



Davies, S. (2019). Weimar Classicism and Intellectual Exile: Schiller, Goethe and *Die Horen*. *Modern Language Review*, 114(4), 751-787. <https://doi.org/10.5699/modelangrevi.114.4.0751>

Peer reviewed version

Link to published version (if available):  
[10.5699/modelangrevi.114.4.0751](https://doi.org/10.5699/modelangrevi.114.4.0751)

[Link to publication record in Explore Bristol Research](#)  
PDF-document

This is the author accepted manuscript (AAM). The final published version (version of record) is available online via Modern Humanities Research Association at [https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5699/modelangrevi.114.4.0751#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5699/modelangrevi.114.4.0751#metadata_info_tab_contents). Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

## University of Bristol - Explore Bristol Research

### General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-policy/pure/user-guides/ebr-terms/>

Steffan Davies

Weimar Classicism and Intellectual Exile: Schiller, Goethe, and *Die Horen*

**ABSTRACT**

This article asks how **Goethe** and **Schiller's** works in *Die Horen*, in the shadow of the **French Revolution** and the 'émigré question', prefigured the concerns of later **exile writing**. It asks how far they established principles of 'intellectual exile' that have gained currency in the writings of **Edward Said** and **Vilém Flusser**. It compares Schiller's *Ästhetische Briefe* with **Adorno's** reception of them; it examines concepts of exile in Goethe's 'Erste Epistel' and *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*. Finally, it asks how **elegy** fits into a poetics of exile. The article suggests a fresh perspective on **Weimar Classicism**, and widened scope for *Exilforschung*.

## Weimar Classicism and Intellectual Exile: Schiller, Goethe, and *Die*

### *Horen*\*

Exile literature seems out of place in Weimar Classicism. In retrospect the 1790s, after all, mark the point at which German literature found canonical stability, notably in the uniquely productive partnership of Schiller and Goethe, sealed in 1794 after previous false starts. Goethe, as T. J. Reed points out, ‘was a “behauster Mensch” if anyone ever was’.<sup>1</sup> In the twentieth century, classical literature appealed to exiles from Nazism because of this fixity: it was comfortingly familiar and articulated the culture they had borne with them out of

---

\* Parts of this article were presented at seminars at the universities of Kiel, Sheffield, and St Andrews, and at conferences of the *Gesellschaft für Exilforschung* and the Association for German Studies in Great Britain and Ireland. I am very grateful to the audiences on those occasions for comments that have shaped the argument, and in particular to Ceri Davies, Kevin Hilliard, Robert Vilain, and *MLR*’s two readers for their engaged reading of the complete text. It is also a pleasure to acknowledge the support of the Leverhulme Trust, whose award of a Major Research Fellowship, on the topic of ‘A long history of German exile literature, 1790-1955’, has enabled the article’s timely completion.

<sup>1</sup> T. J. Reed, ‘Der behauste Mensch: On Being at Home in the Universe. Goethe, Kant, and Others’, *PEGS*, 83 (2014), 137-48 (p. 138); cf. Hans Egon Holthusen, *Der unbehauste Mensch: Motive und Probleme der modernen Literatur* (Munich: Piper, 1951).

Germany.<sup>2</sup> Some saw it as too settled; others, however, claimed the classics for opposition, ‘wrest[ing] [Goethe] away from the Nazis’ propagandistic exploitation’<sup>3</sup> and turning the canon’s settled status into an unsettling force. Combining identification with Goethe with his adoption for resistance, Heinrich Mann claimed that had he been alive in 1936, ‘er teilte mit uns allen das Exil’.<sup>4</sup> This went significantly beyond the appropriation of authors commonly seen as the establishment’s antagonists, such as Heine or Büchner. With overtly subversive literature outlawed, Anna Seghers recommended the classics *because* they looked misleadingly safe: ‘Die sechs- und zehnbändigen Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Hebbel, die eure Eltern Euch zur Konfirmation schenken, haben unaufgeschnittene Seiten. Sie enthalten allen Stoff, der genügt für siebenhundert Scheiterhaufen’.<sup>5</sup> Hermann Kesten, questioning the very

---

<sup>2</sup> See Brita Eckert, ‘Goethe-Rezeption im Exil 1933 bis 1949’, *Exilforschung*, 18 (2000), 230-53.

<sup>3</sup> Guy Stern, ‘Goethe as a Figure in Exile Literature’, in *Goethe im Exil: Deutsch-amerikanische Perspektiven*, ed. by Gert Sautermeister and Frank Baron (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2002), pp. 185-98 (p. 198).

<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Mann, ‘Begrüßung des Ausgebürgerten’, *Die neue Weltbühne*, 10 December 1936, pp. 1564-66 (p. 1565).

<sup>5</sup> Anna Seghers, ‘Illegales legal’, in *Aufsätze, Ansprachen, Essays 1927-1953*, Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben, 14 vols (Berlin: Aufbau, 1977-1980), vol. XIII (1980), pp. 69-70 (p. 69).

validity of exile writing as a separate literary category, declared that '[d]ie größten deutschen Dichter waren Ausländer inmitten ihres Volkes, Exilanten des Geistes'.<sup>6</sup>

This article takes Kesten's 'Exil[-] des Geistes' back to the 1790s, tracing it in contributions by Goethe and Schiller to the first year of Schiller's ill-fated journal, *Die Horen*. Both men had experienced exile, metaphorically at least. Goethe reversed the poles of home and 'exile' on his return from Italy in 1788, quoting Ovid's lament for Rome (in *Tristia* 1.3) on his own last night in the city.<sup>7</sup> He would later recall that as he worked on *Torquato Tasso* (1790) in Florence on the way back to Germany, he had felt that '[w]ie mit Ovid dem Local nach, so konnte ich mich mit Tasso dem Schicksale nach vergleichen' (FA I.15.2 (1993), 1157). In Weimar he now considered himself an outsider: 'Aus Italien dem formreichen war ich in das gestaltlose Deutschland zurückgewiesen, heiteren Himmel mit einem düsteren zu vertauschen; [...] ich vermißte jede Teilnahme, niemand verstand meine Sprache' (FA I.24 (1987), 414-15). Schiller, too, was repeatedly on the move after his unauthorised departure from Stuttgart in 1782; he

---

<sup>6</sup> Hermann Kesten, 'Fünf Jahre nach unserer Abreise...', in *Der Geist der Unruhe: Literarische Streifzüge* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1959), pp. 52-61 (p. 58).

<sup>7</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Friedmar Apel and others, 40 vols (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-1999), part 1, vol. xv.1 (1993), pp. 596-97. Henceforth cited as FA. See also Goethe to Herder, 27 December 1788 (FA II.3 (1991), 452). On Goethe and exile: Gert Sautermeister, 'Heimat und Fremde, Exil und innere Emigration: Ein Spannungsverhältnis in der Biographie und im Werk Goethes', in: *Goethe im Exil*, ed. by Sautermeister and Baron, pp. 19-70; Walter Müller-Seidel, 'Auswanderungen in Goethes dichterischer Welt: Zur Geschichte einer sozialen Frage', *Jahrbuch des Wiener Goethe-Vereins*, 81-83 (1977-1979), 159-83.

settled in the Duchy of Weimar in 1789, but only on returning to Württemberg, for a visit from August 1793 to May 1794, did he consider that his ‘banishment’ was over.<sup>8</sup> The stability of Weimar Classicism rested on the itinerancy, both physical and figurative, of its two central figures. In turn, *Die Horen*, launched in 1795, addressed a broader notion of ‘Exil[-] des Geistes’. It proposed models of abstraction from the heat of politics – notably, the intense concern with the French Revolution and its impact on Germany – that parallel the concepts of ‘intellectual exile’ developed a century and a half later in response to the greater terrors of the Holocaust and Second World War. Kesten’s claim of an exiled canon was pleading *pro domo*, of course, but in *Minima Moralia* (1944-1947; first published 1951) Theodor Adorno made a more sustained bid, out of the experience of exile, to define the intellectual’s right position as one outside society’s mainstream. His most prominent statement of the concept cited Nietzsche (‘es gehört selbst zu meinem Glücke, kein Hausbesitzer zu sein!’)<sup>9</sup> in the background to the dictum that ‘es gehört zur Moral, nicht bei sich selber zu Hause zu sein. [...] Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen.’<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Schiller to Prince Friedrich Christian von Augustenburg, 11 November 1793: Friedrich Schiller, *Werke: Nationalausgabe*, ed. by Julius Petersen and others, 42 vols (Weimar: Böhlau, 1943-), vol. xxvi (1992), p. 295. Henceforth cited as NA.

<sup>9</sup> *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, §240: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 2nd edn (Berlin: de Gruyter/Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), vol. III, p. 513.

<sup>10</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, 20 vols (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970-1986), vol. IV (1980), p. 43. Henceforth cited as GS. For further views of ‘existential’ exile, formulated after World War Two, see Jost Hermand, ‘Schreiben in der

Beyond biography, this article is principally concerned with Schiller and Goethe's ideas. How far were they precursors of 'intellectual exile' in the twentieth century, seekers of fixity as well as its representatives? Following Kesten to search for 'Exilanten des Geistes' in classical literature has three aims. First, it establishes a firmer connection between exile as biographical circumstance and literary theme for Schiller and Goethe – which is well-documented – and its reflection in their poetics. In so doing, a significant secondary concern is to argue for the coherence of their contributions to *Die Horen*, against the persistent view that Goethe's texts undermined Schiller's plan. The article reassesses Adorno's rejection of Schiller, and argues that exile is a consistent thread, not just a scene-setter, in Goethe's *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* (1795). Second, it develops a new avenue for German exile studies, as the field diversifies beyond its original aims to recover and study a forgotten literature under Nazism.<sup>11</sup> *Exilliteraturforschung* has broadened from its traditional focus on 1933-1945, towards more recent literature in particular, it has taken on comparative approaches, and it has moved beyond strictly defining exile literature by the author's lived situation. Elisabeth Bronfen drew attention to the fluid boundaries between exile as real state and literary metaphor – including exile as a metaphor for the act of writing – as early as

---

Fremde: Gedanken zur deutschen Exilliteratur seit 1789', in *Exil und Innere Emigration. Third Wisconsin Workshop*, ed. by Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Frankfurt a.M.: Athenäum, 1972), pp. 7-30 (pp. 9-10).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, *Literatur und Exil: Neue Perspektiven*, ed. by Doerte Bischoff and Susanne Komfort-Hein (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013).

1993.<sup>12</sup> Applying twentieth-century concepts to a different period should enable a distinction between their specifically period-bound qualities and those that apply more broadly, and suggest whether the differences are ones of quality or degree. By extension, a third aim is to sharpen the concept of intellectual exile. Can it be sensibly transferred beyond the circumstances of the mid-twentieth century and the specific ingredients of Adorno's 'falsches Leben'? In other words, did Kesten's claim have substance beyond its rhetorical effect?

This article first presents more fully the concept of intellectual exile and the related discussion of how exile literature reflects reality (section I). It sets out the context and programme of *Die Horen* (II) and turns to Schiller's *Ästhetische Briefe* (III), whose articulation of a position outside society as the only position from which art can influence life is pivotal in establishing intellectual exile in Weimar Classicism. It investigates Adorno's attitude towards Schiller's aesthetics, identifying similarities and differences that help to tease apart which aspects of twentieth-century exile might be informed by its precursors, and which might not (IV). It then asks how Goethe responded to the *Ästhetische Briefe*, and to exile, in *Die Horen*, notably in the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, but also in the tale of shipwreck and hospitality in 'Erste Epistel' (V). Finally, it asks how far the journal's examples and discussion

---

<sup>12</sup> Elisabeth Bronfen, 'Exil in der Literatur: Zwischen Metapher und Realität', *Arcadia*, 28 (1993), 167-83. On the anxiety that the biographical approach which defined *Exilforschung* also fundamentally limited it – an anxiety as old as the field itself – see Bernhard Spies, 'Exilliteratur – ein abgeschlossenes Kapitel? Überlegungen zu Stand und Perspektiven der literaturwissenschaftlichen Exilforschung', *Exilforschung*, 14 (1996), 11-30.

of elegy, the foremost genre for grief and lament, might correspond to a poetics of exile (VI and conclusion, VII).

I.

The notions of exile cited so far already extend the concept beyond a strict definition. They range from Ovid's formal banishment, or flight from severe and certain persecution, via a more chosen 'emigration' from unpalatable conditions – arguably, Schiller's absence from Württemberg – to a feeling of estrangement within one's own culture. Terminological usage is fluid, too: 'exiles' from Nazism, for example, but 'émigrés' to Germany from Revolutionary France. 'Émigré', although historically specific, is itself complex. It implies a voluntary choice to leave France, noble status accompanied by arrogant misbehaviour, and counter-revolutionary political purpose, all of which apply to some of the émigrés, but none to them all. Whatever their motives for leaving, by a series of laws from 1791 to 1793 they were expropriated and were subject to the death penalty if they returned. Legend apart, they were socially diverse: the first émigrés had been noblemen and clerics, but the majority were 'ordinary people fleeing from the consequences of civil war' after 1792, 'more accurately described in recent terms as refugees or displaced persons'.<sup>13</sup> 'Refugee' as another alternative term implies a migrant compelled to flee with neither choice nor status, seeming to have neither an individual face nor voice. Exile, notes Simon Goldhill, 'means having a story

---

<sup>13</sup> William Doyle, 'Introduction', in *The French Émigrés in Europe and the Struggle against Revolution, 1789-1814*, ed. by Kirsty Carpenter and Philip Mansel (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. xv-xxii (p. xvi). For a detailed regional study, see Thomas Höpel, *Emigranten der Französischen Revolution in Preußen 1789-1806* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2000).

to tell of one's own coming into greatness. [...] Pity the refugee, but listen to the exile's story...'<sup>14</sup> Exile is forced, but it is dignified to a degree by social status, political purpose, or intellectual standing.

