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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM OF "GESTURE" IN HEINRICH VON KLEIST AND HIS WORKS

by
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of the requirements for the degree of
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INTRODUCTION

In the autumn of 1803 an embittered and dejected Heinrich von Kleist finally felt compelled to abandon work on his drama, Robert Guiskard. On October 5th, two weeks before he burned the manuscript in Paris, he wrote to his sister Ulrike:

> Töricht wäre es . . . , wenn ich meine Kräfte länger an ein Werk setzen wollte, das, wie ich mich endlich überzeugen muss, für mich zu schwer ist. Ich trete vor Einem zurück, der noch nicht da ist, und beuge mich, ein Jahrtausend im voraus, vor seinem Geiste. Denn in der Reihe der menschlichen Erfindungen ist diejenige, die ich gedacht habe, unfehlbar ein Glied, und es wächst irgendwo ein Stein schon für den, der sie einst ausspricht.[1]

The tone of titanic despair and prophetic conviction in this letter is not unique in Kleist's correspondence. From his first letter to his last the consistency of this tone, the uniting thread, is never essentially broken. When we consider the period at which Kleist wrote, it may seem at first paradoxical that his struggle for expression is set down in such lapidary fashion in the letters. The answer to this paradox is that in his dilemma he was not struggling for words but,

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[1]Heinrich von Kleist, Sämtliche Werke und Briefe, ed. Helmut Sembdner (Munich, 1952), II. 761. All quotations from Kleist's letters will follow this most complete and accurate of the recent editions.

in the last analysis, against them.

In 1799 he had written: "Ich ahnde noch etwas Höheres, und das ist es wohl eigentlich, was ich nicht ausdrücken und formen kann."[2] The struggle was the same--the only fluctuating factor in all his letters lies in their intensity. From the same year we read:

> Verstanden wenigstens möchte ich gern zuweilen sein, wenn auch nicht aufgemuntert und gelobt, von einer Seele wenigstens möchte ich gern zuweilen verstanden werden, wenn auch alle andern mich verkennen.[3]

As we read through his correspondence it becomes increasingly impossible to mistake the literary visionary in Kleist. In the next year, 1800, he writes: "Es gibt gewiss Stoff genug zum Handeln--und wenn ich auch auf dieser Erde nirgends meinen Platz finden sollte, so finde ich vielleicht auf einem andern Sterne einen um so bessern."[4]

By the following winter, however, he still has ten years to live "on this Earth," and the anguish will not subside. To Ulrike he writes:

> Gern möcht ich Dir alles mitteilen, wenn es möglich wäre. Aber es ist nicht möglich, und wenn es auch kein weiteres Hindernis gäbe als dieses, dass es uns an einem Mittel zur Mitteilung fehlt. Selbst das einzige, was wir besitzen, die Sprache taugt

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[2] Ibid., II, 473.

[3] Ibid., II, 494.

[4] Ibid., II, 599.

> nicht dazu, sie kann die Seele nicht malen, und was sie uns gibt, sind nur zerrissene Bruchstücke.[5]

His genuine despondency is rarely rhetorical in the traditional sense. In the spring of 1803, again to Ulrike, he says:

> Ich weiss nicht, was ich Dir über mich unaussprechlichen Menschen sagen soll. -- Ich wollte, ich könnte das Herz aus dem Leibe reissen, in diesen Brief packen, und Dir zuschicken. -- Dummer Gedanke![6]

Three years later the tone and the mood are the same:

> Wie soll ich es möglich machen, in einem Brief etwas so Zartes, als ein Gedanke ist, auszuprägen? Ja, wenn man Tränen schreiben könnte -- doch so --.[7]

Such words in the correspondence are legion. May one more excerpt serve as a transitional note. It is taken from the much-quoted and extraordinarily revealing letter of August 31, 1806, to Kleist's comrade, Rühle von Lilienstern:

> Die Wahrheit ist, dass ich das, was ich mir vorstelle, schön finde, nicht das, was ich leiste. Wär ich zu etwas anderem brauchbar, so würde ich es von Herzen gern ergreifen: ich dichte bloss, weil ich es nicht lassen kann. . . . Es gibt nichts Göttlicheres als [die Kunst]: Und nichts Leichteres zugleich; und doch, warum ist es so schwer? Jede erste Bewegung, alles Unwillkürliche ist schön; und schief und verschroben alles, sobald es sich selbst begreift. O der Verstand! Der unglückselige Verstand![8]

When read in conjunction with the remarkable body of

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[5]Ibid., II, 642.

[6]Ibid., II, 754.

[7]Ibid., II, 796.

[8]Ibid., II, 789-799.

Kleist's letters, his dramas and stories can be appreciated in a light which no other documentation or secondary source can shed. It becomes eminently clear that he was striving for a dramatic concept which was neither that of the Klassiker nor of the Romantiker.[9] As August Kuhn-Foelix, a recent biographer, has said: "Ihn lockte allein seine platonische Idee von neuem Drama. . . . Und wo er dieser Erfüllung nicht näher rückte, da schien ihm sein Werk umsonst getan."[10] Yet despite his anguish, despite his despair in the face of the inadequacies of verbal expression, his pride and inextinguishable ambition nurtured him and kept him writing. Thomas Mann remarks:

> "Wer nicht verzweifeln kann, der muss nicht leben," hat Goethe gesagt. Kleists stürmische Natur war zur Verzweiflung nur zu geneigt. Aber selbst in ihr bleibt sein heisser Blick auf den Kranz des Olympiers gerichtet. Denn insgeheim weiss er, dass etwas in ihm ist, was ihn, so dunkel, unterirdisch, vorolympisch, titanisch-barbarisch es ist, über das dichterische Gelingen des Götterlieblings und seines idealisch-rhetorischen Freundes hinausreissen könnte,

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[9]It is not so much the tabulation of Classical and Romantic elements in Kleist's writings that seems barren to us today as it is the necessity, occasionally still apparent, of categorizing him as a member of one or the other school. A century and a half ago Arnim remarked more intelligently: "Der blinde Streit zwischen sogenannten Romantikern und sogenannten Klassikern ende sich. Was übrig bleibt, das lebt." (From Paul Kluckhohn, Die deutsche Romantik [Bielefeld & Leipzig, 1924], p. 259.)

[10]August Kuhn-Foelix, Heinrich von Kleist (Murnau, 1948), p. 171.

> hinausreissen auf elementar dramatische Art, die nichts mit Bildung, Humanität, schöner Linie, schöner Mitte, Idealität, Winckelmannschem Griechentum, auch nichts mit moralisierender Ideendichtung zu tun hat, sondern dionysisch ist, gottbesessen, rauschhaft-exzessiv bis in jede Wendung der von Ausdruck überlasteten Sprache hinein. . .[11]

and, one would like to add, "des von Ausdruck bereicherten Nichtsprechens."

We do not wonder that Goethe was unable to comprehend Kleist, indeed, that he felt a particular antipathy to his work and personality. In 1807 he wrote to Adam Müller, Kleist's literary companion in Dresden, of Der zerbrochene Krug: "Nur schade, dass das Stück auch wieder dem unsichtbaren Theater angehört."[12] And in the next year Goethe wrote to Kleist of Penthesilea: "Es betrübt und bekümmert mich immer, wenn ich junge Männer von Geist und Talent sehe, die auf ein Theater warten, welches da kommen soll."[13]

Nor is it any wonder that the few productions of Kleist's plays which were staged during his lifetime (none of which Kleist witnessed), as well as those of the following one hundred years, were brutally misconceived. Indeed, it is

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[11]Thomas Mann, "Heinrich von Kleist und seine Erzählungen," intro. to H. v. Kleist, Die Erzählungen (Hamburg, 1956, p. 14.)

[12]Heinrich von Kleists Lebensspuren, ed. Helmut Sembdner (Bremen, 1957), No. 185; hereafter cited as Sembdner, Lebensspuren.

[13]Ibid., No. 224.

perhaps safe to say that even today they are not fully understood or adequately realized by many an actor and director. We should not be surprised that it was the Naturalists at the end of the last century who caught and conveyed the first glimpses of appreciation in their critique and performances. For in a sense it was the "naturalistic" elements in Kleist's drama which first had to be comprehended before there could be a really competent performance.

Kleist scholarship has been no more rapid in discernment and penetration than the theater. Little of importance was done prior to 1900; and it was not until Gerhard Fricke's Gefühl und Schicksal bei Heinrich von Kleist appeared in 1929, that the problem of the author and his work as an inseparable unity was fully approached.[14] In the following decade a few valuable contributions were made, most important among which was Max Kommerell's essay, "Die Sprache und das Unaussprechliche bei Heinrich von Kleist."[15] Nevertheless, despite the enormous amount of Kleistiana, relatively little effort has been devoted to the primary consideration of Kleist as a dramatist, as an author who wrote plays and whose greatest ambition was

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[14]Gerhard Fricke, Gefühl und Schicksal bei Heinrich von Kleist: Studien über den inneren Vorgang im Leben und Schaffen des Dichters (Berlin, 1929).

[15]Max Kommerell, "Die Sprache und das Unaussprechliche bei Heinrich von Kleist," Geist und Buchstabe der Dichtung (4th ed.; Frankfurt-on-Main, 1956), pp. 243-318.

that they be produced.

It is, of course, understood that Kleist was just that, a dramatist in the most essential meaning of the word. But there are few critics who have drawn the necessary conclusions. This study is based on the inviolability of that premise. The fact that Kleist never had any direct connection with the theater, that he never saw a performance of any of his plays, that he had no intimate knowledge of the stage, that he was therefore never obliged to make extensive revisions of lines and give more explicit stage directions for the actor and director, has no bearing on the matter. The significant fact is that he conceived dramatically and that he wrote drama. His most fervent hope was for production and appreciation of his plays; his most mortal defeat was the crushing of this ambition. Arnold Zweig writes:

> In Kleist ist die Uranlage des Dramatikers leidenschaftlicher und triebhafter wach als in irgendeinem seiner Vorgänger. Nirgendwo hämmert in Sprache, Tempo und gestaltenträchtiger Phantasie so wild der dramatische Grundwille, die ganze Wirklichkeit der Menschenwelt in Anschauung, Vorhandensein, brennendste Existenz für die Dauer einer Vorstellung auf dem Schaugerüst zusammenzupressen, vorüberzujagen.[16]

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[16]Arnold Zweig, Lessing, Kleist, Büchner: Drei Versuche (Berlin, 1925), p. 90. Compare also: Friedrich Gundolf, Heinrich von Kleist (Berlin, 1922), p. 14, "Was er zu sagen hatte konnte er auf keine gemässere Weise sagen als auf dramatische; seine Gedichte sind ausdruckslos und seine Erzählungen sind versetzte Dramen. . . . Es liegt ein tiefer Sinn darin, dass der einsamste deutsche Dichter auch unser

Why, then, were these dramas not performed? Why did this great dramatist go unrecognized for decades after his death? What is this element in the plays which makes them so different from everything that his contemporaries were doing? The answer to these questions has already been given in the few excerpts from the letters quoted above. It is the same "hermetic" element in Kleist which made both him and his drama ultimately so incomprehensible and unpalatable to so many for so long. It is the element of "das Unaussprechliche," which can be conveyed only through an intensified silence, through the meaningful gesture, the half-uttered word or sentence, through pantomime, and through the unique way in which these are all used to make symbols--but never through the flow of rhetoric.

To be sure, "gesture" is among the basic qualities not only of the drama, but of music, the dance, and the visual arts as well. It would be shortsighted to deny the importance of this element at moments in even the most classical of Goethe's and Schiller's plays. But in the case of Kleist its significance is immeasurably greater. The final "Ach!" of Alkmene, the first scene of Prinz Friedrich von Homburg and

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reinster und echtester Dramatiker geworden ist." Kuhn-Foelix, op. cit., p. 36, "Kleist ist ja kein Dichter, kein Lyriker, den der Anblick der Welt verzückt. Er ist Dramatiker und nur Dramatiker."

the last in Penthesilea, the "Hollunderstrauch" scene in Das Käthchen von Heilbronn--these are all instances in his dramas which, so to speak, are saturated with and embraced by the "inexpressible." It is no longer the word alone but the gesture which is of paramount importance. Barring Shakespeare, no dramatist before Kleist and perhaps none after him has incorporated gesture within and around his words with such a conviction of inevitability.

To assure ourselves of the truth of this statement, we need only observe in what places Kleist has chosen to use the fewest words and the most gesture and pantomime. Among the most expressive moments are those at or near death: the "Verkleidungsszene" of Die Familie Schroffenstein, the long pantomime before Penthesilea's death, the scene following upon Homburg's recognition of the open grave intended for him. Closely related to the feeling of these is Alkmene's reaction to Jupiter's final revelation, and the weakened Guiskard's stumbling acceptance of the Heerpauke. At none of these moments did Kleist take the accepted recourse to rhetoric. There are no false effusions, no philosophizings, no lengthy speeches of consolation based on Christian, or any other dogma, and no choruses of reconciliation. There are instead few words from the protagonists and the terse comments of the observers. The rest is symbolic action. Max Kommerell writes: "Kleist ist

der Dichter, der mit den Mitteln der Sprache in Gebärden dichtet."[17] These gestures of Kleist, perhaps the most important stepping-stones to the underlying symbols in each of his works, constitute one of the remarkable aspects of his style.

Since there will be frequent occasion in the following study to use this word "style," it is important that we give a definition of just what is meant (and what is not meant) by it. Literary style in our terms does not have to do with the endeavors of that branch of "stylistics" whose chief purpose is to uncover and categorize, according to generic, regional, national, or epochal viewpoints, the sundry ways in which an author consciously demonstrates his subscription to an accepted mode of composition and intentionally ornaments his verbal techniques with recognizable figures of speech and his non-verbal techniques with the conventional conceits. Literary style in our terms, instead, is identical with what German scholars call Individualstil. It is conditioned by the unique artistry of the individual writer who, in forms of his own choice, reflects the outer and inner world through his senses and his psyche.

Style, in the definition of Gero von Wilpert, is "im

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[17]Kommerell, op. cit., p. 306.

weiteren Sinne die charakteristische, einheitliche Ausdrucks- und Gestaltungsweise bei der Prägung eines Kunstwerks überhaupt, in der sich ästhetisches Ziel und Gestaltungskraft des Schöpfers vereinen."[18] Everything that contributes to the uniqueness of an artist "[wird] im Stil zu einer aus der inneren Haltung, Weltanschauung und Formgefühl erwachsenen Einheit, der 'inneren Form' zusammengefügt" (Wilpert, p. 563). In its more circumscribed sense, to which we must direct our particular attention, style consists of two further essential factors, which Wilpert differentiates as "den Zweck des Werkes als bestimmend für die Darstellungsweise" and "den eigenen Gestaltungstrieb aus dem Gemüt und der innersten menschlichen Haltung des Schöpfers als persönlichen Anteil an der Schöpfung" (pp. 563-564).

In this sense, style is the unique artistic application of the tools of language as the "wesentliches Kennzeichen der Sprachkunst" (563). And in this same sense, as Wolfgang Kayser states, "[ist] der Stil der Grundbegriff der Literaturwissenschaft."[19] A thorough stylistic investigation of a work of literary art must take into account not only the grammatical

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[18]Gero von Wilpert, Sachwörterbuch der Literatur (Stuttgart, 1955), p. 563.

[19]Wolfgang Kayser et al., Kleines literarisches Lexikon (2nd ed. rev.; Bern, 1953), p. 146.

elements--such as vocabulary, syntax, and the modes of rhetorical expression--as well as the prosodic, rhythmic, and melodic features of verbal formulation, but also, indeed especially, as von Wilpert writes: "die umgreifenden Formen der Sprachdynamik in Allegorie, Symbol, Bild, Ausruf, [and "Gebärde," we must add] . . . als weitaus tiefgreifendere Kennzeichen der Stilkraft" (564).

Ideally, then, the realized style of a work of literature is identical with the meaningful integration of all these, its explicit and implicit ingredients, in the last analysis nowhere more succinctly defined than in Buffon's famous dictum: "Le style est l'homme même."

The peculiarity of Kleist's style which we shall pursue in this study has been noted and named variously by a relatively small number of commentators: "das Mimische," "das Pantomimische," "das Gebärdenhafte," "das Musikalische," "das Rein-Theatermässige," "das Unbewusste," "das Bewegt-Sinnbildliche," "das Tänzerische," "das stumme Spiel." Arguments about the nomenclature must remain a matter of negligible concern here. Yet perhaps these terms may best be distilled into Kommerell's "das Unaussprechliche," the "inexpressible" element of gesture in Kleist. His mode of expression is, indeed, the gesture (either accompanied by words or silent, that is, pantomimic) and its varieties (the device of half-spoken words and phrases,

repetition, exclamation).

In effect, Kleist's ultimate mode of expression is symbolical.

Silence, stammering, or monosyllabism pervade the most heightened moments of both Kleist's dramas and his Novellen; the essential moments are never turgid or grandiloquent. The cliché, "Words fail me," is not cliché here. For it is the essence of Kleist's characters that words do fail them.

Slowly actors have learned to abandon the academic and the monolithic gesture while playing Kleist. Subtleties and refinements abound in his plays as in few other texts for the theater. It is the seeming ambivalence and the endless possible textual interpretations that make them so intriguing. It is this that makes the Kleistian gesture a study in itself. Stark Young, the American drama critic, could easily have had the actor of Kleist in mind when he wrote thirty years ago:

> In fine acting the body and the words are at supreme moments inseparably one, and they can be said to be interchangeable in meaning and significance. It is not that the emotion is transferred from speech into a mimicry of gesture and facial play, not that--though the mere gift of miming need not be despised. It is that the idea that moves within becomes one with the outside form. The highest use of the body, of gesture, is not to reproduce, but to represent, with an added radiance, what is within, not, that is, to be an image but a symbol; the living content of the moment charges with its power the body that it animates, and makes it a symbol of its meaning. The idea that gathers up all its elements . . . into one thing in terms of the body, takes on a magnificent

> power. . . . Gesture in some instances has a power beyond that of mere words, however splendid their golden eloquence may be.[20]

Ultimately the beauty of a truth is that there are never any words to express it completely.

The aim of this study will be to illuminate the primary sources and the subsequent history of a problem in the field of modern German literary styles, which heretofore has not engaged the specific and undivided attention of a scholar. That problem is, first and foremost, to discover from the primary sources other than Kleist's plays and stories just what constitutes "das Unaussprechliche" in Kleist, that is, what there was in the man which led him to abandon the conventions of the articulate literary tradition into which he was born and in which he lived, and how the steadfast persual of his inner dictates caused him to remain unrecognized in his lifetime and long afterward as the momentous style innovator that he was.

The problem is further to discover from the documentary material contemporaneous with Kleist and from modern scholarship and criticism the gradual apprehension of the author's incorporation of the various elements of gesture in his creative endeavors. In short, our aim is to provide a prolegomenon

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[20]Stark Young, Theatre Practice (New York, 1926), p. 32.

for possible future stylistic investigations of these elements, both in Kleist's dramas and, secondarily, in his stories.

To facilitate both orientation and development, it is felt that it would be prudent to begin this study with the current interest in our problem, to continue with the pertinent secondary material, and to conclude with analyses of the primary sources. In this sense the arrangement of the chapters will be retrospective, focussing first on the general situation and history of the problem, then on our specific interpretation of its initial sources.

The first chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the return to Kleist in Germany since the Second World War, with specific regard to the active interest exhibited in the aspects of his works (in particular his drama) as set forth above, and with the addition of a brief indication of the interest which Kleist has recently aroused in other countries. The second chapter will try to sketch the rise of the problem in the minds of scholars and critics in a chronologically arranged review of material since about 1890 dealing with the question of "das Unaussprechliche" in Kleist's writings, furnishing in this limited sense a Forschungsbericht reaching back some seventy years. The third chapter, approaching the problem proper, will consist of topically arranged discussions of detailed extracts from the contemporaneous source material

(i. e., the writings, letters, and other documented critiques of Kleist's contemporaries) and from Kleist's letters and certain of his shorter writings. Here our aim will be to substantiate, by detailed analysis, what Kleist could have meant in so often describing himself as an "unaussprechlicher Mensch," and the bearing this new perspective may have on the interpretation of his masterpieces.

It is felt that on the basis of such a Vorschule it would be possible to approach more securely an analytical investigation of the Gebärdensprache and the Sprachgebärden in his writings.

To illustrate how our findings might be meaningfully implemented, we shall demonstrate in an appendix Kleist's incorporation of these stylistic devices in certain scenes of central importance from one of his dramas. Although each of his plays and stories has scenes from which one could draw material for such an investigation, it is suggested that a cumulative, scene-by-scene analysis of a single drama would yield more significant results than would a catalog of aspects from all the works. Not the least of these results would be a heightened appreciation of the organic growth of the symbolic structure in one work. Such an insight, it is felt, could not be derived from a synthetic tabulation of generically similar but organically unrelated elements from a variety of

his plays and stories.

Scenes i, ix, xv, and xxiv from Penthesilea have been selected for our purposes for a number of reasons. Although we cannot maintain in any meaningful way that this is Kleist's most "typical" play, there will be few to deny that it is his most personal and, emotionally, his most intense. Penthesilea stands more or less in the middle of Kleist's short period of dramatic productivity. It reflects most of the language of gesture used in the works which preceded it and it anticipates most of that usage which followed, particularly in Prinz Friedrich von Homburg and, perhaps to a lesser degree, in Das Käthchen von Heilbronn. But Penthesilea exceeds all the other works in the range and the central importance of the verbalized and the non-verbal aspects of gesture. For one thing, it has by far the greatest use of pure pantomime. Further, in no other drama is there a figure so singularly paramount as Penthesilea herself--almost to the exclusion of the development of any other character. Thus Kleist was able to establish an organic network of personal symbols clustered about the heroine, which is unequalled in any other drama and which finds a prose analogy only in the figures of Michael Kohlhaas and the Marquise von O... . Finally, the fact that we possess versions of the drama at earlier stages is of inestimable value in determining how and to what extent Kleist

enlarged the importance of its extra-verbal, as well as its verbal, aspects.

CHAPTER I

Wilhelm von Humboldt once wrote: "Über einen Dichter reden oder schreiben ist nie mehr als ein Herumgehen um das Unaussprechliche."[1] Perhaps our study must necessarily stand under the sign of this paradox. Indeed, in this particular attempt we might even speak of a compounded paradox, for, to carry Humboldt's statement further, the problem at hand will be to organize and comment upon the elements of "das Unaussprechliche" of a man who by his own repeated confession was overwhelmed by the incommunicability of human beings, and who sought to instill this eternal puzzle in his works.

The purpose of this first chapter will be to determine to what extent the interest in this particular aspect of Kleist's dramatic style is alive in Germany and elsewhere, and to establish briefly what advances and recent insights have been attained in connection with the underlying language of gesture, above all in his plays. We have stated in the introductory chapter that Kleist strove for the realization of a

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[1]Cited in Herman Uyttersprot, Heinrich von Kleist: De Mensch en het Werk ("Reiksuniversiteit te Gent, Werken uitgegeven door de Faculteit van de Wijsbegeerte en Letteren," No. 101; Bruges, 1948), p. 312.

"new dramatic concept." The aim of his concept was to be the effective juxtaposition and interaction of word and gesture in such a way that the latter might gain a relative importance entirely unknown in German drama up to that time.

For centuries, to be sure, students of literature and the theater have been able to recognize and catalog the dramatic gesture; for centuries dramatists have indicated, especially by explicit stage directions, just what gestures they desired their actors to convey.[2] But the students of Kleist, lacking requisite printed evidence of his desires, ignored the fundamental significance of both symbolic gesture and gesticulation implicit in the language and punctuation; and as far as the relatively few stylistic studies devoted to Kleist are concerned, their authors until recently have contented themselves with describing the language on the printed page. It was not until interest in the rhythmic and "orchestral" structure of Kleist's dramas grew, that the unprecedented significance of the pause, the silence, and the physical gesture began to be manifest. After 1911 a very few incisive comments on the nature of these peculiarities in Kleist's drama

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[2]For succinct discussions of the development of the traditional language of gesture in drama see: Paul Merker and Wolfgang Stammler, Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte (Berlin, 1925-1926), I, 407-408 (art. on "Gebärde"); and in Gero von Wilpert, Sachwörterbuch der Literatur (Stuttgart, 1955), pp. 69-70 ("Bühnenanweisung") and pp. 185-186 ("Gebärde").

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appeared in print. A handful of German doctoral dissertations touched the problem briefly. Yet one cannot avoid the impression that such considerations were uniformly felt to lie well outside the province of serious scholarship. And so this tenuous quality in Kleist was left to the few essayists who sensed its importance. Even Max Kommerell's essay, which remains the only organized critique of the problem, is in a sense more belletristic than scholarly or academically utilitarian.[3] Up to this time none of Kleist's dramas (or, indeed, stories) has ever been systematically analyzed from this stylistic point of view.

As recently as 1943 Paul Kluckhohn in his second review of Kleist scholarship was obliged to mention the grievous lack of concern with all stylistic matters pertaining to Kleist's literary production. By far the majority of work done on Kleist between 1926 and 1943 either followed "geistesgeschichtliche Ziele," or was directed at the interpretation of the narrative and "weltanschauliche Gehalt" of the plays and short stories; Kluckhohn writes: "Demgegenüber ist die Erforschung der dichterischen Gestaltung und des sprachlichen Ausdrucks allzusehr im Hintertreffen geblieben."[4] He notes in this

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[3]Max Kommerell, "Die Sprache und das Unaussprechliche bei Heinrich von Kleist," Geist und Buchstabe der Dichtung (4th ed.; Frankfurt-on-Main, 1956), pp. 243-318. The essay first appeared in 1937 and was first published in book form in 1939.

[4]Paul Kluckhohn, "Kleist-Forschung, 1926-1943," Deutsche

review that he had been obliged to lodge the same complaint in his first Forschungsbericht (which covered the years 1922-25), and adds: "Inzwischen dürfte die Überzeugung allgemein geworden sein, dass hier wesentliche Aufgaben der Literaturforschung gerade auch für unsere Gegenwart liegen."[5] But this had clearly not been the case. He is able to mention only two books and a very limited number of articles which are concerned with stylistic aspects of any sort in Kleist's work.[6]

Relative to the immense amount of general Kleist scholarship which was carried on between the centennial year 1911 and the period covered by Kluckhohn's reviews (through 1943), the production of the past decade and a half has been slim and confined mostly to random and incomplete, if sometimes intriguing, observations. However, it must be said that the interest in style per se has grown in these fifteen years. Some of this work is based on the Kommerell essay, but thus far no one has made a serious attempt to develop his ideas further. Kurt Weigand is evidently the only person sufficiently interested

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Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte, XXI (1943), 45-87 (quotation p. 78). Kluckhohn's first review of Kleist literature: "Das Kleistbild der Gegenwart: Bericht über die Kleist-Literatur der Jahre 1922-25," Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift, IV (1926), 798-830.

[5]Kluckhohn, "Kleist-Forschung, 1926-1943," p. 79.

[6]First and foremost among the articles which Kluckhohn mentions is the Kommerell essay.

in Kommerell's specific approach to deem its author and his connection with Kleist worthy of an independent article--and even this article is but five brief pages in length.[7] Yet he does make an excellent case for the modernity and current applicability of Kleist, seeing in him the only writer from the Classic period of German literature whose star is very much in the ascendancy--and this by virtue of the fact that today we have learned to react to elements and their implications never seen in Kleist's works before. He finds that Kleist is the author who returned to the gesture its power: to both the gesture of the word and the gesture in place of the word. Most significant perhaps, according to Weigand, is the fact that Kleist, in accordance with his essay Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden, provides the possibility for the revelation of decision and emotion in his characters not only through the words they speak but also through their gestures. Kleist reveals through them the unconscious--and he does so in a way that no author before him was capable of doing. Weigand states that Kommerell was the first to realize Kleist's anticipation of psychoanalysis, but that in the essay it is necessary here and there to read between the lines as a result of the political strictures of the 1930's with reference

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[7]Kurt Weigand, "Kleist und Kommerell," Das neue Forum (Darmstadt), I (1950-51), 196-202.

to anything smacking of Freud and all his work. Which, of course, is not to say that Kommerell would have seen in Kleist a forerunner of Freudian clinicalism and any analytical involvement with infant complexes; rather that Kleist was far more oriented toward the psychology of situation, the dramatic situation of conflict, and that his primary method of revealing this was the delving into the subconscious and conveying this in a way unlike anything the Classicists and Romanticists could conceive. Further consideration of Weigand's brief but eminently lucid essay will be reserved for the next chapter. Suffice it to say that he presents not only a review of Kommerell's contribution but adds a number of keen observations of his own. His orientation (despite a somewhat negative pronouncement in the text itself) is essentially existentialist. It is regrettable that this article appeared in a relatively inaccessible Theaterzeitschrift.

Further evidence of a current interest in Kleist is found is the recent writing of Benno von Wiese, the Bonn Germanist. Following upon the first edition of his Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel, in which he devotes a large section to Kleist's drama, von Wiese published two articles in German literary periodicals in which he, in part, follows the lead of Kommerell somewhat more closely than in the book.[8] In the

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[8]Benno von Wiese, Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis

first of these two articles, "Gedanken zum Drama als Gespräch und Handlung" (1952), he contrasts three scenes from three different plays: Wallenstein, Hofmannsthal's Der weisse Fächer (one of the problem plays from the author's early period, 1895), and Prinz Friedrich von Homburg, IV/iv. In the last-named, von Wiese is expressly concerned with the scene "als Gespräch und Pantomime" and develops the concept of gestures as speaking a language diametrically opposed to the words of the scene: "der Widerspruch von Tun und Sagen."[9] The second article, which appeared in the following year, presents one of the most apt considerations of Kleist to have appeared since the Second World War. In part it is a reduction of much from the Deutsche Tragödie, while a long paragraph on the gesture and pantomimic elements in Kleist is adapted from the foregoing article--but what he said in these places seems to have been well deserving of repetition. He, like Weigand, makes much of the inextricable relationship of the unconscious and the gesture, and contrasts it sharply with Schiller's approach:

> Noch ein . . . Wort darüber, wie Kleist [sein] Menschenbild in der dramatischen Aussage verwirklicht hat. Es

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Hebbel (2nd ed. rev.; Hamburg, 1952), pp. 277-348. Von Wiese's two articles: "Gedanken zum Drama als Gespräch und Handlung," Der Deutschunterricht (Stuttgart), no vol. (1952, No. 2: Poetik in der Gegenwart), 28-47; and "Das Menschenbild Heinrich von Kleists," Wirkendes Wort, IV (1953-54), 1-12.

[9]Von Wiese, "Drama als Gespräch und Handlung," p. 34.

> geschieht keineswegs nur durch das Wort, sondern weitgehend durch die Pantomime. Denn die Worte trügen und gehören nur allzuoft der verfälschenden Welt des Bewusstseins an. Das Unbewusste jedoch spricht durch die Gebärde. Bei Kleist gibt es nicht so sehr eine Dialektik geistiger Positionen wie etwa bei Schiller, die im Dialog hin und her gewendet wird, sondern die Menschen müssen mühsam nach dem Wort suchen, weil sie sich selbst nicht mehr oder noch nicht begreifen.[10]

The miracle of self-revelation impresses the spectator (and the sensitive reader) as an unveiling of an enigma. Von Wiese restates Kommerell's thesis that at such times the unspoken is mostly more important than the spoken:

> Erst in der reinen Ausdrucksbewegung wird das Geheimnis der Menschenseele ganz sichtbar. Das Ungesagte ist hier meist wichtiger als das Gesagte--auch das Schweigen spricht seine eigne, bedeutungsvolle Sprache. In der Gebärde verhält sich der Mensch unmittelbar zu sich selbst. Der Mensch gelangt nicht mehr vom Sagen zum Tun, indem er das Tun dialektisch einkreist wie bei Schiller, sondern das Tun wächst unterschwellig aus ihm heraus, noch gegen alles Sagen. Auch hier geht es um das Menschenbild der Marionette. Erst dort ist der Mensch wahr und unmittelbar, unverstellt wie die Marionette, wo er durch den Widerspruch zwischen Schein des Wortes und Echtheit des Gefühles hindurchstösst. Das ist nur noch mit Hilfe der Pantomime aussagbar. Aller spitzfindigen, ausfragenden Dialektik des Wortes--welche Meisterschaft zeigt Kleist in seinen Verhören!--steht der unteilbare, aus seiner nur ihm gehörigen Wahrheit heraus lebende Mensch gegenüber, dessen Eigenstes unaussprechlich bleibt. Nicht nur Heinrich von Kleist, auch seine Gestalten haben diesen Zauber des Unaussprechlichen.[11]

Erik Lunding, the Danish literary historian and critic

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[10]Von Wiese, "Das Menschenbild Heinrich von Kleists," pp. 11-12.

[11]Ibid., p. 12.

(and one who has been received as a scholar of discriminating judgment and lucid common sense), has devoted both his most recent books to criticism of German Literaturwissenschaft and literary criticism.[12] In both of these he has made precise reference to Kleist scholarship, stressing the need for a more stylistically oriented approach. In Strömungen und Strebungen der modernen Literaturwissenschaft (1952) Lunding writes:

> Selbst eine sprachstilistisch so hochinteressante Erscheinung wie Heinrich von Kleists Wortkunst ist bisher ungenügend untersucht worden, sogar die einzige umfassende Behandlung, Georg Minde-Pouets 1897 erschienenes Werk, "Heinrich von Kleist. Seine Sprache und sein Stil," befriedigt im Sprachlichen nicht völlig die heutigen Ansprüche. Was das Stilistische betrifft, so ist naturgemäss ein weitgehendes Versagen festzustellen, da sich das Verfahren seither grundsätzlich geändert hat. Eine neue Gesamtbehandlung wäre sehr zu wünschen.[13]

In the following year, 1953, Lunding, by way of illustrating a projected category of stylistic differentiation having practical application to all types of literature, takes a number of moments from Homburg to clarify his point, and in so doing he comes very close to Kommerell's concept of "das Unaussprechliche" in Kleist. Thus what Lunding has to say here exemplifies, in a brief way, a partial answer to the call he had made in 1952 for new stylistic investigations of Kleist. It would

[12]Erik Lunding, Strömungen und Strebungen der modernen Literaturwissenschaft ("Acta Jutlandica: Aarsskrift for Aarhus Universitet." Humanistic Series, No. 37; Copenhagen, 1952). Published as No. 38 in the same series was Lunding's Wege zur Kunstinterpretation (1953).

[13]Lunding, Strömungen und Strebungen, p. 64.

be well to indicate here in summary fashion Lunding's suggested style category, if only to make clearer how one important contemporary literary scholar and critic chooses his examples, and consequently to indicate another sympton of current interest in Kleist. The very fact that he selects Homburg, rather than the work of another author, is significant in itself.

Following the general lead of Wilhelm Schneider and Wilhelm Kramer in setting up a system of "polare Begriffspaare"--a device very much in vogue in German scholarship since Schiller's differentiation of naive and sentimental poetry (and one which, of course, has often led to questionable generalities and extremes)--Lunding proposes most convincingly the pair of concepts: "biocentric" and "logocentric."[14] He claims to reveal from their bifurcation a genuine dual-polarity, applicable through "wortkünstlerische Instrumentierung" to all literary genres, and as such a valid criterion and instrument for stylistic differentiation of any given work from any other--and further, of any given part of a work from any other part within that work. The "logocentric" is oriented toward the extensive, expansive, and ornamental, whereas the "biocentric" work of art eschews "die schillernde Lichtreklame äusserer Stileffekte."[15] Behind the sometimes dull facade of the latter, however, there

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[14]Lunding, Wege, pp. 58-63.

[15]Ibid., p. 60.

is more often than not a wealth of unique and significant imagism and symbolism. Here the genuine connections between art and life are more fruitfully sought, although Lunding makes it very clear that with the concept "bios" neither "biological" nor purely external "biographical" elements are meant. With the term "life" he means here, rather, the artistic potentiality emanating from a vital Lebensgefühl, which gives to words such an inward, dynamic, and organic amplitude that human pulsations are translated into spiritual terms ("Triebhaftes in Geistiges") and living forms are born.

Needless to say, this organological form-concept lends itself most vitally to dramatic realization. Lunding succinctly states (and it is clear that he has the "biocentricity" of much of Kleist's drama in mind):

> Es berührt nämlich den innersten Lebensnerv [des dramatischen] Genres, ob die auftretenden Personen nur Sprecher bestimmter Intrigen sind, oder ob sie in Mimik und Gestik, in Wort und Tat ein besonderes Lebensgefühl und eine einmalige Lebensbestimmung verkörpern. Während der logozentrische Stil schon wegen seiner intellektuellen Struktur ausserstande ist, vitale und elementare Gefühle wortkünstlerisch sagbar zu machen, ist es ein Wesensmerkmal des biozentrischen Stils, dass er das Irrationale, das Unterbewusste und das Unartikuliert-Dumpfe zu erfassen vermag [italics mine].[16]

It is important to realize, if one is going to apply these style categories to a literary work, that both the

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[16] Ibid.

"biocentric" and the "logocentric" can be--indeed, most frequently are--found within the same work. But one always dominates the other. Lunding appreciates this, and on the basis of a handful of examples he gives brief illustrations of both types. In both Lessing and Schiller the "logocentric" dominates in every work in the last analysis, although there are distinct moments of "biocentricity," for example in Emilia Galotti and in Wallenstein. On the other hand, the "biocentric" is more often found in Goethe--and even more frequently in Kleist. In all of the latter's dramas the "biocentric" ultimately dominates (although Lunding does not expressly state this), despite the myriad lines of messengers' reports, the lengthy and detailed speeches in which background, situation, and motivation are unraveled, and the sections in which persons of supposedly little intelligence and lowly social standing become virtuosi in descriptive exposition. One is tempted to find in these (sometimes, to be sure, justifiably) "logocentricity" incarnate.

These stylistic concepts of Lunding do not represent simply a new, superficially adroit device whereby any given literary work can be facilely categorized. They are genuinely valid and lend themselves with considerable flexibility to more detailed ramifications of stylistic analysis. For the present it is sufficient to appreciate the implications in

Lunding's discovery that it is Kleist who, of the authors discussed, best lends himself to "biocentric" analysis, and that the reality of his characters is manifest in their "Mimik und Gestik."

From the little of Lunding that has been quoted above, it may not be surprising to learn that his orientation is basically existentialistic. His constant plea is for a return to the work of art itself, for sanity and for honesty in analytical criticism. He has come to be appreciated more and more as a scholar who wishes to have illustrated and emphasized the eminent position which the unspoken elements frequently have in literature. In his essay--an appendix to his book on Adalbert Stifter--"Kierkegaard und die existentielle Literaturwissenschaft" he has the following to say:

> Es ist als Richtschnur hervorzuheben, dass es für den Forscher durchaus nicht darauf ankommt, mit grossem Fleisse Formulierungen, Sprüche und Sentenzen zu sammeln und zu verzetteln. Ein solches Verfahren wirkt sich zwangsläufig als Intellektualisierung der Kunst aus. . . . Es erliegen viele Forscher immer wieder der Versuchung, die Bedeutsamkeit der direkten Formulierungen zu überschätzen. Wichtiger als das scharf Artikulierte ist das Nicht-Gesagte, das Vertuschte, Verdeckte, Verschleierte, denn Existenz teilt sich indirekt mit, wirkt wie ein unterirdisches Brodeln und manifestiert sich am liebsten in einer Fülle von Verkleidungen. Die Triebkräfte der Existenz lassen sich bis ins kleinste Detail der Stilanalyse nachweisen. Sie da zu erforschen, ist eine dringende Aufgabe der Literaturforschung, denn lange genug sind die Deuter der Kunst dem Kunstwerke aus dem Wege gegangen.[17]

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[17]Erik Lunding, "Kierkegaard und die existentielle

No statement could be applied more appropriately to the very essence of Kleist's works and to their scholarly investigation.

There is evidence of recent interest in Kleist, and the facets of his style which Kommerell illuminated, contained in a review by Karl Otto Conrady of Fritz Martini's Wagnis der Sprache.[18] In a chapter of the book in which a section from Kafka's Das Schloss is scrutinized, Martini develops the theme of the gesture and the unspoken word to a point where it is seen as fulfilling a primary function in Kafka's prose in general. Conrady appreciates the validity and relative uniqueness of Martini's approach and remarks:

> Mit seinen Bemerkungen über die Gebärde in der Prosa zeigt Martini auf ein noch fast unbegangenes Gebiet [italics mine] . . . . Max Kommerell hat damals über die Gebärdensprache im Drama Kleists gehandelt. Es wäre zu begrüssen, wenn Martinis Gedanken zu weiterführenden Untersuchungen anregten.[19]

The late date of this observation (1956) seems remarkable.

Indicative of the widespread reawakening of interest in the theater and in drama in Germany since 1946, is the fact that in 1955 the fifth of the celebrated Darmstädter Gespräche was devoted to the theater.[20] Although the orientation of the

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Literaturwissenschaft," appendix to Adalbert Stifter (Copenhagen, 1946), pp. 149-150.

[18]Karl Otto Conrady, rev. of Das Wagnis der Sprache by Fritz Martini (1954), Wirkendes Wort, VI (1955-56), 56-58.

[19]Ibid., p. 57.

[20]Egon Vietta (ed.), Darmstädter Gespräch: Theater (Darmstadt, 1955).

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discussions was in large part toward the practical aspects of the theater, its social functions and obligations, foreign influences, production of translated material, and "Theaterwissenschaft" as such, a few remarks relative to Kleist and to the relationship between drama and presentation ought to be mentioned. Oskar Fritz Schuh, one of Europe's foremost directors (onetime director of the Burgtheater and the Vienna State Opera, now director of the Theater am Kurfürstendamm) with specific reference to Kleist's drama, calls for a revitalization of language on the stage and a reappraisal of the importance of voice and gesture. Why is it, he wonders, that today an actor requires twice as much time to learn a role in one of Kleist's plays as he did two decades ago? The relation among word and meaning, pantomime and gesture, must be relearned or learned for the first time:

> Ich glaube, dass nur der Zwang zur Sprache das Theater wieder in dem zentralen Bezug belebt, der ihm verlorengegangen ist. Wir können heute sehr gut pantomimisch, gestisch Theater spielen, wir wissen sehr gut, was mit dem Theater der Geste heute anzufangen ist. Wir haben aber sehr stark verlernt, das Mittel der Sprache in der Weise zu gebrauchen, die eigentlich zu den Grundprinzipien des Theaters gehört.[21]

We might compare a similar complaint lodged thirty years earlier by Stark Young:

> In the art of the theatre . . . to throw away such an

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[21] Ibid., p. 258.

> avenue as is the sense of sound is short-sighted and suicidal. It is a way of limiting the expression of life, of forgetting the necessary earth, of telling lies. And in our theatre it is a fact that sound is almost a forgotten thing. The voice is used in our theatre almost entirely as an articulate medium. But a part of every truth is its inarticulateness: all the half-conscious elements, the delicate implications, the radiant and shadowy emanations that make up every human truth, and that words can never express. And sound itself has significance. . . . Regardless of word concepts the mere voice is another medium to express the ancient and imminent life that lives itself in us.[22]

The applicability of such a statement to the "Urlaut" in Kleist's dramas is evident.

Kurt Horwitz, actor-director and presently director at the Staatsschauspielhaus in Munich, is in full agreement with Schuh's statement about the plight of Kleist on the German stage today. He adds to his assertions: "Wir alle wissen . . ., dass es heute kaum noch möglich ist, ein Ensemble zu finden, dass wirklich fähig ist, Kleist lebendig zu sprechen."[23] One cannot avoid the impression that, despite the relative paucity of valuable postwar scholarly material on Kleist, in this respect the theater in Germany is still somewhat behind the critic.

Emil Preetorius, President of the Bayrische Akademie der schönen Künste and the honorary presiding officer at the fifth

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[22]Stark Young, Theatre Practice (New York, 1926), p. 157.

[23]Darmstädter Gespräch, p. 295.

Darmstädter Gespräch, evinced a firm, if somewhat generalizing, view of the problem of the relationship between the printed and the acted drama in his opening speech at that congress. In it he said:

> Ich rühre an das zuwenig geachtete Problem des Verhältnisses von Dichtkunst zur Darstellungskunst, nämlich an die Frage, wie der dramatische Dichter der schöpferischen Kraft des Mimus die rechte Sprungweite lasse, seinen Text fürs Spiel durchlässig halte; echte Theaterdichtung also im Sinne einer mimischen Partitur, abzielend auf das Ineinander von Wort und Gebärde. Wieder einmal bemerkt Hofmannsthal: der Schauspieler ohne Dichtung sei fast ein Nichts, der Dichter ohne Schauspieler aber ein Vollkommenes.[24]

In the case of Kleist the German theater possesses a dramatist who was intuitively able to devise in his dramas "die mimische Partitur, abzielend auf das Ineinander von Wort und Gebärde," which Preetorius postulates.

We turn now to a brief investigation of whatever interest in Kleist's style (particularly, of course, in its extra-verbal elements) has been expressed in countries other than Germany. Aside from the few and scant articles which have appeared in Holland (as, for example, in Neophilologus), Italy, and Denmark (above all Erik Lunding), this interest has been

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[24] Ibid., p. 19. Cf. Suzanne Langer's remark in Feeling and Form (New York, 1953), p. 314: "The poet must give his interpreters scope . . . ; for drama is essentially an enacted poem, and if the acting can only duplicate what the lines already effect, there will be unintended redundancy, and an apparent clutter of superfluous elements that makes the total form impure and opaque."

confined to America, England, and particularly to France.[25]

In England and America such interest can hardly be called widespread. With the exception of one book,[26] the translation of two of Kleist's essays[27] and a few of his plays,[28] several articles confined to philological matters in scholarly journals, one recent dissertation,[29] and random comments in a handful of books, there is nothing to be mentioned. It has not been possible to accurately determine whether there have been any productions of Kleist plays since the war, either in the original or in translation. It may be safely assumed that any such

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[25]The extensive Kleist monograph by the Flemish scholar Herman Uyttersprot will be discussed in Chapter II.

[26]The work of the late University of California (Berkeley) scholar, Hans M. Wolff, Heinrich von Kleist: Die Geschichte seines Schaffens (Bern, 1954), is essentially philologically oriented and need not be considered here.

[27]Heinrich von Kleist, "Essay on the Puppet Theater," trans. Eugene Jolas, Partisan Review, XIV (1943), 67-74; and Kleist, "On the Gradual Construction of Thoughts During Speech," trans. Michael Hamburger, German Life and Letters, V (1951), 42-46.

[28]Notably the recent translations of Homburg by Charles Passage (New York, 1956), and James Kirkup in The Classic Theatre, Vol. II: Five German Plays, ed. Eric Bentley (New York, 1959); and of Penthesilea, translated by Humphry Trevelyan, in the latter volume.

