the reader's role in narrative production. The reader's narrative awareness is inexorably situated in relation to the reader himself. In both stories, a spatiotemporal irregularity is explained away and incorporated into the reader's existing experiential framework, which projects a causal 'gloss' over the events of the narrative. An intuitive reading of the texts is aligned to the reader's habits of thought and relies on established precedents of time, space and causality. These mental habits streamline the cognitive process, allowing the mind to make fast and effortless judgements and assumptions about the text. Within the two thought experiments, the exposure to the fantastic thus has ramifications for the reader: in testing the limits of rational framework in the fictional world presented, these experiments force the reader to question their own assumptions. Both Hoffmann and Kleist leave sufficient clues for the reader to become self-aware: our assumption that the Marquis is responsible for the old woman's death is challenged by the fact that she fails to accuse or even engage the Marquis, alive or as a ghost in *Das Bettelweib*; Daniel's culpability as Wolfgang's murderer would be complete were it not for the questionable trustworthiness of V.'s account.

Narratives are not merely unproblematic mediations of occurrences across time and space, but rather are structured by a process of actualisation by the reader. This process lends events a veneer of present-time relevance, an illusion of indeterminacy – an impression that events have not yet run their course and in some way may still be influenced, which is a necessary element for aesthetic response. As readers, we seek to reconstruct events around a central telos, yet experience a discontinuity between moral and natural orders - a disruption of the space-time coordinates which we employ to make sense of experience. The texts raise awareness of the mechanisms of epistemology in the reader and serve as a warning not only against jumping to facile conclusions, but also that we are unable to fully free ourselves from our acquired perspectives.

Chapter 4

Metaphysics and Materiality

The preceding chapter considered the supernatural events of *Das Bettelweib von Locarno* and *Das Majorat* as examples of conventional understandings of time, space and causality being flouted. A causal picture of the events is completed by an intuitive reading process - a process disrupted by elements in the texts which appear to challenge such causal narratives. The reader is thus invited to reflect critically on his or her immediate intuitive response to certain elements of the story. This chapter explores *Die heilige Cäcilie oder die Gewalt der Musik* and *Die Elixiere des Teufels* as thought experiments. The former examines not only the inadequacy of rational epistemological frameworks, but reveals the operation through which a narrative becomes established as truth. This operation is also present in *Die Elixiere*, which posits a monistic conception of being alongside rival religious narratives.

This chapter builds on the previous chapter's consideration of the intersection of epistemological frameworks, causal narratives and reading practices. Like *Das Bettelweib* and *Das Majorat*, the two texts studied in this chapter, Hoffmann's *Die Elixiere des Teufels* and Kleist's *Die heilige Cäcilie*, revolve around extraordinary events. Central to this discussion are the overtly religious narratives which take precedence over co-existing alternative narratives: Medardus' arduous path to redemption from the grave sin of drinking the elixirs entrusted to him through to his rehabilitation with his order is undercut by the account of the monk's family history, which offers a genealogical explanation for his depraved behaviour.

Similarly, the Catholic line on the mysterious events in *Die heilige Cäcilie* is that it is by divine intervention that the convent is saved from destruction and the iconoclasts suddenly convert. Yet this explanation is questioned in the very title of the novella, with the second half, 'oder die Gewalt der Musik', proposing an alternative explanation. At stake, I argue, is not so much whether these events, considered within the parameters of a fictional text, should be considered credible or not, but rather the process by which a particular view of them attains legitimacy. In *Die Elixiere*, the multiple identities of Medardus do not represent mere projections of the monk's imagination, but are materially real: the play of divine and demonic agencies in the story takes place in a single

plane of reality. The materiality of the *doppelgänger* figures corresponds to a theme of transformation shared with *Die heilige Cäcilie*, where the four brothers are transformed during their attack taking place on Corpus Christi. In their ambiguity and layering of narratives, the texts not only invite the reader's critical reflection as I have argued in the previous chapter, but also explore an enduring human appetite for mysticism, manifest in the structural precedence granted to the Church's version of events in both texts over more rationalistic interpretations.

Religious Metaphysics and the Island of Truth

In both stories, the Catholic church plays a central role not only as a setting for the abundance of narrative layers in both tales, but also an agent which seeks to dominate these other layers. The term 'Metaphysics' describes systems of speculative thought. In both texts, religious narratives 'elevate' the mysterious, otherworldly events into a religious system. The mechanism through which this process operates comprises the establishment and maintenance of a narrative aligning the events with religious doctrine. Yet this narrative is undermined, not only by similar inconsistencies to those discussed in the previous chapter, but also by the changing reality presented. The very idea of a metaphysical realm beyond the physical world presupposes defined notions of selfhood and materiality, which are challenged by the fluid materiality of *Die Elixiere's* protagonist.

Michael Printy seeks to highlight the secular bias in discussions of the Enlightenment, in which Western modernity emerges as the repudiation of Catholicism, typically deemed to be antithetical to rationality.¹ This narrative privileges Prussia's power within the Holy Roman Empire: Prussia wielded not only a considerable military might but also soft power. Prussia's status as a cultural superpower in literature and philosophy is evidenced by the German canon today. The Enlightenment served as an agent for the transformation of Catholicism in Germany, more so, perhaps, than in other European nations given that Christianity, despite its competing confessions, was shared across a politically fractured society. The proliferation of vernacular literatures in the eighteenth century, along with the nascent idea of the nation state as a vessel for political and social aspirations, created space for Catholics to re-evaluate what it is to be both Catholic and

¹ See Michael Printy, *Enlightenment and the Creation of German Catholicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1-24.

German. German Catholicism re-modelled itself in the face of the Enlightenment, rejecting many practices and attitudes of its Baroque form.

Kleist's ambivalent relationship with Catholicism is clear in his letters, where he exclaims his wonder at Würzburg, which 'wimmelt von Heiligen, Aposteln u. Engeln, u. wenn man durch die Straßen geht, so glaubt man, man wandle durch den Himmel der Christen', only to complain that this illusion is shattered as 'Heere von Pfaffen u. Mönchen, buntscheckig montirt, wie die Reichstruppen, laufen uns unaufhörlich entgegen u. erinnern uns an die gemeinste Erde'.² Writing from Leipzig the following May to Wilhelmine, he famously exclaims, 'Ach, nur einen Tropfen Vergessenheit, und mit Wollust würde ich katholisch werden'. In his letter, Kleist declares that 'Nirgends fand ich mich aber tiefer in meinem Innersten gerührt, als in der Katholischen Kirche, wo die größte, erhabenste Musik noch zu den andern Künsten tritt, das Herz gewaltsam zu bewegen. Ach, Wilhelmine, unser Gottesdienst ist keiner. Er spricht nur zu dem kalten Verstande, aber zu allen Sinnen ein katholisches Fest.'³ Kleist's praise corresponds to a certain allure of Catholicism's aesthetic appeals to the senses in contrast to Prussia's austere Protestantism and cult of reason.

Hoffmann's text, *Die Elixiere*, too reflects a certain Prussian fascination with Catholicism, in particular, with the notion of Catholic mysticism as a tonic for unyielding rationalism. Hoffmann's treatment of Catholicism is neither wholly reverential, nor uncritical: the novel's scenes in Rome portraying the Vatican as a den of iniquity and the Pope as something of a fraud correspond to well-established images of the Catholic church. Nevertheless, those rare religious figures worthy of the narrator's esteem, namely Prior Leonardus and the monk Cyrillus, appear not to strictly adhere to Church dogma, but instead advocate a freer spirituality, as shown by the relics at the heart of the novel.

The ambiguity provided by such figures, and that of the merchant in *Die heilige Cäcilie*, feeds into a broader contrast between competing accounts within the novel, offering religious or pseudo-rationalistic explanations. In both texts, although multiple narrative layers co-exist, it is the Church's account which takes structural precedence. Despite the contradictions in the different accounts of the brothers' conversion in Kleist's tale, the Catholic church gains control over the mysterious event, through the

² See Kleist's letter from 11 September 1800, *IV/1 Briefe*, pp. 274-281 (p. 274).

³ Kleist's letter to Wilhelmine from 21 May 1801, *IV/2 Briefe*, pp. 15-25 (p. 21).

narrator's editing of the merchant's story, coupled with the Archbishop of Trier's confirmation that 'die heilige Cäcilie selbst dieses zu gleicher Zeit schreckliche und herrliche Wunder vollbracht habe' and the papal letter.⁴ The Church's ownership of the event is finally consolidated with the conversion to Catholicism of the mother, a Protestant seeking to discover the fate of her sons.

In *Die Elixiere*, Medardus narrates his life story, having returned to his cloister, as an act of penitence. As with Kleist's tale, the close of the novel is marked heavily by Catholicism's influence: his death is relayed in a postscript by Pater Spiridon, who offers a celestial image of the monk's passing accompanied by 'liebliche Glockenklänge' and 'feine[m] Rosenduft'.⁵ The putative bilocation of Schwester Antonia in *Die heilige Cäcilie* and the sudden conversion of the iconoclasts are labelled as a miracle by the Church, while the suggestion that the monk's depraved actions can be put down to the uncorking of the reliquary's elixirs is maintained in Hoffmann's story. The Catholic church thus appears to straddle the vanishing point of a transcendent, divine realm and the material world in which its doctrine is disseminated, capable of lifting events from the physical world and elevating them as part of a divine scheme. Yet despite the gloss of the religious narrative, as this chapter explores, both texts leave enough clues to raise doubts in the reader's mind. The Church constitutes, then, a metaphysical order, with a physical presence and power to influence the material world.

Metaphysics, while generally thought of as dealing with principles beyond the physical world, can equally be considered as a practice creating and maintaining speculative structures of thought. Metaphysics, in both religious doctrine and philosophical systems, postulates a transcendent state of eternal perfection in contrast to the earthly physical sphere of man. The very possibility of the former and the emphasis placed upon it devalues the latter. In a rare example of metaphor in his work, Kant uses the example of the building of the tower of Babel to explain the difference between transcendental and empirical realms: if we consider knowledge as a building, for which, in the 'Transzendente Elementarlehre' in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, we might well have wished to build a tower stretching to the heavens, but the supply of materials suffices only to build a house. The house in Kant's metaphor is 'geräumig und hoch genug' for our purposes on the level of experience. The bold undertaking of building a tower is

⁴ *DHC*, p. 103.

⁵ *DHC*, p. 350.

condemned to failure also by the confusion of languages, ‘welche die Arbeiter über den Plan unvermeidlich entzweien, und sie in alle Welt zerstreuen mußte, um sich, ein jeder nach seinem Entwurfe, besonders anzubauen.’⁶ Kant’s proposal is not to foolishly attempt to build a tower, but a modest dwelling that rests on secure foundations. The occupier of this house is the human subject. While philosophy as a discipline had previously concerned itself with uncovering some order, in which man was a part, Kant saw man as foundational to this very order.⁷ Kant consolidates his image with another, where he describes the difference between phenomena or objects of our immediate awareness and noumena, ‘things-in-themselves’ or that which is inaccessible to experience, with the metaphor of an island: Kant has helped us travel through the land of pure understanding, surveying its entirety, and assigning everything to its correct place.

‘Dieses Land aber ist eine Insel, und durch die Natur selbst in unveränderliche Grenzen eingeschlossen. Es ist das Land der Wahrheit (ein reizender Name), umgeben von einem weiten und stürmischen Ozeane, dem eigentlichen Sitz des Scheins, wo manche Nebelbank, und manches bald wegschmelzende Eis neue Länder lügt, und in dem es den auf Entdeckungen herumschwärmenden Seefahrer unaufhörlich mit leeren Hoffnungen täuscht, ihn in Abenteuer verflechtet, von denen er niemals ablassen und doch auch niemals zu Ende bringen kann.’⁸

A place of order in an sea of confusion - or more accurately, a confusion that resists elucidation by human reasoning: a voyage across this ocean can only lead to the antinomies of reason, contradictions which follow necessarily from our attempts to comprehend the noumenal world.⁹ Only that which lies within the island’s limits belongs to the domain of truth: that is to say, it is the empirical alone of which we can have any knowledge. The noumenal ‘Schein’ is, for Kant, closed to human comprehension and thus unknowable - human notions of truth are accordingly based on the former.¹⁰ Seafarers

⁶ Kant’s metaphor opens the ‘Transzendente Methodenlehre’ in the second part of his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. This section seeks to determine the formal conditions of a complete system of pure reason (p. 759; A707, B735).

⁷ See Manfred Momberger, *Sonne und Punsch : die Dissemination des romantischen Kunstbegriffs bei E.T.A. Hoffmann* (München: W. Fink, 1986), p. 31.

⁸ Kant, *KrV*, pp. 202-203 (A235—236; B295-296). The location of this passage within the *KrV* gives an indication of Kant’s intentions: the preceding *Elementarlehre* effectively surveys and maps the ‘island’ within his philosophical system.

⁹ Kant’s Antinomies are the outcome of applying pure reason to sensible experience.

¹⁰ Momberger, p. 32.

might be viewed as metaphysicians, afloat a sea representing that which is beyond possible experience.

For Kant, metaphysicians laying claim to ‘truth’ beyond this island, then, have been deceived by banks of fog and melting ice. Yet the very notion of a definable boundary between what can be known and the unknowable is famously dismissed by Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s dislike of metaphysics lay in its dualistic structuring of the universe as a vanishing point of some higher state of eternal perfection and the earthly sphere inhabited by man. The ‘death of God’, Nietzsche’s aphoristic claim, is thus a blow to the self-evident status of the universally valid European humanistic subject, metaphysically endorsed by its striving for the salvation of mankind. The target of Nietzsche’s criticism, enlightenment notions of selfhood and agency - if one can talk so generally about such things - are grounded in a deep-rooted faith in the self-regulating and fundamentally moral character of human reason, predicated on contemporary renditions of values and ideals from classical antiquity and the Renaissance.¹¹ Kant’s philosophy, however, maintains the binary paradigm of metaphysics and revolves around two key concepts, appearance and things in themselves. The implausibility of a definable boundary between knowable and unknown is a familiar criticism of Kant: if the thing in itself lies beyond the limits of possible human knowledge, it is surely impossible to make any assertions at all about its nature. Trimmed of relations, an object is without properties and thus not an object at all.

The Romantics took a different line of attack. Faced with the tyranny of metaphysics, the Romantics set sail on Kant’s ocean of appearances, seeking to show that it is not merely the deceptive ‘Sitz des Scheins’ Kant had claimed it to be, but also a site of truth.¹² Writers such as Hoffmann led the charge against enlightenment notions of selfhood and agency. The idea of a discrete and unified self defined in terms of individual consciousness within any structure reliant upon metaphysics simply reflects a desire for self-control. The questioning of such notions of selfhood and authenticity are fundamental to *Die Elixiere des Teufels* (1815-1816), in which numerous identities of the figure introduced by the editor as the Capuchin monk Medardus emerge in episodes in the narrative. These events are chronicled retrospectively by the protagonist and structured around the character’s fall - ostensibly from uncorking the elixirs - and his

¹¹ See Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, Malden, MA: Polity, 2013) pp.13-14.

¹² See Momberger, p. 33.

path to redemption.

Die Elixiere: Crafting a Narrative of Redemption

Published in two parts in 1815 and 1816, E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Die Elixiere des Teufels* is one of his longest works. The novel contains the autobiography of the Capuchin monk Medardus, who, returning to his cloister, writes the story of his sinful and adventure-filled life in the outside world. The numerous identities of the monk accompany episodes in the narrative chronicled retrospectively by the protagonist. The plot of *Die Elixiere* is convoluted, incorporating a dizzying number of narrative voices, settings, and characters. Critical responses to the novel often founder on the text's resistance to categorical interpretation; any such reliance on a particular interpretation of the narrative's events stands at odds with the text's clearly intentional ambiguity, which operates not only through the plot, but also at the level of the narrative voice. Much existing scholarly work reads the disparate identities of the monk as manifestations of competing aspects of Medardus's 'self'. The real, undivided self is presumed to be that of the narrator - the post-penance Medardus writing his life story at the request of the Prior. What we deem to be fact and fiction is entangled and any attempt to separate the two, presupposes a 'true' core - yet Hoffmann provides us with no such thing.

This chapter, by contrast, seeks to investigate the material dimension of the various identities adopted by the protagonist, which challenge the idea of competing iterations of the self. An interpretation of these identities as deviations from a core identity appeals to an instinctive mystical view of the events. Yet far from being 'masks' worn on top of some stable ordinary identity, these identities are not without their own ontological value within the fictional world presented. This reading argues that a parallel narrative can be determined, in which the protagonist's continual material re-invention challenges the narrative of redemption super-imposed on events by the atoned monk. The material world and its contents do not merely serve as placeholders for a transcendental world; both divine and demonic forces appear to be at work in the mundane world, thus constituting a single plane of reality - in contrast to religious metaphysical systems locating them externally.

Indeed, Kenneth Negus writes that the 'manifestations of his innermost self have been combined in an uncanny manner with 'chance' events that have made his life re-

semble pieces of a jigsaw puzzle spread haphazardly throughout the past.’¹³ A similar interpretation is made by Dumont, whose comparison between *Die Elixiere* and Karl Philipp Moritz’s psychological novel *Anton Reiser* investigates sources of inspiration for Hoffmann, asserting that the ‘schamhaft verborgen gehaltene Innerlichkeit ihrem Schattendasein entrückt und zum eigentlichen Darstellungsgegenstand [wird]’.¹⁴

Christine Lehleiter identifies this strand of criticism as overly focussed on the double. The protagonist’s double, his half brother Viktorin, is often interpreted as ‘a projection and personification of the protagonist’s guilt-driven and suppressed unconscious’.¹⁵ Lehleiter focuses on genealogy and, specifically, the patrilineal determinism behind the monk’s actions. While she highlights the novel’s materialistic interpretation of the doctrine of original sin, she declines to extend this observation to commenting on the dop-pelgänger figures.

Focusing instead on drawing out this theme of materiality, this chapter argues that Medardus’s alternative identities as Viktorin, Herr Leonhard, and Leonard Krczynski from Kwiecziczewo do not so much mark a deviation from some stable, core identity, but rather a process of immanence. This contrasts with both the prevailing religious narrative of the elixirs as a catalyst for evil, which unleash demonic forces, and also with notion that these identities are merely projections of Medardus’s unconscious. This reading is motivated by a desire to understand not only the epistemological frameworks of the texts, but also the narrative-building central to the writers’ conception of truth, as part of the writers’ broader critique of enlightenment.

My consideration of these various identities goes beyond the assumption of a unitary self, home to different drives and desires, split along conscious and unconscious axes. The events and characters of the monk’s narrative follow a trajectory of salvation. The precocious monk develops into a gifted orator, only to be corrupted by pride. He fails in his duty as the guardian of the reliquary when he allows two visitors to uncork and drink from them - a temptation to which Medardus too later yields. When a young woman resembling Saint Rosalia declares her love for him during confession, he is no

¹³ Kenneth G. Negus, ‘The Family Tree in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *Die Elixiere Des Teufels*’, *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 73.5 (1958), 516–20 (p. 516).

¹⁴ Altrud Dumont, ‘Die Einflüsse von Identitätsphilosophie und Erfahrungsseelenkunde auf E. T. A. Hoffmanns *Elixiere des Teufels*’, *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 1.1 (1991), 37–48 (p. 38).

¹⁵ Christine Lehleiter, ‘On Genealogy: Biology, Religion, and Aesthetics in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Elixiere Des Teufels* (1815–16) and Erasmus Darwin’s *Zoonomia* (1794–96)’, *The German Quarterly*, 84.1 (2011), 41–60 (p. 41).

longer able to sublimate his sensory desires into religious fervour and leaves the cloister to find her. In his itinerant path of changing identities, Medardus scorns his religious background, seemingly pursuing his desires. Waking up in an Italian cloister, Medardus once again returns, via the Vatican, to his home cloister, where he atones for his sins and dies. The monk's escape from justice and close shave in the Vatican, it would seem, are coordinates on his route to redemption.

The narrative of salvation, which serves as an organising principle for the monk's account of events, diverts attention from the uncertainty over the wavering material reality of the identities. These can be viewed either as material transformations of the monk, *doppelgänger* figures, or mere figments of the protagonist's imagination. This chapter contends that alongside the religious narrative, the various related figures of Viktorin, Herr Leonhard, and Leonard Krczynski can also be said to constitute modes of existence corresponding to representations of the monk's consciousness. Indeed selfhood, along with identity more broadly in the novel, I suggest, is environmentally and agentially contingent, susceptible to change and renewal in different contexts. In line with the contention of this thesis that the texts should be explored as thought experiments, I argue that the texts not only expose the inadequacy of epistemological frameworks of rationalism, but, in their thematisation of transformation, explore a monistic conception of being beneath the surface of the religious narrative.

The monk's material transformations, however, contrast with the life story he narrates. The first-person narrative is written from the perspective of Medardus, having returned to his cloister from the latter part of his travels. The position from which the monk writes, as a penitent sinner seeking to atone, is significant and aligns the trajectory of his account with that of the Christian act of redemption. The monk's story, introduced by the editor's foreword, is split into two parts documenting first Medardus's promise as a young monk and his departure from the cloister into the world. Continuing from the caesura of his recovery in an Italian hospital, the second part records his return and rehabilitation with his home cloister. The division of events aligns with the tale's trajectory of fall and redemption, a reflection of the Catholic creed of the need for spiritual struggle for salvation. The sections are marked by changes in setting, typically deviations from Medardus's path to Rome. Asking a farmer for directions for where he is to stay the night, the farmer 'beschrieb mir genau einen nähern, von der Heerstraße ab-

weichenden Richtsteig mitten durchs Gebürge'.¹⁶ Shortly after, having taken a nip of the elixir and startled a sleeping count into falling from a precipice, Medardus describes how he 'bog in einen schmalen Fußsteig ein, der mich einen jähren Abhang hinabführte; als ich aus dem Gebüsch trat, lag ein großes, schön gebautes Schloß vor mir im Talgrunde.'¹⁷ Later, in his flight from the castle, 'Kaum hatte ich die Anhöhe vor mir erreicht, als ein freundliches schönes Tal sich öffnete, in dem ein großes Dorf lag'.¹⁸ Once again running from his encounter with a strange painter, the monk's driver realises, 'daß er in der Finsternis ganz von der Straße abgekommen sei; es war kein anderes Mittel, als diesen Weg, so gut es gehen wollte, zu verfolgen und so vielleicht mit Tagesanbruch in ein Dorf zu kommen.'¹⁹ This succession of villages and valleys provides 'containers' for each episode and identity assumed by the monk. These digressions from his prescribed journey thus appear somewhat redundant and disconnected, considered from the critic's bird's-eye view of the text. Yet the monk's retrospective account of his life, with its truncation of his early years and the elision of events occurring after his return to the cloister, emphasises instead the events and struggles of his journey. Medardus's return to the cloister gains significance in his battles with temptation and pride: it is precisely his weakness and capitulation into depravity which give shape to his narrative of redemption.

This presentation of the monk's travels as a development from his promising career marred by pride, deceit and lies, culminating in committing murder before eventually reaching a purer state of religious devotion is strengthened by the role of penance in the text. The protagonist's penance, first as he battles the temptation of the elixirs and in the second part in atonement for his sins, supposes a certain continuity between *physis* and spirit. The Catholic doctrine of mortification holds that sin can be purged through suffering of the flesh and the soul united with God. While God is unchanging in his divine nature, Christ's experience of pain, as the second person of the Trinity, constitutes an infinite act. Through pain, the human being is united to Christ's pain and the infinite act of saving mankind.

The narrative of redemption presented in the monk's account is implied by his choice interjections, in which he reflects and comments on events. Medardus immedi-

¹⁶ *DE*, p. 56.

¹⁷ *DE*, p. 60.

¹⁸ *DE*, p. 97.

¹⁹ *DE*, p. 123.

ately suffixes his telling of the abbess's favour and support for him as a child with reference to redemption through suffering, 'Aber finstre Gestalten steigen auf, und immer dichter und dichter sich zusammendrängend, immer enger und enger mich einschließend, versperren sie die Aussicht und befangen meinen Sinn mit den Drangsalen der Gegenwart, daß selbst die Sehnsucht, welche mich mit namenlosem wonnevollem Schmerz erfüllte, nun zu tötender, heilloser Qual wird!'.²⁰ Later during his investiture, Medardus speaks of 'jene Ruhe des Geistes' of his vocation, only to exclaim somewhat incongruously, 'die Macht des Feindes ist groß! - Wer mag der Stärke seiner Waffen, wer mag seiner Wachsamkeit vertrauen, wenn die unterirdischen Mächte lauern.'²¹ The narrative trajectory is prepared by the narrator's warnings and established by the focus on the period of his life spent away from the cloister. An expectation that the young monk will fall prey to these chthonian powers is created in the reader, primed by narrative convention for the fallen monk's 'bounce back' in the second part of the narrative.

A more assertive form of this streamlining process comes in Prior Leonardus's explanation of what happened at the Baron's castle and the forester's house: it soon became known that 'daß nicht du, sondern der als Capuziner verkappte Graf Viktorin auf dem Schlosse des Barons gewesen war.' After all, Viktorin's servant 'habe [...] seinen Herrn [zu genau] gekannt, zu viel mit ihm noch auf der Flucht aus dem Schlosse gesprochen, als daß hier eine Verwechslung statt finden könne.'²² The Prior claims his story is substantiated by that of the forester: 'Viktorin hatte [Medardus] in den Abgrund gestürzt; [...] Aus der Betäubung erwacht, aber schwer am Kopfe verwundet, gelang es ihm, aus dem Grabe heraufzukriechen [...] So lief er durch das Gebirge, vielleicht von einem mitleidigen Bauer hin und wieder gespeiset und mit Lumpen behangen, bis er in die Gegend der Försterwohnung kam.'²³ The Prior's account essentially exculpates Medardus and arguably removes the obstacles in the monk's way to reconciliation with the cloister. Yet we know from Medardus himself that Viktorin was spotted, alive, disguised as a farmer in a village close to the Baron's castle and later encountered at the Forester's home. The Prior's indulgent position with regard to a man who had apparently abandoned his religious duties allows for the monk to escape serious punishment and paves the way for his welcome as the cloister's prodigal son - a role in which Med-

²⁰ *DE*, p. 20.

²¹ *DE*, p. 32.

²² *DE*, pp. 326-327.

²³ *DE*, p. 327.

ardus is cast in Pater Spiridon's sentimental account of the monk's death. The Prior's readiness to ascribe the monk's sins to Viktorin corresponds to his fondness for Medardus, expressed in allowing him to preach for the cloister on important occasions and entrusting the reliquary to him.

This well-disposed view of the protagonist is anticipated by the editor's direct address to a 'günstiger Leser', entreating the reader to identify with the narrator's point of view and look upon it sympathetically. The preface to *Die Elixiere* also offers few clues to guide the reader, but forewarns of 'das Schauerliche, Entsetzliche, Tolle, Possenhafte [Medardus] Lebens'²⁴ - that is to say, the supernatural themes and continual oscillation and deviation from the text's logical progress.²⁵ The uncertainty surrounding the characters' identity in *Die Elixiere* is amplified by the ambiguity of the narrative. The monk's account of his life is framed by the fictional editor of the *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, a collection of texts published in four volumes between 1814 and 1815. Despite the editor's plea, the reader must do battle with a miscellany of narrative elements, which provide a discordant account of the events. The main body of the narrative is full of signals of unreliability: Medardus's autobiography is permeated at times by contradictory stories of others, such as Medardus's confused account of his father's life given early in the first section, which is clearly derived from his mother. The narrator admits that his mother never spoke of the circumstances of his father's life, only to immediately follow, 'rufe ich mir aber alles das in's Gedächtnis zurück, was sie mir schon in meiner frühesten Jugend von ihm erzählte, so muß ich wohl glauben, daß es ein mit tiefen Kenntnissen begabter lebenskluger Mann war.' From his mother's tales, it emerges that his parents sank from a comfortable existence into poverty and that his father, tempted by Satan, committed a terrible sin. Medardus contradicts himself by crafting a positive image of his father from his earliest memories as a man of considerable experience and knowledge, only to say that he sank into mortal sin.

Medardus's story is also interrupted at several points by others, raising further questions over its credibility. The account of Medardus's escape from his own wedding and rehabilitation is spliced with Belcampo's explanation of how he found him stripped of his worldly clothes - stolen by Viktorin - and carried him to the sanatorium. While

²⁴ *DE*, p. 12.

²⁵ See Christopher R. Clason, 'Narrative "Teasing": Withholding Closure in Hoffmann's *Elixiere des Teufels*', *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 42.1 (2009), 81-92 (83).

these accounts help complete Medardus's story and conserve its linearity, *Die Elixiere* abounds with competing versions of events, which generate confusion in the reader and uncertainty over what really happens. Indeed, a strange painter gives his own account of what happened at the Baron's castle, publicly denouncing Medardus before other visitors to his exhibition. The painter explains how the devil, appearing as a Capuchin monk, threw Viktorin over a precipice, before causing mayhem at the castle. The monk flees, having poisoned the Baroness and murdered Hermogen, apparently afraid of Viktorin's return. The painter closes his story by turning to Medardus: 'Doch das Alles wird Ihnen dieser Herr (er wies nach mir) viel umständlicher und besser erzählen können, da er während der ganzen Begebenheit auf dem Schlosse zugegen war.'²⁶ The painter's story resonates with what the reader has already read from Medardus's account; by contrast, that given by Viktorin appears to be an imitation. The Count steals the monk's identity on two occasions, at the forester's house and at the cloister at the end of the novel. Viktorin's account, given to the forester, diverges significantly in its claim that he himself decided to uncork the elixirs and drank the bottle at once - in contrast to Medardus's story, where two visitors uncork the bottle and the monk decides to sample the wine later on. In Viktorin's account, Medardus is sentenced to imprisonment by the prior and freed by Satan. This contradicts Medardus's version of events, in which the Prior allows him to leave the cloister under pretext of undertaking a mission abroad.