Two twentieth-century thinkers in particular have developed a concept of exile that extends beyond physical circumstances to a broader cluster of experiences and states of mind: Edward Said and Vilém Flusser. It is Said who gave the term 'intellectual exile' currency in English, using it as the title of one of his BBC Reith Lectures, *Representations of the Intellectual*, in 1993. In this and a previous essay he shifts precariously, but deliberately, between reflecting on the actual experience of exile and using that experience as a metaphor: 'The pattern that sets the course for the intellectual as outsider is best exemplified by the condition of exile'.<sup>15</sup> He reminds his readers that actual exile is not optional: '[a]nyone who is really homeless regards the habit of seeing estrangement in everything modern as an affectation, a display of modish attitudes', and he is disdainful of the 'somewhat pallid notion that non-exiles can share in the benefits of exile as a redemptive motif'. Yet he also moves decisively beyond the 'really homeless' when he 'speak[s] of exile, not as a privilege, but as an *alternative* to the mass institutions that dominate modern life'. He wants to protect the idea of exile as specific to those who have experienced it in the past century, but relaxes it with generalised formulations ('Exile is a model for the intellectual who is tempted, and even beset and overwhelmed, by the rewards of accommodation, yea-saying, settling in'), or by advancing

---

<sup>14</sup> Simon Goldhill, 'Whose Antiquity? Whose Modernity? The "Rainbow Bridges" of Exile', *Antike und Abendland*, 46 (2000), 1-20 (p. 4).

<sup>15</sup> Edward Said, 'Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals', in *The Edward Said Reader*, ed. by Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (London: Granta, 2001), pp. 368-81 (p. 373).

Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) and his 'loneliness as an obscure Neapolitan professor' as 'the great prototype' for the position he describes.<sup>16</sup> Referring to *Minima Moralia*, he cites Adorno's belief 'that the only home truly available now, though fragile and vulnerable, is in writing'.<sup>17</sup>

Said's assertion that '[e]xile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others'<sup>18</sup> might seem to carry little resonance with 1790s Weimar, but he also suggests that the very things that look the most settled in fact have shaky origins. Nationalism, 'an assertion of belonging in and to a place', is intimately connected with exile not just because the nation state created exile in its modern form, but because nationalism itself developed in its early stages 'from a condition of estrangement', from the 'struggles [...] of national groups separated – exiled – from what was construed to be their rightful way of life'.<sup>19</sup> Exiles themselves seek a form of home in 'choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people'.<sup>20</sup> Goldhill similarly emphasizes restoration in exile narratives: Odysseus's return shows that 'to come back is to pay back'.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the tensions in defining exile, between metaphor and physical state and between victimhood and privilege, resurface in Said's chronology: mass

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 379-80.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Said, 'Reflections on Exile', in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 173-86 (pp. 182-84).

<sup>18</sup> 'Intellectual Exile', p. 373.

<sup>19</sup> 'Reflections on Exile', p. 176.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>21</sup> Goldhill, p. 4.

displacement in the twentieth century, he argues, has made this an 'age of the refugee' beyond comparison with any other, and given exile a scale and impersonality that means it 'cannot be made to serve notions of humanism'; it 'is neither aesthetically nor humanistically comprehensible'.<sup>22</sup> Seeking Said's themes in the 'Goethezeit' is an attempt to test this claim.

Said also touches cautiously on positive aspects of exile, both real and metaphorical. 'Exile is one of the saddest fates', he reminded his BBC listeners, but '[i]f you can experience that fate not as a deprivation and as something to be bewailed, but as a sort of freedom, a process of discovery [...]: that is a unique pleasure.' Exile can foster creativity, enquiry, 'innovation and experiment rather than the authoritatively given *status quo*'.<sup>23</sup> Flusser, who was born in Prague in 1920 and fled to Brazil in 1940, built a 'philosophy of emigration' on this premise, advancing exile as the defining condition not of modernity (as it was for Said), but of humanity as a whole. Human beings are naturally restless, Flusser argued, so it is those who are rooted who should be pitied; exile has no need of return or restoration here. Being fully human *is* to be uprooted. Equating the two might seem banal, but 'gemeint ist, daß wir in den Vertriebenen und ihrem Entsetzen uns selbst unschwer wiedererkennen: Sie sind so wie wir, nur extremer'.<sup>24</sup> Flusser connects irony and emigration, with their respective suggestions of metaphorical and physical distance. This offers a mechanism to challenge the limitation of humanity. 'Der Mensch ist bedingt,' he observes, 'weil seine Bewegung von den natürlichen

---

<sup>22</sup> Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 174.

<sup>23</sup> Said, 'Intellectual Exile', pp. 369, 380, and 381.

<sup>24</sup> Vilém Flusser, 'Um entsetzt zu sein, muß man vorher sitzen', in *Von der Freiheit des Migranten: Einsprüche gegen den Nationalismus* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), pp. 35-37 (p. 37).

und kulturellen Dingen in seiner Umgebung in spezifische Bahnen gelenkt wird.<sup>25</sup> Schiller, as will be seen, diagnosed his age in comparable terms. Flusser proposes that the upwards movement out of limitation to a position of irony from which we can observe it is outrage ('Empörung'), and the return to limitation in order to change it is engagement; these two moves together constitute freedom. 'Empörung in die Ironie' could also be labelled 'emigration' and 'Engagement', the return from irony, 'immigration'. In theory at least, Flusser argues, the emigrant is dignified by contrast with the refugee because the emigrant moves consciously and intentionally into irony and back, whereas the refugee is driven from one state of limitation to the next.<sup>26</sup>

At its core, this is a question of how literature reflects reality; of how it responds to reality and shapes it. Schiller and Goethe's engagement with actual and metaphorical exile in *Die Horen* persistently asked the same question; Seghers's point was that the classics had seemed too refined to have much impact, but now, re-read with disregard for canonical respectability, they should be world-changing. In exile from Nazism, this became a matter of ethical commitment – to 'keep watch' over what was left of the truth, Heinrich Mann wrote in 1933 – such that any form of abstraction in literature could seem an abdication of responsibility.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Vilém Flusser, 'Für eine Philosophie der Emigration', in *Von der Freiheit des Migranten*, pp. 31-34 (p. 31).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-33.

<sup>27</sup> Heinrich Mann, 'Die erniedrigte Intelligenz', in *Essays und Publizistik*, ed. by Wolfgang Klein and others (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2009-), vol. vi.1 (2009), pp. 99-108 (p. 108). See further Helmut Koopmann, 'Moral und Sittlichkeit als Überlebensstrategien im Exil', in *Innen-Leben:*

Brecht complained in Los Angeles in April 1942: 'Hier Lyrik zu schreiben, selbst aktuelle, bedeutet: sich in den Elfenbeinturm zurückziehen.'<sup>28</sup> Yet commitment to the real posed two complex problems. First, the duty that many of the exiles of the 1930s and 40s felt, to oppose Nazism from beyond Germany's borders and to counter the abuse of culture as Nazi propaganda, reopened an old question that had also been acute in the 'Goethezeit': how far can art be a political instrument and yet still be art? Wulf Koepke identifies the 'radical dilemma' of exile writing as one shared by the Enlightenment: the choice between a pure commitment to truth and reason at the risk of being ineffective, and taking sides, at the risk that ideology replaced ideals.<sup>29</sup> Thomas Mann's 1936 coinage, 'militanter Humanismus', articulated writers' aspirations to bridge these poles, and Walter A. Berendsohn, similarly, insisted that 'Humanität' at the end of the eighteenth century had not been merely 'Bildungsgut für den Sonntag im Studierzimmer' but a force in political life: 'Die deutsche Erhebung gegen Napoleon, die Einheits- und Freiheitsbewegung des 19. Jahrhunderts sind

---

*Ansichten aus dem Exil. Ein Berliner Symposium*, ed. by Hermann Haarmann (Berlin: Fannei & Walz, 1995), pp. 70-90.

<sup>28</sup> Bertolt Brecht, *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, ed. by Werner Hecht and others, 31 vols (Berlin: Aufbau/Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988-1998), vol. xxvii (1995), p. 79.

<sup>29</sup> Wulf Koepke, 'Aufklärung und Exil: Eine Problemskizze', in *Exile and Enlightenment: Studies in German and Comparative Literature in Honor of Guy Stern*, ed. by Uwe Faulhaber and others (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), pp. 115-22 (pp. 120-21).

ohne sie nicht denkbar.<sup>30</sup> 'Nutzbarmachung des Geistes' on the other hand, Kesten argued, was the principle that had created modern civilization, but it was a betrayal of 'Geist' itself. Thus, in an age of instrumentalized art he asked:

Ist die Kunst zwecklos? Ist die Kunst nützlich? Ohne Zweifel kann sie nützen oder schaden und kann Zwecken dienen. [...]

Dennoch ist das, was die Kunst von der Nichtkunst unterscheidet, das Aesthetische, das Objekt des 'interesselosen Wohlgefallens', die Schönheit, das Mass, die Vollkommenheit, das Gleichgewicht, dennoch ist das alles jenseits von Nutzen und Schaden, Absicht und Zweck, Politik und Moralität.

Das politische Element eines Kunstwerks ist akzessorisch, ist 'zufällig', ist nicht das, was das Kunstwerk ausmacht.<sup>31</sup>

The second problem raised by this concern with the real was the place, if any, of fiction and fantasy in shaping reality. Where was the balance between mythology as escapism, or worse, as endorsement of Nazi ideology, and letting literature work on the imagination by the fullest range of its techniques? Often fictions in exile writing have been read as compensating for

---

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Mann, 'Humaniora und Humanismus', in *Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 1974), vol. x, pp. 339-348 (p. 348); Walter A. Berendsohn, 'Deutsche Humanität', *Die Sammlung*, 1, no. 7 (March 1934), 374-79 (p. 376); see also Berendsohn, *Die humanistische Front: Einführung in die deutsche Emigranten-Literatur. Erster Teil* (Zurich: Europa-Verlag, 1946), esp. pp. 150-52.

<sup>31</sup> Hermann Kesten, 'Der Preis der Freiheit: Zur Lage der deutschen Literatur', *Die Sammlung*, 1, no. 5 (January 1934), 238-44 (pp. 238-39).

lost reality by 'creating a new world to rule' (Said) in history or myth.<sup>32</sup> The turn to fantasy also expressed doubt as to whether, in the shadow of the Holocaust, the appeals in earlier years to humanity and a rational apprehension of the world had not been simply naïve.<sup>33</sup> Kesten, on the other hand, writing in 1934, invoked Lessing to argue that the 'truth' of art relied on its autonomy; truthfulness could not be anything other than subjective in any case, because 'die objektive Wahrheit, das heisst die absolute Wahrheit der Menschheit noch nicht allgemein gültig bekannt gegeben wurde und ihrer bisher nur Fanatiker, Schwindler, Esel, Gnadenträger und Parteimitglieder teilhaftig wurden'.<sup>34</sup>

This is a concern exacerbated, but not created, in the mid-twentieth century. Schiller's prologue to *Wallenstein* (1798) similarly held that desperate times called artists not to retreat, but to raise their game: under extraordinary circumstances art, too, must 'fly higher' or risk being shown up as an irrelevance. Schiller famously introduces his audience to a product of 'des Dichters Phantasie'. It will raise its viewers' horizons from 'des Bürgerlebens engem Kreis', but in rhyming verse, to make them aware of its artificiality; the prologue itself, for those who hear it, has the same effect. Schiller's argument that rhyme is the 'altes deutsches Recht' of

---

<sup>32</sup> 'Reflections on Exile', p. 181.

<sup>33</sup> Bettina Englmann, *Poetik des Exils: Die Modernität der deutschsprachigen Exilliteratur* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001), pp. 19-41.

<sup>34</sup> Kesten, 'Der Preis der Freiheit', p. 240. Kesten at this point conflates Lessing's famed preference, in *Eine Duplik* (1778), for the search for truth over possession of it and his insistence (e.g. in *Hamburger Dramaturgie* (1769), chapters 2 and 19) that verisimilitude, not factual reality, is what is required of art.

art states a pedigree for the innovation he is claiming here – the apprehension of reality by distance – a poetics which Schiller, like Kesten, feels he must define and defend.<sup>35</sup>

II.

The harmony in Weimar Classicism conceals the extent to which it was born of crisis. Deep down, the changes that Reinhart Koselleck identified in the ‘Sattelzeit’ broke the sense of a continuous relationship between present and past.<sup>36</sup> A new awareness of nationhood made Germany’s literature seem inferior to the established cultures of England and France, an unease Goethe would address in *Die Horen* (‘Literarischer Sanscülottismus’, fifth issue, 1795). Kant’s philosophy was a seismic ‘revolution’.<sup>37</sup> More immediately, the French Revolution was ever-present. Events in Paris, Prussia and Austria’s unsuccessful war of 1792-1795 against France, and the short-lived Mainz Republic (1793) engaged broad, intense interest. For Goethe, the émigrés were a local reminder in Thüringen of what was happening in France.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> NA 8 (1949), 3-6; see Martin Wagner, ‘Zeit, Geschichte und Ästhetik im *Wallenstein-Prolog*’, *Orbis Litterarum*, 67 (2012), 366-86.

<sup>36</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, ‘Historia magistra vitae: Über die Auflösung des Topos im Horizont neuzeitlich bewegter Geschichte’, in *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp. 38-66.

<sup>37</sup> Schiller to Augustenburg, 9 February 1793: NA 26, 184.

<sup>38</sup> *Campagne in Frankreich*: FA I.16 (1994), 570-71; more generally, see Regina Köthe, *Vor der Revolution geflohen. Exil im literarischen Diskurs nach 1789* (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag, 1997), and Harro Zimmermann, ‘Die Emigranten der Französischen Revolution in Literatur und Publizistik um 1800’, *Francia*, 12 (1984), 305-54.

He returned repeatedly to writing about the Revolution, notably in drama and in *Herrmann und Dorothea* (1797), which centres on the arrival of refugees from the left bank of the Rhine. Schiller was following current affairs by reading the *Moniteur universel*, which, given its focus on debate in the National Convention, made him hopeful that reform would be moderate, not radical.<sup>39</sup> War, however, was driving public opinion to fever pitch: ‘Der fatale Krieg!’ he remarked to Göschen, ‘Er wird uns Schriftsteller zwingen nichts mehr als Zeitungen zu schreiben.’<sup>40</sup>

Whilst Schiller followed events in the press, Goethe, ‘embedded’ with the Duke of Weimar’s troops on the 1792 campaign, experienced at first hand the Prussians’ retreat after the battle of Valmy (20 September), and saw with his own eyes the ‘pity of War’<sup>41</sup> – dead soldiers left unburied and dying animals left to suffer; hunger and insanitary living; mud and disease – on a venture that had unexpectedly failed, and now seemed pointless.<sup>42</sup> Recalling this in *Campagne in Frankreich* (1822), he referred repeatedly to émigrés caught up in (and adding to) the chaos of advance and retreat, and recorded the war’s impact on him. Since his journey to Italy in 1786-1788 there had been little to compare with the creative impetus he had

---

<sup>39</sup> Schiller to Körner, 26 November 1792: NA 26, 169-70. On Schiller and the *Moniteur*, see further NA 26, 671 and Peter-André Alt, *Schiller: Leben – Werk – Zeit*, 2 vols (Munich: Beck, 2000), vol. II, pp. 119-22.