[29]The dissertation of Valentine C. Hubbs, Consciousness and the Unconscious in the Drama of Heinrich von Kleist: Kleist's Struggle for Individuation (New York University, 1958; not yet available on microfilm) shows psychoanalytical orientation (Freud, Adler, and particularly Jung), but is not fundamentally concerned with questions of style and the creative process.

performances have been generally confined to university campuses.[30]

In 1946 Eric Bentley, the theater critic, anthologist, and champion of modern German drama (especially that of Bertolt Brecht) in America, wrote:

> Heinrich von Kleist . . . is another marvelous genius who is somehow left to academicians to admire. As with Hebbel, the difficulty is in translating him. Nobody has come along to do for the German playwright what Schlegel and Tieck did for Shakespeare.[31]

Bentley notes the revival of such figures as Hölderlin and Büchner outside Germany but regrets that such has not been the case with Kleist at all:

> Within Germany he was revived by the Stefan George Circle [!] and has even been regarded as the greatest German playwright; elsewhere he remains unknown.[32]

The author of these words is quite correct in recognizing the almost insuperable difficulties which the translator of Kleist must face,[33] and in all fairness it cannot be said that they

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[30] The Broken Jug, an adaptation by Donald Harron and performed in April, 1958, by the Stratford Players of Canada at the Phoenix Theater in New York, is too far removed from the original to be taken as a serious attempt to perform Kleist on the professional stage of that city.

[31] Eric Bentley, The Playwright as Thinker: A Study of Drama in Modern Times (New York, 1946), p. 322.

[32] Ibid.

[33] In this connection Lunding writes aptly in Wege zur Kunstinterpretation: "Das Verhältnis zwischen biozentrischem und logozentrischem Stil ist nicht zumindest bei Übersetzungen

have been met with much success in two very recent English translations of Homburg and Penthesilea which Bentley has published in the second volume of his anthology, The Classic Theater (1959).[34] That they have appeared in such a popular form as the Doubleday Anchor "paperback" series, however, must certainly be applauded. Such glowing words as those which appear on the back cover of the volume may, indeed, elicit more popular interest in America in the genius of Kleist. Bentley, as editor, writes that the book

> . . . presents . . . two of the greatest plays of Heinrich von Kleist, a figure who holds more interest for many readers today than Schiller or even Goethe. Penthesilea and The Prince of Homburg are among the most amazing plays ever written. . . . This volume can mean . . . the discovery of Kleist--for stage and study alike.

One wonders perhaps upon what texts and from what authority and experience such a sensitive and erudite writer as Ronald Peacock builds the following criticism:

> A poet trying to create his own tragic values enters the arena of opinion; his audience loses its cohesion and emotional unity. . . . All subjects that deal

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sehr wichtig. Der Übersetzer, der fähig ist, ein biozentrisch eingestelltes Werk zu übertragen, ohne ins Logozentrische abzugleiten, legt ein ganz ausserordentliches Können an den Tag. Der häufigste Vorgang ist die Strukturverwandlung in der Richtung des emanzipierten Logos. Bisweilen geht diese Entwicklung so weit, dass Original und Übersetzung das Polaritätsverhältnis der beiden Typen geradezu in exemplarischer Form veranschaulichen" (p. 65).

[34]Eric Bentley (ed.), The Classic Theatre, Vol. II: Five German Plays (New York, 1959).

> with the exceptional or the pathological case--the subjects of Kleist for instance . . .--lose their tragic power; at the most they arouse the curiosity and the pathos that characterize the bystander and not the participant.[35]

Peacock has subsequently directed much more attention to German literature and in a volume which appeared in 1957 exhibits more insight into some aspects of Kleist's dramatic technique not unrelated to our problem; but his fundamental feeling for Kleist seems not to have changed, as the following might indicate:

> Heinrich von Kleist's plays . . . show distorted forms in the plot and persons which destroy literal validity and throw into relief symbolic expression, producing--the idea has its genesis here--"expressionism." The actions and conflicts in Kleist's plots run to extremes, the persons behave with maximum irrationality, propelled by trances or trance-like states of mind, by dreams, by contraries of violent passion, particularly by alternating hatred and love, so that they appear "abnormal." They are, however, still persons and they are best read as accentuated symbols of psychological tendencies in human nature generally [:]. The distortion is not an untruthfulness or inaccuracy (Kleist probably believed firmly in the objective reality of his characters) but an emphatic lighting, a way of throwing analyzed aspects of behaviour into sharp relief. It is a distortion not of the individual person considered as a "case" (a pure example of pathological type) but of the more normal breadth and variety of personality. Kleistian heroes and heroines are admissions of Kleist's personal conflicts, so that the symbolism is forceful but restricted. They put his drama near to the dream image that is less than the best because it is too near <u>natural</u> drama. Too much in Kleist is documentary in the sense of being evidence of dream, trances, or the unconscious, and not

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[35]Ronald Peacock, <u>The Poet in the Theater</u> (New York, 1946), p. 157.

> sufficiently integrated, as art requires, into a controlled vision and commanding reality.[36]

Such is the most recent scholarly evaluation of Kleist to have appeared in a volume of drama criticism in America. That his departure from traditional symbolic structure is touched upon would seem to be gratifying and overdue--but that is hardly enough.

Richard March's brief monograph on Kleist contributes nothing new to the field other than to serve as an adequate introduction to Kleist for the American and British reader.[37] The same might be said of Michael Hamburger's article, "Heinrich von Kleist," but it must be added that the inclusion of such an article in so influential a periodical as the Partisan Review represents a gratifying trend.[38]

In England and America specifically scholarly writings on Kleist since the beginning of the Second World War have been few in number and limited in scope. As to the element of

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[36]Ronald Peacock, The Art of Drama (New York, 1957), p. 187.

[37]Richard March, Heinrich von Kleist ("Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought"; New Haven, 1954).

[38]Michael Hamburger, "Heinrich von Kleist: An Introduction," Partisan Review, XXII (1955), 222-234; this article, which would seem to make a somewhat sensational use of the "pathological" element in Kleist, has subsequently appeared in revised and expanded form in Hamburger's Reason and Energy: Studies in German Literature (New York, 1957), pp. 107-147.

"das Unaussprechliche," it has been all but overlooked. For example, neither George Merrick Baker's 1942 edition of Prinz Friedrich von Homburg nor Charles Passage's introduction to his translation of that play considers this aspect in any way.[39] Ilse Graham's article in Modern Language Quarterly on Der zerbrochene Krug deals in very cursory fashion with "the device of omission," refers to Kleist as "a realist at heart," and in connection with the taciturnity of Frau Marthe infers that often the method of most fully expressing a thing is to leave it unspoken.[40] D. G. Dyer, in an article on the Amphitryon dramas of Plautus, Molière, and Kleist, has but one brief word in connection with this device: Kleist "has written a play in which the language is constantly charged with ambiguity, hovering on the borderline between things expressible and inexpressible."[41] Dyer's preface to a 1952 school edition of Penthesilea stresses tersely the importance of symbol in the play, and with

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[39]Heinrich von Kleist, Prinz Friedrich von Homburg, ed. and introd. George Merrick Baker ("Oxford German Series by American Scholars"; New York, 1942), pp. i-xxxix. Charles Passage, op. cit., introd.

[40]Ilse Appelbaum Graham, "The Broken Pitcher: Hero of Kleist's Comedy," Modern Language Quarterly, XVI (1955), 99-109.

[41]D. G. Dyer, "'Amphitryon': Plautus, Molière and Kleist," German Life and Letters, V (1951), 191-201. Henry W. Nordmeyer's existentially oriented monograph on "Kleist's Amphitryon: Zur Deutung der Komödie," Monatshefte, XXXVIII (1946), 1-19, 165-176, 268-283, 349-359 and XXXIX (1947), 89-125, will be discussed in Chapter II.

more conviction than in the article on Amphitryon it states:

> Often Kleist dispenses with language, as if realizing its limitations, and indicates the inner struggles of the characters by significant gestures and long pauses, above all in the final scene, heightening the effect by what is left unsaid.[42]

Walter Silz, in his study of Realism and Reality, mentions "the way in which Kleist accompanies speech with gesture" and the "obbligato of gesture and movement in the Novellen of Kleist, the dramatist."[43]

Adequate, but to some degree, incomplete, renditions into English of two essays, which bear directly upon the problem of the unspoken in Kleist (Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden and Über das Marionettentheater), have appeared (one in England and one in America) in recent years, but neither is accompanied by interpretive or critical text.[44] The new and in part successful translation of Homburg by Charles Passage is accompanied by introductory notes, which (as already mentioned) discuss in no way the theatrical or symbolic aspects of the play. However, its inclusion in the eminent company

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[42]Heinrich von Kleist, Penthesilea, ed. and with introd. D. G. Dyer ("Cambridge Plain Texts"; Cambridge [England], 1952), p. viii.

[43]Walter Silz, Realism and Reality (Chapel Hill, 1954), pp. 44 and 126.

[44]Kleist (trans. Jolas), op. cit.; and Kleist (trans. Hamburger), op. cit.; the latter was also broadcast on the BBC on January 12, 1951.

represented in the "Liberal Arts Library" series is, again, an encouraging sign. Finally, a projected American publication of the short stories of Kleist in translation, for which Thomas Mann wrote an introduction (from the German original of which we have already quoted),[45] might be mentioned.[46]

Current interest in Kleist's drama in France presents a generally more gratifying picture than that in England and the United States.[47] Building mainly upon the monumental work of Roger Ayrault (1934)--a work which Paul Kluckhohn considered in his second Forschungsbericht to be one of the two outstanding contributions to Kleist research from 1926 to 1943 and in which stylistic matters are given considerable notice--the attention of French scholars and critics grew until 1939.[48]

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[45]See p. 4 of this study.

[46]Francis Golffing in The American Scholar, XXIV (1955), 194, states that Criterion Books of New York intended publication of this volume in June, 1955. This was postponed to November, 1956; but by late 1958 the volume had still not appeared. Meanwhile the original German introduction has been published by S. Fischer in Thomas Mann, Nachlese: Prosa 1951-1955 (Frankfurt-on-Main, 1956) and as the introduction to Heinrich von Kleist, Erzählungen ("Fischer Bücherei," No. 135).

[47]See Hansres Jacobi, "Frankreich entdeckt Kleist," Antares (Baden-Baden), III (1955), 57-60.

[48]Roger Ayrault, Heinrich von Kleist (Paris, 1934); see Kluckhohn's review for 1926-1943, op. cit., p. 87. The other important work "of size and quality" which Kluckhohn mentions here is, of course, Gerhard Fricke, Gefühl und Schicksal bei Heinrich von Kleist (Berlin, 1929).

A specific instance of interest directed toward the aspects of gesture and the unreal world in Kleist is Jean Cassou's article, "Kleist et le somnambulisme tragique," which appeared in an issue of Cahiers du Sud (1937) devoted entirely to German Romanticism.[49]

During the years of the Second World War and those immediately following it, this interest in Kleist subsided markedly and perhaps understandably, due to the propaganda use to which tailored versions of Die Hermannsschlacht, Homburg, and Käthchen were put by the National Socialists. But with the Théâtre National Populaire production under Jean Vilar of Prinz Friedrich von Homburg at Avignon in 1951, in Paris in 1952, and subsequently on tour in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany, real attention to Kleist was aroused once more.[50] It was thanks to what were generally regarded as a masterful translation and a consummate performance that the significant interrelationship of word and gesture in the drama was realized

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[49]Jean Cassou, "Kleist et le somnambulisme tragique," Cahiers du Sud ("Numéro spécial consacré au Romantisme Allemand"), XX (1937), 275-281.

[50]The production was part of the repertoire of the Théâtre National Populaire under the direction and supervision of Jean Vilar. Presented at the Papal Palace in Avignon and in both the Théâtre des Champs Élysées and the Théâtre National du Palais Chaillot in Paris in a translation by Jean Curtis, it is often regarded as the most celebrated recent production of any Kleist play.

and transmitted. Paris critics, among them the influential "B. Dort" and Gabriel Marcel, sensed this and were able to incorporate the impression in their reviews--none of which is marked by frugality of praise.[51] Marcel, himself one of the outstanding exponents of "existencialisme" in France, is not the only one of that orientation who has concerned himself with Kleist. Alfred Schlagdenhauffen, for example, is the first scholar to have written a book on Kleist whose title makes express use of the word "existentialism."[52]

Significant, too, is the fact that so celebrated a writer and public figure as André Maurois has devoted a recent essay to Kleist.[53] To be sure, he confines himself largely to a biographical review of the author's life; but the conviction in such statements as the following about Homburg is surely indicative of a new concern with Kleist in France:

Le ton, étonnamment moderne, du langage et des

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[51]B. Dort, "Le Théâtre en Avignon," Les Temps modernes (Paris, ed. J.-P. Sartre), VII, 761-764; and Gabriel Marcel, "Tragédies romantiques," Théâtre de France (Paris), II (1952), 78-81 and "'Der Prinz von Homburg' in Paris," Das neue Forum (Darmstadt), I (1952), 202-205.

[52]Alfred Schlagdenhauffen, L'univers existentiel de Kleist dans Le prince de Hombourg ("Publications de la Faculté des lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg," 2nd series, no. 18; Paris, 1953).

[53]André Maurois, "Heinrich von Kleist," Robert et Elizabeth Browning: Portraits suivis de quelques autres (Paris, 1955), pp. 65-103.

sentiments s'imposa.[54]

> Cette pièce "semble avoir été écrite par le génie même de la poésie." Elle est sublime, avec cette étrange folie que Shakespeare seul avait jusqu'alors domptée.[55]

It is probable that the Vilar productions of Prinz Friedrich von Homburg and subsequently the performances of Der zerbrochene Krug in Lyon and Paris in 1954-55, together with the attention called to Kleist by the reviewers and essayists (chiefly among the existencialisme) gave rise to Marthe Robert's book, Heinrich von Kleist, Dramaturge (1955).[56] This study, part of a recent series whose volumes are devoted to other dramatists such as Molière, Lorca, Brecht, Pirandello, Strindberg, Büchner, and Musset, represents undoubtedly the most important French contribution to the understanding of Kleist as a stylist since Ayrault's study. Sections entitled "La double entente" and "Une dramaturgie de l'acte manqué" are especially applicable to the present theme. Mme. Robert exhibits a sensitive and knowledgeable approach to the material,

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[54] Ibid., p. 65.

[55] Ibid., p. 97. The great enthusiasm and dogmatic reservations of André Gide in regard to Penthesilea (in his Journal 1939-1949: Souvenirs ["Bibliothèque de la Pléiade"; Paris, 1954], pp. 137-141) will be briefly taken into account in the appendix to this study.

[56] Marthe Robert, Heinrich von Kleist, Dramaturge ("Collection Les Grands Dramaturges," No. 8; Paris, 1955).

an approach which likewise betrays existentialist origins. Although there is no direct consideration of the unspoken and the gesture as stylistic devices per se, the author has a firm grasp on the essence of the unspoken in Kleist's drama. She writes:

> Il est certain que l'idée lui venait aussi en sentant et que, désespérant de trouver pour les désirs de son coeur qui en aurait rendu la richesse aussi bien que le trouble et la pureté, il a porté directement ses désirs là où ils ont la préséance, là où le sentiment est immédiatement idée et mouvement visibles: sur une scène de théâtre.[57]

Although no significant insights would seem to originate in this book, it further suggests a refreshing and active preoccupation with Kleist on the part of a handful of non-German critics and scholars. It is to be hoped that this and similar investigations will lead to a productive incorporation of the body of Kleist's writings into comparative literary endeavors. Another optimistic indication of continuing interest in Kleist is the fact that in the past few years a number of new French translations of the plays have been published and produced.[58]

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[57] Ibid., p. 116. This work will be discussed further in Chapter II.

[58] Le prince de Hombourg, trans. Jean Curtis ("Collection du Répertoire du T. N. P."; Paris, 1950 [?]). La Cruche cassée, trans. Arthur Adamov, Théâtre Populaire (Paris), no vol. (March-April) 1954. Penthésilée, adapted by Julien Gracq (Paris, 1954).

In this chapter we have attempted to arrive at a representative, but not exhaustive, picture of the critical, non-philological interest in Kleist as a stylist since the Second World War, with particular emphasis on the progressive awakening (since Kommerell's essay two decades ago) to the realization that this artist wrote in two separate languages: the immediate and articulate surface language of words and images, and the subliminal language of gesture and symbol. When compared with the phenomenal increase of stylistic analyses of twentieth-century authors during the past decade, however, this awakening has been, relatively, a very listless process. "Gesture" and "symbol" are now firmly established terms in the critical jargon of Kleist scholarship and belles-lettres, but their application has yet to find its place in fundamental research.

It is highly probable that this would have developed twenty-five years ago but for the exigencies of the times and the stultification of scholarship in Germany. For, indeed, the beginnings of this gradual awakening reach back to the last decade of the nineteenth century, when Kleist scholars first began to assume--albeit in a very limited degree--stylistic concepts as part of their province. The task of Chapter II will be to trace critically and chronologically the details of scholarly occupation with the second of the two languages

mentioned above. We shall attempt to demonstrate that its ascent has been steady (if very slow at times), that interest in the more profound stylistic aspects of Kleist's language of gesture is more alive today than at any previous period, but that the definitive study of these aspects has yet to be written.

CHAPTER II

Stylistic investigations of Kleist's works were a long time in coming to the fore. It is doubtless due to the paucity of source material other than the works themselves and to the impossibility of confining these works to the criteria of either the Classical or the Romantic School, that for the decades from the scholars' first discovery of Kleist in the last third of the nineteenth century until the 1920's this author's life and writing were the almost exclusive province of the positivists. It is to them, of course, that we are indebted for research fundamental to any study of Kleist. This research includes such vital material as the critical edition of the texts, the investigation of sources for and genesis of the various works, and the thorough studies of all available biographical data. Yet, faced with an almost total absence of specifically literary criticism in any form by Kleist himself, it was many years before scholars turned in earnest to the plays and stories in order to deduce the stylistic precepts which speak so eloquently from them. Poetik as such was disregarded in the case of Kleist longer perhaps than for any other figure of comparable stature in modern German literature.

Instead, the preponderance of conjecture--necessarily an outgrowth of the tantalizingly fragmentary nature of much of Kleist's extant correspondence and of contemporary source material--was directed at filling the gaps in the biographical and later the psycho-biographical, facts, and at determining Kleist's status and role in the social and political complexion of his time.

With very few exceptions there is no detectable interest in the aspects of gesture and the unspoken in the dramas of Kleist before the turn of the century. It is a curious fact that the author who refers so often in his letters to the ineffable, in himself as well as in all human situations, should have had this central phase of his nature and his works all but ignored for well over a century. To be sure, we occasionally encounter the word "pantomime" as such in the secondary literature prior to the increase in Kleist scholarship prompted by the centenary in 1911 of his death. But it is never taken to be a vital aspect of the dramatic Gebärdensprache of the author. Before 1900 Otto Brahm and Georg Minde-Pouet would seem to be the only writers on Kleist to have appreciated this facet--and even their appreciation is random and inconclusive, as may be seen later.

In the review of research which follows we shall confine ourselves (with a few exceptions) to the scholarly material

which has appeared in Europe since 1900 and which concerns itself with the occurrence in Kleist's work of language as gesture and the gesture of language. Such observations will range from the rudimentary beginnings at the time of the first ruptures with the philological approach, through Kommerell's essay,[1] and down to the present.

Despite the enormous volume of literature on Kleist it may be appreciated from the above that the vast majority of the articles and even of the longer scholarly investigations fall outside our field of interest. It might be noted in passing, however, just how profuse Kleist literature has been since about the time of the First World War. The exhaustive Kleist Bibliography compiled by Georg Minde-Pouet and published in the Jahrbuch der Kleist-Gesellschaft lists 396 pages of separate entries for the twenty-three years from 1914 to 1937 alone.[2] With an average of about ten entries per page this

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[1]Max Kommerell, "Die Sprache und das Unaussprechliche: Eine Betrachtung über Heinrich von Kleist," Geist und Buchstabe der Dichtung (4th ed.; Frankfurt-on-Main, 1956).

[2]Jahrbuch der Kleistgesellschaft, ed. Georg Minde-Pouet [and Julius Petersen] ("Schriften der Kleist-Gesellschaft"; Berlin, 1921-38). The bibliographies appear in the issues for 1921 (pp. 91-169), 1922 (pp. 112-174), 1923-24 (pp. 182-230) 1929-30 (pp. 62-193), and 1933-37 (pp. 186-263). See also the 120-page review and appraisal of Kleist literature from 1821-1931 in Roger Ayrault, La légende de Heinrich von Kleist: Un poète devant la critique (Paris, 1934). This Sonderveröffentlichung--a preface to Ayrault's large Kleist monograph--remains the most complete work of its sort in the field.

totals nearly four thousand items. Of these only the minutest fraction deals with Kleist's works using style (as we have come to understand that word today) as the critical criterion--that is, observing and commenting upon the structure of the work as a work of literature per se. It might be further mentioned that not until the 1920's and the recognition of theater science as an orthodox and independent discipline did scholars begin to investigate the dramas of Kleist as literature intended for the theater.

It would seem wisest to follow a chronological review of the books and articles which have been found applicable to our study. To set up a series of categories such as: pantomime, "stummes Theater," gesture, gesticulation, stage directions, the pause, and so forth, would tend only to artificiality and unnecessary complication. To divide the study according to the nationality of the scholars included would likewise be superfluous, inasmuch as at least eighty percent of the items included originated in Germany. That this is to be in part a critical review might be mentioned again.

Approximately twenty percent of the items date from the turn of the century to 1914, forty percent from 1914 to 1939, and forty percent from the beginning of the Second World War through 1958. The approximately one hundred studies in this review do not of course represent every scattered reference

to gesture in Kleist's dramatic style which could be found. It is true that a few of the items (particularly the early items) will seem to have little bearing on the subject, but their inclusion is meant to demonstrate a trend in some cases, in others a retrogression, and in still others an ignorance or avoidance of the stylistic viewpoint. The inclusion of such material has been purposely selective. On the other hand, it is hoped that no important contribution has been overlooked. Among the positive contributions quantity, as a criterion of importance, is a rarity. In some cases a further increase in our evidence has been gained from a paragraph of criticism, a particularly penetrating sentence or even a mere reference to a line in a drama or a sentence in one of the Novellen.

A. 1884-1911. It is somehow appropriate and hardly accidental that Otto Brahm, the Berlin scholar and one of the most noteworthy leaders of the Naturalist movement in that city, was very probably the first to make specific reference to the importance of the unspoken word in Kleist.[3] To be sure, the references to it are few and far between. We read, understandably, of the "naturalistic" and "realistic" nature of Kleist's style (e.g., pp. 117, 125, 159, 163). In writing of the moment in Robert Guiskard when the "Heerpauke" is

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[3]Otto Brahm, Das Leben Heinrich von Kleists (Berlin, 1884; 2nd ed., 1885). (New ed., Berlin, 1911)

offered as a seat to the fever-ridden leader (l. 488). Brahm remarks:

> Echt Kleistisch wird das nicht in Worten deutlich ausgesprochen, sondern durch Geberden und abgebrochene Reden indirekt dargestellt (p. 117).

Again:

> Selbst kurze Reden sucht Kleist, nach Shakespeares Art an entscheidenden Momenten so zu fassen, dass sie durch Geberden begleitet und gleichsam in Handlung umgesetzt werden (p. 160).

These and a few other brief remarks may hardly seem very significant--but when we contrast Brahm's approach with the general trend even a decade later we can appreciate his forthright critiques of Kleistian texts in a time almost totally devoid of preoccupation with matters of style. This trend might be represented by Heinrich Bulthaupt's evaluations of Kleist and his plays in the popular Dramaturgie des Schauspiels[4] in 1893, which, despite its title, is generally confined to admiration of the patriotism as seen variously incorporated in Kleist's plays. Bulthaupt praises this or that contemporary performance adding an occasional bit of advice. Nowhere is there any textual interpretation, any consideration of the element of gesture. The following excerpt from a discussion of Homburg will characterize his approach adequately:

> Die bleiche Todesfurcht des Mannes, des Officiers,

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[4]Heinrich Alfred Bulthaupt, Dramaturgie des Schauspiels (5th ed.; Oldenburg and Leipzig, 1893), Vol. I. (First ed., 1880.)

> ist dem grossen Publikum fremd. . . . Dass ein preussischer Officier dem Kleist'schen Prinzen von Homburg je geglichen, glaube ich kaum (p. 7).

A substantial step forward in style critique was made three years before the turn of the century by Erich Schmidt's student, Georg Minde-Pouet, mainly as a result of the extensiveness and intimate awareness of his approach in Heinrich von Kleist: Seine Sprache und sein Stil.[5] His work continues, in an almost exclusively philological way, the earlier work of Rudolf Köpke (1862), Reinhold Köhler (1862), and Richard Weissenfels (1888).[6] The value of Minde-Pouet's study is perhaps somewhat dimmed today by what we might see as pedantry and dogma. He touches very rarely upon what we consider the "essential" problem. In his investigation of the dialog, to be sure, he emphasizes the realistic style, the "Lebhaftigkeit und Natürlichkeit der Rede" (pp. 25-31), the "Missverständnisse in Wort und Rede" (pp. 31-32), plays on words (pp. 32-35), the interrupted discourse (pp. 35-36), the incompletion of sentences (pp. 36-38), the polyphonic dialog (pp. 38-40), and the so-called "tote Momente"--moments at which Kleist kept his

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[5]Georg Minde-Pouet, Heinrich von Kleist: Seine Sprache und sein Stil (Weimar, 1897).

[6]See Minde-Pouet, ibid., p. iv for Köpke and Köhler. Richard Weissenfels, "Über französische und antike Elemente im Stil Heinrich von Kleists," Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen, LXXX (1888), pp. 265-313.

characters intentionally silent when traditional dialog would have them the most vociferous (pp. 40-41). In his discussion of the monolog (pp. 15-23) Minde-Pouet mentions how it is frequently impossible for Kleist's characters to speak because of their "überschwängliche Gefühle." Yet nowhere does he quite come to the conclusion that it was with precisely these tools of gesture and silence that Kleist most resolutely worked. His partial agreement with Clemens Brentano's familiar criticism that Kleist's figures are "half deaf and stupid"--a deduction drawn from the repetitious and fragmented dialog--is indicative of Minde-Pouet's reluctance to grasp the fundamental reality behind what he sees as "Unnatur und Künstelei" (p. 41). His chapter on "Anschaulichkeit und Prägnanz des Ausdrucks" (pp. 118-127), on the other hand, is more incisive. That on "Sentenzen und Reflexionen" (pp. 130-142), however, bolsters its objections to Kleist's style in these regards upon quotations from Otto Ludwig and Treitschke, and upon the fact that, in contrast to Schiller, "Kleists Reflexionen haben ein so individuelles Gepräge und sind so in den Zusammenhang hineingewebt, dass man sie nur mit Änderungen herausheben kann; sie können nicht für sich bestehen" (p. 132). This is indeed true; but Minde-Pouet finds this to be a fault rather than testimony to the vigor and immediacy of Kleist's dialog. Minde-Pouet's interpretations are uniformly and scrupulously

literal. It is the section on "Die Eigenheiten der Kleistschen Sprache" (pp. 176-198) which demonstrates most clearly the limitations of his analysis as we should judge it today. His understanding seems narrowest when he refers to and then lists the "Auswüchse in der Bildersprache" (pp. 176-180), and when he regrets the "painfulness" of much of the hyperbole, resulting in "zu starke Ausdrücke," "die bis zur Unklarheit sich steigernden verschränkten Wort- und Satzstellungen" (pp. 184-190). Even when there might be plausible ground for objection, the force of his conviction is mitigated by somewhat pontificating pronunciamentos about lapses in the proper use of "unsere Sprache." There is little discussion of Kleist's use of the dash as a Gedankenstrich, of the twisting of the syntax at moments of great emotion, of the purposeful misplacing of adverbs and prepositions, of the subtle reflection in the syntax of emotional preoccupation. He does give, however, this comment and quotation from Brahm, unfortunately without further developing them:

> Eine kunstvolle Deklamation vermag durch sinngemässe Betonung, durch leises Anhalten nach diesem oder jenem Satzteilchen dem so oft verdunkelten Verständnis aufklärend zu Hilfe zu kommen. Und einem Vortrage leistet die reiche, originelle, dem Französischen nachgeahmte [?] Interpunktion Kleists gute Dienste. Fasste doch Kleist selbst den Gedanken, "ob man nicht, wie bei der Musik, auch in der Poesie durch Zeichen den Vortrag andeuten könne; und er machte selbst den Versuch, das Heben, Tragen, Sinkenlassen der Stimme durch Vorschriften zu fixieren . . ." (Brahm S. 177) (p. 203).

Yet despite these reservations, this study must be recognized as the first important critique of Kleist's style. Indeed, it remains today the only book specifically devoted to that subject.

It was nearly a decade before the next study of style was undertaken: a continuation by Albert Fries of the Minde-Pouet investigation.[7] Fries probes somewhat deeper into matters of rhythm, verse construction, peculiarities such as the uniquely Kleistian "Verkehr der Personen untereinander," and the dialog; "Psychologisches" also crops up in the section on "Lebensbeziehungen in den Werken." The most significant enlargement upon the Minde-Pouet book concerns the repetition of motifs and phrases. Again the approach is "Scherer-Schule" philology in the main--but in the "neue Beobachtungen und Forschungen zu Kleists Stil und Sprache" (the third major division of the study, pp. 26ff.), despite the overwhelming adulation with which Fries approaches his subject ("Ich sehe es als eine Art Lebensaufgabe," p. 26), there are a few observations which indicate that this scholar saw well beyond the purely philological enumeration technique and into a realm

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[7]Albert Fries, Stilistische und vergleichende Forschungen zu Heinrich von Kleist, mit Proben angewandter Ästhetik ("Berliner Beiträge zur germanischen und romanischen Philologie," XXX, "Germanische Abteilung," No. 17; Berlin, 1906). See also rev. by Paul Hoffmann in Studien zur vergleichenden Literaturgeschichte, VII (1907), 374-378.

of more synthesizing style speculation:

> Es lässt sich nicht alles verstandesmässig zergliedern und nach Kategorien aufreihen, es will vieles lauschend erraten, trunken geahnt, verstehend nachgelebt sein--Wir müssen selbst ein wenig Kleist sein, Kleist werden, wenn wir Kleist lesen. . . . Wir müssen eintauchen in seine Wogen, uns ganz bespülen lassen und dann stammelnd Nachricht zu geben versuchen von dem, was wir unten an Wunderpflanzen sahen, an seltsamer Wellenmusik belauschten, an einzigartigen Wellendüften einatmeten (p. 23).

It is perhaps regrettable that despite the signs of this generous (indeed, fervid) orientation, Fries' "ästhetisch-stilistische Interpretation einzelner Stellen" (the second phase of the study's third division) is confined entirely to the spoken word, the power of syntax, and similar matters. In general the author seems to have been somewhat too awe-stricken by his image of the divine and oracular Kleist:

> Es ist nur <u>ein</u> Kleist! Er war ein Dichter! . . . Er ist göttlich und allzumenschlich zugleich--lebendig wirkend, wie ein Gott! (p. 27).

Wilhelm Waetzold's article in the following year, "Kleists dramatischer Stil," is of value to us only in being indicative of a retrogression from the advances of Minde-Pouet and Fries (slight as even they may seem today).[8] This investigation attempts to show Kleist's dramatic style to be evidence of his "persönlicher Lebensrhythmus" (p. 46). The concern is

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[8]Wilhelm Waetzold, "Kleists dramatischer Stil," <u>Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft, II</u> (1907), 46-69.

primarily with act division, crests and troughs in the flow of action, analogies with music, verse rhythm. Less dubious are the remarks about the "Verhörsszenen" with their brief, quick, and "real" dialog. There is later, however, a regrettable confusion of artistic media--anticipating the havoc loosed after 1915 by the promiscuous application of the Wölfflinian principles to literature and music--when Waetzold draws further close analogies between dialog and painting, word emphasis and color emphasis. He is more convincing in his discussion of the importance, in all the arts, of repetition. But when later he derives Kleist's syntax from the influence of French word-order, and Kleist's terseness of style from the military orders he had heard in the Prussian army, and when he sees in the dramatic pauses nothing but "Künsteleien" (p. 54)--since he had set up thoroughly arbitrary "Pausenkategorien" in which Schiller's pauses fit with greater ease than Kleist's!--his statements, even for the time, seem farfetched.

Quite another matter are the "Mimische Studien zu Heinrich von Kleist" (1908-09) by Ottokar Fischer.[9] They are the first and the only accurate, exhaustive, and organically

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[9]Ottokar Fischer, "Mimische Studien zu Heinrich von Kleist," Euphorion, XV (1908), 488-510 and 716-725; XVI (1909), 62-92, 412-425, and 747-772.

arranged catalogs of gesture and pantomime in Kleist's dramas, short stories, anecdotes, and letters. Although Fischer's philological orientation permits few generalizing conclusions to be drawn from the compilations, his 102 pages form a basic source for any further consideration of the Gebärdensprache of Kleist. Fischer has gathered and assiduously categorized the various typically Kleistian elements of gesture (in the sense of visible gesticulation): "Mimik des Gesichts," "Geberden der Hand," "Erröten," "Niederknieen," "Sich-Kränzen," "Ohnmacht," "Bewegung der Lippen," "Bewegung der Augen," "Bewegung des Mundes"--each as a separate section. However, only on a very few occasions within this thorough study are there synthesizing conclusions. One example (in connection with the wreath motif):

> Ist nun diese Art von Phantasiebetätigung wahrscheinlich gemacht, so drängt sich die Frage auf, ob nicht andere Beobachtungen über Kleists Schaffen damit in Zusammenhang gebracht werden können, und ob nicht etwa der Umstand, des Dichters Einbildungskraft sei von einer durch bezeichnende Mimik bestimmten Situation ausgegangen, Folgerungen auf die Beschaffenheit seiner schöpferischen Phantasie und seiner dichterischen Wahrnehmungsart überhaupt zulasse (p. 507).

Other instances are:

> Geberden werden zu wesentlichen Bestandteilen der dramatischen Handlung; Dialog und mimische Aktion gehen völlig ineinander auf (p. 509).

> In der Fähigkeit, einen wirklichen oder erdichteten Vorgang in greifbarer Gestalt vor sich zu sehen, liegt ja ein gut Teil der Kleistschen, wie der poetischen Veranlagung überhaupt, begründet. Er

> hat die Schöpfungen seiner Einbildungskraft klar vor Augen, gewiss, und ist darin ein gleich grosser "Realist" wie in den Schilderungen der Einzelheiten des alltäglichen Lebens, die sich seinem Auge mit plastischer Deutlichkeit darbieten, ja aufdrängen (p. 720).

Fischer concludes his section on the pantomimic element in Kleist's writing with these words:

> Ich wende auf Kleist die Worte an, mit denen Nietzsche Wagners Drama zu charakterisieren sucht: Bei Kleist steht im Anfang die Halluzination von Geberden. Wer hat diese Überzeugungskraft der Geberde, wer sieht so bestimmt, so zu allererst die Geberde! (p. 510).

This series of articles anticipates, as little else, the work of Max Kommerell three decades later, and by virtue of its essentially cataloging nature it remains today the most valuable specific source for any study of the tangible gesture in Kleist's writing.

The 1909 dissertation of Helene Krynska, Der sprachliche Ausdruck der Affekte in Kleists dramatischen Werken, might have exhibited more basic understanding of the unspoken word in the plays, if it had had the advantage of Fischer's study in toto.[10] As it is, the brief work, dealing with "Innenvorgänge," "Worte," and "Mimik und Pantomimik" as the three possible ways of expressing emotion, is a curious mixture of a momentary awareness of "das Unaussprechliche" and suffocating pedantry in its dwelling upon the "Ausdrucksmittel,"

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[10]Helene Krynska, Der sprachliche Ausdruck der Affekte in Kleists dramatischen Werken (diss. Bern, 1909).

such as interjections and the like. We cannot say of the following statements (the only ones in which the author makes general remarks about gesture) that they represent any advance over Minde-Pouet's study:

> Die inneren Vorgänge der im Affekt Handelnden machen sich durchaus nicht in ihrem ganzen Umfange durch Worte bemerkbar. Vieles geht blitzschnell, unbewusst vor sich. Und der Dramatiker steht vor einer doppelten Aufgabe: entweder er gibt der Verständlichkeit zu Liebe mehr Worte, als der Betreffende wahrscheinlich sprechen würde, . . . oder er gibt nur wenig und bleibt so vielleicht seinem Publikum etwas unverständlich (p. 6; just what Kleist's solution to this dichotomy was, Krynska does not develop).
>
> Kleist hat es erkannt, die stärksten Leidenschaften, die inhaltsvollsten Momente können manchmal durch Worte gar nicht ausgedrückt werden, und die sogenannten toten Momente spielen in seinen Werken eine grosse Rolle (p. 7).
>
> Und nicht selten weiss Kleist eine Leidenschaft auch nur durch eine einzige aber ausdrucksvolle Geberde anzudeuten (p. 17).

Another publication in 1909--a revamped dissertation on Der bildliche Ausdruck in den Werken Heinrich von Kleists by Joachim Senger--is no more than a lexicographical listing of Kleist's Bildersprache.[11]

The importance of Kleist's dictum: Truth before "Schönheit um jeden Preis," of the terseness of his language, its use of interruptions, uncompleted sentences, repetitions,

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[11]Joachim Henry Senger, Der bildliche Ausdruck in den Werken Heinrich von Kleists ("Teutonia: Arbeiten zur germanischen Philologie," No. 8; Leipzig, 1909).

pauses, scenes of interrogation, and of the application of the essay, Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden to his dramatic technique, all are mentioned, but unfortunately nowhere developed in the consideration of "Stil" and "Poesie" (pp. 30-35) in Erich Schmidt's biographical introduction in the first volume of the five-volume critical edition of the collected works and letters.[12] This is doubtless part of the necessary brevity of this otherwise keen and informative introduction. Schmidt writes: "Der Charakteristiker verschmäht keine äusserste Konsequenz, um Vorgänge, Worte, Gebärden vollauf wiederzugeben" (p. 32).

In contrast to the astounding conciseness of these pages, however, it may at first seem surprising that the vast two-volume work on the drama of Kleist by Heinrich Meyer-Benfey contributes little if anything to the understanding of the language of gesture here.[13] This may be explained in good measure by the thoroughgoing application of Classical criteria to all the works and the strict adherence to the "Sagen" over against the "Tun" in the plays. It is a fact of Kleist scholarship, no matter how coincidental, that since the appearance of the first part of Meyer-Benfey's work in 1911 all

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[12]Heinrich von Kleists Werke, ed. E. Schmidt (Leipzig and Vienna, 1905ff.), I.

[13]Heinrich Meyer-Benfey, Das Drama Heinrich von Kleists (2 vols.; Göttingen, 1911-13).

subsequent Kleist monographs have tended to minimize or ignore stylistic matters--with the outstanding exceptions of the two non-German scholars, Ayrault and Uyttersprot, to be discussed later.

This is also true of Karl Birk, a follower of Otto Brahm, though one of the handful of early Theaterwissenschaftler to have written on Kleist. His Beiträge to the stage productions of Der zerbrochene Krug and Robert Guiskard are unimaginative and seem to be generally directed at the provincial theater.[14] But they do, in part, mark the beginning of a long overdue involvement with Kleist's drama on the part of the small theater in Germany. It is astonishing that in 1910 Birk still had to reveal the dearth of such interest:

> Charakteristiken der einzelnen Personen existieren in Kleist-Biographien, namentlich die von Otto Brahm zeichnen sich durch eine scharfsinnige Deutung der Charaktere aus und dürften darum für den Schauspieler von Wert sein. Dagegen findet sich meines Wissens nirgends eine Charakteristik, die für den Regisseur die Gestalten mit plastischen Zügen bühnenlebendig darstellt und direkte schauspielerische Winke enthält (ZK, p. 16).

Nevertheless, to us Birk's own "Winke" seem no less pedestrian and inflexible than his readings of Kleist's verses. There is some appreciation of the "stummes Spiel" in Eve's role,

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[14]Karl Birk, Heinrich von Kleist: "Der zerbrochene Krug": Ein Beitrag zur Inszenierung des Lustspiels, and Heinrich von Kleist: "Robert Guiskard": Ein Beitrag zur Inszenierung des Fragments (Prague, 1910).

where "all das vom Dichter Gewollte und Gedachte, aber nicht in Wort Gekleidete zur Geltung kommt" (ZK, p. 31), but the Beiträge are typified more by such remarks as this:

> Pathologisch interessant ist die von einer Seite ausgesprochene Anschauung, dass Guiskard seine gewaltige Macht sich nur im Fieberwahne erträume. Diese Ansicht, sei sie noch so begründet und interessant, scheint mir für die Bühnendarstellung nicht empfehlenswert (RG, p. 10).

B. 1911-1933. Besides Brahm, another important theoretician and exponent of Consistent Naturalism in the theater, Julius Hart, tried his hand at Kleist--some years after the heyday of that movement. Das Kleist-Buch (1912) purports to contribute a completely new view of Kleist.[15] Today it is widely regarded as little more than an error-ridden and prolix panegyric. Throughout the book the essayistic "analyses" of content seek out the great "Classical Naturalist" and the "Stoic" in Kleist--but disappointingly (for it is just here that Hart could have been most discerning) the author does not deal with stylistic matters at all. Despite the indisputably important reawakening of interest in Kleist's dramas by the Naturalists, their one-time activistic manifestoes seem to have taken little notice of the subtleties of gesture as an aspect of style.

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[15]Julius Hart, Das Kleist-Buch (Berlin, 1912).

Nor did another theater-oriented publication, Walter Kuehn's Heinrich von Kleist und das deutsche Theater, contribute much understanding in this regard.[16] The volume is a conscientious account of Kleist's personal connections with the theater (completely biographical and factual), his works in the German theater through 1911 (completely historical), and Kleist and the modern theater (based entirely upon secondary sources except for a few timid suggestions as to how the plays might be cut or adapted to fit the "modern taste").

Another contribution to the Kleist Year (1911), however, Hanna Hellmann's Heinrich von Kleist: Darstellung des Problems, is undeniably the "gem" of pre-World War I Kleist literature.[17] This little book is probably the first to look at Kleist's writings as works of art in themselves. Although there is nowhere an elaboration of it, this sensitive essay has sought out by inference the unique position of the unspoken in Kleist's writings. Very important is the fact that Hanna Hellmann was the first scholar to develop the key role of the essay on the Marionettentheater and the substance of the Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen. These words are clearly distinguishable from those of the bulk of her contemporaries in research:

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[16]Walter Kuehn, Heinrich von Kleist und das deutsche Theater (Leipzig, 1912).

[17]Hanna Hellmann, Heinrich von Kleist: Darstellung des Problems (Heidelberg, 1911).

> So wäre [Kleists] Kunst, die objektiv-symbolisch, soweit sie eben Kunst ist, das heisst Vollendetes ist, das "niemals sich allein," das immer auch gleich seine "mitverwandte Welt" ausspricht und so in sich schon jenes Mehr der Bedeutung trägt, in dem das Wesen des Symbols beschlossen ist, sie wäre zugleich im höchsten Masse subjektiv-symbolisch, symbolisch für den Künstler. . . . Wir müssen es Kleist glauben, dass er nicht gedichtet hätte, wenn er das Geheimnis seines Lebens und seiner Welt in unverhüllter Geistigkeit hätte zum Ausdruck bringen können. Wenn das Geheimnis des Lebens unverhüllt zum Ausdruck zu bringen wäre. . . . "Das Höchste kann man eben, weil es unaussprechlich ist, nur allegorisch sagen," heisst es in Friedrich Schlegels Gespräch über die Poesie. Dichten bedeutet Symbolisieren, bedeutet, eigenes Wesen in fremdem Stoff offenbaren (pp. 5-6).

A scholarly thoroughness, devoid of the liberal and enthusiastic grasp of Hellmann's study, however, characterizes the last stylistic investigation before the First World War to deal in part with the non-verbal aspects of speech in Kleist--and for the first time in his prose. Hermann Davidts' book (1913) on the short-story technique of Kleist dates the eight stories and deals thoroughly with both their Gehalt and Gestalt.[18] Here is what is generally regarded as the most competent treatment up to that time of the contagious dynamism of Kleist's prose style (pp. 123-125), of the "Szenenbild" as a "Bühnenbild" (pp. 125-126), "das Äussere der Personen" (pp. 132-133; a reworking of Fischer's tabulations), and of "rhythmisierte Rede" and "Verstummen" as expressions

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[18]Hermann Davidts, Die novellistische Kunst Heinrichs von Kleist ("Bonner Forschungen," No. 5; Berlin, 1913).

of emotion (pp. 140-141). Less satisfactory seem the remarks on intentional terseness of style and the interference of rhythm and rational syntax as purposeful gestures to be thus conveyed to the reader (throughout the second main part of the study).

The next work to concern us is by Johannes Bathe, another dissertation, which appeared in Germany in 1917. It also deals with the Novelle technique of Kleist, specifically Die Bewegungen und Haltungen des menschlichen Körpers in Heinrich von Kleists Erzählungen.[19] Its orientation is stated as "eine psychologische Fragestellung aus statistischen Untersuchungen" and "bezieht sich vorwiegend auf die optischen und akustischen Qualitäten" (preface). Its first sixty pages consist entirely of word-counting and tabulations, and by the time a conclusion is to be drawn (after p. 78), instead of realizing, as Davidts had done, that the actions of the characters reflect their emotions in a kind of "stummes Theater," the author boldly states: "Eine stark einwirkende Bühnenphantasie tritt bei Kleist [in den Novellen] nicht hervor" (p. 79). This most curious conclusion is demonstrated on the basis of some of Ottokar Fischer's statistics and is meant to prove beyond doubt that if the stories were to be (literally?)

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[19]Johannes Bathe, Die Bewegungen und Haltungen des menschlichen Körpers in Heinrich von Kleists Erzählungen (diss. Tübingen, 1917).

dramatized, spectators would find the actors "besessen" with their "unaufhörliches Sichsetzen, Sicherheben, Händeringen, Umarmen, Küssen, Niedersinken, Erblassen und Erröten, Um-Verzeihung-Bitten und Stammeln von Dankes-bezeugungen" (p. 79).