In the final chapter before Father Spiridon's postscript, Viktorin, again attempting to assume Medardus's identity, offers an account of the monk's life. These episodes, while recognisably seeking to imitate the monk's life, fail to tally with what has previously been shared with the reader - for instance, Viktorin's claim that he was imprisoned by the Prior for his behaviour has no counterpart in Medardus's autobiography. Further voices in the narrative include the conversation with the Prince's physician, which provides the protagonist with some family history, as does the painter's manuscript, given to him by Leonardus. Aurelie's letter to the Abbess, intercepted by Medardus, provides additional background detail on his father.

Woven also into the narrative fabric is the bizarre, clownish character of Peter Schönfeld, who also goes by the name of Pietro Belcampo, and has the narrative

²⁶ *DE*, p. 118.

function of facilitating the movement between the various episodes, appearing at the crucial moment to whisk Medardus to safety after his accusation by the strange painter and to carry his beaten body to the sanatorium. Schönfeld's comical movements and eccentric, rambling speech loosely recalls the Harlequin characters of the *Commedia dell'arte*, a mischievous servant who typically mocks the established social order. Schönfeld, a barber, does not so much ridicule his superiors as emphasise the need for humour to counterbalance reason. In his guise as Belcampo he explains to Medardus, 'Ich bin die Narrheit, die ist überall hinter dir her, um deiner Vernunft beizustehen [...] in der Narrheit findest du nur dein Heil, denn deine Vernunft ist eine höchst miserables Ding, und kann sich nicht aufrecht erhalten, sie taumelt hin und her wie ein gebrechliches Kind, und muß mit der Narrheit in Compagnie treten, die hilf ihr auf und weiß den richtigen Weg zu finden nach der Heimat - das ist das Tollhaus'.²⁷ For Belcampo, reason is nothing more than a lazy governor, 'der sich nie darum kümmert, was außer den Grenzen des Reiches vorgeht, der nur aus Langerweile auf dem Paradeplatz die Soldaten exerzieren läßt, die können nachher keinen ordentlichen Schuß tun, wenn der Feind eindringt von Außen'.²⁸ Reason is rendered useless by its unwillingness to look beyond its own boundaries – echoing criticisms of Kant's island of truth. The product of this assortment of narrative elements is a blurring of what we consider fact and fiction in the account. Any notion of an originary core narrative, unsullied by conflicting accounts, is illusory. There is no such core: Hoffmann's *Elixiere* is not accidentally convoluted, but deliberately so. Despite the dubious reliability of the narrative, the Catholic narrative of redemption is imposed by Medardus as an organising principle for his account.

As readers, we might interpret the monk's multiple identities as an attempt to attenuate the responsibility for his depraved actions. At decisive moments in his account, a voice sounds, seemingly not his own, which determines the path he is to follow. Asked by Viktorin's servant, who believes Medardus to be his master, what he has done with his uniform, he responds, 'Die schleuderte ich hinab in den Abgrund', in a voice that is 'hohl und dumpf, denn ich war es nicht, der diese Worte sprach, unwillkürlich entflohen sie meinen Lippen'.²⁹ Soon after, meeting Reinhold, he claims

²⁷ *DE*, p. 259.

²⁸ *DE*, pp. 259-260.

²⁹ *DE*, pp. 58-59.

that he is an acquaintance of the Baroness's confessor, 'ohne mich zu besinnen, blindlings das nachsprechend, was mir eine fremde Stimme im Innern zuzuflüstern schien'.³⁰ It is unclear whether the voice is the fabrication of Medardus, the writer, intended to deflect the reader's opprobrium or whether he really is directed by an unknown voice.

While the monk's account appears to seek to deflect personal responsibility for his actions, Medardus's inflated sense of pride is irrepressible. The Prior's favourable view of him appears ill-deserved, however, given the monk's failure in his guardianship of the reliquary. Indeed, despite his early enthusiasm for monastic life and gifts as an orator, Medardus reveals himself to be susceptible to bouts of jealousy and lust. He is spurred to take his vows in a pique of fury as he finds himself mocked by friends of the concert master's sister: 'Überall erklangen um mich Stimmen, die mich verspotteten, verhöhnten [...] Erst als der Morgen anbrach, wurde ich ruhiger, aber fest war ich entschlossen, sie niemals mehr zu sehen und überhaupt der Welt zu entsagen.'³¹ Similarly, his religious fervour appears to be directed more towards admiration for the abbess than venerating God - 'Welche Heiligkeit, welche Würde, welche überirdische Größe strahlte aus jedem Blick der herrlichen Frau, leitete jede ihrer Bewegungen!' - for whom he claims, 'Ich hätte mich vor ihr in den Staub werfen mögen, wenn ihr Blick zufällig auf mich fiel'.³²

The authenticity of this devotion is undermined throughout the monk's account, where it appears that his pride, jealousy and lust are sublimated into religion. Nevertheless, his pride cannot be contained for long and in each episode rears its head. As a preacher, the thought takes root that he is God's chosen one: 'alles deutete dahin, daß [...] ich nicht der Welt, den Menschen angehöre, denen Heil und Trost zu geben ich hier auf Erden wandle.'³³ At the Baron's castle, repulsed by Euphemie's boastfulness, Medardus muses to himself that he has the power, 'entflammt von den geheimnisvollen Mächten' to precipitate her fall.³⁴ He imagines himself as a puppet master - Euphemie's fate resting in his hands. Quickly forced to flee, however, Medardus reinvents himself as the cultured gentleman, Herr Leonard - yet soon, he finds himself revelling in the at-

³⁰ *DE*, p. 64.

³¹ *DE*, p. 30.

³² *DE*, p. 23.

³³ *DE*, p. 39.

³⁴ *DE*, pp. 84-85.

tention and praise of the court. Once again, in Rome, Medardus is exalted by the crowds drawn to his public displays of penance and even imagines his martyrdom at the hands of rivals in the Vatican. There is a certain cyclicity in the monk's repeated re-invention of himself and succumbing to his own pride: a desire to be revered, rather than any heartfelt religiosity.

A Tonic for Rationalism

The monk's pride raises questions about the sincerity of any sense of remorse.

Nevertheless, beneath the text's narrative trajectory towards redemption, Hoffmann's text reflects a certain Prussian fascination with Catholicism, in particular, with the notion of Catholic mysticism as a tonic for unyielding rationalism. The elixirs, within the monk's narrative, are presented as a catalyst for his fall. Indeed, after five years in the cloister, Medardus is charged with looking after the reliquary, which among its collection houses a bottle, alleged to be that from the legend of St. Anthony.

Familiarised with the pieces of the collection, Medardus voices his scepticism regarding the authenticity of the relics: 'Sollten denn, lieber Bruder Cyrillus [...] alle diese Dinge gewiß und wahrhaftig das sein, wofür man sie ausgibt?' Cyrillus responds by saying that it is beside the point whether the items are what they are claimed to be or not, instead 'den Gläubigen, der ohne zu grübeln [...] wird der geistige Einfluß des Heiligen, dessen auch nur angebliche Reliquie den Impuls gab, erweckt, und der Mensch vermag Stärke und Kraft im Glauben von dem höheren Geiste zu empfangen'.³⁵ For Cyrillus and the Prior, who shares his views, it is not so much a question of the originality of the material, but one of belief. The relic is a material object which serves simply as a stimulus for reflection and allows one to be filled with a kind of rapture capable of overcoming physical suffering - the relics thus indeed are capable of performing miracles. Belief transforms the material - no longer a mere imitation, the relic lives up to its billing.

The elixirs themselves are open to numerous interpretations. Cyrillus and Prior Leonardus, two positively presented spiritual figures, seem not to press the issue of their authenticity, preferring instead to view them as prompts which strengthen belief. By contrast, the young count and his tutor who visit the cloister drink from the elixirs, paying no heed to Medardus's protests. The Count's scepticism, claiming that such

³⁵ *DE*, p. 33.

legends as that of St. Anthony are nothing more than clever allegories mistaken as accounts of real events, stands for a rationalistic interpretation of the elixirs, whose mystery must be revealed by an experimental tasting of them. The uncorking of the elixirs also appears to serve as a catalyst for Medardus's later depraved actions - for evil more broadly and provides a fulcrum for the monk's downfall within the text's narrative of redemption. Contrasted with the mysticism of the elixirs, however, is a quasi-scientific narrative in the form of the documents outlining the protagonist's genealogy: the depraved origins of the family line with Francesco and his descendants points instead to a deterministic causal explanation. Yet this too is undermined somewhat by the supernatural beginning of the wicked bloodline. Although used by Medardus as a unifying basis for the events in his story of redemption, the elixirs in reality act as a device allowing Hoffman to raise, yet to elude any categorical stance on, problems of causality and moral responsibility.

The theme of genealogy is particularly prominent in *Die Elixiere* and plays a disruptive role in the reader's interpretation of Medardus's story, appearing to stand in opposition to the monk's efforts to expiate his sins. Nevertheless, the narrative neither conclusively endorses the psychological determinism suggested by the narrative of inherited sin in Medardus's family history, nor the freedom to choose one's own path. Medardus thus writes 'Das Leben lag vor mir, wie ein finstres undurchschauliches Verhängnis, was könnte ich anders tun, als mich in meiner Verbannung ganz den Wellen des Stroms überlassen'.³⁶ Indeed, this sense of abandon guides him at the Prince's palace, 'eine innere Stimme, die mir unaufhörlich, wie in dunklen Worten zurief, daß *hier* mein Geschick sich bestimmen werde, trieben mich unwiderstehlich fort [...]'.³⁷

This sense of inevitability is underwritten by the protagonist's family history, which harbours a certain cyclicity. There is a symmetry in this lineage, bookended by Francesco and Franz (later to be known as Medardus). The parallels extend beyond their names: their paternal figures, Leonardo da Vinci and Leonardus respectively, serve not only as instructors but also as moderating forces in their lives. Francesco and Medardus both ultimately rebel against their masters, winning acclaim through their art - painting in the case of Francesco, oration for Medardus - yet come unstuck by their vanity and the neglect of the values taught by their mentors. Both have affairs with

³⁶ *DE*, pp. 102-103.

³⁷ *DE*, pp. 153-154.

‘demonic’ women, before they repent and return to religion. Francesko, however, cannot be released from his guilt until his demonic progeny, conceived with the ‘teufliche[s] Weib’, is dead. In Medardus this wicked bloodline comes to an end.³⁸ Separating the two figures, lies the tangle of Francesko’s descendants, each endowed with particular qualities, which are represented in their totality by only the painter and the monk. Those descendants who are legitimate children, such as the Abbess and Aurelie have, despite their flaws, virtuous qualities; by contrast, those who are illegitimate, such as Euphemie and Viktorin, are depraved without saving grace. The *mise-en-abyme* of the family tree is cut short by Medardus, whose reformed behaviour, the account suggests, allows the cycle of inherited sin to be broken.

Despite the impression of inevitability conjured by the monk and the apparent submission to some unidentified agency, Medardus makes a conscious decision to disguise himself after fleeing the Baron’s castle and later carefully, intentionally crafts a new identity in prison to impede and deflect the investigations of the prosecutor as much as possible: ‘es war nötig, alles Auffallende vermeidend, meinen Lebenslauf ins Alltägliche, aber weit Entfernte, Ungewisse zu spielen [...] In dem Augenblicke kam mir auch ein junge Pole ins Gedächtnis, mit dem ich auf dem Seminar in B. studierte; ich beschloß, seine einfachen Lebensumstände mir anzueignen.’³⁹ Medardus’s awareness of his deceit runs counter to the overarching story that his downfall is precipitated by the evil unleashed by his drinking of the elixirs.

Doppelgänger and Materiality

Medardus’s sinful path, whether viewed through the prism of genealogical determinism or as a necessary abasement for redemption, is shaped by the doppelgänger figures of Viktorin and Herr Leonard. The material reality of these figures represents a challenge to the hylomorphic model of being, reflecting a conception of matter as fundamentally changing rather than immutable. The structures through which we tend to view identity are descendants of a lengthy line of thought: Aristotle’s most pervasive legacy, arguably, is that of the hylomorphic paradigm. Aristotle describes by what agency animals are created in *On the Generation of Animals*, where he claims that ‘the male stands for the

³⁸ See Negus, p. 518.

³⁹ *DE*, p. 196.

effective and active, and the female, considered as female, for the passive'.⁴⁰ In Aristotle's account of reproduction the female provides the receptacle and matter, and the male the form and soul. The idea of matter as inert and given shape by form has applications beyond questions of reproduction and sexual difference. Traces of this container-seed paradigm appear to lurk behind enlightenment notions, such as the perfectibility of man through learning, the moral function of reason and is embedded within philosophical systems. Kant's postulate of a transcendental self, the necessary framework of rules and imaginative schemata used to unify experience and distinguish self from the rest of the phenomenal world, is established in opposition to an unchanging matter. Unlike Descartes's view of self, which is essentially solipsistic, our spatiotemporal understanding, for Kant, requires reference to other bodies in space - without which one could not know whether the claim 'I am' persists through time or not.⁴¹ Yet the idea that matter is passive, while certainly challenged by modern physics, also encounters plenty of counter examples in everyday life. Christine Battersby, in her critical account of Kant's concept of self in *The Phenomenal Woman*, cites pregnancy or the transformation of the caterpillar into a butterfly as obvious instances of matter changing and morphing into something else.⁴²

Kant's account of selfhood is rivalled by Spinoza's alternative paradigm. Despite predating Kant, Spinoza's philosophy continued to be influential throughout the Enlightenment and beyond, reborn later in numerous guises. Spinoza, too, was influenced by Aristotle: specifically, Aristotle's conception of substance as the most basic thing, whose conception relies on nothing else. By such a definition, a substance is ontologically independent and contains within itself the explanation for its existence. Spinoza married Aristotelian substance with a hand-me-down from the Scholastics, the ontological argument.⁴³ Spinoza took this argument not simply to show that God exists, but also that only one thing exists.⁴⁴ He famously claims in *Ethics* that 'Whatever is, is in

⁴⁰ Aristotle, 'On the Generation of Animals', in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, pp. 2426-2658 (p. 2469).

⁴¹ Kant explains this in his 'Widerlegung des Idealismus' in the *KrV*, pp. 191-193 (B274-279).

⁴² See Christine Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 67. Battersby discusses Kant's conception of selfhood in Chapter 4.

⁴³ The ontological argument is roughly tripartite: For St. Anselm, 'God' corresponds to an idea of something immeasurably great, endowed with every conceivable perfection. If this being only existed in the mind, then it would surely lack the attribute of existence. It is therefore a necessary truth that such a being exists beyond the mind.

⁴⁴ See Roger Scruton, *Spinoza* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 35.

God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God'.⁴⁵ While we can explain the existence of one substance, God, there can be no a priori explanation for the existence of multiple substances.⁴⁶ Our experience of God arises from both contemplation of the divine and our being part of it.⁴⁷ While Kant's account of self taps into and sustains enlightenment ideas of autonomy and closure seemingly inimical to embodiment, Spinoza's ontological monism raises questions of human identity, self-sufficiency, and exceptionalism - by such an account 'I' is nothing more than a mode of God.⁴⁸

In line with Kant - and indeed Enlightenment ideals of subjectivity writ large - many existing interpretations of *Die Elixiere* rely on the notion of the self as a largely individual affair, a stage reached in existence that presumably carries with it some degree of finality and unretractability. Yet selfhood is surely gained through our exchange with other beings and things. That is to say, we might consider selfhood as a process rather than an object or possession. By such a definition, the separation of material being, *physis*, from identity and the mind is a fallacy, raising the question as to where a line between the two realms is to be drawn. Individual sets of material conditions, a tangle of agencies, set the stage for the continual unfolding and renewal of the self, rather than being cast in a particular mould once and for all. The proliferation of identities in *Die Elixiere*, which at times leaves the reader unsure of the characters' reality, reflects this immanent conception of selfhood. Viewed in line with Spinozan monism, then, the apparently material reality of Medardus's identities undermines the transcendentalism on which his religious narrative is predicated.

The uncertain distinction between material being and mind is apparent in the doppelgänger figures of Viktorin and Herr Leonard, who remain troubling for the reader, appearing at times to be a figment of his imagination and at others to have a physical presence. Medardus's material transformations from one character to the next are situational. This transformative process bridges the protagonist's own conviction at various points that he is someone else and the point where others indeed believe him to be somebody other than the depraved monk Medardus. This process is illustrated by the prosecutor's statement, which has a performative quality as it secures Medardus in his new identity as Leonard Krczynski, court savant and soon to be suitor of Aurelie: 'Es ist

⁴⁵ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. and trans. by Edwin Curley (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 10 (P15).

⁴⁶ See Scruton, p. 43.

⁴⁷ See Scruton, p. 48.

⁴⁸ See Scruton., p. 53.

ausgemittelt, nach bester Form und Weise, daß Sie nicht der Mönch Medardus sein können, da eben dieser Medardus sich hier befindet [...] ja auch selbst gar nicht leugnet, daß er jener Capuziner sei'.⁴⁹

This same process of material transformation is echoed in Medardus's behaviour. Apparently without prior meditation, Medardus effortlessly steps into the shoes left empty by Count Viktorin, presumed dead at the bottom of a rocky chasm. Collecting the Count's belongings and speaking as Viktorin to the Count's servant, it is 'als würde er [Viktorin] gleich herausbrechen' and he feels his 'Blut heftiger wallen'.⁵⁰ The monk carries out Viktorin's plan to appear at the castle in disguise and is quickly recognised as the preacher Medardus by Reinhold, a friend of the baron. Medardus thus plays himself vicariously through his role as Viktorin: 'Ich baute auf Reinhold, der mich ja als den Pater Medardus kannte, unerachtet mir das eine Lüge zu sein schien: nichts konnte meinen verworrenen Zustand lösen.'⁵¹ Having fled the castle, Medardus starts afresh. Well-adjusted in his new life in the town as the bourgeois aesthete and traveller Herr Leonhard, he plays his new role so well that he begins to believe that he is no longer the monk - 'jener Kanzelredner war der Mönch Medardus, der ist gestorben und begraben in den Abgründen des Gebürges, ich bin es nicht, denn ich lebe [...] So war es mir, wenn Träume mir die Begebenheiten im Schlosse wiederholten, als wären sie einem Anderen, nicht mir, geschehen; dieser Andere war wieder der Capuziner, aber nicht ich selbst.'⁵² Indeed, when he is released from custody and acquitted of murdering Hermogen, he starts to believe 'daß nicht ich jener ruchlose Frevler auf dem Schlosse des Barons von F. war, der Euphemien – Hermogen erschlug, sondern, daß der wahnsinnige Mönch, den ich im Försterhause traf, die Tat begangen.'⁵³ This conviction is only strengthened by the prince's claim that the court now knows that he is a nobleman, whose status as such has been confirmed by news from Poland, legitimising and authenticating his identity as Leonard. The monk's identity, however, goes beyond his secular dress and adopted persona to take on a material dimension: Aurelie writes in a letter that Medardus and her betrothed, Herr Leonard resemble one another strongly, yet 'ein gewisser charakteristischer Zug, der seiner Nation eigen (Du weißt, daß er ein

⁴⁹ *DE*, p. 217.

⁵⁰ *DE*, p. 74.

⁵¹ *DE*, p. 74.

⁵² *DE*, pp. 111-112.

⁵³ *DE*, p. 225.

Pole ist), von Francesko und dem Mönch Medardus sehr merklich.⁵⁴

The Gothic

This sustained uncertainty over the reality of these identities corresponds to the aesthetic conventions of the Gothic genre. Certainly, *Die Elixiere des Teufels*, with its numerous scenes invoking the reader's horror, supernatural elements, and brooding cloisters and dungeons, contains many of the ingredients of a 'gothic novel'. The latter is a term more commonly employed by literary scholars in the English-speaking world, serving with regard to German literature as a catch-all for the proliferation of terms: *Ritterromane*, *Schauerromane*, *Räuberromane*.⁵⁵ These terms, to be precise, are applied retrospectively to a body of work deemed to be more or less descended from Schiller's *Geisterseher* (1789). Hoffmann's novel, in particular, represents a German example of the genre - not least owing to its inspiration from Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1795), a work firmly rooted in the genre's constellation.⁵⁶ The gothic novel was born out of a growing disillusionment with the enlightenment project - a sense of reason's limitations.

The longstanding decline in religiosity through the nineteenth century and the shifting view of humanity as unfolding through history coincides with the growing importance of natural science, which saw neural physiology and empirical psychology gain prominence as medical disciplines. For the former, nerves, not the soul, came to be viewed as the centre of human functions.⁵⁷ In the case of the latter, empirical psychology's drive to psychologise physical illness, often via the individual's biography, is arguably anti-Cartesian in its disregard for mind-body dualism and anti-Kantian in its apparent eschewal of metaphysics. The Gothic genre is therefore paradigmatic of this *Sattelzeit*, which straddles Enlightenment and Romanticism, exploring the contemporary interest in psychology and medicine, but also preoccupied with the potential for opacity

⁵⁴ *DE*, p. 247.

⁵⁵ A recent discussion of the Gothic can be found in *Popular Revenants: The German Gothic and its International Reception, 1800-2000*, edited by Andrew Cusack and Barry Murnane (Rochester, New York: Camden House: 2012). In the first chapter, Murnane provides a useful overview of the reception history of the German Gothic, pp. 10-43. The book seeks to explore the German and non-German contexts of the *Schauerroman*. The popular forms of the *Ritter-*, *Räuber*, and *Schauerromantik* are collectively known by the umbrella term 'Gothic' in the English-speaking world. The Gothic, as Murnane observes, encompasses a broad range of related cultural phenomena from the eighteenth century to present. Fake translations and plagiarised texts characterise the cross-border reception and development of Gothic fiction.

⁵⁶ See Michael Hadley's *The Undiscovered Genre: A Search for the German Gothic Novel* (Berne: Lang, 1978); also, Brendan Hennessey's *The Gothic Novel* (Harlow: Longman for the British Council, 1978).

⁵⁷ See Jürgen Barkhoff, "'The echo of the question, as if it had merely resounded in a tomb': The Dark Anthropology of the *Schauerroman* in Schiller's *Der Geisterseher*", in *Popular Revenants*, ed. by Cusack and Murnane, pp. 44-59 (p. 47).

and psychological uncertainty. The gothic novel thus offers shelter from the inanity of overbearing rationalism, satisfying a hunger for mystery in place of the certainties offered by the late nineteenth century. Not solely predicated on some element of horror, the 'gothic' connotes at once the Gothic peoples of the *Völkerwanderung* and the barbarity of interminable conflict and also, anachronistically, the Middle Ages - more specifically, 'medieval' settings, such as monasteries and castles, along with the associated notions of chivalry. Above all, however, the gothic implies the supernatural, typically in the form of a divine or demonic agency around which the narrative pivots - supplied, in the case of *Die Elixiere*, by the suggestion that the uncorking of the elixirs releases an evil spirit which is the cause of Medardus's actions and the strange painter, whose apparitions appear to serve as some salutary intervention.

The Gothic should thus be understood not as a repertoire of motifs and settings, but as horror produced as a narrative mode. The paralysis of the reader's ability to determine ties into Todorov's notion of the fantastic, discussed earlier in the previous chapter. The reader is unable to establish whether a story's strange events are nothing more than an illusion, leaving the laws and expectations of reality unchanged, or whether in fact it is our understanding of reality that is lacking and which must be revised. Todorov's 'fantastic' is thus a highly relevant narrative strategy for *Die Elixiere*, in which the uncertainty surrounding the reality of the monk's identities remains unresolved.

Avatars of the Unconscious

The genre conventions of the gothic novel prime the reader for a supernatural agency at play in the narrative. This notion is validated by the shifting materiality of the protagonist and the elixirs, which within the monk's master narrative precipitate his fall and unleash the devil's agents. The mysterious voice fits in with the religious narrative of the existence of an evil force, manifested in the avatars of the devil. The elixirs, within Medardus's narrative, serve as a catalyst, a kind of Pandora's box and point of departure for his subsequent actions. The Pope, however, contradicts this narrative of corruption through an external agent with his metaphor of a giant: 'der ewige Geist schuf einen Riesen, der jenes blinde Tier, das in uns wütet, zu bändigen und in Fesseln zu schlagen vermag. Bewußtsein heißt dieser Riese [...] Des Riesen Sieg ist die Tugend, der Sieg

des Tieres, die Sünde'.⁵⁸ The Pope's tale pits consciousness and the unconscious against one another. Sin, represented by the animal, is not an external force which preys on individuals but the product of an inner struggle. Yet the distinction between the two states, as we see later when Medardus is recovering in the Italian sanatorium, is not unproblematic. After a long period of convalescence where he is unconscious, the protagonist awakes, yet curiously appears to be conscious of his waking: 'Nun fingen die Gedanken der einzelnen Teile an sich zu drehen, wie leuchtende Punkte, immer schneller und schneller, so daß sie einen Feuerkreis bildeten [...] "Das sind meine Glieder, die sich regen, jetzt erwache ich!" So dachte ich deutlich'.⁵⁹

Despite the Pope's suggestion that consciousness and unconsciousness are combatants in some internal struggle, they are represented by various avatars external to the self, such as the voice of Medardus's mother, who warns him not to drink the elixirs, and the figure of the strange painter, who makes a number of interventions throughout the narrative, at times menacing, telling the monk to repent in shame - at which Medardus flies into a murderous rage, at others more consolatory, such as when he appears to Medardus in prison and explains, 'ich war es, der überall dir nahe war, um dich zu retten von Verderben und Schmach, aber dein Sinn blieb verschlossen!'⁶⁰ Beyond the devil's human proxies, the force of evil becomes tangible also in other 'tokens' of evil, such as the bottle of elixirs and the card game, Faro, played by the Prince and his entourage. The Prince asserts that by playing Faro, 'Man tritt gleichsam aus sich selbst heraus, oder besser, man stellt sich auf einen Standpunkt, von dem man die sonderbaren Verschlingungen und Verknüpfungen, die die geheime Macht, welche wir Zufall nennen, mit unsichtbarem Faden spinnt, zu erblicken im Stande ist. Gewinn und Verlust sind die beiden Angeln, auf denen sich die geheimnisvolle Maschine bewegt, die wir angestoßen, und die nun der ihr einwohnende Geist nach Willkür fortreibt.'⁶¹ The Prince's remarks show remarkable prescience as Medardus, in his role as Leonard Krczynski, repeatedly wins by playing the same card - the queen, in which he recognises Aurelie's features. The monk soon recognises, 'daß nicht ich, sondern die fremde Macht, die in mein Wesen getreten, alles das Ungewöhnliche bewirke, und ich nur das willenlose Werkzeug sei, dessen sich jene Macht bediene, zu mir unbekanntem

⁵⁸ *DE*, p. 300.

⁵⁹ *DE*, p. 254.

⁶⁰ *DE*, p. 214.

⁶¹ *DE*, p. 152.

Zwecken.’⁶² The card game thus allows the machinations of this dark power to be observed.

Yet any notion of a dividing wall between unconsciousness and consciousness, however, is shaken by the indeterminate characters of Viktorin and the strange painter. Viktorin vacillates between demented monk and petulant, scheming Count; the painter, between guardian angel and jeering adversary. Their appearances in the text are inconsistent: they are neither continually of material reality nor can they merely be dismissed as avatars of the unconscious or the religion-infused consciousness of the protagonist. Medardus encounters Viktorin first at ‘Teufelssitz’, where the Count falls into the precipice, and later at the forester’s home. In this second encounter, Viktorin enters Medardus’s room in a lucid dream and challenges him to a fight on the rooftop. This bizarre scene is later followed by Viktorin’s appearance at dinner, where he rages: ‘Da blickte er um sich mit Zornfunkelnden Augen, und schrie mit fürchterlicher Stimme: “der Satan soll dich zerreißen mit deinem ehrwürdigen Herrn, und deinem verfluchten Beten”’.⁶³ The next day, the forester explains how he came to take in the mad monk. Eventually, the monk is taken away to an asylum. The figure in question is not simply a figment of the protagonist’s imagination since he is clearly materially real for the forester and his family. By contrast, the Prince’s doctor, to whom Medardus is speaking, is apparently oblivious to the mad monk’s voice and the knocking that Medardus hears, ‘Stärker klopfte es, und stöhnte und ächzte; ein feines Lachen, das durch die Stube pffft, klang wie Medardus...Medardus...hi...hi...hi hilf!’⁶⁴ Similarly, the strange painter, during Medardus’s episode as a socialite, denounces him as the devil before a crowd, forcing the monk to flee; yet the painter appears to him alone in prison. The painter is not witnessed by anyone else and indeed is first described as a Dominican friar before his countenance changes to become ‘sanft und milde’.⁶⁵ The Prior of the cloister in Rome explains that the painter regularly visits, although he admits, ‘ich bin zweifelhaft, ob seine körperliche Erscheinung das ist, was wir wahr nennen. So viel ist gewiß, daß niemand die gewöhnlichen Funktionen des Lebens bei ihm bemerkt hat.’⁶⁶ These figures, then, are more real at certain moments than others - not simply the

⁶² *DE*, p. 157.

⁶³ *DE*, p. 130.

⁶⁴ *DE*, p. 222.

⁶⁵ *DE*, p. 214.

⁶⁶ *DE*, p. 274.

product of a mentally unstable individual, but appear with a fleeting materiality.

Indeed a number of the story's characters appear to be so closely related as to suggest that they are personifications of particular aspects of the monk's conscience. The strange painter bears certain parallels to Hermogen not only physically - the painter glares at the monk with 'stieren Augen',⁶⁷ while Hermogen casts 'stieren lebendigtoten Blicken'⁶⁸ - but also in their brooding disapproval of the monk. The strange painter's appearance during Medardus's sermon at the height of his hubristic career as a church orator causes him to lose his composure. Similarly, Hermogen's furious outburst, 'Elender Heuchler, bald kommt die Stunde der Vergeltung [...]!', leave the monk 'zerschmettert, vernichtet'.⁶⁹ The strange painter has an ethereal quality, at times visible to others; others, only to Medardus, and figures in the biography of Francesko, his father. The painter thus appears as a facet of the two figures' conscience, a kind of familial moral sense. The discountenance provoked by both the painter and Hermogen point to the monk's sudden awareness of his aberration from his virtuous path.