<sup>40</sup> Schiller to Göschen, 15 March 1793: NA 26, 232.

<sup>41</sup> The phrase is Wilfred Owen’s: *Collected Poems*, ed. by C. Day Lewis (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), p. 31.

<sup>42</sup> Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991-), vol. II (2000), pp. 116-46, gives a thorough account of Goethe’s experience.

received there, but it was the French campaign, the worst of which he claimed to have spared his readers, that nearly undid its effects (FA I.16, 515). Asked to read *Iphigenie auf Tauris* (1787) as evening entertainment, he refused; the humaneness of the exiled Iphigenia had little place in the Rhineland of the day (FA I.16, 516-17). '[D]ie Welt', he reflected, 'erschien mir blutiger und blutdürstiger als jemals' (FA I.16, 569), and he was horrified, on his return, to see Germans toying with revolutionary ideas (FA I.16, 567).

*Die Horen*, conceived when Schiller met the publisher Cotta in Württemberg in May 1794, was a microcosm of the tension between art and political reality. Schiller contracted at the same time to edit a political newspaper, the *Europäische Staaten-Zeitung*: these were complementary projects, but he extricated himself from the latter, arguing that he was not cut out for it, whereas with *Die Horen* he would be 'ganz in meinem Fach'.<sup>43</sup> This was an ambitious project to bring together high-quality historical, philosophical and literary texts, and thus both to mediate between those modes of writing and to unite Germany's disparate reading public. It stood out for the intention, stated in the call in June 1794 to potential participants, to ban from its pages the single most pressing matter of the day, 'alles [...] was sich auf Staatsreligion und politische Verfassung bezieht' (NA 22 (1958), 103). Schiller's stance seems puzzling. Avoiding the Revolution was part of his programme to unite, and it was a way

---

<sup>43</sup> Schiller to Cotta, 19 May 1794: NA 27 (1958), 3; see also Schiller to Cotta, 14 June 1794:

NA 27, 14. For a detailed account, see Günter Schulz, *Schillers Horen: Politik und Erziehung*.

*Analyse einer deutschen Zeitschrift* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1960), pp. 7-14.

to avoid censorship,<sup>44</sup> but this apparent otherworldliness, Schiller's misjudgement of the reading public and his poor relations with his contributors contributed in large part to the journal's quick demise.<sup>45</sup> First published in January 1795, it folded little more than three years later. The flaws in Schiller's ambition to mould the public were exacerbated by the limited material at his disposal; in-fighting among the authors, declining quality and readership, and financial loss were the reverse side of a venture that is also a programmatic statement of Weimar Classicism. As T. J. Reed has pointed out, the frosty reception that *Die Horen* received shows how far that programme was from being accepted in its own time. Schiller and Goethe saw themselves as opposition, corresponding about their 'feud' with the establishment before the journal's first year was out.<sup>46</sup>

The failure of *Die Horen* makes it too easy to dismiss as ill-conceived. Schiller was addressing the most important question put to culture by the age: how could the artist respond *as artist*

---

<sup>44</sup> Peter Weber, 'Schillers *Horen* – ein zeitgerechtes Journal? Aspekte publizistischer

Strategien im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert', in *Friedrich Schiller: Angebot und Diskurs*, ed.

by Helmut Brandt (Berlin: Aufbau, 1987), pp. 451-63 (pp. 452-56).

<sup>45</sup> Raymond Heitz, 'Publizistik, Politik und die Weimarer Klassik: *Die Horen* im Kreuzfeuer von Schillers Zeitgenossen', in *Schiller publiciste – Schiller als Publizist*, ed. by Raymond Heitz and Roland Krebs (Berne: Lang, 2007), pp. 357-84.

<sup>46</sup> T. J. Reed, 'Ecclesia militans: Weimarer Klassik als Opposition', in *Unser Commercium:*

*Goethes und Schillers Literaturpolitik*, ed. by Wilfried Barner, Eberhard Lämmert, and

Norbert Oellers (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1984), pp. 35-53, esp. pp. 35-40; see Schiller to Goethe, 1

November 1795 (NA 28 (1969), 93) and Goethe to Schiller, 21 November 1795 (FA II.4

(1998), 135).

– how might art respond *as art* – to the challenges of the day? What was the point of art, when Europe was consumed by war and revolution? These were, themselves, fundamentally political questions; pro-republican Johann Friedrich Reichardt took Schiller to task not so much for *being* apolitical as for *claiming* to be above politics in principle and breaking the rule in practice.<sup>47</sup> Schiller faced head-on the same existential problem of relevance that authors in exile, indeed, many if not all authors engaging with politics, would later face, too. Late in 1792 he had thought of travelling to Paris to intervene in the trial of Louis XVI at the Convention, trusting in the influence on France of a voice from abroad (strengthened, perhaps, by the honorary French citizenship he had been awarded a few months before), and believing that ‘[d]er Schriftsteller, der für die Sache des Königs öffentlich streitet, darf bei dieser Gelegenheit schon einige wichtige Wahrheiten mehr sagen, als ein anderer, und hat auch schon etwas mehr Credit’. He was soon to be disappointed: by the following February he knew that events had overtaken him, the journey was off, and the King was dead. Louis’s execution put an end to his optimistic reading of the *Moniteur*: ‘Ich kann seit 14 Tagen keine französischen Zeitungen mehr lesen, so ekeln diese elenden Schindersknechte mich an.’<sup>48</sup> Goethe, too, recalled the helplessness of Germans who were on campaign fighting for Louis at the very time that he was being tried and put to death (FA I.16, 571). *Die Horen* tested, perhaps to

---

<sup>47</sup> Reichardt reviewed the first volume of *Die Horen* in his journal *Deutschland* in 1796: Oscar Fambach, *Schiller und sein Kreis in der Kritik ihrer Zeit* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957), pp. 225-52. See Jeffrey L. High, *Schillers Rebellionskonzept und die Französische Revolution* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 2004), pp. 122-25, and Heitz, pp. 368-75.

<sup>48</sup> Schiller to Körner, 21 December 1792 and 8 February 1793: NA 26, 172 and 183. See, in detail, High, pp. 65-84.

destruction, the principle that art must influence political reality, not by direct intervention – writing ‘no more than newspapers’ – but rather by cultivating attitudes. The preface to the first issue showed Schiller’s full awareness that this was a risky enterprise. Banning the immediate present was meant, however, to enforce a search of past and future for traces of a humane ideal: an act of mediation, making tangible in the present a humanity that, in life as it is lived, is either a nebulous ideal or is all too easily ignored. The journal thus ‘[wird] an dem stillen Bau besserer Begriffe, reinerer Grundsätze und edlerer Sitten, von dem zuletzt alle wahre Verbesserung des gesellschaftlichen Zustandes abhängt, nach Vermögen geschäftig sein’ (NA 22, 106-07). Removing art from a claim to direct relevance was, paradoxically, to be its means of speaking to its age.

III.

*Die Horen* opened with Letters One to Nine of Schiller’s *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*. The rest followed in two further instalments in issues Two and Six. Schiller knew that starting with such a dense text would be ‘keine Captatio benevolentiae bey dem Publikum’,<sup>49</sup> but the text and its outlet were of a piece, as the letters elaborated on the questions that the journal’s preface had posed so far. They open unapologetically, with the claim that art and beauty are an object of study ‘der mit dem beßten Theil unsrer Glückseligkeit in einer unmittelbaren, und mit dem moralischen Adel der menschlichen Natur in keiner sehr entfernten Verbindung steht’ (NA 20 (1962), 309). An inquiry into beauty, argues Letter Two, is quite the opposite of otherworldly. The tastes of the age may be political – ‘der *Nutzen* ist das große Idol der Zeit, dem alle Kräfte frohnen und alle

---

<sup>49</sup> Schiller to Goethe, 20 October 1794: NA 27, 67.

Talente huldigen sollen' – but its needs are not. Art, Schiller argues boldly, gives the answer to the political problems that politics cannot solve alone, 'weil es die Schönheit ist, durch welche man zu der Freyheit wandert' (NA 20, 311-12).

In the first versions of the Letters, written to the Danish Prince Friedrich Christian von Augustenburg whose award of a three-year stipend had enabled their writing, Schiller had made clearer still that aesthetics must be timely, not self-indulgent:

Ich liebe die Kunst und was mit ihr zusammenhängt über alles, [...] [a]ber es kömmt hier nicht darauf an, was die Kunst *mir* ist, sondern wie sie sich gegen den menschlichen Geist überhaupt, und insbesondere gegen die *Zeit* verhält, in der ich mich zu ihrem Sachwalter aufwerfe.<sup>50</sup>

Frederick Beiser offers one of the clearest analyses of Schiller's argument: the Letters are 'an essentially political work', in which art is the way out of the 'vicious circle' of a modern republicanism that depends on virtue but cannot develop that virtue out of political principles alone.<sup>51</sup> In France the practical opportunity to found a republic had arisen, but the moral capacity to sustain the new foundation was lacking, 'und der freygebige Augenblick findet ein unempfängliches Geschlecht' (Letter Five: NA 20, 319). Although the Letters' arguments can be traced back before 1789, the reality of events in France was the decisive impetus that turned a project to extend the 'Kallias' letters on aesthetics, written in early 1793, into a work

---

<sup>50</sup> Schiller to Augustenburg, 13 July 1793: NA 27, 259.

<sup>51</sup> Frederick Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: A Re-Examination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 120 and 123-29.

of political philosophy: a speculative project had now become topical.<sup>52</sup> Closer to home, Schiller's experience of the Jena student riots in 1792 may also have shaped his portrayal of revolution in Letter Five.<sup>53</sup> By the time Schiller was rewriting the Letters for *Die Horen* in late 1794, after the originals were lost in the fire that destroyed the Christiansborg palace on 26 February that year, the situation in Paris had stabilized, enabling him to rework his ideas as a broader study of humankind.

Letters Three and Four set out the hypothetical desirability of a state founded on reason, but they are realistic about the difficulty of developing the 'Naturstaat', which exists, into the 'moral state' which is a mere ideal. The former must keep functioning whilst the latter is being formed. Schiller contrasts the statesman with a clockmaker, who can stop the clock's

---

<sup>52</sup> High, p. 126, argues: 'Die *Ästhetischen Briefe* sind nicht Schillers Antwort auf die Französische Revolution und sie enthalten keine neue Theorie, [...] die Schiller nicht in ähnlicher Form schon vor 1789 erläutert hatte.' High's general point is that the Revolution confirmed rather than created Schiller's scepticism about rebellion. Beiser, pp. 121-26, traces the Letters' complex genesis and context. Hans-Jürgen Schings, *Die Brüder des Marquis Posa: Schiller und der Geheimbund der Illuminaten* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), pp. 187-226, shows how the Letters were also influenced by Friedrich Christian's interest in reviving the Illuminati in the Revolution's wake.

<sup>53</sup> *Goethes Weimar und die Französische Revolution: Dokumente der Krisenjahre*, ed. by W. Daniel Wilson (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004), pp. 22-23. As Wilson explains (pp. 28-30), the riots had little direct connection with France, but nonetheless emerged from an 'Allgemeingeist des Augenblicks' which – according to Goethe's memorandum on the student fraternities – contemned any law 'in das man nicht ganz freiwillig [consentirt] habe' (FA I.27 (1999), 13).

mechanism before setting to work on it. His call is not for reason to cancel out 'nature', but for mediation between the two; a society imbalanced in favour of reason is no better than one in which nature runs untamed. Reason should not replace instinct, but become instinctive. In extremes demonstrated respectively by the masses and the 'civilized classes', human beings are savages if their feelings trump their principles, but worse – 'eine[-] Depravation des Charakters, die desto mehr empört, weil die Kultur selbst ihre Quelle ist' – they are barbarians if principle overrides feeling (NA 20, 318-20). Letters Six to Eight restate the paradox with a longer view of an 'exile' from antiquity, contrasting divided modernity with the lost unity of ancient Greece. In Letter Nine, closing the first instalment of the series in *Die Horen*, Schiller proposes art as the mediating 'third character' between sensuousness and reason for which he has called in Letter Three. If nobler character is the precondition of reforming the state, but the 'barbaric' state is no place to develop such a character – the circular problem left at the end of Letters Six to Eight – then developing the human capacity for feeling is of the essence. Art, Schiller argues, is the best tool for the task (NA 20, 332-33).

The paradox of this education to republican virtue is that art only fulfils its task because it is detached; it can only be instrumental as long as it is not instrumentalized. If this was implicit in Letter Three (the 'third character' that is *neither* reason *nor* nature), then Schiller spells it out in Letter Nine: art and science alike are fundamentally immune to arbitrary intervention, and it is the artist's duty to stand back from the whims of the day. Schiller is not advocating irrelevance, but discernment: 'Lebe deinem Jahrhundert,' he advises the young 'friend of truth and beauty', 'aber sey nicht sein Geschöpf; leiste deinen Zeitgenossen, aber was sie bedürfen, nicht was sie loben' (NA 20, 335). The artist's 'play' is more effective than being serious: seriousness makes people defensive, but catch them at their leisure, and they will listen. Schiller rejects the casual claim that art ennobles, 'daß das entwickelte Gefühl für

Schönheit die Sitten verfeinere’, on the grounds that there are no historical examples of widespread high culture hand in hand with good politics, and plenty of examples of the opposite (Letter Ten: NA 20, 337-40). In the letters to Augustenburg that preceded the fuller version in *Die Horen*, Schiller had used a line from Ovid’s exile poetry, the *Epistulae ex Ponto* (‘Letters from the Black Sea’), to explore this idea, and its relation to his concept of ‘die schmelzende Kraft der Schönheit’ in particular (NA 20, 340): ‘[adde quod ingenuas] didicisse fideliter artes | emollit mores nec sinit esse feros’.<sup>54</sup> Quoting these lines contains the double irony – probably accidental on Schiller’s part – that in Ovid’s context they are simple flattery, written to ask Cotys IV, the new, cultured ruler of much of Thrace, for help, and that his cultivation did Cotys little good when his uncle Rhescuporis invaded his kingdom and put him to death in 19 CE.<sup>55</sup> Because this facile notion of art as cultivation has failed, Schiller instead, as Beiser argues, ‘reinterpret[s] [...] the moral and political relevance of the arts’ to make aesthetic autonomy not just compatible with such relevance, but fundamentally necessary to it.<sup>56</sup>

After the outside position of the artist in Letter Nine, Schiller’s focus shifts onto the outside position of art, building up to the vision in Letter Twenty-One that through aesthetic culture

---

<sup>54</sup> *Ex Ponto* 2.9.47-48; Schiller to Augustenburg, 11 November 1793 (Einschluß): NA 26, 303.