With one exception none of the few dissertations dealing with Kleist's style which appeared from the 1910's through the 1930's is helpful to our understanding of the extra-verbal elements in the author's drama. For the majority, a brief mention of their titles will suffice to indicate the nature of the investigations undertaken in those years by doctoral candidates in Germany and Austria. In 1915 a Heidelberg thesis by Wilhelm Willige on Klassische Gestaltung und romantischer Einfluss in den Dramen Heinrichs von Kleist states explicitly in the introduction that the "Sprachschöpferische" is not to be stressed.[20] The image of Kleist to emerge from it seems today to be far too Classical: under the influence of Meyer-Benfey, Wolters, and Gundolf--seven years before the latter's own book on Kleist--(see introduction) the author's simplified summary seems untenable:

> Schliesslich . . . bringt [Kleist] gewaltiges Zeiterleben eine neue Erleuchtung: er schaut eine neue Welt, er sieht zur Wirrnis die Klärung, zu seinen Rätseln die wirkliche Lösung, alles Zerrissene und Zerklüftete

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[20]Wilhelm Willige, Klassische Gestaltung und romantischer Einfluss in den Dramen Heinrichs von Kleist (diss. Heidelberg, 1915).

> gewinnt ihm Zusammenhang, und die tiefste Qual erkennt er als sinnvoll, notwendig und höherem Zwecke dienlich. . . . Und so dürfen wir ihn auch in diesem höchsten Sinn einen klassischen Künstler nennen (p. 89).

We need make only briefest mention of the dissertations by Gustav Buchtenkirch,[21] Friedrich Kanter,[22] and O. W. Fraude,[23] as they contribute nothing essentially new to our problem. In general the same must be said for the dissertations of Charlotte Schilakowsky,[24] Karl Hans Böhm,[25] Fritz-Julius Miller,[26] and Georg Brod,[27] even though the title of each of them, directed as they are at the theater of Kleist, might make the reader expect a discussion of dramaturgic style. Two additional dissertations with promising titles, "Die 'verdeckte

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[21]Gustav Buchtenkirch, Heinrich von Kleists "Zerbrochener Krug" auf der deutschen Bühne (diss. Heidelberg, 1914).

[22]Friedrich Kanter, Der bildliche Ausdruck in Kleists "Penthesilea" (diss. Jena, 1913).

[23]O. W. Fraude, Heinrich von Kleists "Hermannsschlacht" auf der deutschen Bühne (diss. Kiel, 1919).

[24]Charlotte Schilakowsky, Kleists Überarbeitung seiner Dramen: Ursachen und Auswirkung auf den Gesamtorganismus des einzelnen Kunstwerks (diss. Kiel, 1926).

[25]Karl Hans Böhm, Kleists "Robert Guiskard" auf der deutschen Bühne (diss. Munich, 1932).

[26]Fritz-Julius Miller, "Heinrich von Kleist auf der Wiener Bühne" (unpubl. diss. Vienna, 1930).

[27]Georg Brod, Kleist und Holbein: Ein Beitrag zu dem Problem: Bühne und Drama (diss. Vienna, 1934).

Handlung' bei Kleist" by Lutz Weltmann[28] and "Heinrich von Kleist und das Theater" by Gerhard Reiprich,[29] were never published and have not been available. According to the Kleist bibliography in the 1923-1924 Kleist yearbook (p. 211), however, the last-named must have been one of the first theater-science theses to be written on our author, though apparently there is no concern for pantomimic aspects here.

The one dissertation which expressly develops the pantomime in Kleist is Das stumme Spiel im deutschen Drama von Lessing bis Kleist[30] by Fritz Engert (1928). Two chapters are devoted to Kleist, "Das stumme Spiel in der 'Penthesilea'" and "Die Entwicklung des stummen Spiels bis und bei Kleist." (The others deal with Die Jungfrau von Orleans, Wagner's Kindermörderin, Emilia Galotti, and Tasso.) Engert writes:

> Es handelt sich bei Kleist um stumme "Rätsel-Augenblicke," in denen weder ein einziges starkes Gefühl noch eine einzige starke Willensregung in der Gestalt herrscht. Vielmehr liegt stets ein höchst verwickeltes Durcheinander verschiedenster Regungen gefühls- und willensmässiger Art vor, . . . ja teilweise unbewusst. . . . Von einer rationalen Benennbarkeit des seelischen Inhalts kann hier keine Rede mehr sein (p. 40).

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[28]Lutz Weltmann, "Die 'verdeckte Handlung' bei Kleist" (unpubl. diss., Freiburg i. Br., 1924).

[29]Gerhard Reiprich, "Heinrich von Kleist und das Theater" (unpubl. diss., Würzburg, 1922).

[30]Fritz Engert, Das stumme Spiel im deutschen Drama von Lessing bis Kleist (diss. Leipzig, 1928; publ. 1934).

He seems to grasp, but nowhere develops, the importance of the pause. He perceives the speech of a chorus which accompanies a pantomime as "orchestration" of the "stummes Spiel" (p. 42). "Bei Kleist," writes Engert,

> wirkt das stumme Spiel . . . mit einer Kraft und Gewalt wie bei keinem deutschen Dichter vor ihm. Ja, das stumme Spiel Penthesileas nach der Tötung des Achills steht wohl auch heute noch als ein einsamer Gipfel da (p. 59).

Nowhere, however, does Engert really consider any gestural aspects beyond pantomime and gesticulation. He does not take any essential step beyond what Fischer (no matter how unimaginatively perhaps) had said two decades earlier.

An article dating from the First World War period, "Die Gesten in der deutschen erzählenden Dichtung" by Julius Wiegand (specifically, number 5, "Kleist, 'Michael Kohlhaas'"),[31] suggests nothing more than that "die Gesten bezeugen einen besonderen plastischen Gesichtssinn" (p. 340). An excellent approach to the style of Kleist's dramatic language, on the other hand, is evinced in one of the very few articles on style printed in the Kleist-Jahrbuch during its seventeen-year existence: "Kleists dramatische Kunst," by Julius Petersen, who was for a time a co-editor.[32] Although there is no concern with the

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[31]Julius Wiegand, "Die Gesten in der deutschen erzählenden Dichtung: 5, Kleist: 'Michael Kohlhaas,'" Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur, XL (2. Abt.), 338-340.

[32]Julius Petersen, "Kleists dramatische Kunst," Jahrbuch

unspoken, Petersen dwells at some length on the musicality of the dramatic language. Indicative of his approach is the fact that he sees the aural orientation of Kleist's dramatic technique as more significant than the visual.

The first valuable contributions to an understanding of Kleist's dramatic style by a scholar intimately connected with the theater are contained in three books written in the early 1920's by Julius Bab: Neue Kritik der Bühne: Dramaturgische Grundlegungen[33] (1920), Der Mensch auf der Bühne: Eine Dramaturgie für Schauspieler[34] (1921), and Das Drama der Liebe[35] (1925). This combination of critic, scholar, and theater-man, the first since Otto Brahm to have been keenly involved with Kleist, bases his writings mainly on the "Regieerfahrung von immerhin mehreren Theaterjahren und noch längeren Jahren schauspielerischer Seminarübungen" (Mensch auf der Bühne, p. 183). The specific insights we receive from him are unobtainable elsewhere in Kleist literature. At no place, however, does Bab deal with the question of the gesture divorced from

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der Kleist-Gesellschaft I (1921), 1-21.

[33]Julius Bab, Neue Kritik der Bühne: Dramaturgische Grundlegungen (Berlin, 1920).

[34]Julius Bab, Kleist und Grillparzer," Der Mensch auf der Bühne: Eine Dramaturgie für Schauspieler (Berlin [1921]), Vol. I Chap. 6, pp. 175-209.

[35]Julius Bab, Das Drama der Liebe (Berlin and Leipzig, 1925).

the word itself. Although it is safe to say that he senses it everywhere, he never wrote of it as a separate stylistic entity. The two short volumes which Bab devoted entirely to Kleist--Preussen und der deutsche Geist: Heinrich von Kleist[36] (1915; a bit of benevolent propaganda) and Heinrich von Kleist und seine Bühnenwerke[37] (1922; a cursory Bühnenführer through the dramas)--nowhere make any mention of mimic concepts. Yet what he writes in the other more general volumes about such matters as the hiatus, the caesura, the balance and timing of speech, and "die Mittel, durch die der Dichter das lebendige Wesen der Sprache, den Sprachschöpfungsprozess, dauernd in Fluss hält"--namely, rhythm, syntax, and metaphor (Neue Kritik, pp. 38-45)--is impressive evidence of his encompassing knowledge of Kleist as a writer for the theater. When Bab speaks of the ultimate significance of the word over the gesture it is apparent that he is not altogether denying gesture its role, but he is at the same time manifestly discounting what he sees as the indefensible claims of those who would maintain that emotion can be revealed more meaningfully in gesture without words (i.e., pure pantomime) than with them as a framework

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[36]Julius Bab, Preussen und der deutsche Geist (Heinrich von Kleist) (Konstanz, 1915).

[37]Julius Bab, Heinrich von Kleist und seine Bühnenwerke: Eine Einführung ("Schneiders Bühnenführer"; Berlin, 1922).

or accompaniment. With specific reference to Kleist, his analyses of the vocal style in various dramatic scenes are more incisive than any criticism heretofore and imply everywhere a realization of the unspoken, if perhaps not a full appreciation of its sometimes central significance. Rather than quote at length from Neue Kritik, the more theoretical of Bab's two basic books, let it suffice to cite the problem with which it deals: "Durch welche stilistischen Mittel verleiht der Dramatiker den Worten seiner Personen den Schein von Leben, der uns allein seine Ergriffenheit zu übermitteln vermag?" (p. 25), and what was found as "unwandelbares Gesetz, als Wesen der Form" in its quintessential formulation:

> Das Drama ist als Sprachkunstwerk fassbar, sobald wir als das zündende Erlebnis des dramatischen Dichters gefühlsmässige Ergriffenheit durch das Wesen des zu praktischem Zwecke sprechenden Menschen erkennen. Dies Wesen aber wird künstlerisch suggestiv, wenn der Dichter den Sprachschöpfungsprozess unter Durchhalten eines dualistischen Grundtakts darzustellen vermag" (p. 58).

Despite the conspicuous absence of the word "Gebärde" everywhere and the constant emphasis on the word "Sprache," it would seem that the relentless "dualism" to be maintained is one between precisely these two elements: the word and the gesture.

It is tantalizing how close Bab comes to formulating the concept of gesture as the distinguishing trademark of Kleist's dramatic vision. It is almost explicit in the following comparison and contrast with Shakespeare (from Der

Mensch auf der Bühne):

> Kleist gleicht dem Shakespeare darin, dass ihm kein anderes Erlebnis der Welt entfernt so wichtig ist wie der Mensch, die schicksalsbildende Persönlichkeit. Darum gleicht er ihm mehr als irgend ein anderer deutscher Dramatiker in der ununterbrochenen Bewegtheit, der rein handelnden Entfaltung, der nichts als dramatischen Natur seiner Sprache, die beinah gar keine lyrischen und epischen Abschweifungen kennt. Aber er unterscheidet sich von Shakespeare dadurch, dass ihm der Mensch nicht das grosse, sichere, in Schmerz und Entzücken immer unumstössliche klare Erlebnis ist. Er muss aus immer neuen Zweifeln und Erschütterungen sein Gefühl vom Wert, von der Einheit, von der Grösse der menschlichen Person erst herausreissen. Deshalb werden gewisse sprachliche Rhythmen, die vereinzelt auch in hohen Augenblicken Shakespeares auftauchen, bei ihm geradezu die Grundelemente der Sprache. Deshalb wechselt bei ihm der splitternde, zersprengte, aufgelöst durcheinander jagende, wild verwirrende Dialog ständig mit der grossartig gefassten, gewitterhaft ausrollenden Periode. Weil Kleists Menschen immer auf der Jagd sind, ihre gefährdete, entschwindende Persönlichkeit wieder zu fassen und zu erhöhen, deshalb strengt er den Schauspieler äusserlich und innerlich in einem Masse an, wie weder Shakespeare, noch sonst ein Dramatiker. Kleists Mensch ist eigentlich ständig in der Krise und will (bildlich verstanden) immer fortissimo gespielt werden (p. 187).

The Expressionist "Lebenswissenschaftler" and Baroque and Schiller scholar, Herbert Cysarz, would seem to be quite correct when he writes in Erfahrung und Idee[38] (1921):

> In virtuoser Weise versteht [Kleist] es, szenische Bemerkungen, Drastik, Mimik, alle Arten von Gebärde, im Dialog zum Ausdruck zu bringen, eine spezifische Fähigkeit Shakespeares. Gerade die hingewühlten Gesprächsfetzen liefern hier lebendige Bilder und wichtige Regieangaben (p. 251).

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[38]Herbert Cysarz, Erfahrung und Idee: Probleme und Lebensformen in der deutschen Literatur von Hamann bis Hebbel (Vienna and Leipzig, 1921).

But he exhibits perhaps less understanding later:

> Kleist ist als Gestalter des Wortes der grossartigen Geschlossenheit seiner Emotionen, der bis zur Indifferenz zur ideellen Ewigkeit gesteigerten, inneren Form bei Weitem nicht ebenbürtig (p. 251).

Although Friedrich Gundolf's Heinrich von Kleist[39] (1922) deals no more specifically with style and theater in Kleist's works than the long works of Walter Muschg[40] (1923) and Friedrich Braig[41] (1925), it is such a unique work in this field that it must not go unmentioned. There is much in it that is refreshing, much that has often been called infuriatingly stubborn and open to accusation of prejudice. The formulation is superb throughout. His attack of Kleist, if that is what it is to be called, is not based upon analyses of the works themselves; the orientation is not stylistic--indeed, it is nothing other than what has come to be known as "Gundolfian": the candid approach of the critic to the poet--for Gundolf, a thoroughly unintimidated confrontation. The frequent comparisons to Goethe and Shakespeare redound consistently to Kleist's disfavor. The view is olympian and the approach often pointedly detached. The importance of this curiously ambiguous work (one which at times seems to have

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[39]Friedrich Gundolf, Heinrich von Kleist (Berlin, 1922).

[40]Walter Muschg, Kleist (Zurich, 1923).

[41]Friedrich Braig, Heinrich von Kleist (Munich, 1925).

been written in spite of its author, some think even as a sort of penance) is summed up by Paul Kluckhohn in his first Forschungsbericht[42] thus:

> Im letzten Grunde wird Gundolf . . . Kleist nicht gerecht. Das Gesamtbild, das hier entsteht, ist aus der kritischen Haltung eines ihm fern und fremd gegenüberstehenden Geistes, dessen Ausdrucksvermögen und Gefühl für Echtheit und Eigenart dichterischer Werke alle anderen Schriften der Kleistliteratur, mögen sie auch aus grösserer Liebe entstanden sein, weit hinter sich lässt. Um so dankbarer ist man für dieses Buch über den Dichter Kleist, wenn man in den jüngsten Monographien den Dichter allzusehr als Philosophen und Weltanschauungsproblematiker behandelt sieht (p. 818).

With the last sentence Kluckhohn refers primarily to Muschg's work, in which everything Kleist ever did or wrote seems to center upon the so-called "Kantkrise" (Kluckhohn is exceedingly negative in his criticism of this volume) and to Friedrich Braig's long treatise, which despite its cautious and knowledgeable qualities "dennoch die schwersten Bedenken auslöst" (Kluckhohn, p. 829) in its relentlessly Christian orientation and evaluations. That these extensive products of research totally neglect Kleist the poet and stylist, Kluckhohn finds most regrettable. In connection with this neglect and the need at the time for a closely analytical approach to Kleist's work, we quote from Kluckhohn:

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[42]Paul Kluckhohn, "Das Kleistbild der Gegenwart: Bericht über die Kleist-Literatur der Jahre 1922-25," Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift, IV (1926), 798-830.

> [Of Braig] Dieses Werk bedeutet, trotz seines schweren Rüstzeugs und mancher wertvollen Einzelerkenntnisse in seiner Einseitigkeit doch einen Rückschritt und eine Verzeichnung des Bildes. Erst recht gilt das von Muschg. Mit Erschrecken sieht man, wohin die notwendig gewesene Wendung unserer Wissenschaft in die Richtung der "Synthese" und "Schau" führen kann, wenn sie eine Vernachlässigung der Analyse und philologischen Kritik mit sich bringt oder zur Unterstützung vorgefasster Meinungen missbraucht wird (p. 829).

The pendulum had indeed swung in the opposite direction since the studies of Minde-Pouet and Fischer; and in Kluckhohn's opinion at least, there had not been (nor was there to be in the years ahead) any perfect wedding of the analytical and synthesizing views of Kleist's writing.

All the more refreshing, if not corrective, is Gundolf's book, however. Lacking space to give examples of his unique characterizations (which in most cases are of matters foreign to the special task of this study), we cite only a few lines to indicate the author's particular apprehension of the role which gesture plays in Kleist's works:

> Nur <u>dass</u> Kleists Zeugnisse so wenig über seine Dichtung aussagen, diese Tatsache selbst sagt etwas darüber aus. Dass sein Bewusstsein nicht in sein Schaffen hineinleuchtete, grenzt dies Schaffen ab (p. 23).

> Er fühlte in Farben, Tonfällen, Gebärden, die sich in Menschen umsetzen. . . . Der Affekt, nicht die Leidenschaft wie bei Shakespeare, nicht der Gedanke wie bei Schiller, nicht das Gefühl wie beim jungen Goethe, entzündet bei Kleist den dramatischen Willen (p. 24).

> Was Kleist gelebt, hat er musikalisch, nicht plastisch umgesetzt, und es steht deutlicher in der Formgebung als in den Aussagen seiner Werke, deutlicher in der

> Bewegung als in der Struktur seiner Stoffe, deutlicher in seinem Ton als in seinem Wort (p. 26).

Arnold Zweig's "Versuch über Kleist" in his book Lessing, Kleist, Büchner[43] (1925) is still regarded as one of the outstanding essayistic attempts at fathoming the essence of the author and his literary production. Its wide and generous view anticipates later scholarly work of others; there seems also little doubt that it was very familiar to Kommerell. The approach is quite without burdensome pedantic overtones. It is general in nature and there are no specific investigations of style; which is not to say, however, that the eminence of "das Unaussprechliche" is not grasped. Zweig writes,

> Mit welchem Glück hat er vermieden, auch in Dramen oder Novellen so erkenntnisbeladene, scharfsinnige Denkerfiguren einzuführen, die die durchaus anschauliche Atmosphäre mit der Denkfunktion ihrer Worte nur zerstört hätten! Dieser Dichter denkt in Personen, und er spricht nur aus Personen. . . . Seine Gedanken gibt er nicht in Beweisen, sondern in [Personen] und Anekdoten, aus denen das zu Beweisende, verkörpert und nicht ausgesagt, höchst einleuchtend, d.h. anschaulich und überzeugend hervortritt, so dass das Denken des Dichters, sein geistiges Meinen wie in der Szenenführung eines Dramenaktes nur an der Form und Art der Verkörperung merkbar wird (pp. 123-124).
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> In jedes seiner Werke dichtet er einen Teil seiner Seele, nie ihre Ganzheit, denn die kann er nur als Stimmung fassen, nicht verkörpern: sie ist zu reich und seine Aufgabe zu schwer! Die Form wiedererobern, die immer wieder entglitten ist, und mit ihr eine Welt des Herzens, der Nerven und des Geistes auszudrücken (p. 127).

Gottfried Zeissig's article, "Heinrich von Kleists

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[43]Arnold Zweig, Lessing, Kleist, Büchner: Drei Versuche (Berlin, 1925).

Dramensprache,"[44] (1929) is an attempt, "Kleists Dramensprache als Offenbarung seiner Denk- und Wesensformen zu verstehen" (p. 118). The interpretation of the essays Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden, Über das Marionettentheater, Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen, and Brief eines jungen Dichters an einen jungen Maler is altogether synthetic in approach and fails to demonstrate for want of sufficient illustration the organic connection with the dramatic language, which these essays indeed possess. On two occasions there is some brief mention of the elements of the unspoken:

> Am stärksten und eindrücklichsten . . . wirkt Kleists Dramensprache da, wo sie den tragisch-spannenden Stimmungskern nicht unmittelbar offenbart, sondern versteckt. Auch hier ist Kleists antithetisches Formgefühl erkennbar: Aussen- und Innenseite der Sprache stehen gegeneinander, und aus ihrem Spannungsverhältnis entsteht jene quälend zwiespältige Stimmung, wie sie Kleist liebt (p. 135).
>
> Das epische Verweilen bei nebensächlichen Einzelheiten hat bei Kleist immer den Zweck, das Wesentliche dadurch, dass es nicht ausgesprochen wird, in beängstigender Unfassbarkeit erahnen zu lassen (p. 137).

One has the impression that Zeissig might very well have offered a great deal with the further development of this latter insight. (This technique he sees, quite correctly, illustrated in Amphitryon II/ii, Schroffenstein V/i, and in

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[44]Gottfried Zeissig, "Heinrich von Kleists Dramensprache," Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde [Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht], XLIII (1929), 118-137.

much of Der zerbrochene Krug.)

There can still be little question today that Gerhard Fricke's Gefühl und Schicksal bei Heinrich von Kleist[45] (1929) is one of the cornerstone contributions to the modern understanding of Kleist and the organic unity of the man and his works. He does not deal, however, in terms of close textual analysis of the writings. This is the task which Fricke sets for himself in his chapter "Zur Aufgabe und Methode," but which he explicitly states is not to be exhaustively realized in the book:

> Dem schlechthin geistigen Urerlebnis Kleists, der eigentlichen, einmaligen und zugleich ewigen Substanz seines Wesens gilt es, sich anzunähern. Und diese Aufgabe, den "Weg der Seele" des Genius und--vielleicht mehr durch Umschreibung Andeutung, Symbol, als durch begriffliche Formeln, die immer unzulänglich bleiben--die innere Dynamik seines Geistes, ihren Ursprung, ihre Notwendigkeit, ihr Ziel sichtbar werden zu lassen--diese Aufgabe scheint bei Kleist nach wie vor ihrer Lösung zu harren (p. 5).

Fricke's was a new departure. It is true that the language of the study seems at times unnecessarily complex; it is frequently objected that the simple is often overladen with a density of style rarely encountered elsewhere in Kleist literature; the obvious often made paradoxically obscure. The

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[45]Gerhard Fricke, Gefühl und Schicksal bei Heinrich von Kleist: Studien über den inneren Vorgang im Leben und Schaffen des Dichters ("Neue Forschung: Arbeiten zur Geistesgeschichte der germanischen und romanischen Völker " No. 3; Berlin, 1929).

orientation is clearly Heidegger- and Jaspers-inspired. It is a reaction to the historical, purely biographical, and the psychological approaches. There are no form analyses as such, and consequently the study does not apply in any of its details to our investigation. Perhaps the most regrettable aspect of Fricke's milestone achievement is that ultimately the phenomenon Kleist is raised above the works themselves. This fact (and possibly other reservations which are not elaborated) is doubtless what Kurt May has in mind when he writes in his 1957 essay on Penthesilea:[46]

> Die Linie, die von Heinrich von Kleist in den modernen philosophischen Existentialismus hineinführt, liegt zutage. . . . Aber eine existenz-theologische Auslegung in der Art Gerhard Frickes, der doch unser Kleist-Verständnis einmal bedeutsam erneuert hat, ist heute nicht mehr tragbar (p. 246).

Others have voiced the same reservations; even more recently than May we read the following as part of the task which Friedrich Koch sets for himself in his foreword to Heinrich von Kleist: Bewusstsein und Wirklichkeit[47] (1958):

> Eine zweite Aufgabe: die Korrektur des Bildes von Kleists Leben und Erleben, wie es seit Gerhard Fricke weithin die Kleistdeutung beherrscht. Fricke fand als das rettende Grunderlebnis Kleists die Erfahrung des "Gefühls," die eine gewisse Phase

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[46]Kurt May, Form und Bedeutung: Interpretationen deutscher Dichtung des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts (Stuttgart, 1957).

[47]Friedrich Koch, Heinrich von Kleist: Bewusstsein und Wirklichkeit (Stuttgart, 1958).

> seines Lebens bestimmt, und interpretiert sie in die anderen Lebensabschnitte hinein. Unter den mancherlei Versuchen Kleists, seinem Leben einen Sinn zu gewinnen, hebt er diesen besonders hervor und macht ihn zum Grundzug des Kleistschen Lebens überhaupt. Aus dieser Einseitigkeit gilt es das Bild von Kleists Leben zu befreien (pp. v-vi).

Such eloquent disavowals attest to the impact which Fricke's study continues to have on scholars today. Be these as justified as they may, we cannot deny that Fricke's exploration demonstrated as never before the inseparability of Kleist and his work, and--this is our concern--further opened the way for all subsequent investigations of style as being an integral manifestation of Kleist's "Einmaligkeit."

Two studies in the years immediately following are in part devoted to the particular problem of the gesture in Kleist's works: one of them, a short article by Robert Petsch, "Die dramatische Gebärde,"[48] has been unavailable. The other is a 1931 publication, Die dramatische Charaktergestaltung bei Heinrich von Kleist, by Wolfgang von Einsiedel.[49] This work, clearly influenced in part by Fricke and devoted specifically to an investigation of the Kleistian development of character in Penthesilea, is a definite contribution to the

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[48]Robert Petsch, "Die dramatische Gebärde," Das Nationaltheater [a Theaterheft], Oct., 1930, pp. 41-46.

[49]Wolfgang von Einsiedel, Die dramatische Charaktergestaltung bei Heinrich von Kleist, besonders in seiner "Penthesilea" ("Germanische Studien," No. 109; Berlin, 1931).

investigation of style in Kleist and to some extent directly applicable to our problem. Despite its (at times unavoidably) repetitive nature and the seemingly stilted way in which style categories are posited the explication of Kleist's dramatic figure as "der antinomische Mensch, . . . der Mensch der ungeheuersten Gegensätzlichkeit, der angesichts eines sinnlosen oder sinndunklen Daseins seine unbedingte Existenz auf ein letztes Fundament gründet: das Gefühl, das zugleich die Funktionen des Erkennens, Wollens, Handelns umfasst" (p. 45), is made convincing. Kleist's means for creating the dramatic figure are divided into "Äusserung" and "Spiegelung," of which the former predominates; it is subdivided into the aspects of "Wort" and "Gebärde," designated in turn as "Tonfall" and "Mienenspiel" and the interaction of these elements; the subdivisions of the gesture are the "begleitende," the "tragende," and the "symbolische." Regardless of the fact that the symbolic gesture cannot be said to be satisfactorily developed and that the others are denoted by only a few illustrations, this study is the first to have incorporated the concept of "das Unaussprechliche" in an organic investigation of style. (The specific term is not used, however.) The various aspects of "das Wort" ("Tonfall," "Melos," "Rhythmus," "Metapher," "Stauung," "Aufspaltung," "Wiederholung," and the like) are not considered enough in depth to permit any new insights into

the verbal language. And perhaps the single greatest misgiving to be had with this book is that von Einsiedel does not soon enough come to the conclusion that the word is often a gesture itself. His division between the two is often artificial; and his assiduous over-categorizing has prevented him from appreciating and demonstrating sufficiently the identity here. Only in his conclusion--which, as an important step in the chronological view of our problem's development, we shall quote at length--does he come close to seeing this. As one of the three

> charakteristischen Wesensmerkmale Kleistscher Ausdruckssprache erschien uns das Verhältnis von Wort und Gebärde. Beide bilden zunächst eine Einheit--derart aber, dass das Wort den Vorrang behauptet. Das bedeutet zweierlei: einmal, dass die Gebärde als solche vielfach in die Wortsprache, in Tonfall, Rhythmus, Gleichnis mit einbezogen scheint (so dass der Schauspieler mit Gesten bei Kleist sparsam sein darf). Zum anderen, dass die Gebärde selbst mehr Ausdrucks- und Darstellungswert besitzt. So bewahrt selbst im Bericht die geschilderte, handlungstragende Gebärde--oder vielmehr, wie wir sahen, die Folge zweier gegensätzlicher Gebärden--noch ihren expressiven Charakter.
>
> Es handelt sich also bei Kleist vorwiegend um Begleitgebärden. Sind sie physiognomisch-mimischer Art und so subtil, dass sie auf der Bühne kaum mehr wahrgenommen werden könnten, übermittelt sie uns der Dichter durch ein Wort des Gegenspielers. [This would seem to be a much too simplifying statement.] Finden sie sich dagegen in szenischen Bemerkungen ausdrücklich vorgeschrieben, so tragen sie meist symbolische Akzente und wachsen sich zu grossen, weiterhin sichtbaren Bewegungen aus.
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> Löst sich nun aber die Gebärde vom Wort, erfolgt mithin eine Sprengung oder Lockerung jener ursprünglichen Einheit, so wird sie entweder zu tragender

> Gebärde, die den gesamten Ausdrucksgehalt des dramatischen Augenblicks in sich sammelt; oder zur enthüllenden, die über ihre pragmatische Funktion hinaus noch symbolischen Charakter besitzt.
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> Die tragende Gebärde deutet insbesondere auf Erlebnisvorgänge, die sich der Verlautbarung durchs Wort entziehen. Sie findet sich vornehmlich in Augenblicken der tiefsten Erschütterung, der Verwirrung oder Bewusstseinsumdämmerung; oder auch der Scham.
>
> Die enthüllende oder symbolische Gebärde tritt oftmals in Gegensatz zum Sachgehalt des gesprochenen Wortes, da sie einen Tatbestand offenbart, den diese zu verschweigen oder zu verschleiern trachtet; oder aber, sie ist so ausdrucksstark, dass sie dem Gehalt der Worte gleichgeordnet scheint oder es sich sogar unterwirft. --Die tragende und symbolische Gebärde sind mithin Formen gesteigerten Ausdrucks (pp. 97-98).

Meta Corssen's comparison of Kleist und Shakespeare[50] (1930) is another of the few substantial stylistic analyses in the field. The clarity of her own style is most welcome. Particularly incisive is her seventh chapter, "Die Sprache" with its subdivisions: "Sprachinhalt," "Sprachgefüge," and "Vers." It is regrettable for our purposes that her lucid insight does not extend to a discussion of the extra-verbal elements in the style of the two great dramatists. Only the comparison of the hiatus in their verses applies to our problem (Chapter VII).

In the following year the pedagogical guidebook of Wilhelm Schneider, Ausdruckswerte der deutschen Dichtung,[51] made brief note of the "Kunst des Auslassens" which Kleist

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[50] Meta Corssen, Kleist und Shakespeare ("Forschungen zur neueren Literaturgeschichte," No. 41; Weimar, 1930).

[51] Wilhelm Schneider, Ausdruckswerte der deutschen Dichtung (Leipzig and Berlin, 1931).

"meisterlich versteht" (p. 50). The application here is to the short-story technique and what Schneider calls its "Zusammenziehen" or "Einkochen" [:].

By the early 1930's a number of scholars and critics of the theater had again turned attention to Kleist's work on the stage (as had Bab in the early 1920's and Brahm before him in the 1880's). The number of reviews and critiques of Kleist performances is great at this time. Few of them, however, seem to have been concerned with the aspects of the ineffability of situation and character; it is probable that few performances were able to capture it well enough. And with the advent of National Socialism the incidence of performances of Käthchen, Homburg, and Hermannsschlacht and their application to the so-called furthering of national interests grew noticeable. In the period just previous to the "millennial dispensation," however, there was considerable discernment by drama critics of the German press. Outstanding among them was Felix Hollaender in whose Lebendiges Theater: Eine Berliner Dramaturgie[52] (1932) we find such passages as this from a review of a performance of Käthchen's role:

In dieser Unbewusstheit und Selbstverständlichkeit,

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[52]Felix Hollaender, Lebendiges Theater: Eine Berliner Dramaturgie (Berlin, 1932).

> in dieser äussersten Einfachheit, die keinen Strich zuviel gibt, in diesem organischen Zusammengehen von Wort, Ton und Gebärde, in dieser Anmut des Herzens und unbeschreiblichen Grazie des Körpers liegt eine Gewähr (p. 82).

Or from a review of Homburg:

> Was bedeutet uns die Diskussion über das Vaterland, das Individuum und den Staat? Einen Schmarren, meine Herrschaften, würde ich antworten--im Gedanken an den Tod. Sterben ist eine verflucht bittere Angelegenheit. Machen wir uns nichts vor! . . . [Homburgs] menschliches Schicksal geht über das Absingen von Chorälen, über Kanonendonner und über die demütige Preisung Gottes, der in seiner Weisheit sich für den Sieg des Kurfürsten entschieden hat. . . . Aber das ist ja das Wunderbare, dass bei Kleist Idee und Gestalt eins werden, dass hinter allen geistigen Formen blutvolle Menschen sich bewegen, deren Ach und Weh wir teilen. Und immer bleibt bei ihm ein anonymer Rest. . . . Die Schauspieler Kleists müssen aus dem Weichbild des Gewöhnlichen heraustreten--sie müssen ahnen, dass dieses Dichters Geschöpfe irgendwie undurchsichtig sind, bis die Schleier im entscheidenden Augenblick gelüftet werden. [Of Paul Hartmann's too resilient and Schilleresque portrayal of the Prince:] Im Seelischen zu flach, zu gradlinig war dieser Prinz. Für das Somnambule und Verzückte, für den Zustand des Todesgrauens fand er nicht den überzeugenden Ausdruck. Aus Kleists Sprache und Vers [und Gebärde] wurden nicht jene besonderen Reize geschöpft, durch die sie sich wesentlich von der Diktion anderer Dichter unterscheiden (pp. 42-43).

C. 1933-1945. Interesting in this connection is the dissertation of Hans Zigelski, Heinrich von Kleist im Spiegel der Theaterkritik des 19. Jahrhunderts[53] (1934), which seems to be an excellent account of the development of both the

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[53]Hans Zigelski, Heinrich von Kleist im Spiegel der Theaterkritik des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zu den Aufführungen der Meininger (diss. Erlangen, 1934).

journalistic and audience reaction to the performances of all of Kleist's dramas in Germany from 1811 until about 1880. Particularly illuminating are the accounts of the extraordinary misunderstandings and slanted interpretations of both works and author. However, Zigelski does not include any critiques of dramatic style which are pertinent for us.

This is not true of the investigation by Jens Soltau of Die Sprache im Drama[54] (1933), in which a sizable section is devoted to the importance of "das unmittelbare Sagen" in contrast to "das Gesagte" in Kleist's dramas (particularly pp. 55-83). But the section is perhaps somewhat too extensive in its synthesis, Soltau having apparently found many ways of restating his one fundamental point (without enough illustration):

> Das Sprechen selbst oder die unmittelbare Aktion des Sagens in ihrer dynamischen Entfaltung und Zielstrebigkeit bleibt in Kleists Sprachschöpfung in jeder Hinsicht das Wesentlichste (p. 81).

On the other hand, his brief comparisons of speech patterns in the dramas of Kleist, Shakespeare, Schiller, and Goethe are precise and illuminating. In the case of Kleist it is clear that Soltau (although he never states it in quite this way) conceives of the act of speaking as a primary gesture. He writes of him:

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[54]Jens Soltau, Die Sprache im Drama ("Germanische Studien," No. 139; Berlin, 1933).

> Wenn seine Sprache auch lyrische Elemente und stimmungsschaffende Worte in reichstem Masse mit sich führt, so wollen sie doch niemals aus der aktiven Sprachbewegung gelöst und für sich genommen im blossen Worte ausgewertet werden, wie ein lyrisches Gedicht. Wenn Kleist in einem Briefe schreibt: Ach! es gibt kein Mittel, sich anderen ganz verständlich zu machen. . . , so sagt er damit nur [!], dass er die Sprache der erschöpfenden Aussage, die Sprache des Lyrikers eben, nicht kennt. . . . Kleist bleibt in seinem ursprünglichen Verhältnis zur Sprache ein Antipode des Lyrikers in Goethe, dem wirklich ein Gott zu sagen gab, was er leide (p. 79).
>
> Wenn man ihn Schritt für Schritt in seiner Wortbedeutung, losgelöst aus dem aktiven Sprachprozess, auswerten wollte, so würde man damit sein eigentlichstes Wesen und seinen inneren Sinn vollkommen zerstören. Nur auf dem Wege, den die Sprache geht, leuchten die Dinge auf, um die Bewegung als solche erst ganz fühlbar werden zu lassen. Der Hörer oder Leser hat keine Zeit, das Gegenständliche für sich auszuwerten und er soll sie auch gar nicht haben, denn dem Sprecher oder dem Erzähler Kleist kommt es nicht darauf an, etwas anschaulich zu machen oder einen gegebenen Inhalt sprachlich auszuschöpfen. Bewegung ist alles. . . . Die Sprache ist diese Bewegung gleichsam selbst (pp. 80-81).

We may note in this regard that it is this very aspect of immediacy in Kleist's dramatic style--an immediacy of word and gesture and word as gesture--which necessitates something unknown in the explication of an Ideendrama, namely, a running commentary: an attempt at making performance and critique simultaneous--an attempt, of course, doomed to failure. And yet there can be no other completely vital method of exhibiting the dynamism at the heart of every Kleist play. Soltau continues:

> Solcher Sprachgebrauch, in dem der unmittelbare Sprachprozess immer etwas anderes und immer auch mehr bedeutet als das Gesagte in seinem objektiven Wort- und Sinngehalt, schafft immer eine Rolle, die im Raume dargestellt werden will. Hier ist Otto Ludwigs "wahres Gesetz der dramatischen Kunst" erfüllt, das in einer "solch innigen Durchdringung des Poetischen und des Theatralischen" beruht, "dass beide ihre Eigenheit verlieren, das Poetische zugleich das Schauspielerische, das Theatralische zugleich das Poetische wird." Der Sprachleib treibt seinem inneren Sprachgebrauch nach die theatralische Gebärde und die theatralische Form ganz von selbst hervor als notwendige Lebensbedingung (p. 83).

These significant discernments about the organism of Kleist's dramatic language do not seem to have been discussed in these terms before Soltau's article.

The first non-German contribution of major significance to Kleist scholarship appeared in 1934: Roger Ayrault's Heinrich von Kleist,[55] a nearly six-hundred-page study of "le poète," "sa vision du monde et de l'homme," and "son art." Perhaps the outstanding feature of the study is the freshness of its approach and the fund of comparative literary material which Ayrault brings to his subject. The last section of the book is devoted to Kleist's style. It is here that we can appreciate Ayrault's return to the primary sources for his study. He strongly emphasizes the importance of the essays Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden and Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen and their

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[55]Ayrault, Heinrich von Kleist (Paris, 1934).

purport for the various works. The discussion of the power of repetition in dialog (an important gesture in Kleist) is new and convincing; and the extension of the image through word associations is sensitively treated. On the other hand, the remarks on the hyperbole and the period are not original. In general the impression is that altogether Ayrault's grasp of Kleist's style is unusually sympathetic. We regret that he did not extend his specific considerations to include l'ineffabilité and le mouvement expressif, which seem latent in much of his analysis. In speaking, for example, of the two Kleist essays mentioned above, Ayrault writes:

> Entre ces deux aveux qui enferment sa création poétique Kleist n'a point varié; et son essai [Brief] s'inspire de la même conviction bien qu'elle y apparaisse moins crûment. Le mépris qu'il porte au langage, n'y trouve pas d'expression directe, mais l'incite à en parler sans mystère, à révéler l'aspect mécanique de son fonctionnement, à présenter l'acte de la parole comme une série de mouvements infimes, non comme une irruption toute puissante, et de mouvements très bien connus, que l'esprit peut diriger savamment s'il sait être armé de conscience. Il revendique pour le langage le bénéfice d'une certaine force originelle, mais il revendique pour l'esprit la possibilité de s'en servir par des moyens appropriés (p. 558).

The inability of ultimate communication between two people--certainly the central aspect of Kleistian "Unaussprechlichkeit"--is briefly examined by Oskar Walzel in his succinct article, "Kleist der Tragiker"[56] (1935). He writes:

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[56]Oskar Walzel, "Kleist der Tragiker," Neophilologus, XX (1935), 190-198 and 272-287.

> Sich wechselseitig nicht zu verstehen, ist bei Kleist nicht bloss Ergebnis der Verhältnisse und nicht bloss bestimmt, künftig bessere Verhältnisse zu schaffen. Die Unfähigkeit, den anderen zu begreifen, wird zum eigentlichen Kern der Tragik. . . . Eine Missdeutung ist Ursache der Tragik (p. 198).

Gerhard Fricke found more than an enthusiastic disciple in Clemens Lugowski, whose "existentielle Gehaltsanalyse," Wirklichkeit und Dichtung[57] (1936), is an investigation of the "Wirklichkeitsauffassung" of Kleist. It sheds additional light upon the style of Kleist's dramatic syntax, again with emphasis on the revelations in the essay on the gradual completion of thought through the process of speaking. Each of Lugowski's remarks on stylistic matters is then brought into close connection with his demonstrations of the extraordinary reality-perception and reality-evocation in Kleist's creations. In reference to our problem one might cite Lugowski's remark on the silence in the roles of the Kurfürst and (in prose) of Kohlhaas: the element of "in-der-Schwebe-Bleiben." We are warned, however, not to overinterpret these silences--for they are elements of Wirklichkeit per se and cannot be tampered with:

> Wir können nicht in die Menschen hineinsehen, und

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[57] Clemens Lugowski, Wirklichkeit und Dichtung: Untersuchungen zur Wirklichkeitsauffassung Heinrich von Kleists (Habilitationsschrift, Göttingen, 1935; Frankfurt-on-Main, 1936).

> selbst sachhafte Kausalzusammenhänge sind uns niemals ganz durchsichtig. . . . Alles echte Wagnis beruht auf dieser Undurchsichtigkeit. Das Geheimnis lebt überall da, wo Wirklichkeit das in einem letzten Grunde Unerklärliche ist und als solches ernst genommen und fraglos anerkannt wird (p. 218).

This is clearly true--but are we to balk before this "Undurchsichtigkeit" without any attempt to explain it at least in stylistic terms? Fortunately Lugowski's awe for this aspect of his subject does not become more timorous than this, and his demonstrations of why we have moments of tortured silence so often in Kleist's works are for the most part convincing. This he summarizes in the perhaps somewhat too tendentious conclusion:

> Die Entwicklung des Wirklichkeitsgefühls, wie sie von der Dichtung nach Kleist gespiegelt wird, ist der zähe Kampf um die endgültige Wiedererringung eines alten, neuerwachenden Urverhältnisses zur Wirklichkeit. Kleist hat die Grundstellungen dieses Kampfes mit visionärer Klarheit vorweggenommen. Er ist eine Gestalt des Übergangs, aber eines solchen von weltgeschichtlichem Ausmass, in dem wir selbst noch darinstehen. Kein anderer Dichter hat die Not dieses Übergangs so schmerzhaft wach durchleben müssen wie er, und in keinem anderen wurde uns so schonungslos und sibyllenhaft gezeigt, wie wir sind und wie wir sein sollen. Das ist der letzte Sinn seiner Dichtung und der Rechtsgrund ihrer Unvergänglichkeit (p. 224).

The great transition, of course, in literary terms, was one from an age of the divine word and the nimble tongue to the new age of the inexpressibility of emotion in terms adequate to its complexity.

Another existentially oriented work in the wake of Fricke

is the investigation of Komik und Humor bei Heinrich von Kleist by Curt Hohoff[58] (1937), an attempt, "die humorvollen Dichtungen des Dichters auf seines Wesens Kern zurückzuführen." However, matters of style here are manifestly secondary to the development of the concepts irony, humor, and the comical, and to the concern with the relation of Kleist to Bergson's principles (through Schelling, Fichte, and Kant). There is some brief mention of the unspoken elements in the "geistige Komik des Aneinandervorbeiredens" of Alkmene and Jupiter (p. 18). But in this philosophically oriented Gehaltsanalyse there is no analysis of humor in the abundant gestures and suppressed speech in Der zerbrochene Krug!

1937 was also the year in which Max Kommerell's essay, "Die Sprache und das Unaussprechliche: Eine Betrachtung über Heinrich von Kleist," first appeared.[59] Perhaps more than any other, the viewpoint of this work is, as shown above, of central importance to our study; but even Kommerell's approach is more general than exhaustive. The application of the concept "das Unaussprechliche" is applied more specifically to Penthesilea and Homburg than to the other works. But for the most part only the highlights are touched even in these dramas.

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[58]Curt Hohoff, Komik und Humor bei Heinrich von Kleist: Ein Beitrag zur Klärung der geistigen Struktur eines Dichters ("Germanische Studien," No. 184; Berlin, 1937).

[59]Kommerell, op. cit.

It is in no sense a mere résumé of previous studies of the gesture, and if Kommerell's terminology seems at times too volatile and unphilological, it must be borne in mind that the essay makes no pretense at being a thoroughgoing, scholarly document. One thing of incalculable worth must be said of it: its approach lies in its own immediacy, in its "Sagen" rather than its "Gesagte," in Soltau's terms. Both because it is not possible to do justice to all of Kommerell's apperceptive interpretations in a concise fashion, and because we shall have recourse to specific parts of it in the analyses of scenes from Penthesilea, it will be sufficient to quote Kluckhohn's summary and evaluation.[60] Having called the study the most valuable contribution to the study of Kleist's style in the period 1926-1943, he writes:

> Er geht von dem Eindruck Kleistscher Szenen aus, "als ränge sich im Sprechen das Unaussprechliche herauf," und von dem Umstand, dass Kleist selbst sich als "unaussprechlichen Menschen" bezeichnet hat. Die schon wiederholt beobachtete Tatsache [Kommerell gives no precise references], dass in seinen Dramen oft Wesentliches unausgesprochen bleibt oder seine Gestalten mit einem Ach! der Betroffenheit reagieren, ohne dass wir wissen, was es bedeutet, und anderes Ähnliche wird in dem ersten Teil des Aufsatzes "Der Charakter als Rätsel und das rätselhafte Faktum" dargelegt, worauf der zweite "Das Drama als Probe" die Enthüllung der rätselhaften Seele aus all den verdeckenden Schichten, die das Meinen der anderen, die eigene

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[60] Paul Kluckhohn, "Kleist-Forschung, 1926-1943," Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift, XXI (1943), pp. 45-87 in Referatenheft.

> Meinung u.a. über sie legen, oft in grausamer Folterung durch das Schicksal als Kern Kleistscher Dramatik aufdeckt mit tiefschürfenden Interpretationen einzelner Szenen. . . . Ein dritter Abschnitt untersucht "Die Mittel," mit denen das Unaussprechliche sich heraufringt, so die Verwendung des Verses, die Art des Sprechens und die Bedeutung des Partners dafür, die Gebärde, die die Sprache ersetzen muss . . . , Abgestuftheit der Sprache je nach der Treue oder Untreue des Helden gegen das Unbewusste. . . . Eine Fülle tiefschürfender und Wesentliches erhellender Beobachtungen ist in diesen schönen und überzeugenden Ausführungen dargeboten, die mit ihrem Umfang von kaum mehr als 40 Druckseiten manches dicke Buch an Wert aufwiegen (pp. 78-79).