This psychoanalytic view of these identities as projections is alloyed, however, to a certain material reality. These different figures appear almost to melt together: the mother and the abbess become one in their supportive roles and in their disapproval of Medardus's immodest style of preaching and vanity. Similarly, Prior Leonardus is characterised as 'hochbejahrt' but not without 'jugendliches Feuer';⁷⁰ these features are shared by the Italian prior, 'ein hoher ehrwürdiger Greis [...] mit unbeschreiblich mildem Ernst'.⁷¹ These sets of characters, in their resemblance, constitute moral instances *within* Medardus, which are personified and attributed to the individuals in his account. This sense of indeterminacy created by the shifting materiality and affinities between characters contributes to the reader's sense of unease and confusion when reading *Die Elixiere*: any attempt to piece together the fragmented causal picture must ultimately remain incomplete. The presence of a number of narratives, which appear to justify and explain the events of the novel and the protagonist's behaviour, are engulfed by the text's broader alignment with Catholic dogma. Medardus's life story structured around a putative fall and passage to redemption, to be used in support of the catechism of salva-

⁶⁷ *DE*, p. 41.

⁶⁸ *DE*, p. 84.

⁶⁹ *DE*, p. 79.

⁷⁰ *DE*, p. 26.

⁷¹ *DE*, pp. 268-269.

tion through struggle. This same play of narratives and the dominance of religion in the text are shared with Kleist's *Die heilige Cäcilie*.

Die heilige Cäcilie, or a Tale of Church Dominion

Die heilige Cäcilie oder die Gewalt der Musik (1810) counts as one of Kleist's lesser known works. Yet the novella has been the focus of renewed attention in recent years due to the apparent modernity of the epistemological critique present in the text. The striking event which opens the tale comprises two events germane to this enquiry: the ostensible bilocation of Schwester Antonia, and the mysterious conversion of four iconoclasts, who abort their violent plans and fall to their knees in reverence when the music begins and whose fate is interpreted later by various characters. The novella reveals that the inadequacy of existing tools of interpretation lead to a need for narratives. Just as the nun's bilocation challenges existing spatiotemporal understanding, the accounts of the various characters, all seemingly in line with the official dogmatic interpretation provided by the Catholic church remain unconvincing. Barely concealed beneath the text's face value, the novella documents a clash of religious and rational institutions for 'truth'. Kleist's tale reveals, however, that a singular, definite truth is illusory and irretrievable from the tangle of interpretations.

The main focus of the novella is the fate of four *Bilderstürmer*, Dutch iconoclasts, who are overcome by the nuns' music during their attack on a convent. Faced with the prospect of the convent's destruction and with no protection 'als ein alter, siebenzigjähriger [sic!] Klostervogt, der sich, mit einigen bewaffneten Troßknechten, am Eingang der Kirche aufstellte',⁷² the nuns prepare a mass. The mass in question, as instructed by the abbess, is 'eine uralte von einem unbekanntem Meister herrührende, italienische Messe'.⁷³ While the mob storms the building, Schwester Antonia, the only person in the convent capable of conducting the orchestra for that piece of music, lies unconscious on her deathbed, supervised by another sister, while the music is played; yet at the critical hour, the conductor appears, 'frisch und gesund, ein wenig bleich im Gesicht'.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the sister looking after Antonia bears testimony that she remained incapacitated during this time, 'krank, bewußtlos, ihrer Glieder schlechthin

⁷² *DHC*, p. 78.

⁷³ *DHC*, p. 79.

⁷⁴ *DHC*, p. 81.

unmächtig, im Winkel ihrer Klosterzelle'.⁷⁵ The apparent bilocation of Schwester Antonia challenges our conventional understanding of physical objects in space - namely, that things can only occupy one space at a time. The decisive moment is marked by an epistemological shift, as suggested by the use of punctuation and the verb 'erschien': 'als Schwester Antonia [...] von der Treppe her erschien; sie trug die Partitur [...], auf deren Aufführung die Äbtissin so dringend bestanden hatte, unter dem Arm'.⁷⁶ The nun's ostensible occupation of two spaces at once points to the inadequacy of the temporal and spatial norms which govern human perception.

As for the second component of the 'miracle', the iconoclasts' conversion, an intuitive religious reading of the novella would suggest that the four brothers are struck down by the nuns' performance in divine retribution for their attempted attack on the cloister. In reality, however, few readers will be convinced by the explanation offered to them - an explanation one might otherwise accept, were it not for the somewhat suspicious lack of contradictory evidence.⁷⁷ The glib accounts of the mysterious event offered up in support of the Catholic church's interpretation are not, however, completely without challenge in the text. In the search for truth around which the novella revolves, Kleist's characters betray small details which allow for alternative interpretations of the event. Critics have discerned various possible explanations for the brother's behaviour following the mass delivered by the nuns: Lisa Beesley raises the possibility that Veit Gotthelf, in his account as a witness of the event, implies that the brothers' display of piety in the cloister is simply feigned in order to evade arrest, 'da auf Befehl des Commandanten, in eben diesem Augenblick mehrere Arretirungen verfügt, und einige Frevler, die sich Unordnungen erlaubt hatten, von einer Wache aufgegriffen und abgeführt wurden'.⁷⁸ Birrell tentatively suggests that the brothers' behaviour during the mass and afterwards living an ascetic existence of strict religious observance points to a case of mesmerism.⁷⁹ Drawing comparison with Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert's work on mesmerism, Birrell argues that the brothers are spellbound

⁷⁵ *DHC*, p. 102.

⁷⁶ *DHC*, p. 81.

⁷⁷ See Gordon Birrell, 'Kleist's *St. Cecilia* and the Power of Electricity', *German Quarterly*, 62.1 (1989), 72–84 (p. 72).

⁷⁸ *DHC*, p. 89.

⁷⁹ See Lisa Beesley, 'Catholic Conversion and the End of Enlightenment in Religious and Literary Discourses', in *Religion, Reason, and Culture in the Age of Goethe*, ed. by Elisabeth Krimmer and Patricia Anne Simpson (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013), pp. 166–186 (pp. 179–180).

by the performance which liberates their ganglionic systems, the nervous system responsible for bodily matters, involuntary action, and emotional responses; their cerebral system, which attends to analytical processes, is suppressed, leading to their trance-like state. An alternative interpretation is that the brothers' conversion to Catholicism is to be read as a relinquishment of their freedom and responsibility to think for themselves - as indeed many *Aufklärer* saw Catholicism.⁸⁰

This chapter argues that despite the diversity of interpretation in critical literature, no definitive position can be claimed for the text. The uncertainty surrounding explanations of the events corresponds to a performative function in the text, which compels the reader reflect critically on the conflicting accounts of the events. As Haase and Freudenburg argue, the central theme of the novella is the relation between power and interpretation. The various accounts of the 'miracle', while loosely aligned, present the reader with enough inconsistencies and vested interests to challenge the dominant Catholic interpretation of the events as a miracle. In calling our attention to the hermeneutic act, Kleist underscores the relativity of truth.⁸¹ Considered within the broader arguments of this thesis, the text raises doubts about the attainability and legitimacy of claims to truth and offers a tacit refutation of enlightenment claims to knowledge.

The miracle of Antonia's recovery and the sudden piety of the *Bilderstürmer*, as the title of the novella suggests, can be attributed to a number of agents: to Saint Cecilia, the patroness of music; to God; and to the music itself. Indeed the title, 'Die heilige Cäcilie, oder die Gewalt der Musik', can either be read conjunctively with the implication of a vague causal relation between Cäcilie and the music - or, given the ambivalence of 'oder', be read as two hypotheses for explaining the events that follow.⁸² The themes of truth and interpretation are further reflected in the novella's subtitle, 'Eine Legende', which undermines the dominant narrative conveyed in the text by the Church's triumph and casts doubt over both the event and the accounts of it presented to the reader. As a genre, a legend is often transmitted orally, and as such subject to con-

⁸⁰ See Birrell, pp. 75-76. In his criticism of Catholicism, Wieland stresses that belief in religious doctrine should be acquired by through self-enlightenment, not accepted based on authority in *Über den freyen Gebrauch der Vernunft in Glaubenssachen*.

⁸¹ See Donald P. Haase and Rachel Freudenburg, 'Power, Truth, and Interpretation: The Hermeneutic Act and Kleist's *Die Heilige Cäcilie*', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 60.1 (1986), 88-103 (p. 88).

⁸² See Bernhard Greiner, *Kleist's Dramen Und Erzählungen : Experimente Zum 'Fall' Der Kunst* (Tübingen: Francke, 2000), p. 399.

stant revision. This is reflected in the varying but essentially congruent accounts of the innkeeper, Gotthilf, and the abbess.

Comparable to the reader's confusion at those scenes in *Die Elixiere* where the monk appears alongside Viktorin, we are unable to conceive of the nun in two places at once and find ourselves aware of the limits of human understanding: we thus turn to speculation to sate our need for explanation. In attempting to explain Antonia's being in two places at once, several possibilities spring to mind: Antonia's appearance at the mass is a case of mistaken identity; she really does occupy two places at the same time; or, perhaps her recovery in fact is a divine intervention to save the convent. It is the latter explanation which takes precedence in the novella. In proclaiming Antonia's remarkable recovery and her defence of the convent to be a miracle, the Church normalises the event, expunging the unexplained from speculation: the abbess explains that the archbishop of Trier had declared 'daß die heilige Cäcilie selbst dieses zu gleicher Zeit schreckliche und herrliche Wunder vollbracht habe [...]'.⁸³ A papal letter is even produced to validate this claim.

When the mother, seeking the place where her sons were struck by madness, finds the cloister, hundreds of workers are installing an ostentatious copper roof; access to the interior is barred. The cloister, the space in which the miracle allegedly took place, is not, as the mother had hoped, preserved in time. The past thus cannot simply be revisited, but rather can only be accessed through a narrative of past events. The embellishment of the Church serves to align the building with its status as an arena of divine intervention, reinforcing the dominance of the Church's dogmatic interpretation of the events. The copper roof, an excellent conductor of electricity, contrasted against the brewing storm reflects the consolidation of the Church's power. The lightning strikes and the highly conductive roof of the cathedral offer a powerful image of the Church's ambition to channel a higher power into the physical world. The boarded up doorway is a metaphor for the Church securing its narrative: having established and authenticated its interpretation of events, it seals off and protects its contents from further scrutiny. The codification of the mysterious power of the music as a miracle, conducted by a nun believed to be at death's door – and who indeed dies shortly after – marks its assimilation into Christian ontology.

⁸³ *DHC*, p. 103.

From a Kantian perspective, the incident flouts laws of space and time.⁸⁴ Indeed, if we take the *Bilderstürmer* incident at face value, Schwester Antonia occupies two spaces at the same point in time. That the power of the music led by Antonia leaves the four ringleaders as automata, would appear to offer proof that a miracle took place - a reading challenged by the apparent madness of the brothers described later. To be precise, we assume that there is a causal link between their sudden piety and asceticism, and Antonia's music. Given the perceptual incongruity of the event, the Church's branding of it as a wonder of God channels it into the purview of divinity, thereby obviating further enquiry and placating human exigencies of causality. The Papal letter marks the event's official assimilation into the Catholic Church's thaumaturgical narrative. Such narratives, regardless of their origin and truthfulness, are needed to compensate for the aporias of human perception.

The description of the event itself sustains the ambiguity: Schwester Antonia appears suddenly looking pale, yet she is also 'von Begeisterung glühend';⁸⁵ at the organ, she conducts the music and 'das Oratorium ward mit der höchsten und herrlichsten musikalischen Pracht ausgeführt', but during the performance '[es regte sich] 'kein Odem in den Hallen und Bänken; besonders bei dem salve regina und noch mehr bei dem gloria in excelsis, war es, als ob die ganze Bevölkerung der Kirche tot sei'. The next paragraph states that 'diese Begebenheit längst vergessen war'⁸⁶ - yet the convent is being lavishly refurbished with gilded crenelations and the events are deemed a miracle by various powers of the Church. Indeed, the narrative leaps from Antonia's safeguarding of the convent to the search of the mother of the *Bilderstürmer* for her sons six years later. The prolepsis follows the epistemological shift, which opens a rift through which competing ontologies emerge. The 'miracle' is considered as such only retrospectively - beneath the label lies an event seemingly unfathomable to conventional understandings of space and time.

Vested Interests

The apparent impenetrability of the events to rationality is explored by the mother of the four *Bilderstürmer*, who travels to Aachen to see what has become of her sons. The

⁸⁴ See Kant's *KrV*, pp. 52-53 (A24/B39).

⁸⁵ *DHC*, p. 81.

⁸⁶ *DHC*, p. 82.

mother is informed that they are in an asylum, where they ‘an der Ausschweifung einer religiösen Idee krank lagen’.⁸⁷ She then visits the asylum, accompanied by a bailiff, where the supervisor explains that ‘kein Laut über ihre Lippen käme’. This contradicts his statement immediately following that the brothers rise at midnight and ‘mit einer Stimme, mit welche die Fenster des Hauses bersten machte, das *gloria in excelsis* intonirten.’⁸⁸ She then meets Veit Gotthelf, a cloth merchant who took part in the attack, who recollects that the men, ‘bei Anhebung der Musik’, removed their hats with a simultaneous movement. The preacher leading the attack ‘läßt sich mit kreuzweis auf die Brust gelegten Händen, auf Knien nieder und murmelt, sammt den Brüdern, die Stirn inbrünstig in den Staub gedrückt, die ganze Reihe noch kurz vorher von ihm verspotteter Gebete ab.’⁸⁹ Gotthelf’s account presents the mysterious events in terms corresponding to the Church’s view of them.

Despite Gotthelf’s rebellious past, he is now married with several children and has taken over ‘die beträchtliche Handlung seines Vaters’.⁹⁰ Thus the account of the event comes from somebody who is presumably fully reconciled with the Church and as a cloth merchant, has economic interests to protect. Gotthelf recalls how the young men, previously staying at a guesthouse, gave instructions to the landlord, ‘die Freunde liebeich abzuweisen, die sich sonst regelmäßig am Morgen jedes Tages bei ihnen zu versammeln pflegen’.⁹¹ The narrator curtails Gotthelf’s account, declaring ‘Dies und noch Mehreres sagte Veit Gotthelf [...] das wir hier, weil wir zur Einsicht in den inneren Zusammenhang der Sache genug gesagt zu haben meinen, unterdrücken’.⁹² The narrator’s obvious intervention in Gotthelf’s account raises suspicions about the reliability of the narrative: Gotthelf’s involvement in the attack belies his account of the brothers’ behaviour, in which, adopting terms that would not be out of place in a sermon, ‘das Volk drängt sich, die Hausthüre spendend, über die Stiege dem Saale zu, um die Quelle dieses schauderhaften und empörenden Gebrülls, das, wie von den Lippen ewig verdammter Sünder, aus dem tiefsten Grund der flammenvollen Hölle, jammervoll um Erbarmung zu Gottes Ohren heraufdrang, aufzusuchen’.⁹³ Somewhat

⁸⁷ *DHC*, p. 84.

⁸⁸ *DHC*, p. 85.

⁸⁹ *DHC*, pp. 88-89.

⁹⁰ *DHC*, pp. 86-87.

⁹¹ *DHC*, p. 95.

⁹² *DHC*, p. 96.

⁹³ *DHC*, pp. 93-94.

tellingly, Gotthelf asks the mother not to implicate him in the attack, ‘falls es zu gerichtlichen Nachforschungen über diese Begebenheit kommen sollte’.⁹⁴ His story, replete with pieties, such as ‘der Himmel selbst scheint das Kloster der frommen Frauen in seinen heiligen Schutz genommen zu haben’,⁹⁵ as well as the narrator’s editing of the account, points to an individual fearful of the Church’s revenge. The inconsistencies and interests at play in these lay accounts, which cast the events as miraculous, are further exposed by the passing mention of the medical examination. The brothers are found to be mad and institutionalised. Yet this rational, medical explanation of their condition is absent from the other accounts of the events.

Later, the abbess requests the mother, ‘die Niederländerinn’,⁹⁶ to show her the letter ‘den der Prädicant an seinen Freund, den Schullehrer in Antwerpen geschrieben hatte’.⁹⁷ During the meeting, the abbess explains ‘daß schlechterdings niemand weiß, wer eigentlich das Werk, das ihr dort aufgeschlagen findet, im Drang der schreckenvollen Stunde [...] dirigiert habe.’⁹⁸ We might indeed ask ourselves whether the wonder lies in the four brothers hearing a divine music rather than a merely sublunary one, or perhaps in the dogmatic interpretation of the events by the abbess, archbishop and pope. In the uncertainty of the events lies an opposition between Catholic and Protestant worldviews.

The historical background of the tale is by no means accidental. The sixteenth-century setting of the Protestant Reformation and Dutch iconoclasm of the novella’s central action is further cemented by the reference to the cloister, which ‘bis am Schluß des dreißigjährigen Krieges bestanden hat’.⁹⁹ The conflict of Protestant and Catholic ideologies, evident in the iconoclasts attack and conversion, is echoed in the event’s historical context and in the two mother figures, the Protestant mother and Catholic abbess - a mother superior. The day of the attack, Corpus Christi, refers to the Protestant rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation and may be taken as representative of the iconoclasts’ war on signs more broadly.¹⁰⁰ In a wonderful turn of Kleistian irony, the broth-

⁹⁴ *DHC*, p. 96.

⁹⁵ *DHC*, p. 87.

⁹⁶ *DHC*, p. 98.

⁹⁷ *DHC*, p. 99. We learn earlier (p. 83) that the last anyone has heard from the brothers is a letter from the ringleader to a friend boasting about the planned attack.

⁹⁸ *DHC*, p. 102.

⁹⁹ *DHC*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁰ The Catholic doctrine by which the elements of the Eucharist become the blood and body of Christ - not mere representatives of them.

ers are brought down by the very signs they came to destroy, and must be led away from the cloister ‘unter Seufzern und häufigem Umsehen nach der Kathedrale, die hinter uns im Glanz der Sonne prächtig funkte’.¹⁰¹ Their newfound devotion leads them to worship a homemade wooden crucifix and chant gloria in excelsis in a display of Catholic ritual fulfilled ad absurdum. The onslaught of Catholic imagery continues in the mother’s audience with the abbess, which instills awe in the Protestant mother. The imposing appearance of the Abbess, ‘den Fuß, auf einem Schemel gestützt, der auf Drachenklauen ruhte’ is coupled with the apparently coincidental display of the music score on the lectern.¹⁰²

Yet secular authorities, too, are party in the clash: the imperial officer, dismisses the abbess’s calls for help to defend the convent, himself ‘ein Feind des Pabstthums, und [...] der neuen Lehre zugethan’, claiming that there was not the slightest danger to the convent.¹⁰³ Later, the cloister is secularised thanks to a clause in the Treaty of Westphalia. One might wonder why St. Cecilia does not intervene a second time - the cloister’s secularisation is hardly a reflection of divine omnipotence.¹⁰⁴ Any idea of a categorical triumph of religion thus seems doubtful. The battle is not one of the world of appearances against divine power, but a political battle. The music, the apparent cause of the brothers’ capitulation, is a physical affair: sound generated by vibrating bodies carried through the air by waves.¹⁰⁵

At stake in *Die heilige Cäcilie* are two of the ‘five solas’, a set of principles which distinguish the faith of the reformers from that of the Catholic Church, sola scriptura and soli Deo gloria.¹⁰⁶ The former, ‘by scripture alone’, posits that the Bible is the only source of revelation and teaches the behaviour necessary for salvation; the latter, ‘glory to God alone’ opposes the veneration of the Virgin Mary, angels, and the saints, arguing that all glory is due to God alone and that salvation may only be accomplished through His will. While for the Catholic church, the capitulation of the *Bilderstürmer* and the revival of Sister Antonia constitute divine intervention, from a Protestant perspective,

¹⁰¹ See Haase and Freudenburg, pp. 96-97; *DHC*, p. 90.

¹⁰² *DHC*, p. 98.

¹⁰³ *DHC*, p.77.

¹⁰⁴ See Haase and Freudenburg, p. 97.

¹⁰⁵ See Haase and Freudenburg, p. 95.

¹⁰⁶ The exact number and formulation of the ‘solas’ varies greatly between scholars. Typically three or five ‘solas’ are set out, chiefly *sola scriptura* (by scripture alone), *sola fide* (by faith alone), and *sola gratia* (by grace alone). These principles sought to counter what was perceived as a seizing of divinity by the Church itself.

the events can be no such thing. Moreover, hailing Saint Cecilia as the agent behind them contravenes the principle of *solī Deo gloria* by attributing the salvation of the brothers to Saint Cecilia rather than God. The status of the event is thus contested on the one hand as a miracle to be assimilated into Catholic doctrine, and on the other as something to be elucidated through rational enquiry: ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ versions of reality can be distinguished. The tale’s close with the mother, ‘durch diesen Vorfall tief bewegt, in den Schooß der katholischen Kirche zurückkehrte’ is typically Kleistian: the mother’s conversion to Catholicism seems to seal off the events from question.¹⁰⁷ The rationalism of the protestant mother, unable to find answers beyond those given to her by Gotthilf and the abbess, seeks refuge in the mysticism of the Catholic church. Yet if the Catholic church is portrayed ambiguously in Kleist’s tale, Protestantism is not spared criticism either: the iconoclasts violent intentions reveal a lack of tolerance and thus violate one of the central tenets of enlightenment, the call for tolerance of other religious positions.

Mindful of Kleist’s brand of irony, we might assume that Kleist is sceptical that the nun’s bilocation and the music is a miracle. Yet this is perhaps the wrong question to ask: Kleist does not so much ask whether the miracle really happened, as question what makes it real. Faced with the power of the Church’s narrative and bound by our need for explanation, Kleist suggests that the power to discern whether it is real or not lies beyond the powers of our understanding. The remarkable event of Sister Antonia’s recovery and the brothers’ conversion sits uncomfortably with conventional understandings of space and time - the event’s comprehension, located beyond the epistemological grasp of its observers in the text - and indeed the reader - threatens to be overshadowed by the problematic nature of the hermeneutic act itself. Kleist declines to balance the tale with other interpretations of the event, yet encourages the reader to question the ‘truth’ of the party laying claim to it by allowing the reader a glimpse into the vested interests at play and points to the enduring appetite for mysticism underpinning the reader’s intuitive understanding of the text and the ‘rational’ mother’s conversion.

¹⁰⁷ *DHC*, p. 104.

Conclusions

Both texts are distinctive in their number of narrative voices and elements. In *Die heilige Cäcilie*, the mysterious events are interpreted differently by the narrator, the landlord, Veit Gotthilf and the Abbess; similarly, *Die Elixiere* is bookended by the editor's foreword and Pater Spiridon's statement, with biographical fragments from others embedded throughout the monk's story. Yet it is the Church's perspective of events which takes structural precedence in both texts: the narrative of redemption crafted by the monk provides the reader with a certain trajectory of interpretation - not least in its implication that the monk's aberrant identities emerge from his drinking of the elixirs. In Kleist's tale, the novella revolves around an investigation into the cause behind the brothers' conversion with the Church's claims for the event as a miracle and the mother's own conversion emphasised - despite the vested interests which appear to weaken such claims. Correspondingly, the Prior's indulgence towards Medardus and the editor's remark in the preface that the former had wished to burn the monk's papers underscore the Church's desire to consolidate his story, the monk's path to redemption to be read, it would seem, as an illustration of the struggle and pain through which one can grow closer to God.

Hoffmann tantalisingly supplies the reader with indications that challenge this interpretation by presenting elements which appear to undermine and confuse the narrative. We thus see the drinking of the elixirs as a Pandora's box moment, from which point Medardus fails to resist the devil's temptations and succumbs to wickedness, set alongside the protagonist's family history, which can be read as a causal account of his behaviour. Similarly, Medardus's evil doppelgänger, Viktorin, appears at times a product of the monk's imagination, imperceptible to others; at other moments, his half-brother is materially real - along with the strange painter. To consider the repentant monk Medardus as the 'true' or 'real' figure against whom the other identities are contrasted is to disregard the narrative's plurality. In acknowledging the shifting material status of these identities, we become critically aware of the authenticity of the atoned monk's chronicle. *Die Elixiere's* resistance to offering the reader a clear account of the monk's story carries a distinctly modern stamp, feeding into the Romantic trope of the unfathomable self. As the Delphic figure Schönfeld/Belcampo reveals, reason alone cannot serve as a guiding principle owing to its propensity for introspection. Indeed,

Belcampo serves as a spokesman for a certain Romantic aesthetic, which valorises the imagination, but acknowledges the danger it presents in opening up potentially dangerous realms. Beyond his narrative function in the transitions between episodes and humorous diversion, Belcampo is lucid enough to recognise the monk's madness - Belcampo's joining of the cloister at the close underscores the allure and power of the Church's narrative to attract. The mother of Kleist's iconoclasts, too, is drawn to the Catholic church in a symbolic gesture of reason's exhaustion.

Both Kleist and Hoffmann's texts draw attention to the processes of selection, suppression and consolidation by which a narrative gains structural concretion. Religion's power as a guardian and author of such narratives is significant in its ability to elevate events into an untouchable, unfathomable celestial realm beyond our conventional ontological purview. The two texts illuminate the inescapable necessity of such metaphysical systems in narrative production. Viewed rationally alone, the precise nature of the events in *Die heilige Cäcilie* is unclear: the Catholic thaumaturgical narrative, however, smoothes over the cracks in our understanding, obviating the need for further effortful rational enquiry by presenting the mysterious events as the work of God.

Despite this, Kleist punches holes in this explanation, casually observing the cloister's subsequent secularisation - presumably St. Cecilia did not deign to save the cloister a second time. Hoffmann, meanwhile, allows his protagonist to craft an exculpatory narrative, carefully structured to present his crimes as part of a religious struggle, aided by the mitigatory efforts of the Prior and Spiridon at the novel's end. Yet the monk's account is confused by competing explanations, each flawed. The genealogical (i.e. rational) explanation for his behaviour is itself tainted by the presence of the supernatural with it; Medardus's split conscience is undone by the apparently fluctuating material reality of its avatars. The uncorking of the elixirs, a metaphor for the Fall and pivotal moment in the monk's redemptive tale, is rendered irrelevant by the evidence that suggests that the lust and pride which drive him to commit sin were present in his personality all along.

The reader's intuitive response to the texts discussed in this section is at once facilitated and undermined by details in the text. The lack of causal linkages, inconsistencies and contradictions, as well as the coexistence of apparently contradictory narratives, challenge this response. These narratives highlight the constructed nature of truth - in contrast to the enlightenment belief that it is something to be uncovered through the

exercise of reason. In forcing the reader to reflect and think critically about the stories, these narrative techniques, along with subject matter which tests rational epistemology, fulfil a certain discursive role within Kleist and Hoffmann's enlightenment response.

Chapter 5

Beyond Mimesis

Section one considered the writers' challenging of the practical application of enlightenment ideals and the assured trajectory of *Mündigkeit*, while section two explored the epistemological scepticism and fluidity of truth, both of which present a rebuttal of key assumptions underpinning the rational worldview. As we have seen, Kleist criticises the failure in the practical application of enlightenment values through the figure of the rational bourgeois, whose independent reasoning ends in disaster, and also through the story's plot, where the characters show no critical awakening despite the apparently propitious conditions to do so. This sense of scepticism and anxiety takes a more overtly theoretical form in Hoffmann's work, expressed not only in the struggle to articulate new artistic identities and creative processes, but also, as we have seen in both writers' works, in narrative techniques which leave just enough hints that there may be more to the story than meets the eye. The reader thus becomes self-conscious and is prompted to reflect on their own role in interpreting the story's events.

In this final section, 'Representational Aesthetics', I shift the focus of my consideration to the development of an aesthetic programme in response to the perceived shortcomings of enlightenment. This response is structured around the intersection of epistemology and ontology and questions whether the two can be truly considered to be separate. I contend that Hoffmann's artist figures in the texts studied represent an implicit taxonomy founded on the figures' creative process and departure from representational precedents. Hoffmann's 'inspired' artists' battle to translate their inner visions into works of art corresponds to an ambition to access a form of inspiration beyond the physical world. Such insights represent an alternative source of knowledge, whose light does not merely illuminate the material world, but penetrates deeply into an inner world to reveal its true nature. Hoffmann's aesthetic position appears at once to highlight the limited epistemological scope of rationality, yet also be mindful of the untenability of such visions as physical works of art. This apparent ambivalence towards enlightenment values is confounded by the somewhat flippant presentation of the very figures contesting them.

This chapter contends that the complex relationship of Hoffmann's Romanticism

to enlightenment requires a revision of our understanding of the two as diametrically opposed and posits a certain continuity between Classicism and Romanticism in the mimetic process underwriting the artist's creative endeavours. The periodisation of Classicism and Romanticism is pervasive in critical literature and, while useful at a level of generality, often characterises Romanticism as a rejection of and rebellion against Classicism.¹ 'Beyond mimesis' looks at Hoffmann's *Die Jesuiterkirche in G.* and *Der Artushof* in relation to the concept of mimesis.

Romanticism, however, marks not so much a paradigm shift problematising the conceptual framework of the age, as a form critical practice set in motion by enlightenment itself. The Romantics strove for a far-reaching synthesis as a restorative for modern life, riven by the contradictory faculties of reason and sensibility.² This ideal was driven not only by an anxiety about the weakening of religion's power to unite man, nature and the cosmos, but also by the increasing fragmentation of knowledge due to the technicality and specialisation of modern science. In contrast to efforts in science to eliminate any subjective influence, the Romantics sought to achieve a unifying perspective on nature through a synthesis of the exact knowledge of modern scientific experimentation, and the intuition and speculation of art.³

Classicism and Romanticism, I argue, are not antithetical and the concept of mimesis is central to both. In Winckelmann's view, art should be a productive appropriation of elements from Greek antiquity - a process of *Nachahmung*, of differentiation and interfusion, rather than simply *nachahmen* (copying). There is a certain continuity in the idealism of Winckelmann's *Nachahmung* and the Romantic aesthetic which Hoffmann expounds in his 'Serapiontic principle'. For Hoffmann's Serapion, the artist's job is to translate and make accessible his inner visions, disregarding conventions of realistic representation - yet, as we see in the figure of

¹ This view was prevalent in pre-1970s scholarship, but endures even in relatively recent histories of German literature where Classicism and Romanticism are treated separately, such as the *Camden House History of German Literature*, 10 vols (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2001-6). Hermann Korff's landmark work *Geist der Goethezeit*, 5 vols (Leipzig: Weber, 1923-1957) identifies that a single spirit which developed from *Sturm und Drang* to Classicism and Romanticism as part of a broader natural process. This close relation between Romanticism and Classicism is widely accepted by modern scholars, who tend to speak of a *Goethezeit*, under which Classicism and Romanticism may be subsumed. See also Ricarda Schmidt, 'From early to late Romanticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, ed. by Nicholas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 21-40; and Azade Seyhan, 'What is Romanticism, and where did it come from?', *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, pp. 1-20.