Ovid, *The Poems of Exile: Tristia and the Black Sea Letters*, trans. by Peter Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 149: ‘Besides, the liberal arts, if faithfully studied, | civilize a man’s character, rule cruelty out.’ Schiller also quotes Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* (3.545) at the same point.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Green, explanatory note in Ovid, *The Poems of Exile*, p. 327.

<sup>56</sup> Beiser, p. 210.

‘[dem Menschen] die Freyheit, zu seyn, was er seyn soll, vollkommen zurückgegeben ist’ (NA 20, 378). This looks like an escape from politics to aesthetics, but it is not intended thus.<sup>57</sup> Dieter Borchmeyer notes that far from depoliticizing art, Schiller derives his concept of aesthetic autonomy from the very same concept in politics.<sup>58</sup> Freedom is the basic category of both: Schiller constructs an aesthetic realm that offers the individual liberty from the tyranny of circumstances on the one hand and of principles on the other. Schiller’s model of the ‘ganz[er] Mensch’ (Letter Fifteen: NA 20, 359), enabled by such freedom to shape reality for the better, is analogous to Flusser’s, which emphasizes movement in and out of contingency. He moves through a series of triadic structures in which art, or beauty, mediates between mind and matter: ‘Spieltrieb’, which fleetingly brings together the material here and now (‘Sinntrieb’) and the timeless (‘Formtrieb’) to offer a glimpse of full humanity (Letters Fourteen and Fifteen); the ‘aesthetic condition’ that mediates between reason and nature, momentarily setting the two aside (from Letter Eighteen onwards). Such mediation can never be permanently established, because there *is* no stable means to mediate between the senses

---

<sup>57</sup> The most prominent critics of Schiller’s ‘escapism’ are Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, 3rd edn (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972), pp. 78-79, and Georg Lukács, ‘Zur Ästhetik Schillers’, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Ästhetik* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1956), pp. 11-96 (e.g. p. 39). For a recent restatement of this position: Yvonne Nilges, *Schiller und das Recht* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), p. 211.

<sup>58</sup> Dieter Borchmeyer, ‘Ästhetische und politische Autonomie: Schillers “Ästhetische Briefe” im Gegenlicht der französischen Revolution’, in *Revolution und Autonomie: Deutsche Autonomieästhetik im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution*, ed. by Wolfgang Wittkowski (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990), pp. 277-96 (p. 283).

and the intellect. Schiller's individual is determined ('bestimmt') by both sensuousness and reason, and in order to develop moral autonomy that individual must step back momentarily, out of 'Bestimmung' to 'Bestimmbarkeit', enhancing the power of rational judgement to counterbalance physical will. For that moment, in the 'aesthetic condition', both sense and reason are active at the same time (Letter Twenty: NA 20, 374-75).

Schiller spells out extensively that the aesthetic, at the same time as being the crux of his model, must be qualitatively separate from what it unites. Semblance ('Schein') depends on separation from reality; where it pretends to be real it is in fact 'nichts als ein niedriges Werkzeug zu materiellen Zwecken, und kann nichts für die Freyheit des Geistes beweisen' (Letter Twenty-Six : NA 20, 402). The ability to perform this separation rests on social privilege, but it is not escapist.<sup>59</sup> Schiller here reformulates the advice to artists given in Letter Nine: beauty does not come about in the hands of 'troglodytes', nor either in the hands of 'nomads' in constant company, but 'da allein, wo [der Mensch] in eigener Hütte still mit sich selbst und, sobald er heraustritt, mit dem ganzen Geschlechte spricht' (NA 20, 398). 'Ästhetischer Schein' has its place in the moral world when, and because, it does not pretend to *be* that world; the complaint that reality is being 'lost' to aesthetics is in fact the sad reflection of an age that cannot imagine art without a definite purpose (NA 20, 402-04). It is the reception of beauty that counts: not an escape from the physical world into aesthetics, but the way it enables an understanding that humanity is not merely subject to compulsion (Letter Twenty-Three: NA 20, 386). The 'aesthetic condition' teaches the contemplation of human existence from outside – Flusser's 'irony', arguably – as a crucial step beyond the physical world: 'Erst, wenn

---

<sup>59</sup> See T. M. Holmes, 'Property and Politics in Schiller's Theory of Aesthetic Education',

*Oxford German Studies*, 11 (1980), 27-39.

[der Mensch] in seinem ästhetischen Stande, [die Sinnenwelt] außer sich stellt oder *betrachtet*, sondert sich seine Persönlichkeit von ihr ab, und es erscheint ihm eine Welt, weil er aufgehört hat, mit derselben Eins auszumachen' (Letter Twenty-Five: NA 20, 394). Contemplation is the exact opposite of instrumentalization; it is 'das erste liberale Verhältnis des Menschen zu dem Weltall, das ihn umgiebt'. Just as it cannot come from moral imperative, it is also free of the impulses of desire, which grasps at its object by reflex ('unmittelbar'); instead it has an 'ownership' of its object that is dispassionate and secure (NA 20, 394). If back in Letter Six, abstracted thought was given the blame for the present state of mankind, here intellectual outsidership produces a solution. Metaphorically speaking, exile overcomes exile. The last of Schiller's triadic structures, the 'aesthetic state' of Letter Twenty-Seven, has left him the most open to the charge of escapism. He seems to suggest a political state built in the aesthetic realm: 'Hier also in dem Reich des ästhetischen Scheins wird das Ideal der Gleichheit erfüllt, welches der Schwärmer so gern auch dem Wesen nach realisiert sehen möchte' (NA 20, 412). Yet he has studiously insisted on the separation of art and politics so far, and indeed here too, such a state in real existence, 'dem Wesen nach', is a matter for dreamers; it is the need for it that exists 'in jeder feingestimmten Seele' (NA 20, 412). Schiller's point, to the last, is that this is about a state of mind. This is a community that people join because they *want to*, not out of the compulsions of physical need or moral obligation; in turn, they are removed from such compulsions in attitude, but emphatically not in reality. Beiser suggests that Schiller himself had 'something like *patriotism*' in mind,<sup>60</sup> thus returning the

---

<sup>60</sup> Beiser, p. 163.

argument full circle to the political sphere where he started, and to the republican virtue that the France of the Terror had lacked.

#### IV.

In his exile works *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (written in 1944, with Max Horkheimer) and *Minima Moralia* Adorno criticized not only the Enlightenment as a whole as containing the seeds of its own downfall (GS 3 (1981), 13), but also, specifically, the idealist aesthetics of Weimar Classicism as 'dialectically' authoritarian. Adorno charged Schiller not with escapism, but complicity. Freedom understood as sovereignty over nature, he asserts, is itself fundamentally repressive; by ignoring the individual for the sake of the idea, it is as 'levelling' ('nivellierend') as the 'culture industry' of the mid-twentieth century. This unwittingly but fundamentally, according to Adorno, 'kettet deutschen Geist und deutsche Barbarei aneinander' (GS 4, 97-98). Adorno's bitterly unsympathetic attitude to Schiller stemmed from a fundamental difference from him: writing in the shadow of Nazism, he was convinced that modern humanity so comprehensively lacked freedom that it could not try to assert or achieve it. What looks like freedom is in fact an illusion that tricks people into embracing unfreedom still further; thus invoking freedom, in Adorno's paradoxical vision, is complicity with power. His pessimism extends to art, which has failed in its most urgent task – to portray the enormity of fascism – because that task is impossible: 'Vollendete Unfreiheit lässt sich erkennen, nicht darstellen' (GS 4, 163).

Adorno's counterexample is Schiller's intention, stated in the preface to *Fiesco* (year?), 'die kalte, unfruchtbare Staatsaktion [...] an das menschliche Herz wieder anzuknüpfen' or, in an unacknowledged allusion to the *Wallenstein* prologue, to bring a historical figure '[a]uch eurem Herzen, menschlich näher' through art (GS 4, 161-62; NA 8, 6). Adorno labels this a

move to justify, rather than challenge, the status quo. Similarly, his later essay 'Ist die Kunst heiter?' (1967) argues against the closing line of the same prologue, 'Ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst', that such 'carefree' art and its settled ('befriedet') relationship to the world around it is unimaginable in an age in which the Holocaust has been possible (GS 11 (1974), 603). In this situation, and in exile especially, intellectuals have no power, and neither should they aspire to it. Power would make them parts of the system rather than its critics: 'der Blick auf mögliche Vorteile ist der Todfeind der Bildung menschenwürdiger Beziehungen überhaupt'. The only means towards alleviating their situation is to recognize it clearly (GS 4, 38). For Schiller, by contrast, freedom is fundamental and possible, both as end and means; the 'aesthetic state' is an ideal, but the political republic is a realistic goal. Klaus Berghahn and Henrik Sponsel point out amply that Schiller himself mistrusted idealism where it meant contempt for reality: this is the very reason why according to the *Ästhetische Briefe*, conventional means to reform the state are not enough.<sup>61</sup> Rather, the decisive difference is that in Schiller's vision, freedom has been derailed in France but it can and must be saved; in Adorno's, the enormity of Auschwitz means that it cannot.

Adorno's hostility to Schiller, however, belies the similarity of their thinking and obscures Schiller's position as a precursor of Adorno's 'intellectual exile'. The *Ästhetische Briefe* show acute awareness of Enlightenment in crisis. Truth has made little headway in the present,

---

<sup>61</sup> Klaus L. Berghahn, 'Ansichten eines Idealisten: Ein Nachwort', in *Schiller: Ansichten eines Idealisten* (Frankfurt a.M.: Athenäum, 1986), pp. 223-28; Henrik Sponsel, 'Was sagte dieser Schiller (damals)? Schillers Antworten auf seine Kritiker nach 1945', in *Who is this Schiller Now? Essays on his Reception and Significance*, ed. by Jeffrey L. High, Nicholas Martin, and Norbert Oellers (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), pp. 383-400.

Schiller argues, not because it has been beyond reason ('Verstand'), but for lack of will, which is out of reason's reach: '[es liegt] an dem Herzen, das sich [der Wahrheit] verschloß, und an dem Triebe, der nicht für sie handelte' (Letter Eight: NA 20, 331). More deeply, if culture is called to rescue modern humanity from the division between sense and reason that were united in antiquity, then it was also culture itself that first caused the split (Letter Six: NA 20, 322). It is out of this crisis that Schiller argues for art's place and influence outside the everyday; for Georg Bollenbeck it is his dismissal of art as simple cultivation within reality that makes him a forerunner of modern *Kulturkritik*.<sup>62</sup> Adorno's image of a culture rationalized and broken by the 'culture industry', such that it cannot heal itself, is more extreme than Schiller's Letter Six, but it establishes the same logical circle that Schiller seeks to break. His warnings in *Minima Moralia*, that the intellectual must not join in with what is socially acceptable, and that art in society is impossible (if it is part of culture, then it is 'Kunstgewerbe': GS 4, 242), echo Schiller on the position of art and the artist in society in Letters Nine and Ten. Adorno's intellectual keeps cleaner hands, but for him, too, it is only from autonomy that art can influence society: as Ruth Sonderegger summarizes, 'Kritisch relevant werden Kunstwerke erst in Prozessen, die sie nicht steuern können'.<sup>63</sup>

Although Adorno makes idealism a part of the problem, he also suggests a degree of admiration, or even lament, for autonomous art. The 'Kulturindustrie' chapter of *Dialektik der*

---

<sup>62</sup> Georg Bollenbeck, 'Der konstitutive Funktion der Kulturkritik für Schillers Briefe *Über die ästhetische Erziehung*', *Euphorion*, 99 (2005), 213-41 (esp. pp. 216-18).

<sup>63</sup> Ruth Sonderegger, 'Ästhetische Theorie', in *Adorno-Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. by Richard Klein, Johann Kreuzer, and Stefan Müller-Doohm (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2011), pp. 414-27 (p. 424).

*Aufklärung* briefly considers art that ‘aus dem Idiom herausfällt’, even though in so doing it confirms the ‘system’ because it is the exception that proves the rule (GS 3, 150); if the fusion of culture and entertainment is a ‘Depravation der Kultur’ (GS 3, 165), then culture on its own must be better than ‘depraved’. Similarly, *ex negativo*, there must have been drama that directed its audience less than the total control imposed by present-day cinema, and tragedy before the tragic became a threat to stay in line (cf. GS 3, 147, and 175). In *Ästhetische Theorie* (published posthumously in 1970) Adorno sets out the utopian quality of art, a reminder of ‘das Mögliche gegen das Wirkliche, das jenes verdrängte, etwas wie die imaginäre Wiedergutmachung der Katastrophe Weltgeschichte’, although that reminder in turn always also conveys the memory of that ‘permanent catastrophe’ which is its opposite: ‘Kunst ist das Versprechen des Glücks, das gebrochen wird’.<sup>64</sup> In *Minima Moralia* he contrasts tenderness with directness in personal relations, the latter the hallmark of a practical, regimented order, but the former expressing ‘das Bewußtsein von der Möglichkeit zweckfreier Beziehungen, das noch die Zweckverhafteten tröstlich streift’ (GS 4, 45).