Bernt von Heiseler--who was to write more on Kleist after the Second World War--published his brief biography of the author in 1939.[61] His own connection with the theater is revealed in one remark which reminds us of a similar observation by von Einsiedel.[62] Heiseler writes:

> [Kleists] Drama ist auf den Rhythmus von Sprache und Pantomime angelegt, so, dass beide einander bedingen, alles Gesprochene ist bei ihm voll mimischer Eindringlichkeit--und nur weil unsere Schauspieler von anderen Dramen her an die Notwendigkeit gewöhnt sind, dass selbstherrliche Dichterwort durch ihre Kunst zur Geste zu steigern, tun sie bei Kleist, wo die Geste im Vers sich schon selbst andeutet, oft zu viel und verletzen die zarte und mächtige Einheit seines dramatischen Ausdrucks (p. 44).

The intimate connections which Kleist felt with music are mentioned here and there from the beginning of the literature on the author. Gundolf's insights are particularly keen.

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[61] Bernt von Heiseler, Kleist (Stuttgart, 1939).

[62] von Einsiedel, op. cit., p. 97; see p. 88 of our study.

There can be no doubt that the flow of language, the patterns of speech and pause, the use of repetition, the indication of tempo and even of pitch, in Kleist's dramas constitute gestures of a fundamental order and are techniques whereby the author speaks without words to his audience. The most thorough analysis of this aspect is the Cologne dissertation of Donald P. Morgan, Heinrich von Kleists Verhältnis zur Musik[63] (1940). The author is wise in emphasizing that, regardless of Kleist's intimacy with the spirit of music, however, it can never have been his earnest intention, "mit seinen Dichtungen musikalische (Klang-) Wirkungen zu erzielen--also von vornherein romantische Musikdramen zu schaffen" (p. 35). Morgan cites Franz Servaes[64] remark that, despite Kleist's "feinem dynamischen und rhythmischen Empfinden und dessen schattierter Klangschönheit . . . , Kleist zwei Kunstgefühle eigneten, von denen das primäre eben das dichterische war, hinter dem, mehr schattenhaft, das musikalische stand" (p. 36). Morgan observes:

> dass Kleist von Musik so durchdrungen war, dass er in Zeiten besonderer Gemütsbedrückung keinen anderen Ausweg zu haben vermeinte, als alles, was ihm sonst Lebenswerk war, aufzugeben und sich ein Jahr lang ["oder länger"] mit nichts anderem als mit Musik zu beschäftigen. Dabei darf man sich nicht beschränken auf die Erkenntnis des unmittelbaren und ausgesprochenen

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[63]Donald P. Morgan, Heinrich von Kleists Verhältnis zur Musik (diss. Cologne, 1940).

[64]Franz Servaes, Kleist (Leipzig, Berlin, and Vienna, 1902).

> Ausdrucks der Musik in den Dramen, sondern muss auch den Sinn offen halten für die Musik der Sprache und der Gesamtkomposition des Werkes. Musik liegt bei Kleist oft gar häufig unter der Schwelle des Fühlens, strahlt aber unverkennbar dahin aus, wo ein Gegenpol von Musikempfinden sie erwartet (p. 37).

To be sure, the musical gesture in Kleist's dramas had clearly been seen earlier by Gundolf[65] (whom Morgan cites with regularity) and who had written:

> [Kleist] erlebte musikalische Schauer und Entzückungen und er setzt sie in Visionen um, in sprachliche Gestalten, er drückte mit dramatisch verdichteter Sprache das aus, was der Musiker mit Tönen ausdrückt (p. 25).
>
> Wortakzent und Versakzent fallen bei ihm weit öfter auseinander als bei Schiller. . . . Den Reiz der Dissonanz hat erst Kleist für den deutschen Dramenvers entdeckt (p. 39).
>
> Kleists Gleichnisse sind Assoziationen, die sich von den anregenden Gedanken . . . ablösen und dann ein selbständiges Leben führen, ja in vielen Fällen den Anfangsgedanken erwürgen. Auch hier das Überwiegen der Orchestration über den ursprünglich melodischen Einfall (p. 40).

Of Amphitryon Gundolf writes:

> Auf der Höhe hat Kleist durch den blossen Ton die einmaligen nackten bewegten Herzen reden lassen. . . . Kleists Personen reden in dem heftigen und unbekümmerten Ton wie Menschen, die mit sich allein sind, sie brechen aus, sie zittern, sie kennen nicht die Rücksicht . . . auf Zuschauer. . . . Die Musik der Seele ertönt erst, wo die Gesellschaft nicht mithinein redet oder horcht (p. 78).

And of Homburg:

> Hier erklingen die süssesten und stärksten Töne

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[65]Gundolf, op. cit.

> Kleists, niemals blosser Gefühlserguss und doch nicht blosse Theaterrede, sondern Gebärdensprache eines ganz ergriffenen Gemüts (p. 149).

Of much less sensitivity and stature in regard to the musical quality of Kleist's style are the briefer studies of Friedrich-Karl Roedemeyer, "Kleists 'Robert Guiskard': Eine sprechkünstlerische Betrachtung"[66] (1924), which is a slight study of "der wortmusikalischen Architektonik und dem festen Klang-Aufbau der Kleistschen Dichtung"; by the same author, "Heinrich von Kleists Sprache der Musik: Versuch einer sprechkünstlerischen Auswertung"[67] (1927); and finally, "Musikalische Komposition in deutscher Dichtkunst" by Hans Klein[68] (1930).

The Kleist bibliographies in the yearbooks of the Kleist-Gesellschaft during the 1930's contain numerous entries of articles and musical compositions inspired by Kleist's works, and sometimes done for the radio and for films. What more has appeared in these idioms since the Second World War cannot be determined, owing to the absence of a specialized Kleist

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[66]Friedrich-Karl Roedemeyer, "Kleists 'Robert Guiskard': Eine sprechkünstlerische Betrachtung," Jahrbuch der Kleist-Gesellschaft, III/IV (1924), 107-117.

[67]Friedrich-Karl Roedemeyer, "Heinrich von Kleists Sprache der Musik: Versuch einer sprechkünstlerischen Auswertung," Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts (Frankfurt-on-Main), 1927, pp. 217-233.

[68]Hans Klein, "Musikalische Komposition in deutscher Dichtkunst," Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift, VIII (1930), 680-716.

bibliography since 1937.

Indicative of the vital connection between the dramatic and the musical in Kleist's plays was the reaction of Hugo Wolf, the most celebrated composer to have occupied himself with this dramatic material. Between 1883 and 1885 Wolf twice set Penthesilea to music.[69] He seems to have had a demonic affinity for the emotionalism and a highly developed susceptibility for the silent depths of Kleist. In Hermann Bahr's Selbstbildnis[70] we read of Wolf:

> Er schien dichterisch fast noch empfindlicher als in seiner eigenen Kunst, und ich frage mich heute noch zuweilen, ob sein Urerlebnis, sein Verhältnis zum Dasein nicht eigentlich das des Dichters war. Daher auch sein Sinn für Kleist, bei dem ja wieder umgekehrt das Wort aus Musik aufzutauchen scheint, ja zuweilen selbst noch von überwogender Musik schäumt. Ich hörte damals [i.e., at the time when Wolf was visiting the youthful Bahr and his family] die Penthesilea zum erstenmal, Wolf trug sie stets bei sich, sie war sein Brevier, er las uns immer wieder daraus vor, oft mitten in irgendein Gespräch hinein, in einer plötzlichen Aufwallung von Freude, tiefer Dankbarkeit und Andacht. . . . Vom Abglanz reinsten inneren Glückes begann, indem er las, sein durchscheinendes Antlitz zu leuchten, seine Hände zitterten und im Übermass der Erregung sprang er dabei auf einmal davon, sich Luft machend in Lauten einer seltsamen Mischung von Knirschen, Zischeln und Wiehern. Einen Augenblick später kam er verwandelt zurück (p. 154).

The feeling for the organic connection between music

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[69]See Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Eric Blom (5th ed.; New York, 1955), Vol. IX, pp. 338-339.

[70]Hermann Bahr, Selbstbildnis (Berlin, 1923).

and drama is quite lost and a perfervid mystagogical relationship substituted in Erich Ruprecht's essay, "Wille und Schicksal bei Heinrich von Kleist"[71] (1947). Here we are confronted with such pseudo-existential verbiage as this:

> Kleists "Wortmusik" gibt dem in seinem Schaffen ins Dasein drängenden Willensgeiste eine noch weitgehend im Musikalisch-Rhythmischen der dämonischen Urstruktur verbleibende Verdichtung (p. 132).

Without any attempt at showing stylistically what he means, Ruprecht continues:

> Wer also nicht den symphonischen Klang einer Kleistischen Tragödie zu hören vermag, ist auch nicht imstande, ein einziges Wort so zu verstehen, wie es verstanden sein will (p. 132).

This approach to Kleist is one of a number of similar unfortunate aberrations following in the wake of a misunderstood Fricke and--before 1945--sometimes contaminated by the admixture of racist propaganda. Among these is the work of Rudolf Ibel,[72] who, although he speaks glibly of the gesture and the inexpressible in Kleist (p. 470), contributes nothing but confused metaphysics and contorted prophecies. Much the same can be said of Hermann Pongs' Das Bild in der deutschen Dichtung[73]

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[71]Erich Ruprecht, "Wille und Schicksal bei Heinrich von Kleist," Botschaft der Dichter: Zwölf Vorträge (Stuttgart, 1947), pp. 119-155.

[72]Rudolf Ibel, Weltschau der Dichter: Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, Kleist (Jena, 1943).

[73]Hermann Pongs, Das Bild in der deutschen Dichtung, Vol. II, Voruntersuchung zum Symbol (Marburg, 1939).

(1939) and its comments on Kleist (pp. 108, 150ff.). After the Second World War the tendentious nationalism was eliminated, but occasionally the inappropriate and (to any appreciation of style) foreign application of certain interpretations of the existential philosophy continued. Such obfuscation characterizes the work of Anneliese Bodensohn, Heinrich von Kleists Begegnung mit dem Tode[74] (1951), as well as the work of Ruprecht discussed above--and such is what Erik Lunding (with specific reference to Ruprecht and certain other Heidegger-inspired writers) castigates in his appeal for a "way out of helplessness, stagnation, and decay" in so much of German literary criticism.[75] Likewise, in his remarks on the disappearance of style criteria due to a pseudo-existential orientation, Max Wehrli--in his Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft (1951)--quotes Werner Richter's comment on Hermann Pongs' and Horst Oppel's "tragikomische Vergewaltigung" and "totales Missverstehen des 'Existentiellen'"; and, in a similar vein, Wehrli concludes: "Es ist nicht ganz unrichtig, wenn für das Debakel der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft deren

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[74]Anneliese Bodensohn, Heinrich von Kleists Begegnung mit dem Tode (Frankfurt-on-Main and Bonn, 1951).

[75]Erik Lunding, Strömungen und Strebungen der modernen Literaturwissenschaft ("Acta Jutlandica: Aarsskrift for Aarhus Universitet," Humanistic Series, No. 37; Copenhagen, 1952), p. 89.

allzu 'geistes'-wissenschaftliche Tendenz verantwortlich gemacht wurde."[76]

What was perhaps needed at the time was a restatement of the question put by Nietzsche in Schopenhauer als Erzieher: "Ja, wann werden wieder Menschen dergestalt kleistisch-natürlich empfinden, wann lernen sie den Sinn einer Philosophie erst wieder an ihrem 'heiligsten Innern' messen?"[77]-- or perhaps a rereading of Kleist's own Satz aus der höheren Kritik:

> So wie die erhabensten Sätze am leichtesten zu verstehen sind (nur das Minutiöse ist schwer zu begreifen), so gefällt das Schöne leicht; nur das Mangelhafte und Manierierte geniesst sich mit Mühe. In einem trefflichen Kunstwerk ist das Schöne so rein enthalten, dass es jedem gesunden Auffassungsvermögen, als solchem, in die Sinne springt.[78]

And, indeed, a strong impetus for the careful investigation of Kleist's style came from Switzerland during the early 1940's. Here Emil Staiger applied his eminently sensible approach to a thorough exploration of Kleist's style in the shortest of all his Novellen, Das Bettelweib von Locarno.

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[76]Max Wehrli, Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft ("Wissenschaftliche Forschungsberichte, Geisteswissenschaftliche Reihe," No. 3; Bern, 1951), p. 21.

[77]Friedrich Nietzsche, Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen III: Schopenhauer als Erzieher, Vol. I of Werke, ed. Alfred Baeumler (Leipzig, 1930), part 2, p. 220.

[78]Kleist, Werke, ed. Sembdner, II, 351.

Staiger demonstrates with real feeling the dramatic quality of this extraordinarily compact story.[79] The gesture in the sentence structure and sentence flow is found to be the paramount and most captivating quality. Staiger comes very close to our problem in his conviction that the effect after which Kleist had striven in writing this story was to compress its entire action into one gigantic, hyperbolic "sentence" in an effort to convey in simultaneity its whole content and feeling. It is less an alliance than a battle with words.

Staiger's unfortunately short-lived periodical Trivium in Zurich contained many articles in which style is taken as the basic criterion. Only one, however, deals with the aspects in Kleist's style with which we are concerned: Paula Ritzler's "Zur Bedeutung des bildlichen Ausdrucks im Werke Heinrich von Kleists"[80] (1944), in which the author demonstrates how the various stylistic devices of imagery, personification, metaphor, simile, are all aimed at a "Bildinhalt" of an intensity great enough to be commensurate to Kleist's own intense world, this being especially true for the "Gebiet des

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[79]Emil Staiger, "Kleist: 'Das Bettelweib von Locarno,'" Meisterwerke deutscher Sprache aus dem 19. Jahrhundert (Zurich, 1943), pp. 100-119.

[80]Paula Ritzler, "Zur Bedeutung des bildlichen Ausdrucks im Werke Heinrich von Kleists," Trivium: Schweizerische Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Stilkritik, II (1944), 178-194.

Elementaren." The study emphasizes (by implication) how Kleist seemed almost fated to struggle with the components of the German language in his attempts to convey the inexpressible.

Clearly the most significant of the Swiss contributions in this period, and a work of great value to our study, is a book by Tino Kaiser, Vergleich der verschiedenen Fassungen von Kleists Dramen[81] (1944). It is precisely this kind of stylistic study for which Kluckhohn was calling in his review of Kleist literature in 1943. With meticulous care, Kaiser compares the earlier versions of Schroffenstein, Krug, Penthesilea, and Käthchen with the final versions and deduces from the changes which Kleist made, essential facts about his style. The study is divided by style categories (rather than into sections for the separate dramas): "Handwerksmässige Feilarbeit," "Rede und Zwiegespräch," "Wortstellung im Satz und Pausen," "Sprachgebärde," "Pathos," "Beiwort und Zeitwort," "Ausdruckskraft und Anschauung," "Gleichnis und Bild," "Rhythmus und Vers," "Rücksichten auf die Gesellschaft," "Namen und Charaktere," and "Tragik und Komik." There is no forcing of material to fit preconceived notions about the author. The works, per se, are studied in a clear, exhaustive, and

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[81] Tino Kaiser, Vergleich der verschiedenen Fassungen von Kleists Dramen ("Sprache und Dichtung: Forschungen zur Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft," No. 70; Bern and Leipzig, 1944).

penetrating manner. Kaiser's findings from his astute comparisons of the earlier with the final versions are succinctly summarized in the concluding sentences of his study:

> . . . Letztes Ziel aller stilistischen Wandlungen bei Kleist ist es, Form und Sprache so sehr zum Ausdruck des Gehaltes zu machen, dass sie als solche immer unsichtbarer werden, damit das, was sie aussprechen, in reinster Entmaterialisierung zur Erscheinung komme. Die Form soll also nicht den Stoff bändigen, ihm nicht entgegenwirken, wie in der Klassik, sondern sie soll ihn im Gegenteil möglichst unmittelbar, möglichst direkt, möglichst "charakteristisch" ausdrücken. Was sich so als wesentlichste stilkritische Tendenz aus dem Vergleich aller stilistischen Wandlungen von Kleists Dramen ergibt, das hat der Dichter selber in seinem "Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen" mit grossartiger Klarheit bestätigt. . . .
>
> Das erstrebte Ziel in allen Umgestaltungen von Kleists Dramen--gleichgültig ob diese Wandlungen ein Satzzeichen oder einen ganzen Auftritt umfassen--ist es, den Geist möglichst unmittelbar zum Ausdruck zu bringen, Form und Stoff dagegen immer mehr verschwinden zu machen. In dieser Absicht äussert sich eine ganz bestimmte stilistische Grundanschauung, die über das Nur-Formale und über das Nur-Stoffliche hinaus ins Weltanschauliche reicht. Die Erscheinungsformen der Natur sind dem Dichter weder Selbstzweck, noch Metamorphosen eines Urphänomens, sondern sie sind Ausdrucksformen eines an sich "Undarstellbaren"; genau so ist die dichterische Form nur Spiegel des unendlichen Geistes. Weder um "einfache Nachahmung der Natur," noch um Darstellung vom "Wesen der Dinge in sichtbaren und greiflichen Gestalten," um Schönheit an sich, um Widerspruchslosigkeit in der äusseren Handlung geht es, sondern immer wieder um den "charakteristischen" Ausdruck des im Wort eingeschlossenen Gedankens. So wird für Kleist der Stil selber immer mehr zum Ausdruck der Wahrheit, und die Wahrheit wird mehr und mehr befreit von den Schlacken der Erscheinung (pp. 381-383).

D. 1945-1959. None of the small number of American

and British contributions to Kleist scholarship in the years immediately after the Second World War is specifically directed at the investigation of style, much less of that aspect in which we are primarily interested. One solitary American contribution, however, dating back to well before this period, had a few succinct statements about Kleist's struggle with words. In a brief chapter entitled "Words and Music" in his study, Early German Romanticism: Its Founders and Heinrich von Kleist,[82] Walter Silz had written in 1929: "The inadequacy of language as a vehicle of human communication and poetic utterance was axiomatic for Kleist and the Romanticists" (p. 194). Silz, whose aim it is to integrate Kleist's thought and production into the first (as distinctly opposed to the later) phase of the Romantic movement and who sees Kleist's later works as ideal syntheses of Classic and Romantic aims, contributes a little goldmine of passages by Hölderlin, Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Tieck, and Schiller, each of which illustrates the same feeling of inadequacy. Kleist, continues Silz:

> . . . sought for a more and more immaterial element of communication. First of all [he] tried to give to language itself a transparency which should make it invisible rather than alluring. Kleist's objection to language . . . was founded on its

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[82]Walter Silz, Early German Romanticism: Its Founders and Heinrich von Kleist (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1929).

> inaptness to convey meaning definitely and completely. . . . Kleist considered language, rhythm, and euphony as necessary evils, and deemed it the office of art to make these trappings of thought disappear as much as possible (p. 195).

Of Kleist's narrative style Silz says:

> The style . . . is not so much epic as dramatic. Instead of epic leisureliness of tempo and breadth of recital we have, tersely presented, a concentrated steadily impelled action; every speech is accompanied by gesture and movement. . . . We do not hear Kleist's story; we see it, and we see it in dramatic motion (p. 224).

Return to the postwar years, the third part of Bernhard Blume's study on "Kleist und Goethe"[83] (1946) makes reference to the importance of the pantomimic element of the idylls in Schroffenstein, Penthesilea, Käthchen, Krug, **Das Erdbeben in Chili**, Kohlhaas, and Die Verlobung in St. Domingo. Ernst L. Stahl's understanding of the real nature of the inexpressible in Kleist (though he knows Kaiser) would seem to be somewhat inadequate, as a passage like the following from his study of the dramas[84] may indicate, mistaking as it does supreme stylistic effort for deficiency or incompetence:

> There are many unexpected developments in his dramas, many apparent inconsistencies and incongruities. He did not always succeed in expressing his ideas, although he may have known what he wanted to say. The ideas may have been definite enough, but they remained at the back of his mind, because he was not capable of expressing them fully (p. 32).

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[83]Bernhard Blume, "Kleist und Goethe," Monatshefte, XXXVIII (1946), 20-31, 83-97, and 150-165.

[84]Ernst Ludwig Stahl, Heinrich von Kleist's Dramas (Oxford, 1948).

A more significant American contribution to the understanding of Kleist as a dramatist, and at the same time the definitive interpretation of Amphitryon, if one accepts Fricke, appeared as a monograph in the form of a series of articles by Henry W. Nordmeyer in 1946-47.[85] The study develops by means of close character and textual analyses such matters pertinent to our specific interest as the meanings behind the actions and words of Alkmene and Jupiter, the "Ohnmacht" (the crucial importance of which had never been understood before; Part V, 116-122) of Alkmene, the "Aneinandervorbeireden" of the heroine and Jupiter, the symbolical substitution of the action for the word, and the ultimate inexpressibility of "Vertrauen" and "innere Frieden" (fundamental Kleistian concepts). Nordmeyer writes:

> Ein eigentümlicher Doppelsinn wird . . . erzeugt bei allem, was gesprochen wird und getan, eine Doppelbödigkeit, die für Stil und Stimmung von tiefster Bedeutung ist, "das Antigrave . . . das In-der-Schwebe-Lassen der Motivationen," . . . sodass man kausal nichts ganz festnageln darf. Der eigentümliche Reiz der Dichtung, das "Irisieren," das Thomas Mann . . . hervorhebt, zwischen Himmlischem und Irdischem ist das erregende und beklemmende Ergebnis (Part I, 12-13).

Of the last scene of the drama:

> Eingefaltet in Jupiters Aktion sind überall die Reaktionen der Alkmene, und da hat sich nachgerade ein tiefer Zwiespalt aufgetan. Die Verkündigung

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[85]Henry W. Nordmeyer, "Kleists Amphitryon: Zur Deutung der Komödie," Monatshefte, XXXVIII (1946), 1-19, 165-176, 268-283, and 349-359; XXXIX (1947), 89-125.

> an sich [lines 2335-2344] ist ja nur der Abschluss der feststehenden Fabel, die den Rahmen des Ganzen hergibt; was eigentlich zu sagen ist, kommt erst danach, und wäre es nur ein Seufzer (Part III, 276).
>
> Mit Jupiters Entschwinden erfolgt zweierlei: Einmal, Alkmene kehrt aus dem Tiefenbewusstsein in die irdische, sachlich bedingte Beziehungswelt zurück, dem Gemahl vermählter denn je. "Amphitryon," dies eine Wort von ihr sagt mehr als viele Verse, denn es ist nachgerade selber ein Symbol ihres, ihr unbewussten Sieges geworden. In einem existentiellen Drama wie diesem darf sie jetzt nicht, wie umgekehrt eine Schillersche Heroine im klassizistischen, glorreich den Sieg der Idee verkünden. Das würde, wo von einem reflektierten Reich der Idee nicht die Rede ist, vielmehr nur von einem wirkend erlebten Reich der Seele und des Charakters, einen ethischen selbstherrlichen Solipsismus proklamieren. Nichts lag dem Dichter ferner, wie eben die "Ohnmacht" beweist. Alkmene muss vor sich selber sie selber bleiben. . . . Was sie unmittelbar, durch Tat und Haltung geleistet, benötigt überhaupt keiner Bestätigung durch Worte, die dem Endlichen angehören und doch wieder rationaler Deutung unterliegen.
>
> Das Schlimmste, was sich Kleist anderseits wünschen konnte, war, den Schluss seines Dramas als Kompromiss aufgefasst zu sehen. Denn hier ist das Zweite, was erfolgt: Die Wolken öffnen sich "in der Höhe," und wir haben den Anblick des Olymps mit den dort gelagerten Göttern, nun erkannt als Sinnbild des ewig thronenden Schicksals. Auch dieses Bild, das bis zum letzten Vorhang auf Theben herabstrahlt, drückt mehr aus, als Worte können: die Allmacht des Schicksals ist nicht beiseite zu setzen (Part V, 120).

Aside from these and other perceptions of "das Unaussprechliche" in this drama, however, it should be emphasized that the technical details of style in this existentially oriented study are meant to be subsidiary to the express purpose:

> . . . darzutun, dass Kleist sein Werk aus einem einmaligen Welterleben heraus und mit vollem künstlerischen

> Bedacht . . . gefügt hat. . . . Es [soll] durch ästhetische und psychologische Fragestellung der Dichtung ein Bau gesichert werden, in dem sich das Wesen der Handlung, die Anlage der Charaktere, die Verknüpfung der Vorgänge und der Ausgang Zug für Zug entsprechen, und zu einer harmonischen Einheit . . . zusammenschliessen (Part I, 5-6).

Nordmeyer has approached these goals by virtue of scrupulous and thoroughgoing analyses of the characters' motives, actions and reactions (which are, of course, their gestures) and penetrating and empathetic investigations of Kleist's aims, alternatives, and final choices in writing the drama. As it progresses, the study uncovers a wealth of relationships generically connected with the elements of our undertaking.

Undoubtedly the most impressive general Kleist monograph since the appearance of Ayrault's work in 1934 is the volume of another non-German scholar, Herman Uyttersprot, of the University of Ghent. His 614-page study, Heinrich von Kleist: De Mensch en het Werk[86] (1948), written in Dutch and thus unfortunately inaccessible to many interested readers, is the only extensive publication in Kleist scholarship to have specifically apprehended Max Kommerell's views and to have applied them widely. The work shares with Ayrault's the advantage of having been founded to a great extent upon a close

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[86]Herman Uyttersprot, Heinrich von Kleist: De Mensch en het Werk ("Reiksuniversiteit te Gent, Werken uitgegeven door de Faculteit van de Wijsbegeerte en Letteren," No. 101; Bruges, 1948).

textual familiarity with the primary sources plus that of being able to bring to it much material of comparative nature. The third major division of Uyttersprot's work contains in part an eighty-page investigation inspired directly by Kommerell's essay and entitled: "Het Raadsel--De 'Unaussprechliche.'" He writes:

> De taal als middel ter communicatie is ontoereikend om een gedachte, laat staan een gevoel met de laatste finesse en nuance weer te geven. De volledige communie en vertolking der gedachte, de eenige die voor een op totaliteit gerichte natuur als Kleist bestaan kan, wordt daardoor onmogelijk. Daarom, alweer met een sprong naar het uiterste, veroordeelt hij de "taal" (p. 360).

And:

> Ten slotte: hoe Kleist het verstommen zijner helden aanbrengt, het feit dat hij het nu eens als kennelijk technische greep, berekend dus, dan weer--en bij voorkeur--op de hoogtepunten van de psychologische ontwikkeling laat intreden, in beide gevallen gepaard met gebaar en mimische aanduiding, wijst er op dat ook daarachter persoonlijke ervaring staat. Een trek dus, dien we in zijn privaat leven hebben kunnen aanwijzen--en die ook in dit opzicht van het belijdenis-karakter van zijn werk getuigt. Want alleen wat diep in een natuur geworteld ligt, kan zoo sterk en obsedeerend terugkeeren. De "unaussprechliche Mensch" Kleist heeft, naar zijn beeld, vaak "unaussprechliche Menschen" geschapen (p. 391).[87]

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[87]"Language as a means of communication is insufficient to reproduce a thought, much less a feeling, with finality of finesse and nuance. Consequently, the complete communicability and vocal rendering of the thought process--all that can exist for a nature as uncompromising as Kleist's --became impossible. And thus, in complete exasperation again, he condemns 'language.'

"In conclusion, the efficacy of Kleist's introduction of the speechlessness of his protagonists, at times through

German contributions to Kleist scholarship in the first year after the War are understandably few in number. We need call attention to only two of these in this review. Das unsichtbare Theater[88] is a slim volume edited, and with an accompanying essay (pp. 63-86), by Helmut Müller. On the basis of Guiskard and Marionettentheater, which are included and form the bulk of the material, Müller deduces, in a rather turgid style, what Kleist meant by his new vision of the theater, a vision which, we are assured, was neither Classical, Ifflandesque, nor Naturalistic. Bab is quoted extensively on Guiskard. This is followed by a brief and dubious discussion of why Kleist failed during his lifetime to attain the stage. The essay on the marionette theater is proclaimed as the manifesto and bible for today's actor--and Kleist himself is seen in an apocalyptic vision as the great prophet-reformer of the theater. The book is rife with error and even partly invented (or at least strangely edited) quotations

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an obviously technical (i.e., calculated) device, then again (and preferably) at the highpoints of psychological development--in both cases accompanied by gesture and mimic suggestion--reveals that behind this lies personal experience. A trait, that is, demonstrable in his private life--and which also gives evidence of the confessional character of his work. For only that which lies deeply rooted in one's nature can recur with such strength and compulsion. The "unaussprechliche Mensch" Kleist frequently created, in his own image, "unaussprechliche Menschen."

[88]Heinrich von Kleist, Das unsichtbare Theater, ed. and with a postscript by Helmut Müller (Frankfurt-on-Main, 1946).

from Kleist--in short, the promising title leads us to a volume which is not concerned with the language of gesture or symbol or to anything really dealing with the "unsichtbares Theater." The second of the two 1946 works is the essay, Kleists Ende, by Reinhold Schneider.[89] The felicitous style reveals a genuine sympathy (if not empathy) with Kleist's creative impulses, despite a slightly tendentious Roman Catholic interpretation of the "perhaps avoidable" suicide. However, the author evinces as brother artist a clear comprehension of "das Unsagbare" when he writes, as Kleist himself might have soliloquized:

> "Ach, dass ich solche Arbeit tun muss, solche Gebilde forme, 'Töpfe und Schüsseln' gleichsam, während doch das Unsagbare, das edelste, schwerelose Gebild, die Gestalt meiner Seele, mit all ihren verborgenen Schimmern und Lichtern, mir vor den Augen schwebte und meine Hände sie schön zu bilden begannen aus einem Stoff, der noch keinem Dichter gehorchte--und sie dann doch nicht zu bilden vermochte" (p. 19).

"Das Leiden an der zu engen Form," writes Schneider,

> war vielleicht sein tiefstes Leiden; wir verständen es nur, wenn wir seine Glut empfinden könnten im Widerspruch zu allem und allem, was ihn umschränkte (p. 29).

In many ways the finest of all the short biographies of Kleist appeared in Germany in 1948. The work of August Kuhn-Foelix[90] is clearly indebted to the exploratory

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[89]Reinhold Schneider, Kleists Ende (Munich, 1946).

[90]August Kuhn-Foelix, Heinrich von Kleist (Murnau am Staffelsee, 1948).

investigations of both Fricke and Kommerell and is worthy of complementing them in its sensitive approach to the "innere Biographie." Again and again its author emphasizes the inexpressible in Kleist and his creations. He writes of the dramatist,

> der die ganze Psychologie rein nervenmässig in sich trägt und am eigenen Beispiel alle Urphänomene des Herzens zu deuten vermag, der jene Hellsichtigkeit besitzt, die den Schein durchbricht und hinter die Gebärde dringt; der also immer die Doppelhandlung von Tat und Seele sieht (p. 44).

Of the often-quoted letter to Ulrike ("Ach, du weisst nicht, wie es in meinem Innern aussieht. . . ."[91]) Kuhn-Foelix remarks:

> Ihm lähmt die dunkle, von frühester Jugend gemachte Erfahrung der Unsagbarkeit der inneren Erlebnisse die Kraft. Er fühlte, dass es zwecklos sei, ins Schöpferische auszubrechen, weil doch nie die wahre Erschauung im Wortgebilde aufstehen könne, dass vielmehr dort, wo das Letzte, Geheimnisvollste sich auftue, nur Stammeln oder Schweigen wohnt, niemals also sein Inneres Befreiung, Reinigung von allem Angehäuften erfahre, sondern mit der Bitternis des Unsagbaren neu belastet weiter wandeln müsse (p. 47).

Of the genius who had to write despite the torture of this insight:

> Was einst er ahnend gefühlt: die Endlichkeit des Wortes, was ihn so tief erschreckt, dass er nicht aufbrechen konnte zur Tat, jetzt hat er die tragische Begegnung in der Schöpfung. Entsetzt steht er mit der ungeheuer redenden Stimme seines Innern vor der Hartgefügigkeit des Nennbaren. Er begegnet der Sprache wie einem Feind. Wutvoll fällt er sie an. . . . Immer im Innern die dröhnende Gewalt des Unaussprech-

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[91] Feb. 5, 1801; see Werke, ed. Sembdner, II, 642.

> lichen. Doch je länger er kämpft, desto höher steigt die Qual. Die Phantasie, die nicht im Schöpfungsakt verströmen kann, beginnt, an Ort gebannt, wie ein ungeheurer Wirbel sich um sich selbst zu drehen, und das ungesagte Wort bricht mit einem Male neue Tiefen auf (pp. 70-71).

And finally of his language:

> Das . . . ist wohl das Höchste an der Sprache, ist die Rückführung in ihre Frühe, da sie--wahrhaft Urlaut--nur im Rhythmus und Klang sich offenbarte. Daher die namenlose Wucht, mit der sie uns anfällt. Sie trifft nicht unseren Intellekt, sie senkt sich einfach in uns im tanzenden Wirbel ihrer Laute.
>
> Das Wort läuft nicht mehr neben dem Drama her als Mittel der Aussage. Es ist nicht Zutat noch Beiwerk. Es erläutert nicht die Handlung, sondern handelt selbst. Unablässig wirkt es, treibt vorwärts, ist Träger des Gesamtgeschehens. Es wird zum Spieler. Die Leidenschaft der Helden, ihr Ton und ihre Gebärde ist in diesem dynamik-gefüllten Wort. . . . Dabei ist jede Zeile höchste Bildhaftigkeit. Aber eine, die über das Gesagte hinaus noch wirkt, die nicht begrenzt, sondern nur anschwingt(pp. 132-133).

In these and other passages the picturesque and vibrant style of Kuhn-Foelix (not altogether unlike Gundolf's, although much more sympathetic to Kleist) enhances the solid and scholarly foundation of his biography, the only compendious one thus far in Kleist literature to attribute such a central role to the inexpressible.

The rekindled interest of the Theaterwissenschaftler in the inner dynamics of Kleist is indicated in part by the appearance of an expanded edition of Artur Kutscher's Grundriss der Theaterwissenschaft[92] (1949) and by the

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[92]Artur Kutscher Grundriss der Theaterwissenschaft

publication of the Stilkunde der deutschen Dichtung[93] (1952) by the same author. Both works have special sections devoted to the gesture and the pantomime in drama, in which Kleist is frequently drawn upon for illustrative examples. In championing theater science as a valid, independent discipline, Kutscher, in the first of these books, cites the case of an unnamed Kleist dissertation by way of example:

> Wenn ein bekannter Germanist als Urteil über eine recht erfreuliche theaterwissenschaftliche Dissertation zur Bühnengeschichte eines Dramas von Heinrich von Kleist schrieb: "Interpretation der Absicht Kleists bildet die Grundlage, auf der die Fragen der Inszenierung sich aufbauen. Diese Grundlage ist so fest gefügt, dass man sie als durchaus ausreichenden Befähigungsnachweis für den 'Literaturhistoriker' und damit für den Erwerb des Dr. phil. betrachten und darüber hinwegsehen kann [italics Kutscher's], dass der andere Teil der Ausführung auf die Praxis der Regie zielt," so ist dies philologische Versteifung hochmütigster Art und Misskennung der Tatsache, dass nicht einmal diese Interpretation geschehen konnte ohne ausgeprägt mimischen Sinn (p. 436).

The postwar return of Kleist was slow at first, but by the early 1950's the resurgence had gathered enough momentum to indicate here and there that both production and criticism were becoming increasingly aware of letting the Kleistian gesture-language speak for itself. This we have already seen to some extent in Chapter I. It is likewise illustrated in

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(2nd ed. rev.; Munich, 1949), pp. 54, 158, 260, 430. (The original edition appeared 1932-36).

[93]Artur Kutscher, Stilkunde der deutschen Dichtung (Bremen-Horn, 1952), Vol. II, pp. 259-260, 272, 275, 310-319.

the reviews of Bernt von Heiseler[94] and in two of his essays in Ahnung und Aussage[95] (1952). In one of these, "Kleist und seine Sprachkunst," he investigates Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden as the most important source of Kleist's "Dramensprache":

> Seine Sprachkunst ist der getreue Spiegel . . . innerer Vorgänge, sie geht nicht auf grosse, fliessende Linien aus, sondern auf die Entladungen des dramatischen Augenblicks. Darum sagen seine Menschen nie, was sie sich schön zurechtgelegt haben, sie sprechen so, wie der Moment sie zwingt, ihre Rede ist beständig gehemmt oder gesteigert durch das Gegenüber, dessen Hitze und Kälte, dessen Gebärden- und Mienenspiel (p. 24).

The other essay, "Über Vers und Bühne," is in the form of an imaginary dialog between the actor of Homburg's role and the scholar-critic. The latter speaks, for example, of a recent rendition by the actor of the Prince's second monolog:

> Du . . . hast wieder den klaren Gang dieser Verse mit lauter Mimik und Psychologie überfärbt. Du hattest so wenig Glauben an die Macht des Dichters, dass du es für nötig hieltest, ihr aufzuhelfen mit theatralischen Gebärden, mit unterstreichenden Betonungen, die den Sinn herausheben sollen--und ihn zerstören! Denn in dem Rhythmus und nirgendwo sonst steckt der Sinn. Dein Spiel war so voll Verstand, dass es ohne Musik war. Statt nur die Seele der Hörer anzurühren und ihre Einbildung zu beflügeln, damit sie--denn dies ist die Kunst--von selber ihr Werk vollbringe, drängtest du dich erklärend zwischen uns und das dichterische

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[94]E.g., Bernt von Heiseler, "Kleist in Salzburg," Zeitwende (Stuttgart), XXIII (1951), 367-368.

[95]Bernt von Heiseler, Ahnung und Aussage: Essays (Gütersloh, 1952).

> Wort und lähmtest den Flug der Phantasie. Du sprachst von "stillen Ätherräumen," die dein Geist durchwandert, und glaubtest mit Händen zeigen zu müssen, wohin er geht. Dann wieder, um eine "Abwechslung" hereinzubringen, oder wie ihr sonst auf der Bühne diese Torheiten nennt, hast du die Zeilen vom Schiff, das die muntre Hafenstadt versinken sieht, in dem Alltagston eines Kapitäns gesprochen," etc. (p. 341).

Such is von Heiseler's appeal for performances of Kleist in which the words, the silences, and the actions move together.

A more scholarly study of Homburg appeared under the editorship and guidance of Emil Staiger in Zurich in 1952. Franz Hafner's book, Heinrich von Kleists "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg,"[96] reveals the influence of Fricke and Lugowski as well, and possibly that of Kommerell. His sections on "Stil" and "Vers" exhibit an awareness of "die Sprache, die sich ständig verneint und selber aufheben will," stating: "[Kleist] versucht, das Grammatikalische zu überwinden, und statuiert doch dabei dessen Unumgänglichkeit" (p. 20). These sections are very brief. Better and more extensive is the consideration of the antinomy of "Gefühl" and the rules of versification. "Bei all dem wundern wir uns, dass Kleist überhaupt Verse schreibt! Ihm fehlt das ursprüngliche Verhältnis zur gebundenen Aussage" (p. 22). However,

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[96]Franz Hafner, Heinrich von Kleists "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg" ("Zürcher Beiträge zur deutschen Literatur- und Geistesgeschichte," No. 4, ed. Emil Staiger; Zurich, 1952).

> er rast sich nicht besinnungslos im eigenen Rhythmus aus wie die Stürmer und Dränger, die Ähnliches zu verkünden haben wie er. Kleist will die äussere Form nicht zerstören, er sucht sie. Er kann sich nicht selber gegen die Welt ins Feld führen, sich selbstsicher über die umgebende Wirklichkeit hinwegsetzen, sondern er möchte sich darin bestätigt sehen. Das Bewusstsein der eigenen wahren Empfindung genügt ihm nicht. Sein unendliches Gefühl verlangt sinnliche Gegenwart; es wünscht das Endliche nicht zu zerstören, es will sich darin vielmehr verwirklichen (p. 23).

The most thorough scholarly application of Marxian dialectical materialism to Kleist so far, appeared in Georg Lukács' Deutsche Realisten des 19. Jahrhunderts[97] in 1952. It is hardly surprising that stylistic considerations are at a minimum in this study. However, the contrast of scenes of recognition in antique and Shakespearean drama with those in Kleist, and the discussion of the attendant "seelischer Abgrund, der sich zwischen den einsamen Menschen der Kleistschen Welt immer wieder und immer tiefer auftut" (p. 30), shed some interesting sidelight on the inextricable and inexpressible duality of psychology and plot. Essentially a part of our subject matter are Lukács' observations on Kleist's plastic awareness and command of the stage:

> Kleist ist . . . einer der grossartigsten Szeniker und szenischen, sinnlich-gedanklichen Dialogkünstler der dramatischen Weltliteratur. Dialoge, die so klar, knapp und konzentriert verwickelte Lagen zwischen den Menschen zugleich blitzartig beleuchten und handlungsgemäss weiterführen, . . . findet man nur bei den

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[97]Georg Lukács, "Die Tragödie Heinrich von Kleists," Deutsche Realisten des 19. Jahrhunderts (Berlin, 1952), pp. 19-48.

> grössten Dramatikern. Dazu kommt die ausserordentliche charakterschaffende Fähigkeit Kleists: das Grosse und das Liebliche, das Grauenerregende und das Komische beherrscht er gleich stark und mit den gleichen einfachen und doch nicht trivialen Mitteln der Charakterisierungskunst (p. 37).

Little of value to our approach is found in the chapter on Kleist's narrative prose in Johannes Klein's history of the German Novelle.[98] Indeed, it is disappointing to discover that Klein in this voluminous book has overlooked the vitally important aspect of gesture in the short stories. Likewise Claus-Henning Bachmann's brief article, "Das Ausgeruhtsein in einem Schwerpunkt: Kleists Marionettenessay, das Spiel mit Marionetten und der Mimus"[99] (1954), offers nothing new to our understanding. Its grandly stated purpose: "die Relationen zwischen dem Aufsatz Kleists, dem praktischen Spiel mit Marionetten und dem Bereich des Theaters zu klären, aber auch die einzelnen Gesichtspunkte voneinander abzusetzen" (p. 1145), is not convincingly fulfilled. What could have been its most unique contribution, the "fachmännische Auseinandersetzung," is compromised for the sake of yet another turgid exegesis of the essay.

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[98]Johannes Klein, Geschichte der deutschen Novelle von Goethe bis zur Gegenwart (Wiesbaden, 1954), pp. 49-70.

[99]Claus-Henning Bachmann, "Das Ausgeruhtsein in einem Schwerpunkt: Kleists Marionettenessay, das Spiel mit Marionetten, und der Mimus," Deutsche Rundschau, LXXX (1954), pp. 1145-1149.

The substantial studies of Erik Lunding (1953) and Benno von Wiese (1952-54) have already been dealt with at some length in the previous chapter, and here need only to be assigned their position in this chronological review.[100]

The only outstanding study which we have found to implement a technique very similar to that of Kommerell's in his essay on Kleist, is Fritz Martini's chapter on Kafka's Das Schloss in the volume of stylistic analyses, Wagnis der Sprache[101] (1954). The essential parallelism in much of the prose style of Kafka and Kleist is clearly delineated and found to obtain in both the element of "das Unsagbare" and in the economic means with which both authors develop plot and character. Martini writes:

> Es wurde bereits mehrfach auf die bewegliche, ironische Anmut, das Spielend-Entbundene in Kafkas Sprache gewiesen, das man als eine Freiheit in Fesseln empfindet. Ohne Pathos des emotionalen Ausdrucks enthält seine Prosa ein Pathos der Intensität, in welchem jeder Satz mit einem Höchstmass an Inhalt aufgeladen wird, ohne dass doch dank der konstruktiven Genauigkeit des Satzaufbaues eine Überbürdung stattfände. Darin zeigt sich die Verwandtschaft zu Heinrich von Kleists Prosa, deren Einfluss auf Kafka bezeugt ist.
>
> . . . In diesem Pathos der Intensität liegt eine spezifische Eigenart der künstlerischen Prosa seit Nietzsche, die sehr wesentlich von der durch Goethe bestimmten Erzähldichtung des 19. Jahrhunderts abhebt.

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[100] See footnotes 8-17 in Chapter I.

[101] Fritz Martini, "Franz Kafka, Das Schloss," Das Wagnis der Sprache (1954), Wirkendes Wort, VI (1955-56), 56-58.

> Es herrscht . . . eine zunächst pointiert unpoetisch erscheinende Nüchternheit vor, die knapp und sachlich auf das Wesentliche gerichtet ist. Zugleich aber löst dieser Lakonismus gerade die Suggestion der Fülle aus, die sich jedes Verweilen versagen muss, um das unaufhaltsam andrängende äussere und innere Geschehen in seiner Spannung zu bewältigen (pp. 310-311).

We can hardly doubt that Martini has both writers in mind when he continues:

> Im Nacheinander der Aussage wird das Nebeneinander oder besser: das Ineinander der verschiedenen Gebärden ausgedrückt, aus dem die innere Lage [der Charaktere] bereits im wörtlichsten Sinne sichtbar ist. . . . Alles ist hier sprechende Gebärde geworden und erscheint . . . als etwas Eigenschaftliches; es ist in eine Form des Dauernden gesetzt, in ein Bildhaftes, welches festhält (p. 311).

> Der Wortwechsel wird je durch eine mimische Gebärde oder durch eine Charakterisierung der Tonart, wie er geführt wird, begleitet; damit wird also das Wort durch den inneren Vorgang kommentiert. Es ist auffällig, wie die Sprache oder Gebärde, die theatralisch den Sprechvorgang zum Mimisch-Sichtbaren erweitert, selbständig neben das Wort tritt, es ergänzt, etwas eigenständig über die . . . Rede hinaus mitteilt und so den Dialog verinnerlicht und bildhaft macht. Denn die Gebärde kommt aus einer tieferen Schicht des Innerlichen, während das Wort in der Sphäre des gedanklich bestimmten Bewusstseins bleibt (p. 330).

Although this latter passage is specifically applied to Kafka, there can be little doubt that Martini is continuing the parallelism by implication. "Die Sprache," wrote Kafka in Hochzeitsvorbereitungen, "kann für alles ausserhalb der sinnlichen Welt nur andeutungsweise, aber niemals auch nur annähernd vergleichsweise gebraucht werden, da sie, entsprechend der sinnlichen Welt, nur vom Besitz und seinen Beziehungen handelt"

(quoted by Martini, p. 306).

Karl Otto Conrady's review[102] of Martini's book points out in particular this study of the language of gesture, suggests Martini's indebtedness to Kommerell (although Martini does not mention any), and calls for more work of precisely this nature.