² See Seyhan, p. 11.

³ See Jürgen Barkhoff, 'Romantic Science and Psychology', in *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, pp. 209-226 (p. 209).

Berthold in *Die Jesuiterkirche* and Berklinger in *Der Artushof*, the artist is compelled to use pre-existing means of representation and thus doomed to fail in their endeavours to create art that *is*, rather than simply art that *represents*. While those figures who strive to harness these inner visions are presented in heroic Promethean terms, they are also gently satirised by their somewhat hackneyed suffering and devotion to art. Hoffmann's aesthetic of creative production appears thus to pour scorn on the blinkered rationalist worldview embodied by the bourgeois figures in the text to highlight the broader epistemological and representational possibilities available to the individual.

While this chapter focuses on the two Hoffmann texts and the next chapter will address Kleist's aesthetic views in more detail, an insight can be gleaned from Kleist's non-fictional writings. Kleist's well-known article 'Empfindungen vor Friedrichs Seelandschaft', which appeared in the *Berliner Abendblätter* on 13 October 1810, is a rare piece of art criticism by Kleist. Kleist's thoughts on Caspar David Friedrich's famous Romantic painting 'Mönch am Meer' are a reworking of writings by Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim. Setting aside discussion of the sublime in this piece, to which I will return in chapter six, Kleist's praise for the painting is cast in a typically ironic tone. Kleist declares his conviction 'daß sich, mit [Friedrichs] Geiste, eine Quadratmeile märkischen Sandes darstellen ließe, mit einem Berberitzenstrauch, worauf sich eine Krähe einsam plustert'.⁴ This economy of representation, in its 'Einförmigkeit und Uferlosigkeit', is seen by Kleist as akin to having one's eyelids removed. The ambivalence of Kleist's comments on the painting is reflected in his letter to Marie in the Summer of 1811, in which he praises music as an art which is the root of all other forms - or rather, as an 'algebraische Formel'.⁵

Kleist's description corresponds to widely held Romantic conceptions of music as capable of better disclosing the hidden reality of the world than those art forms compromised by the confines of linguistic representation. Kleist employs here the exuberant rhetoric of early Romanticism, but tempers it with a certain satirical bite. His fictive letter of the same year, 'Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen', draws a droll analogy between 'Gedanke' and the language, rhythm, harmony of his writing, and a piece of fruit: 'dem Durstigen kommt es, als solchem, auf die Schale nicht an, sondern auf die Früchte, die man ihm darin bringt'. Regardless of how attractive the elements enclosing

⁴ Kleist, *II/7 Berliner Abendblätter I* (1997) pp. 61-62.

⁵ Kleist, *IV/3 Briefe*, pp. 603-607 (p. 607).

‘den Geist’, they are ‘an und für sich, aus diesem höheren Gesichtspunkt betrachtet, nichts, als ein wahrer, obschon natürlicher und notwendiger Übelstand’.⁶ The aspiration towards bypassing representation and its unappealing and cumbersome ‘rind’ will be familiar to readers of *Über das Marionettentheater*, which is prefigured in Kleist’s earlier letter to his friend Otto August Rühle von Lilienstern in 1806, where he posits that ‘Jede erste Bewegung, alles Unwillkürliche ist schön; und schief und verschoben alles, sobald es sich selbst begreift. O der Verstand! Der unglückselige Verstand!’⁷ Kleist’s lamentation about the loss of beauty due to self-consciousness corresponds to a broader anxiety about representation, evident also in the strivings of Hoffmann’s artist figures.

This common ground between Kleist’s letters and Hoffmann’s treatment of artist figures in his fiction problematises one of the core values of enlightenment thought: the conception of the world as inherently knowable and representable. Within the linear narrative of literary history, Classicism offers an aesthetic counterpart to such a conception: art should be didactic and morally improve the beholder; emotional and rational elements should be carefully balanced. Plato’s concept of mimesis, later recast by Winckelmann, postulates a set of essentially unknowable God-given ideal forms, of which the material world is a lesser imitation. Within such a paradigm, artistic representations of this world are doubly removed from these divine, ‘true’ forms. Given the status of mimesis as a form of lesser imitation, the challenge for the Romantic artist was thus to access a beauty and truth beyond the material world. Classicism is often wrongly charged with advocating copying of Ancient Greek and Roman art. In actual fact, Classicism calls for considered selection and idealisation of beauty, with Ancient Rome and Greece supplying the best examples. Indeed, mimesis, far from being mere copying, is not inimical to Romanticism, as might be presumed, given the latter’s emphasis on spontaneity, individuality, emotion, sensitivity, naturalness and originality, against Classicism’s balance, unity and somewhat normative bent. Rather, mimesis provides a unifying strand common to both Classicism and Romanticism. While clearly stylistically very different from Romantic art, Classicism shares a similar creative process requiring the translation of inner images into a material form.

⁶ Kleist, *II/8 Berliner Abendblätter II*, p. 24.

⁷ Kleist, *IV/2 Briefe*, pp. 417-423 (p. 423).

The Enlightenment's emphasis on self-determination set the stage for the Romantic cult of genius, inaugurating a decisive shift away from the identity of the pre-modern artist, who often remains so well concealed behind his artwork that he is all but invisible to posterity; the artist of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries emerges by contrast as a hero in fiction, an artistic subject in his own right, whose modes of production help carve out a social status and role distinct from the public.⁸ This 'specular' artist, an identity invested not only in the artwork's creation, but also its interpretation, is, for the Romantics, a 'genius'. The 'genius', by virtue of his creative powers, is able to challenge the boundaries between the noumenal and phenomenal presented by Plato's hierarchy to produce something without precedent in the material world. Such efforts to break away from prevailing aesthetic movements are presented as a Promethean effort, a heroic and tragic undertaking, condemned to failure.

Yet the familiar practice of dividing of literary history into contiguous epochs, demarcated on the basis of style, as a means of orientation for the scholar often fails to do justice to the entanglements between artists of different times, places and media. Indeed, to level such criticism at the notion of literary or artistic 'epochs' is hardly controversial and few scholars would contest their limited relevance. Nevertheless, scholarship often follows the folds of these boundaries: Hoffmann's *Die Jesuiterkirche* is broadly apprehended as a narrative representation of a tussle not only between opposing stylistic schools, but artistic ends. Other critics, by contrast, have emphasised the protagonist Berthold's affinity with other artist figures in Hoffmann's works, highlighting their shared characteristics and plot structures. The common ground between these figures is not necessarily stylistic or medial, but rather one of crisis and creation: the artist figure typically stands isolated from the bourgeois society around him and struggles to translate his fantastic inner visions into physically present works of art.

Hoffmann conceptualises this struggle in his 'Serapiontic principle', arguably his most explicit articulation of an aesthetic standpoint. While its precise content is disputed by critics, it is typically understood to fuse the artist's inspiration from the world with transformative powers of the artistic imagination to produce an inner image which must then be communicated to the beholder. The artist's job is thus to translate and make

⁸ See Alexandra Pontzen, *Künstler ohne Werk: Modelle negativer Produktionsästhetik in der Künstlerliteratur von Wackenroder bis Heiner Müller* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2000), pp. 27-28.

accessible his inner visions, disregarding conventions of realistic representation - yet, as we see in the figure of Berthold and Berklinger in *Der Artushof*, such efforts inevitably fall short of their aims. The ironic theme of the artist without material artwork is used to illustrate the impossibility of maintaining consciousness in both the higher plane of the imagination and the material world. Examining not only *Die Jesuiterkirche*, but also *Der Artushof* and *Der Einsiedler Serapion* from the *Serapionsbrüder* collection of tales, this chapter examines the role of mimesis as a substructure for different artistic positions, together with its broader relevance to questions of representation.

Representation remains an inescapable stage of artistic production, given that an artwork *represents* the artist's vision. For the 'inspired' artist, this representation lies not in a candid depiction of the material world, but rather is present indirectly in the abstracting and idealising process of mimesis. Mimesis, in its imitation of the material, is fundamentally an act of representation. The limited epistemological scope of the rational worldview, as discussed in previous chapters, is an inducement to seek new sources of inspiration beyond the plane of material reality. The inspired artist's visions, however, must be rendered as physical works of art - inevitably as representations of such visions.

Die Jesuiterkirche in G. is one of Hoffmann's lesser-studied texts but merits closer attention and comparison to his other works due to its exploration of the problems confronting the Romantic artist. The relative scarcity of critical work on *Die Jesuiterkirche* stems perhaps from the story's juxtaposition of opposing aesthetic positions, the cool rationality of materialism to the simmering emotionality of Romanticism. The two positions in the text at first glance appear clearly antithetical, initially appearing to leave only their affirmation or negation as possible outcomes of the story. As with other tales by Hoffmann, the narrator is also a character in the plot and does not hold back from offering his own judgement of the Professor and the painter. The narrator, who identifies himself as an 'enthusiast', is unexpectedly forced to spend three days in the town G., while his carriage is repaired. There, he meets Professor Aloysius Walter from the Jesuits' college, of whom he has heard one of his friends speak. At the Professor's invitation, the enthusiast views the church and encounters the painter Berthold at work. Later, leaving the church for a midnight walk, the narrator finds Berthold working on a *trompe l'oeil* painting of an altar. The narrator offers to assist Berthold and the two converse. The next day, he tries to find out more

about the painter from the Professor, who gives him a short biography of Berthold written by another 'enthusiast'. Berthold's life, as we learn from the manuscript, resembles the plot of a *Bildungsroman*, with the young painter thrown into an existential crisis as he is torn between a kind of nascent realism and idealism, and steered by different mentors.⁹ Berthold studied in Italy in search of his true style. He is encouraged by a typically Hoffmannian figure, a mysterious Maltese gentleman, to focus instead on penetrating nature's inner sense in order to see its image in great splendour in his mind. Berthold's story recalls Ovid's Pygmalion in *Metamorphoses* when, during the invasion of Naples, Berthold encounters a woman who appears to be the physical manifestation of his idealised female figure. Saving her from a murderous mob, he returns with her as his wife to Germany. He finds his creative talent sapped and bitterly separates from his wife and child - with the implication that he kills them. Returning to the present, the narrator departs and receives news from the Professor six months later that the painter has completed his masterpiece and disappeared, apparently having committed suicide.

The plot of *Der Artushof* bears many similarities, with the story's hero captivated by an image of a female character, who is coveted and pursued. Eventually, the artist realises that this image is an ideal, and thus not identical to the real person in question - instead, the artist possessed *his* figure all along and it is this ideal, not the living and breathing woman behind it, which serves as his model for aesthetic production. The story starts with the merchant prince Elias Roos commissioning his son-in-law-to-be Traugott to write a letter to Hamburg. Traugott, working in Danzig's Artus Court - a stock exchange and also a centre of artistic and social life - instead of fulfilling his duties, allows his mind to wander and doodles, copying two figures from a nearby wall painting. A man named Berklinger praises Traugott's talent and reveals himself to be the creator of the original images.¹⁰ Traugott is sceptical as the painting is easily 200 years old; nevertheless, he takes lessons from the man. Traugott is captivated by a painting of a young woman who closely resembles Berklinger's son; the latter explains that the painting is of his late sister, Felizitas. Traugott later discovers that the boy is in fact the woman of the painting, but is immediately thrown out of Berklinger's house - neither Berklinger nor the boy can be found the next day. On the day of his wedding to Roos's

⁹ See Marion Geiger, 'Kreative Mimesis: E. T. A. Hoffmanns *Die Jesuiterkirche in G.*', *Orbis Litterarum*, 68.1 (2013): 17–42 (p. 23).

¹⁰ The name Berklinger alludes to Berglinger in Tieck and Wackenroder's collection of essays on aesthetic theory *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (1796).

daughter, Traugott learns that Berklinger's son is in fact Felizitas and that both father and daughter are in Sorrento. Berklinger, as a stockbroker informs Traugott, dressed his daughter as a boy because of a prophecy that he will die suddenly, should his daughter ever fall in love. Traugott abandons his wife-to-be and rushes to Rome. There, he meets a schoolfriend who claims to have seen Berklinger and his daughter in the Trinità del Monte church. When Traugott sees the man and his daughter closer, he realises it is not Berklinger and Felizitas. Despite this, he stays with them and grows close to Dorina. Returning to Danzig to settle Roos's estate, he discovers that 'Sorrent' is a country house and that is where Felizitas and her father had moved. Felizitas has since married a police superintendant and Berklinger died as prophesied. Traugott takes his leave and returns to Rome to marry Dorina.

Secondary literature on *Die Jesuiterkirche*, although limited compared to that of some of Hoffmann's better known texts, is diverse. Jörn Steigerwald's essay on *Die Jesuiterkirche* focuses on Jesuit rhetoric as a background for the text's debate on representational aesthetics - in particular, the notion of 'argutia', economy of expression and rhetorical wit, used to return deceived and rebellious souls to the correct path.¹¹ Yet, as Ricarda Schmidt notes, neither the painter Berthold nor the narrator, a travelling 'enthusiast' interested in contemporary debates on artistic innovation and originality, are themselves Jesuits and indeed stand in opposition to the Professor: Berthold, the lost and tortured soul, is not returned to the righteous path. Ricarda Schmidt, too, discusses *Die Jesuiterkirche* in her monograph *Wenn mehrere Künste im Spiel sind: Intermedialität bei E.T.A. Hoffmann*.¹² Schmidt's book seeks to avoid what she views as a tendency to homologise current and past concepts: instead, she proposes to examine Hoffmann's dialogic relationship with his time; notably, the cross-pollination between music, visual art, and literature of the period. Schmidt discusses *Die Jesuiterkirche* in relation to *Signor Formica* and the real-life figures of Salvator Rosa and Raphael. Raphael represents the primary point of orientation for both the narrator and Berthold, with the latter's unfinished masterpiece modelled on Raphael's style. Perhaps most interesting in Schmidt's analysis of the text is her suggestion that the Professor's claim

¹¹ See Jörn Steigerwald, 'Anschauung und Darstellung von Bildern: E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Die Jesuiterkirche in G.*', in *Bild und Schrift in der Romantik*, ed. by Gerhard Neumann and Günter Oesterle (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1999), pp. 329-356.

¹² Ricarda Schmidt, *Wenn mehrere Künste im Spiel sind: Intermedialität bei E.T.A. Hoffmann*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

that the higher kingdom should be recognised in this world and this recognition can be awakened by cheerful symbols, presented to us by the spirit which descends from that higher kingdom, is in fact a rhetorical camouflage for his dedication to the earthly realm. This insight is significant in acknowledging that the difference between the Professor's artistic viewpoint and Berthold's painting is not simply one of style, but rather of inspiration: Berthold's female figure represents an ideal, disengaged from its material origin; the Professor, however, looks no further than the material world for signs of a 'higher kingdom'.

While Schmidt's discussion furnishes the evidence for Hoffmann's intermediality and convincingly argues in favour of understanding Hoffmann's writings within the idiom of their time, it is Marion Geiger's 2013 article 'Kreative Mimesis: E. T. A. Hoffmanns *Die Jesuiterkirche in G.*' which forms the point of departure for my discussion of *Die Jesuiterkirche*. Geiger views the tale as riven by tensions between competing artistic aspirations: that of realistic depiction and the Romantic conception of art as subjective expression.¹³ Geiger considers the conflict between these notions of artistic creation and representation in relation to Plato's model of mimesis, aligning the mentor figures in the tale, Hackett and the Maltese gentleman, along a split of *techné* and *poiesis* - etymologically speaking, the knowledge of how to do and make things, as opposed to a form of production that transforms the world, requiring virtue and a knowledge of which ends are worth pursuing. While this conceptual pairing originates from Antiquity, where they were viewed as complementary and mutually reinforcing, the two were increasingly considered as detached from one another in the nineteenth century. *Poiesis* was ascribed spontaneity and originality, whereas the learnable rule-driven *techné* bore negative connotations - hence the problematic status of 'academic' training and art.

Beyond the periodisations of literary history, *techné* and *poiesis* offer a more relevant conceptual pairing than that of Classicism and Romanticism for discussion of the artist's creative process: the tension between *techné* and *poiesis* is present not only in *Die Jesuiterkirche*, but also in *Der Artushof*. Alexandra Pontzen considers *Der Artushof* alongside *Des Veters Eckfenster* and *Ritter Gluck*: the artist figures of these tales are united by their struggle to depict their inner visions and their scant artistic

¹³ See Geiger, p. 19.

production.¹⁴ Peter von Matt also focuses on the creative process, viewing Hoffmann's artists as divided by antinomies of inner and outer vision, with the latter subordinate and objectifying counterpart to the former. Von Matt contends that the initial impression that *Die Jesuiterkirche* is a Romantic tale of madness is tempered somewhat by the affinity with the later tale *Der Einsiedler Serapion*.¹⁵ The possibility that Serapion is a visionary and not simply a madman links, I would argue, more strongly still with Berklinger in *Der Artushof*. Like Serapion, Berklinger's apparent genius lies at the vanishing point between madness and the idealism of his visions.

Mimesis

Johann Joachim Winckelmann's importance lies in providing the impetus and form to Classicism, against which 'Romanticism' is defined. Indeed, with the possible exception of Klopstock, Winckelmann was held in high regard in a way unlike almost any other German writer and is credited with the rebirth of German Hellenism. Following the Reformation, classical studies had deteriorated and Greek was studied chiefly as the language of the New Testament. In his seminal work *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (1755), Winckelmann claimed that perfect beauty was not to be found in nature, but rather the artist must select and combine beautiful elements in order to create an idealised image - ancient Rome and Greece, in particular, supplied the finest models.

The artist's skill in imitation is the product of his or her powers of observation and technical ability. The aims of artistic creation in Antiquity and the measures by which it was considered a success largely centred on illusion - achievements in mimesis served as a model of progress.¹⁶ For Winckelmann, copying relates to the imitation of beauty reduced to a single object, unlike the general beauty gained from gathering observations from many objects to form an ideal image.¹⁷ Winckelmann carefully distinguishes between *Nachahmen* - copying, and *Nachahmung* - imitation. Importantly, the latter, unlike copying, does not stand in conflict with originality. This positive appraisal of

¹⁴ See Pontzen, *Künstler ohne Werk*, pp. 163-191.

¹⁵ See Peter von Matt, *Die Augen der Automaten: E.T.A. Hoffmanns Imaginationslehre als Prinzip seiner Erzählkunst*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1971), p. 15.

¹⁶ See E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 11.

¹⁷ See Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Writings on Art*, ed. by David Irwin (London: Phaidon, 1972), p. 67.

mimesis was not universally shared and was rejected by Johann Georg Hamann, author of *Sturm und Drang* treatise on beauty *Aesthetica in nuce*.¹⁸ Despite the distance claimed by the likes of Hamann between Classicism and their own aesthetic of self-expression, Winckelmann's position is not without similarity in its idealism and nostalgic, romanticised view of antiquity.

Mimesis, then, taken at a level of generality, is a practice privileging the primacy of the objective dimension. Yet the lineage of 'mimesis' is such that it cannot be taken in any unqualified sense: Plato's hierarchy of forms deems art to be the mere imitation of the material world, itself a shadow of higher forms. This order raises epistemological, theological, and moral questions over the legitimacy of artistic representation. Plato's is a position somewhat at odds with Aristotle's, for whom mimesis allows for a knowledge of the contingent, the probable and the necessary. Absolved from the need to represent things realistically, the artist is thus free to provide his audience with moral insight by attempting to pictorialise universal truths.

Viewed as a 'Romantic' from the vantage point of literary history, Hoffmann sought to challenge those staid enlightenment values of rationality and the retreat from speculation and metaphysics in favour of concrete activity and utility in the physical world. Yet, as this thesis argues, the relationship of Hoffmann (as of Kleist) with enlightenment is complicated by his ambivalence towards both the values he ostensibly rejects and the irony with which he treats those figures who would challenge them. Hoffmann's aesthetic programme initially appears to be a rejection of mimesis: Hoffmann answers Schlegel's call for a new mythology, which must be developed 'aus der tiefsten Tiefe des Geistes' to serve as a point of orientation for poesy, programmatically with his 'Serapiontic principle,' which posits that the artist must make use of his fantastic inner visions.¹⁹ The writings of Hoffmann's *Serapionsbrüder* constitute a formal rejection of any aesthetic of imitation and responsibility towards

¹⁸ Hamann viewed humanity as unified in its diversity, acknowledging the numerous and contrasting aspects and features which make up the human being. Hamann did not confine his understanding of the human to reason and epistemology, but also considered sexual desire and the appetite for revenge as constitutive elements too. Imitation of the beautiful in nature thus fails to fully mediate the human. See Johann Georg Hamann, *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten. Aesthetica in nuce* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1998).

¹⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Rede über die Mythologie', in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. by Ernst Behler and Hans Eichler, II (Paderborn: Schönigh, 1967), pp. 311-329.

realistic representation.²⁰ Hoffmann's formal articulation of his guiding aesthetic principle is prefigured literarily in his earlier works. The Romanticism of Hoffmann's work, however, is linked to the Enlightenment in ways that make it not simply the converse of the latter and an outright rejection of mimesis. This can be illustrated by the figure of the genius, a staple character in Romantic fiction, as exemplified by the painter Berthold. While enlightenment faith in the representability and knowability of the world is called into question by the emphasis in Romanticism on the artist's inner vision, the genius figure attempts to break through Plato's mimetic hierarchy of divine forms, which views the material world and mimetic art as doubly removed from the forms. The genius creates something of original beauty by translating an inner image to create something of a higher truth.

While the Enlightenment is generally held to be a watershed marking a gradual shift in our apprehension of the material world as being of greater reality and value than any metaphysical realm, Romanticism sought truth in precisely those areas subjected to rational critique during the Enlightenment, such as dreams, madness and the supernatural. The Romantic artist thus inaugurates a return to spiritualism - yet, for many Romantics, stripped of the guarantor of religious institutions.²¹ While mimesis as an artistic praxis is rejected, it serves as something against which Romantic responses to enlightenment can define themselves: an example of *techné* in opposition to their *poiesis*. Such responses seek to return to a pre-enlightenment ontological hierarchy in which the spiritual realm is of greater significance.

Plato's notion of mimesis draws from a well of scepticism towards artists - in particular, towards poets. Socrates' assertion that artists work at a distance from truth has ethical overtones - a notion continuous with Plato's account of mimesis. Plato's intention, it must be stressed, is not to cast doubt upon the existence of a physical world which can be apprehended by the senses. To be precise, the ordinary, sensibly present

²⁰ Hoffmann's 'Serapiontic principle' is prefigured literarily in Tieck and Wackenroder's *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, where the monk cites a letter from Raphael written to the Count of Castiglione: 'Ich halte mich an ein gewisses Bild im Geiste, welches in meine Seele kommt'. See Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and Ludwig Tieck, *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), p. 6.

²¹ Schelling and Novalis, as part of the broader intellectual movement of the *Frühromantik*, held that everyone was bound by fundamental moral and natural laws and called for a new religious mythology for the modern world. While the *Frühromantiker* saw the world as divided and longed for unity, they sought to reintegrate such differences and divisions within the larger concepts of state, society and, ultimately, nature. Their brand of unifying religious mythology had a more pantheistic foundation than that promulgated by theistic institutions.

objects which surround us stand in a relationship of dependency with 'forms'. For Plato, all objects and qualities have a corresponding 'form', which constitutes their essence and exists independently of space and time. The forms thus sit at the top of Plato's ranking of things by ontological dependency: images of sensible objects acquire definition through their relationship with Forms; these, by contrast, do not rely on anything else for their names. Plato's famous 'Allegory of the Cave' is used to demonstrate the extent to which we may or may not have knowledge of the world. The prisoners are tied up in such a way that they can only see the passing shadows on the back of the cave cast by various objects in front of a fire - any disabusal would not immediately be understood as a liberation from their condition.²²

An analogy can be drawn between the prisoners and people living in the 'everyday' world without the gift of the artist's liberated imagination: these individuals fail to see the genius's freedom as such. So it is, as we see with Berthold, that the genius' struggle and exclusion from mainstream society is not necessarily viewed as a kind of emancipation from the shadow reality of the everyday. In *Der Artushof*, Traugott is torn between his artistic inclinations and his professional and social obligations which are formalised in his engagement to the burgher's daughter Christina.

The theme of antagonism between poetry and philosophy, which underwrites Plato's concept of mimesis, is established throughout his work, rather than expressed in any singular passage. While Plato expels the poetry of Homer and his followers from his ideal state in Book X of the *Republic*, in *Laws* the banished poets are allowed to compete with the lawmakers as rivals in shaping human life - an agreement in which poetry is subordinate to politics and those who fashion and those who imitate must speak as one. Only what is deemed morally admissible can be 'imitated'; what remains is to be narrated.²³ Plato's notion of mimesis, introduced in Books II and III by Plato's spokesman Socrates, is thus not an isolated denunciation of the arts, but ties into a broader paradigm of hylomorphism, the imposition of forms upon the material world, creating the structures through which we view it.²⁴ In *Symposium*, a poetic demonstration of Plato's philosophy, Plato draws attention to the fraught nature of knowledge transmission: acquiring, replicating and transmitting knowledge depends on

²² See Plato, 'Republic VII', in *Complete Works*, ed. by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 1132-1134.

²³ See Plato, 'Republic X', in *Complete Works*, pp. 1199-1223. See 'Laws VII', pp. 1457-1490.

²⁴ See Plato, 'Republic II and III', in *Complete Works*, pp. 998-1052.

an intricate narrative genealogy. While the objects of such narratives have their basis in the eternal forms, these objects are incapable of ever fully representing them.²⁵ Indeed, while Hoffmann's artist figures seemingly seek to free themselves from mimesis, an act which would in theory guarantee an artwork's originality and innovation, the artworks themselves are inescapably representations of an ideal. Further, visual arts do not so much imitate the world as it is, but rather how it *appears*. The longstanding dichotomy between imitation and self-expression is not necessarily, as first appears, a contradiction, given that, in representing an object, the artist is not necessarily seeking to create a faithful reproduction of it. Correspondingly, the beholder does not measure an artwork against some yardstick of reality, but is isolated from real life by the temporary suspension of scruples of verisimilitude when contemplating a work of art.

The question of imitation, in contrast to copying, and the role of self-expression are central to the conflict between artistic styles in *Die Jesuiterkirche*. More broadly, the idea of freeing oneself from copying lies at the heart of the artist's claims to originality. Berklinger's gruff warning to Traugott not to try to seek any allegorical meaning in his painting is not so much a rejection of critical interpretation, but rather an indication of Berklinger's view of mimesis: Berklinger does not consider his painting to be a representation of something in the physical world, but rather to have a reality of its own. If Berklinger's painting were to truly be considered to reference only itself, it would posit a reality beyond the purview of rational speech. The very notion that an artwork could be genuinely non-mimetic is, of course, highly problematic and raises the question of whether it is at all possible to create something that has no reference beyond itself. The origins of the idealised image which forms the basis of the genius's masterpiece are clearly rooted in the physical world. In what appears to be a familiar schema in Hoffmann's work, Berthold and Traugott covet a particular female image, yet fail to recognise that this ideal is rooted within themselves and thus a reflection of their own ego. The ideal serves as an archetype of artistic production and any physical relationship with the person who inspired this ideal redirects the creative process away from one translating an inner vision to one of conventional mimesis. Berthold and Traugott therefore make the error of searching for something that they already possess.

²⁵ See Freddie Rokem, *Philosophers and Thespians: Thinking Performance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 26; Plato, 'Symposium', in *Complete Works*, pp. 457-505.

The Creative Process

This distinction between copying and imitation is explored in Berthold's development as a painter, as he discovers as a student in Rome studying the works of the great masters: 'Er sah ja selbst, daß seinen Zeichnungen, seinen Kopien alles Leben des Originals fehle [...] alles, was er auswendig zeichnete, hatte, wie jedes nur undeutlich, verworren Gedachte, kein Regen, keine Bedeutung.'²⁶ Berthold's lifeless copies lead him to doubt his vocation as a painter - a notion quickly rejected by his mentor Birkner, who claims that Berthold's doubts only affirm his vocation - 'Der, welcher in stetem unwandelbaren Vertrauen auf seine Kraft immer fortzuschreiten gedenkt, ist ein blöder Tor, der sich selbst täuscht'.²⁷ Birkner's claim underscores the intuition that the artist needs crisis in order to thrive - a particular set of circumstances to stir his passions and provide the necessary creative vigour for great work.

Such a crisis emerges for Traugott, whose artistic awakening is accompanied with a growing dissatisfaction with his job. Traugott's escape in *Der Artushof* from the monotony of the stock exchange with its paper-rustling and coin-clinking functionaries, is accompanied with the narrator's description of the creative process as the inhalation of 'erquicklichen Frühlingsstrahlen, die die innere Welt voll herrlicher Bilder entzünden'.²⁸ This image of nature being drawn in by the artist's senses is shared by the Maltese gentleman in *Die Jesuiterkirche*, who excoriates 'das bloße genaue Abschreiben der Natur' producing 'korrekte Abschriften eines in [dem Künstler] fremder Sprache des Originals'. Instead, the initiated artist 'vernimmt die Stimme der Natur, die in wunderbaren Lauten aus Baum, Gebüsch, Blume, Berg und Gewässer von unerforschlichem Geheimnis spricht, die in seiner Brust zu frommer Ahnung gestalten; dann kommt, wie der Geist Gottes selbst, die Gabe über ihn, diese Ahnung sichtlich in seine Werke zu übertragen'.²⁹ The Maltese gentleman's conception of the creative process revolves around a particular artistic receptivity to sense impressions in nature and an ability to transform these into divine intuitions. Yet, as we learn in *Der Artushof*, a further ingredient is required in this process: contingency. As Traugott begins to work on writing the dispatch as directed by Roos, it is by chance that he 'gerade vor den in

²⁶ *DJ.*, p. 125.