Utopian ‘Zweckfreiheit’ takes Adorno to a central concept of the *Ästhetische Briefe*, and qualifies his condemnation of ‘Heiterkeit’ and ‘play’ in Schiller’s theory. Significantly, he begins ‘Ist die Kunst heiter?’ by pointing out the parallel to the *Wallenstein* prologue in Ovid’s exile poems: ‘[crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostro: ]] uita uerecunda est, Musa iocosa mea’ (GS 11, 599; *Tristia* 2.353-54). Adorno claims that Schiller adapted the second line as an authoritative (indeed, authoritarian) statement – ‘Ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst’ – and ignored its real function, which is to persuade: Ovid is again appealing to be allowed home,

---

<sup>64</sup> GS 7 (1970), 204-05; see Klaus L. Berghahn, ‘Ästhetische Reflexion als Utopie des Ästhetischen’, in *Schiller: Ansichten eines Idealisten*, pp. 125-55 (pp. 126-27).

one of many ingenious pleas in the *Tristia* that his risqué love poetry was meant as no more than a harmless game.<sup>65</sup> But it is Adorno who misreads Schiller, by only considering the Prologue's last line: he complains that it is a dictum ('einverleibt dem bürgerlichen Hausschatz, bei passendem Anlaß zitierfähig'), but himself ignores its context. Schiller is closing the Prologue by pointing out that art creates distance. He is not tricking his audience into thinking he has replicated reality in a cheerful drama; the move from grim reality to the 'play' of art is deliberate and overt, and in any case, the rest of the drama does not sustain it.<sup>66</sup> This is entirely what Adorno wanted: as in *Ästhetische Theorie*, he goes on to argue in 'Ist die Kunst heiter?' that because art delights, it resists and contradicts '[das] bloß[e] Dasein' even though that existence cannot be escaped. Art is defined by the tension between being serious and carefree: 'Kunst vibriert zwischen [dem Ernst] und der Heiterkeit als der Realität Entronnenes und gleichwohl von ihr Durchdrungenes. Allein solche Spannung macht Kunst aus' (GS 11,

---

<sup>65</sup> Ovid, *The Poems of Exile*, p. 33: 'My morals, believe me, are quite distinct from my verses – | a respectable life-style, a flirtatious Muse'. Schiller's recent editors note that the antithesis in his line stands in a long rhetorical tradition (e.g. NA 8N.III (2013), 623), but the parallel that Adorno identifies with Ovid is striking. Jennifer Ingleheart, *A Commentary on Ovid, 'Tristia', Book 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 288-89, traces further references to a 'Musa iocosa' in Ovid, Horace, and Martial, and also points out the irony of 'crede mihi' here: 'claims in verse that Ovid lives a pure life, closely tied to the assertion that Ovid's verse is not to be trusted'.

<sup>66</sup> See Peter-André Alt, "'Arbeit für mehr als ein Jahrhundert": Schillers Verständnis von Ästhetik und Politik in der Periode der Französischen Revolution (1790-1800)', *JDSG*, 46 (2002), 102-33 (pp. 131-32).

600-01). In *Minima Moralia* Adorno had previously made a similar statement on thought: when thought loses its independence from reality it also loses the ability to penetrate that reality, and yet it must also avoid the trap of isolation, proclaiming ‘die Distanz wie [...] ein Privileg’, which would consign it to a world in which factual and conceptual truth are never brought to meet (GS 4, 142). Although the thought that Adorno advocates appears absolute, in essence it is relative; it must transcend contingency *in order to* understand the factual world. Art that seeks only to be carefree is in fact kitsch, the fuel of the ‘culture industry’, but this is not Schiller’s art, either: his Letter Twenty-Six expressly dismisses the kind of semblance ‘den man [...] liebt, weil er Schein ist, und nicht, weil man ihn für etwas besseres hält’ and which is ‘bloss Betrug’ (NA 20, 399-400). Adorno cannot share in Schiller’s redemptive vision, but his conclusion that ‘untruth’ in thought leads, and must lead, back to truth, leaves an open door to Schiller’s aesthetics.

V.

Goethe is easily cast as an awkward collaborator in the *Horen* project. The journal missed out on the work that would have been a major coup, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/96), because he had just promised it to another publisher; in private Schiller complained that for its first issues ‘Göthe und ich fast alles [...] liefern, und leyder Göthe nicht die exquisitesten Sachen, und ich nicht die allgemeinverständlichsten’.<sup>67</sup> The *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* that Goethe did contribute broke explicitly, in the very first issue, with the ban on contemporary topics: Schiller replied, when he received the text, with a reminder of ‘unsere Keuschheit in politischen Urteilen’ and objected that the altercation in it between

---

<sup>67</sup> Schiller to Körner, 29 December 1794: NA 27, 111.

Geheimrat von S. and the revolutionary sympathizer, Karl, might offend a sizeable faction of the readership by its one-sidedness in the former's favour.<sup>68</sup> Several critics have seen the *Unterhaltungen* as a disapproving reply to the *Ästhetische Briefe*: Ulrich Gaier, notably, sees Goethe's contributions to the first issue as 'Störfaktoren' which signalled that, in response to the Letters, 'er das ästhetische Spiel [...] nicht mitzuspielen bereit war'.<sup>69</sup> Gaier takes Letters 1-9 one by one to set out in detail how Goethe's plot and characters are arguments against Schiller's high ideals. He suggests that Goethe's criticisms were what discouraged Schiller from his plans to publish the Letters, which he had once thought 'das beßte, was ich in meinem Leben gemacht habe', as a book.<sup>70</sup> Bernd Witte points out that the readership of *Die Horen*, who were surely the potential beneficiaries of 'aesthetic education', had the very same social makeup 'aus adeligen Damen, Hofleuten, alten Geistlichen und Hauslehrern' as the emigrants whose behaviour is so lacking in Goethe's text.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Schiller to Goethe, 29 November 1794: NA 27, 94. See also Reichardt's review: Fambach, pp. 226-27.

<sup>69</sup> Ulrich Gaier, 'Soziale Bildung gegen ästhetische Erziehung: Goethes Rahmen der "Unterhaltungen" als satirische Antithese zu Schillers "Ästhetischen Briefen" I-IX', in *Poetische Autonomie? Zur Wechselwirkung von Dichtung und Philosophie in der Epoche Goethes und Hölderlins*, ed. by Helmut Bachmaier and Thomas Reutsch (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), pp. 207-72 (p. 218).

<sup>70</sup> Schiller to Hoven, 21 November 1794: NA 27, 92; Gaier, p. 211.

<sup>71</sup> Bernd Witte, 'Das Opfer der Schlange: Zur Auseinandersetzung Goethes mit Schiller in den "Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten" und im "Märchen"', in *Unser Commercium*, pp. 461-484 (p. 463); also Gaier, p. 255.

Reconstructing Goethe and Schiller's relationship relies on a record that is dense but incomplete, and on letters that are the products of momentary activities and changing circumstances.<sup>72</sup> Firm disagreement often cannot be cleanly told apart from constructive difference; for *Die Horen*, there is at least an equally good case for seeing Goethe's role as complementary, not contrary. He replied warmly when Schiller first invited him to join the editorial committee, looking forward to 'eine sehr interessante Unterhaltung' on the journal's selection of material.<sup>73</sup> His comments to Schiller over the months that followed suggested that he was looking for ways not to contradict him but, quite the opposite, to give his theory a practical turn. When Schiller nervously sent him the first part of the *Ästhetische Briefe* (Letters 1-9), hoping that he would find in them a shared goal despite the different 'tools' by which the two men 'grasped' the world, Goethe read them at a single sitting and wrote back declaring his pleasure in reading them, 'da ich das was ich für recht seit langer Zeit erkannte, was ich theils lebte, theils zu leben wünschte auf eine so zusammenhängende und edle Weise vorgetragen fand'. Two days later he had read them again, looking specifically for their practical rather than their theoretical significance, and against expectation he had found himself 'auch da [...] nur gestärckt und gefördert'.<sup>74</sup> The two men's correspondence in the autumn of 1794, repeatedly discussing the journal in both principle and practice, reveals a joint enterprise beyond that of an editor and a contributing author. After a fortnight together

---

<sup>72</sup> Gerrit Brüning, *Ungleiche Gleichgesinnte: Die Beziehung zwischen Goethe und Schiller 1794-1798* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015), is a meticulous account focused on critical, contextual study of the correspondence; on *Die Horen*, see pp. 85-109.

<sup>73</sup> Goethe to Schiller, 24 June 1794: FA II.4, 9.

<sup>74</sup> Goethe to Schiller, 26 and 28 October 1794: FA II.4, 41 and 43.

in Weimar in September Goethe wrote of *Die Horen*: ‘besonders sinne ich auf Vehikel und Masken, wodurch und unter welchen wir dem Publico manches zuschieben können’. Schiller knew fully the value of such devices, pressing Goethe on 28 October for ‘die Geschichte des ehrlichen Prokurators aus dem Boccacaz’, which then grew into the *Unterhaltungen* project and was placed later in it. He was asking for a free-standing, readable literary text, and explained that ‘[w]ie ich schon an sich selbst der Darstellung vor der Untersuchung den Vorzug gebe, so bin ich hier um so mehr der Meinung, weil in den 3 ersten Stücken der Horen schon etwas zu viel philosophiert werden dürfte, und an poetischen Aufsätzen Mangel ist’.<sup>75</sup> The first instalment disappointed this hope as well as seeming partisan: on receiving only the start of the frame narrative and none of the embedded tales, Schiller rightly foresaw that the work’s fragmented publication would prevent its readers from grasping ‘die nothwendigen Beziehungen des Gesagten auf das Ganze’.<sup>76</sup>

Apart from the start of the *Unterhaltungen*, Goethe also furnished the first issue with its opening, after Schiller’s preface: a verse ‘Erste Epistel’ (FA I.1, 479-83) that loosely recalls the form and purpose of Horace’s *Art of Poetry*.<sup>77</sup> The poem responds to the preface and the

---

<sup>75</sup> Goethe to Schiller, 1 October 1794: FA II.4, 32; Schiller to Goethe, 28 October 1794: NA 27, 75. As has often been pointed out, the story in question did not come from Boccaccio, but from the French collection *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* (see FA I.9 (1992), 1521-22).

<sup>76</sup> Schiller to Goethe, 29 November 1794: NA 27, 94; also Schiller to Goethe, 15 May 1795, reporting Cotta’s comment that the readers ‘noch nicht absehen können, was damit werden soll’: NA 27, 183.

<sup>77</sup> The ‘Episteln’ were probably intended as a regular introduction to *Die Horen*, but petered out after the second issue (see FA I.1 (1987), 1154).

instalment of the *Ästhetische Briefe* that Goethe had just read – ‘Edler Freund, du wünschst das Wohl des Menschengeschlechtes’ – but it seems at first glance to deflate Schiller’s earnest idealism: ‘Ernst und wichtig erscheint mir die Frage, doch trifft sie mich eben | In vergnüglicher Stimmung’ (lines 16-17).<sup>78</sup> *Die Horen* thus appears to open with a statement of its uselessness: ‘Soll ich sagen wie ich es denke? so scheint mir es bildet | Nur das Leben den Mann und wenig bedeuten die Worte’ (ll. 38-39). Books do not change minds, but only confirm them, as their recipients only find in them the things they want to read. Horace’s reminders to his fledgling poets that they are writing to please, and thus to earn money and fame – ‘tu quid ego et populus mecum desideret audi: si ploris eges aulaea manentis [...]’<sup>79</sup> – are echoed in this poem’s advice not to harangue, but to flatter: ‘sprichst du zum Volke, zu Fürsten und Königen, allen | Magst du Geschichten erzählen worin als wirklich erscheint | Was sie wünschen und was sie selber zu leben beehrten’ (ll. 45-47).

---

<sup>78</sup> This view is pursued by Thorsten Valk, ‘Ästhetische Bildung als politische Propädeutik?

Goethes *Unterhaltungen* als kritische Replik auf Schillers *Horen*-Ankündigung’,

*Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*, 48 (2007), 189-214 (pp. 213-14), and by Reiner Wild,

*Goethes klassische Lyrik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999), pp. 112-14.

<sup>79</sup> *Ars Poetica* 153-54. *Classical Literary Criticism*, ed. by D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 102: ‘Let me tell you what I and the public both

want, if you’re hoping for an applauding audience that will wait for the curtain’. See also *Ars*

*Poetica* 343-44: ‘omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci, | lectorem delectando

pariterque monendo’ (*Classical Literary Criticism*, p. 107: ‘The man who combines pleasure

with usefulness wins every suffrage, delighting the reader and also giving him advice’).

Here Goethe indeed foresaw one of the flaws that would bring down *Die Horen*, that it would fail to convert a broad public to high culture, and like Horace, he focuses on the audience and readership which also, by their absence, crucially determine exile writing. Yet the puzzle, on this reading, is that Schiller should still have reminded Goethe in December 1794 that he wanted a 'Zweyte Epistel' for the journal's next issue.<sup>80</sup> Who, or what, is this poem's real target? It not only challenges Schiller's project, but questions the value of all writing. On its own terms, it, too, is just as useless as any other text, and indeed, it is introduced as adding just another opinion to an endless chain (ll. 4-7). If read seriously, it reduces all poetry to little more than flattery, but it clearly is not serious. Its emphasis on its cheerful disposition ('dem Heitern erscheint die Welt auch heiter', l. 20; 'vergnügliche[-] Stimmung' and 'warme[s] heitere[s] Wetter', l. 17) pre-empts the end of the *Wallenstein* prologue, which Goethe significantly emended to 'heiter sei die Kunst' (FA I.18 (1998), 528). By its very contrast with Schiller's earnest preface, it corresponds to Schiller's ambition for the journal: 'Einer heitern und leidenschaftsfreien Unterhaltung soll sie gewidmet sein, und dem Geist und Herzen des Lesers, den der Anblick der Zeitbegebenheiten bald entrüstet, bald niederschlägt, eine fröhliche Zerstreung geben' (NA 22, 106). As Matthias Mayer points out, the poetic voice must not be misread as Goethe's, and its target is not Schiller any more than its caricature of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as composed for the whims of the market is a straight interpretation of Homer. Rather, '[h]ier ist eine zynische Maske am Werk, die als Warnung vor harmloser Lektüre verstanden werden kann.'<sup>81</sup> The real challenge to Schiller would have been a serious

---

<sup>80</sup> Schiller to Goethe, 22 December 1794: NA 27, 109.

<sup>81</sup> Matthias Mayer, 'Ökonomie und Verschwendung in der klassischen Lyrik Goethes: "Episteln" und "Amyntas"', *Goethe-Jahrbuch*, 122 (2005), 61-75 (p. 67).

declaration of the instrumental value of art; these poems' ironic self-deprecation does not close dialogue about the project's possibilities and scope, but opens it up.