Helmut Prang's recent study, Irrtum und Missverständnis in den Dichtungen Heinrich von Kleists[103] (1955), is a pedestrian attempt to extract from all the works, great and small, and to a certain extent from Kleist's letters, all situations in which error or misunderstanding play a part. The philology is thorough, but the syntheses are scant and not really conclusive. Each use of such words by Kleist as "Irrtum," "Missverständnis," "Verwirrung," "sich irren," "verworren," etc. is industriously gleaned and noted. But were it not for the very occasional references to Fricke, Staiger, and a few others, it might at times be difficult for one to ward off the impression that this work is contemporaneous with Ottokar Fischer's investigations, fifty years ago. The analyses are never applied organically to any one work; the summary

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[102]Karl Otto Conrady, Review of Fritz Martini, Das Wagnis der Sprache (1954), Wirkendes Wort, VI (1955-56), 56-58.

[103]Helmut Prang, Irrtum und Missverständnis in den Dichtungen Heinrich von Kleists ("Erlanger Forschungen," Series A, No. 5; Erlangen, 1955).

remarks reveal little regard for the power of the extra-verbal in Kleist, as could be easily illustrated (e. g., pp. 21, 23).

The twelve-page article by Erika Kultermann in Maske und Kothurn (1957), a new periodical devoted to theater science, has a most promising title: "Die Bedeutung der Pantomime in den Dramen Heinrich von Kleists."[104] Brief though it is, it would appear to be scholarship on a solid foundation. Nevertheless, it reveals nothing essential beyond its obvious (but not always acknowledged) sources: Fischer's half-century-old "Mimische Studien" (which are almost ubiquitous in the article) and Kommerell, though the resuscitation of Fischer's long-neglected material surely deserves recognition.

The most recent of the larger German studies of Kleist is the 1958 monograph by Friedrich Koch, entitled Heinrich von Kleist: Bewusstsein und Wirklichkeit.[105] The author writes that his "Ausgangspunkt ist die Zerstörung des Bewusstseins als Grundsituation der Kleistschen Dichtung," and that the major stimulus in writing the study was to correct the one-sided emphasis on "das Gefühl" as "das rettende Grunderlebnis Kleists," which it is claimed has been too influential

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[104]Erika Kultermann, "Die Bedeutung der Pantomime in den Dramen Heinrich von Kleists," Maske und Kothurn: Vierteljahrsschrift für Theaterwissenschaft (Vienna), III (1957), pp. 70-82.

[105]Friedrich Koch, op. cit.

on Kleist scholarship ever since it was introduced by Fricke. Koch's promise is a grand one: "Es geht darum, das Kunstwerk als ein Ganzes zu fassen und wahrzunehmen. Weiter ist die Frage nach dem Werk von der Frage nach dem Lebensgefühl und der Weltanschauung des Dichters zu unterscheiden." "Der Geist der Dichtung," writes Koch, "ist nicht immer der Geist des Dichters, wenn auch vielfältige Beziehungen hin und her bestehen" (p. [v]). One has the feeling that finally the application of the intrinsic approach to the text and close reading will bear fruit in modern Kleist interpretation. And, indeed, there do seem to be at first very extensive investigations of the individual works, but (as we learn) not of their intrinsic style. It is still Gehaltsanalyse (very much in the style of the often-cited Benno von Wiese), laden with a priori formulation, with too much ratiocination, with a too transparent urge to fit every motif, every gesture, every situation into the proper slots of the "Wirklichkeits"- or "Bewusstseins"-structure. Koch seems to evince, and quite often, a most sensitive feeling for the gestures and the subarticulate qualities in the works, but he does not develop their import as such. His undeniable knowledge of his subject does not seem to have granted room for the intricacies of the poetic generation of the works and their concrete realities as literature for reading and performance. In the last

analysis this engaging work returns to the abstraction which it claims to expunge.

As to material applicable to our topic from outside Germany within the last decade (1948-58), we have already briefly reviewed the contributions from England, America, and France in the first chapter, mentioning the incidental remarks in the work of D. G. Dyer, Walter Silz, I. A. Graham, André Maurois, Gabriel Marcel, et al. Hans M. Wolff's recent volume, Heinrich von Kleist: Die Geschichte seines Schaffens[106] (1954), has little direct connection with our problem. Only on the last page does the author make specific reference to the "Unsagbare" without adding anything to our knowledge.

Of recent French work in the field, apart from those discussed in the previous chapter, we need mention again only the book of Marthe Robert, Heinrich von Kleist, Dramaturge[107] (1955). As we have seen before, this study perhaps comes closer to a sympathetic understanding of Kleist's individual style than any other French contribution since Roger Ayrault. Mme. Robert writes:

> Il obéit au rythme d'une obsession qui est à la fois sa richesse et sa pauvreté, sa nuit et sa lumière, à

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[106]Hans M. Wolff, Heinrich von Kleist: Die Geschichte seines Schaffens (Bern, 1954).

[107]Marthe Robert, Heinrich von Kleist, Dramaturge ("Collection Les Grands Dramaturges," No. 8; Paris, 1955).

> cela même, enfin, qui le sépare irrémédiablement des autres tout en lui ouvrant la seule voie de communication qui lui soit accessible. . . . Kleist vit presque simultanément le sentiment et l'idée (p. 115).
>
> Brisé, dédoublé, imparfait jusqu'en son fond, le langage humain en effet est essentiellement équivoque, d'autant plus trompeur qu'il garde une trace de ses origines et comme un souvenir de son ancienne splendeur. Certes, tout subjectif et falsifié qu'il soit, il témoigne encore pour la Parole perdue, mais ce qu'il dit n'est plus entendu, le message est brouillé, personne n'est plus en mesure de le percevoir (p. 117).
>
> Cette particularité de dialogue [i.e., the repetition of questions in place of direct answers] qui naît, ainsi que l'écrit Clemens Brentano "à coup de questions et de répétitions," comme si tout les personnages etaient "sourds et à moitié stupides," constitue la plus grande originalité du style dramatique de Kleist. . . . C'est elle qui donne aux plus belles scènes des drames leur mouvement inimitable et leur déchirante profondeur (p. 129).

This review of criticism and research into the elements of gesture and the unspoken in Kleist might best be brought to a conclusion by calling attention once again to the short article by Kurt Weigand, "Kleist und Kommerell,"[108] which appeared in 1952. We have been able to locate nothing in recent literary criticism which by implication better puts the case for a continued exploration of these fascinating components of Kleist's style. The article is meant as a tribute to Kommerell's "vielleicht ergebnisreichste Arbeit"

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[108]Kurt Weigand, "Kleist und Kommerell," Das neue Forum (Darmstadt), I (1950-51), 196-202.

(p. 201), and to show how very fresh its approach remains today. Since Weigand's contribution appeared in an all but inaccessible Theaterheft, we quote at length from it:

> Heute, wo uns unsere Klassiker vielleicht ferner stehen als je, tritt Kleist in den Scheinwerfer. Er bedeutet kein literarisches Programm. Kommerell hat z.B. von Kleists "Tendenzen" ganz abgesehen und z.B. die Hermannsschlacht nicht erwähnt. Das ist nur statthaft, wenn man Kleist nimmt, wie Kommerell ihn nahm: als eine eigene Seele, die sich dichterisch ausspricht--bzw. gerade nicht "ausspricht." Die Dichtwerke sind für Kommerell hier unmittelbare Lebensbekundungen. Kleist ist nicht der Dichter, den er rezensiert, sondern der Held, den er besingt.
>
> Das Thema seiner Betrachtung verheisst Grundsätzliches. Nicht weniger als eine neue Sicht des Dichtertums, nämlich in der Spannung zwischen dem Unaussprechlichen und der Sprache. . . . Das Verstummen in der schicksalhaften Situation . . . wird zu einem überraschenden Charakteristikum Kleists, das man nicht als ein bloss für Kenner interessantes Stilmerkmal auf sich beruhen lassen kann. Dies Verstummen ist nämlich nur indirekt ein Nichtreden, denn Kleistisches Sprechen mündet in die Gebärde ein. Kleist gibt der Gebärde ihre Macht zurück. Er benutzt, wie nur Shakespeare vor ihm, das Wort im Hinblick auf die Gebärde. Das Wort kommt also einerseits im Sinne seiner Mitteilung, andererseits im Sinne der Gebärde im Drama vor. Dieser zwiefachen Funktion der Sprache entspricht eine zwiefache dichterische Bedeutung. Wenn Kommerell feststellt, dass bei Kleist das Gleichgewicht zugunsten des Pantomimischen verschoben ist, so ist das nur der Ausdruck für eine andere, unmittelbarere Art dichterischen Gestaltens. Kleist ist Gestikulant. Er lässt nicht nur mitteilen, zu welchem Entschluss seine Helden gekommen sind, sondern zeigt, wie sie zum Entschluss kommen (pp. 198-199).
>
> Im Drama offenbart sich das Unbewusste in der Gebärde. Sie wird zur Verkündung des Eigentlichen. Das Unbewusste und Eigentliche hinwiederum ist jenes Unaussprechliche, das im Thema der Betrachtung über Kleist steht. In das Unausgesprochene verlegt dieser Dichter seine wesentlichste Aussage. Auf diese Weise wird jedoch das Unaussprechliche indirekt in der Dichtung eingefangen, und gerade das verleiht Kleists

Dichtung ihre erschütternde Unmittelbarkeit.

Es war nicht neu (im Gegensatz zur sachlichen Lage), die Entscheidung eines Menschen zu sich selbst zu sehen, aber es war neu, diese Entscheidung als ein Hinabsteigen in das Unbewusste, als den Fundus, aus dem der Mensch lebt, zu begreifen. Die dichterischen Mittel und Ausdrucksformen der personae dramatis, Mitteilung und Gebärde, rücken in das Licht einer Seinserhellung. Die von keiner Reflexion vorgeprüfte Gebärde enthüllt, was aller prunkenden Rhetorik entgleiten muss. Kleist lässt das Unausgesprochene mit dem Unaussprechlichen zusammenfallen. Das Unausgesprochene ist das Negativum zu dem Positivum des Unaussprechlichen. Das Minimum von Mitteilung verrät ein Maximum an Bedeutung, da nur durch die Gebärde das Unsagbare ins Sagen hineinragt. . . .

Allerdings kann die Legierung von Begriffen aus verschiedenen Vorstellungswelten eklektisch sein, aber der Literaturhistoriker darf sich durch verschiedenartige Gedanken anregen lassen, ohne sich durch Philosophien der konkreten Dichtung, die er vor Augen hat, zu entfremden. Vielleicht aber ist es Kommerell gelungen, den Ort zu finden, an dem zwischen den beiden feindlichen Brüdern, Psychoanalyse und Existenzphilosophie, ein Waffenstillstand möglich ist.

. . . Was sollte Kleist? Als er in die Literatur eintrat, hatte sich das deutsche Drama bereits konstituiert. Alle Plätze waren besetzt. Seine hohen Intentionen konnten nicht mehr bedeuten als eine Revolution post festum. Daher war es ihm unmöglich, die "Welt" zu beschreiben; er konnte nur sich und seine Ratlosigkeit gestalten und auf solchem Wege das Abseitige und Unfassliche. Er musste in die Nuancen des rätselhaften Seelischen flüchten und . . . eine Romantik nach innen betreiben. Er wurde der Dramatiker der psychischen Geheimnisse, dessen eigenes Geheimnis--seine Ruhmsucht--seine Werke tingierte. Kommerell vergass vom Inhaltlichen her zu erhellen, warum Kleist auszog, um das Unaussprechliche in seinen Besitz zu bringen. Goethe und Schiller hatten schon längst das Sagbare gesagt. Der Sieg in seiner Niederlage war seine Prophetie des Unbewussten (pp. 200-201).

In summary, it appears that the progression of interest

in Kleist's dramatic style, from the work of Georg Minde-Pouet and Ottokar Fischer over a half a century ago to the signs today of a reawakened interest in the work of such writers as Max Kommerell, has been very slow--but a progression nevertheless. The intervening exigencies of the times together with disinclination or, indeed, reluctance to approach the work of art as an entity and to analyze it without undue regard for extrinsic considerations, have for many years stood in the way of forthright textual explication. Yet we can clearly detect a change in approach: from the thoroughness of the "Mimische Studien" (which drew so few conclusions from such an abundance of evidence) to the brevity of Weigand's revival of Kommerell's essay (both of which apply so few illustrations to their fundamental insights).

What we have attempted to do in this chapter is, in a sense, as negative as it is positive. To be sure, the chapter may represent a reasonably comprehensive review of stylistic studies devoted to Kleist since 1884. But this would be a contribution only incidental to our stated purpose in subjecting all this material to scrutiny: namely, to review what scholars and critics alike have specifically discovered about Kleist's Gebärdensprache. The aggregate is impressive, perhaps. But, on the negative side, with the exception of the work by Fischer, Kommerell, Wolfgang von Einsiedel, Jens

Soltau, Erika Kultermann, Tino Kaiser, Herman Uyttersprot, and a few others, its concentration has been meagre, to say the most. As to the others whose work we have investigated, their insights and general remarks--in so far as style has been a criterion--have been astute to some degree. But nearly all these remarks have been cursory and incidental; or, on the basis of obvious occurrences of pantomime in Kleist's dramatic texts, the Gebärdensprache has been treated as something which has been amply demonstrated in the past and which can be taken for granted. As a partial result of this, we have found that in the past two decades there has been in Kleist literature a tendency toward a too facile, uncritical, and synthetic application of essayistic and pseudo-existentialistic terminology.

In the final analysis, we must conclude that the words "gesture" and "the unspoken" have gained entrance into Kleist studies without ever having been thoroughly demonstrated in the case of a single drama or short story. Specifically, Kleist's and Kommerell's term "das Unaussprechliche" awaits a salient and detailed demonstration, lest it become, for lack of sufficient testing, another among the generous number of clichés in Kleist scholarship. The purpose of such an undertaking would not be simply a synthesis and implementation of scattered phrases and findings of earlier scholars.

If such is necessary in terms of general corroboration, the present chapter may suffice. What is now needed is a thorough and independent inspection of Kleist's sowing, tending, and harvesting, so to speak, of the various kinds of gestures throughout one of the plays or stories, and then a comparative investigation of gestures from work to work. One of the significant results of this procedure might be to furnish a clearer insight into the structure of symbol in Kleist's creations.

In the following chapter, the final and ultimately most important stage in our Vorschule, we turn away from the secondary literature of our century to collect and review what Kleist and his contemporaries had to say about these and related matters.

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CHAPTER III

It will be the task of this chapter to determine to what extent that which we call "das Unaussprechliche" in Kleist can be substantiated by (A) various documents of his contemporaries, (B) Kleist's own letters, and (C) his few critical writings and some of the other so-called Kleinere Schriften. To determine this cannot be a simple matter of extracting from these three sources specific references to or discussions of this element as such in Kleist's personality and work. It was rare, indeed, that terms like "unaussprechlich" and "Gebärde" were applied to him. Rather we shall have to approach the problem from a variety of directions and assemble a mosaic from a variety of smaller stones, so to speak. But when, after what may appear at times to be searching somewhat far afield for our evidence, a fuller picture of Kleist's creative "Nachtseite" emerges, this will have been precisely our goal. For only after demonstrating a multiplicity of reciprocally illuminating facets can the greater arc be suggested and the segment in which we are primarily interested be defined. We shall see in this chapter that the manifestations of "das Unaussprechliche" in

Kleist present a highly composite image.

It is a familiar fact that less is specifically known of Kleist's life and the genesis of his works than perhaps of any other figure of comparable stature in the history of modern German literature. Kleist's letters, of course, continue to be the primary source of information about him. These 222 extraordinary documents have slowly accumulated over the past century and a half, often only by dint of the most painstaking investigation of personal literary remains and official archives in every city and town that Kleist is known or thought to have visited. On the other hand, the gradual collection of letters to or concerning Kleist, reviews of his work in contemporary publications, official documents mentioning his name, and other such material, scant as much of it is when taken individually, has eventually provided us with a source of information which is second in importance only to the letters of the author himself.

A. It is to these <u>contemporaneous documents</u> that we shall first turn our attention.

It is not altogether true, of course, that Kleist was unknown or that his works were unappreciated in his time. One or two of his plays and a number of his stories enjoyed a certain popularity during his lifetime. But it was not until his sensational suicide in November, 1811, that general

attention was drawn to his personage, if not to his works. By then it was too late to "discover" the man Kleist. He had personally destroyed practically all correspondence and whatever manuscripts were in his possession at the time. These very likely included the Geschichte meiner Seele, for the existence of which we have substantial evidence and which would surely have been of great value in gaining further insights into Kleist's personality and probably his methods of work.[1] It is also well known that the members of his family and his closest friends destroyed many letters from him and in the subsequent years were reluctant, for a variety of reasons, to part with information concerning the "notorious" writer. When finally a few of them divulged some facts, these were, as often as not, obscured by prejudice or dim memory.

It is likewise certainly not true that Kleist lived at a time and in a society which tended to neglect the literary figure and to relegate him to a subsidiary role. Yet while we know, for example, the history of Goethe's activities literally from day to day, it is one of the cruel ironies of Kleist's life that his final twenty-four hours are the only ones which we can follow step by step. There are periods

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[1]See Heinrich von Kleists Lebensspuren: Dokumente und Berichte der Zeitgenossen, ed. Helmut Sembdner ("Sammlung Dietrich," No. 172; Bremen, 1957), nos. 667, 694, 732.

of many months in his life of which we know absolutely nothing. The chronology of his production is still a matter of contention; and, aside from a few remarks of his own, the few extant holograph manuscripts, and the scant and scattered references of others, his stylistic techniques and critical viewpoint must be wholly deduced from the final versions of his creations.

Nevertheless, it is doubtful that our information regarding Kleist would be as extensive as it is, were it not for the intercession on his behalf after his death of such men as Fouqué and particularly for the devotion of Ludwig Tieck. It is to the latter's ardent and untiring efforts in the 1820's and 1830's that we owe the first editions of the literary remains and the collected works and the preservation of many biographical data.[2] As more facts (and fiction) of Kleist's life came to light, they were set down by Tieck's pupil, von Bülow, in the 1840's, by Koberstein and Wilbrandt in the 1860's, by Theophil Zolling in the 1880's.[3] For the

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[2] Heinrich von Kleists hinterlassene Schriften, ed. Ludwig Tieck (Berlin, 1821). Heinrich von Kleists gesammelte Schriften, ed. Ludwig Tieck (3 vols; Berlin, 1826). Heinrich von Kleists ausgewählte Schriften, ed. Ludwig Tieck (4 vols.; Berlin, 1846).

[3] Heinrich von Kleists Leben und Briefe, ed. Eduard von Bülow (Berlin, 1848). Heinrich von Kleists Briefe an seine Schwester Ulrike, ed. August Koberstein (Berlin, 1860). Adolf Wilbrandt, Heinrich von Kleist (Nördlingen, 1863). Theophil Zolling, Heinrich von Kleist in der Schweiz (Stuttgart, 1882). Other pioneering work in the last century, prior to

most part the early biographical studies depended for their information on the letters written by Kleist.

Gradually, however, the personal correspondence of Kleist's acquaintances, their memoirs, forgotten scraps from newspapers and periodicals, and the governmental archives in Berlin, Frankfurt an der Oder, Dresden, Leipzig, Würzburg, and other places revealed both their dry and impersonal and their poignant and often tragic facts. As time went on, these were incorporated in the skeletal outline of Kleist's life and filled the gaps here and there, much as tesserae in a growing mosaic, which is still too incomplete to offer a picture clear to all, slowly make it more vivid to the scholar who is able to deduce and synthesize. Flodoard Freiherr von Biedermann was the first, in 1912, to publish these fragments in an ordered collection.[4] This he called Heinrich von Kleists Gespräche in a somewhat futile attempt to adapt the slim book to the five-volume prototype, Goethes Gespräche, which he had earlier published.[5] Clearly none of the 155 entries in the

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the material investigated in Chapter II of this study, by Zolling, Julian Schmidt, Rudolf Köpke, Reinhold Köhler, Heinrich von Treitschke, A. R. Schillmann, Paul Lindau, Karl Siegen, and many others is listed by title and chronologically in Otto Brahm, Das Leben Heinrichs von Kleist (2nd ed.; Berlin, 1911), pp. 437-439.

[4]Heinrich von Kleists Gespräche: Nachrichten und Überlieferungen aus seinem Umgange, ed. Flodoard Freiherr von Biedermann (Leipzig, 1912).

[5]Goethes Gespräche, ed. Flodoard Freiherr von Biedermann (5 vols.; Leipzig, 1909-1911).

book is in the form of a conversation with Kleist which might be in any way analogous to the avariciously sought and assiduously noted conversations with the great man of Weimar. None of Kleist's contemporaries was prompted to set down the words of this taciturn and generally unfamiliar writer. Those few "quotations" which were recalled subsequent to his death are exclusively in an anecdotal framework, to which we can rarely ascribe any authenticity.

There is, however, an important fact revealed in these fragments which we must not overlook. Not suspecting the great posthumous fame which was to be Kleist's due, none of his contemporaries felt obliged to adulate him during his lifetime or to idealize him for posterity. Consequently there is an air of the immediate and the genuine about many of the sparse characterizations. This candor perhaps enables us to be on safer ground in some of our suppositions than if we were to be juggling obvious panegyrics.

In 1957 the collection of von Biedermann was superseded by what will likely remain the definitive compilation of this material, Helmut Sembdner's Heinrich von Kleists Lebensspuren: Dokumente und Berichte der Zeitgenossen.[6] The editor's

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[6]Kleists Lebensspuren, ed. Sembdner; cf. fn. 1. In this section of Chapter III references will be made to the item number in the Sembdner volume; this number will be placed in the text in parenthesis after the excerpt. It will

chronological arrangement has necessitated a division of some of the longer items. The incorporation of newly discovered documentation, all extant letters to Kleist,[7] many more excerpts from the early biographies than in the earlier collection, many excerpts from contemporary criticism of his writings, a selection of applicable material from the Abendblätter, and the entire Tieck correspondence in connection with the publication of the first collected editions, make this volume nearly four times larger than that of von Biedermann.[8]

We should seek in vain among the more than 800 entries for specific reference to Kleist's use of gesture, pantomime, and the unspoken in his works. "Gebärde," when the word was used, meant nothing more than a physical action denoting a stylized expression of some emotion.[9] And the terms "Pantomime"

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sometimes be necessary to refer to items in Biedermann, in which case the reference, likewise to item number and not page, will be prefixed by "Bm."

[7]The vast majority was burned by Kleist; those of which duplicates exist in record offices and those which Kleist never received for one reason or another constitute the bulk of what remains.

[8]In a few instances Sembdner has not included the full selections as they appear in the Biedermann collection; whether he has determined that such material is of disputed authenticity or merely repetitious, he does not state. In any case, a few passages which he has omitted we shall have reason to cite.

[9]The only reference to the gesture in drama which we

and "Mimik" are used only in connection with the performances in Berlin in April, 1811, of the last scene of Penthesilea by Mme. Henriette Hendel-Schütz, an event with which we shall deal briefly in the consideration of that drama.[10] More surprising possibly is the almost complete absence of terms such as "unaussprechlich" or "unbeschreiblich" in connection with Kleist and his works--surprising in view of the unprecedented frequency with which Kleist, from literally his first letter to his last, applied these terms to himself and to what he was trying to express with the written word. Any careful reader of these contemporary documents cannot fail to be impressed by the tragic lack of understanding and the inability to comprehend the deeper implications of Kleist's work. In short, his symbolic language seems never to have been appreciated by his contemporaries to any decisive degree.

It would seem to be a worthwhile venture to extract from this multitude of fragmentary information those aspects of both the man and his work which constitute evidence for the uniqueness of his nature and his creations, and which at

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have been able to locate is not included in the Sembdner volume. In a review of a performance of Käthchen in Berlin some twelve years after Kleist's death, the reviewer says of Frau von Holtei's performance of the main role that it was "einfach im Ausdruck des Wortes und der Gebärden, wie es der Dichter wollte, und der Geist des Dichters allerdings fordert" (Bm. 77).

[10]Cf. Sembdner, Lebensspuren, nos. 487-491.

the same time help to corroborate our claim for the importance of the extra-verbal elements in them.

1. We shall begin with those elements in Kleist's behavior, as judged and evaluated by his contemporaries, which are applicable to our investigation.

Without making specific ascriptions at this point, it is revealing to set down a list of adjectives used to describe Kleist's nature by those who came in contact with him. Such a list may suggest among other things the frank and unbiased attitude toward this figure of which we have spoken, as well as a startling consistency. Each of these adjectives was used more than once, a number of them frequently. Kleist was found to be "träumerisch," "verschlossen," "zurückziehend," "schweigsam," "melancholisch," "betrübt," "finster," "dunkel," "düster," and "ernst"; "exzentrisch," "zerstreut," "ungeregelt," "reizbar," "empfindlich," "überspannt," "wunderlich," and "wunderbar" (in the sense of "wunderlich"); "launig (i.e., "launisch"), "unzufrieden," and "schwärmerisch"; "stolz," "strebsam," as well as "bescheiden"; "liebenswürdig," "zauberisch," "treu," "edel," and "genial." Finally, more than a mere coincidence, it is a significant fact that the three adjectives applied most often to Kleist by those who seem to have had the closest affinity for him are "rätselhaft," "still," and "wahr." These certainly apply in an equally significant

way to the characters which he created.

For Kleist's inexplicable silences, the "sickness" of his mind of which some wrote, and his incongruous behavior became part and parcel of his misunderstood heroes and heroines. As such they are essential aspects of our investigation. Among the "Überlieferungen" set down by von Bülow we read that Kleist was "still, ernst und zerstreut. . . . Es konnte ihn ein Blick, eine Miene ausser Fassung bringen" (35). Wilhelmine von Zenge, Kleist's "stille Braut," wrote that he was "sehr melancholisch, finster und sprach sehr wenig" (36). Zschokke wrote of his "zuweilen schwärmerischen, träumerischen Wesen" (66). The most revealing single source for these peculiarities of Kleist's personality is Wieland's often-quoted letter to that Dr. Wedekind in Mainz who treated Kleist after his breakdown in 1803. In it Wieland speaks of the "etwas Rätselhaftes und Geheimnisvolles, das tiefer in ihm zu liegen schien, als dass ich es für Affektation halten konnte," and of his eccentric behavior which manifested itself in sudden silences, stammering, mumbling, and lapses into absent-mindedness (89).[11] In transcribing the recollections of Kleist's devoted friend, Ernst von Pfuel, Wilbrandt writes of the recurrent idée fixe of committing suicide with a willing companion, but also that

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[11]This important document will be quoted at greater length in the appendix on Penthesilea.

Kleist "verstand allezeit guten Spass, dieser finstere, rätselvolle Mensch" (112). More complete is the retelling by Rudolf Köpke of the words of Tieck:

> Trotz seines sonderbaren Wesens war Kleist liebenswürdig: . . . schroff und scheu, . . . wechselnden und zweifelvollen Stimmungen unterworfen. In guten Stunden nahm er unbefangen und lebhaft an der Unterhaltung teil. Dann fiel ein unbedeutendes Wort, auf welches niemand Wert legte, aber ihn berührte es in unbegreiflicher Weise, und sogleich ward er stumm, finster, und zog sich misstrauisch tagelang in sich selbst zurück. In solchen Augenblicken des Schweigens schien er geistig abwesend (271).

The pupil likewise remarks, "dass er in seinen . . . Stimmungen schon Momente hatte, in denen sein Geist geradezu abwesend schien" (309).

One of the best-known of such characterizations of Kleist is in the letter from Achim von Arnim to Wilhelm Grimm (1810); Arnim speaks of Kleist as

> . . . eine sehr eigentümliche, ein wenig verdrehte Natur. . . . Er ist der unbefangenste [!], fast zynische Mensch, der mir lange begegnet, hat eine gewisse Unbestimmtheit in der Rede, die sich dem Stammeln nähert (345).

The reminiscences of a random acquaintance in Berlin, F. W. Gubitz, recall Kleist as "nicht glänzend angetan, düster, vor sich hinblickend. . . . Ein Wort von ihm selber habe ich nie vernommen" (471). An account in 1812 by the peculiar little figure Ernst Friedrich Peguilhen, whom fate seems to have brought into Kleist's life toward its end, tells us that Kleist

was "überhaupt einer ruhigen Überlegung nicht fähig, sondern entweder Enthusiast oder ganz teilnahmslos" (511). More negative is the description of Kleist's peculiarities as recorded by the biographer of Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann (in reality one of Kleist's most faithful and admiring comrades), Anton Springer: Dahlmann, he wrote, "übersah nicht die krankhafte, überreizte, unstete, zur unrechten Zeit und am unrechten Ort unmutige und dann wieder kleinmütige Natur Kleists" (726).

Although it is far from the task of this study to attempt a clinical analysis of Kleist's mentality, it may well be argued that this "sickness of mind" as seen by a number of his contemporaries is to a great extent another manifestation of the impenetrable and incongruous nature of the man and his work. Goethe (who almost certainly never met Kleist) was compelled more than any other to note this aspect. Kleist's behavior, he claims, "deutet auf eine schwere Verirrung der Natur, die den Grund ihrer Entschuldigung allein in einer zu grossen Reizbarkeit der Nerven oder in Krankheit finden kann" (251). It was Kleist's unwavering and obsessive pursuit of a truth which Goethe seemed incapable of absorbing. In writing of a conversation with Goethe about Kleist, Falk writes:

> Goethe tadelt an ihm die nordische Schärfe des

> Hypochonders; es sei einem gereiften Verstande unmöglich in die Gewaltsamkeit [der Kleistschen] Motive . . . mit Vergnügen einzugehen. . . . Es gehöre ein grosser Geist des Widerspruches dazu, um einen so einzelnen Fall [as that of Kohlhaas] mit so durchgeführter, gründlicher Hypochondrie im Weltlaufe geltend zu machen. . . . "Sein Hypochonder ist gar zu arg; er richtet ihn als Menschen und Dichter zugrunde" (385).

And Goethe also writes:

> Mir erregte dieser Dichter, bei dem reinsten Vorsatz einer aufrichtigen Teilnahme, immer Schauder und Abscheu, wie ein von der Natur schön intentionierter Körper, der von einer unheilbaren Krankheit ergriffen wäre (772).

That these last two excerpts date from the late years of Goethe's life, would seem to indicate that the phenomenon of Kleist was something he was never able to put out of his mind once and for all. We cannot indeed avoid the impression that Goethe must have felt diabolically threatened by it. The man to whom balance, moderation, and health in its highest sense became more and more paramount, who had experienced and emerged from periods more dionysiac than is often recalled, can hardly have reacted differently to such uncompromising extremes as he found in Kleist's writings.[12]

Far less comprehending are the notorious words of C. F. Weisser in the Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände, who speaks with a vicious kind of sanctimoniousness of Kleist as

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[12]Cf. Bernhard Blume, "Kleist und Goethe," Monatshefte, XXXVIII (1946), esp. pp. 20-31.

"ein wahnsinniger Schriftsteller . . . , einer der berüchtigtsten Jünger der berüchtigten romantisch-mystischen [!] Schule"; of the "grosse Unehre" with which he bore his family name. "Mit einem Worte, [Kleist] war ein unheilbarer Kranker," one of the "Basilisken," one of the "Rotte unwissender, selbstsüchtiger und wahnsinniger Knaben" through whose work German literature had become "ein verpesteter Sumpf" (611)! Fortunately the lack of appreciation of Kleist went no further than this.

The "Unaussprechlichkeit" of Kleist's personality can be seen clearly mirrored in his hermetic concentration and the reclusive manner of working, as has already been suggested by some of our previous excerpts. There are others. "Eine unbekannte Freundin" (whose interesting "Fragment" appeared in Vienna in 1847) recalls:

> Oft geschah es . . . , dass er mitten im Redestrom plötzlich abbrach, vor sich hinstarrte, als erblickte er irgend etwas vor sich, und dann in dumpfes Hinbrüten versank, wo dann nichts mehr aus ihm herauszubringen war (34).

In her journal Adolphine von Werdeck, an acquaintance from Potsdam and onetime traveling companion of Kleist, found it exceptional that on one occasion "selbst Kleist war weniger als sonst mit sich selbst beschäftigt" (114). Wilhelm von Schütz, one of the first to preserve the recollections of Pfuel and of Kleist's cousin, Marie von Kleist, writes of Kleist in Königsberg: "Dort entzweit er sich mit allen und

lebt lange stets im Zimmer, ohne mit irgendwem zu verkehren" (148). Bülow speaks of the same behavior:

> Er hatte häufig Fieber und lag oft ganze Tage lang, wie er freilich sagte, mehr aus Unlust als aus Unwohlsein, zu Bett, oder liess sich doch, in sein Zimmer verschlossen, vor keinem Menschen sehen (149).

And that such behavior seems to have been habitual is attested to by Arnim five years after Kleist was in Königsberg: "Er lebt sehr wunderlich, oft ganze Tage im Bette, um da ungestörter bei der Tabakspfeife zu arbeiten" (345).

It is also Arnim who tells us shortly after Kleist's death of the latter's uncompromising exclusiveness:

> Wenige Dichter mögen sich eines gleichen Ernstes, einer ähnlichen Strenge in ihren Arbeiten rühmen dürfen wie der Verstorbene. . . . Man hätte bedauern müssen, dass er keine Schule anerkannt, dass heisst, nur in seltnen Fällen dem Hergebrachten und dem Urteile seiner Kunstfreunde nachgab . . . ; die Festigkeit, mit der er das Schicksal seines Lebens lenkte, erklärt diesen Eigensinn sehr leicht, der sich in den Widerwärtigkeiten seines Lebens durch das Gefühl der inneren Kraft, mit der er sie ertrug, noch vermehrte (612).

And very similar are the words of Fouqué:

> Was irgend Heinrich erfasste, erfasste er mit gewaltiger Liebe und Kraft, aber eben deshalb mit einer gewissen Ausschliesslichkeit, die ihn oftmals verhinderte, das Gute und Schöne auf den Bahnen anderer zu bemerken, oder doch gehörig zu würdigen (106).[13]

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[13]It is interesting to note that Duke Karl August observed something similar; in a letter to Goethe which refers to the performance of Der zerbrochene Krug in Weimar he remarked that Kleist "mit vielem Witz, Verstand und etwas Talent sich mit sich selbst amüsiert, ohne die mindeste Ahnung zu haben, wie es andern Leuten dabei zumute ist" (245).

Towering ambition, an aspect with which Kleist imbued such of his figures as Penthesilea and Guiskard, is an aspect closely related to the above. It is part and parcel of himself as the dramatic visionary as well as of his most important protagonists in these dramas. Pfuel's well-known and probably not apocryphal account (as adapted by Wilbrandt) is its best expression:

> Keiner hat Goethe leidenschaftlicher bewundert, aber auch keiner ihn so wie Kleist beneidet und sein Glück und seinen Vorrang gehasst. Dem Freunde [Pfuel] gestand er in wilderregten Stunden, wie er es meinte: "Ich werde ihm den Kranz von der Stirne reissen," war der Refrain seiner Selbstbekenntnisse wie seiner Träume" (112).

Thus a gesture also in nearly every one of Kleist's dramas is seen to be, metaphorically, an integrated gesture in his own behavior.

The extraordinary lack of comprehension of Kleist and his artistic aims, even after his death--a corollary of the foregoing to a great extent--is one of the most consistent threads running through the documents during the years following 1811. For our purposes we select only a few excerpts which more specifically elucidate the absolute failure to understand the hidden aspects of Kleist's work and nature. The presumably close friend Dahlmann surely oversimplifies the horrendous complexities of his suicide when he remarks: "Kleist erlag seiner düstern nagenden Hoffnungslosigkeit,

seiner Verzweiflung am Vaterlande, soviel ich weiss, keiner andern Leidenschaft" (518a); and also: "Er ist an gebrochenem Herzen über die Leiden der Zeit gestorben, wenn gleich äusserlich er als Opfer einer phantastischen Grille fiel" (727). Even Pfuel, with whom Kleist was on the most intimate terms, speaks of the suicide as "eine falsch erkünstelte Exultation" (560).[14] Far from unique is the reaction of one L. Wissmann, a member of "die deutsche Tischgesellschaft":

> Ich habe immer kein rechtes Herz zu diesem wunderlichen Menschen gehabt. Dass man sich selbst erschiessen kann, ist sehr vortrefflich eingerichtet für die äussersten Umstände, aber der Mörder eines andern könnte ich doch niemals werden (548).

The critical and often derisive Clemens Brentano writes:

> Der arme, gute Kerl, seine poetische Decke war ihm zu kurz, und er hat sein Leben lang ernsthafter, als vielleicht irgendein neuer Dichter, daran gereckt und gespannt. Er ist allein so weit gekommen, weil er keinen recht herrlichen Menschen gekannt und geliebt, und grenzenlos eitel war (579a).

Arnim's witty rejoinder--"Wenn Du dem armen Kleist vorwirfst, seine poetische Decke sei ihm zu kurz gewesen, so ist Dir Deine vielmehr zu lang, oder Du hast sie in der Eile verschoben und über die Augen geworfen" (579b)--is not sufficient to offset the lack of understanding which he himself evinced in regard to Kleist's art. Ernst Peguilhen, the source for

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[14]There is, however, cause to believe that Pfuel was far more shattered than "unangenehm berührt" (as he says in this letter) by Kleist's death; cf. 619.

whose sometimes strangely penetrating observations is still a puzzle, is, on the other hand, often quite mistaken--for example, when he states that the cause of Kleist's downfall was to be seen in the "schwärmerisch religiöse Gesinnungen, [die er] hegte" (522).

To anticipate for the moment the following section, the all but unprecedented element of "das Unaussprechliche" in Kleist's works was as misunderstood or unnoticed as the author himself. Varnhagen von Ense, one of the most ardent defenders of Kleist's honor as a Prussian, writes of Die Marquise von O.... that it is "gebildet wie die Erzählung eines Weltmannes, nicht gebildet wie die eines Dichters, in diesen wenigen Worten glaub ich Kleists ganzes Wesen ausgesprochen zu haben" (260). And Fouqué writes of Penthesilea: "[Es] tritt leider eine fremde Besonnenheit nur allzuoft dazwischen, und verunstaltet die eigentümliche Keckheit zur Affektation" (229). When in his naïveté Fouqué also takes umbrage at the fact that the outcome of Der zerbrochene Krug is never in doubt and therefore is "nicht einmal recht lebhaft gespannt" (497), he reminds us of a similar objection to Die Marquise von O...., which is lodged by an unnamed contemporary critic, who signs himself "och" and who writes in Der Freimüthige:

Schon nach den ersten Seiten errät man den Schluss

> des Ganzen, und die Menschen darin benehmen sich alle so inkonsequent [!], albern, selbst moralisch unmoralisch, dass für keinen Charakter irgendein Interesse gewonnen werden kann (235).

The same article goes on to refer to the style as "undeutsch, . . . steif, . . . verschroben, . . . gemein." Von Collin in Vienna explains that Kleist's works were unsuccessful because their "Sprache und Vers in gesuchter Nachlässigkeit sich gefielen" (391). Solger, a more sympathetic critic, wrote in 1817 to Tieck a peculiarly contradictory appreciation. He speaks of unbounded admiration for Kleist's

> tiefes und oft erschütterndes Eindringen in das Innerste des menschlichen Gefühls, das er mir nur oft zu hart und fast roh an das Licht riss [precisely!], und die ausserordentliche energische und plastische Kraft der äusseren Darstellung.

Yet paradoxically what he objects to is

> der grosse Wert, den er auf gesuchte Situationen und Effekte, und besonders auf den Gehalt einzelner Charaktere legte, wie auch ein absichtliches Streben, über das Gegebène und Wirkliche hinwegzugehn, und die eigentliche Handlung in eine fremde, geistige oder wunderbare Welt zu versetzen, kurz ein gewisser Hang zu dem willkürlichen Mystizismus, der am Ende mehr interessant als wahr und tief sein will (678).

It is, of course, exactly those elements which constitute Kleist's great contribution.[15]

It would seem in historical perspective that the

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[15] In all fairness, however, it must be conceded that for 1817 Solger shows a rare affinity for these particular literary ingredients.

incongruity of Kleist and his agony as a misfit was the inevitable price he had to pay in his role (for want of a perhaps less deterministic term) both as heir of the eighteenth century and, far more significantly, as literary prophet of much that came after him. This particular aspect of his fate was felt by only a sparse number of his contemporaries. Heinrich Zschokke "nahm den leisen Zug von Schwermut für ein Nachweh in der Erinnerung an trübe Vergangenheiten" (73). Luise Wieland, the daughter of the poet and one of a number of women who seem to have had great affection for Kleist, found more accurately that he was "einer von denen, die nicht allein stehen können, ohne nicht am Ende in den Strudel unserer Zeit mit hineingerissen zu werden" (512). (These prophetic words were written in 1811, little more than a month before Kleist's death.) And, as is so frequently the case, the majority of the appreciations of Kleist's ambivalent position in his own time came afterward.

The faithful Fouqué wrote in 1840:

> Einem Geiste wie dem seinigen konnte die Halbscheid des Daseins nicht genügen . . . und die Glaubenssonne . . . war ihm nicht aufgegangen. So hatte ihn denn eine unbegrenzte Sehnsucht ergriffen, hinter den Vorhang zu schauen (515a).

The "unbekannte Freundin" remembers bitterly:

> Wie herzlos das gebildete Berlin sich gegen den genialen unglücklichen Dichter bewies, wie die kleinlichsten Kabalen angewendet wurden, um selbst den

> Versuch, seine Dramen auf die Bühne zu bringen, zu hintertreiben, wie seine Zerstreutheit, seine Art zu reden und sich zu tragen, ausgebeutet wurden, ihn lächerlich zu machen, ihn als einen halb Wahnsinnigen darzustellen (517).

Fouqué's wife Caroline wrote to Adam Müller: "Die Welt hat Kleist nur sträubend, gleichsam vor dem Übergewicht zurückweichend, anerkannt" (552a). The friend Pfuel wrote to this same Caroline von Fouqué: "So tief er ins menschliche Gemüt zu schauen verstand, so blieben ihm die Menschen in Masse doch fremd und unverständlich" (560). Arnim shows an appreciation of Kleist's ambivalent position in his time in these words to the Brothers Grimm: "Er meinte es mit seiner Arbeit so ehrlich wie wenige, . . . und seinem dramatischen Talente fehlte eigentlich nur ein Theater, das er geachtet hätte, indem es sich für ihn interessiert hätte" (577). Varnhagen speaks to his sympathetic wife Rahel of Kleist's agony:

> Der Arme! welch ein ungeheurer Schmerz muss in ihm gewütet haben, eh er sein Talent aufgab, das er in seinem verwüsteten Leben wie einen unzerstörbaren Talisman eines verheissenen Glücks betrachtete (584).

According to Adam Müller in Der österreichische Beobachter, Kleist

> hatte längst eine Art von Unbehaglichkeit unter den Zuständen seiner Zeit empfunden. Seine teutschen Zeitgenossen waren ihres eignen Urteils vielleicht nie weniger mächtig gewesen, als da seine Werke erschienen: man strebte nach Ruhe, nach gewissen bequemen Empfindungen, nach leichten schmeichelnden Berührungen des Herzens. Wie konnte ein Dichter gefallen, der, selbst keines oberflächlichen Gefühls

> fähig, die Zukunft zu ergreifen, die Nation für den Schmerz zu erziehen und für grossmütiges Hingeben an das Vaterland und an die Freunde zu begeistern, also alle Wunden noch tiefer aufzureissen, mit jugendlicher Überschwenglichkeit unternommen hatte. Sein Publikum liess das gut sein, der Dichter ward an die Seite gestellt und wie alles Unbequeme, leicht vergessen (608).

The ineffable quality of Kleist's nature seems to have exercised a certain limited contagion throughout his life; and although the word "unaussprechlich" itself is used by others so rarely as to give it even greater impact in Kleist's correspondence (where it is anything but a voguish cliché), we cannot overlook the several instances where something very similar concerning Kleist is recorded by his contemporaries. Pfuel's avowal seems entirely genuine when he writes:

> Ich für mein Teil bin zuerst Kleists Freund und dann erst Christ, und deswegen weicht meine Ansicht von der der meisten weithin ab, und ich bin nicht imstande, mich ihnen über meinen Freund verständlich zu machen, wie ich es wünsche (619).

Caroline von Schlieben, later the wife of Kleist's onetime companion, the artist Heinrich Lohse, writes in 1803: "Im ganzen ist Kleist aber doch ein wunderbares Wesen, ich kann ihn nicht begreifen; sollte ich . . . sagen, wie er mir alles vorgekommen ist, so würde ich nicht fertig werden" (110). The fervid confession of Caroline von Fouqué reveals much the same thing after Kleist's death: "Mir ist sehr viel mit Kleist verlorengegangen, er war mir . . . Reisegefährte

. . . durch die geheimnisvollen Schachten und verschlungenen Metalladern des inneren Menschenlebens!" (552a). There seems to have been a very close affinity between Rahel and Kleist during his last year in Berlin, and although there remain only meagre scraps of evidence to document this affinity, these same scraps have a tone completely unique among all the others. Their simplicity is rare, for one thing. One of the finest tributes to the inexplicability of Kleist's personality is Rahel's note to Varnhagen, in which she states: "Erschöss' ich mich: wunderten sie sich, wie über Kleist. Diese Begräbnisfeier, mich nicht zu wundern, habe ich ihm wenigstens gehalten -- !" (585).

Finally, the woman to raise the most voluble voice after Kleist's death was his cousin Marie. But if we can detect a certain hysteria in her anguish, we can be quite certain that somehow it has its justification. It was she more than any other who spoke of the inexpressible in Kleist's nature. Immediately prior to his death she interceded with her sovereign on his behalf, referring to him, by analogy with his forbear, Ewald von Kleist, as "ein Mann . . . aus unsäglichen Sonderbarkeiten zusammengesetzt" (507a). One month after the suicide she wrote to her son of Kleist:

> Übrigens war er ein Dichter. Und wenn er kein einziges Gedicht erzeugt hätte, so war er doch seiner Natur nach ein Dichter. Er war der poetischste, der

> romantischste Mensch, den ich je gesehn, und so war vieles in ihm, was wir nicht erklären können, noch begreifen. Er war würklich ein genialischer Mensch, und in einem solchen gibt es viele Dinge, die sich nicht erklären lassen (563).

Two decades later the ecstatic tone had still not abated. As justification for her having burned much of his correspondence to her, she writes:

> So spricht er sich nicht zweimal im Leben aus, und so kann sich auch keiner wieder aussprechen, weil keiner so empfinden, so fühlen kann, wie dieser unbegreifliche Sterbliche! (567).

2. Remarks by Kleist's contemporaries about his everlasting struggle with words as his medium and about his creative thought processes in general are, if anything, rarer than those regarding the inexpressible in his personality. It is felt, however, that few as they may be they should be collected here.