²⁷ *DJ.*, p. 126.

²⁸ *DA*, p. 186.

²⁹ *DJ.* p. 130.

einem Zuge abgebildeten Figuren stand', to which his eye is drawn.³⁰ The narrator later offers an explanation for Traugott's contemplative doodling and distant behaviour by drawing an analogy with the 'Weltgeist' as 'eine tüchtige Elektrisiermaschine' from which mysterious conductors stretch through our lives and which we try to avoid, 'aber in irgend einem Moment müßten wir darauf treten, und Blitz und Schlag führen durch unser Inneres, in dem sich nun plötzlich Alles anders gestalte.'³¹ Traugott has, by the narrator's assessment, just stepped on one such live wire. The implied relationship between the artist and their creative faculties is thus one of passivity, requiring some chance encounter to animate some inherent proclivity towards artistic creation - 'ein reines wahrhaftiges Künstlergemüt', as Berthold is described by his mentor Birkner.³²

This process of artistic creation contrasts sharply with the rational production techniques of Berthold's altar painting, which seeks to trick the viewer by creating an illusion of a three-dimensional object. This style of production and painting is at variance with the younger Berthold, as we learn from his story. Berthold's two mentors, Hackert and the Maltese gentleman represent conflicting stylistic movements - Hackert is able to represent nature with great accuracy and has considerable technical ability; the Maltese gentleman, by contrast, advises Berthold to seek inspiration in his own inner visions. While 'der ehrliche deutsche Hackert' embodies enlightenment values of hard work, patience and diligence, the gently ironic tone in which Berthold's accomplishments under Hackert are cast, where he 'nicht Geringes in dem Dunstigen und Duftigen [leistete]', undermine Hackert's mimetic aesthetic.³³

The Maltese gentleman, by contrast stands for a Romantic understanding of artistic inspiration - the two mentors thus juxtapose *techné* and *poiesis*. The figure of the Maltese gentleman personifies Berthold's critical spirit and striving for perfection. Speaking to Berthold, he states 'aus dir hätte viel werden können; denn sichtlich zeugen deine Werke das rastlose Bestreben nach dem Höheren, aber nimmer wirst du dein Ziel erreichen, denn der Weg, den du eingeschlagen, führt nicht dahin.'³⁴ The man deems Berthold's tutelage under the landscape painter Hackert unsuitable and we learn from

³⁰ *DA*, p. 178.

³¹ *DA*, p. 183.

³² *DJ*, p. 124.

³³ *DJ*, p. 127.

³⁴ *DJ*, p. 129.

Hackert that the 'Maltheser' 'gar nichts auf mich hält'.³⁵ The man instead advocates listening to nature's voice, which speaks of the unfathomable mystery in the wonderful sounds of the trees, flowers, and waters, which combine in the painter to form an impression. It is the painter's gift to be able to translate this impression visually into an artwork.

The Serapiontic Principle

This conception of art as a representation of the ideal is prefigured in Hoffmann's later response in *Der Einsiedler Serapion* to Friedrich Schlegel's call for a new mythology in his *Rede über die Mythologie*. Schlegel expresses his wish for a new unifying myth for contemporary literature and art - a myth grounded not in the familiar, sensory world surrounding us, but forged 'aus der tiefsten Tiefe des Geistes'.³⁶ This new framework, grounded in the human spirit, is a hieroglyphic representation of nature through continually changing imagery.³⁷ Rather than producing a treatise outlining his views, Hoffmann presents them to us through fiction. In the first section of his framed collection of short stories, *Die Serapionsbrüder*, in which a group of friends tell one another stories, the character Lothar calls for the friends to try to form the picture they seek to convey in their minds 'mit allen seinen Gestalten, Farben, Lichtern und Schatten, und dann, wenn er sich recht entzündet davon fühlt, die Darstellung ins äußere Leben [zu] tragen.'³⁸ The artist's inspiration from the world is transformed by the artist's imagination into an image which must then be communicated. *Der Einsiedler Serapion* is the first tale in the *Serapionsbrüder* collection and provides a narrative exposition of Hoffmann's 'Serapiontic principle'.

Cyprian, one of the friends whose conversations provide the frame for the tales of *Die Serapionsbrüder*, introduces the tale in the first person. The storyteller, who is lost in a forest, chances upon a hermit, and asks for directions to a nearby town. The hermit responds irritably that it is only curiosity to see him that has driven the man into this

³⁵ *DJ*, p. 128.

³⁶ Schlegel claims 'Es fehlt, behaupte ich, unsrer Poesie an einem Mittelpunkt [...] Wir haben keine Mythologie. Aber setze ich hinzu, wir sind nahe daran eine zu erhalten, oder vielmehr es wird Zeit, daß wir ernsthaft dazu mitwirken sollen, eine hervorzubringen.' ('Rede über die Mythologie', p. 312). Schlegel draws an analogy between the relation of the soul to the body and mythology: 'Was sonst das Bewußtsein ewig flieht, ist hier dennoch sinnlich geistig zu schauen und festgehalten, wie die Seele in dem umgebenden Leibe, durch den sie in unser Auge schimmert, zu unserm Ohre spricht' (p. 318).

³⁷ See John A. McCarthy, 'Forms and objectives of Romantic criticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, ed. by Nicholas Saul, pp. 101-118 (p. 111).

³⁸ *Die Serapionsbrüder*, p. 69.

desert and that he should return to Alexandria with his friend Ambrosius von Camaldoli, an Italian theologian from the 15th century. Bewildered by the strange man, the narrator continues his journey and later learns that the man, known as 'Priester Serapion', was a brilliantly talented poet who had previously held an important diplomatic post - yet Serapion one day went missing and was eventually found in the Tyrolean mountains, where he preached in the villages and lived alone in the forest. Recognised by his uncle, the man was taken to an asylum, from which he escaped and built a shelter in the forest close to the town B. Fascinated by the recluse and eager to free the man from his 'fixed idea', the narrator returns to visit him. Despite his preparations, the narrator finds his attempts to 'cure' the man fail: the man responds curtly that he is frequently visited by people, 'vom Teufel angetrieben', who attempt to persuade him that he is 'der Graf P** aus M'. Serapion declares his present visitor 'der ohnmächtigste von allen Widersachern die mir erschienen und ich werde Sie mit Ihren eignen Waffen schlagen, das heißt mit den Waffen der Vernunft.'³⁹ Indeed, Serapion counters the narrator's claims that he is imprisoned by a fixed idea, arguing that in fact his interlocutor is more likely to be mad than himself. The martyr Serapion, according to the narrator, lived many centuries ago thus rendering the hermit's claimed identity implausible. Serapion responds, however, that time is a relative concept and it seems to a him merely hours since he was put to martyrdom by Emperor Dezius. Serapion's view of the world does not rely upon sensory inputs but is entirely ideal:

Ist es nicht der Geist allein, der das was sich um uns her begibt in Raum und Zeit, zu erfassen vermag? - Ja was hört was sieht, was fühlt ins uns? - vielleicht die toten Maschinen die wir Auge-Ohr-Hand etc. nennen und nicht der Geist? - Gestaltet sich nun etwa der Geist seine in Raum und Zeit bedingte Welt im Innern auf eigene Hand und überläßt jene Funktionen einem in uns inwohnenden Prinzip? - Wie ungereimt! Ist es nun also der Geist allein, der die Begebenheit vor uns erfäßt, so hat sich das auch wirklich begeben was er dafür anerkennt?⁴⁰

For the hermit, if the mind alone is responsible for cognition, then it too serves as an arbiter for reality. This view of reality appears to be loosely Berkleyan: the monistic view that posits that only the mind and its contents exist and that sensible objects are

³⁹ *Der Einsiedler Serapion*, p. 30.

⁴⁰ *Der Einsiedler Serapion*, pp. 33-34.

ideas.⁴¹

There is some divergence between scholars on the nature, scope and usefulness of the Serapiontic principle. Hilda Meldrum Brown explores the Serapiontic principle as a theoretical underpinning for the creative process in Hoffmann's writing. Brown's book follows this strand of this concept through many of Hoffmann's novellas and *Märchen* from the *Fantasie-* and *Nachtstücke*.⁴² This corresponds to the view of Kenneth Negus, for whom the Serapiontic principle represents a major factor in the unity of Hoffmann's whole literary accomplishment.⁴³ Other critics have sought to identify the most important components of the Serapiontic aesthetic, such as Alina Dana Weber, who locates it in a visionary 'Schauen' of external reality, a balance between inner representation and the outside world.⁴⁴ By contrast, in the notes to Deutscher Klassiker Verlag edition of *Die Serapionsbrüder*, Wulf Segebrecht views the essence of the principle as an incitement to introspection and self-criticism. Hoffmann's 'Poetik des Schauens' holds the 'agreement' of an *image* and interpretation of reality with the artist is more important than its reality content.⁴⁵

Christoph Kleinschmidt, however, highlights instead the questionable consistency in both meaning and application within the *Serapionsbrüder* tales. 'Serapiontik', for Kleinschmidt, serves as a kind of quality standard for the brothers, which calls not only for ingenuity, humour, and vividness, but also a careful balance between fantastic and reality.⁴⁶ Similarly, Kenneth Woodgate expresses scepticism towards the notion of a singular 'Serapiontic principle' and rejects the principle's legitimacy as the keystone of Hoffmann's aesthetic programme, given that it is propounded by the friends rather than by Hoffmann himself. Woodgate distinguishes four possible Serapiontic principles with *Die Serapionsbrüder*: that represented by Serapion himself, that discussed by the

⁴¹ Berkeley's attack on materialism rejects that material things are mind-independent and posits that the world that we see exists only inside us, in our mind. See George Berkeley, *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (Auckland: Floating Press, 2014), in particular, principle four, pp. 28-29.

⁴² See Hilda Meldrum Brown, *E.T.A. Hoffmann and the Serapiontic Principle: Critique and Creativity* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006).

⁴³ See Kenneth Negus, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Other World: The Romantic Author and His 'New Mythology'* (Philadelphia, University of Philadelphia Press, 1965), p. 75.

⁴⁴ See Alina Dana Weber, 'Im Schacht des Textes: Diskursive Schichten in E. T. A. Hoffmanns *Die Bergwerke zu Falun*', *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*, 54.1 (2018), 1-22 (2).

⁴⁵ E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Die Serapionsbrüder*, ed. by Wulf Segebrecht (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2001), pp. 1244-1250 (p. 1246-1247).

⁴⁶ See Christoph Kleinschmidt, *E.T.A. Hoffmann. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. by Detlef Kremer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2010), pp. 537-539.

friends, those characteristics described as Serapiontic throughout the collection of stories, and finally, the sum total of the artistic ideals of the six friends.⁴⁷

Further, as Ilse Winter points out, there is a contradiction in the need for correspondence between the demands for a faithful reproduction of reality and the artist's image. Indeed, as Winter illustrates, the four stages of Serapiontic artistic creation include 'das Schauen, das Aufgehen im Innern, das Erfassen des Geschauten mit allen Gestalten und Farben, Lichtern und Schatten', and finally 'das Hineintragen ins äußere Leben'.⁴⁸ Such a process of internalisation and translation into outer reality hardly appears reconcilable with realistic representation.

Count P.'s delusion is total and dislocated entirely from the present reality. The Count not only assumes the identity of a centuries-dead saint, but fully perceives his environment to be that of the historical figure. Despite the gaining the admiration of the 'brothers' for the strength of his imagination, Serapion's world is solipsistic. His claims result in his treatment in an asylum, where he is declared 'gänzlich unheilbar'.⁴⁹ The disconnect between the Count's remarkable imagination and his surroundings reveals the madness seen elsewhere in Hoffmann's 'inspired' figures. The price for their higher perception and inner processing of images, I argue, is a withdrawal into a realm of imagination, in which the figure is doomed to remain.

The immaterialism entailed by Serapion's worldview is present also in *Die Jesuiterkirche*, where music offers an alternative means of bypassing the material. The form in which the mystery, described by the Maltese gentleman, is revealed is significant in its musicality: music offers a means of representation, unbridled by the limitations of language and the constraints of visual depiction. The Maltese gentleman instructs the painter to listen to 'die Urtöne der Schöpfung': Bethold indeed develops a new awareness of things that had previously remained unfathomable: 'Wie in seltsamen Hieroglyphen zeichnete ich das mir aufgeschlossene Geheimnis mit Flammenzügen in die Lüfte; aber die Hieroglyphen-Schrift war eine wunderherrliche Landschaft, auf der Baum, Gebüsch, Blume, Berg und Gewässer, wie in lautem wonnigem Klingen sich

⁴⁷ See Kenneth Woodgate, 'Revisiting Serapion: E.T.A. Hoffmann's principles of literary production and the limits of literary discourse. *A.U.M.L.A.: Journal of the Australasian Universities Modern Language Association*, 92 (1999), 33-50 (43).

⁴⁸ Ilse Winter, *Untersuchungen zum serapiontischen Prinzip E.T.A. Hoffmanns* (Paris: Mouton, 1976), p. 87.

⁴⁹ *Der Einsiedler Serapion*, p. 26.

regten und bewegten.⁵⁰ This state of harmony, in which the artist is receptive to nature's 'voice', is not the exclusive preserve of any one set of painters: the Maltese gentleman recognises a common aspiration in various styles as 'Auffassung der Natur in der tiefsten Bedeutung des höheren Sinns, der alle Wesen zum höheren Leben entzündet'.⁵¹ The artist's withdrawal into inner vision is accompanied by Hoffmann's motif of music: as the Maltese gentleman in *Die Jesuiterkirche* explains, that those inaugurated in the language of nature are able to apprehend 'die Stimme der Natur'.⁵²

This musical motif is significant in that music was held by Hoffmann to provide harmony and constitute a form of art free from the representational constraints of literature, which are irrevocably tainted by language. Romantic theories of language are typically based on a grading of semiotic systems according to their distance from the mind with sound considered to be the closest. A musical performance, then, as vibrations dispersed as mechanical waves of displacement and pressure through the medium of air, represents the form of expression least sullied by a fixed material form.⁵³ Entry into this state of deeper understanding is not just accompanied by music, but also by a loss of consciousness. Just as Traugott, lost in a daydream, was not conscious of his sketches, Berklinger, too, is oblivious to the blank canvas before him. Traugott pursues both his ideal, Felizitas, and an artistic career in Italy - a well-worn path for the apprentice painter and an earthly paradise. Berklinger's subject matter of paradise returned, by contrast, has no correspondent in reality and recalls the recluse's vision of himself and his surroundings in *Der Einsiedler Serapion*. These figures demonstrate the impossibility of maintaining consciousness in both worlds: reality for them pivots from one of an external world present to the senses to an inner vision, and the artist occupies exclusively one realm or the other.

Creative Struggle

The artist's struggle, implicit in Hoffmann's aesthetic programme, is part and parcel of the creative process. In his pursuit of originality, the artist seeks to escape existing representational precedents - yet cannot elude representation and its accompanying anxiet-

⁵⁰ *DJ*, p. 131.

⁵¹ *DJ*, p. 129.

⁵² *DJ*, p. 131.

⁵³ See Manfred Momberger, *Sonne und Punsch: die Dissemination des romantischen Kunstbegriffs bei E.T.A. Hoffmann* (München: W. Fink, 1986), p. 47. I would draw a distinction here between musical performance, where no two renditions are identical, and musical notation.

ies of inferiority and loss when translating his vision into a physical artwork. Traugott, in *Der Artushof*, repeatedly attempts to sublimate his artistic inclinations into his professional life as an associate of Elias Roos. In a moment of bitter clarity, Traugott returns to work and reschedules his wedding to Christine, which had been put on hold. He exclaims ‘Felizitas war das Trugbild, das mich verlockte zu glauben an dem, das nirgends lebte als in der wahnwitzigen Fantasie eines Fieberkranken. - Es ist aus!’⁵⁴ His view of Felizitas as an illusion and resolve to face up to his professional and social role are quickly dispelled when he learns the whereabouts of Berklinger and his daughter. The tedium of Traugott’s work is by no means incidental: without the incongruity between his artistic inclinations and his work under Roos, Traugott would be arguably without motivation to pursue his dreams to be an artist. The notion of struggle is integral to established conventions of artistic identity. Berthold’s path to success is beset by vacillating self-belief and indecision over his stylistic direction - yet, as his first mentor Birkner soothes, ‘Deine Zweifel sind es gerade, die für Dich, für Deinen Künstlerberuf sprechen. Der, welcher in stetem unwandelbaren Vertrauen auf seine Kraft immer fortzuschreiten gedenkt, [...] ihm fehlt ja der eigentliche Impuls zum Streben’⁵⁵

While the idea of creative struggle is clearly central to Berthold’s identity as an artist and also, by extension, to his assessment of his own works, this notion is accompanied by more concrete hardships that he endures: Berthold draws an analogy between the myth of Prometheus and those artists, ‘welche taub für das Klirren der Sklavenkette, fühllos für den Druck des Irdischen, sich frei, ja selbst sich Gott wären und schaffen und herrschen wollen über Licht und Leben’.⁵⁶ Such painters, in Berthold’s view, are foolish to attempt to represent human beings; - ‘nicht Fleischeslust, wie Tizian’, but rather attempting to attain the highest in divine nature, that Promethean spark in man, draws the painter dangerously close to the precipice. A wicked deception allows these ‘arme unschuldige Narren [...] unten *das* erblicken, was er oben über den Sternen erschauen wollte!’.⁵⁷ Berthold’s explanation appends the Enthusiast’s hesitant praise for the altar painting. The brilliance of the painting depends not, the Enthusiast remarks, on genius, but rather on mathematical speculation - a victory of *techné* over *poiesis*. The sugges-

⁵⁴ *DA*, p. 198.

⁵⁵ *DJ*, p. 126.

⁵⁶ *DJ*, pp. 116-117.

⁵⁷ *DJ*, p. 117.

tion that any glimpse of the divine is really no more than a cruel falsehood motivates Berthold's acclaim for 'human' - notably, his praise for mathematics.

Inspiration - Divine and Mundane

Despite the tendency in critical scholarship to structure arguments around the idea that enlightenment rationality and Romanticism are dichotomous, the desire to set literary epochs and aesthetic systems in sharp relief from one another obscures the irony with which Hoffmann deflates the positions held by the travelling enthusiast and Professor in *Die Jesuiterkirche*: both are excessively one-sided. The enthusiast's gushing appraisal of Berthold's unfinished masterpiece, which is kept covered by the Professor, creates an ironic distance between himself and the reader, perhaps wary of his hyperbole: 'Nieder mich zu werfen in den Staub vor ihr, der Himmels Königin, trieb mich ein unbeschreibliches Gefühl - keines Wortes mächtig konnte ich den Blick nicht abwenden von dem Bilde ohne Gleichen.'⁵⁸ While, conversely, the claims of the Professor, who represents a caricature of the enlightenment ideal of rationality, that 'alles geistige Streben, Erfindungs- und Schöpfungskraft [leitet man] aus gewissen Konjunkturen der Eingeweide', only strengthen the narrator's assessment of him as a crass materialist. The Enthusiast's contempt extends to the Professor's other ideas, such as his view that every thought proceeds from the joining together of fibres in the brain, and he appears to consider the Professor's ideas as a means of constraining the painter, who duly refutes the possibility of any favourable influence from a higher realm. Instead, the reader is left to find an intermediate position between the Professor's materialism and the enthusiast's *Schwärmerei* for the transcendental.

Berthold's madness, however, stems not so much from his inability to combine love for another with an infinite artistic ideal - nor from his frustration at his creative drought - but from the danger of accessing a higher plane of imagination. The latter posits a realm accessible only to the true artist and one in which the artist's consciousness is transferred from the material present to a world of imagination, with no possibility of maintaining consciousness in both. The artist thus risks entering the world of imagination only never to return to consciousness in the material world or be able to recreate their experience of the imagination through their art.

While Berthold is illuminated by the Maltese gentleman's advice, he is only able

⁵⁸ *DJ*, p. 121.

to apprehend in dreams the ‘Stimme der Natur’ of which his mentor spoke: ‘Nur in süßen Träumen war ich glücklich - selig [...] Wie in seltsamen Hieroglyphen zeichnete ich das mir aufgeschlossene Geheimnis mit Flammenzügen in die Lüfte; aber die Hieroglyphen-Schrift war eine wunderherrliche Landschaft, auf der Baum, Gebüsch, Blume, Berg und Gewässer, wie in lautem wonnigem Klingen sich regten und bewegten’.⁵⁹ Yet beyond the safe confines of dreams, the natural world takes on a threatening edge, where even the pattering of a stream betokens ‘Untergang und Verderben’.⁶⁰

The ambivalence of Berthold’s inspiration is clear in his fleeting glimpse of the exquisitely beautiful woman in the grotto. The moment is contrasted with the difficulty the painter experiences in expressing the images of his dreams on canvas as a waking flash of divine inspiration - yet the event is immediately preceded by the statement: ‘Berthold hatte hier öfters gearbeitet, öfter noch in einer Grotte des Parks zur guten Zeit sich dem Spiel seiner fantastischen Träume hingegen.’⁶¹ Berthold’s putative waking vision is called into question by the implication that it is in fact merely a daydream. Later, having painted the figure to critical acclaim, Berthold’s confidence in his ideal is dented by suggestions of the figure’s resemblance to Princess Angiola, which bring down his higher inspiration to the level of the mundane.

A distinction emerges between the ‘tortured’ artist, whose inspiration is drawn from a higher plane, and the businesslike artist Berthold has become, painting to sustain himself with a meagre living. Berthold’s struggles are at odds with his friend and fellow painter Florentin, whose works rely not upon ‘tiefes Studium’, but ‘heiteren Lebensgenuß’.⁶² Florentin works with an impression of effortlessness, anchoring his work in the ‘menschliche Prinzip’, to which he clings ‘um nicht gestaltlos im leeren Raum zu verschwimmen.’⁶³ Florentin’s apparent success, of which we learn little else in the tale, is an outlier among Hoffmann’s artist figures.

The impression of Berthold as a tortured soul is fed by the narrator’s first encounter with him, where the painter’s cantankerous ravings - ‘Viel Plage - krummes verworrenes Zeug - kein Lineal zu brauchen - Tiere - Affen - Menschengesichter - o ich

⁵⁹ *DJ*, p. 131.

⁶⁰ *DJ*, p. 131.

⁶¹ *DJ*, p. 133.

⁶² *DJ*, pp. 131-132.

⁶³ *DJ*, p. 132.

elender Tor!' - are declared by the narrator to be the expression of 'das ganze zerrissene Leben eines unglücklichen Künstlers'.⁶⁴ The narrator's view of Berthold, gleaned at this point only from his brief pause by the painter's scaffold on his tour of the church, is assimilated to established clichés regarding painterly life - hardship, failed relationships, creative drought. This impression of toil is strengthened further by the painter's biography, where we learn that 'er hatte sich seines Weibes und Kindes entledigt'.⁶⁵ When probed by the narrator on whether he really murdered his wife and child, Berthold becomes enraged, asserting 'Rein sind diese Hände vom Blute meines Weibes, meines Sohnes! Noch ein solches Wort, und ich stürze mit Euch hier vom Gerüste herab, daß unsere Schädel zerschellen auf dem steinernen Boden der Kirche!'⁶⁶ The painter's lack of composure and the story of his fall to a lowly 'Wandpinsler' supports the implication that Berthold carries a burden of guilt, stifling his creative prowess and released only by his implied suicide at the novella's close.

Setting aside the narrator's own position as both an actor in the story and an 'Enthusiast' - the narrator alludes to his own artistic credentials as an assistant to Berthold - the story suggests that Berthold's struggles, from trying to find his true style, to the realisation that his divine inspiration was merely earthly and in his possession all along as his wife, to his nervous state, unable to even look at - let alone finish - his masterpiece, emerge from his misjudgement of inspiration. His metaphor of a precipice, where the artist is deceived in thinking that what he sees below is above him is self-referential. Berthold's story pivots on his fall, precipitated by his bitter deception in believing his flash of inspiration, his female ideal, to be truly from above.

Both Berklinger's 'painting' and Berthold's struggle to regain the state of imagination that allowed him to create his covered masterpiece point not simply to a crisis of stylistic identity, but rather to a deeper problem: one of expressing an inner image in the idiom of the everyday physical world which does not represent, but simply *is*. While the problem is thus one of mimesis, in seeking to create something beyond existing representational precedents, the painters strike at the heart of the ontological challenge posed by mimesis: in their quest to create a kind of transcendental art, the question remains not simply whether such a feat is possible, but rather whether such

⁶⁴ *DJ*, p. 112.

⁶⁵ *DJ*, p. 138.

⁶⁶ *DJ*, p. 140.

efforts merely expand the existing horizons of representation. Yet artworks, of course, are *things* alongside being representations - even if it were possible to create an ontologically independent artwork, such an object would be interpreted from the perspective of existing representational paradigms, thus closing the circle of a flawed notion.

Felizitas, Berklinger's daughter, remains Traugott's ideal, despite the close resemblance between her and Dorina, who serves as the earthly counterpart to the celestial and unattainable Felizitas. When Traugott first sees Berklinger's painting of Felizitas, he exclaims in delight, 'Ach sie ist es ja, die Geliebte meiner Seele, die ich so lange im Herzen trug, die ich nur in Ahnungen erkannte!'.⁶⁷ Traugott's enchantment with the picture, he claims, comes from the recognition of an idealised figure from his own thoughts. Yet by his own admission, the face of woman in the painting is 'ganz das Gesicht des Jünglings': Traugott's ideal stems not from a deep-rooted inner image, but from Berklinger's son.

Later, when Traugott encounters the physical manifestation of the woman in the painting, his first impressions are of 'ein[em] abgebroche[n] Gesang' and the sound of a lute. Music, in Hoffmann's novellas, often indicates an important event or an ontological shift in the narrative - witness the chiming bells accompanying Anselmus's visions in *Der goldene Topf* and the heavenly ringing Nathanael hears when he sees Olimpia's gaze in *Der Sandmann*. Traugott's encounter with the living and breathing version of his ideal is thus marked by a shift in reality, casting doubt on whether Felizitas is truly real or merely imagined. This doubt is initially reinforced by the disappearance of Berklinger and his son; Traugott is initially unable to find any trace of their whereabouts. It is only when another broker explains to Traugott that the pair have left for 'Sorrent', before perfunctorily adding that 'halb Danzig wußte, daß das ein Mädchen war'.⁶⁸ Traugott's ignorance that the boy was in fact Felizitas resembles Nathanael's obliviousness in *Der Sandmann*, despite the observations of his peers, to the fact that Olimpia is an automaton. The artist's accessing of an ideal realm severs his connection to the physical world, reducing his relationship to the projection of an ideal onto the physical being (or doll, in the case of Olimpia).

⁶⁷ *DA*, p. 193.

⁶⁸ *DA*, p. 198.

Satire: 'Anselmi' Figures

Like Berthold, Traugott in *Der Artushof* clearly belongs among Hoffmann's long line of 'Anselmi' figures - artistic types who find themselves separated from their surroundings by a fantastic realm which opens up before them at various points in the story. These figures' distance from their bourgeois lifestyles and their erratic behaviour creates an impression of madness - Traugott postpones his engagement to the burgher's daughter only to later resign himself to marrying the girl, before breaking off the engagement for good and leaving for Rome. This madness is magnified by the pathologisation of the artist figures' behaviour: instead of valorising the genius's admittance to an artistic realm unburdened by the senses and the exigences of 'everyday' reality, the artist is instead viewed by other figures as a daydreamer and a romantic. As Alexandra Pontzen's monograph *Künstler ohne Werk* takes as its central theme, Hoffmann's artist figures are curiously unproductive, and at odds with bourgeois values of diligence, rationality, and productivity. In *Die Jesuiterkirche*, Berthold, at the time of the narrator's visit to the church, no longer paints in his earlier style: his task is to repaint the walls of the church - a job apparently requiring no better than a dauber of walls, since the church is a place 'wo der Marmor unerschwinglich ist, wo große Meister der Malerkunst nicht arbeiten mögen'.⁶⁹ Berthold is then later described by the professor as 'ein wunderlicher Mensch' who has let himself fall to earning a living painting church walls.

Berthold's fall is not simply a matter of changing styles, but rather one of descending from a painter of vocation to one of mere profession - a move from the *poiesis* of an artist to the *techné* of a worker. By contrast, Berklinger, in *Der Artushof*, changes from a creator of material artworks to one whose works have no existence in the physical world. Upon visiting the painter at home and seeing his work, Traugott is spellbound by one particular painting of a young woman. Berklinger, however, presents his latest piece to which he is putting the final touches. Sitting before a grey-primed empty canvas, the painter proceeds to explain,

Es ist das Gegenstück zu dem gleich großen Gemälde, das verlorene Paradies darstellend, welches ich voriges Jahr vollendete und das Sie auch bei mir anschauen können. Dies ist nun, wie Sie sehen, das wiedergewonnene Paradies, und es sollte mir

⁶⁹ *DJ*, p. 112.

um Sie leid tun, wenn Sie irgend eine Allegorie herausklügeln wollten. Allegorische Gemälde machen nur Schwächlinge und Stümper; mein Bild soll nicht *bedeuten* sondern *sein*. Sie finden, daß alle diese reichen Gruppen von Menschen, Tieren, Früchten, Blumen, Steinen sich zum harmonischen Ganzen verbinden, dessen laut und herrlich tönende Musik der himmlisch reine Akkord ewiger Verklärung ist.⁷⁰

The scene has a dark humour in the painter's animated description of his masterpiece: 'Nun fing der Alte an, einzelne Gruppe herauszuheben [...] Immer stärker, aber immer unverständlicher und verworrener wurde des Alten Ausdruck.'⁷¹ Berklinger's fantastic descriptions arguably parody the stock conception of the tortured and inscrutable Romantic artist and his doomed attempts to escape representational constraints.