Critics who see 'Erste Epistel' as contradicting Schiller tend to ignore the fact that it confronts the same basic problem as the *Ästhetische Briefe* – 'why art?' – and that Goethe follows Schiller's dismissal, in the early letters he had read, of straightforward 'art as cultivation'. Little attention has been paid to the poem's second half: the tall tale ('Märchen'), heard in Venice, of a man washed up on the island of Utopia, at the end of the earth. Displacement and hospitality in a foreign culture here become the means to extend the discussion of poetry's social value. The story-teller is a rhapsodist (line 59): a reciter and thus also a compiler of poetry, and of Homeric epic in particular. He is connected additionally to Odysseus (l. 52) by the rags they both wear (in Odysseus's homecoming in l. 55 and the story-teller's dress in l. 59), by the 'ebenso' connecting the *Odyssey* and the 'Märchen' (l. 56), and by the imaginary story of the man's treatment in Utopia. He receives free, unlimited board and lodging there; in time he forgets his cares, but when he asks to settle his dues, he is beaten for insulting the island's generosity. A judge tells him that he may stay, even though he can do no useful work. Indeed, it is a condition of his staying that he does no manual labour, but observes and enjoys the island's life; as long as he does this, his political and social standing will be high. The Venice audience are pleased by what they hear. At two levels, this story challenges the account in the first half of 'Erste Epistel', of poetry called to be functional, but doomed to fail. First, in Utopia, 'Heiterkeit' has value in itself; aesthetic pleasure is a civic duty. Second, in Venice the story-teller influences his audience, taking them by an engaging performance (l. 59) into a world beyond their experience and making it attractive: 'heiter waren die Stirnen | Aller Hörer geworden' (ll. 104-05). Transferred back to the purpose of literature, the message of the tale, and of the whole poem, is that poetry is ineffective where it is harnessed to a purpose, but

fulfils purpose when it is not; as Mayer puts it, ‘indem [die Dichtung] sich [...] zu ihrer von der Realität abweichenden Alterität bekennt’.<sup>82</sup> It is the outside position of art that makes it work; the difference with Schiller is in method, not vision. It is unclear whether the poem’s end, where the audience, too, ‘wünschten, des Tages, | Solche Wirte zu finden, ja solche Schläge zu dulden’ (ll. 105-06), affirms the story or returns ironically to the cynicism of the poem’s first part, but the point is that it does both, its ambiguity summing up the necessary interplay of reality and abstraction for which the poem stands. The poem’s topic may seem to be Horace’s well-known binary, ‘aut prodesse uolunt aut delectare poetae’, but in fact ‘Erste Epistel’, too, finds the resolution that Horace suggests in the following line: ‘aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere uitae’.<sup>83</sup>

The displacement of people by the French Revolution was Goethe’s prompt to set out the *Horen* project, and test it, at greater length. He and Schiller had discussed plans for the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* when they met in Jena in early November 1794, and he had sent Schiller the first instalment before Schiller wrote his preface. Noticeably, Schiller did not state an objection to Goethe’s opening sentence, which is more prominent, less ambiguous, and far more ‘unkeusch in politischen Urteilen’ than the character of Geheimrat von S. Instead, he borrowed its content and phrasing for his own preface; Goethe’s

---

<sup>82</sup> Mayer, p. 71.

<sup>83</sup> *Ars Poetica* 332-33. *Classical Literary Criticism*, p. 106: ‘Poets aim either to do good or to give pleasure – or, thirdly, to say things which are both pleasing and serviceable for life.’

emigrants were not just a response to Schiller's programme, but formed it.<sup>84</sup> For Goethe's narrator the French were the lucky beneficiaries of German negligence, and the noble emigrants are victims:

In jenen unglücklichen Tagen, welche für Deutschland, für Europa, ja für die übrige Welt die traurigsten Folgen hatten, als das Heer der Franken durch eine übelverwahrte Lücke in unser Vaterland einbrach, verließ eine edle Familie ihre Besitzungen in jenen Gegenden und entfloh über den Rhein, um den Bedrängnissen zu entgehen, womit alle ausgezeichnete Personen bedrohet waren, denen man zum Verbrechen machte, daß sie sich ihrer Väter mit Freuden und Ehren erinnerten [...]. (FA I.9, 995)<sup>85</sup>

Soon enough the family at the story's centre – Baronesse von C., her children Luise and Friedrich and their cousin Karl – proves unable to discuss politics without argument, not least as Karl sympathizes with the Revolution's ideals. It is a particularly impassioned quarrel that results in the departure of Geheimrat von S. and makes the family agree that when gathered together, for the sake of common courtesy they will 'gänzlich alle Unterhaltung über das Interesse des Tages verbannen'. To fill the gap in conversation the Baroness suggests each in

---

<sup>84</sup> See Jane K. Brown, *Goethe's Cyclical Narratives: Die Unterhaltungen deutscher*

*Ausgewanderten and Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), pp. 5-6, and Brüning, pp. 103-05.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Schiller's first sentence: 'Zu einer Zeit, wo das nahe Geräusch des Kriegs das Vaterland ängstigt, wo der Kampf politischer Meinungen und Interessen diesen Krieg beinahe in jedem Zirkel erneuert und nur allzuoft Musen und Grazien daraus verscheucht [...]' (NA 22, 106).

the group might talk about geography, history, poetry, and nature, the interests that used to be the topics of ‘belehrende und aufmunternde Gespräche’ (FA I.9, 1009), her phrase a close allusion to Horace’s ‘aut prodesse...’, but they do not.<sup>86</sup> Instead the old priest travelling with them tells the first in what becomes a chain of embedded stories, taking on the function of the rhapsodist from ‘Erste Epistel’.<sup>87</sup>

*Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* was written about a year and a half after the events it narrates (the conquest of Mainz, from 14 April to 23 July 1793: FA I.9, 1001-02). The family’s departure for ‘ein Gut, das an dem rechten Ufer des Rhein’s, in der schönsten Lage, ihr zugehörte’ (FA I.9, 999) has been hasty but relatively comfortable; although it is described as ‘Flucht’, they are not really so dispossessed of status or property as to count unambiguously as refugees. Yet fleeing home is more than just a convenient or contemporary device for setting the scene. Their particular circumstances as emigrants bring out the worst in them: their conversations become heated and they revert to type (FA I.9, 995 and 998-99). Exile has polarized political discussion and made it acute (FA I.9, 1000) at the very same time as heightening the need for sensitivity:

---

<sup>86</sup> On Horace and the Baroness: Witte, pp. 464-65.

<sup>87</sup> This connection is noted by Sorina Becheru, ‘Der “ganze” Mensch als “abenteuerliche” Erzählung: Anthropologische Dimensionen einer narrativen Evolution kleiner Prosaformen in den *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*’, in *Kleine anthropologische Prosaformen der Goethezeit (1750-1830)*, ed. by Alexander Košenina and Carsten Zelle (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2011), pp. 271-300 (p. 283).

Die Bedürfnisse des Tages, die Hindernisse des Weges, die Unannehmlichkeit der Quartiere führten die Gesellschaft gewöhnlich auf ein gegenwärtiges Interesse zurück, und die große Anzahl französischer und deutscher Ausgewanderten, die sie überall antrafen und deren Betragen und Schicksale sehr verschieden waren, gaben ihnen oft zu Betrachtungen Anlaß, wieviel Ursach man habe, in diesen Zeiten alle Tugenden, besonders aber die Tugend der Unparteilichkeit und Verträglichkeit zu üben. (FA I.9, 998)

Karl's inability to practise this virtue drives Geheimrat von S. away; indeed, far from injecting 'Parteigeist' into *Die Horen*, Goethe here shows its ill effects as Karl wishes the guillotine a 'rich harvest' in Germany and insults S. personally to boot (FA I.9, 1004).<sup>88</sup> Karl demonstrates, in Said's terms, the exile's 'passionate hostility to outsiders, even those who may in fact be in the same predicament as you',<sup>89</sup> but just as S. is 'zum zweitenmal, und zwar durch einen Landsmann vertrieben' (FA I.9, 1004), so Karl, too, carries a double burden: he is exiled at the same time as believing dogmatically in the revolution that has driven the family from their home. S. is also to blame for raising the heat of their argument when he laughs Karl off as a youthful idealist, and his equally unbridled comment on the German Jacobins in Mainz – that they will be forsaken by the French, fall into the allies' hands, 'und er hoffe sie alle gehangen zu sehen' – Karl understandably takes not just as provocation but as a threat (FA I.9, 1004).

---

<sup>88</sup> Hartmut Reinhardt, 'Ästhetische Geselligkeit: Goethes literarischer Dialog mit Schiller in den *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*', in *Prägnanter Moment: Studien zur deutschen Literatur der Aufklärung und Klassik*, ed. by Peter-André Alt and others (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002), pp. 311-41 (p. 327).

<sup>89</sup> Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 178.

Exile entails a loss of memory, as S.'s departure means the loss of 'ein unerschöpfliches Archiv von Menschen- und Welt-Kenntnis, von Begebenheiten und Verhältnissen' (FA I.9, 1005).<sup>90</sup>

Goethe wrote the *Unterhaltungen* in tandem with reading the *Ästhetische Briefe*. He had read Letters 1-9, and responded to them, a month before he sent Schiller the first instalment of the *Unterhaltungen* on 27 November 1794. He can be expected to have read the second instalment (Letters 10-16) when it came out in the journal's second issue in late February 1795, and although his reading of the sixth issue, containing his *Römische Elegien* and the last instalment of the Letters (17-27), was delayed by his visit to Karlsbad in July and early August, he still had time to read the final Letters in Weimar before sending Schiller the 'Märchen', the last part of the *Unterhaltungen*, on 26 September.<sup>91</sup> Although Schiller was unhappy with the start of the *Unterhaltungen*, Goethe declared himself pleased to be working on the project (FA I.9, 1510-11), and it accounts more sympathetically for Goethe's intention to see the two interleaved works as contrasting but complementary. Seeing their relationship otherwise means dismissing the evidence of Goethe's response to the Letters and speculating instead

---

<sup>90</sup> Manfred Koch, 'Zirkulation und wiederholte Spiegelungen: Kulturelle Gedächtnisbildung durch modernen Ideenumlauf in Goethes *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*', in *Gedächtnis und Zirkulation: Der Diskurs des Kreislaufs im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Harald Schmidt and Marcus Sandl (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), pp. 167-87 (p. 170).

<sup>91</sup> Goethe to Schiller, 18 March 1795 (FA II.4, 63), 27 June 1795 (NA 35 (1964), 229), 29 July 1795 and 26 September 1795 (FA II.4, 101 and 114). Paul Raabe, *Die Horen: Einführung und Kommentar* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1959), pp. 37-104, presents submission dates for individual contributions, and publication dates for each issue.

that his real opinion was the opposite of what he said to Schiller's face.<sup>92</sup> Likewise, looking for point-by-point correspondence between the *Unterhaltungen* and the Letters, as Gaier does, sets the comparison up to fail: Goethe, as so often, has an eye for the individual in contrast with Schiller's concern for the universal.<sup>93</sup> The 'gesellige Bildung' that the emigrants lack (FA I.9, 1008) is arguably the aim of 'ästhetische Erziehung', for individuals and for civic society, but the two concepts are of a very different size and scale. Goethe suggests, in a literary text, how aspects of aesthetic education might apply in microcosm.<sup>94</sup> In her complaint that the children used to talk about sensitive matters tactfully, but now, in exile, they do the opposite (FA I.9, 1008-1009), the Baroness parallels Schiller on the 'fall' from ancient culture in Letter Six. Her scepticism as to whether men can fully control themselves (FA I.9, 1006) pulls together on an individual level the threads of Schiller's conundrum for human society, that imposing reason over nature will always fail. The stories as a remedy model what aesthetic education might be held to mean, rather than contradicting it. They do not analyse the Revolution, but suggest ways out of 'dem aufreibenden politischen Fieber'.<sup>95</sup> They are stories not with particular morals, but about the basics of societal living: 'die Empfindungen, wodurch Männer und Frauen verbunden oder entzweiet, glücklich oder unglücklich gemacht, öfters aber verwirrt als aufgeklärt werden' (FA I.9, 1014). They are told to listeners who, once cast

---

<sup>92</sup> Brüning, pp. 87-88.

<sup>93</sup> This, although from a different angle, is also the essence of Witte's conclusion, pp. 482-84.

<sup>94</sup> See, in particular, Reinhardt, 'Ästhetische Geselligkeit'.

<sup>95</sup> Gonthier-Louis Fink, 'Das Märchen: Goethes Auseinandersetzung mit seiner Zeit', *Goethe-Jahrbuch*, 33 (1971), 96-122 (p. 100).

out of the familiarity of home, have revealed that they are not the complete individuals they previously seemed to be, and whom the situation now requires.<sup>96</sup>

From an inauspicious start, the story-telling has a gradual, good effect. The children become more receptive to it, and to calm, considerate conversation, re-cultivating the qualities they have neglected. As if to answer the Baroness's complaint about self-control, though in direct dialogue not with her but with Luise, 'der Alte' is later able to suggest art's potential to start to bridge the gap: 'Nur diejenige Erzählung verdient moralisch genannt zu werden, die uns zeigt, daß der Mensch in sich eine Kraft habe, aus Überzeugung eines Bessern, selbst gegen seine Neigung, zu handeln' (FA I.9, 1057). The stories tentatively restore the memory lost in exile, with 'der Alte' finally promising 'ein Märchen, durch das Sie an nichts und alles erinnert werden sollen' (FA I.9, 1081). The reader only sees the fragile beginnings of better relations in the family, with nothing to guarantee that another crisis would not bring about another lapse. Thorsten Valk sees the storytelling as a failure (and therefore, Goethe as a critic of Schiller),<sup>97</sup> yet this fragility is precisely what fits the story to the theory. Cultivation through story-telling is not a quick fix: the *Unterhaltungen* also model Schiller's rejection of straightforward ennoblement through art.

Cousin Karl thinks in polar opposites, in politics and more generally. His insistence on reason and reality – as he understands them – is a symptom not just of empiricist purism, but of the exile's preoccupation with the real when former certainties have been lost. When a split appears in a desk of theirs at the same time as an identical piece at their aunt's house, made

---

<sup>96</sup> See Brown, pp. 13-15.