Again one of our most important sources is the letter from Wieland to Dr. **Wedekind** (89 and 125), although we learn little more from it than that Kleist was liable to lapse without warning into coma-like silences, in which, as he later confessed, he was mentally composing his Guiskard; that the slightest word could sometimes set up a series of sympathetic vibrations in him, "wie ein Glockenspiel," which would likewise release his mind from social strictures. It would seem that Kleist at such moments was behaving in a fashion strikingly

similar to his own Penthesilea, Achilles, and Homburg. Wieland speaks in the same letter of "sein fruchtloses Streben nach einem unerreichbaren Zauberbild von Vollkommenheit" (125). The high esteem in which Wieland held Kleist is echoed in the recollection of one of the latter's nieces, Auguste von Schönfeldt. Through Ulrike we hear Auguste's statement, "dass wenn Onkel jemals so weit käme, das auszusprechen, was er in sich ahnen lässt, so würde die Kunst um Jahrhunderte vorwärtsschreiten" (90).

Pfuel recalls the following in connection with the genesis of Schroffenstein:

> Ihm war eines Tages die seltsame Auskleideszene des letzten Aktes [significantly one of the scenes in which gesture is of central importance], rein als Szene, in den Sinn gekommen, und da die Situation ihn anzog, hatte er sie wie eine zusammenhanglose Phantasie niedergeschrieben. Dann erst fiel ihm ein, sie mit andern Fäden der Erfindung, vielleicht mit einem zufällig entdeckten Stoff zusammenzuspinnen, und so wob sich allmählich um diese Szene die ganze Tragödie herum (70).

This immediate and instinctive visualization of a dramatic situation is intimately connected with another non-verbal medium associated with Kleist's creative processes: the aural. Although his musical propensities and his virtuosity on the flute and clarinet are fairly well known to us today, such matters were little regarded by his contemporaries.[16] We

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[16]Cf. pp. 100-105, and 198-201 of this study.

hear only through von Bülow of Kleist's thoughts about the possibility of adapting musical notation to literary techniques (145). What else we have learned about this aspect, we have had to gather from his own letters and from the construction of the plays themselves. In each case it does suggest a struggle and a dissatisfaction with words as the exclusive medium in writing.

Emma Körner writes that Kleist "liebt es, mit dem Stoff zu kämpfen," and adds, "aber es ist schade, wenn er seine Kraft verschwendet" (262). Tieck speaks of the same thing:

> Er war gewissenhaft ängstlich in seinen Arbeiten, sie rückten nicht schnell vor, er änderte oft und arbeitete wieder um. Er selbst war am schwersten zu befriedigen (273).

Brentano writes to Wilhelm Grimm: "Was mich bei der Sache ängstigt, ist, dass er sehr schwer und mühsam arbeitet" (347). Arnim also notes that Kleist was one who "in seinen Arbeiten durch stetes Ausstreichen und Abändern sich äussert" (345). Peguilhen either exploited the observations of others (perhaps, indeed, of Kleist himself)[17] or chanced at times to have

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[17]Although there has been no opportunity as yet to investigate the matter thoroughly, there would seem to be passages attributed to Peguilhen (esp. E. F. Peguilhen, "Aus dem Leben Heinrich von Kleists," Berühmte Schriftsteller der Deutschen, ed. F. W. Gubitz Berlin, 1854 , Vol. I, pp. 309-316), which in part are of a style so similar to that of Kleist himself as to give rise to interesting speculation about Peguilhen's sources.

arrived at apt formulations by himself, for example, when he wrote of the figure of Käthchen: "Der Verfasser wollte ein Wesen darstellen, deren Inneres so reich ausgestattet ist, gleichsam überfüllt ist, dass ihm immer und ewig die Worte fehlen, es ganz auszusprechen" (393). There is likewise something vaguely mystifying in the appropriateness of another of Peguilhen's observations; he wrote of Kleist,

> dass ihm das wichtigste Talent fehlte, sein Talent geltend zu machen, und dass er ihm vermöge einer ihm eigentümlichen tiefen Verschlossenheit des Gemüts, die sich fast in allen seinen Schriften ausspricht, den Reichtum seines Innern nur selten enthüllte, immer nur ahnden liess. . . . Er äusserte sich wenig, empfand aber tief und innig, und nur einzelne Funken liessen zuweilen den Vulkan in seinem Innern verraten (621).

Kriegsrat J. G. Scheffner, an acquaintance of Kleist in Königsberg, used an analogy from nature other than the volcano to convey Kleist's struggle with words:

> Wie ein der Meerestiefe entsteigender Taucher sich wenigstens in den ersten Augenblicken nicht auf alles Grosse und Schöne besinnt, was er in der Wasserwelt gesehen, und es nicht zu erzählen vermag, so schien es bisweilen bei Heinrich von Kleist der Fall zu sein (142).[18]

Other specific aspects of Kleist's creative process and its effects which concern this part of our study and which

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[18]The same analogy to a submarine vision was later used by Albert Fries, as we have seen (see pp. 59-60 of this study). With quite different intent Alfred Kerr writes: "Kleist ist schon, wie Hebbel, nicht ein Schwimmer im klaren Wasser, sondern ein Taucher in die reiche Mischwelt des Tangs."--Die Welt im Drama, ed. G. F. Hering (Cologne and Berlin, 1954), p. 401.

were noted to a limited extent by his contemporaries include its immediacy, the author's exaggerated identity with his characters, and the difficulty on the part of readers of expressing the impact of certain works on them. As to the element of immediacy, Joseph Görres in Munich remarked of the Schroffenstein tragedy:

> Ein bedeutungsvolles Leben hat der Dichter dem Worte eingehaucht, und seine Gestalten gehen meistens mit bestimmter Individualität hervor, und bewegen sich zwanglos und frei nach dem Rhythmus ihrer inneren Natur (135).

Of Amphitryon Adam Müller wrote in his introduction

> Der Autor verlangt . . . keine mechanische Verbindung von [antiker und moderner Manier], sondern strebt nach einer gewissen poetischen Gegenwart, in der sich das Antike und Moderne . . . wohlgefallen (171).

According to Graf O. H. von Loeben, Mme. de Staël should have sensed, indeed, perhaps did sense the same immediacy and the absence of the tradition-bound.[19] Better known is Goethe's

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[19]"Eine Natur von grossem praktischen Talent für das gegenwärtige Theater war der zu früh und zu unglücklich untergangene Heinrich von Kleist. Der sinnlichen Naturkraft und dem gestalteten Irdischen mehr als dem inneren Leben zugewendet[?], erfreuten sich seine Dramen . . . einer kecken Bemächtigung des Lebens und einer freien Darstellung, die ihn, bei einem tieferen Studium, mehr als irgendeinen der deutschen Dramatiker zu einem Nachfolger Shakespeares geeignet haben würde. Seine Stärke war mehr . . . die Erscheinung als die Bedeutung . . . ; mehr schien er dem antiken als dem romantischen Stil verwandt, fast zu los von beiden ergriff er wohl oft das Moderne" (638). Graf von Loeben also tells us that ("soviel wir wissen") Mme. de Staël knew Kleist personally and collaborated with him and Müller on the Phöbus in Dresden.

judgment of Der zerbrochene Krug, of which he said that it has "ausserordentliche Verdienste, und die ganze Darstellung drängt sich mit gewaltsamer Gegenwart auf" (185). Even more familiar, however, is the telling sentence which follows that appreciation: "Nur schade, dass das Stück auch wieder dem unsichtbaren Theater angehört."

The most famous anecdote in connection with Kleist's identification with his characters is Pfuel's often-cited account of Kleist's highly emotional reaction upon announcing the death of his Penthesilea.[20] Also Varnhagen writes: "So ernst waren ihm seine dichterischen Gestalten, so innig lebte er mit ihnen!" (Bm. 70). According to Pfuel's partial biographer, W. Loewe, Pfuel further generalized his observations about Kleist and his creations:

> Kleist habe immer mit einer tiefgreifenden Aufregung gearbeitet, indem er sich mit seinem ganzen Fühlen und Denken . . . in das Leben und in die Schicksale seines Helden oder seiner Heldin versenkte (Bm. 69).[21]

Goethe's puzzled reaction to Kleist's works and his apt formulation of it has often been applied in subsequent criticism. Of Amphitryon:

> Ich las und verwunderte mich, wie über das seltsamste Zeichen der Zeit. . . . Der antike Sinn in Behandlung

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[20]See the appendix to this study, p. 353.

[21]Similarly, a close association, specifically between Kleist and his Käthchen, is mentioned by Friedrich Schulz in 1824 (394).

> des Amphitryons ging auf Verwirrung des Sinnes. . . . Der Gegenwärtige, Kleist, geht bei den Hauptpersonen auf die Verwirrung des Gefühls hinaus (181).

Another very different critic, the twelve-year-old Hedwig von Staegemann, perhaps echoed the feeling of her mother, a great admirer of Kleist, when she wrote in her glowing praise of Käthchen: "Ich weiss auch nicht, was so Schönes in dem Käthchen liegt, aber es reizt mich mehr als alles übrige" (388).

Finally, it was the anonymous critic "Ha. Ha." in the Jenaer Allgemeine Zeitung (1807), whose use of "unaussprechlich" constitutes the one and only application of that word in all the contemporary documentation regarding Kleist's works: "Schön ist das überwältigende, unaussprechliche Gefühl von dieser plötzlichen Offenbarung durch Alkmenens einfaches Ach! ausgedrückt, womit das Drama bedeutend schliesst" (177).

Such is the extent of the "Rätselhaftigkeit" of Kleist's works as seen by his contemporaries. There are few other quotable instances. This element, as we have already observed, was more often mentioned in connection with the man. The same is true of his "Stille" and also of the third of this appropriate trio, Kleist's "Wahrheit." Adam Müller refers to his "königliche Wahrheit" (258), and Tieck calls him "bieder, wahr und aufrichtig" (271). In 1810 Rahel writes in her uniquely moving manner, "Adam Müllers Kleist sehe ich jetzt.

Ich lieb ihn und was er macht. Er ist wahr und sieht wahr. . . . Wir wollen auch grausam wahr sein" (357). And after his death:

> Es lässt sich, wo das Leben aus ist, niemals etwas darüber sagen; von Kleist befremdete mich die Tat nicht [the suicide], es ging streng in ihm her, er war wahrhaft und litt viel. . . . Ich freue mich, dass mein edler Freund--denn Freund ruf' ich ihm bitter und mit Tränen nach--das Unwürdige nicht duldete; gelitten hat er genug (576).

Rahel was, indeed, one of the astonishingly few people to understand Kleist and to appreciate how that strange but ineluctable trio of qualities: "Rätselhaftigkeit," "Wahrheit," and "Stille," which so dominated his nature, constituted the "Unaussprechlichkeit" of both him and his works.

It is outside the scope of this investigation to quote other general words of appreciation by Kleist's contemporaries. They were never applied to the inner meanings, the intentions behind the words of his writings. Varnhagen, Arnim, Fouqué, Tieck, Gentz, despite their pleas in Kleist's behalf, never comprehended this aspect of his genius.

As time passed voices of importance were raised in defense of this genius, but only rarely. E. T. A. Hoffmann speaks of him as that "herrlicher Genius" (628). Heinrich Heine writes of Homburg: "Was mich betrifft, so stimme ich dafür, dass es gleichsam vom Genius der Poesie selbst geschrieben ist" (709). And other voices, such as that of Ferdinand

Grimm to his two illustrious brothers, were heard:

> Es ist lächerlich zu glauben, Kleist habe Schiller auf irgeneine Weise nachgeahmt, wie viel grösser ist er und vollkommner gegen diesen, wie allein steht er nur Goethe zur Seite, . . . dem er aber auch nie nachgegangen ist. Nur Shakespeare hat ihn geboren (659).

But it is the astonishingly modern words of one H. G. Hotho, long forgotten, which include what is perhaps the first real appreciation in print of Kleist's dynamics of silence. Hotho wrote in 1827 in a review of Kleist's Gesammelte Schriften:

> Je mehr . . . die Gegensätze aller früheren Darstellungen . . . in diesem letzten Werke [Homburg] ihren Kampf friedlich und versöhnt beenden, desto auffallender könnte es scheinen, dass weder unser Dichter sich lebend mit der vorhandenen Welt in Einklang zu setzen, noch von seiner Mitwelt, wie er es wünschte und forderte, Anerkennung zu finden vermochte. Nennt ihn doch Tieck immer den verkannten Dichter, und bemüht sich vergebens, das Publikum für die Werke seines Freundes zu begeistern. Doch diese Werke können und dürfen ihrer Natur nach nur einem kleinen Kreise zur Freude und Erholung dienen. Die inneren Stimmungen und Verstimmungen des Gemütes, das Widerstreben der äusseren Zufälligkeit, ihr gespenstiges Verkünden einer höheren Welt, jene tiefste, lautlose, verschlossene Innerlichkeit, welche in sich webend und verschwebend unmittelbar aus dem Vergessen aller sonst gültigen, menschlichen und göttlichen Wirklichkeit das höhere Wissen . . . schöpfen soll, und dann doch keine weitere Kunde erhält, als die von erfüllten Liebesträumen,--die ganze Darstellung überhaupt der mehr oder weniger inhaltslosen Verhältnisse des inneren Selbstbewusstseins und des Wissens von der äusseren Welt, diese dramatische Psychologie, wie vollendet sie auch ausgeführt sein mag, kann niemals auf allgemeinere Anerkennung Anspruch machen. Denn man müsste diese Verstimmungen und Krankheiten des Geistes nicht nur in sich erfahren haben, sondern sie auch für die Gesundheit selber halten, um mit unserem Dichter ganz übereinzustimmen. Da die Richtung

> seiner Zeit, welche er darstellt, nur eine Nebenrichtung ist, kann es nur als unbillig erscheinen, zu verlangen, jeder solle diesen einsamen Fussteig entlangwandern und alle seine Krümmen und Irrgewinde voll Befriedigung verfolgen. Aus der Unbilligkeit dieser Forderung hat unser Dichter selber seinen Missmut und Lebensüberdruss geschöpft (722a).

It was nearly a century after these remarkable words were written that equivalent insights were brought to bear upon "jene tiefste, lautlose, verschlossene Innerlichkeit" in Kleist's creations. It is little wonder that at the time they were greeted with little appreciation: "Des jungen Hotho Kritik über H. v. Kleist ist noch sehr grün und unverdaulich," wrote Staegemann (732b). And the reaction of the seventy-eight year old Goethe displays the very emblem of resistance to thoughts of the transitory:

> Las [Hothos] Rezensionen in der Berliner Literaturschrift. Unterhaltung über diesen philosophisch-phantastischen Unfug. . . . Rezension der Kleistschen Schriften ward sehr getadelt: Die Herren schaffen und künsteln sich neue Theorien, um ihre Mittelmässigkeit für bedeutend ausgeben zu können. Wir wollen sie gewähren lassen, unsern Weg still fortgehen und nach einigen Jahrhunderten noch von uns reden lassen (723c).

Such was the great man's confidence in the future. But Adam Müller had words about the future's recognition of Kleist, too. He was quite correct; he merely underestimated the time it would take:

> [Was Kleist] als tragischer Dichter gemeint hat und was er geleistet, und was also Teutschland an ihm verloren hat, wird erst die Zukunft zu würdigen wissen (608). Was die Zeitgenossen darüber denken,

> ist gleichgültig! Alles recht Göttliche muss wohl dreissig und mehrere Jahre in irdischer Umgebung so forttreiben, ehe es auch nur vom zweiten erkannt wird; dies lehrt die Weltgeschichte, die Bibel, und wird auch das Schicksal der Werke lehren (258).

B. It is doubtful that in all the annals of German literature there is evidence of a life of greater anguish and documentation of more excruciating self-analysis than in the letters of Heinrich von Kleist. Two hundred and twenty-two letters, of which a large percentage in the last years of his life constitutes a business correspondence of sorts, is all that the most thorough investigation has been able to uncover in the century and a half since his death. We can never know what proportion this represents of the total number Kleist wrote in his lifetime. In any event, those that remain represent the most valuable source of information regarding the facts of his life and personality, and in addition shed some unique light upon his creative techniques and esthetic viewpoints when properly evaluated. A cautious interpretation is essential, however, since none of the letters was specifically aimed at augmenting traditional literary criticism in any sense. Not recognized during his life as the momentous style innovator that he was, Kleist was understandably never called upon to give commentaries on his own works or those of others; and the insights which he divulged

in personal correspondence must be carefully gleaned. It is something of a paradox that the more Kleist devoted his time to literary composition, the less frequent are the references to it, until, in the last year and a half, the exigencies of his existence precluded the possibility of both creative writing and contemplative correspondence.

In spite of these seemingly inauspicious conditions, students of Kleist have realized for some time that an appreciation of both content and form of his dramas and stories can be enhanced by a sympathetic reading of the letters. We shall find that the letters and works can be seen as mutually complementary in a very real sense, with the constant provision, however, that in any correlations we might make we avoid the constant pitfall of a deterministic interpretation which in the past has been the trap for many a zealous categorizer. The astonishing consistency underlying Kleist's correspondence, from the early didactic exercises to the final letters, lends itself neatly to such endeavors and it also runs counter to an evolutionary pattern evident in the correspondence of many, perhaps most, other writers. This singular and unswerving power of the letters is in no sense vitiated by the fact that, with the exception of only two, all of them fall into the relatively short twelve-year period from 1799 through 1811.

Stated in simple terms, this underlying consistency resides in the ineluctable search for Truth and for meaning in human relationships, and the realization that there is no way of capturing it and translating it into words. It is important to realize this consistency in view of the apparent dichotomy between the tone in the period of the "Lebensplan" and that after the so-called "Kant-Krise." We cannot seriously maintain that Kleist became "a different person" through the sudden realization that "Handeln ist besser als Wissen" (635).[22] There is too much evidence to support our conviction that such a transformation (or better, formation) antedates even the earliest letter. It would seem far more valid to perceive in the rationalistic letters and their pathos and rhetoric (primarily in 1799 and 1800) the desperate and even agonized pursuit of definition and stability. Their very length and circumspection attest to this. It might be said that in their solipsism were the birth-pangs of the plays and stories.

A question that always might well be asked in

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[22]All quotations from the letters are taken from the second volume of Helmut Sembdner's edition of the collected works (Munich: Hanser, 1952); this text follows that of Minde-Pouet in Vol. V of the Erich Schmidt edition, except for a few normalizations in the spelling and punctuation; in addition it includes the letters discovered subsequent to the 2nd edition (1936ff.) of the latter. Parenthetical reference in the text is to page number rather than to letter number or date.

investigating epistolary documents is: Why were these letters written in the first place? To whom were they directed, by whom inspired? In other words, what is the relation between writer and recipient? Although we cannot hope to give adequate answers in this summary review, they are tacit in every quotation which follows, for it should be mentioned at the outset that from first to last these letters speak with uncompromising consistency of the soul-searching writer himself. They are unequalled examples of what some call "ego-directedness." Kleist almost never asks questions about others or seems to concern himself intimately with their travails. And yet nothing would be more misleading than to conclude from this that he was a man without compassion. Indeed, it would seem that he internalized and generalized these concerns only to transform and fix this energy in his creative writings.

There is a striking discrepancy of style within his letters, particularly among the earlier ones. It is a difference between the casually conversational and the consciously formulated. Passages which are typified by the latter style can be called his earliest extant literary prose. Whereas those which fall into the former category consist of both long and short sentences, helter-skelter, are uncontrivedly specific, informative, and whereas their content is clearly

more important than the style in which it is conveyed, the others are cautiously worked over, show signs of much revision, and often consist of long, involved periods and the most intricate participial constructions, much as in the later Novellen. It is also immediately apparent to the systematic reader of these letters that such passages often occur in more than one letter, indeed that verbatim or slightly altered repetitions occur in letters to a variety of recipients. Particularly felicitous formulations seem to have lodged themselves in Kleist's mind and reoccur at what now would seem to be random moments throughout the whole correspondence. He clearly enjoyed dispersing what seemed to him his most satisfactory passages. For it was a demonstration of his victories with words, some kind of proof that he had anchored a thought or an image against the inexorable current of the obliterating anonymity which he feared. Much the same thing is seen in his repetitions of metaphors and other imagistic devices from play to play and from story to story. They, too, are bulwarks against the inexpressible. And for all of Kleist's admitted limitations as a descriptive writer, these very repetitions are gestures and symbols which transcend the boundaries of the individual works.

It is in this sense that we must ask about the convincing quality of such obviously constructed passages in the letters.

Is their strength diluted and their power diminished by virtue of their conscious style and by the fact that the same utterances are contained in letters to close friends and to casual acquaintances? Is the anguish which is so memorably expressed in many of the letters the less real for its stylistic perfection? Surely not. The problem--a problem of the creative mind in general--is nowhere better stated than in the journals of Franz Kafka:

> Mir immer unbegreiflich, dass es jedem fast, der schreiben kann, möglich ist, im Schmerz den Schmerz zu objektivieren, so dass ich zum Beispiel im Unglück, vielleicht noch mit dem brennenden Unglückskopf mich setzen und jemandem schriftlich mitteilen kann: Ich bin unglücklich. Ja, ich kann noch darüber hinausgehen und in verschiedenen Schnörkeln je nach Begabung, die mit dem Unglück nichts zu tun zu haben scheint, darüber einfach oder antithetisch oder mit ganzen Orchestern von Assoziationen phantasieren. Es ist gar nicht Lüge und stillt den Schmerz nicht, es ist einfach gnadenweiser Überschuss der Kräfte bis zum Boden meines Wesens, den er aufgekratzt, verbraucht hat. Was für ein Überschuss ist es also?[23]

This question, one we could not presume to answer, must have been one over which Kleist often pondered.

Inasmuch as we shall not attempt a complete review of Kleist's letters,[24] our aim here will be to extract from them,

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[23]Quoted in Fritz Martini, Das Wagnis der Sprache (Stuttgart, 1954), p. 306.

[24]See the following dissertations for more complete treatments of the letters: Hans-Horst Brügger, Die Briefe Heinrich von Kleists (Zurich, 1946), and Pieter Fokko Smith, Das Vertrauen in Heinrich von Kleists Briefen und Werken (Groningen, 1946).

as in the foregoing investigation from the contemporary documents, the elements which would seem to pertain to Kleist's dramatic vision, the importance of gesture within and apart from the language, the inadequacies of words. These elements can be generally divided into two major divisions: 1) the formative and palpable, the specific references to matters of theater and drama, the visual, aural, and oral, in short, the physical elements; and 2) the abstract, intangible elements, those sensations which defy description, the search for adequacies, the unspoken elements which lead, in short, to the symbolic. (A correlate to this is the attendant agony, doubts, and the consolation which Kleist was able to draw from his artistic and human dilemma.) The latter section will be seen to be by far the more revealing.

1. Of the elements which have a direct bearing on the dramatic creation in the palpable or perceptive sense, the visual-imaginative powers are clearly important. Kleist's mind's eye was always active, analyzing and synthesizing. Spectacular views of nature "at work" and panoramas of towns and cities are frequently transformed in his letters into "stages" of various activities. Indeed, nature always seems to take on the aspect of a theater in his writings. The extensive and critical description of the "Panorama der Stadt Rom" in Berlin (519-521) impresses us as nothing so much as

being comments on a stage-set found to be expert in some regards, wanting in others. More reflective and appreciative is the description of the Mulde River and the town of Waldheim on it (543-545). Interlarded as it is with sometimes almost humorously scientific observations, it nevertheless reveals a very important feature: a selectivity of moods and objects, which is not a random, but a consciously formative synthesis of what Kleist saw. Natural surroundings are clearly envisioned as a stage-set in the description of Schloss Lichtenstein in 1800:

> Wir sahen von einem hohen Berge herab, rechts und links dunkle Tannen, ganz wie ein gewählter Vordergrund; zwischendurch eine Gegend, ganz wie ein geschlossenes Gemälde. In der Tiefe lag zur Rechten am Wasser das Gebirgsstädtchen; hinter ihm, ebenfalls zur Rechten, auf der Hälfte eines ganz buschichten Felsens, das alte Schloss Lichtenstein; hinter diesem, immer noch zur Rechten, ein höchster Felsen, auf welchem ein Tempel steht. Aber zur Linken öffnet sich ein weites Feld, wie ein Teppich, von Dörfern, Gärten und Wäldern gewebt. Ganz im Hintergrunde ahndet das Auge blasse Gebirge, und darüber hin, über die höchste, matteste Linie der Berge schimmert der bläuliche Himmel (555-556).

The "Schauspiel" of the Main River at Würzburg (590-591) is described in a similar manner. It is indicative of the way in which Kleist fixed such descriptions in his mind that when he speaks a year later of the Rhine between Mainz and Coblenz, he uses exactly the same words, in part identical sentences. The variety of nature <u>per se</u> seems to have meant little to him. More important is the successful effort of

capturing a generally applicable aspect of it and transforming it into the stage-set on which the beauty and horror of human incommunicability could be performed, first in his self-apprenticeship and later in his literary creations. He must have thought of such scenes, presumably even before 1799, in specifically theatrical terms.

This is unquestionably true in his description of the nocturnal appearance of the terrain at Mainz; in its persistency it seems to exceed the limits of contrived metaphor:

> In der Tiefe, sagte ich, liegt die Stadt, wie in der Mitte eines Amphitheaters. Die Terrassen der umschliessenden Berge dienten statt der Logen. Wesen aller Art blickten als Zuschauer voll Freude herab. . . . Aus dem Gewölbe des grossen Schauspielhauses sank der Kronleuchter der Sonne herab. . . . Es sollte ein Nachtstück aufgeführt werden (591).

This same description is repeated and extended in the important letter to Adolphine von Werdeck from Paris in 1801, in which "Beifall," "allegorisches Stück," and above all musical metaphors are interwoven (696). The interiors of cathedrals which Kleist visited on his journeys are at times treated in the same manner; further, he speaks of nature as the interior of a church and as a stage-set (e.g., 715). The rambling description of the inn in which Kleist and von Brockes lodged in Würzburg also reveals the same plastic manner in which he grasped and transformed his environment (581-582). To be sure, none of this represents a conceptualism rare for the

period. The metaphorical (and at times even allegorical) allusion to nature as the stage on which life is played is clearly as old as literature. However, Kleist's perceptive faculties created for him a new reality, so to speak, from the metaphorical structures. And to see in them nothing further than an adherence to a tradition-bound way of interpreting nature, would be to deny them their terseness, vigor, and synthesizing power.

A related aspect of Kleist's plastic perception is his ability to summon in his letters the concrete, verbal way in which he makes abstract concepts representational. That is, it is an illustration of his tendency to actualize the non-verbal noun, to substitute for a meaningless (because undemonstrated) nominal concept a specific gesture. In one of the didactic letters to Wilhelmine he asks her "Deinen Scharfsinn in dem Auffinden des Ähnlichen zu prüfen"; and he gives her a multitude of examples (we must ask, indeed, who was being tested!):

> Was ist schrecklich? Blitz und Schlag in einem Augenblick. . . . Was ist lächerlich? Im Mondschein über den Schatten eines Laternenpfahls zu springen, in der Meinung, es sei ein Graben; die ersten Versuche eines Kindes zu gehen (aber auf weichem Grase); ein ungeschickter Landjunker, der aus Liebe tanzt. [Can we not already see the author of Der zerbrochene Krug?] -- Was ist unerträglich? . . . Windstille unter der Linie. -- Was ist Erwartung erregend? Ein Pfeifen im Walde; ferne Kanonenschüsse im Kriege; Das Klingeln zum Aufziehn des Vorhangs im Theater usw. usw. (621).

This way of suggesting the pantomime in human activity and empathetic observation was also extended by Kleist to his many personifications of natural phenomena, and nowhere more powerfully than in Penthesilea.

Closely allied to the foregoing is Kleist's perspicuity, his ability to "see through" human activity. He claims at times a pellucidity of vision which becomes a painful clairvoyance. He speaks longingly of "jener vorteilhafte Schleier, . . . der uns, wie Wieland sagt, mehr erwarten lässt, als versteckt ist" (546). What irony there is in the fact that Kleist directed the following words to the gentle and uncomprehending Wilhelmine:

> Vielleicht hat die Natur Dir jene Klarheit zu Deinem Glücke versagt, jene traurige Klarheit, die mir zu jeder Miene den Gedanken, zu jedem Wort den Sinn, zu jeder Handlung den Grund nennt. Sie zeigt mir alles, was mich umgibt, und mich selbst, in seiner ganzen armseligen Blösse, und der farbige Nebel verschwindet, und alle die gefällig geworfnen Schleier sinken und dem Herzen ekelt zuletzt vor dieser Nacktheit -- O glücklich bist Du, wenn Du das nicht verstehst (636-637).

One of the most essential formative instincts of the creative dramatist is what we might call the Pygmalion instinct: the compelling demand to appropriate and (in both senses of the word) to reform. To a certain extent this is what Kleist did with nature and with what he observed in the social realm. It is the urge to select from, and to synthesize the amorphous and to make it speak, in words and action. When

this compulsion is applied to one individual, of course, it can become a heartless endeavor. To an extent this seems to have been true of Kleist's most curious courtship of Wilhelmine. She was, indeed, appropriated as an integral part of Kleist's "Lebensplan." His task, he states, is to see whether

> das Mädchen auch im Innern so schön sei, wie von aussen. Wäre das und wäre auch nur ein Fünkchen von Seele in ihr, ich nähme sie mit mir, sie auszubilden nach meinem Sinn. Denn das ist nun einmal mein Bedürfnis; und wäre ein Mädchen auch noch so vollkommen, ist sie fertig, so ist es nichts für mich. Ich selbst muss es mir formen und ausbilden, sonst fürchte ich, geht es mir, wie mit dem Mundstück meiner Klarinette. Die kann man zu Dutzenden auf der Messe kaufen, aber wenn man sie braucht, so ist kein Ton rein (553-554).

On the objective level this nearly fanatical narcissism--fortunately confined to the early letters--would seem to be reprehensible at times. But we must be wary of overinterpreting its effect on Wilhelmine. (From what we know of her subsequent life, she seems to have coped with the situation with reasonable success.) It is well for her that she did not fully empathize with the inexpressible desperation in this Pygmalion, who wrote:

> Ich selbst fühle, wie matt diese Bildersprache gegen den Sinn ist, der mich belebt-- -- O wenn ich Dir nur einen Strahl von dem Feuer mitteilen könnte, das in mir flammt! Wenn Du es ahnden könntest, wie der Gedanke, aus Dir einst ein vollkommenes Wesen zu bilden, jede Lebenskraft in mir erwärmt, jede Fähigkeit in mir bewegt, jede Kraft in mir in Leben

> und Tätigkeit setzt! -- Du wirst es mir kaum glauben, aber ich sehe oft stundenlang aus dem Fenster und gehe in zehn Kirchen und besehe diese Stadt von allen Seiten, und sehe doch nichts als ein einziges Bild -- Dich, Wilhelmine, und zu Deinen Füssen zwei Kinder, und auf Deinem Schosse ein drittes. . . . Ist es ein Wunder, Wilhelmine, wenn ich für diese Empfindungen die Sprache nicht finden kann? (588).

The dramatist's eye for incident and detail is revealed frequently in Kleist's letters by reported dialog, potentially dramatic anecdotes, and the scenic form of many a setting. Here, too, the unspoken is mostly more important than the spoken. He uses a terse dialog form plus "stage directions" for the briefest of exchanges with a student acquaintance in Berlin, one Neddermann (522); for an imaginary interrogation conducted by Wilhelmine as to what he saw in Dresden and its environs in September, 1800 (554-555); for a much longer conversation in the Lesebibliothek in Würzburg with a librarian (568-569); in relating to Ulrike a conversation with the mathematician Hindenburg in Leipzig (755-756); and, most outstandingly, in 1804 in the retelling of an interview with Karl von Köckeritz, the good-natured Generaladjutant of Friedrich Wilhelm III (763-765). Material of anecdotal nature, many of the details of which (mostly exaggerations used for their power as gestures in language) are clearly imaginary and used to heighten the dramatic effect, is found throughout the correspondence. The fact that gesture, descriptions

of incidents as pantomime, and asseverations as to the inexpressibility of much of what he attempts to record are paramount in these anecdotes, can be appreciated, for instance, in: the first Kleist letter which we possess, that long, adolescent account to his "Tante Massow" (in 1793), in which incidents of his second year with the Potsdamer Garderegiment in Auerstädt, Buttelstedt, Gotha, Eisenach, Fulda, Gelnhausen, Hanau, and Frankfurt-on-Main are related (460-466); in the account of a humorous incident between Gleim and Ewald von Kleist (677); in the morosely moralizing story of the "Eselsgeschrei" upon which his life and that of Ulrike once hung (688 and again 691); in the account about the same "perilous" journey during the treacherous storm on the Rhine (692);[25] and in the scene with von Köckeritz (see above), which is elaborated with dialog.

The number of direct references in the letters to the theater, the actor, the stage, is sparse, but this is not surprising in view of the fact, which we have already emphasized, that Kleist at no time had an intimate association with any dramatic production. Having already briefly discussed the application of theater terminology to the spectacles of nature, we can find in addition only: a reference to Rühle von Lilienstern's translation of Racine (799); a question put to his sister Ulrike in 1807: "Was würdest Du wohl sagen,

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[25] Cf. the incidents concerning Ulrike which Kleist wrote to Adolphine von Werdeck (699-700).

wenn ich eine Direktionsstelle beim Wiener Theater bekäme?" (of which we hear nothing further); a few very random mentions of plays of others; and the well-known lament to Marie von Kleist (in 1807) about the regrettable state of acting and production in Germany under the influence of Iffland and Kotzebue, and the necessity of excluding women from the theater audience--women, who are

> zuletzt an dem ganzen Verfall unserer Bühne schuld; und sie sollten entweder gar nicht ins Schauspiel gehen, oder es müssten eigne Bühnen für sie, abgesondert von den Männern, errichtet werden. Ihre Anforderungen an Sittlichkeit und Moral vernichten das ganze Wesen des Dramas, und niemals hätte sich das Wesen des griechischen Theaters entwickelt, wenn sie nicht ganz davon ausgeschlossen wären (829-830).

We can read in these words the despair which Kleist felt at the fate of his own misunderstood and ignored dramatic vision. More famous is the lone letter to Goethe in which Kleist alludes briefly but directly to the unfitness of the contemporary stage for his Penthesilea ("weder vor noch hinter dem Vorhange"). "So sehr ich auch sonst in jedem Sinn gern dem Augenblick angehörte," he continues, "so muss ich doch in diesem Fall auf die Zukunft hinaussehen" (840). Finally, we possess only a cursory reference to the pantomime activity of Henriette Hendel-Schütz (894).

Even less informative are Kleist's infrequent references to his own dramas. Yet this, too, cannot surprise us. To

theorize about the style and content of other writers' works was always foreign to his nature; this is all the more true when applied to works of his own, about whose quality and fate he must have been in a constant quandary. By August, 1806, at which time he made the (for him) extraordinarily compromising statement: "Ich will mich jetzt durch meine dramatischen Arbeiten ernähren" (799), the period of extensive introspective letters was well over. We can safely assume that this was not due to any subsequent wholesale destruction of long letters from these years, but to the fact that the intensive creative process, particularly from 1806 on, supplanted the necessity of continuing to write such letters. The self-reflecting narcissism of the young Kleist is gone. It is not until in the letters just before his suicide that he begins to speak about himself and his work again, and about the mental anguish which led him to this final act; and these last letters in no way revert to the earlier effusiveness, but are short and indescribably pregnant. Brügger observes correctly: "Die Selbstanalyse ist überflüssig geworden von dem Moment an, wo das Leben mit der Seele gelebt wird."[26] There was no further necessity of justifying his existence to himself and others. From the moment in which he realized his dedication to creative activity, the elements of pathos

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[26]Brügger, op. cit., p. 82.

and rationalization in his correspondence diminish, until their necessity is obviated.[27]

Thus the references to his own dramatic works are generally confined to the briefest and most inconclusive remarks. These are primarily connected with the publication and the hopeless battles for production of his plays, particularly in regard to Penthesilea (e.g., 829, 830), and Käthchen (e.g., 830, 895). In a letter to Wieland in 1807 (832-834), the letter to Goethe (840), several to von Collin (especially 843) and to Cotta (847, 853, 857), we find numerous brief allusions. As to Hermannsschlacht and Homburg, there are only cursory references in business letters. His own remarks about Schroffenstein, Guiskard, and Krug are all but negligible. None of these, with the exception of the remarks to Marie von Kleist about Penthesilea, gives us an iota of information about the style of his dramas, about the importance of gesture or symbol in them, about how he envisioned them on the stage.

In reviewing what we have called the tangible or perceptible elements in Kleist's letters (descriptions, specific references, and the like), we must see that his method of

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[27]Despite the frequently fragmentary nature of the extant correspondence, it is indicative that, in the Sembdner edition, for the three years, 1800-1802, there are 235 pages and for the nine years, 1803-1811, 186 pages of letters.

observing reality and recreating situations points to a definitely plastic, physical orientation and to a tendency to permit actions, once he has constructed a framework for them, to speak for themselves. It is undeniably a dramatic orientation, rather than a contemplative, philosophical one in which the artistic balance between the spoken and the unspoken is not of importance. Indeed, even the abstract concepts with which Kleist does deal are always specifically associated with some symbolic act or object, if such is within the realm of the definable. If not, they always filter down to the core of ultimate judgment in Kleist: das Gefühl, "die Goldwaage der Empfindung." And this itself is a symbol with him; so that whether expressible or not, it amounts to the same thing. For example, two of the abstract concepts which Kleist felt keenly throughout his life were ambition and duty. The desire for fame is (in Kleist's undeniably circumscribed nominal vocabulary) almost invariably associated with the "Lorbeerkranz" (578, 594, 600, 602, 758, 761, 762, 786, 827). The feeling of duty, which functions paradoxically, sometimes as the basis for ambition and pride, sometimes as the necessity for relinquishing them and retreating to a life of agrarian truths and simplicity, is almost invariably conceptualized in the symbols of obligation to his sisters and brothers and their families, to Wilhelmine, to his unborn

children, and to the fields which he never plowed. Such a pair of concepts as fame and duty likewise exemplifies the type of dilemma which he was forever creating and facing. The anguish it caused him was literally inexpressible.

Kleist could, in short, speak only in movement, in developing action, in verbs of motion, in the gestures which make the words move, and in the symbols which the moving words make.[28] He could not say: virtue is the essence of such and such, beauty is the quality of so and so. He tried this approach in vain in the early letters. All the others attest to his real nature. And when finally he despaired of being able to grasp reality and attain an inward clarity of form, such as he felt he had been able to do at times in his writing, he could no longer endure the ironies of life.

It is in the sense of a protest to verbal limitations that we must understand the profuse hyperbole in many of his letters and the intensity in some of his other writing. His few violent descriptions of nature might remind us of the contorted and agonized sketches of windstorms, floods, and

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28"Gesture, in language, is the outward and dramatic play of inward and imagined meaning. It is that play of meaningfulness among words which cannot be defined in the formulas of the dictionary, but which is defined in their use together: gesture is that meaningfulness which is moving, in every sense of that word: what moves the words and what moves us."--R. P. Blackmur, Language as Gesture: Essays in Poetry (New York, 1952), p. 210.

other cataclysmic activity in the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci. Their form is contained, but their suggestions and projections burst the frame.[29] And there is always present the regret that he cannot be more specific, cannot make his thoughts and feelings completely communicable.

2. It is at this point that we can begin to investigate those elements in the content and style of Kleist's letters which reveal the deeper strata, so to speak, and which transcend the factual cataloguing of matters which can be construed to pertain directly or indirectly to Kleist's more empirical literary references and viewpoints. Some of these more significant aspects would seem to have been quite consciously incorporated in the letters: the hyperbole, a certain element of mystery, the "philosophical" conviction that action is better than knowledge. But even more important are those which--although, of course, consciously formulated--seem to have welled up from the underlying strata and which pervaded every word he wrote and every action he took: the verbal gestures inherent in his exclamations, his word order, the choice and use of verbs; the intimate connection with music; the

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[29]Kleist's descriptions of the inmates of the asylum at Würzburg, especially that of an eighteen-year-old, of whom some unnamed "unnatürliches Laster" had made an idiot, are likewise very close to the Italian master's studies of the insane in suggested gesture.

constantly repeated use of the term "unaussprechlich" and its synonyms; his grasp of fate and the riddle of existence; the deity as an enigma; the paradox of life; the source of consolation in Gefühl, in the inviolability of the artist's intuition, in the power of simplicity, and in Vertrauen.

As we have suggested, the hyperbole in Kleist's letters, as in his drama, can be thought of as a frustrated clutching at the inexpressible; something in the nature of a lost battle with words. Not being an end in itself, the hyperbole tends inevitably toward the condition of gesture. The same is true of those pedantic letters to Wilhelmine with their endless questions and testing devices. In them the dogma, the pontificating, the arid sermonizing likewise constitute what we might justifiably call a vast and awkward gesture and clinging device. The essential point of all these questions, of the desire to create a partner, is to evoke a response and thus to establish a contact and binding force against his sinister lonesomeness. It might be called a search for what the German existentialists have called "Geborgenheit." In recent years, and especially since the work by Gerhard Fricke,[30] we have learned to read the letters of the "Lebensplan" period--their tendrils and suckers, so to speak, seeking a rock or

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[30]Gerhard Fricke, Gefühl und Schicksal bei Heinrich von Kleist (Berlin, 1929).

a matrix--in a new light. Apart from the anachronism involved in such a comparison, the bulk of these letters represents explicitly and implicitly the polar opposite of the Biedermeier tendency. Their turbulence and fury and, finally, their combination of ecstasy and despair never find the outlet in words which Kleist sought.[31]

One of the inevitable results of this is the conspicuous abundance of exclamations and interjections in the letters. Over and over we read "O Wilhelmine!" and "Ach, Ulrike!"[32] Again, as in the plays, these sometimes constitute the most dynamic and telling effects. A situation is made all the more immediate or urgent by the use of the direct "du!" and by outbursts such as "O Jesus!"[33] In one passage we find the "O!" five times within nine lines (622). Repetition is a gesture in itself in such cases. There is another letter to Wilhelmine whose concluding paragraph contains the almost frantic "Lebe wohl!" six times (663).

An aspect of the letters which has been something of a bone of contention among later critics is the element of mystery, or, as some would have it, of self-dramatization.

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[31]Particularly from November, 1800, to October, 1803.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid.

Intentional or not, it is an element which reveals something of Kleist's proclivity for the literally unspeakable element in human contacts. Indeed, it is difficult to avoid the impression that Kleist at times derived a certain amount of enjoyment in the clandestine and in an aura of intrigue. One cannot help wondering how great a role this might have played in the journey to Würzburg in 1800. Kleist asserted that he could find no words to express the critical importance of the trip and the necessity of a silent trust on the part of his confidantes. Yet nowhere in the letters which we have from that period do we learn the purpose of the undertaking.[34] The events of the summer and autumn of 1809 when Kleist was in Austria (and particularly when he is presumed to have been in Prague) are enshrouded in even greater secrecy. On the other hand, we cannot doubt the genuineness of Kleist's agonized silence in connection with the "Guiskard-Krise" in 1802-1803. Nor is there any purposeful mystification or histrionics in his illness in Bern, his desperation in Paris and Boulogne, the destruction of the Guiskard manuscript, and his collapse in Mainz.[35] In 1804 Kleist himself wrote of this sequence of events:

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[34]See letters pp. 515, 526, 553, and 564.

[35]See letters pp. 751-755 and 761-763 in particular.

> Ich bin nicht imstande, vernünftigen Menschen einigen Aufschluss über diese seltsame Reise zu geben. Ich selber habe seit meiner Krankheit die Einsicht in ihre Motive verloren und begreife nicht mehr, wie gewisse Dinge auf andere erfolgen konnten (771).

Intimately associated with the increasing importance of non-rational gesture in words is the realization that "action is better than knowledge." In this connection we might emphasize the fact that Kleist spoke in such terms well before the so-called "Kant-Krise" of 1801, even though he employs it during that year to such an extent that it becomes nearly an emblem and manifesto for him. In 1799 he had written:

> Bei dem ewigen Beweisen und Folgern verlernt das Herz fast zu fühlen: und doch wohnt das Glück nur im Herzen, nur im Gefühl, nicht im Verstande. Das Glück kann nicht wie ein mathematischer Lehrsatz bewiesen werden, es muss empfunden werden, wenn es da sein soll (493).

And in the following year the developing conviction shines through the earnest sentences with which Kleist tried to impose upon himself the necessity of a "Lebensplan":

> Denn nicht durch Worte aber durch Handlungen zeigt sich wahre Treue und wahre Liebe (502).

> In Gesellschaften, auf den Strassen, in dem Schauspiele, mag es schweigen, denn da wirken die Gegenstände nur auf den Verstand, und bei ihnen braucht man kein Herz (552).

> [Of the Nikolaus-Kirche in Leipzig:] Aus der Kühnheit der äusseren Wölbungen sprach uns der Götze der abenteuerlichen Goten zu; aus der edeln Simplizität des Innern wehte uns der Geist der verfeinerten Griechen an. Schade, dass ein -- -- -- ich hätte beinah etwas

> gesagt, was die Priester übelnehmen. Aber das weiss ich, dass die edeln Gestalten der leblosen Steine wärmer zu meinem Herzen sprachen, als der hochgelehrte Priester auf seiner Kanzel (557).
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> Überhaupt, dünkt mich, alle Zeremonien ersticken das Gefühl. Sie beschäftigen unsern Verstand, aber das Herz bleibt tot. . . . Mir wenigstens erfüllt eine Todeskälte das Herz, sobald ich weiss, dass man auf mein Gefühl gerechnet hat (561).
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> "Wenn Du Dein Wissen nicht nutzen willst, warum strebst Du denn so nach Wahrheit?" So fragen mich viele Menschen, aber was soll man ihnen darauf antworten? Die einzige Antwort, die es gibt, ist diese: weil es Wahrheit ist! -- Aber wer versteht das? (607).

In 1801 Kleist claimed as the source for his motto his comrade Ludwig von Brockes. Yet it would seem that Kleist projected as much, and more, of himself into the adoring characterizations of Brockes written at this time, than may actually have been present. Of his comrade he wrote:

> Sein Grundsatz war: Handeln ist besser als Wissen. . . . Immer nannte er den Verstand kalt, und nur das Herz wirkend und schaffend. Daher hatte er ein unüberwindliches Misstrauen gegen jenen, und hingegen ein unerschütterliches Vertrauen zu diesem gefasst. Immer seiner ersten Regung gab er sich ganz hin, das nannte er seinen Gefühlsblick, und ich selbst habe nie gefunden, dass dieser ihn getäuscht habe. Er sprach immer wegwerfend von dem Verstande (635).