The creative paths of Traugott and Berthold contrast with bourgeois vapidty in *Der Artushof* and the shallow rationality of the Professor in *Die Jesuiterkirche*. Traugott's distraction from his work overlays a satire of the German burgher family: as with Veronika in *Der goldene Topf*, Traugott's betrothed is a nitwit, whose interest for rank and title - in Christina's case, for heavy silver spoons and the arrangements for the Sunday roast - far exceeds any for her future husband. Nor does her father, Elias Roos, escape Hoffmann's satire. Roos proves ineffective at focusing his future son-in-law's mind, instead throwing tantrums and wailing 'der Schwiegersohn ist ein melancholischer Mensch und in der Eifersucht türkisch gesinnt.'⁷² Roos's misreading of Traugott, believing him to be jealous of Christina, exaggerates Traugott's otherness - an impression reinforced by the nephew, who claims 'selbst ein so entschiedener Verehrer der Kunst [zu sein]'. The nephew arguably parodies bourgeois artistic appreciation in his asinine claims, 'Erheiterung, Erholung vom ernsten Geschäft, das ist der schöne Zweck alles Strebens in der Kunst [...] nur der, der nach jener Ansicht die Kunst übt, genießt die Behaglichkeit, die den immer und ewig flieht, welcher der wahren Natur der Sache entgegen, die Kunst als Hauptsache, als höchste Lebenstendenz betrachtet.'⁷³ The nephew's remarks appear to suggest that art should be practised as a form of diversion - a conception of art diametrically opposed to the Romantic vision of the artist as a figure driven by their vocation and passion. Pressed by Traugott on what exactly he means by the 'ernstes Geschäft des Lebens', the nephew's snotty response 'kam ungefähr darauf

⁷⁰ *DA*, p. 191.

⁷¹ *DA*, p. 191.

⁷² *DA*, p. 197.

⁷³ *DA*, pp. 184-185

hinaus, keine Schulden sondern viel Geld haben, gut Essen und Trinken, eine schöne Frau und auch wohl artige Kinder, die nie einen Talgpfleck ins Sonntagsröckchen bringen u.s.w.’⁷⁴ The nephew’s identification of the important things in life amounts to a hackneyed selection of bourgeois aspirations, satirised by the sincere wish for children to avoid grease stains on their best clothes.

The nephew’s counterpart in *Die Jesuiterkirche* is the Professor. The narrator’s initial impressions of the Professor relate to the latter’s modern room which contrasts sharply with the Gothic church. The Professor explains, ‘wir haben jenen düstern Ernst, jene sonderbare Majestät des niederschmetternden Tyrannen, die im gotischen Bau unsere Brust beklemmt, [...] aus unseren Gebäuden verbannt’.⁷⁵ The Professor’s philistine wish to purge the church of its majesty is presented by the narrator in a tone which leaves little doubt of his disapproval of the Professor. The narrator swiftly follows the Professor’s claim that ‘das höhere Reich soll man erkennen in dieser Welt’ with his own appraisal of the Professor: ‘Ja wohl, dachte ich: in allem was ihr tattet, beweiset ihr, daß euer Reich von dieser Welt, ja nur allein von dieser Welt ist.’⁷⁶ The Professor’s apparent bias towards the earthly realm - away from his office of devotion to the divine - is accompanied with his unsympathetic attitude. Indeed, he unflinchingly passes judgement on Berthold, whom he deems ‘schwachen Verstandes’, to have fallen by a crime committed ‘vom herrlichen Historienmaler zum dürftigen Wandpinsler’.⁷⁷ The Professor again later takes up his moralising reprise, declaring of Berthold’s fall, ‘die Hand samt dem Arm ist ihm an den Leib gewachsen - ja ja! - er selbst war gewiß sein eigener Dämon - sein Luzifer, der in sein Leben mit der Höllenfackel hineinleuchtete.’⁷⁸

Conclusions

In contrast to Kleist’s response to enlightenment, which, as we have seen, takes the form of rational bourgeois figures and narrative structures to prompt the reader’s reflection, Hoffmann’s approach is arguably more overtly theoretical. Kleist’s focus on the shaky foundations of human convictions contrasts to Hoffmann’s writings, which express a crisis of the notion of a sovereign ego. Hoffmann’s artist figures are a vehicle for his

⁷⁴ *DA*, p. 185.

⁷⁵ *DJ*, p. 111.

⁷⁶ *DJ*, pp. 111-112.

⁷⁷ *DJ*, p. 120.

⁷⁸ *DJ*, p. 122.

‘Serapiontic principle’ - the closest Hoffmann comes to an explicit statement of his aesthetic views. Both Berthold in *Die Jesuiterkirche* and Berklinger in *Der Artushof*, as ‘inspired’ artists, are epistemologically privileged and initiated into a higher realm beyond earthly inspiration. The artist’s epistemological and ontological standpoints intersect in his ambitions to produce art without precedent in the material world. Such efforts are condemned to failure - as we see in Berthold’s struggles and Berklinger’s blank canvas. The dark humour in these scenes corresponds to Hoffmann’s ironic treatment not only of rational, technically-orientated figures, but also his caricature of the Romantic painter, wretched but brilliant.

Mimesis, within these rival aesthetic silos, proves to be fundamental to both with the efforts of Birkner and the younger Berthold to faithfully capture the natural world on canvas and also the ‘Serapiontic’ artist - the later Berthold and Berklinger - whose creative process involves an abstraction and idealisation of the represented. Opposing stylistic schools are displaced by the broader descriptive labels of *techné* and *poiesis*: this difference is borne out in the artists’ inspiration. The Promethean struggle for the artist to translate such flashes of ‘higher’ inspiration leads to madness. Idealisation, within this creative process, is a source of danger with the risk that the artist is deceived into thinking that earthly inspiration is divine. The impossibility of realising their aim of bringing such visions to fruition is at the heart of the artist’s striving to push further existing epistemological horizons. Hoffmann recognises that there can be no true break from mimesis and the material world, given the need for the artist to reveal his visions to the world and thus make use of pre-existing representational structures. The artist’s desire to broaden the range of representational possibilities beyond that of mimesis is thus constrained not only by aesthetic conventions, but also the need to communicate. The centrality of struggle and failure to this mode of artistic production echoes the narrative of redemption discussed in the previous chapter: like Medardus, ‘inspired’ artists must fall first in order to be raised up by their efforts. Yet this image of the artist as a tortured soul, an established paradigm among the Romantics (and indeed beyond), is itself satirised by Hoffmann. Hoffmann’s ambivalence, heaping irony not only upon the rationalist Professor and the pettifogging bourgeois characters Roos and Christina as well as the artist protagonists, corresponds to a broader, measured response to enlightenment.

Like Kleist’s thought experiments, Hoffmann’s texts appear to punch holes in key

enlightenment values and assumptions, often revealing these to be absurd and untenable in reality. While a clear preference for *poiesis* over *techné* emerges in the texts, both artistic modes of creative originality and technical mastery are imperfect. Hoffmann's treatment of the artist is often satirical, conscious of the descriptive excesses of 'enthusiasts' and artists alike, and of the stock trajectory of suffering accompanying their stylistic development. Building on this chapter's discussion of the artist, the next chapter turns to the sublime. The sublime, conceived in disparate forms in the texts discussed, represents an opening of epistemological possibilities. While the sublime in Kleist's text presents a tabula rasa for an emancipated and enlightened society, for Hoffmann, it is channelled through art to point to a realm beyond the rational world.

Chapter 6

The Sublime

Ein Mann, wie du, bleibt da
Nicht stehen, wo der Zufall der Geburt
Ihn hingeworfen: oder wenn er bleibt,
Bleibt er aus Einsicht, Gründen, Wahl des Bessern.¹

Sultan Saladin's words in Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* had such an impression on Kleist that he proffers them almost verbatim to Ulrike in his letter from May 1799. Speaking generally, Kleist describes the masses that he encounters as led by 'dunkle Neigungen [...] der Augenblick bestimmt ihre Handlungen'. Such behaviour, he continues, 'ist nun freilich eines freien, denkenden Menschen höchst unwürdig. Ein freier, denkender Mensch bleibt da nicht stehen, wo der Zufall ihn hinstößt; oder wenn er bleibt, so bleibt er aus Gründen, aus Wahl des Bessern.'² The young Kleist's letter, replete with the faith in the human capacity for self-determination and penned in the idiom of enlightenment, represents a foil to much of his fictional works, in which such values are experimented with and mocked. Indeed, as the first section of the thesis contends, the assumed positive trajectory of *Mündigkeit* is challenged by Kleist's thought experiments. Section two builds on this questioning, examining how narrative is instrumentalised by the two writers, with different narrative strands criss-crossing and mirroring one another, to invite the reader himself to become *mündig* in his response to the texts. The texts depart from the traditional role of narrative as one of providing closure to questions posed at the story's opening and imposing structure and significance on events.

While Kleist and Hoffmann explore representational uncertainties about 'truth' narratologically, we see questions of epistemology addressed in aesthetic terms elsewhere in their work as this chapter discusses. Martha B. Helfer identifies the Cartesian *cogito* as the defining point at which representation becomes interchangeable with truth.³ In the representational paradigm of modernity which crystallises, the human being occupies a stable centre position - a notion captured by Heidegger's literal sense of

¹ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan der Weise* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990), III.5, p. 69.

² Kleist, *IV/1 Briefe*, pp. 53-71 (p. 58).

³ See Martha B. Helfer, *The Retreat of Representation: The concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 1.

Vorstellung as the setting of something before oneself (*vor-stellen*). Yet as we have seen in the previous chapter, the basis for artistic evaluation diverges between the narrow thematic focus of neoclassical interpretations of mimesis and the process-orientated mimesis of Hoffmann's 'inspired' artists: ambitions for objectively representing nature give way to a subjective representation of feeling.

As the thesis demonstrates with reference to *Die Familie Schroffenstein* and *Der Findling*, Kleist rejects the enlightenment cult of specular evidence, instead repeatedly demonstrating in his literary experiments that sensory experience paralyses critical reflection in ways that obstruct finding truth. For Kleist, visual representation is tightly bound to misinterpretation and catastrophic error. In locating the unfolding of 'truth' beyond the visual purview of the protagonists and the reader, Kleist effectively delimits representation, creating an analytical form of narrative referred to by Goethe as 'unsichtbares Theater'.⁴ Hoffmann, too, thematises the inadequacy of visual representation in his artist figures. Intoxicated by the creative process, the artist is divorced from constraints of the rational world. Within Hoffmann's aesthetic programme, self-detachment emerges as a constituent quality for artistic genius and also to guard against the limitations of rationality.

Considering these limitations, this final chapter turns to the sublime and its divergent forms in *Das Erdbeben in Chili* and *Ritter Gluck*. Despite their differences, the texts reveal parallels in the way the sublime is explored as a broadening of epistemological possibilities. Working to clarify the Kantian sublime as not simply the simultaneous sensation of pain and pleasure, but also as the accompanying awareness of human vulnerability and distinctness, this chapter finds the opportunity in the sublime destruction of existing social structures in *Das Erdbeben* for the creation of a new *mündig* society is missed. The fledgling social awareness and magnanimity of the survivors are displaced by their voluntary return to the pre-quake order. This thwarted trajectory of emancipation is accompanied by a narrative course, which sets up an expectation that the couple will be saved. The musical sublime in Hoffmann's tale contrasts with Kleist's sublime.

⁴ Goethe's disdain for Kleist's work is well known. Goethe staged *Der zerbrochene Krug* in 1808 at Weimar's court theatre. Long and straining the nerves of the audience, the disastrous performance was not to be repeated. See Johannes Falk, *Goethe aus näherem persönlichen Umgange dargestellt. Ein nachgelassenes Werk* (Leipzig: Brockhaus 1832), pp. 120-123 (p. 122). While Goethe praised the play, he expressed regret that the play 'auch wieder dem unsichtbaren Theater angehört.' The invisible theatre Goethe describes refers to an analytical dramatic form, in which a past event comes to light by degrees. For an analysis of Goethe's reception of Kleist's work, see Julie Price, 'Prescription and Proscription: Goethe, Kleist and the Theatre', *German Life and Letters*, 34.3 (1981): 273-284.

Building on the discussion of artist figures in the previous chapter, unlike Berklinger and Traugott, Gluck is successful in mediating his visions into original music - an accomplishment corresponding to the Romantic conception of instrumental music as unbounded by the constraints of language.

The coherence of enlightenment, a notion this thesis broadly defines as the striving for human emancipation through rational cognition from habits of thought and unquestioned behaviours, has been vexed by the tension between the rational subject's self-conception as self-grounding and awareness of their situatedness in a world manifestly governed by unconscious instincts and drives.

The Leibnizian doctrine of pre-established harmony and the 'best of all possible worlds' was attacked by Voltaire, in his famous *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* following the 1755 Lisbon earthquake.⁵ Despite more emollient subsequent positions, such as that of Rousseau in his *Lettre sur la Providence* (1756) addressed to Voltaire, which sought to find middle ground between Leibnizian optimism and Voltaire's denial of providence, the absurdity of any notion of human control remained an unresolved issue for Kleist and Hoffmann.⁶

The notion of the sublime, a familiar concept in philosophical aesthetics, literary theory and art history, conceptualises this vanishing point of human subjectivity and awareness of transcendence. The lineage of the term is largely bound to the seminal theories of Longinus, Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant.⁷ These various theories are united by the common paradigm of the individual's sense of being at once overwhelmed and exalted. The sublime is a useful concept in its sense of bridging mutually opposed categories - rational and irrational; empirical and transcendental; ethical and aesthetic.

⁵ Gottfried Leibniz claims that the world God chose to exist, in spite of the suffering and injustice, is the best of all possible worlds. In *La Monadologie* (1714), a concise exposition of his later philosophy, Leibniz seeks to resolve the apparent incoherence between the problem of evil in the world and the idea of God as omnibenevolent, omnipotent and omniscient. Leibniz' argument follows the principle of sufficient reason: God has reason to choose our universe over an infinite number of possible universes. God is inherently good and so the world he chose to exist must be the best of all possible worlds. See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), pp. 248-250 (§§56-60).

⁶ Voltaire's poem, published in the following year of the earthquake, challenges philosophical optimism's attempts to reconcile a loving and forgiving Christian deity with a world filled with suffering and injustice. Voltaire mocks Alexander Pope's assertion 'whatever is, is right', framing his description of the quake's horrors with the repeated line 'Tout est bien'. Voltaire counters faith in providence, concluding that man's own nature remains unknown as God does not communicate with human beings. See Voltaire, *Les oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, ed. by Basil Guy, Haydn T. Mason et al. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2009), XLV A, 335-349.

⁷ See Robert Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 1-2.

As Longinus, popularised by Boileau's French translation of 1674, understands, *hypsos* connotes a kind of outstripping of oneself in terms of one's mental capacity or state of mind, a surpassing of normal human limits in the sense of being proximate to the divine. The widely accepted English translation of *hypsos* is 'the sublime' or 'sublimity', a somewhat unsatisfactory translation given that *hypsos* translates literally as 'elevation', allowing *hypsos* to function as a metaphor for heightened states of mind or expression.⁸ Burke's 1756 treatise *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* marked a precocious Romantic turn towards an aesthetic of the unbounded and infinite, away from the eighteenth-century one of order and clarity.

Yet it is Kant's association with the sublime that is of greatest relevance for the discussion in this chapter and differs from Longinus and Burke's theories in its efforts to reclaim the idea of transcendence from irrationalism.⁹ Kant goes beyond the common understanding of the sublime as a metaphorical image of an overwhelming sense-experience, where the observer, in his or her terrified dumbness and bodily stupor, experiences a masochistic blend of pleasure and pain. In his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), Kant counters the conception of the sublime as simply 'himmelansteigende[-] Gebirgsmassen, tiefe[-] Schlünde und darin tobende[-] Gewässer, tiefbeschattete[-], zum schwermütigen Nachdenken einladender Einöden'.¹⁰ Kant distinguishes between the 'mathematical sublime' and the 'dynamic sublime'. The former describes the feeling of reason's superiority over the imagination, our capacity for sensory apprehension, which strives to comprehend objects in accordance with the demands of reason. Concretely, confronted with something so big, the imagination's ability to comprehend it is overwhelmed: Kant makes reference to St. Peter's basilica in Rome and the pyramids of Egypt.¹¹ The dynamic sublime, by contrast, describes a sensation of fear when experiencing nature, even though we know we are safe from harm. This fear corresponds to a recognition of our physical impotence before the might of nature. Simultaneously, however, we are aware of our independence from and superiority over nature.¹² Both forms

⁸ See Doran, p. 39.

⁹ See Doran, p. 7.

¹⁰ See 'Allgemeine Anmerkung zur Exposition der ästhetischen reflektierenden Urteile', in Kant's *KdU*, pp. 266-277.

¹¹ See Kant, *KdU*, pp. 251-257 (§26).

¹² See Kant, *KdU*, pp. 260-264 (§28).

of the sublime are characterised by this sense of the superiority of human reason over nature - a source of pleasure - as well as a certain displeasure. In the case of the mathematical sublime, this displeasure comes in an awareness of the inadequacy of our imagination; in the dynamic sublime, it is an awareness of our physical powerlessness in the face of nature's might. The contradiction of pleasure and pain, within Kant's sublime, offers an insight into the human capacity for morality. The overwhelming forces of nature set our own humanity, with both its limits of imagination and reasoning power, in sharp relief before nature. Human resilience when facing such challenges is sublime insofar as we credit ourselves and others as the authors of reasoned acts - and not simply the playthings of some external power.¹³

Hoffmann and Kleist are brought together, I argue, in their thematisation of the sublime as a literary experiment in the production of natural moral society in Kleist's *Das Erdbeben in Chili* and as a means of exploring beyond the confines of codified musical performance in *Ritter Gluck*. In the former, the earthquake, which devastates Santiago and saves Josephe from imminent execution and Jeronimo from prison, is ostensibly a sublime event. The common association of the sublime with natural disasters is borne out in *Das Erdbeben* in the devastating effect of the earthquake on the city. Yet perceived through the cognitive scheme of the sublime, the earthquake also invokes a form of perverse pleasure in the erasure of existing structures of understanding and also pain in the inability to form a satisfactory sensible presentation of the object with respect to reason. The encounter with death and the resulting fear of death allows the human subject to discover a higher form of self-preservation - the discovery of the moral self beyond the fear of death is a moment of the sublime. This state is uncertain, however, haunted by a return of the previous repressive state of existence.

The sublime is explored in a very different way in Hoffmann's *Ritter Gluck*. In 1809 Hoffmann began publishing his work in the respected journal for music criticism *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, where he first published the novella along with two music reviews before his much studied Beethoven review appeared in July 1810. It is not clear whether Hoffmann ever actually heard Beethoven's piece performed. Hoffmann was an accomplished musician and would have certainly had no difficulty in reading the score. This chapter's discussion of Hoffmann's text focuses on the striking final

¹³ See Isak Winkel Holm, 'Earthquake in Haiti: Kleist and the Birth of Modern Disaster Discourse', *New German Critique: An Interdisciplinary Journal of German Studies*, 115 (2012), pp. 49-66 (p. 60).

scene in the novella *Ritter Gluck*, where Gluck delivers a dazzling performance from the empty score in front of him, offering a vision of an art unconstrained by language. The listener's experience is thus not a simulacrum of objects and processes extant in the material world, but makes the enthusiast aware of the limits of what can be reproduced in a rational system of codification.

Both explorations of the sublime discussed here, although differing in their approach and thematisation of the concept, tie into a broader representational aesthetic. The sublime offers a subversive counter to enlightenment notions of aesthetic pleasure arising from the harmony between a phenomenal reality and man's own limited understanding of the world by positing a centrifugal force beyond human imagination. While for both Hoffmann and Kleist the paradoxical experience of being at once overwhelmed and exalted raises the possibility of new epistemological vistas, free from the gravitational pull of enlightenment rationality, their reception of these new vistas differs. Continuous with discussion in the previous chapter of Hoffmann's 'inspired' artists, who are epistemologically privileged and initiated into a higher realm beyond earthly inspiration, this final chapter goes beyond the doomed efforts of the painters Berthold and Berklinger to translate their higher inspiration into material artworks, exploring instead a different kind of artist: the musician. Amongst the literary experiments in the application of enlightenment values and ambitions, the musical sublime offers not only the performer Gluck, but also the listener, an indirect knowledge of their connection to a realm beyond sensibility.

My discussion of Kleist's sublime in *Das Erdbeben* revolves not around the earthquake in itself, but rather the fledgling awareness of a natural moral condition. The Edenic valley, where the survivors regroup, offers a glimpse of an egalitarian society free from class boundaries and the obligations and judgements of religion. The quick demise of this idyll recalls the claims of Herr C. in the later *Über das Marionettentheater*: there can ultimately be no return to a lost paradise. The novella's brutal and disturbing close takes leave of the reader with the same equivocation as we see in his other texts. The pregnant final line describes Don Fernando comparing Philip with his own infant son, whose brains have been dashed out by a raging mob, 'so war es ihm fast, als müßt er sich freuen'.¹⁴ The incongruity of Don Fernando's gratitude, a man who only a

¹⁴ *DEIC*, p. 43.

moment before saw his child ‘mit aus dem Hirne vorquellenden Mark’,¹⁵ is darkly ironic - and lends the novella’s close a *Candide*-like final note.¹⁶

First published in the *Allgemeinen Musikalischen Zeitung* in 1809 and subsequently in the collection *Fantasiestücke in Callot’s Manier* in 1814, *Ritter Gluck* is a tale of artistic virtuosity with striking parallels to *Der Artushof*. A music lover’s chance encounter one evening in Berlin with a mysterious gentleman, leads to an interesting conversation. The strange man defends the narrator’s criticism of the atrocious din of out of tune instruments coming from a small orchestra, asking them to play Christoph Willibald Gluck’s *Iphigenia in Aulis*. The narrator is enchanted by the stranger’s delight in the music and it is later revealed that the latter is a composer. Becoming increasingly animated, the gentleman recalls his experience with the higher realms of music and claims to have encountered the truth of all art. The man abruptly stands up and leaves. It is only by chance that the narrator encounters him again several months later. During this second encounter the narrator visits the stranger’s house, where he is regaled with a spontaneous performance of Gluck’s *Overture*. The narrator is astonished to find that the score from which the stranger is apparently playing is blank. The performance, at once ‘fast ganz dem Original getreu’ and yet interwoven with ‘viele neue geniale Wendungen’, leaves the narrator stunned.¹⁷ In a final twist, the stranger reappears, richly dressed and declares himself to be Gluck. The novella’s plot structure with an ‘enthusiast’ figure and an artist without material work invites comparisons with the travelling enthusiast of *Die Jesuiterkirche in G*. Yet Gluck’s art, unlike Berklinger’s blank canvas, is liberated from material constraints, and is expressed through his performance.

Kleist’s *Erdbeben in Chili* is a well-known text to most Germanists.¹⁸ Despite its familiarity, however, *Das Erdbeben* retains interest both as an object of scholarly atten-

¹⁵ *DEIC*, p. 41.

¹⁶ The comparison of *Das Erdbeben* to Voltaire’s *Candide* has been made previously by Werner Hamacher, who speaks of *Candide* as a travesty of contemporary novel-writing (note the contrived tragic sequence in the disarray of the earthquake, the chance salvation from martyrdom and the chance reunion of the lovers). Hamacher also points out the thematic overlap between the two texts in their handling of the problem of evil in the world and providence, but declines, however, to draw stronger parallels in the two texts’ use of darkly humorous irony. See Werner Hamacher, ‘Das Beben der Darstellung’, in *Positionen der Literaturwissenschaft: Acht Modellanalysen am Beispiel von Kleists ‘Das Erdbeben in Chili’*, ed. by D.E. Wellbery (Munich: Beck, 1985), pp. 149-173.

¹⁷ *RG*, p. 30.

¹⁸ First published in Johann Friedrich Cotta’s important literary magazine *Morgenblatt für die gebildeten Stände* in September 1807 with the title *Jerónimo und Josephe. Eine Scene aus dem Erdbeben zu Chili, vom Jahr 1647*, it is only in 1810 that the tale acquires the title by which it is today known when it is published by Reimer in the collection *Erzählungen*. See Günter Blumberger, *Heinrich von Kleist: Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011), p. 280.

tion, and also for readers given the brutal ending - for which even multiple readings do little to soften. Josephe, sentenced to be executed for fornication and her lover, Jeronimo, imprisoned at the time of the quake, are set free by the chaos and destruction it unleashes. The survivors regroup in a paradisiacal valley outside the city walls and the narrator paints an image of a fledgling society, in which old social divisions are levelled and past transgressions are forgiven. The survivors, including Josephe, Jeronimo, and their child, return to the destroyed city to give thanks in the lone surviving church. Comparing the quake to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the canon claims the earthquake is a punishment for the sins of Josephe and Jeronimo. Before the young family and their new friends can escape, they are recognised and savagely clubbed to death by the bloodthirsty crowd.

Narrative strategies and the moral codex

Unsurprisingly, given the popularity of *Das Erdbeben in Chili*, there is no shortage of critical work on the text. Within such a large body of scholarly work, a number of recent contributions stand out: Ellwood Wiggins (2015) describes the web of narrative strategies at play in the tale, positing that different modes of storytelling determine varying ideas of social causation and also draws an analogy between the four etiological modes and Aristotle's four causes.¹⁹ Schneider's earlier contribution (2003) also examines the narrative strategy of *Das Erdbeben*, but contends that an illicit sexual encounter precipitates a narrative conflict that remains hidden - even as it unfolds. The famous Kleistian 'event' disrupting the status quo with such ineluctable force is traceable to the most prosaic of human experiences. Steven Howe takes a different approach, examining the relationship between *Das Erdbeben* and Rousseau as part of his monograph (2012) on Kleist and Rousseau and broader relationship with French Revolution. Tim Mehigan (2011) argues that the tale shows that there is no natural virtue underlying human life and helps to explain why Kleist — unlike his direct contemporaries, the Romantics — is unable to see any instruction in nature for human affairs.²⁰

Of greatest interest for this inquiry, however, are those works which relate the text to the sublime. Werner Hamacher's influential book article 'Das Beben der Darstel-

¹⁹ See Ellwood Wiggins, 'Kleist's Four Causes: Narration and Etiology in *Das Erdbeben in Chili*', *MLN*, 130.3 (2015), pp. 580-606.

²⁰ See Tim Mehigan, *Heinrich von Kleist: Writing after Kant* (New York: Camden House, 2011), p. 47.

lung' (1985) traces the antithetical movements of 'Fall' and 'Erhebung' in the text and relates them to the Kantian sublime: the deficit in human senses before the power of nature forces the characters' powers of imagination to seek support in the ethical idea of the 'Menschheit in unserer Person' – rather than in intuition or reason.²¹ David Roberts (2000) too writes on the sublime in *Das Erdbeben*. Roberts advocates a reading of the text as a narrative adaptation of Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft*: the destruction wrought upon the social order is experienced at once as a kind of perdition and a dawning of a new start, as death and new life.²² Like Kant, Kleist's text is preoccupied with the nature of this encounter. Most recently, Holm (2012) focuses on the catastrophe itself and the ensuing social disaster orchestrated by the citizens themselves. Holm identifies three cognitive schemes to conceptualise the vulnerability of human society: the theodicy, the sublime, and the state of emergency.²³

This reading of the text builds on the notion of the sublime explored by Roberts, which views the sublime not as the destructive force of the earthquake itself, but the human counterforce that is our own subjective awareness. The collapse of the story's idyll and the restoration of prior institutional and doctrinal positions have not been satisfactorily reconciled with analysis of the earthquake and the idyll as sublime. This chapter relates this breakdown of expected salvational teleology to the broader position represented in this thesis of Kleist's work challenging enlightenment assumptions.

While we might conventionally think of narratives as following a single path, tapering into an orderly *dénouement*, we know from our investigations in previous chapters that this is far from the case in the works of Hoffmann and Kleist. In *Das Erdbeben in Chili*, it is difficult to determine a single unified direction: each narrative chunk reveals a different temporal aesthetic and the direction of the narrative seems to change with each one. Text and story time diverge greatly in the first section with a brief summary of the love affair between Josephe and Jeronimo as contextualisation for their imprisonment. The reader might be forgiven for assuming at this point that the story will progress towards the execution of the couple; this is quickly superseded by the earthquake episode, in which text and story-time are closely aligned. At this point,

²¹ Hamacher, p.158.

²² See David Roberts, 'Kleists Kritik der Urteilskraft: Zum Erhabenen in *Das Erdbeben in Chili*', in *Heinrich von Kleist und die Aufklärung*, ed. by Tim Mehigan (Rochester, New York; Woodbridge: Camden House, 2000) pp. 46-57.

²³ See Holm, p. 52.

the narrative appears to be advancing towards the redemption of the sinners. Yet any nascent harmony is quickly interrupted by the canon's incitement to lynch justice. The Christian teleological narrative of fall – apocalypse – salvation is perverted in *Das Erdbeben* to fall – salvation – apocalypse. Despite the obvious resonance of the New Testament in the novella, any parallels to Christ are quickly shattered: indeed, the reader's expectation that the violent death of Josephe and Jeronimo may somehow be mourned and take on meaning is dashed by the abrupt end of the novella. Our approach as readers to the text is inevitably marked by our prior exposure to Christian moral values and the assumption that God will ultimately intervene to protect two lovers, cruelly and unreasonably punished by the law.