<sup>97</sup> Valk, esp. p. 210.

from the same tree, is destroyed by fire, Karl wants a scientific explanation as to why, but cannot lay his hands on the one instrument, a hygrometer, that he deems most useful for the task. Friedrich suggests that the desk split at the same time as its 'twin brother' burned, but Karl dismisses that by dismissing all scientific and historiographical explanation as 'Spaß' and trickery; 'eine einzelne Handlung oder Begebenheit ist interessant, nicht weil sie erklärbar oder wahrscheinlich, sondern weil sie wahr ist' (FA I.9, 1030-32). His literary taste is the same, as he asks at the end of the frame narrative for a wholly fictitious story, 'irgend ein Märchen', because 'verbunden mit der Wahrheit bringt [die Einbildungskraft] meist nur Ungeheuer hervor und scheint mir alsdann gewöhnlich mit dem Verstand und der Vernunft im Widerspruche zu stehen' (FA I.9, 1081).

Karl's 'seduction' by the Revolution (FA I.9, 997) and the fact that he cannot deal with the inexact sets him among the 'Fanatiker, Schwindler, Esel' whom Kesten described as seeking absolute truth. Yet he asks the question that follows on reasonably from Schiller's Letters and Goethe's story-telling alike, and is surely in the reader's mind too: how firmly must a story be based in factual reality in order to inform the 'real world'? Both works set a space aside for 'unreal' discussion, but with political reality ever-present. Goethe's exiles are only forbidden from discussing current affairs when gathered as a family group (FA I.9, 1007); outside events punctuate the stories and, in the case of the broken desk, uncannily fit into them. The question runs through the discussions in Goethe's frame: the opposite of Karl's attitude is that spoken by 'der Alte', who observes that people are most interested in novelty and gossip because those are 'facts' that fire the imagination but distract the mind from anything more profound (FA I.9, 1012). His advice to the cousins on dealing with the confusing mass of news and rumours they are hearing is 'daß wir dasjenige glauben, was uns angenehm ist, ohne Umstände das verwerfen, was uns unangenehm wäre, und daß wir übrigens wahr sein lassen,

was wahr sein kann' (FA I.9, 1017). The characters eventually view the stories in a similar light, broadly agreeing that their reality, like their morality, is a matter not of their contents but of their effect. In this light, Karl's request for a 'Märchen' in fact shows considerable progress. He speaks out for autonomous imagination, which 'muß uns keinen Gegenstand aufdringen wollen, sie soll, wenn sie Kunstwerke hervorbringt, nur wie eine Musik auf uns selbst spielen, uns in uns selbst bewegen und zwar so daß wir vergessen, daß etwas außer uns sei, das diese Bewegung hervorbringt' (FA I.9, 1081). By learning to respond to art rather than to seek its meaning, he is acting on the warning that 'der Alte' gave at the start: 'man soll keine meiner Geschichten deuten!' (FA I.9, 1016). Even so, it is not on this note that the frame narrative ends, but with the cousins gladly parting from 'der Alte' in order to hear more about Friedrich's visit to their aunt. His 'Neuigkeiten und Nachrichten von dem was indessen geschehen war' (FA I.9, 1081) eclipse the stories with ease.

Where is exile in the 'Märchen'? First, the story extends the investigation of the real: it is the first in the cycle for which no connection at all is claimed with outside reality, and yet 'der Alte' promises it will be a reminder of 'nichts und alles'. Goethe, similarly, wrote to Wilhelm von Humboldt, '[e]s war [...] eine schwere Aufgabe, zugleich bedeutend und deutungslos zu sein'.<sup>98</sup> Fantasy creates a more complete reality than appeal to fact. There is no return to the frame narrative at the end – Goethe had signalled that he would be happy 'wenn [die Unterhaltungen] durch ein Produkt der Einbildungskraft gleichsam ins Unendliche ausliefen'<sup>99</sup> – and in thus defying interpretation, the story reflects Schiller's idea of art that speaks to the world by not being a direct extension of it. Humboldt praised Goethe for presenting the

---

<sup>98</sup> Goethe to Wilhelm von Humboldt, 27 May 1796: FA II.4, 188.

<sup>99</sup> Goethe to Schiller, 17 August 1795: FA II.4, 106.

products of pure imagination as real (rather than investing the products of reality with imagination) and thus writing in a genre that expressed, uniquely, ‘das eigentliche Wesen des bloß Poetischen’.<sup>100</sup> Second, the story’s characters are not exiles or refugees, but nearly all are in some way uprooted or incomplete, arguably – to quote Flusser – ‘Heimatlose’ who become ‘das wache Bewußtsein aller Beheimateten und [...] Vorbote[n] der Zukunft’, because through their uprootedness they form a community that exemplifies ‘das Geheimnis des Mitseins mit anderen’.<sup>101</sup> The will-o’-the-wisps that appear at the start are outsiders who have come in search of the beautiful Lilie and disrupt established life. Their gold is dangerous for the ferryman and they cannot pay him in vegetables as he requires; they then appear to the old woman as ‘zwei ungestüme Wanderer’, strip her home of its gold decoration and turn her dog into onyx; her hand shrivels up when she fails to pay their debt to the ferryman. At the same time, they are essentially creative, as the gold coins they produce enable the snake to light up and, in turn, to illuminate the four kings hidden in a rock chasm, jointly with the old man with the lamp, who has never yet lit the chasm ‘[weil] ich das Dunkle nicht erleuchten darf’ (FA I.9, 1088). On her quest to find Lilie to revive her dog, the old woman meets a youth who is also seeking Lilie but only later reveals that he has been made miserable by his love for her. In turn Lilie mourns the loss of her canary, killed by the youth’s hawk. Although there

---

<sup>100</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt to Goethe, 9 February 1796: FA I.9, 1529-30.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Wohnung beziehen in der Heimatlosigkeit’, in *Von der Freiheit des Migranten*, pp. 15-30 (p. 30). Leonie Marx sees the ‘Gemeinschaftsbegriff’ of the ‘Märchen’ received, via Gustav Landauer’s *Der werdende Mensch* (1921), in Ernst Toller’s exile drama *Pastor Hall* (1939): Leonie Marx, ‘Ernst Toller und Goethe’, in *Goethe im Exil*, ed. by Sautermeister and Baron, pp. 71-84 (pp. 82-84).

are loosely defined places in the story – the river, the rocks, the bridge formed by the snake, the temple that emerges from the ground – it is the way in which the characters complement each other that rescues their society and revives it. Lilie, ‘die vollkommene Schönheit’ (FA I.9, 1095), revives the dog; the youth, on touching her, falls ‘entseelt aus ihren Armen zur Erde’ (FA I.9, 1101) but is half-revived by the old man with the lamp (who also revives the canary) and comes fully back to life through his coronation by three of the four kings in the rock. Power, light, and beauty combine to restore order, a combination echoed by the symbols with which the three kings invest him: a sword, a sceptre, and a crown of oak-leaves. As the new king, brought back to life, kisses Lilie, the old man remarks that love, as a fourth power, ‘herrscht nicht, aber sie bildet und das ist mehr’ (FA I.9, 1111). Society is redeemed by beauty and by the ‘Heiterkeit’ (FA I.9, 1100) that has been present, but also disruptive and under challenge, from the start.<sup>102</sup> The giant, whose shadow initially offers one of the few means to cross the river, nearly destroys the new society by his clumsiness, but ends up regulating it, as the vast stone statue into which he is transformed works as a sundial in the castle forecourt (FA I.9, 1086 and 1112-13). Spatial isolation at the beginning of the tale – the challenge of crossing the river to reach Lilie – has turned to centrality by the final sentence: ‘bis auf den heutigen Tag wimmelt die Brücke von Wanderern, und der Tempel ist der besuchteste auf der ganzen Erde’ (FA I.9, 1114). The last story told to Goethe’s exiles ends with a population that has become thoroughly ‘behaust’.

---

<sup>102</sup> Witte, p. 478, reads the coronation as meaning ‘daß die Kunst in der Gegenwart die Funktionen zu erfüllen hat, die in der jüngsten Vergangenheit der politischen Macht, im Mittelalter der Kirche und in der Antike der Philosophie zugekommen waren.’

VI.

Finally, *Die Horen* in its first year presented and tested a genre that, at first sight, is germane to exile writing: elegy. Elegy has two distinct definitions, as the distich metrical form is separate from the sorrow and lament of the elegiac mode. It marks another point at which exile as a metaphor correlates strikingly, but not in full, with the actual phenomenon that is its vehicle; at which intellectual exile seen across a longer historical span is like the narrower, twentieth-century phenomenon from which the term arose, but not nearly as distressing. The first year of *Die Horen* reflected the range of moods that elegiac form can cover: Goethe's *Römische Elegien*, in the tradition of Latin love elegy, in the sixth issue, Schiller's 'Elegie' (later reworked and renamed 'Der Spaziergang') in the tenth, and the first two instalments of Schiller's three-part essay *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, including his discussion of this genre, in issues Eleven and Twelve.

The Roman Elegies, published under the title 'Elegien', are elegies in form and not at all in mode, a celebration of the fullness of life – cultural, erotic, creative – that Goethe had found in Rome. They were written well before their publication, possibly already started in Rome and certainly catalyzed when Knebel sent Goethe a 'Kleeblatt der Dichter' – the love poems of the 'triumvirate' of Elegy Five, Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius – in Weimar in October 1788.<sup>103</sup> Yet there are two reasons to consider them through the lens of exile writing, neither of which calls into question their fundamentally affirmative tone; indeed, they contribute to

---

<sup>103</sup> W. Daniel Wilson, *Goethes Erotica und die Weimarer 'Zensoren'* (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2015), p. 26; FA I.1, 1088. The Elegies are quoted and numbered here according to the text in *Die Horen*, FA I.1, 393-439 (odd pages).

it. First, the Roman Elegies rely on inverting ‘home’ and ‘abroad’, playing with the idea of banishment as the key to rich experience. This is partly biographical: the opening lines of Elegy Seven, ‘O wie föhl ich in Rom mich so froh! Gedenk ich der Zeiten, | Da mich ein graulicher Tag hinten im Norden umfing’, were probably not true of their author as he wrote, and they certainly did not reflect the situation of their audience. The prudish reception of the Elegies, as of Goethe’s relationship with Christiane Vulpius, confirmed the image of a ‘grey’ Weimar; Rome, on the other hand, had been the exciting city of light, colour, and form. If Goethe felt himself ‘exiled’ in Germany because he had been freer in Rome, then he shared the feeling with Winckelmann, whose *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1764) had guided him around the city. In 1768 Winckelmann had written from Vienna, as he curtailed his return visit to the Germany he had left in 1755, ‘daß für mich auöer Rom kein wahres Vergnügen zu hoffen ist, da ich es mit tausend Beschwerlichkeiten erkaufen muß’.<sup>104</sup> Goethe’s ‘sketches’ of Winckelmann in 1805 portrayed a figure who at his best was ‘ganz und abgeschlossen’ (FA I.19 (1998), 180) – thus overcoming humanity’s ‘exile’ from antiquity – and yet was awkward in company, needy of appreciation for his work, and restless, even in Rome. Describing Winckelmann’s abortive return, Goethe drew the same parallel with the Cimmerians, who

---

<sup>104</sup> Winckelmann to Wilhelm von Stosch, 14 May 1768: Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Briefe*, ed. by Walther Rehm, 4 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1952-1957), vol. III (1956), p. 389; Goethe, *Italienische Reise*, FA I.15.1, 157 and 159, and conversation reported by Sulpiz Boisserée, 3 August 1815: FA II.7 (1994), 481-82.

live near the underworld in perpetual mist and cloud in *Odyssey* 11.14-19, as he later did in *Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt* (1829) to recall the Weimar he had left in 1786.<sup>105</sup>

Independently of Goethe's life, the poetry of the Elegies depends on this same inversion. Elegy Seven develops its theme at the Capitoline Hill, the site of several temples including Rome's most important, the Temple of Jupiter, where the 'I' dreams of visiting the gods on Olympus. He could hardly be more at home ('Welche Seligkeit ward mir Sterblichen!', l. 11), and yet he knows he should not be there and is a tolerated guest at best; his imagined banishment from Olympus to the underworld at the end also takes in his status as an actual guest in Rome, as he passes the city's burial-ground for non-Catholics, located at the Pyramid of Cestius, on the way. Elegy One has already captured the shock of arriving in Rome with hopes that are not immediately fulfilled: a tourist who knows in his mind what he ought to be feeling, 'nur mir schweiget alles so still'. In Elegy Thirteen, the poet's abstracted study of antiquity – 'Du betrachtetest mit Staunen die Trümmern alter Gebäude' – cues Amor's reminder that the basis of creativity is in the present: 'Die Antike war neu da jene Glückliche lebten, | Lebe glücklich und so lebe die Vorzeit in dir'.

Second, then, the Roman Elegies are poems that know their abstraction from Rome, both geographically and in the gap between antiquity and the modern world. They do not downplay distance, but celebrate the means by which it is overcome. Encountering the 'silent' ancient city in Elegy One enables erotic encounter to bring it to life; the imagination takes centre stage in Elegy Seven. Memory is ever-present, whether personal (the barking dog in

---

<sup>105</sup> FA I.19, 211 and FA I.15.1, 460; see *Goethe-Wörterbuch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978-), vol. v (2011), col. 368, s.v. 'kimmerisch'.

Elegy Seventeen) or cultural: the history and mythology evoked in Elegies Three and Ten, and, taking the cycle as a whole, the conventions of Latin love elegy to which the Elegies allude (see FA I.1, 1091-92). The poems focus not solely on natural experience, but on the second-level methods that are the only means of expressing it.<sup>106</sup> Their metre makes their artificiality stand out, like the rhymed verse of *Wallenstein*. As has been widely pointed out, these are poems that reflect expressly on the fact and process of being written, most conspicuously in the final elegy of the published cycle, in which the poet entrusts to his poetry the secret of his joy, but present as early as the obvious play with language – Roma/Amor – in Elegy One. Consciousness of time articulates timelessness: total fulfilment is evoked when marked time is absent, as in Elegy Nine, ‘devoted to the single moment of “uprushing flame” [...] which never ceases through the whole course of the poem’, but the measure of this fulfilment is the presence of temporality when, as in the large majority of the Elegies, the actual moment of love-making is outside the poem’s scope.<sup>107</sup> These are poems about thinking and reflection – the note to which the Ninth Elegy turns at its end, as it switches from the present tense to the past – as much as they are about experience.<sup>108</sup> Distance is the way to articulate immediacy and to experience it again.