The "Kant- [or Fichte- or Kleist-] Krise" was clearly in full swing when he wrote to Ulrike early in 1801:

> Selbst die Säule, an welcher ich mich sonst in dem Strudel des Lebens hielt, wankt -- -- Ich meine die Liebe zu den Wissenschaften. -- Aber wie werde ich mich hier wieder verständlich machen? -- Liebe Ulrike, es ist ein bekannter Gemeinplatz, dass das

> Leben ein schweres Spiel sei; und warum ist es schwer? Weil man beständig und immer von neuem eine Karte ziehen soll und doch nicht weiss, was Trumpf ist; ich meine darum, weil man beständig und immer von neuem handeln soll und doch nicht weiss, was recht ist. Wissen kann unmöglich das Höchste sein -- handeln ist besser als wissen (645).

At mid-year he wrote in a similar vein to Wilhelmine:

> Wo Gedanken mit Gedanken, Gefühle mit Gefühlen kämpfen, da ist es schwer zu nennen, was in der Seele herrscht, weil noch der Sieg unentschieden ist. Alles liegt in mir verworren, wie die Werkfasern im Spinnrocken, durcheinander, und ich bin vergebens bemüht, mit der Hand des Verstandes den Faden der Wahrheit, den das Rad der Erfahrung hinausziehen soll, um die Spule des Gedächtnisses zu ordnen. . . . Ich selbst fange an, zu glauben, dass der Mensch zu etwas mehr da ist, als bloss zu denken -- Arbeit, fühle ich, wird das einzige sein, was mich ruhiger machen kann. Alles, was mich beunruhigt, ist die Unmöglichkeit, mir ein Ziel des Bestrebens zu setzen, und die Besorgnis, wenn ich zu schnell ein falsches ergriffe, die Bestimmung zu verfehlen, und so ein ganzes Leben zu verpfuschen. Aber sei ruhig . . . , ich habe fast eine Ahndung von dem rechten (674).

By the end of that summer (1801) Kleist was in Paris, where he seemed no longer able to derive much consolation from his realization. The tension of the initial work on the material for Die Familie Schroffenstein had clearly churned up the dilemma of "Handeln" and "Wissen" again. He became aware of the double paradox of placing the former above the latter, only to digress about it in his letters--and of trying to fix concretely an action in words. We can sense this in the following sentences written from Paris:

> Ach, ich trage mein Herz mit mir herum, wie ein nördliches Land den Keim einer Südfrucht. Es treibt und treibt, und es kann nicht reifen -- Denn Menschen lassen sich, wie Metalle, zwar formen, solange sie warm sind; aber jede Berührung wirkt anders auf sie ein, und wenn sie erkalten, wird ihre Gestalt bleibend. Ich möchte so gern in einer rein menschlichen Bildung fortschreiten, aber das Wissen macht uns weder besser noch glücklicher. Ja, wenn wir den ganzen Zusammenhang der Dinge einsehen könnten! Aber ist nicht der Anfang und das Ende jeder Wissenschaft in Dunkel gehüllt? Oder soll ich alle diese Fähigkeiten, und alle diese Kräfte und dieses ganze Leben nur dazu anwenden, eine Insektengattung kennenzulernen? . . . Ach, mich ekelt vor dieser Einseitigkeit! (702).
>
> -- Die Wissenschaften habe ich ganz aufgegeben. Ich kann . . . nicht beschreiben, wie ekelhaft mir ein wissender Mensch ist, wenn ich ihn mit einem handelnden vergleiche (718).

During the ensuing years, as "Handeln" became more and more intimately involved with creating (through a language suffused with gestures) a new race of interacting personalities in the stories and plays, the letters of Kleist, understandably, grew gradually more silent about this conviction. Demonstration supplanted demonstrativeness.

The artistic medium which seems at times to be more adequate than creative writing to the inexpressible subtleties and the intensities of Kleist's feelings is music.[36] Numerically

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[36]Cf. discussions of D. P. Morgan, Friedr. Gundolf, etc., pp. 100-105 of this study. Another 19th century writer, Gustave Flaubert, knew of the torments of the inexpressible and of the music of the unspoken: "La plénitude de l'âme ne débordait pas quelquefois par les métaphores les plus vides, puisque personne, jamais, ne peut donner l'exacte mesure de ses besoins, ni de ses conceptions, ni de ses douleurs, et

speaking, the references to music are for the most part incidental allusions. Nevertheless, in sum they clearly indicate this orientation. Although he never mentions his own virtuosity on the clarinet or the flute, he does refer to the former instrument (e.g., 554), and the latter is twice used in simile:

> Wir werden in diesem Leben so selten unserer bewusst --die Gedanken und die Empfindungen verhallen wie ein Flötenton im Orkan--so manche Erfahrungen gehen ungenutzt verloren (683).[37]

The "friends of music" are mentioned first and foremost among "die Freunde der Künste" (545). Kleist's orientation in this regard is also illustrated by his choice of the harmonica to illustrate a particular point (616), and more importantly by such phrases as "die Dissonanz der Dinge" (746), "der Tod als das ewige Refrain des Lebens" (814), and "die Kirchenmusik, welche die Ströme und die Gewitter rauschen" (715). In connection with the last metaphor, it is revealing to observe how music was at one time the element which, more than any other, caused Kleist to change completely his approach to the Roman Catholic ritual. This may be illustrated by comparing

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que la parole humaine est comme un chaudron fêlé où nous battons des mélodies à faire danser les ours, quand on voudrait attendrir les étoiles."--Gustave Flaubert, Madame Bovary: Moeurs de provinces ("Oeuvres complètes; édition du centenaire"; Paris, 1921), p. 208.

[37]Cf. letters pp. 579, 683, and 760.

the following passage from a letter from Leipzig in 1801 with his pronouncements from Würzburg one year earlier:

> Nirgends fand ich mich tiefer in meinem Innersten gerührt als in der katholischen Kirche, wo die grösste, erhabenste Musik noch zu den andern Künsten tritt, das Herz gewaltsam zu bewegen. Ach, Wilhelmine, unser Gottesdienst ist keiner. Er spricht nur zu dem kalten Verstande, aber zu allen Sinnen ein katholisches Fest. . . . Ich hatte eine unbeschreibliche Sehnsucht, mich . . . niederzuwerfen, und zu weinen -- Ach, nur einen Tropfen Vergessenheit, und mit Wollust würde ich katholisch werden (671).[38]

An extended metaphor in a letter of November, 1800, uses the following terminology: "die vollstimmige Sonate," man; "eine eintönige Musik," animal; the former, Kleist says,

> ist bestimmt, mit allen Zügen seines künstlichen Instrumentes einst jene grosse Komposition des Schöpfers auszuführen, indessen das Tier auf seiner Rohrpfeife nichts mehr als den einzigen Ton hören lassen soll, den sie enthält (620).

He speaks metaphorically of himself, using musical terminology:

> Mir wars, als ob ich vorher ein totes Instrument gewesen wäre und nun, plötzlich mit dem Sinn des Gehörs beschenkt, entzückt würde über die eignen Harmonieen -- (696).[39]

There are two passages in the letters, however, which more explicitly than anything quoted above reveal the musical

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[38]One need only read Kleist's comments from Würzburg on the Roman Catholic Church (esp. pp. 557-561) to see the contrast.

[39]Cf. the same personification in the puzzling letter to Heinrich Lohse, in which Kleist refers to himself: "Und doch hättest Du alle holden Töne aus dem Instrumente locken können, das Du nun bloss zerrissen hast -- " (735).

orientation of Kleist's stylistic sense. It is especially noteworthy that the first of these excerpts contains, in addition, the only reference by Kleist to his early youth (antedating by two years the first extant letter), and that this memory is intimately associated with music:

> Zuweilen--ich weiss nicht, ob Dir je etwas Ähnliches glückte, und ob Du es folglich für wahr halten kannst. Aber ich höre zuweilen, wenn ich in der Dämmerung, einsam, dem wehenden Atem des Westwindes entgegengehe, und besonders wenn ich dann die Augen schliesse, ganze Konzerte, vollständig, mit allen Instrumenten von der zärtlichen Flöte bis zum rauschenden Kontra-Violon. So entsinne ich mich besonders einmal als Knabe vor 9 Jahren, als ich gegen den Rhein und gegen den Abendwind zugleich hinaufging, und so die Wellen der Luft und des Wassers zugleich mich umtönten, ein schmelzendes Adagio gehört zu haben, mit allem Zauber der Musik, mit allen melodischen Wendungen und der ganzen begleitenden Harmonie. Es war wie die Wirkung eines Orchesters. . . . Ja, ich glaube sogar, dass alles, was die Weisen Griechenlands von der Harmonie der Sphären dichteten, nichts Weicheres, Schöneres, Himmlischeres gewesen sei, als diese seltsame Träumerei.
>
> Und dieses Konzert kann ich mir, ohne Kapelle, wiederholen, so oft ich will -- aber sobald ein Gedanke daran sich regt, gleich ist alles fort (579).[40]

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[40] "Wir dürfen bei aller erwiesenen Musikalität Kleists hier keine verwirklichbare Musik annehmen, auch wenn sie ihm als solche erschien. Denn was hier klingt, ist mehr, weit mehr als alles Ausdrückbare, es ist der tiefe Rhythmus seines Innern . . . und was nun dranghaft in Traumschöpfungen Ausdruck sucht. Es ist wesentlich und wichtig zu beachten, dass er schon als Neunjähriger [Kuhn-Foelix misreads "vor" in the letter as "von"; Kleist was fourteen years old "vor neun Jahren"; nevertheless what he writes would still seem to be quite valid] klingende Visionen hatte, also damals, als der Intellekt ihn noch nicht auf Abwege geführt."--August Kuhn-Foelix, Heinrich von Kleist (Murnau: Riemerschmidt, 1948), p. 43.

As the second of the two important music passages, Kleist wrote half a year before his death these often quoted and revealing words to his cousin Marie von Kleist:

> Ich fühle, dass mancherlei Verstimmungen in meinem Gemüt sein mögen, die sich in dem Drang der widerwärtigen Verhältnisse, in denen ich lebe, immer noch mehr verstimmen, und die ein recht heitrer Genuss des Lebens, wenn er mir einmal zuteil würde, vielleicht ganz leicht harmonisch auflösen würde. In diesem Fall würde ich die Kunst vielleicht auf ein Jahr oder länger ganz ruhen lassen, und mich . . . mit nichts als der Musik beschäftigen. Denn ich betrachte diese Kunst als die Wurzel oder vielmehr, um mich schulgerecht auszudrücken, als die algebraische Formel aller übrigen, und so . . . habe ich, von meiner frühesten Jugend an, alles allgemeine, was ich über die Dichtkunst gedacht habe, auf Töne bezogen. Ich glaube, dass im Generalbass die wichtigsten Aufschlüsse über die Dichtkunst enthalten sind.

From this statement (all the more valuable for its uniqueness in the letters) and from the way in which it is incorporated in Kleist's writing, we can appreciate that he undeniably felt that of all the media available to artistic expression, music is capable of relaying an emotion most immediately, most universally, and most convincingly--in part because it resists rational analysis and counters speculation most thoroughly. In short, the language of music can be the language of purest and most absolute gesture, as R. P. Blackmur suggests in his rewarding essay on "Language as Gesture," in which he investigates the role of gesture in the various arts:

> It is music that of all the arts does more. Like

> pure acting its medium may be thought of as entirely in time as time is filled with sound. It is purer than acting because all its movement is movement of sound. But its greatest purity lies in the fact that, although other arts may use some of its effects, it alone of the arts can proceed according to its own purpose without either anterior or subsequent obligations to any other art. . . . I do not know what constitutes the discipline of music from a composer's point of view, except that I am sure it is severe, yet I feel as a layman that the freedom which that discipline secures is the freedom of repetition, of development, of variation within or upon or around a theme to an extent which in any other major art would be not only ineffectual but boring: the freedom, in short, to play with the elements of musical meaning until they become gesture. This is no doubt why Pater said that all the arts tend to the condition of music; the condition is gesture. The rest of music is but the means for the delivery of gesture, and for the artist who rejoices at all in his work that is the most blessed circumstance possible to imagine. It is tantamount to saying that his means--his technique--may become almost the whole object of attention for both himself and for his audience. It is not his theme, once he has it, but what happens to his theme, that counts; and what happens to it will be precisely and immitigably what he does within his means. His form and his substance will be united in process as well as at the end: united as gesture.[41]

It is precisely this union, as gesture, of both the form and the substance of Kleist's work--as significantly during the very unfolding of the work as at its end--which he saw as the highest goal of his art.

Specific references in the letters to "das Unaussprechliche" are so numerous that to quote them all would be a task as lengthy as it would be tedious. Some of them are

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[41]Blackmur, op. cit., pp. 213-214.

worth scrutiny. From his first letter to his last Kleist despairs of ever attaining his primary goal: the discovery of a means of adequate human communication. His statements about this refer to both sides of the coin: to his never being able to adequately express himself, and to his never being understood by others. It is both typical and significant that, although he speaks often of the inability in others to make themselves comprehensible to their fellow men, he seldom mentions his inability to understand both their words and their gestures. In fact, as we have seen, he claims for himself an extraordinary and painful capacity for comprehension (especially 636-637). We ought not to doubt that this was, in the main, true. In all events, the constant recurrence of such words as "unaussprechlich," "unbeschreiblich," "unsagbar," "unsäglich," and the agony which is more often than not behind their every occurrence, can escape only the superficial reader of the letters. The occurrences of such modifiers are more prevalent between 1800 and 1804 (years for which we have the longest and the most personal letters) and again during the months before his death in 1811.

The first page in Kleist's hand which we possess, the letter of March, 1793, to "Tante Massow," reveals the same general type of phraseology which is encountered in the letters during the following eighteen years. For no matter

how his epistolary style may have matured and changed, in the final analysis the spirit behind it remained doggedly the same. The sixteen-year-old soldier writes of the regions through which the troops passed on the way to Frankfurt-on-Main. It is not as a polite excuse for brevity--for the letter is anything but brief--that he writes: "Ich kann Ihnen aber dieses unmöglich beschreiben" (459), or: "Was ich hier für Gegenden sah, Tantchen, das kann ich Ihnen gar nicht beschreiben" (460). The ensuing descriptions are thorough and competent, but clearly not adequate to the young Kleist's desires--a natural impatience, perhaps, but one which subsequently never evaporated. There is no essential difference between this and the line written eight years later to Wilhelmine: "Ach, ich kann Dir nicht beschreiben, wie wohl es mir tut, einmal jemandem, der mich versteht,[42] mein Innerstes zu öffnen" (650). To the same recipient he writes in 1801 from Paris of one of the "intolerable" aspects of the French nation: "O ich kann Dir nicht beschreiben, welchen Eindruck der erste Anblick dieser höchsten Sittenlosigkeit bei der höchsten Wissenschaft auf mich machte" (705). Occurrences of the word "unbeschreiblich" never appear in these

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[42]In his searches Kleist often more than half invented persons who "thoroughly understood" him; in every case there can be found a subsequent qualification or retraction of the claim.

letters in a casual or stylized context. They are always meant quite literally and carry with them a feeling of great emotion and urgency, and often of frustration. In describing to Wilhelmine the familiar image of the arch with its keystone, observed in Würzburg and later incorporated as an important symbol in Penthesilea (ix/1349-1356), he observes that it remains intact,

> weil alle Steine auf einmal einstürzen wollen--und ich zog aus diesem Gedanken einen unbeschreiblich erquickenden Trost, der mir bis zu dem entscheidenden Augenblicke immer mit der Hoffnung zur Seite stand, dass auch ich mich halten würde, wenn alles mich sinken lässt (606).[43]

It is in connection with persons for whom he has strong emotional attachment that Kleist uses the word "unbeschreiblich." To Ulrike he writes in 1806: "Wenn ich nur an Dir nicht Unrecht getan hätte, mein teuerstes Mädchen! Ich bin so gerührt, wenn ich das denke, dass ich es nicht beschreiben kann" (800). And he writes in the next year about Ernst von Pfuel, his lifelong comrade for whom he had an attachment far more profound than many a scholar seems to realize, these words from Chalons-sur-Marne:

> Letzthin sass ich auf einer Bank im Jard, einer öffentlichen, aber wenig besuchten Promenade, und es fing schon an, finster zu werden, als mich jemand,

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[43]Cf. also letters pp. 625, 671, the letter to Wilhelmine in the summer of 1801 with its threefold "ganz unbeschreiblich": 674-676, 733, the fascinating letter to Heinrich Lohse: 735.

> den ich nicht kannte, mit einer Stimme anredete, als ob sie P[fuel] aus der Brust genommen gewesen wäre. Ich kann . . . die Wehmut nicht beschreiben, die mich in diesem Augenblick ergriff (814).

To Marie von Kleist he writes about Penthesilea: "Unbeschreiblich rührend ist mir alles, was Sie mir über die Penthesilea schreiben" (830).

In the final years of his life, the broader verb "beschreiben" gives way to the simpler and larger "sagen," and thereby enlarges, one might say, the ultimate silence hovering about his words--a sign perhaps that, at least as far as his personal letters are concerned, he was becoming resigned to the absolute inability to convey his deepest feelings. Again we can suggest this merely by brief illustration. During the mysterious period when he was in Prague, a period in which he did not know how "ich meine Existenz fristen will," he wrote to Ulrike: "Ich bin gänzlich ausserstand zu sagen, wie ich mich jetzt fassen werde" (864). His intense preoccupation with the death agonies of the Berliner Abendblätter in the spring of 1811 is purportedly the cause of his gentle declination of Fouqué's invitation to come to the latter's country home--an invitation which, if accepted, say idle speculators, would have prevented the suicide seven months later. Such hypotheses serve only to reveal the inability of their proponents to comprehend the deep implications and the tragic tone behind such

apparently simple words as these:

> Ihre liebe, freundliche Einladung, nach Nennhausen hinauszukommen und daselbst den Lenz aufblühen zu sehen, reizt mich mehr, als ich es sagen kann. Fast habe ich ganz und gar vergessen, wie die Natur aussieht (892).

These contextless excerpts, some of which may seem at first little more than stylized and inconsequential, are in actuality intimately related to Kleist's stylistic convictions. We must realize that it was not typical of German writers of the period (and perhaps particularly of Prussians) to admit that there were no words requisite to their thoughts and emotions. Indeed, there has rarely been a more articulate literary epoch. We need think only of Goethe and the others generally grouped as the Classicists, of the early Romantic writers who were in their fullest flower in the first decade of the century, of a man like Ludwig Tieck, quantitatively the most prolific writer in German literary history, and of the philosophers and natural scientists whose writings were being published in unprecedented volume. At times one might have the feeling that Kleist alone felt the limitations of words. Beside the terms "unbeschreiblich" and "unsäglich," we encounter his lament at being unable to "define" (e.g., 473); to represent ("darstellen"), depict ("malen"), and set down ("aufschreiben") (e.g., 476, 524, 642-643, 717, 725); to be understood and comprehended ("verstanden werden," "begriffen werden") (e.g.,

494, 497, 552, 570, 579, 617, 633, 636, 642, 700); to express ("ausdrücken") and to explain or clarify ("[sich] erklären") (e.g., 472, 568, 586, 647, 656).

It becomes understandably clear that one of the difficulties of substantiating this aspect of Kleist from his letters is not in finding and listing the material, but in determining which passages are the most appropriate to cite, and to what extent. Any selection is bound to be arbitrary and, without fuller context, can be tediously repetitious. The power of such quotations comes from their balance of separateness and consistency and from the reader's discovery of these passages and his empathy with their inherent gestures. Their unusual volatility renders their mere cataloging a most ephemeral undertaking. Yet in lieu of giving only page references and with the conviction that a judicious sampling of these passages can nevertheless enhance the validity of our assertions, we shall quote at length from a few of the letters. Behind each of these passages, whether from 1799 or 1811, we can sense the unique mind of this writer. There is the desperate pretense of self-assurance of the young man with his "Lebensplan," the fashioner at work on his Wilhelmine, the discovery of "das Gefühl" and "das Herz," the tone of frustration and despair belonging to no one year, the final transfiguration of the very last letters. The keynote in each of

them is the inexpressible.

In 1799 the young Kleist writes of virtue to his erstwhile teacher, Christian Ernst Martini:

> -- -- -- Lieber! ich schäme mich nicht, zu gestehen, was Sie befürchten: dass ich nicht deutlich weiss, wovon ich rede, und tröste mich mit unseren Philistern, die unter eben diesen Umständen von Gott reden. [Die Tugend] erscheint mir nur wie ein hohes, erhabnes, unnennbares Etwas, für das ich vergebens ein Wort suche, um es durch die Sprache, vergebens eine Gestalt, um es durch ein Bild auszudrücken. Und dennoch strebe ich diesem unbegriffenen Dinge mit der innigsten Innigkeit entgegen, als stünde es klar und deutlich vor meiner Seele. Alles, was ich davon weiss, ist, dass es die unvollkommenen Vorstellungen, deren ich jetzt nur fähig bin, gewiss auch enthalten wird; aber ich ahnde noch etwas Höheres, und das ist es wohl eigentlich, was ich nicht ausdrücken und formen kann (472-473).

Somewhat more immediate in tone--but on that account by no means necessarily more intense or sincere than the foregoing--are these words to Ulrike in the same year:

> Vorsätze und Entschlüsse wie die meinigen bedürfen der Aufmunterung und der Unterstützung mehr als andere vielleicht, um nicht zu sinken. Verstanden wenigstens möchte ich gerne zuweilen sein, wenn auch nicht aufgemuntert und gelobt, von einer Seele wenigstens möchte ich gern zuweilen verstanden werden, wenn auch alle andern mich verkennen. . . .
>
> Was ich mit diesem Interesse im Busen, mit diesem heiligen, mir selbst von der Religion, von meiner Religion gegebnen Interesse im engen Busen, für eine Rolle unter den Menschen spiele, denen ich von dem, was meine ganze Seele erfüllt, nichts merken lassen darf, -- das weisst Du zwar nach dem äusseren Anschein, aber schwerlich weisst Du, was oft dabei im Innern mit mir vorgeht. . . .
>
> Wenn ein anderer z. B. ein Buch, ein Gedicht, einen Roman gelesen hat, das einen starken Eindruck auf ihn machte und ihm die Seele füllte, wenn er nun

> mit diesem Eindruck in eine Gesellschaft tritt, er sei nun froh oder schwermütig gestimmt, er kann sich mitteilen, und man versteht ihn. Aber . . . wenn ich nun mit [einem ähnlichen] Eindruck in eine Gesellschaft trete, wem darf ich mich mitteilen, wer versteht mich? Nicht einmal ahnden darf ich lassen, was mich zur Bewunderung hinriss, nicht einen von allen Gedanken darf ich mitteilen, die mir die Seele füllen. -- Und so muss man denn freilich zuweilen leer und gedankenlos erscheinen, ob man es gleichwohl nicht ist (495-497).

The letters to Wilhelmine are on occasion prefaced by similar remarks, such as this written in the summer of 1800:

> Das Ganze ist ein Brief geworden, den ich Dir nicht anders als mit mir selbst und durch mich selbst mitteilen kann, denn, unter uns gesagt, es ist mein Herz. Du willst aber schwarz auf weiss sehen, und so will ich Dir denn mein Herz, so gut ich kann, auf dieses Papier malen, wobei Du aber nie vergessen musst, dass es blosse Kopie ist, welches das Original nie erreicht, nie erreichen kann (524).

Kleist was probably correct in expecting that the same recipient a month later might have asked these questions:

> Noch einen Gedanken -- --. Warum, wirst Du sagen, warum spreche ich so geheimnisreiche Gedanken halb aus, die ich doch nicht ganz sagen will? Warum rede ich von Dingen, die Du nicht verstehen kannst und sollst? (553).

It is difficult to believe that Wilhelmine could have apprehended the underlying desperation in Kleist's laudation of his friend on the trip to Würzburg, Ludwig von Brockes, which appears for the first time in the above-mentioned letter. In it we are forcibly struck by the pervasive emphasis on Vertrauen, another keynote of the letters of this period in particular, and one whose essence is ultimately enshrouded in

the inarticulative:

> Wie froh bin ich, dass doch wenigstens ein Mensch in der Welt ist, der mich ganz versteht. Ohne Brockes würde mir vielleicht Heiterkeit, vielleicht selbst Kraft . . . fehlen. Denn ganz auf sein Selbstbewusstsein zurückgewiesen zu sein, nirgends ein Paar Augen finden, die uns Beifall zuwinken -- und doch recht tun, das soll freilich, sagt man, die Tugend der Helden sein. Wer weiss, ob Christus am Kreuz getan haben würde, was er tat, wenn nicht aus dem Kreise wütender Verfolger seine Mutter und seine Jünger feuchte Blicke des Entzückens auf ihn geworfen hätten (552).

Kleist's heart and mind are still filled with Brockes five months later, but again--as always--Kleist himself remains the pivot:

> Niemand versteht mich ganz, niemand kann mich ganz verstehen als er und Du--ja Du selbst vielleicht, liebe Wilhelmine, wirst mich und meine künftigen Handlungen nie ganz verstehen, wenn Du nicht für das, was ich höher achte, als die Liebe, einen so hohen Sinn fassen kannst als er (633). Es ist keine Sprache vorhanden, um das Bild dieses Menschen recht treu zu malen (636).

In learning Kleist's correspondence one feels how these words, also to Wilhelmine, might as easily have been written to anyone else who befriended him:

> Unsere äussere Lage kann ganz ruhig sein, indessen unser Innerstes ganz bewegt ist-- Ach, ich kann Dir nicht beschreiben, wie wohl es mir tut, einmal jemandem, der mich versteht, mein Innerstes zu öffnen. . . . Ja, allerdings dreht sich mein Wesen jetzt um einen Hauptgedanken, der mein Innerstes ergriffen hat. . . . Ich weiss nur nicht, wie ich das, was . . . durch meine Seele flog, auf diesem Blatt zusammenpressen soll (650).

> O wenn ich jetzt neben Dir stehen könnte, wenn ich Dir diesen unverständlichen Brief erklären dürfte, wenn ich Dich vor Missverständnissen sichern könnte! (585-586).

Kleist was even more outspoken to his sister Ulrike about this problem of misunderstanding as a result of incommunicability. In the important letter to her in February, 1801, he speaks of the physical torment which his speechlessness caused him:

> Wenn ich mich in Gesellschaften nicht wohl befinde, so geschieht dies weniger, weil andere, als vielmehr weil ich mich selbst nicht zeige, wie ich es wünsche. Die Notwendigkeit, eine Rolle zu spielen, und ein innerer Widerwillen dagegen machen mir jede Gesellschaft lästig, und froh kann ich nur in meiner eigenen Gesellschaft sein, weil ich da ganz wahr sein darf. Das darf man unter Menschen nicht sein, und keiner ist es.[44] . . . O wie schmerzhaft ist es, in dem Äusseren ganz stark und frei zu sein, indessen man im Innern ganz schwach ist wie ein Kind, ganz gelähmt, als wären uns alle Glieder gebunden, wenn man sich nie zeigen kann, wie man wohl möchte, nie frei handeln kann, und selbst das Grosse versäumen muss, weil man vorausempfindet, dass man nicht standhalten wird, indem man von jedem äusseren Eindrucke abhängt und das albernste Mädchen oder der elendeste Schuft von Elegant uns durch die matteste Persiflage vernichten kann. -- Das alles verstehst Du vielleicht nicht, liebe Ulrike, es ist wieder kein Gegenstand für die Mitteilung, und der andere müsste das alles aus sich selbst kennen, um es zu verstehen (644-645).

This famous letter contains also the most compact and best-known of the anguished analyses of the dilemma which the as yet unrealized writer faced:

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[44]Cf. the conclusion of a somewhat earlier letter to Ulrike: "Behalte dies alles für Dich. Niemand versteht es, das haben mir tausend Erfahrungen bestätigt. 'Wenn Du Dein Wissen nicht nutzen willst, warum strebst Du denn so nach Wahrheit?' So fragen mich viele Menschen, aber was soll man ihnen darauf antworten? Die einzige Antwort, die es gibt, ist diese: weil es Wahrheit ist! -- Aber wer versteht das?" (617).

> Ach, Du weisst nicht, wie es in meinem Innern aussieht. Aber es interessiert Dich doch? -- O gewiss! Und gern möchte ich Dir alles mitteilen, wenn es möglich wäre. Aber es ist nicht möglich, und wenn es auch kein weiteres Hindernis gäbe als dieses, dass es uns an einem Mittel zur Mitteilung fehlt. Selbst das einzige, was wir besitzen, die Sprache taugt nicht dazu, sie kann die Seele nicht malen, und was sie uns gibt, sind nur zerrissene Bruchstücke. Daher habe ich jedesmal eine Empfindung wie ein Grauen, wenn ich jemandem mein Innerstes aufdecken soll; nicht eben, weil es sich vor der Blösse scheut, aber weil ich ihm nicht alles zeigen kann, nicht kann, und daher fürchten muss, aus den Bruchstücken falsch verstanden zu werden. . . . -- Ach, Du weisst nicht, Ulrike, wie mein Innerstes oft erschüttert ist -- -- Du verstehst dies doch nicht falsch? Ach, es gibt kein Mittel, sich andern ganz verständlich zu machen, und der Mensch hat von Natur keinen andern Vertrauten als sich selbst (642-643).

Two years later there is still the same titanic despair--but it has gone through a process of further distillation, has become more its own demonstration; metaphor and word-gesture supplant all attempts at analysis. These words were written at the time of the crisis over the composition of Robert Guiskard:

> Die Hölle gab mir meine halben Talente, der Himmel schenkt dem Menschen ein ganzes oder gar keins.
>
> Ich kann Dir nicht sagen, wie gross mein Schmerz ist. Ich würde von Herzen gern hingehen, wo ewig kein Mensch hinkommt. . . . Ich komme mir fast vor wie Minette [Wilhelmine, Kleist's younger sister], wenn sie in einem Streit recht hat, und sich nicht aussprechen kann (762).

These words, in some way most poignant of all--they stand as an isolated paragraph in the letter--anticipate a similar passage in the Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen, written

for the Abendblätter in 1811:[45]

> Ich weiss nicht, was ich Dir über mich unaussprechlichen Menschen sagen soll. -- Ich wollte, ich könnte mir das Herz aus dem Leibe reissen, in diesen Brief packen, und Dir zuschicken. -- Dummer Gedanke! (754-755).

The same impotence is expressed in a series of letters to others besides his fiancee and his sister. In the famous letter to von Pfuel of January 7th, 1805 (unpublished until Erich Schmidt's edition), there is this passage, part of a frantic attempt at reconciliation with this friend:

> Mein, mein ist die Schuld, ich habe Dich verwickelt, ach, ich kann Dir dies nicht so sagen, wie ich es **empfinde.** -- Was soll ich, liebster Pfuel, mit allen **diesen** Tränen anfangen? (776).

A year and a half later we encounter a similar passage in a letter to Freiherr von Stein zum Altenstein, the Prussian Minister of Finance who was a confidant of Kleist during the Königsberg period (1805-1806):

> Wenn ich doch nur einen Mittag an Ihrer Seite sein könnte! Denn -- wo soll ich anfangen? Wie soll ich es möglich machen, in einem Briefe etwas so Zartes, als ein Gedanke ist, auszuprägen. Ja, wenn man Tränen schreiben könnte -- doch so -- -- (796).

The letters of Kleist's last months, when the period of literary productivity had come to an end, disclose again a fully frustrated reaction to his disconsolate condition. The following truly tragic words were written to Marie von Kleist little more than a month before his suicide:

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[45]See pp. 263-265 of this study for a discussion of this Brief.

> Mehreremal, wenn ich auf den Gedanken geriet, dass Sie vielleicht einen Brief von mir erwarteten, hatte ich die Feder ergriffen, um Ihnen zu schreiben; aber die gänzliche Unfähigkeit, mich anders als durch die Zukunft auszudrücken, machte sie mir immer wieder aus den Händen fallen. . . . Wirklich, es ist sonderbar, wie mir in dieser Zeit alles, was ich unternehme, zugrunde geht; wie sich mir immer, wenn ich mich einmal entschliessen kann, einen festen Schritt zu tun, der Boden unter meinen Füssen entzieht. . . . Es scheint mir trostlos, dass ich es nicht beschreiben kann, immer an einem anderen Ort zu suchen, was ich noch an keinem, meiner eigentümlichen Beschaffenheit wegen, gefunden habe (914-915).

And to Marie he writes of his decision to die with Henriette Vogel:

> Der Entschluss, der in ihrer Seele aufging, mit mir zu sterben, zog mich, ich kann Dir nicht sagen, mit welcher unaussprechlichen und unwiderstehlichen Gewalt, an ihre Brust (920-921).

Even the last sentences which Kleist ever wrote, the final plea and testament to Ulrike, contain in most compact form this unique vocabulary:

> Du hast an mir getan, ich sage nicht, was in Kräften einer Schwester, sondern in Kräften eines Menschen stand, um mich zu retten: die Wahrheit ist, dass mir auf Erden nicht zu helfen war. Und nun lebe wohl; möge Dir der Himmel einen Tod schenken, nur halb an Freude und unaussprechlicher Heiterkeit dem meinigen gleich: das ist der herzlichste und innigste Wunsch, den ich für Dich aufzubringen weiss (925).

In addition to the specific application of terminology relative to "das Unaussprechliche" to Kleist himself, there are several subdivisions of this aspect, which occur frequently enough in the letters to warrant individual consideration: the

unspoken as part of artistic media, fate as a manifestation of the inexpressible, the indescribable enigma of the deity, the transitoriness of emotions and of life, and, finally, the indescribable nature of simplicity, truth, confidence in the future, and above all Gefühl, in all of which Kleist found a consolation. It is clear that each of these stems from, and eventually returns to, the central core of all the letters: Kleist's obsessive concern with the unknown.

Foremost among them for the express purposes of this study is the preoccupation with the subtly suggested and the unspoken in art:

> [1800] Ich bin in die [sic] sogenannte grosse Kirche gewesen, hier in Zwickau. Da gibt es manches zu sehen. Zuerst ist der Eindruck des Innern angenehm und erhebend. Ein weites Gewölbe wird von wenigen und doch schlanken Pfeilern getragen. Wir sehen es gern, wenn mit geringen Kräften ausgewirkt wird, was grosse zu erfordern scheint (537).
>
> [1805, in connection with a translation by Rühle of a passage from Racine] Aus einem Stück einer Übersetzung des Racine sehe ich, dass er die Sprache . . . völlig in seiner Gewalt hat. Er kann, wie ein echter Redekünstler, sagen, was er will, ja er hat die ganze Finesse, die den Dichter ausmacht, und kann auch das sagen, was er nicht sagt (785).
>
> [1806, these very famous words to Rühle] Die Wahrheit ist, dass ich das, was ich mir vorstelle, schön finde, nicht das, was ich leiste. Wär ich zu etwas anderem brauchbar, so würde ich es von Herzen gern ergreifen: ich dichte bloss, weil ich es nicht lassen kann.[46] . . . Ich höre, Du, mein lieber Junge,

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[46]Cf. "Es ist mein töricht überspanntes Gemüt, das sich

beschäftigst Dich auch mit der Kunst. Es gibt nichts Göttlicheres als sie! Und nichts Leichteres zugleich; und doch, warum ist es so schwer? Jede erste Bewegung, alles Unwillkürliche, ist schön; und schief und verschroben alles, sobald es sich selbst begreift.[47] O der Verstand, der unglückselige Verstand! Studiere nicht zuviel, mein lieber Junge. . . . Folge Deinem Gefühl! Was Dir schön dünkt, das gib uns, auf gut Glück. Es ist ein Wurf wie mit dem Würfel; aber es gibt nichts anderes (798-799).

[1807, from the prison at Chalons-sur-Marne] Erfindung ist es überall, was ein Werk der Kunst ausmacht. Denn nicht das, was dem Sinn dargestellt ist, sondern das, was das Gemüt, durch diese Wahrnehmung erregt, sich denkt, ist das Kunstwerk (814).

[1807, from Dresden to Marie von Kleist, to whom Kleist had sent parts of Penthesilea] Diese Ihre Neigung, sich auf die Partei des Dichters zu werfen, und durch Ihre eigne Einbildung geltend zu machen, was nur halb gesagt ist, bestimmt mich, mir öfter das Vergnügen zu machen, Ihnen im Laufe meiner Arbeiten abgerissne Stücke derselben zuzusenden (830).

[1811, to Fouqué] Die Erscheinung, die am meisten, bei der Betrachtung eines Kunstwerks, rührt, ist, dünkt mich, nicht das Werk selbst, sondern die Eigentümlichkeit des Geistes, der es hervorbrachte, und der sich, in unbewusster Freiheit und Lieblichkeit, darin entfaltet (893).[48]

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nie an dem, was ist, sondern nur an dem, was nicht ist, erfreuen kann" (734).

[47]Cf. Über das Marionettentheater, Kleist (ed. Sembdner), II, 342.

[48]It is obviously in no sense an attempt of this discussion to maintain that the inadequacy of words and verbal contact among humans and in art was the frustration of Kleist alone. Nearly every writer has faced this torment at some time in his career. Goethe, of course, speaks of it in Werther, just as Lessing had in Emilia Galotti. Jean Paul, too, "der unbeschränkt Aussprechende, ehrt einige seiner Geschöpfe (wie Kleist) durch Verschweigen."--Max Kommerell,

The Erfahrung des Unaussprechlichen, although certainly by no means an experience unique to Kleist, nevertheless manifested itself in him to a most unusually high degree. His importance to us and his glory as a writer do not lie in his having capitulated before it, but in his successful incorporation of "das Unaussprechliche" in his own writings.

Perhaps as explanation or justification for his feelings of verbal helplessness, imponderable Life sometimes appears in Kleist's letters in the guise of "Schicksal" and "Zufall." "Ach, Wilhelmine!" he writes in 1801, "wir dünken uns frei, und der Zufall führt uns allgewaltig an tausend feingesponnenen Fäden fort" (660). Two years later, in his profound dejection over the incompletion of Guiskard, he writes: "Das Schicksal, das den Völkern jeden Zuschuss zu ihrer Bildung zumisst, will, denke ich, die Kunst in diesem nördlichen Himmelsstrich noch nicht reifen lassen" (761). Confronted by obstacles at every turn, this tone of despair pervades perhaps one quarter of the entire correspondence. However, it is clearly in the earlier letters that "Schicksal" as a specific concept is closely identified with "das Unaussprechliche."

Jean Paul (3rd ed.; Frankfurt-on-Main, 1957), p. 254. It was, indeed, this same Jean Paul who recognized the importance of the unspoken in Werther: "Es gibt Gefühle der Menschenbrust, welche unaussprechlich bleiben. . . ."--Vorschule der Aesthetik ("Historisch-kritische Ausgabe"; Weimar, 1935), XI, 271.

Consequently it would seem that the conviction (particularly prevalent since Fricke's study) that "Gefühl" and "Schicksal" are consistently the two equal, opposing, and dominating poles in Kleist's life, is too facile, and badly in need of amplification and correction. If there must be a handy formulation, perhaps we could say that during the last ten years of his life Kleist gradually identified the two concepts until they became one. His own "töricht Herz" was his fate, as Prothoe says of Penthesilea, something which Kleist seems not to have fully recognized in himself before the period in Königsberg, if that is when we can approximately date his full "conversion" to writing. This is evident in the gradual elimination of cliché and objectifying self-dramatization from the letters. By way of illustration, these three excerpts from 1801:

> Ach, . . . ich hatte eine unaussprechliche Sehnsucht, nur einen Tropfen von Freude zu empfangen, es schien ein ganzes Meer davon über die Schöpfung ausgegossen, nur ich allein ging leer aus (667);
>
> Ach, es ist ekelhaft zu leben (676);
>
> [Of a narrow escape from death] Also an ein Eselsgeschrei hing ein Menschenleben? Und wenn es geschlossen gewesen wäre, <u>darum</u> hätte ich gelebt? <u>Das</u> wäre die Absicht des Schöpfers gewesen bei diesem dunkeln, rätselhaften, irdischen Leben? <u>Das</u> hätte ich darin lernen und tun sollen und weiter nichts? (691),

contrast noticeably with the actually much greater torment of these two excerpts from 1811, whose simplicity and near tragi-comic tone are far more deeply related to the truly

unutterable:

> Ich schwöre Dir [Marie von Kleist], es ist mir ganz unmöglich, länger zu leben; meine Seele ist so wund, dass mir, ich möchte fast sagen, wenn ich die Nase aus dem Fenster stecke, das Tageslicht wehe tut, das mir darauf schimmert. . . . [Ich bin] so empfindlich geworden, dass mich die kleinsten Angriffe, denen das Gefühl jedes Menschen nach dem Lauf der Dinge hienieden ausgesetzt ist, doppelt und dreifach schmerzen (918);
>
> Ja, die Welt ist eine wunderliche Einrichtung! (921).

In the context of his life and death this last sentence, written the eve of his suicide, speaks with both a sublime levity and an overpowering eloquence.

Among the most informative of the self-analytical passages in the letters is one in which Kleist places in a kind of agonized perspective the inextricable cohesion of fate and the inexpressible in his creative aspirations. To Marie, the most important confidante during his last year, he writes:

> [Einen] Trost, wissen Sie, muss ich, unbegreiflich unseliger Mensch, entbehren. Wirklich, in einem so besondern Fall ist noch vielleicht kein Dichter gewesen. So geschäftig dem weissen Papier gegenüber meine Einbildung ist, und so bestimmt in Umriss und Farbe die Gestalten sind, die sie alsdann hervorbringt, so schwer, ja ordentlich schmerzhaft ist es mir, mir das, was wirklich ist, vorzustellen. Es ist, als ob diese in allen Bedingungen angeordnete Bestimmtheit meiner Phantasie, im Augenblick der Tätigkeit selbst, Fesseln anlegte. Ich kann, von zuviel Formen verwirrt, zu keiner Klarheit der innerlichen Anschauung kommen; der Gegenstand, fühle ich unaufhörlich, ist kein Gegenstand der Einbildung: mit meinen Sinnen in der wahrhaftigen, lebendigen Gegenwart möchte ich ihn durchdringen und begreifen. Jemand, der

> anders hierüber denkt, kömmt mir ganz unverständlich vor; er muss Erfahrungen angestellt haben, ganz abweichend von denen, die ich darüber gemacht habe. Das Leben, mit seinen zudringlichen, immer wiederkehrenden Ansprüchen, reisst zwei Gemüter schon in dem Augenblick der Berührung so vielfach auseinander, um wieviel mehr, wenn sie getrennt sind. An ein Näherrücken ist gar nicht zu denken; und alles, was man gewinnen kann, ist, dass man auf dem Punkt bleibt, wo man ist. Und dann der Trost in verstimmten und trübseligen Augenblicken, deren es heutzutage so viel gibt, fällt ganz und gar weg (910-911).

This magnificent passage is ample proof that toward the end of Kleist's life the concept of fate had become to a great extent synonymous with the frustration imposed by the limitations which artistic media seemed to have placed in his path. Here is undeniably something of the iconoclast who yearned to feel and convey plastically, palpably, and immediately, as no artist before him, yet who felt bereft of all means of ultimate communication.

In close connection with this is Kleist's frequent reference to an enigmatic deity, to God as "ein Rätsel." Without any attempts at absorbing the problem of the orthodoxy of Kleist's beliefs into our investigation, it must suffice to cite from the letters a few illustrations of this facet, of Kleist's despair in the face of life's transitoriness, and of his views on the paradox of life and death, to show how they, too, ultimately redound to the inexpressible. Perhaps emblematic of this is Kleist's fondness for a verse

which was painted as a fresco on the wall of a house in Thun, Switzerland:

> "Ich komme, ich weiss nicht, von wo? Ich bin, ich weiss nicht, was? Ich fahre, ich weiss nicht, wohin? Mich wundert, dass ich so fröhlich bin." Der Vers gefällt mir ungemein, und ich kann ihn nicht ohne Freude denken, wenn ich spazieren gehe (742-743).

Half a year earlier he had written to Wilhelmine from Paris:

> O wie unbegreiflich ist der Wille, der über uns waltet! Dieses rätselhafte Ding, das wir besitzen, wir wissen nicht, von wem, das uns fortführt, wir wissen nicht wohin, das unser Eigentum ist, wir wissen nicht ob wir darüber schalten dürfen, eine Habe, die uns nichts wert ist, wenn sie uns etwas wert ist, ein Ding wie ein Widerspruch, flach und tief, öde und reich, würdig und verächtlich, vieldeutig und unergründlich, ein Ding, das jeder wegwerfen möchte wie ein unverständliches Buch, sind wir nicht durch ein Naturgesetz gezwungen, es zu lieben? Wir müssen vor der Vernichtung beben, die nicht so qualvoll sein kann als oft das Dasein, und indessen mancher das traurige Geschenk des Lebens beweint, muss er es durch Essen und Trinken ernähren, und die Flamme vor dem Erlöschen hüten, die ihn weder erleuchtet noch erwärmt (692-693).

This paradox had earlier haunted him in Würzburg in 1800, from where he had written with a somewhat different kind of pathos:

> Nur gar zu leicht glaubt man, man habe <u>alles</u> getan, wenn man die ernsten Gebräuche der Religion beobachtet, wenn man fleissig in die Kirche geht, täglich betet, und jährlich zweimal das Abendbrot nimmt.
>
> Und doch sind dies alles nur <u>Zeichen</u> eines Gefühls, mit welchem Du bei dem Abendmahle das Brot nimmst, mit demselben Gefühle, sage ich, erwürgt der Mexikaner seinen Bruder vor dem Altare seines Götzen (574).[49]

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[49]Cf. this passage a year and a half later: "Man sage

The transitoriness of emotions and of life are intimately connected with our problem of the transitoriness of the word. Kleist makes the following observation from Paris, the city which haunted and horrified him, as it did Rilke exactly one century later, but which also called forth many of his most acute observations and stimulated his literary endeavors to a far greater degree than is generally recognized:

> Zu schnell wechseln die Erscheinungen im Leben, und zu eng ist das Herz, sie alle zu umfassen, und immer die vergangnen schwinden, Platz zu machen den neuen -- Zuletzt ekelt dem Herzen vor dem neuen, und matt gibt es sich Eindrücken hin, deren Vergänglichkeit es vorempfindet -- Ach, es muss öde und leer und traurig sein, später zu sterben, als das Herz (682).