The novella can be divided into sections in line with the changing focalisation. Beginning with Jeronimo's viewpoint, the story's focalisation shifts to Josephe when the two are reunited. Having reached the beautiful valley, Josephe and Jeronimo are focalised intermittently by Don Fernando. The final section offers a more detached view of the protagonists, although the narrative voice, as in the rest of the novella, remains sympathetic towards them. Wiggins responds to Hamacher's emphasis on the trope of standing and falling in the narrative as representational modes, suggesting instead four narrative explanatory strategies in line with Aristotle's four causes. Aristotle's four causes, in essence an enumeration of the ways we can answer the question 'why?', are explained in book II of *Physics*. Wiggins argues that four modes or registers of narration can be mapped on to the four causes identified by Aristotle.²⁴ The timing of the earthquake and the apparent serendipity of the two lovers' escape are cast in the register of chance: believing all hope to be lost, Jeronimo is about to hang himself 'durch einen Strick, den ihm der Zufall gelassen hatte',²⁵ attaching the rope 'an eine Eisenklammer, die an dem Gesimse derselben eingefügt war'.²⁶ When the earthquake strikes, Jeronimo is saved from being crushed by the prison's collapsing walls 'durch eine zufällige Wölbung'.²⁷

The shift in focalisation to Josephe is, however, presented in a different register. Josephe, seemingly more pious than Jeronimo - possibly due to her time in the convent, interprets their salvation as an act of providence. Her first thought upon reaching the

²⁴ These are material cause (what is it made of?), formal cause (what is its form?), efficient cause (what brought it about?), and final cause (for what purpose?).

²⁵ *DEIC*, p. 10.

²⁶ *DEIC*, p. 11.

²⁷ *DEIC*, p. 11.

city gate is to return to the cloister to save her child. Despite the danger, she enters the burning building ‘als ob alle Engel des Himmels sie umschirmten’,²⁸ fleeing the city with the child ‘den ihr der Himmel wieder geschenkt hatte’.²⁹ The characters’ salvation is no longer presented as a chance event, but as a result of God’s grace. The description of the characters’ refuge away from the city is marked by a shift into a poetic register: attributions of the cause of the earthquake to chance or divine intervention make way for an authorial perspective which alludes to an epic style. Altruism and heroism emerge as defining themes here with Josephe feeding Don Elvire’s child, explaining ‘in diesem schrecklichen Zeiten weigert sich niemand, von dem, was er besitzen mag, mitzutheilen’.³⁰ Josephe is not alone in offering help: ‘Auf den Feldern, so weit das Auge reichte, sah man Menschen von allen Ständen durcheinander liegen, Fürsten und Bettler, Matronen und Bäuerinnen, Staatsbeamte und Tagelöhner, Klosterherren und Klosterfrauen: einander bemitleiden, sich wechselseitig Hülfe reichen, von dem, was sie zur Erhaltung ihres Lebens gerettet haben mochten, freudig mittheilen’. Those previously held in contempt by society ‘hatten Römergröße gezeigt’.³¹

The final shift in register comes in the rhetoric of the cleric’s speech. Despite the narrator’s sympathy for the two lovers, the cleric’s mastery of rhetoric stirs the crowd and re-affirms not only the Church’s position on Josephe and Jeronimo’s guilt, but also tacitly takes ownership of the quake by situating it within its own doctrinal system of virtue, sin and punishment.³²

Josephe’s causal interpretation of the events as a divine correction of a grossly unfair and cruel ruling is reversed by the canon’s view of the earthquake as divine punishment for the sins of the two lovers. The latter interpretation takes on a performative role when promulgated by a religious leader, a representative of God, and offers the crowd both explanation for the otherwise unfathomable natural event and a physical target for their fears.

The earthquake, and the sublime hiatus which ensues, opens up the possibility for different causal explanations. Yet the final section’s sermon is a reprise of the very same unyielding rhetoric and dogmatic religious view which condemns Josephe to exe-

²⁸ *DEIC*, p. 17.

²⁹ *DEIC*, p. 18.

³⁰ *DEIC*, p. 23.

³¹ *DEIC*, p. 27.

³² See Wiggins, pp. 582-598.

cution. The lovers' punishments are demanded as reparation for the injury to religious order, and are called for again post-quake. Despite the broadened epistemological perspectives afforded by the experience of the quake itself and the natural post-quake society, there is no sense of a development of a new social order analogous to that of the valley.

Central to this rehabilitation of the Church's worldview is the desire to secure and defend the existing moral codex. Yet despite such large-scale, collective interpretations of the quake's aetiology, the protagonists, too, are guilty of constructing a causal interpretation in alignment with their self-interests.³³ The narrator's account, internally focalised through Josephe, does little to temper this fantasy: 'Wenn sie sich mit so vieler Vertraulichkeit und Güte behandelt sahen, so wußten sie nicht, was sie von der Vergangenheit denken sollten, vom Richtplatze, von dem Gefängnisse, und der Glocke; und ob sie bloß davon geträumt hätten?'³⁴ The insignificant temporal distance between immanent execution and the valley scene is perceived as far greater: 'Ein Gefühl, das sie nicht unterdrücken konnte, nannte den verfloßnen Tag, so viel Elend er auch über die Welt gebracht hatte, eine Wohlthat, wie der Himmel noch keine über sie verhängt hatte.'³⁵ The reader's sympathies and expectations are frustrated by the crushing response of the masses. The attribution of disaster to the 'Sittenverderbniß der Stadt'³⁶ - in particular, to the sacrilege, 'der in dem Klostergarten der Karmeliterinnen verübt worden war', is not merely a theological reading of the event, but an act of self-interest from the Church.³⁷ Without such a justification and indeed a clearly identifiable malefactor, the earthquake would be the actions of a cruel and incomprehensible God.

Dogma against the natural order

Beyond the disruptive effect of the sublime on the text's explanatory strategies and the endurance of longstanding superstitions, the earthquake lays the foundation for huge social changes. Nor is the text's social-critical impetus confined to the destruction wrought by the quake itself: the opening paragraph, explaining the unsanctioned relationship, notably points out that Josephe's father is 'Don Henrico Asteron, einer der

³³ See Steven Howe, *Heinrich von Kleist and Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Violence, Identity, Nation* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), p. 62.

³⁴ *DEIC*, p.24.

³⁵ *DEIC*, p. 26.

³⁶ *DEIC*, p. 34.

³⁷ *DEIC*, p. 35.

reichsten Edelleute der Stadt'.³⁸ It is in Asteron's home that Jeronimo is employed as a tutor. Any socially critical potential in the relationship between the bourgeois tutor and nobleman's daughter are dwarfed, however, by the allusions to the French Revolution.³⁹ It is notable that the narrator among the almost total devastation of the city elaborates, 'Der Pallast des Vicekönigs war versunken, der Gerichtshof, in welchem [Josephe] das Urtheil gesprochen worden war, stand in Flammen, und an die Stelle, wo sich ihr väterliches Haus befunden hatte, war ein See getreten'.⁴⁰ Shortly before, Josephe witnesses the body of the archbishop being carried out of the cathedral. The destruction of monarchical, judicial, patriarchal and religious institutions invites parallels to the Revolution; the collapse of the prison, in particular, recalls the storming of the Bastille.⁴¹ Steven Howe goes further in his analysis, citing the cobbler Pedrillo who clubs Josephe to death, as an embodiment of the plebeian spirit who answers the canon's incitement to violence.

The contrast between the destruction of social structures - even if the final scenes of the story see a return to the status quo - and the seemingly instinctive sense of community that forms in the valley suggest a natural human condition, denuded of the dogma and value systems of the old society. The valley scene, unsurprisingly, has elicited comparisons with the return to a state of nature described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1754).⁴² Yet as Howe stresses, it is inaccurate to suggest that Rousseau advocates a return to a state of nature. Rousseau's state of nature, rather, is considered a yardstick by which to measure the fall of modern man.⁴³

Tim Mehigan points out that no definitive position has been reached in Kleist scholarship about the extent of Rousseau's influence, pointing out that Rousseau's

³⁸ *DEIC*, p. 7.

³⁹ The reading of *Das Erdbeben* as a metaphor for the French Revolution is a longstanding position in Kleist scholarship. See Howe.

⁴⁰ *DEIC*, p. 18.

⁴¹ See Howe, p. 70.

⁴² Rousseau's influence on Kleist is often cited in Kleist scholarship. Christian Moser paints this relationship cautiously in his discussion of the aporias of sovereignty, pointing out that Rousseau's work rests on the assumption that legal authority is always something conferred (rather than seized). Rousseau's vision appears to be somewhat naive in Kleist's work. See 'Recht als Krieg: Moderne Staatlichkeit und die Aporien legalistischer Herrschaft bei Heinrich von Kleist' in *Heinrich von Kleist and Modernity*, ed. by Bernd Fischer and Tim Mehigan (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2011), pp. 71-92. Steven Howe's monograph undoubtedly represents the weightiest recent contribution to scholarship on Rousseau and Kleist and is an excellent first port of call for enquiries in this area.

⁴³ See Howe, p. 67.

philosophy is often inconsistent. Indeed, while the state of nature is celebrated over ‘the excesses of urban civility and so-called civilisation’ in his *Discours*, in the later and more widely known *Du contrat social* (1762) Rousseau appears in fact to view the state as having the potential to safeguard human interests.⁴⁴ Despite the early reverence for Rousseau shown in his letters to Wilhelmine, *Das Erdbeben* ridicules any notion of a social order that is entered into rationally and mutually legitimised, enforced by a common understanding.⁴⁵

True to Rousseau, Kleist’s Eden underscores the cruelty of the pre-quake society. Yet the irreality of Kleist’s state of nature is drawn out by the deeply hyperbolic descriptions. The allusions to Eden, dripping with irony, are underlined by the narrator’s euphemistic description of their reunion: ‘Sie fanden einen Granatapfelbaum, der seine Zweige, voll duftender Früchte, weit ausbreitete; und die Nachtigall flötete im Wipfel ihr wollüstiges Lied.’⁴⁶ This contrasts sharply with Jeronimo’s flight from the city, where he glimpses the hellish devastation: ‘Hier stürzte noch ein Haus zusammen, und jagte ihn, die Trümmer weit umherschleudernd, in eine Nebenstraße; hier leckte die Flamme schon, in Dampfwolken blitzend, aus allen Giebeln, und trieb ihn schreckenvoll in eine andere; hier wälzte sich, aus seinem Gestade gehoben, der Mapochofluß auf ihn heran, und riß ihn brüllend in eine dritte. Hier lag ein Haufen Erschlagener, hier ächzte noch eine Stimme unter dem Schutte, hier schrieen Leute von brennenden Dächern herab, hier kämpften Menschen und Thiere mit den Wellen’.⁴⁷ The narrator’s anaphora ‘hier’ relentlessly intensifies the suffering described and highlights not only the quake’s damage to the city, but its humanitarian impact. Considered as metonymically as representative of civil society with its judicial and religious systems, the destroyed city marks a loss of authority for such symbolic orders. The return of the survivors to the city, including the protagonists, represents a return to established practices. Despite the apparent loss of authority and the threat to the religion posed by the quake whose indiscriminate destruction sits uncomfortably with teachings of a benevolent and merciful God, habit restores its legitimacy.

⁴⁴ Mehigan 2013, p. 75. Rousseau, it should be noted, does not locate this quality in any existing state.

⁴⁵ Kleist’s schoolmasterly tone in his letters to Wilhelmine von Zenge is explored by Günter Blamberger in the fourth chapter of his seminal biography, ‘Die missbrauchten Liebesbriefe’, pp. 85-116. Kleist discusses Rousseau in his letters as part of a broader programme of cultural instruction in the mould of Rousseau’s *Émile, ou De l’éducation* (1762): the education of women is to reflect the differing duties of men and women in society.

⁴⁶ *DEIC*, p. 21.

⁴⁷ *DEIC*, p.12.

While the earthquake's destruction poses a threat to the legitimacy of the Church, society is also threatened by the very facts of Josephe's child's birth. Helmut Schneider argues that the basic corporeal event of Philip's conception escalates into an outrageous public spectacle. Not only do Josephe and Jeronimo engage in an unauthorised relationship, but they resume their affair even when Josephe is sent away to a cloister, where Jeronimo 'in einer verschwiegenen Nacht den Klostergarten zum Schauplatze seines vollen Glückes gemacht.'⁴⁸ The birth takes place in public too: it is on the steps of the cathedral that the novice goes into labour. Sentenced to be executed, 'dieser Vorfall machte außerordentliches Aufsehn' and 'man vermietete in den Straßen, durch welche der Hinrichtung gehen sollte, die Fenster, man trug die Dächer der Häuser ab, und die frommen Töchter der Stadt luden ihre Freundinnen ein, um dem Schauspiele, das der göttlichen Rache gegeben wurde, an ihrer schwesterlichen Seite beizuwohnen.'⁴⁹ The cruel relish of the citizens in Josephe's death underscores the power of the Church's moral framework.

Schneider contrasts the pre-quake judgement of the couple with their acceptance and value in the valley society: a society whose existence and moral integrity was threatened by a child conceived out of wedlock, now accepts the young family.⁵⁰ Yet the two societies arguably cannot be considered to be the same - not least given the ontological shift which is announced by the valley's location beyond the city gates and its description as a *locus amoenus* - 'voll wundermilden Duftes [...] im Schimmer des Mondscheins'.⁵¹ The valley is a *tabula rasa*: beneath the layers of artifice, humanity shows itself to be fundamentally good. The disaster inaugurates a natural order, which replaces the arbitrariness of state legislation and religious dogma.⁵² Yet any apparent valorisation of a natural order is undermined by the shaky ontological value assigned to the valley. The stasis of the idyll (note the absence of church bells) and its narcissistic self-containment are quickly displaced by the characters' return to Santiago. The Christian masquerade presents a dichotomous God – on the one hand, vengeful and infinitely mighty,

⁴⁸ *DEIC*, p. 8.

⁴⁹ *DEIC*, p. 9.

⁵⁰ See Helmut Schneider, 'The Facts of Life: Kleist's Challenge to Enlightenment Humanism (Lessing)', in *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, ed. by Bernd Fischer (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), pp. 141-63 (p. 141).

⁵¹ *DEIC*, p. 20.

⁵² See Stefanie Marx, *Beispiele des Beispiellosen: Heinrich von Kleists Erzählungen ohne Moral* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994), p. 130.

and on the other, infinitely merciful. In *Das Erdbeben*, it is the former which prevails as the earthquake is read as God's vengeance for the sin of the two lovers. Crossing the church's threshold marks the victory of dogma over a natural moral order.⁵³

The absurdity of the pre-quake society's drive to banish the physicality of conception and birth to the designated morally permissible space of wedlock corresponds to the enlightenment problem of how to reconcile the fundamental physicality of human existence - our essence as a bundle of bodily functions, drives and desires - with the enlightenment claims for man as a self-determinate, rational being. The idyll of the valley scene offers a vision of an ethical society, born not out of the precepts and interdictions of religion and government, but grounded in the natural moral sense of man. In the absence of state and religious oversight, man not only falls back on an inchoate moral sense, but is forced to think for himself. Given their positive reception by the other survivors in the valley, Jeronimo and Josephe decide to stay in St. Jago. Josephe suggests going to La Concepcion to write to the Vicekönig and ask for a pardon: 'Nach einer kurzen Überlegung gab Jeronimo der Klugheit dieser Maßregel seinen Beifall, führte sie noch ein wenig, die heitern Momente der Zukunft überfliegend, in den Gängen umher, und kehrte mit ihr zur Gesellschaft zurück.'⁵⁴ Nevertheless, any critical awakening and path towards *Mündigkeit* is subverted by the decision to follow the crowds back into Santiago. As we see elsewhere in Kleist's work, notably in *Die heilige Cäcilie*, the teleology of this rational emancipation is uncertain and the temptation to remain *unmündig* strong.

The superstition that the earthquake is God's vengeance is countered by Kant's defence of the sublime against hypothetical objections. The Kantian sublime refers not to the terrible destructive force of nature, but in our attempts to cognitively process the event. The idea of self-preservation quickly gives way to awe at power and destruction of quake.⁵⁵ The sense of horror in the monstrous forces at play in the destruction of the city is accompanied by the explosion of both the characters' expectations of their fate, as Jeronimo is miraculously saved from prison, Josephe from the gallows, and their child from the convent.

⁵³ See Marx, p. 132.

⁵⁴ *DEIC*, p. 29.

⁵⁵ See Kant, *KdU*, pp. 257-260 (§27).

Ritter Gluck

This same blending of horror and delight is explored very differently by Hoffmann, with the setting for the sublime shifting from the arena of the natural world to art in *Ritter Gluck*. Readers familiar with Hoffmann's works will find in *Ritter Gluck* many of the themes and motifs found elsewhere, such as the mad artist figure who stands at odds with the world around him, the 'enthusiast' narrator figure who eagerly mediates between this figure and the reader; and, like *Das Erdbeben*, an air of irreality hangs over certain parts of the story.

The question of irreality and imagination has preoccupied critical responses to the text. Jochen Schmidt views the figure Gluck as a manifestation of the narrator's own musical ideal, with the tale as a whole offering an allegory for the incompatibility of art and life.⁵⁶ Ricarda Schmidt's response to *Ritter Gluck* and *Die Abenteuer der Sylvester-Nacht*, also in Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücke*, focuses on intermediality and cultural references in the texts.⁵⁷ Miranda Stanyon points out that although Hoffmann's fascination with the musical sublime has been documented, particularly by musicologists, little has been made of the text's staging of the artist's struggle of relating his experiences to the external reality around him.⁵⁸ Chapin, too, discusses the sublime by drawing comparisons of Hoffmann's aesthetics with the narrator of Tieck's *Herzensergießungen*, in which he views the sublime as blurring the boundaries between physical laws and aesthetic sense.⁵⁹ Ulrich Schönherr views the fictional reincarnation of Gluck as confronting the composer with the historicity of his own earlier work. The blank score affords a virtually limitless artistic present.⁶⁰ A more expansive perspective on Hoffmann's musical aesthetics can be found in critical work on his famous review of Beethoven's fifth symphony. Peter Johnson focuses on Hoffmann's discussions of performance arguing that they constitute a key aspect of his aesthetics in transporting the listener.⁶¹ Steven Cas-

⁵⁶ See Jochen Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik 1750-1945*, 2 vols (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), II, pp. 12-19.

⁵⁷ See Ricarda Schmidt, 'Narration - Malerei - Musik Mediale Interferenz am Beispiel E.T.A. Hoffmanns', *KulturPoetik*, 1.2 (2001), pp. 182-213.

⁵⁸ See Miranda Stanyon, "'Rastrierte Blätter, aber mit keiner Note beschrieben": The Musical Sublime and Aporias of Inscription in Hoffmann's *Ritter Gluck*', *The German Quarterly*, 83.4 (2010), pp. 412-430.

⁵⁹ See Keith Chapin, 'The Grammar Of Musical Communication: Two Versions Of Counterpoint In Early Romantic Literature', *European Romantic Review*, (2002) 13.2, 153-160.

⁶⁰ See Ulrich Schönherr, 'Adorno, Ritter Gluck, and the Tradition of the Postmodern', *New German Critique*, 48 (1989), pp. 135-154.

⁶¹ See Peter Johnson, "'Labyrinthine Pathways and Bright Rings of Light": Hoffmann's Aesthetics of Music in Performance', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, 9 (2012), pp 75-92.

sedy asserts that Hoffmann's Beethoven review establishes music as the most romantic of all the arts - in particular, instrumental music, which is furthest removed from language and the sensible world - a notion also explored by Mark Evan Bonds, who takes an expansive view of the philosophical premises behind the review.⁶²

My contention is that Gluck's apparent madness, along with questions over the narrator's reliability, are merely structural elements, framing Hoffmann's aesthetic position on music and the sublime. The view that the text presents an allegory for the fundamental disharmony between art and the real world, and between artistic inspiration and artistic production is continuous with criticism of many of Hoffmann's works - including those investigated in this thesis. Yet such a view is flawed when applied to *Ritter Gluck* and fails to recognise not only the very different tone in which Gluck is presented, but also the optimism in the novella's close. Gluck's handsome leather-bound volumes are empty, and thus read as another example of the inspired artist's inability to successfully translate his visions in a higher realm into a form accessible in the material world. Yet Gluck, as a musician and composer, arguably does not need to record his art through written notation: performance offers a bridge between the listener and artist's sublime dreamworld. In both *Ritter Gluck* and his Beethoven review, instrumental music offers a means of bypassing the representational constraints of the material world. Although the Kantian sublime offers little direct insight on the sublime in art (unlike Kant's discussion of beauty), the sublime's power to move the individual and arouse an ambivalent sense of both fear and delight has clear relevance for art, music in particular.

Madness and the Narrator

The question of whether Gluck is merely an eccentric stranger, mad, or in fact a figment of the excitable narrator's imagination remains unresolved, played out structurally in the text.⁶³ While the narrator initially complains about the dreadful music, he becomes absorbed by the stranger's facial expressions, which appear to involuntarily follow the music: 'hinauf ziehen sich die Augenbraunen, das Muskelspiel auf den Wangen kehrt wieder, die Augen erglänzen, ein tiefer, innerer Schmerz löst sich auf in Wollust [...]

⁶² See Steven Cassedy, 'Beethoven the Romantic: How E. T. A. Hoffmann Got It Right', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 71.1 (2010), pp. 1-37; See 'Chapter Three. Listening to Truth: Beethoven's Fifth Symphony' in Mark Evan Bonds's, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 44-62.

⁶³ See Ricarda Schmidt, p. 209.

tief aus der Brust zieht er den Atem, Tropfen stehen auf der Stirn; er deutet das Eintreten des Tutti und andere Hauptstellen an; seine rechte Hand verläßt den Takt nicht, mit der linken holt er sein Tuch hervor und fährt damit über das Gesicht.’⁶⁴ The narrator, it seems, begins to experience the music vicariously as he describes ‘die sanfte, schmelzende Klage, womit die Flöte emporsteigt, wenn der Sturm der Violinen und Bässe ausgetobt hat und der Donner der Pauken schweigt; ich hörte die leise anschlagenden Töne der Violoncelle, des Fagotts, die das Herz mit unnennbarer Wehmut erfüllen’.⁶⁵ The narrator’s internal focalisation of the stranger’s experience of the music is stylistically odd given that the narrator remains engaged in dialogue with the man. The stranger’s description of composition and learning music quickly digresses into a metaphor for artistic creation: ‘Es ist eine breite Heerstraße, da tummeln sich alle herum und jauchzen und schreien: ‘wir sind Geweihte! wir sind am Ziel!’ – Durchs elfenbeinerne Tor kommt man ins Reich der Träume [...] Tolle Gestalten schweben hin und her, aber sie haben Charakter – eine mehr wie die andere. Sie lassen sich auf der Heerstraße nicht sehen, nur hinter dem elfenbeinernen Tor sind sie zu finden.’⁶⁶

The progression from the physically present ‘Heerstraße’ in Berlin to ‘elfenbeinerne Tor’, still recognisable as the Brandenburg Gate in the stranger’s oneiric idiom, to the outright fantastical is seamless. Gluck’s perception of the ‘Reich der Träume’ continuous with the material world suggests madness - yet the narrator’s interest in the stranger and investment in his story leave Gluck’s visions unchallenged. Indeed, the narrator accompanies Gluck to his home, which too appears to be reached via an escape from reality: ‘rasch bog er in eine Querstraße ein, und kaum vermochte ich ihm zu folgen, so schnell lief er die Straße hinab, bis er endlich vor einem unansehnlichen Hause stillstand [...] Im Finstern tappend, erreichten wir die Treppe und ein Zimmer im obern Stock.’⁶⁷ Gluck’s room, in a house located in a nameless side street, opens portal-like to his dream world. The continuity of the narrator’s description suggests a certain complicity in Gluck’s dream world, with either Gluck merely a decoy for his own fantasy or truly a figure capable of entering such a realm.

⁶⁴ *RG*, p. 22.

⁶⁵ *RG*, p. 22.

⁶⁶ *RG*, p. 24.

⁶⁷ *RG*, p. 29.

Gluck and ‘die romantischste aller Künste’

While the reality of both Gluck and his dream world remains inconclusive from the narrator’s description, the presentation of his account disorients and disrupts the reader’s efforts to disentangle the narrator from Gluck’s story. The use of dashes in the text is particularly striking, marking a change in speaker or, in Gluck’s account of the ‘Reich der Träume’,⁶⁸ the rapid transitions between dreaming and waking, sunlight and night.⁶⁹ Gluck’s staccato account is interrupted by numerous dashes, accompanying a dizzying sequence of shifts and interjections. The resulting confusion robs the passage of a clear sense of time - and indeed, in true Hoffmann style, of where reality begins and ends. The topography of the narrator’s Berlin surroundings is paralleled in the features of Gluck’s descriptions: the aforementioned Brandenburg Gate reappears as the ‘elfenbeinerne Tor’. The social mix of ‘eine lange Reihe, buntgemischt - Elegants, Bürger mit der Hausfrau und den lieben Kleinen in Sonntagskleidern, Geistliche, Jüdinnen, Referendare, Freudenmädchen, Professoren, Putzmacherinnen, Tänzer, Offiziere u.s.w.’⁷⁰ corresponds to the unnamed individuals in Gluck’s story, who ‘tummeln sich alle herum, und jauchzen und schreien [...] Tolle Gestalten schweben hin und her’.⁷¹

The carnivalesque nature of Gluck’s vision, as well as his distinction between the music of his dream world and the kind learnt ‘als Knabe, weil’s Papa und Mama so haben wollen’, contrasts sharply with the opening position of the narrator.⁷² Hoffmann’s narrator, presented through his involvement in the narrative as a character, represents a gentle parody of the bourgeois music connoisseur. The narrator is quick to identify a ‘verstimmte Harfe, ein paar nicht gestimmte Violinen, eine lungensüchtige Flöte und ein spasmatischer Fagott’.⁷³ The narrator’s repertoire of musical critique, it seems, is brandished before the stranger: ‘Ich lernte ehemals Klavierspielen und Generalbaß, wie eine Sache, die zur guten Erziehung gehört, und da sagte man mir unter anderm, nichts mache einen widrigern Effekt, als wenn der Baß mit der Oberstimme in Oktaven fortschreite. Ich nahm das damals auf Autorität an und habe es nachher immer bewährt ge-

⁶⁸ *RG*, p. 25.

⁶⁹ See Stanyon, p. 418.

⁷⁰ *RG*, p. 19.

⁷¹ *RG*, p. 24.

⁷² *RG*, p. 24.

⁷³ *RG*, p. 19.

funden.’⁷⁴ The narrator’s remark, intended to engage the stranger in conversation and impress with a flash of erudition, is met with distracted indifference. It is not without a certain irony that the enthusiast’s interlocutor is a composer, no less. Further, the narrator’s remarks, pretension notwithstanding, point to a prescriptive understanding of composition - a view strongly challenged by Gluck’s stunning impromptu performance and disregard for musical notation.

The choice of the historical figure Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787) as the basis for *Ritter Gluck* is thus no accident. The novella parodies contemporary criticism of Gluck by the Göttinger professor of music Johann Nicolaus Forkel.⁷⁵ Gluck, derided for having contravened the rules of composition, is transformed by Hoffmann into a heroic figure. The Romantic veneration of a mystical idea of ‘genius’ offers a rebuttal of such stifling and dogmatic artistic paradigms.⁷⁶ Hoffmann’s Serapiontic principle itself, discussed in the previous chapter, closely links to the Romantic cult of genius and its underlying antagonism between artistic production and life. The genius artist, within Hoffmann’s literary world, is a free agent within a solipsistic realm constructed from their own projections of subjectivity.⁷⁷ Inhabiting his own realm, Hoffmann’s artist breaks from the thematic grounds of mimesis in the Neoclassical sense, but retains, as we have seen, the same fundamental processes of abstraction and idealisation.

Ritter Gluck, beyond any such unstated aims to defend the historical Gluck, offers an important statement of Hoffmann’s musical aesthetics. The text trials many of the motifs and phrases later found in his Beethoven review. Beloved of musicologists,

⁷⁴ *RG*, p. 21.

⁷⁵ See Ricarda Schmidt, pp. 207-208.

⁷⁶ While Novalis’s monistic vision of being seeks to overcome this division by constructing external reality as the secondary state of the *Geist*’s inner realm, Hoffmann’s position resembles more closely that of Tieck. Tieck views ideality and reality as irreconcilably and tragically opposed. Hoffmann’s relationship with genius, viewed through the recurrent clash of artistic subjectivity and external reality in his works, is ambivalent. Hoffmann distorts this familiar genius figure to one tortured by their own demonic inner realm - which also serves as their source of inspiration. Hoffmann appears acutely aware of the hackneyed stereotype of the genius and, despite his sympathy for the artist’s suffering, parodies his inability to work and bizarre behaviour. Kater Murr is arguably Hoffmann’s most incisive caricature of the genius in the self-proclaimed genius Tomcat Murr and musical virtuoso Kreisler. See Jochen Schmidt, pp. 2-18. Hoffmann’s awareness of the banality of ‘genius’ was not unique and was signalled earlier by Herder in his 1778 treatise *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele*: ‘Plötzlich gabs Abhandlung über Abhandlung, Versuch nach Versuch darüber, und wahrscheinlich haben wir noch von irgend einer metaphysischen Akademie in Dänemark, Holland, Deutschland und Italien eine Aufgabe “übers Genie” zu erwarten, “Was Genie sei? Aus welchen Bestandteilen es bestehe, und sich darin natürlich wieder zerlegen lasse? Wie man dazu und davon komme? u. dgl.”’ See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Johann v. Müller (Karlsruhe: Bureau der deutschen Klassiker, 1820) VIII, pp. 74-75.