The Roman Elegies are elegies in the metrical sense; Schiller’s discussion of the genre in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, on the other hand, was about the elegiac mode. This could be expected to come closer to the experience of exile, a ‘condition of terminal loss’

---

<sup>106</sup> See in particular Wild, pp. 52-57.

<sup>107</sup> Boyle, vol. I (1991), p. 635. The translation is David Luke’s: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Roman Elegies and The Diary* (London: Libris, 1988), p. 59.

<sup>108</sup> Boyle, vol. I, pp. 635-37.

(Said) for which elegy would be a natural form of expression.<sup>109</sup> Rüdiger Görner suggests that in the twentieth century, indeed, the genre in German came into its own: 'Elegische Lyrik ist reflektierter Natur. Sie entsteht aus melancholischer Selbstbesinnung. Das 20. Jahrhundert hat dazu Anlässe in bestürzendem Ausmaß geboten, zumal aus deutscher Sicht.'<sup>110</sup> For Schiller, elegy is a genre of sentimental poetry: it is detached from its object and cannot be of a piece with what it describes, but instead it reflects on it, and on the discrepancy between the real and the ideal. It concentrates on a lost state of natural being and on unattainable ideals, seeing them as 'ein Gegenstand der Trauer' (NA 20, 448). Schiller's definition of elegy touches not only the grief of exile, but a tendency identified in mid-twentieth-century exile poetry to avoid the here and now, by either looking to a utopian future or regressing to the familiar in a 'Wunschverlangen nach dem schönen Gestern'.<sup>111</sup> Loneliness and reflection on the self are further tendencies shared by exile poetry and the elegy alike. As Theodore Ziolkowski has shown, Schiller's definition of the elegy according to the sentiments it aroused rather than by its form or simple thematic content upheld the ideas of the aesthetic theorists who had recently preceded him,<sup>112</sup> who had routinely cited exile poetry as examples. Gottsched, whose *Critische Dichtkunst* (1730) defined the elegy first and foremost as lament

---

<sup>109</sup> 'Reflections on Exile', p. 173.

<sup>110</sup> Theodore Ziolkowski, *The Classical German Elegy, 1795-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 288; *Unerhörte Klagen: Deutsche Elegien des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Rüdiger Görner (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 2000), p. 225.

<sup>111</sup> Manfred Durzak, 'Im Exil', in *Geschichte der deutschen Lyrik vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Walter Hinderer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1983), pp. 502-50 (p. 503).

<sup>112</sup> Ziolkowski, pp. 75-85.

(‘Sie soll [...] einen traurigen Inhalt haben, und fast aus lauter Klagen bestehen’), had referred to Ovid’s *Tristia* as consisting ‘aus lauter Elegien, die er aus Scythien nach Rom, als Klageschreiben abgelassen’.<sup>113</sup> Thomas Abbt’s essay on the elegy in 1762, which introduced the principle of mixed sensations into the genre – grief tempered by happy memories, for example – quoted Psalm 137 in a popular hymn adaptation, ‘An den Wasserflüssen Babylons’, as its first example of such a text.<sup>114</sup> It was commonplace to refer to the elegiac couplet as the metre not only of Ovid’s love poetry (alongside that of Tibullus and Propertius) but also of the *Tristia*.<sup>115</sup>

Schiller took the well-established example of the *Tristia*, however, and dismissed it. He defines the elegiac mode in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* as redemptive, following the ‘mixed sensations’ model that originated with Abbt. Exile writing, too, may be redemptive, but the redemption to which Schiller’s definition of the elegy points is in timeless ideals, in ‘moral harmony’, not the restoration of worldly order once the loss has been made good: ‘Der elegische Dichter sucht die Natur [...] als eine Idee und in einer Vollkommenheit, in der sie nie existirt hat, wenn er sie gleich als etwas da gewesenes und nun verlorenes

---

<sup>113</sup> Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst für die Deutschen [...]*, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1737), p. 477.

<sup>114</sup> ‘B.’ [pseud., i.e. Thomas Abbt], ‘Klotzii opuscula poetica [...]. Betrachtungen über die Natur der Elegie’, in *Briefe, die Neueste Litteratur betreffend. XIII. Teil* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1762), pp. 61-86 (p. 75).

<sup>115</sup> Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste. Zweyter Theil [E-Ion]*, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1786), p. 41; Johann Joachim Eschenburg, *Entwurf einer Theorie und Literatur der schönen Wissenschaften*, 2nd edn (Berlin: Nicolai, 1789), p. 143.

beweint' (NA 20, 450-51). Schiller also takes the *Tristia* as his first test case for the elegy, but he refuses to categorize them as elegiac, or, indeed, as poetry at all: 'Es ist viel zu wenig Energie, viel zu wenig Geist und Adel in seinem Schmerz. Das Bedürfnis, nicht die Begeisterung stieß jene Klagen aus.' Ovid '[vermißt schmerzlich] in seinem Exil zu Tomi die Glückseligkeit [...], die Horaz in seinem Tibur so gern entbehrte'; his lament for Augustan Rome was understandable, but it was for finite greatness, an object 'unworthy' of poetry (NA 20, 450 and 432). The notion that the elegy proceeds from the experience of loss to the invocation of an ideal models the development, and the positive potential, of 'intellectual exile', but it insists on downplaying that same experience in the process.

Schiller's own 'Elegie' modelled these ideas.<sup>116</sup> There, the imagined walk of the poetic 'I' takes him past the stages through which nature develops into human civilization and is replaced by it: the 'fall' to modernity set out in the sixth of the *Ästhetische Briefe*, and from which the distinction between 'naïve' and 'sentimental' poetry stems. Not only is the wanderer himself an outside observer; the language of home and exile is a thread through the poem. The wanderer, first, by leaving for the mountain (l. 1) has escaped narrowness for openness, much like the 'I' of the Roman Elegies, and 'den durstigen Blick labt das energische Licht' (l. 10). Emerging from the forest he has crossed in lines 21-28, his observation of harmonious life, albeit at a distance (l. 31), carries no sense of estrangement, but watching primitive humanity develop into ordered society makes 'home' suddenly foreign: 'Ein fremder | Geist verbreitet sich schnell über die fremdere Flur!' (ll. 61-62). The forest fauns are 'in die Wildniß [...]

---

<sup>116</sup> 'Elegie', as published in *Die Horen*, is quoted here from NA 1 (1943), 260-66. 'Der Spaziergang', the later, better-known version, is reproduced in NA 2.I (1983), 308-14. For a stimulating interpretation, see Alt, *Schiller*, vol. II, pp. 283-93.

verstoßen' (l. 73). The next step after the formation of societal estates (l. 65) is the emergence of a nation (l. 81), which metaphorically houses the gods: 'Von dem Himmel steigen die seligen Götter, und nehmen | In dem geweyhten Bezirk festliche Wohnungen ein' (ll. 83-84). This marks still greater sophistication, but also the departure of the nation's 'heroes' for foreign wars to defend the homeland ('für die Penaten', l. 94), specifically, to defend Greece against the Persians. The warriors die and are buried abroad. Schiller's version of the epigram for the Spartan dead of Thermopylae, ascribed to Simonides, translates as 'wanderer' the *xenos* of the Greek original that variously also means 'guest-friend', 'stranger', 'foreigner', or 'refugee': 'Wanderer, kommst du nach Sparta, gib Kunde dorten, du habest | Uns hier liegen gesehen, wie das Gesetz es befahl' (ll. 101-02).<sup>117</sup> Humanity breaks free of constraint by a reversal of all values, and there is a brief reminder of the wanderer's perspective, watching the calamity from outside: 'Leben wähnst du noch immer zu sehn, dich täuschen die Züge, | Hohl ist die Schaale, der Geist ist aus dem Leichnam geflohn' (ll. 169-70). With the city reduced to ashes, the poem repeats its image of release into exile:

O so öffnet euch Mauern, und gebt den Gefangenen ledig,

---

<sup>117</sup> *Greek Lyric 3*, ed. by D. A. Campbell, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 540-41; Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edn with supplement (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 1189, s.v. ξένοσ (Ep. and Ion. ξείνοσ), I-III. NA 2.II.A (1991), 291, identifies Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* 1.42.101 as Schiller's source: 'Dic, hospes, Spartae nos te hic uidisse iacentis, | Dum sanctis patriae legibus obsequimur'. Cf. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. by P. G. W. Glare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 806, s.v. *hospes* 1 and 4: 'guest', 'visitor', 'stranger'.

Zu der verlassenen Flur kehrt er gerettet zurück!

Weit von dem Menschen fliehe der Mensch! (ll. 183-85)

The wanderer returns to a landscape that is void of all human activity. His observation of human development has been formative: from his flight from 'des Zimmers Gefängnis' he returns not to a primitive oneness with nature, but to heightened consciousness. His anthropological concern that civilization means corruption is resolved by understanding difference. Nature '[w]ieg[t] auf gleichem Mutterschooße die wechselnden Alter' (l. 213) and the realization that 'Homer's sun' also shines on 'us' (l. 216) comes not because we stand in the same sunrays as the Greeks, but because we enjoy the sunshine in the knowledge that Homer enjoyed it too.<sup>118</sup> On this reading of 'Elegie', art speaks to the present moment because – and as long as – it speaks to all time.

VII.

'Elegie' ends on a settled note, and *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* states its case in authoritative tones. Yet at the end of 1795, Schiller was still grappling with the problem he and Goethe had faced at the year's beginning: how does art, and especially an aesthetic of harmony and completeness, deal with rupture, be that the political upheavals of the age or the intellectual and spiritual break between modernity and the ancient world? *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* considers some of the art that might play a part in 'aesthetic education'. Schiller's vision of the elegy is of the type of poetry that might, momentarily, lift its reader's eyes to the completeness that could be, whilst Goethe's Roman Elegies celebrate

---

<sup>118</sup> Alt, *Schiller*, vol. II, p. 293.

a fullness of life that is. Schiller rules out didactic writing as poetry (NA 20, 453-54), just as he had ruled out art as simple cultivation in the *Ästhetische Briefe*.

Does this amount to 'Exil[-] des Geistes', in Kesten's terms? There are fundamental differences. Schiller wanted the poet to be a Horace, renouncing Rome by choice and in comfort; his model did not extend to Ovid's laments at the Black Sea. It does not extend to the exiles of the twentieth century, either, for whom the break with what is lost cannot be made good. Karl Wolfskehl's six-poem 'Mittelmeer' cycle (published 1950) might be seen as analogous to Schiller's 'Elegie' in the long history of humanity that it traces at a meeting-point of civilizations, the Mediterranean sea. In the last poem in the cycle, 'Ultimus Vatum' ('The Last of the Prophets'), the 'I' is first exiled to Germany after the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem. More than a thousand years later he is bitterly exiled again: 'Mich wies ein Wicht in Acht und Aberacht, | Griff mir ans Herz und trieb mich in die Nacht'.<sup>119</sup> The end of the poem foresees the collapse of the German 'Reich', to be replaced by a spiritual empire instead:

Denn wen Wandlung umschuf zu Kür und Sende,

Gärt, Evios, ewig aus Allgottes Lende,

Zu Neuem Reich gefeit an Neuer Wende.

So taucht im Drang mystischer Wiederkehr

---

<sup>119</sup> Karl Wolfskehl, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Margot Ruben and Claus Victor Bock, 2 vols (Hamburg: Claassen, 1960), vol. I, p. 192. See further Norman Franke, *'Jüdisch, römisch, deutsch zugleich...'? Eine Untersuchung der literarischen Selbstkonstruktion Karl Wolfskehls unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Exillyrik* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2006), pp. 448-58.

Entbunden heim vom Rhein der letzte Seh'r,

In letzter Sohnschaft heim in Unser Meer.<sup>120</sup>

The prophet's return home to the Mediterranean is arguably a positive end, but although visionary, it is not the same as the end of 'Elegie': this is restoration, not reconciliation. Homer's sun, to paraphrase Schiller, has emphatically set on Germany here. As with Adorno, what Schiller insists must be redeemable seemed beyond all redemption by 1945.

There are too many resonances between the ideas of these two ages, however, to dismiss a connection entirely. Schiller and Goethe's references to exiles and emigrants in setting out the force of autonomous art recur too often to be ignored. Their programme for a German classical literature did not come about in intellectual comfort, however settled it might appear in retrospect; their aim, in Said's phrase, was 'constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others', and the fact and imagery of exile were key ingredients of their emerging poetics in the 1790s. It is significant that their response to the traumas and the displacement of people in their times led them to confront the same problems to which later generations, facing devastation on a scale that was inconceivable in the 1790s, would nonetheless return. In turn, the German exiles of the 1930s and '40s demonstrated similarities with the thinking of *Die Horen* that are surprising if we see only the exiles as unsettled and classicism as fixed. Exiles were sceptical about didactic poetry, as Schiller had been, and not only because they were cut off from their audience. The *Dichter* versus *Schriftsteller* debate about what constitutes 'true' poetry, arguably set in motion by Schiller's categories of the naïve and sentimental, and established with certainty in another exile text, Heinrich Heine's *Ludwig Börne. Eine*

---

<sup>120</sup> Wolfskehl, vol. I, p. 193.

*Denkschrift* (1840), continued to rage as the exiles from Nazism grappled with the problem of relevant and irrelevant writing. Kesten's vocabulary – 'das Mass, die Vollkommenheit, das Gleichgewicht' – uses the very terms that defined the aesthetic of German classicism. Perhaps the accidental ambiguity in Heinrich Mann's phrase when quoted in isolation<sup>121</sup> – a conditional verb that could be misread for the past tense – is in fact justified: Goethe indeed, then, 'teilte mit uns allen das Exil'.

---

<sup>121</sup> '*...er teilte mit uns allen das Exil*': *Goethebilder der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945. Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Exilarchivs 1933-1945 der Deutschen Bibliothek*, ed. by Britta Eckert and Werner Berthold (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999).

University of Bristol

Steffan Davies

*Correspondence address:*

Dr Steffan Davies

School of Modern Languages

University of Bristol

17 Woodland Rd

Bristol

BS8 1TE

[steffan.davies@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:steffan.davies@bristol.ac.uk)