⁷⁷ The self-detachment and the concomitant loneliness of the genius are prefigured in Hölderlin’s episatolary novel *Hyperion* (1797-1799), in which the protagonist embraces his solitude and nature’s beauty in the Greek wilderness.

the review is often cited as introducing a range of concepts to music criticism. Hoffmann's technical review of the piece encompasses such notions as musical genius, the sublime, music as transcendent experience, and historical consciousness.⁷⁸ In both the review and *Ritter Gluck*, instrumental music is revealed as both 'die romantischste aller Künste' and the medium capable of unlocking 'das Reich des Ungeheuern und Unermeßlichen'.⁷⁹ Unbound by language or visual images, instrumental music is able to bypass such carriers of convention to establish communication with a realm beyond the sensible world.⁸⁰ Music itself proves capable of catering to a range of senses. The stranger explains: 'Da fuhren Lichtstrahlen durch die Nacht, und die Lichtstrahlen waren Töne, welche mich umfingen mit lieblicher Klarheit - Melodien strömten auf und nieder, und ich schwamm in diesem Strom und wollte untergehen'.⁸¹ The bizarre realm described by the stranger is an account of a journey of composition: the realm of imagination reached through music is experienced not only aurally, but visually, in the images of sunlight and darkness, but also haptically, in the sensation of the torrents of tones. This synaesthesia, attained through Gluck's composition, adds a sense of multidimensionality to his experience and builds a world beyond the representational paradigms of the material world. Gluck's delight in his creation is alloyed, however, with terror and a feeling of helplessness. 'Als ich im Reich der Träume war, folterten mich tausend Schmerzen und Ängste!' Indeed, 'die grinsenden Larven der Ungeheuer, welche auf einstürmten und mich bald in den Abgrund des Meeres versenkten, bald hoch in die Lüfte emporhoben.'⁸² At its most basic level, Gluck's experience is sublime in its superposing of intense pleasure and suffering. Considered more carefully, however, Gluck finds at once his cognitive faculties overwhelmed and an awareness of his own powerlessness.

⁷⁸ While Hoffmann's Beethoven review is a familiar and well-studied text in musicology, it has only recently become the object of more focussed critical attention in literary studies. Matthew Riley makes a rare attempt to consider the review alongside Hoffmann's fictional texts *Der Sandmann*, *Das Sanctus*, *Das Majorat*, *Die Fermate*, and *Der Baron von B.* See Matthew Riley, 'E.T.A. Hoffmann beyond the 'Paradigm Shift': Music and Irony in the Novellas 1815-1819', in *Words and Notes in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Phyllis Weliver and Katherine Ellis (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013), pp. 119-144.

⁷⁹ E.T.A. Hoffmann, 'Beethovens Instrumentalmusik', in *Fantasiestücke in Callot's Manier*, ed. by Hartmut Steinecke (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006), pp. 52-61 (p. 52; p. 54).

⁸⁰ See Stanyon, pp. 414-415.

⁸¹ *RG*, p. 25.

⁸² *RG*, p. 25.

Kant and the power of music to move

While it is unclear from Kant's account of the sublime whether Kant believed that artworks could evoke the sublime, his distinction of the concept from that of the 'beautiful' establishes a useful paradigm. The 'beautiful' for Kant represents, *in nuce*, that which is pleasant, decorous and human. Kant's account of beauty differs from prevailing accounts resting on notions of perfection or sense impressions. For Kant, judgements of beauty conform neither to subjective nor objective accounts of beauty.⁸³ Kant claims that judgements of taste are singular and relate to empirical objects. Although these are rooted in the individual's subjective feeling, they also have a certain universal validity. Such feelings can be distinguished from those of pleasure and morality in that they are disinterested: beauty is appreciated without purpose. As taste judgements are thus universal as they are disinterested, independent of individual wants and needs, we can speak of a universal aesthetic response.

Music admittedly plays only a marginal role in Kant's philosophy. In contrast to traditional approaches to the study of aesthetics, in which beauty was evaluated against the yardstick of the ideals of the metaphysical world, Kant locates aesthetics within the broader investigation of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* into the faculties responsible for judgement. Although Kant focuses on the natural world and, to some extent, the plastic arts, the power of music to move the listener (in contrast to the charm of the beautiful) parallels the sublime.⁸⁴

The sublime's power to move is evident in the listener's experience of instrumental music. Free from language, such music is no longer necessarily a simulacra of objects and processes found in the material world. Hoffmann writes in his Beethoven review, 'Die Musik schließt dem Menschen ein unbekanntes Reich auf, eine Welt, die nichts gemein hat mit der äußern Sinnenwelt, die ihn umgibt und in der er alle *bestimmten* Gefühle zurückläßt, um sich einer unaussprechlichen Sehnsucht hinzugeben.'⁸⁵ The idea of leaving behind 'precise feelings' on a voyage to an unknown realm recalls Herder's paean to instrumental music, *Kalligone* (1800), in which he praises music as a

⁸³ See Howard Caygill, *A Kant dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 91-93.

⁸⁴ See Herman Parret, 'Kant on Music and the Hierarchy of the Arts', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56.3 (1998), 251-264 (p. 251).

⁸⁵ Hoffmann, 'Beethovens Instrumentalmusik', p. 52.

natural language of the emotions.⁸⁶ Indeed, Hoffmann's claim that the 'entzückte Seele' hears an unknown language and is able to understand 'alle die geheimsten Ahnungen, von denen sie ergriffen'⁸⁷ corresponds to the Romantic view of music as itself a kind of language, untainted by rhetoric.⁸⁸ Despite the affinity of the review with Herder's ideas, Hoffmann's review mimics Kant's language with words and expressions such as 'Sinnenwelt', 'Reich des Unendlichen', 'eigentümliche[s] Wesen', and 'Geist'.⁸⁹

The blank score

The language of Hoffmann's Beethoven review and indeed that of the stranger in *Ritter Gluck* follows established descriptive precedents when talking about the sublime. The sublime, however, is played out at the narrative level in Gluck's apparent mental transport when listening to music and the significant blank score. The latter represents a limitless possibility for reinvention through performance.⁹⁰ By contrast, Gluck bemoans the working practices of other composers: 'Sie kritteln und kritteln – verfeinern alles bis zur feinsten Meßlichkeit [...] wenn sie ein paar Gedanken ans Tageslicht befördern müßten, so zeigt die furchtbare Kälte ihre weite Entfernung von der Sonne'.⁹¹ Despite his outburst, in a clear parallel to Berklinger in *Der Artushof* and to a certain extent the writer in *Des Vettters Eckfenster*, Gluck appears to be unaware that the score's pages are blank when he asks the narrator to turn the pages for him at the correct moment while he is playing.

The narrator expresses his surprise that the stranger possesses Gluck's complete works, 'eine Reihe schön gebundene Bücher [...] mit goldnen Aufschriften'.⁹² It is ironic that the beauty and richness of the books' covers contrasts with their blank pages. The absence of transcription, however, reflects the uncontainability of music from the kingdom of dreams by written representation - each unique performance constitutes a conduit of such music from the higher realm to the listener. Any attempt to embody the mu-

⁸⁶ *Kalligone* posits a counterbalance to the imputed formalism and visual bias of Kantian aesthetics. Herder saw the function of art as to form moral character. Non-linguistic art has the power to affect moral character; visual arts have the power to make moral ideals attractive by blending them with physical beauty.

⁸⁷ Hoffmann, 'Beethovens Instrumentalmusik', pp. 59-60.

⁸⁸ See Bonds, p. 51.

⁸⁹ Cassedy, pp. 1-2.

⁹⁰ See Schönherr, pp. 135-136.

⁹¹ *RG*, p. 26.

⁹² *RG*, p. 29.

sic in a score, binding the music in time and space, anchors the music in the material world and forecloses access to the dream world. Performance, as Peter Johnson observes, is a key part of Hoffmann's aesthetics. Not only should the performance carry the listener away to the artist's dream world, but offer an interpretatively open staging of the piece as part of the Romantic effort of endless pursuit of the unattainable and avoid the danger of reifying notated work.⁹³

Conclusions

Central to this investigation is the fundamental idea of the sublime as a feeling of at once pain and pleasure, developed in Kant's account to include a reflective element: before the overwhelming power of nature the human subject gains definition and awareness of its humanity and rationality. In *Das Erdbeben*, Kleist adopts familiar techniques seen elsewhere in his texts. The shifting focalisation and ensuing proliferation of possible causal narratives disrupts uncritical reading practices, repeatedly challenging the reader's expectations. The text's grizzly ending invites comparisons with Nicolo's dashed brains in *Der Findling* or the infanticide in the closing scene of *Die Familie Schroffenstein*; the bitter irony of Don Fernando's gratitude recalls the contrived image of familial bliss presented at the close of *Die Marquise von O...* Kleist's dark parody of enlightenment values is encapsulated in Don Fernano's adoption of Philip. Noble and brave, Don Fernando embodies the enlightenment ideal of a kind of fatherhood beyond biological paternity - yet the absurdity of his gratitude undermines any such ideal. The narrative trajectory, defined above the twists and turns of the plot, again traces a move towards *Mündigkeit*, only to come crashing down.

Ritter Gluck, too, offers an array of narrative and thematic elements that will be of no surprise to Hoffmann readers. The narrative structure of an 'enthusiast' narrator and mad artist figure is not unique to the tale, with the narrator himself emerging as a somewhat foolish character. Familiar too is the thematic focus of artistic production. In both texts, however, the sublime opens new epistemological vistas in the natural moral society that emerges beyond the ruined city in *Das Erdbeben* and Gluck's dream world, which is channelled through the composer's performance to the listener. The experience of the sublime creates an awareness of a realm beyond the purview of rationality.

⁹³ See Johnson, p. 78.

While for both writers, the sublime offers an awareness of human vulnerability and creates a connection between sensible experience and imagination within their aesthetic programmes, their approach to the sublime is very different. The sublime of *Das Erdbeben* comes in the aftermath of the quake's destruction, and is packaged in the form of an idyll. The post-quake society is undermined structurally as unreal. Any new awareness or critical awakening through the sublime experience is squandered by the survivors return to the city: dogma, the linchpin of mental habits, remains entrenched and unassailable. In *Ritter Gluck*, contrasted with other artist figures of Hoffmann, Gluck is successful in his work. Gluck's experience of the 'Reich der Träume', as he terms it, is sublime - he delights in the 'Lichtstrahlen', but is terrified as he is thrown to the bottom of the sea by 'die grinsenden Larven der Ungeheuer'. Judged by Hoffmann's 'Serapiontic principle', a later articulation of his aesthetics, music allows Gluck to overcome the problem of 'translating' inner images, since he is able to bypass precisely the representational paradigms which normally impair and frustrate such attempts.

Conclusion

Let us return to the central question of whether Kleist and Hoffmann's fiction can be read as responding to perceived shortcomings of enlightenment, refocusing Kleist's relationship to enlightenment beyond the familiar lens of the much-discussed Kant crisis and considering how knowledge is presented in Kleist and Hoffmann's fiction not as stable and fixed, but shifting to reflect power relations and situation. The thesis also asked whether an aesthetic position emerges, reflective of this relationship to enlightenment.

This investigation has taken a more comparative approach to the two writers' work than has previously been attempted. I have identified a common aesthetic in which multiple narratives co-exist and where truth is manufactured by the dominance of one particular narrative. Kleist's texts often present a scenario where there is opportunity for a rational awakening - yet this intellectual emancipation typically proves only short-lived before those in question lapse into their old mental habits, or simply is not seized upon at all. Hoffmann offers a satire of the rational bourgeois' shallow and dogmatic worldview, but also points to the madness of those who seek knowledge below the surface of the rational realm. Rather than positivistically impute influences to the writers' contemporaries, I have sought to view the texts within a more expansive discourse context as literary interventions within a broad, cross-society engagement with enlightenment, in its various streams and factions. By reading the texts as thought experiments, which test and critique key enlightenment assumptions and values, this thesis presents an alternative conceptual framework for exploring Kleist's relationship to Kant, and enlightenment more broadly, as well as considering more closely Hoffmann's literary engagement beyond his designation in literary history as a Romantic. The guiding concept of *Mündigkeit*, I argue, spans a range of interconnected ideas and avoids overly narrowing discussion of the writers' engagement with contemporary discourse to a handful of actors. Not only are the certainty and consequences of this intellectual emancipation evaluated in the texts, but I have also identified a radical questioning of the paradigms of thought which condition our understanding of narratives. This enquiry encompasses our understanding of truth, causality and representational aesthetics.

Addressing the questions posed by the thesis has called for a better understanding of the internal contradictions of enlightenment than has hitherto been evident in the

scholarship. The ambivalence and complexity of the enlightenment project can be captured by returning to Schiller, who, as we saw in the introduction, points out the disparity between enlightenment as an assemblage of abstract ideas, and their realisation to enact an intellectual revolution and foster a tolerant society. Schiller's view of enlightenment, outlined in the introduction to this thesis, as requiring a certain grit to overcome the natural cowardice of the heart and to set oneself at variance with the guidance of others, is tempered by his later caveat that aesthetic appreciation, along with any accompanying moral improvement, is beyond many people.¹

Schiller's caveats regarding the desired beneficiaries and extent of enlightenment signal many of the difficulties in the practical application of enlightenment. As we have seen, it is precisely these difficulties, which are the object of the two writers' thought experiments. While the emancipatory promise of reflection central to Kant's definition of *Aufklärung* emerges as its legacy for posterity, how exactly any such awakening is realised is questioned in Kleist and Hoffmann's fiction, as this thesis has shown.

The findings of this thesis are framed within a differentiated idea of enlightenment. As we have seen in section one, 'enlightenment' represents a broad-stroke movement spanning abstract justifications for reason's supremacy to claims resembling bourgeois 'common sense'. The fostering of a field of shared values - political, social and moral - is now generally accepted as self-evident for a peaceful, successful society. The Enlightenment should not simply be conceived of as a historical event, nor is it reductive to a monolithic set of values; rather, the various streams of enlightenment debate can be said to share in a certain view of the teleology of man's progress and united by broad concepts of individual autonomy, universality, and a human final purpose to our acts. The secular void left by the retreat of Christianity in the West has been filled by liberal ideas of tolerance and freedom. The shift towards a view of God as a creator experienced through his creation - nature - corresponds to Spinoza's equation of God with nature. The favouring of deism and rejection of theism reduces the ever after to the level

¹ See the tenth letter of Schiller's 'Über die ästhetische Erziehung'. Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, ed. by Otto Dann and Axel Gellhaus, VIII (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992) pp. 587-592 (p. 588). To be precise, Schiller argues later in 'Anmut und Würde' that human beings should perfect themselves by unifying the form of our reason with the content of sensibility. If the unity of form and content defines beauty, then an aesthetic education consists not in the refinement of character through works of art, but in making our characters themselves into works of art. Schiller refers to this ideal as 'die schöne Seele'. See Frederick Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 96-107.

of the mortal world. The move away from organised religion, along with ideas of tolerance and freedom, has long since become axiomatic to Western societies. This secularism and tolerance reveals the penetration and absorption of ostensibly enlightenment values into mainstream discourse. This normalisation of enlightenment values sees an active critical process diminished to a level of political expectation - a view of progress grounded in the defence and expansion of personal freedom and tolerance.

Shorn of the need to actively strive for this vision, it acquires a status of inevitability in the modern world. Nevertheless, the essential function of personal critical emancipation in overcoming stasis of any kind points to the continued relevance of enlightenment: Kleist and Hoffmann's literary work, in its experimentation and calls to *Mündigkeit*, remains pertinent to modern times. The preceding investigation of Kleist and Hoffmann's fiction as critical of enlightenment suggests a different picture to that to which we are accustomed: this response is neither merely reflective of contemporary influences nor simply a declaration of the insolvency of enlightenment aspirations, but rather resembles a challenging of central assumptions that the world is inherently discoverable to human reason and that human progression is assured and lasting, as well as the attainability of certain values. The latter are tested in the texts: faith in reason has been explored in *Die heilige Cäcilie* and *Das Majorat*; the great value placed on education over forces of biological determination in *Der Findling*; tolerance of others and justice in *Die Familie Schroffenstein* and *Michael Kohlhaas*; the preference for rational answers over mysticism in *Die Elixiere*, and the optimistic view of human progress in *Die Elixiere*.

Over six chapters, the thesis made use of a number of key concepts to explore the writers' response to enlightenment. Central to chapter one and the following chapters is the concept of *Mündigkeit*. The idea of intellectual emancipation, coupled with an implicit trajectory of human progress, is tested by Kleist. Chapter one examines *Die Familie Schroffenstein*, *Der Findling*, and *Über das Marionettentheater*. The latter constitutes something of an aesthetic treatise for Kleist's later work, suggesting enlightened man as fallen and whose grace is to be recovered via an automated puppet. The ingenuity of rational man's innovation leads him no closer to recovering *his* lost grace: instead, human consciousness becomes estranged from aesthetic production. *Marionettentheater* thus clearly articulates the breakdown of this teleology of emancipation and provides a gateway for considering other texts. In *Die Familie Schroffenstein*, we

see the characters paralysed by the mental habits and prejudices of family. Although the children become ‘awakened’, *mündig*, to these prejudices, the play offers little sense of progression, even in the resolution of the final scene, given that the disputed will is now resolved by the death of its beneficiaries. Further, we find in *Der Findling* a testing of the enlightenment ideal of non-biological fatherhood and power of education to overcome biological otherness rejected. Such an ideal quickly crumbles when faced with the ingrate adopted son Nicolo and his adoptive parents’ lack of success instilling in him their own bourgeois moral values. The first chapter has shown *Mündigkeit* not as an inevitable human process, but as a personal struggle. Nor is the bourgeois family a hatchery for upstanding enlightened individuals, with no amount of apparent generosity and goodwill capable of producing a grateful heir or fully containing the murderous instinct of the father.

While challenging and exploring the concept of *Mündigkeit* forms an overarching theme of the thesis, the second concept used to explore Kleist’s relation to enlightenment is that of the ‘rational bourgeois’. This figure caricatures not only a certain blind faith in reason’s boundless capacity to illuminate and improve the world, but also the contradictions in attempts to distill a fundamentally expansive concept into a programmatic set of popular ideals. This figure is explored in *Michael Kohlhaas* in chapter two, where an apparently straightforward legal picture remains unresolved due to the chicanery of the Junker and his associates. Kohlhaas represents a *mündig* character in his willingness to stand up for his own values. Kohlhaas’s vision of a literal justice, however, is not served by the symbolic justice offered by the existing legal apparatus. The apparent fragility of the codes and contracts making up the social fabric is disrupted by the intervention of contingent events, such as the lightning strike and gypsy’s prophecy, which serve as further actors in the horse seller’s fight. Yet I argue that Kohlhaas, in his droll obstinacy and the farcical proportions reached by his campaign, is a satirical figure of the ‘rational bourgeois’. The protagonist’s lack of political ambition (despite clear grounds to seek improvement of the status quo) underlines Kohlhaas as a fool. Kohlhaas, representing an unnuanced (and anachronistic) embodiment of enlightenment ideals of self-determination and equality before the law pursues his values to their conclusion - at terrible cost.

Connecting with the personal confidence of the rational bourgeois, this underlying view of the world as epistemologically stable and inherently discoverable is explored in

chapters three and four through the guiding themes of mental habits and the notion of ‘truth’. Having examined the questioning of the assumed positive trajectory of *Mündigkeit*, section two, ‘Time, Space and Causality’, turns to examining texts as a critique of the epistemological frameworks through which knowledge is acquired. Now moving on to Hoffmann’s *Das Majorat* alongside Kleist’s *Bettelweib von Locarno*, the spatiotemporal and causal frameworks through which we make sense of the world are revealed to unsatisfactorily illuminate the ostensibly supernatural events of the stories: a causal overlay comes from the reader to smooth over details inconsistent with our view of reality. The jarring effects of the narrative make the reader aware of their own role in its completion. In contrast to notions of the world as fundamentally discoverable and empirical enquiry as a legitimate arbiter of truth, a fully objective account of the world is revealed to be illusory - famously denouncing Kant, Hamann claimed that the sole form of knowledge available to human beings is to be found squarely in the very traditions and customs which Kant instructed enlightened persons to have the courage to reject.² The brittleness of ‘truth’ we see in Kleist and Hoffmann suggests not only that we are inescapably bound by acquired perspectives, but highly receptive to explanatory strategies which provide a causal gloss for uncomfortable and puzzling events.

In chapter four we developed further this discussion of acquired perspectives with a greater focus on religion. Both *Die heilige Cäcilie* and *Die Elixiere* are characterised by their multiple narrative voices and elements, with the Church’s perspective or interpretation of events prevailing. Yet these narratives are undermined by inconsistencies. In *Die Elixiere*, the Church’s desire to take ownership of events dictates the structure of Medardus’s life of sin into a narrative of redemption, departing from his drinking of the elixirs and concluding with the writing of his memoirs. Alongside this narrative is an alternative genealogical explanation of Medardus’s family history. Neither narrative satisfactorily explains the curious material reality of Viktorin - sometimes visible to others, other times seemingly a figment of the protagonist’s imagination. As with *Die heilige Cäcilie*, the text should not be read as an outright assault on the Catholic church given the number of sympathetic Catholic figures (the impressive abbess of *Die heilige Cäcilie* and the kindly Leonardus in *Die Elixiere*, for example), rather it is the power of the Church’s somewhat questionable narratives to attract. Parallel to the iconoclasts’ moth-

² See Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment: And Why it Still Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 321.

er's conversion in *Die heilige Cäcilie*, unable to save her sons, Belcampo in *Die Elixiere* enters Medardus's old order, thus reflecting a certain appetite for mysticism. The co-existence of multiple narratives is not merely 'postmodern' since one narrative clearly dominates. Kleist and Hoffmann instead show the processes by which this one narrative dominates. As with the preceding chapter, the texts are resistant to rational inquiry, inviting readers themselves to be critical.

The final section of the thesis, 'Representational Aesthetics', builds on the first section's examination of Kleist's questioning the practical application of abstract ideals and values, and section two's consideration of epistemological scepticism to consider how these manifest as an aesthetic system. While the epistemological underpinnings of 'truth' are questioned in section two, the concept of mimesis is used to explore the representational dimensions of 'truth' in chapter five. Focusing on Hoffmann's *Die Jesuiterkirche in G.* and *Der Artushof*, chapter five identifies a common trajectory of 'redemption' in creative struggles of Hoffmann's artists - a trajectory shared with *Die Elixiere*. This movement of struggle and fall is necessary in order to produce art of value. This chapter finds Hoffmann's response to enlightenment to be more overtly theoretical than Kleist's satire of the rational bourgeois and experimentation with central tenets of enlightenment thought, as explored in earlier chapters. Hoffmann's artist figures serve as a vehicle of choice for his 'Serapiontic principle', corresponding largely to a striving to produce art beyond existing epistemological precedents. The concept of mimesis remains central to the 'inspired' artist's creative process, with the series of selection, internalisation of the artist's inspiration, and production: different stylistic schools appear less relevant than *techne* and *poiesis*. Yet, as emerges from chapter five's analysis, the seemingly programmatic nature of artistic struggles is, for Hoffmann, ripe for satire. So too are the ridiculous petty bourgeois figures in *Der Artushof* and rationalist professor in *Die Jesuiterkirche*. An aesthetic position emerges, cognisant of the inescapability of mimesis, but assured that the boundaries of representation can be pushed. The artists' higher illumination originates not merely from the natural world, but from their inner world. Further to the individual's narrow epistemological window onto 'truth' discussed in the previous section, Hoffmann's artists seek truth beyond the confines of the rational world - an arguably *mündig* act in itself. The Romantic conception of light, differs from that of enlightenment reason: light is not merely electromagnetic radiation or surface reflections, but a medium capable of penetrating any outer surface to reveal the inmost

nature of the object. For the Romantics light represents a continuum unbroken by language - an incursion of the external into the inner world.³

The final concept used to explore the writers' response to enlightenment is the sublime. The sublime and its divergent forms in *Das Erdbeben in Chili* and *Ritter Gluck*. Despite their differences, the texts reveal parallels in the way the sublime is explored as a broadening of epistemological possibilities. Working to clarify the Kantian sublime as not simply the simultaneous sensation of pain and pleasure, but also an accompanying awareness of human vulnerability and distinctness, this chapter finds the opportunity in the sublime destruction of existing social structures for the creation of a new *mündig* society is missed in Kleist's thought experiment. The fledgling social awareness and magnanimity of the survivors is displaced by their voluntary return to the pre-quake order. This thwarted trajectory of emancipation is accompanied by a narrative course, which sets up an expectation that the couple will be saved. The musical sublime in Hoffmann's tale contrasts with Kleist's sublime. Building on the discussion of artist figures in the previous chapter, unlike Berklinger and Traugott, Gluck is successful in mediating his visions into original music - an accomplishment corresponding to the Romantic conception of instrumental music as unbounded by the constraints of language. While one might divine a cautious optimism in Gluck's apparent ability to channel his visions into artistic success, the uncertainty surrounding his reality and indeed his sanity, point to an inability to switch between ideal and rational worlds. Correspondingly, Kleist's text offers his clearest refutation of the positive emancipatory trajectory of *Mündigkeit*. Both writers ultimately point to the inadequacy of existing rational structures to understand the world - the survivors' readiness to return to the crutch of religion in *Das Erdbeben* and the need to escape dismal reality in *Ritter Gluck*.

Stepping back from the detail of the findings of the individual chapters, it is possible to also make some broader claims for the significance of this work, in the hope that it might provide a context, if not a basis, for further work in this area. A study of any highly canonical writer inevitably faces the difficulty of producing something truly new. This thesis maintains that the most productive avenues of investigation are to be found by working comparatively and also considering the works as part of a broader discourse network, recognising the contribution of literature to intellectual debates.

³ See Manfred Momberger, *Sonne und Punsch: die Dissemination des romantischen Kunstbegriffs bei E.T.A. Hoffmann* (München: W Fink, 1986), p. 34.

Further, parallels drawn between Kleist and Hoffmann do not merely rest on biographical similarities, but also on similar narrative structures, which often comprise a number of dissonant accounts and withhold closure from the reader. This persistence of equivocation arguably lays down a challenge to the reader, encouraging the reader to become aware of the biases and assumptions guiding their reading process. The multiple discourses in contention with one another in the texts are united in incorporating the reader in a performative scenario to exhort them to *Mündigkeit*. Themes of the supernatural and religion, shared by both writers, are integral to their interests in challenging reader expectations.

Beyond highlighting some of the oft-overlooked parallels between Kleist and Hoffmann, most significantly, this study opens up the field to a broader consideration of their relationship to enlightenment. In the case of Kleist, this relation has been hitherto largely characterised by Kant, often reductively taken as sole executor of enlightenment. In line with more recent critics, moving away from the ‘Kant crisis’, Kleist’s relation to Kant can be taken more broadly. Indeed, the many recognisably modern aspects of Kleist and Hoffmann’s writing - epistemic scepticism, the power of the unconscious against rational cognition, anti-religious sentiment - cannot simply be related to a Kant crisis. As this thesis has discussed, this relation can be theorised more expansively using the notion of *Mündigkeit* and the implicit assured trajectory of progress. Kant’s philosophical project in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* largely revolves around securing the territory of human reason and understanding the mind’s contribution to experience. Yet any notion of experience being built on solid foundations is revealed to be deceptive for Kleist and Hoffmann’s writings, in which sensory experience is channeled through a set of causal assumptions and moral prejudices - only to be found lacking.

Hoffmann’s relationship to enlightenment, by contrast, is little discussed other than through Hoffmann’s designation as a Romantic. Romanticism, in many literary histories, is rendered agonistically as a rebellion against the cold reason of enlightenment. While few would ultimately dispute the many continuities and developments between enlightenment and Romanticism, Hoffmann’s irony is not reserved for ‘rationalist’ figures, such as the Professor in *Die Jesuiterkirche*, but also the ostensibly Romantic artist figures too. Hoffmann’s tales thus locate a higher form of inspiration beyond the rational sphere, but depict the struggle to harness this inspiration to produce works of art. The artist’s imagination unlocks a transcendent higher realm, but is overwhelmed and

robbed of the ability to communicate his discovery. There can be no true emancipation from the constraints of representation, since any physical work of art is necessarily a mere representation of the artist's inner vision.

I should once again make clear that this thesis, in its aim to interpret the texts as responding to enlightenment, makes no attempt to claim to trace specific influences in Kleist and Hoffmann's literary works: their correspondence and non-fictional writings should not be taken in any unqualified sense as 'evidence'. Given the highly canonical status of the two writers and the danger of imputing influences on shaky grounds, it is arguably more productive to consider the texts as part of a broader discourse network, encompassing not only literary but philosophical and social debates. Such an approach helps maintain the canon as a source of new ideas and debate.

Few would dispute the contemporary relevance of enlightenment, broadly defined as an intellectual project fostering ideals of tolerance and freedom, in today's tempestuous political times. Around the world, the assured trajectory of man towards the establishment of shared political, social and moral values appears to be under threat: a number of countries are backsliding into authoritarianism, with political leaders dismantling the checks and balances in democracy; elsewhere, in contrast to the cosmopolitan ideals of enlightenment, political campaigns are fought on a platform of pulling out of supranational agreements and restricting immigration. Uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East against autocracies have led to even more crushing repression in some states and outright civil war in others - an assertion of individual values reminiscent of that in *Michael Kohlhaas* with similarly bloody outcomes. Motivated by a desire for democracy, dissatisfaction with human rights violations and poor economic prospects, efforts to oust autocrats and cast off the yoke of repression initially corresponded to the enlightenment teleology of man's emancipation. Yet the victory of man's awakening was by no means assured, recalling the reversals of *Mündigkeit* in Kleist's *Die Familie Schroffenstein* and *Der Findling*.

The notion of *Mündigkeit*, of critical thinking in understanding the vested interests at play and being self-informed, could hardly be more apposite for our times. 'Post-truth', declared word of 2016 by Oxford Dictionaries, is often used in the same breath as 'fake news', with both terms referring to the ugly trend for individuals and media outlets to create counter-factual narratives, which are believed by supporters and

designed to fuel outrage.⁴ The parallel narratives of *Die heilige Cäcilie* and *Die Elixire* notably offer a prescient vision of the power of narrative to smooth over inconvenient or uncomfortable details: the thaumaturgical accounts of events in both texts serve to extend and consolidate Church dominion. Of course, neither ‘post-truth’ nor ‘fake news’ are new developments. Beyond the realm of fiction and in the modern world, Church power has given way to a secular authority - not merely in political arena, but increasingly, via media. An analogous ‘theocratic’ narrative-building process remains constant, in which a version of events, presented and circulated by a particular authority, gains sufficient critical mass to qualify as ‘truth’. The relevance of Kleist and Hoffmann’s work remains undiminished in pointing to the processes behind such narratives, which steer our intuitive responses.

⁴ See Alison Flood, “‘Post-truth’ named word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries”, *The Guardian*, 15 November 2016 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/15/post-truth-named-word-of-the-year-by-oxford-dictionaries>> [accessed 22 August 2017].

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