The surprising, unsolicited letter from Paris to Adolphine von Werdeck, whom he had neither seen nor written for six years, is in this vein a demonstration of its own subject: the tragedy of the irretrievable past:

> Ach, was ist das Leben eines Menschen für ein farbenwechselndes Ding! . . . Wie der Felsen, dessen drohender Gipfel, wenn wir unter seinen Füssen stehen, Erstaunen und Verwunderung in unserer Seele erregt, nach und nach, wenn wir uns von ihm entfernen, immer kleiner und kleiner wird, und endlich zu einem dämmernden Pünktchen schwindet, das wir mühsam suchen müssen, um es zu finden, so werden auch die grossen Momente der Vergangenheit immer kleiner und kleiner -- Selbst Gefühle, an deren Ewigkeit wir nicht zweifelten, schwinden ganz aus dem Gedächtnis. Es war

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nicht, dass eine Stimme im Innern uns heimlich anvertraue, was Recht sei. Dieselbe Stimme, die dem Christen zuruft, seinem Feinde zu vergeben, ruft dem Seeländer zu, ihn zu braten, und mit Andacht isst er ihn auf" (706).

> eine Zeit, wo ich nicht glaubte, dass diese Seele jemals einen andern Gedanken bearbeiten würde als einen einzigen, jemals ein anderes Gefühl liebgewinnen könnte als ein einziges; und jetzt muss eine Zeitung mir in die Hände fallen, oder ein Komet über die Erde ziehen, um mich seiner zu erinnern -- ? . . .
>
> Ach, das Leben des Menschen ist, wie jeder Strom, bei seinem Ursprunge am höchsten. Es fliesst und fliesst, indem es fällt -- In das Meer müssen wir alle -- Wir sinken und sinken . . .
>
> Ach, es ist meine angeborne Unart, nie den Augenblick ergreifen zu können, und immer an einem Ort zu leben, an welchem ich nicht bin, und in einer Zeit, die vorbei oder noch nicht da ist (694-700).

Although this passage (most of whose somewhat turgid parts we have deleted) is genuine despite its suggestion of flamboyancy, surely the finest words in the letters about man under the eternal and infinite shroud of the universe are those written to Rühle from Königsberg in August, 1806. Parts of this letter had already been used in a letter to Freiherr von Stein a month before and apparently so gratified Kleist, that he incorporated them in the former:

> Wer wollte auf dieser Welt glücklich sein. Pfui, schäme Dich, möcht ich fast sagen, wenn Du es willst! Welch eine Kurzsichtigkeit, o Du edler Mensch, gehört dazu, hier, wo alles mit dem Tode endigt, nach etwas zu streben. Wir begegnen uns, drei Frühlinge lieben wir uns: und eine Ewigkeit fliehen wir wieder auseinander. Und was ist des Strebens würdig, wenn es die Liebe nicht ist! Ach, es muss noch etwas anderes geben, als Liebe, Glück, Ruhm usw., x, y, z, wovon unsere Seelen nichts träumen.
>
> Es kann kein böser Geist sein, der an der Spitze der Welt steht; es ist ein bloss unbegriffener! Lächeln wir nicht auch, wenn die Kinder weinen? Denke nur, diese unendliche Fortdauer! Myriaden von Zeiträumen, jedweder ein Leben, und für jedweden eine Erscheinung wie diese Welt! Wie doch das kleine

> Sternchen heissen mag, das man auf dem Sirius, wenn der Himmel klar ist, sieht? Und dieses ganze ungeheure Firmament nur ein Stäubchen gegen die Unendlichkeit! O Rühle, sage mir, ist dies ein Traum? Zwischen je zwei Lindenblättern, wenn wir abends auf dem Rücken liegen, eine Aussicht, an Ahndungen reicher, als Gedanken fassen und Worte sagen können. Komm, lass uns etwas Gutes tun, und dabei sterben! Einen der Millionen Tode, die wir schon gestorben sind, und noch sterben werden. Es ist, als ob wir aus einem Zimmer in das andere gehen (797-798).

Kleist's preoccupation with death and obligation pervades his remarks about the vast enigma of the transitory:

> Ja, wahrlich, wenn man überlegt, dass wir ein Leben bedürfen, um zu lernen, wie wir leben müssten, dass wir selbst im Tode noch nicht ahnden, was der Himmel mit uns will, wenn niemand den Zweck seines Daseins und seine Bestimmung kennt, wenn die menschliche Vernunft nicht hinreicht, sich und die Seele und das Leben und die Dinge um sich zu begreifen, wenn man seit Jahrtausenden noch zweifelt, ob es ein Recht gibt -- -- kann Gott von solchen Wesen Verantwortlichkeit fordern? (706).

And finally there is the ultimate paradox, already suggested above, of life as death and death as life--a paradox which seems closer to the agnostic existentialism in this century than to the orthodox Christian consolation of Kleist's time:

> Ach, es ist nichts ekelhafter als . . . Furcht vor dem Tode. Das Leben ist das einzige Eigentum, das nur dann etwas wert ist, wenn wir es nicht achten. Verächtlich ist es, wenn wir es nicht leicht fallen lassen können, und nur der kann es zu grossen Zwecken nutzen, der es leicht und freudig wegwerfen könnte. Wer es mit Sorgfalt liebt, moralisch tot ist er schon, denn seine höchste Lebenskraft, nämlich es opfern zu können, modert, indessen er es pflegt (692).
>
> Das Leben hat doch immer nichts Erhabeneres als nur dieses, dass man es erhaben wegwerfen kann (749).

Yet Kleist's consistency itself suggests in the final analysis that there was consolation for him in some of his personal involvements, in his artistic engagement, and in this post-Kantian transcendental approach to an unintelligible existence. In the treatment of his letters it remains only to indicate that source of Kleist's consolation, which seems to devolve most explicitly from those aspects of his "Gefühl" which defy articulation. We may call it the self-integrity of his feeling, the inviolability of the artist's intuition. The intimate, almost secret nature of what Kleist called happiness seems to have been clear to him from the first:

> Das Gefühl, im Innern schön zu sein, und das Bild, das uns der Spiegel des Bewusstseins in den Stunden der Einsamkeit zurückwirft, das sind Genüsse, die allein unsere heisse Sehnsucht nach Glück ganz stillen kann (589).
>
> Ich trage eine innere Vorschrift in meiner Brust, gegen welche alle äussern, und wenn sie ein König unterschrieben hätte, nichtswürdig sind. Daher fühle ich mich ganz unfähig, mich in irgendein konventionelles Verhältnis der Welt zu passen. Ich finde viele ihrer Einrichtungen so wenig meinem Sinn gemäss, dass es mir unmöglich wäre, zu ihrer Erhaltung oder Ausbildung mitzuwirken. . . .
>
> Denn nie in meinem Leben, und wenn das Schicksal noch so sehr drängte, werde ich etwas tun, das meinen inneren Forderungen, sei es auch noch so leise, widerspräche. . . .
>
> Was meine Familie und die Welt dagegen einwenden möchten, wird mich nicht irreführen. Ein jeder hat seine eigne Art, glücklich zu sein, und niemand darf verlangen, dass man es in der seinigen sein soll. Was ich tue, ist nichts Böses, und die Menschen mögen über mich spötteln, soviel sie wollen, heimlich in ihrem Herzen werden sie mich ehren müssen. -- Doch

> wenn auch das nicht wäre, ich selbst ehre mich (717-720).

Understandably the power of simplicity and truth plays an increasingly important role in Kleist's consolation through self-integrity:

> Was Ihnen Ihr Herz sagt, ist Goldklang, und der spricht es selbst aus, dass er echt sei. Alle . . . Vorschriften für Mienen und Gebärden und Worte und Handlungen, sie sind nicht für den, dem ein Gott in seinem Innern heimlich anvertraut, was recht ist (681).
>
> Eine Empfindung, aber mit ihrer ganzen Kraft, darzustellen, das ist die höchste Aufgabe für die Kunst. . . . Kunstwerke sind Produkte der Phantasie, und der ganze Gang unserer heutigen Kultur geht dahin, das Gebiet des Verstandes immer mehr und mehr zu erweitern, das heisst, das Gebiet der Einbildungskraft immer mehr und mehr zu verengen (726).

If anything, the strength of Kleist's inner convictions as an artist grew stronger in the face of mounting adversity. The fragment of a letter to Marie in 1811 contains a passage of the utmost importance in this connection. There is both reflection and a sort of transfiguration in these words, whose calm deliberation places for a moment his tormented life in rare perspective and surveys the artistic task sub specie aeternitatis:

> Sobald ich mit dieser Angelegenheit fertig bin, will ich einmal wieder etwas recht Phantastisches vornehmen. Es weht mich zuweilen, bei einer Lektüre oder im Theater, wie ein Luftzug aus meiner allerfrühesten Jugend an. Das Leben, das vor mir ganz öde liegt, gewinnt mit einemmal eine wunderbar herrliche Aussicht, und es regen sich Kräfte in mir, die ich ganz erstorben glaubte. Alsdann will ich meinem

> Herzen ganz und gar, wo es mich hinführt, folgen und schlechterdings auf nichts Rücksicht nehmen, als auf meine eigne innerliche Befriedigung. Das Urteil der Menschen hat mich bisher viel zu sehr beherrscht; besonders das Käthchen von Heilbronn ist voll Spuren davon. Es war von Anfang herein eine ganz treffliche Erfindung, und nur die Absicht, es für die Bühne passend zu machen, hat mich zu Missgriffen verführt, die ich jetzt beweinen möchte. Kurz, ich will mich von dem Gedanken ganz durchdringen, dass, wenn ein Werk nur recht frei aus dem Schoss eines menschlichen Gemüts hervorgeht, dasselbe auch notwendig darum der ganzen Menschheit angehören müsse (894-895).

This paragraph recalls nothing so vividly as those words written five years earlier to Rühle, which we have already cited:

> Es gibt nichts Göttlicheres als [die Kunst]: Und nichts Leichteres zugleich; und doch, warum ist es so schwer? Jede erste Bewegung, alles Unwillkürliche, ist schön; und schief und verschroben alles, sobald es sich selbst begreift (799).

and the masterful essay, Über das Marionettentheater, which grew from these words some years later.

In his futile search for recognition Kleist was forced to turn to the future. If in his early letters the tone seems at times histrionic or aggressive, this is perhaps only natural. In his vulnerability it was a choice between that and what to him would have been tremulousness. Later he proved that in reality he possessed a rare sort of faith. We cannot in any sense relegate to mere self-dramatization his often-repeated words: "Wenn ich auch auf dieser Erde nirgends

meinen Platz finden sollte, so finde ich vielleicht auf einem andern Sterne einen um so bessern" (599).[50] And if in the later letters the tone at times is one of bitter dejection, this is in part a result of the failure of one of his most fervent desires to be realized: appreciation by the people he loved. Kleist had already decided upon his suicide when he wrote to Marie von Kleist about his immediate family:

> . . . sowenig ich davon gesprochen habe, so gewiss ist es, dass es einer meiner herzlichsten und innigsten Wünsche war [meiner Familie] einmal, durch meine Arbeiten und Werke, recht viel Freude und Ehre zu machen. . . . der Gedanke, das Verdienst, das ich doch zuletzt, sei es nun gross oder klein, habe, gar nicht anerkannt zu sehn, und mich von ihnen als ein ganz nichtsnutziges Glied der menschlichen Gesellschaft, das keiner Teilnahme mehr wert sei, betrachtet zu sehn, ist mir überaus schmerzhaft, wahrhaftig es raubt mir nicht nur die Freuden, die ich von der Zukunft hoffte, sondern es vergiftet mir auch die Vergangenheit (918-919).

But now that we are able to speak from our own perspective, we can appreciate that these were certainly not Kleist's final words on the subject of his place in the future. In a real sense he had written his own prophecy eight years earlier, at another moment of despair:

> Ich trete vor Einem zurück, der noch nicht da ist, und beuge mich, ein Jahrtausend im voraus, vor seinem Geiste. Denn in der Reihe der menschlichen Erfindungen ist diejenige, die ich gedacht habe, unfehlbar ein Glied, und es wächst irgendwo ein Stein schon für den, der sie einst ausspricht (761).

Kleist may not have known it, but he was speaking of himself.

Taken as a whole, Kleist's letters are now generally

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[50] Cf. letters pp. 617 and 687.

recognized as constituting an organic part of his creative production as well as a unique source for the fuller appreciation of his plays and stories. In their excruciating self-analysis they tell us relatively little about the social or political climate of their period and almost nothing of the genesis of their author's works. What they do reveal is an astonishing underlying consistency in his aspirations and ideals and in his doubts and despair. He felt, with a gnawing which persisted to the very end, that he was ultimately unable to express to others in the words of his letters what was in his heart and mind. Over and over, from first to last, we can encounter this same lament in the many manifestations which we have attempted to point out and analyze in this section. The most tragic contributing factor was the almost total lack of appreciation by his family, his friends, and his small reading public. One of the most alluring hypothetical situations to ponder in German literary history is the possible consequence for Kleist of a personal and public triumph. As it was, his conviction of his own incongruity grew in proportion to the secret and relentless pursuit of his visions.

C. The so-called Kleinere Schriften of Kleist constitute the third and final group of writings to be investigated

in this chapter.[51] They can be divided into the anecdotes; the short observations about art, literature, and the theater; the patriotic appeals and comments on the political topics of the day; general reportage; and the handful of adaptations and translations. With one important exception,[52] most of the material with which we shall deal appeared in 1810-1811 in the Berliner Abendblätter, the newspaper which Kleist founded and which he edited throughout its brief existence. This material is strictly circumscribed; an article longer than two pages in the modern editions is rare. Thus, despite the number of titles, the bulk is small. Of these incidental writings there are three items of major importance to our understanding of gesture in the larger works: Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden, Über das Marionettentheater, and the Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen. Before considering these, however, there are a few aspects in the other material which cast light on our subject and will call for brief, unanalytical discussion.

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[51]Any analytical investigation of gesture and the unspoken in the eight Novellen of Kleist would be a complete study in itself. Suffice it to say that the inherently dramatic quality of these stories reveals a multitude of the stylistic elements of which we have been speaking. We shall, however, deal briefly with a few of the anecdotes in which these same elements appear in microcosmic form, so to speak.

[52]The essay, Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden, unpublished until 1878 when it appeared in Berlin in the periodical, Nord und Süd.

1. Kleist's Anekdoten are among the shortest in the language. We should search in vain in them for the effusiveness or moralizing frequently typical of the day. Their terseness derives paradoxically from the fact that for the most part they are built up of conspicuously lengthy sentences. Yet, far from meandering, these sentences are constructed with great subtlety and deliberateness and are few in number, an anecdote rarely consisting of more than four. Similar to much of the epic dialog in the dramas, these sentences capture a moment and its atmosphere with an unprecedented immediacy. More than that, they literally capture and confine a time lapse. In them language becomes its own gesture. That is, a sequence of action becomes a sequence of language, the language span often lasting precisely as long in the reading as would the action in reality. Ornamentation and subjectivity are never a part of these anecdotes. The reader is left, or better, the reader is obliged, to fill in the details, knowing that his imagination is completely under the control of the author's verbal gestures. In a real and new sense the reader becomes an integral part of the art object.[53]

Kleist, unlike many Romantics, was keenly aware of the importance of the relationship between author and reader, of

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[53]If we may admit that a few of these dramas in nuce are worthy of the designation.

the gap or kinetic vacuum--in other words, of the unsaid. The reader is not left to wander, to peruse, or to be objective. He is captured by Kleist's objectivity instead, integrated into even the briefest of the anecdotes, and made not only to react but to act. Kleist supplies the situation and the verbs. We unconsciously supply all the elaboration, the modifiers. And most important, we do this simultaneously with the movement of the verbs; we supply precisely that which Kleist suggests, and thus the effect of the anecdote is not vitiated by a sacrifice of time and space.

As in all the Novellen, Kleist prefers in the anecdotes the economy of indirect discourse. For one thing it can be woven easily into the fabric of his propulsive sentences. For another, it leaves the precise wording to the imagination of the reader. It permits quick repartee without sentence break; it permits sentences to flow without paragraph break. And further, it permits the use of one of Kleist's most typical constructions: the "indem"-clause. It is this clause which imbues his prose with those unmistakably Kleistian flashes of gesture: sitting down, standing up, removing a hat, blushing, bowing, mounting a horse, opening a door, leaving a room, fainting, etc., etc.--all with an economy of words so stringent that the reader absorbs rather than thinks about the gesture.

The subject material of these anecdotes is limited in

range; there are few that do not involve death in one form or another; the humor is mostly somewhat grotesque, often a Galgenhumor. Yet it is never cruel; there is both poignancy and truth in each one. It is, however, the execution of Kleist's prose rather than its subjects which we remember. It is not by accident that we find it so difficult to memorize excerpts from this prose. Its beauty is of a generically different order than that of the prose of the Classicists and the Romantics. It is a beauty of action, in which we become immediately involved and swept along. It is not a beauty of rhetoric or truism. Its magic is the magic of brevity; these little stories are over, literally before one is aware of it. We are not only involved with the characters during the unfolding of the sentences, but we can also recollect the entirety of the action kinesthetically. We recall the feeling of the anecdote (or the Novelle) rather than its specific moments removed from context. In this sense again, Kleist's prose partakes of the same qualities as does that art which Kleist regarded as the key to all the others: music, the art of ineluctable movement and pure gesture. It is the art whose recall is an echo of the whole. In the same way, Kleist's characters, even those in the anecdotes, are recalled by their movements rather than through disembodied words. Arnold Zweig writes:

> Mit welchem Glück hat [Kleist] vermieden, auch in Dramen oder Novellen so erkenntnisbeladene, scharfsinnige Denkerfiguren einzuführen, die die durchaus anschauliche Atmosphäre mit der Denkfunktion ihrer Worte nur zerstört hätten! Dieser Dichter denkt in Personen, und er spricht auch nur aus Personen. . . . Argumente für seine Gedanken gibt er nicht in Beweisen, sondern in Anekdoten, aus denen das zu Beweisende, verkörpert und nicht ausgesagt, höchst einleuchtend, d.h. anschaulich und überzeugend hervortritt, so dass das Denken des Dichters, sein geistiges Meinen wie in der Szenenführung eines Dramenaktes nur an der Form und Art der Verkörperung merkbar wird, . . . verschwiegen und doch höchst beredt.[54]

2. Upon first investigation of Kleist's political writings it would seem more difficult to associate them with "das Unaussprechliche." This is due in part to their outspoken patriotic fervor, a feature as true of the material intended for his periodical Germania as it is for Die Hermannsschlacht and Prinz Friedrich von Homburg. His hatred of Napoleon and his mortal dismay at the inability of the Prussian and Austrian armies to unite and to vanquish the "korsische Kaiser" were passionately real. The alliance in 1811 between Friedrich Wilhelm III and Napoleon doubtless contributed in its way to Kleist's suicide, as he himself suggests in a letter to Marie von Kleist.[55] To maintain, on the one hand (as has been done), that this fervor

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[54]Arnold Zweig, Lessing, Kleist, Büchner: Drei Versuche (Berlin, 1925), pp. 123-124.

[55]"Die Allianz, die der König jetzt mit den Franzosen schliesst, ist auch nicht eben gemacht, mich im Leben festzuhalten" (Letters, p. 919; Nov. 10, 1811).

was the outgrowth of a deranged mentality is much too facile and ignores Kleist's background and the enormous complexity of the despair and transcendent elation which drove him to his death. On the other hand, however, it is more important to emphasize that Kleist's patriotic ardor was in no sense born of rational political theory and conviction. Its basis was profoundly, and at times quite irrationally, emotional. It is illuminating (and not altogether facetious) to recall his attempts to join Napoleon's army for the invasion of England consequent to the despair over Guiskard. Yet his antipathy to the French and their leader had already been sufficiently aired by 1803. He could as easily have found his hero's death as part of an assassination plot, for example. Six years later, after the brief period of happiness and success in Dresden, his dejection, if not his desperation, was as great. Our point is not to labor an analogy. It is to suggest that the political temper of the time and place (Dresden, 1809) seemed to offer to Kleist a new kind of anchor and refuge. For the moment he cast aside literary endeavor for its own sake and strove to become part of a common political cause. And this he did with the same uncompromising exclusiveness with which he had embraced the literary world of Dresden shortly before. His was not the common brand of patriotism; it was far more demonic and personal. Indeed, we

might maintain that at times the knowledge of being able to fight in his way against Napoleon rather than for Germany was psychologically more gratifying to Kleist. One finds in all his patriotic poetry and in all the varied forms of appeal to Germany a consuming desire on his part to belong to a whole, in order to give his life a specific content and a new goal.

It is in this connection that these writings and Die Hermannsschlacht apply to the core of the unspoken. Kleist was purposeful in making the dynamic drama his one Tendenzstück, "das einzig und allein auf diesen Augenblick berechnet war," as he twice wrote.[56] It served in addition as a kind of oratorical catharsis for the silences and the delicate shadings of gesture in all his previous work. It was also a self-imposed vengeance for the ineffectuality of those elements upon his contemporary readers. Without attempting a compromise between the individual and the social realms, he plunged into a sphere of involvement. The results of this complete lack of moderation were in turn just as disastrous as before. Perhaps even more so, for in the last analysis this sphere was the more alien to the spirit of his art.

We cannot escape noticing how the dialog of the Arminius drama and that in the Katechismus der Deutschen (1809) stand in polar contrast to all his other work. Compared to the

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[56]See letters, pp. 857, 860.

interrogation technique in Der zerbrochene Krug, Amphitryon, and later in Homburg, its candor in Die Hermannsschlacht is almost blatant. (The elements of non-verbal gesture which remain in this drama--for this fundamental aspect could not be altogether expunged--are reserved primarily for Ventidius, Thusnelda before her conversion, and, most interestingly, for Hermann's least admirable activities. By implication as well, these elements are ridiculed by Kleist almost as an act of masochism.) In the introduction to the projected Germania we find the statement of what Kleist was attempting to do during this 1808-1809 period. In view of everything we know about the hypersensitiveness of Kleist, it seems an aggressive and unnatural reaction to the cryptic elements of his spirit. Of Germania he writes:

> Sie soll alles aussprechen, was, während der drei letzten, unter dem Druck der Franzosen verseufzten Jahre, in den Brüsten wackerer Deutscher hat verschwiegen bleiben müssen: alle Besorgnis, alle Hoffnung, alles Elend und alles Glück (358).[57]

That this, however, was impossible for Kleist is attested to finally by the reversion in Homburg to his fundamental stylistic persuasion. Thus this period of "Aussprechlichkeit," so to speak, constitutes something of an aberration in Kleist's

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[57]Italics mine. All quotations from the Kleinere Schriften are taken from Vol. II of the Sembdner edition of the works and letters; page numbers appear in the text in parentheses.

literary production.

3. Incidental articles in the Abendblätter reveal here and there Kleist's revivified concern with the inexpressible in 1810-1811. We shall briefly consider five of these.

a. In a review of a comedy by Julius von Voss, Ton des Tages, Kleist is primarily concerned with the matter of pantomime and, expressly, with the use of the hands to convey gesture. His rebuke of Iffland, who portrayed a major role in the play, is unmistakable.[58] Kleist is clearly aware of the overuse of the hands by Iffland and thereby of the destruction of the gesture. Iffland, he writes,

> drückt in der Tat, auf die erstaunenswürdigste Art, fast alle Zustände und innerliche Bewegungen des Gemüts [mit der Hand] aus. . . . Es wird ihm in der Pantomimik überhaupt . . . nicht leicht ein Schauspieler heutiger Zeit gleichkommen. Aber von allen seinen Gliedern, behaupten wir, wirkt, in der Regel, keins, zum Ausdruck eines Affekts, so geschäftig mit, als die Hand; sie zieht die Aufmerksamkeit fast von seinem so ausdrucksvollen Gesicht ab; und so vortrefflich dies Spiel an und für sich sein mag, so glauben wir doch, dass ein Gebrauch, mässiger und minder verschwenderisch, als der, den er davon macht, seinem Spiel . . . vorteilhaft sein würde (353-354).

The passage would seem to have definite implications for the moderation and subtlety which Kleist would have had the actors

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[58] However, it is far more gentle than the scathing reference to Iffland's personal predilections in the notorious letters to that gentleman in August, 1810 (874-875), a suggestion of which may linger in the article written two months later.

of his plays bring to their roles.

b. A "Literarische Notiz" in 1811 introduces to the public a few excerpts from the letters of the celebrated mime, Henriette Hendel-Schütz. Kleist, probably the recipient of these letters, was struck by the "plasticity" and "vividness" of them, values of which he was constantly aware in his own writing. That the letters are from the pen of one versed in the art of pantomime, is pertinent:

> Das Schöne, in welcher Form es auch hervortritt, darf nicht gänzlich verborgen bleiben; und die treffliche Künstlerin selbst wird in dieser Bekanntmachung ihres Schreibens, nicht ohne Beifall, das Bestreben eines Freundes anerkennen, ihren Wert auch als sinnige Beobachterin geltend zu machen, welche die seltne Gabe zugleich besitzt, mit der Feder dasjenige lebendig darzustellen, was sie gesehen, gedacht und empfunden; so, wie sie das gleiche auf der höchsten Stufe der dramatischen Mimik, und der mimischen Plastik, längst geleistet hat (436).

c. In reporting to his readers at Christmastide, 1810 on the "Weihnachtsausstellung" brought together by one Mme. Henriette Werkmeister from the handicrafts of poor artisans, Kleist indulges in a uniquely unjournalistic style to convey the immediacy of his impressions upon seeing the exhibition. The article has the same plasticity which he praises above in the style of another. The style here is peculiarly his own. Again it is pervaded by word-gestures and the "indescribability" (as he writes) of what he saw and felt at the exhibition:

> Es hat etwas Rührendes, das man nicht beschreiben kann, wenn man in diese Zimmer tritt. . . . Es ist, als sähe man die vielen tausend kleinen niedlichen Hände sich regen, die hier geschäftigt waren; und man möchte ein Reicher sein, um das ganze Putzlager, mit allen Tränen, die darauf gefallen sein mögen, zu kaufen (425).

In describing one piece in particular, a rug embroidered with roses, it is revealing that Kleist uses a phrase which he must unconsciously have carried over from the most expressly dance-like scene in Penthesilea (vi), in which one of the Rosenmädchen refers to her contribution to the "Rosenfest" as "diesen ganzen üpp'gen Frühling" (line 888). So also of the rug design Kleist writes, some three years later: "Ein ganzer Frühling voll Rosen schüttet sich . . . darauf aus" (426). Insignificant as such a similarity may seem at first, it is uniquely illustrative of Kleist's retentive and plastic conceptualization and his metaphorical suggestion of a gesture.[59]

d. For one of the issues of the Abendblätter Kleist prepared a severe abridgement of a dialog critique by Brentano and Arnim entitled Verschiedene Empfindungen vor einer Seelandschaft von Friedrich, worauf ein Kapuziner. Renamed simply "Empfindungen vor Friedrichs Seelandschaft," it is considered today to be in essence Kleist's own product. He himself writes that "the letter" of the essay belongs to Brentano and

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[59]This has also been pointed out by Erich Schmidt in his edition of the works (1st ed., II, 457).

Arnim; "der Geist aber, und die Verantwortlichkeit dafür, so wie er jetzt abgefasst ist, mir" (438). The subject of the short essay is the famous painting by Caspar David Friedrich, which depicts a monk standing on the Baltic dunes and looking out to sea. What we said above about the obligation of the active reader to fill in the details and gaps intentionally left by the writer, can be productively transferred to the realm of the visual arts here. It is surely no coincidence that it was this particular type of criticism which Kleist chose to rework into the brief essay. For it is precisely the "unspoken" element of the painting and the gestures provoked by its "silence" in Kleist's mind which engaged his entire interest. The element of personal involvement, the subjective approach to its feeling, and the economy of the language in the essay (which corresponds exactly to the economy of the painting) have produced a strikingly modern piece of criticism. We can readily imagine how Kleist would have understood the so-called unfinished paintings of Cézanne, the late works of Monet, and the turbulent expressionism of van Gogh.[60] He writes:

> Das, was ich in dem Bilde selbst finden sollte, fand ich erst zwischen dem Bilde und mir, nämlich einen Anspruch, den mein Herz an das Bild machte, und

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[60]Van Gogh's life, work, and death seem to have astonishingly close parallels to those of Kleist.

> einen Abbruch, den mir das Bild tat; und so ward ich selbst der Kapuziner, das Bild ward die Düne. . . . Das Bild liegt, mit seinen zwei oder drei geheimnisvollen Gegenständen, wie die Apokalypse da . . . und da es, in seiner Einförmigkeit und Uferlosigkeit, nichts, als den Rahm, zum Vordergrund hat, so ist es, wenn man es betrachtet, als ob einem die Augenlider weggeschnitten wären. Gleichwohl hat der Maler zweifelsohne eine ganz neue Bahn im Felde seiner Kunst gebrochen; und ich bin überzeugt, dass sich, mit seinem Geiste, eine Quadratmeile märkischen Sandes darstellen liesse, mit einem Berberitzenstrauch, worauf sich eine Krähe einsam plustert (437-438).

He concludes with an almost predictable reference to the "Unaussprechlichkeit" of the picture:

> Meine eigenen Empfindungen, über dies wunderbare Gemälde, sind zu verworren; daher habe ich mir, ehe ich sie ganz auszusprechen wage, vorgenommen, mich durch die Äusserungen derer, die paarweise, von Morgen bis Abend, daran vorübergehen, zu belehren (438).

e. A story about the composer Haydn at a moment of great emotion is the subject of an article for the Abendblätter in 1811. In the year previous Le Moniteur in Paris had begun a series of biographical articles about the life of the musician by Joachim le Breton. One of the last of these had particular appeal for Kleist and he translated it for his paper. As in the case of the bit of art criticism above, it is not difficult to see why he chose this excerpt (which he later called "Haydns Tod") rather than another. Its most important aspect is the dramatic silence. Shortly before the death of Haydn, the society which had been organized by the illustrious names in the arts and aristocracy of Vienna

and whose purpose it was to perform the works of the master, arranged a performance of Die Schöpfung. Not knowing of this arrangement, the seventy-seven year old composer, as Kleist describes it, was received and honored in one of the vast halls of the city as never before in his lifetime. The moment of his great surprise is told as if Kleist were writing the précis of a scene in a play. Each "stage direction" is present. The emphasis which Kleist places upon the speechless reaction of Haydn is of particular interest to us:

> Haydn, der diesen Empfang nicht vorhergesehen hatte, gebrach es, einfach und bescheiden wie er war, an Worten, das Gefühl, das ihn ergriff, auszusprechen. Man hörte nur einzelne, von Tränen unterbrochene, Laute von ihm. "Niemals -- niemals empfand ich -- !" (454)

The performance of The Creation followed. Haydn's reaction was an even greater speechlessness:

> Haydn, dessen Herz alt und schwach, von Gefühlen überwältigt ward, zerfloss in Tränen, er vermochte nichts, als seine Hände, sprachlos, zum Zeichen seiner Dankbarkeit, gen Himmel zu heben (455).

Although nominally a translation, we can see from the stylistic evidence in these two brief quotations that Kleist made this anecdote, by virtue of his unique stamp, a true part of his oeuvre.

4. Nothing which Kleist wrote sheds more light on the impulses behind the construction of his dramatic and prose dialogs than the essay, Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der

Gedanken beim Reden. Written in Königsberg, probably in 1806, and kept in a personal tone throughout, this was the second treatise inscribed to his regimental comrade Otto August Rühle von Lilienstern.[61] It may be thought of as having two major divisions: a discussion of the process by which a stable emotion develops the rational articulation of a thought; and a briefer discussion of its obverse, namely, the frustration of thought-expression at moments of emotional instability. Inextricably interwoven with this is the presence or absence of an understanding and sympathetic vis-à-vis. Although the essay confines itself to situations in real life, the application of its concepts to the drama and the short story is immediately obvious.

These two major divisions are epitomized in the following sentences:

> Es liegt ein sonderbarer Quell der Begeisterung für denjenigen, der spricht, in einem menschlichen Antlitz, das ihm gegenübersteht; und ein Blick, der uns einen halbausgedrückten Gedanken schon als begriffen ankündigt, schenkt uns oft den Ausdruck für die ganze andere Hälfte desselben (322).
>
> Etwas ganz anderes ist es, wenn der Geist schon, vor aller Rede, mit dem Gedanken fertig ist. Denn dann muss er bei seiner blossen Ausdrückung zurückbleiben (325).

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[61]The other, Aufsatz, den sichern Weg des Glücks zu finden (1799), has little application to our problem. Inasmuch as the ideas which Kleist propounds in the other essay are most fruitfully applied in direct conjunction with our analysis of Penthesilea, much of our consideration of it will be reserved for that section.

Between these two poles the infinite range of Kleist's dramatic dialog may be observed, from the supremely articulate moments of the Kurfürst, Jupiter, Odysseus, to the sometimes inexpressible impulses and confused stammerings of Prince Friedrich, Alkmene, and Penthesilea. We shall later see how, for instance, the "Quell der Begeisterung" in the face of Achilles in scene fifteen permits Penthesilea to unravel her thoughts in an ecstasy of hyperbole; and again how the total lack of comprehension by the High Priestess forces Penthesilea into a language of gesture, abstracted from the logical modes of communication. Such illustrations are to be found in each of the dramas. And to understand the varieties and modulations in human contact among Kleist's characters, is to understand his perhaps most revolutionary contribution to drama.

The essay's primary concern, of course, is to show us that it is not meditation and abstract conceptualism which constitute the womb of expression, but that a thought develops during the very act of speaking: "l'idée vient en parlant." Typically, Kleist infers an analogy with physics: the electric current flowing between speaker and audience stimulates in the former the capacity for articulation, a capacity which remains only a potential when the stimulus is absent. "Die Hebammekunst der Gedanken" (the perfect phrase borrowed from Kant) resides in a keen awareness of externals and in an

intuitive knowledge of how to react to them. If these are not present, the outcome is frustration--in drama, tragedy, as we may readily infer. Kleist speaks from deep personal apprehension of the delicate shadings in human contact when he writes:

> Es ist . . . unerlässlich, dass uns die Sprache mit Leichtigkeit zur Hand sei, um dasjenige, was wir gleichzeitig gedacht haben und doch nicht gleichzeitig von uns geben können, wenigstens so schnell als möglich aufeinander folgen zu lassen.
>
> Denn nicht wir wissen, es ist allererst ein gewisser Zustand unserer, welcher weiss.
>
> Es ist so schwer, auf ein menschliches Gemüt zu spielen und ihm seinen eigentümlichen Laut abzulocken, es verstimmt sich so leicht unter ungeschickten Händen (326).

It is easy to appreciate the meaningful application of each of these observations to such plays as Amphitryon, Penthesilea, and Homburg, and to such a story as Die Marquise von O... .

By way of illustrating the gradual construction of thought during the speech process, Kleist takes two examples: one from contemporary French history and one from a fable by Lafontaine. So excellent are these two illustrations that they must not be omitted from our considerations. Read exclusively in the light of what we know of his dramatic dialog style, they are the most valuable exegeses of it which we possess:

a. Ich glaube, dass mancher grosse Redner, in dem

Augenblick, da er den Mund aufmachte, noch nicht wusste, was er sagen würde. Aber die Überzeugung, dass er die ihm nötige Gedankenfülle schon aus den Umständen und der daraus resultierenden Erregung seines Gemüts schöpfen würde, machte ihn dreist genug, den Anfang, auf gutes Glück hin, zu setzen. Mir fällt jener "Donnerkeil" des Mirabeau ein, mit welchem er den Zeremonienmeister abfertigte, der nach Aufhebung der letzten monarchischen Sitzung des Königs am 23. Juni, in welcher dieser den Ständen auseinanderzugehen anbefohlen hatte, in den Sitzungssaal, in welchem die Stände noch verweilten, zurückkehrte, und sie befragte, ob sie den Befehl des Königs vernommen hätten? "Ja," antwortete Mirabeau, "wir haben des Königs Befehl vernommen" -- ich bin gewiss, dass er bei diesem humanen Anfang noch nicht an die Bajonette dachte, mit welchem er schloss: "ja, mein Herr," wiederholte er, "wir haben ihn vernommen" -- man sieht, dass er noch gar nicht recht weiss, was er will. "Doch was berechtigt Sie" -- fuhr er fort, und nun plötzlich geht ihm ein Quell ungeheurer Vorstellungen auf -- "uns hier Befehle anzudeuten? Wir sind die Repräsentanten der Nation." -- Das war es, was er brauchte! "Die Nation gibt Befehle und empfängt keine" -- um sich gleich auf den Gipfel der Vermessenheit zu schwingen. "Und damit ich mich Ihnen ganz deutlich erkläre" -- und erst jetzt findet er, was den ganzen Widerstand, zu welchem seine Seele gerüstet dasteht, ausdrückt: "So sagen Sie Ihrem Könige, dass wir unsere Plätze anders nicht, als auf die Gewalt der Bajonette verlassen werden." -- Worauf er sich, selbstzufrieden, auf einen Stuhl niedersetzte. -- Wenn man an den Zeremonienmeister denkt, so kann man sich ihn bei diesem Auftritt nicht anders, als in einem völligen Geistesbankerott vorstellen (322-323).

b. Auch Lafontaine gibt in seiner Fabel: Les animaux malades de la peste, wo der Fuchs dem Löwen eine Apologie zu halten gezwungen ist, ohne zu wissen, wo er den Stoff dazu hernehmen soll, ein merkwürdiges Beispiel von einer allmählichen Verfertigung des Gedankens aus einem in der Not hingesetzten Anfang. Man kennt diese Fabel. Die Pest herrscht im Tierreich, der Löwe versammelt die Grossen desselben und eröffnet ihnen, das dem Himmel, wenn er besänftigt werden soll, ein Opfer fallen müsse. Viele Sünder seien im Volke, der Tod des grössesten müsse die übrigen vom Untergang retten.

> Sie möchten ihm daher ihre Vergehungen aufrichtig bekennen. Er, für sein Teil, gestehe, dass er, im Drange des Hungers, manchem Schaf den Garaus gemacht; auch dem Hunde, wenn er ihm zu nahe gekommen; ja, es sei ihm in leckerhaften Augenblicken zugestossen, dass er den Schäfer gefressen. Wenn niemand sich grösserer Schwachheiten schuldig gemacht habe, so sei er bereit zu sterben. "Sire," sagt der Fuchs, der das Unwetter von sich ableiten will, "Sie sind zu grossmütig. Ihr edler Eifer führt sie zu weit. Was ist es, ein Schaf erwürgen? Oder einen Hund, diese nichtswürdige Bestie? Und: quant au berger," fährt er fort, denn dies ist der Hauptpunkt: "on peut dire," obschon er noch nicht weiss, was? "qu'il méritoit tout mal," auf gut Glück; und somit ist er verwickelt: "étant," eine schlechte Phrase, die ihm aber Zeit verschafft: "de ces gens là," und nun erst findet er den Gedanken, der ihn aus der Not reisst: "qui sur les animaux se font un chimérique empire." -- Und jetzt beweist er, dass der Esel, der blutdürstige (der alle Kräuter auffrisst!), das zweckmässigste Opfer sei, worauf alle über ihn herfallen und ihn zerreissen. -- Ein solches Reden ist ein wahrhaftes lautes Denken (324-325).

For our purposes these two illustrations serve also as unique models of how one might proceed with the analysis of many of the scenes in Kleist's dramas. Both have the seed of a playlet, and it will be noted that both are treated dramatically. Kleist infers and interpolates gestures, stage directions; and he says for us what the characters leave unsaid. Of these, and in a very real sense also of his own dramatic dialogs, we may indeed say: "Ein solches Reden ist ein wahrhaftes lautes Denken."

5. The second of the three essays which have the most direct bearing on our problem is at the same time one of the

most famous of all Kleist's writings: Über das Marionettentheater (1810 or 1811). Almost completely unrecognized during the one hundred years after its appearance in the Abendblätter, it has more recently come to have a central position in many an analysis of Kleist's works.[62] Hugo von

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[62]It is interesting to note that in all the secondary source material from the first half century after Kleist's death there is only one reference to this essay: in a letter from E. T. A. Hoffmann in which he thanks Julius Hitzig, first publisher of the Abendblätter, for having sent him copies of that paper; he writes: "Sehr sticht hervor der Aufsatz über Marionettentheater" (Sembdner, Lebensspuren, No. 631). Since Hanna Hellmann's study (Heinrich von Kleist: Darstellung des Problems [Heidelberg: Winter, 1911]) the essay has enjoyed increasing favor. Friedrich Braig (Heinrich von Kleist [Munich: Beck 1925]) devotes an entire chapter to the work (pp. 517-557); however, his interpretation is oriented in Christian theology and its conclusions are of questionable pertinence. Following this, the first major article on the essay was by Paul Böckmann, "Kleists Aufsatz über das Marionettentheater," Euphorion, XXVIII (1927), 218-253. Fricke deals with the essay in his book (op. cit. pp. 150-156) but in a somewhat ponderous fashion. A much more lucid approach (after Böckmann the second important article on the essay) is that of Josef Kunz, "Kleists Gespräch über das Marionettentheater," Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur, LXXXV (1954), 234-246, in which the author claims to investigate for the first time the essay "als eine Ganzheit, . . . als die Entfaltung eines Ansatzes, als Ausgliederung eines einheitlichen Sinnzusammenhanges." More than anyone before him, Kunz discovers "eine ungeheuere Bedeutung des Aufsatzes für das Gesamtverständnis Kleists, für das Werk nicht weniger als für das Leben." In the past decade and a half something of a vogue has arisen around the essay, and there has on occasion been a facile and unscholarly tendency to interpret all of Kleist in its light, as if it were the Alpha and the Omega of his "philosophy." It has recently begun to appear in studies in the field of contemporary literature, e.g., Ludwig Mester, "Die Seele in der Bewegung: Deutung der Figuren 'Puppe,' 'Tänzerin' und 'Engel' bei Heinrich von Kleist, Paul Valéry und Rainer Marie Rilke," Die Sammlung: Zeitschrift für

Hofmannsthal wrote of it: "Nicht Engländer noch Franzosen noch Italiener, ja überhaupt niemand seit Platons Mythen, hat ein so nettes, von Verstand und Anmut glänzendes Stück Philosophie hervorgebracht wie Kleists Aufsatz über die Marionetten."[63] Warranted though this praise may be, we must be cautious in the application of such terms as "Philosophie" to this essay. In no orthodox sense can we call this either philosophically or historically based criticism. The Marionettentheater is not in the didactic tradition of such an essay as Lessing's Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts; and the theological implications in its references to the Book of Moses and the Garden of Eden are no more doctrinaire than those in the fact that Kleist named his protagonists in Der zerbrochene Krug Adam and Eve. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and the Gates of Paradise are symbolic concepts in an exercise in aesthetics. They are imbued with a meaning transcending purely Christian and Judaic dogma, and might be easily applied to fit corresponding concepts of impurity and banishment in other religions.

The style of the essay itself (an aspect of it as yet

Kultur und Erziehung (Göttingen), VIII (1953), 238-253. It has also appeared in translation in this country in the influential Partisan Review, XIV (1943), 67-74, translated by Eugene Jolas.

[63]Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Vorrede zum deutschen Lesebuch," Gesammelte Werke (Frankfurt-on-Main, 1955), Prose, Vol. IV, p. 138.

not adequately studied) is buoyant, and its ease belies the scrupulous care and inventiveness with which it is constructed. The unfamiliarly generous paragraphing reflects the casual dialog style, which alternates between indirect and direct discourse. The illustrations in which the essay abounds are taken from many sources--and, more than mere demonstrations of Kleist's ideas, they embody the ideas themselves. Earnestness and a gentle levity succeed one another, and the brief work concludes with an enticing series of paradoxes and half-exploited symbols.

Its connection with our investigation of the unspoken is intimate, and yet it is difficult to state exactly what the essay "concerns," for it is, as we have said, its own demonstration as it gently and weightlessly moves from one formulation to the next. It begins, for the sake of orientation with observations about the problem of unshackled grace in the dancing marionette and the implication it has for the human condition. A ballet dancer, at first intrigued and now studiously involved with the functions and applications of the lifeless doll, gradually expands for the first person author these concepts, until the latter, propelled by the same kind of reciprocal energy as in the essay on the gradual construction of thought, moves along with him--as his "Begeisterungsquelle" in turn--furnishing an apt illustration

from his experience. From an initial concern with the mechanics of the marionette, the essay considers in turn the pure expression of the uncomplicated doll, the animation of the naturally inanimate, and the absence in it of self-consciousness and thus of a knowledge of mortality. In kaleidoscopic fashion a whole vocabulary of aesthetics emerges: from the dance, to pantomime, to "Anmut" and "Grazie" (which Kleist seems to use interchangeably), to rhythm, to the concept of pure motion directed by the center of gravity in an inert object, to the important concept of weightlessness: the disembodied hovering or, as Kleist writes, "Das Antigrave":

> Diese Puppen haben den Vorteil, dass sie antigrav sind. Von der Trägheit der Materie . . . wissen sie nichts: weil die Kraft, die sie in die Lüfte erhebt, grösser ist, als jene, die sie an die Erde fesselt. . . . Die Puppen brauchen den Boden nur, wie die Elfen, um ihn zu streifen und den Schwung der Glieder, durch die augenblickliche Hemmung, neu zu beleben; wir brauchen ihn, um darauf zu ruhen und uns von den Anstrengungen des Tanzes zu erholen: ein Moment, der offenbar selber kein Tanz ist, und mit dem sich weiter nichts anfangen lässt, als ihn möglichst verschwinden zu machen (339).

Such a moment of pure abstraction, we may observe, is not possible for the human being in any physical sense. But the emotional projection of many a Kleistian hero permits a temporary, and very often perilous, flight into fancy. It is a flight from which words too are removed. The ineffable purity of Homburg's dreams, Penthesilea's swoon in scene nine, and the somnambulism of Käthchen, for example, partake of this

sublime but dangerous Icarus-flight. If there is no return from such inexpressible moments of bliss in the dramas, tragedy is the inevitable result. Thus the tragic overtones at the end of Amphitryon; in the final words of Homburg, half in reality, half in a state of transfiguration: "Was ist es? . . . Nein, sagt! Ist es ein Traum?" (This is the true end of the play, not the muted war cries in the background--this, and the marvel of ambivalence in Kottwitz's: "Ein Traum, was sonst?"); thus, too, the pure tragedy in the final and complete incommunicability of Penthesilea.

At this point in the essay its scope is suddenly widened in order to embrace the two poles in the scale of pure expression. Scarcely is this done, when Kleist identifies the two poles as a common point in "the circular world." Asked whether he is serious in maintaining that the movements of a marionette can be compared with the grace of a human body, the dancer answers,

> dass es dem Menschen schlechthin unmöglich wäre, den Gliedermann darin auch nur zu erreichen. Nur ein Gott könne sich, auf diesem Felde, mit der Materie messen; und hier sei der Punkt, wo die beiden Enden der ringförmigen Welt ineinandergreifen (339).

For "Ziererei" and "Selbsterkenntnis" deprive the human, having once eaten of the fruit of Paradise, of his natural harmony. The center of gravity is inevitably misplaced in each of his movements. The mirror has become the corrupting agent, and

one's innocence is lost forever.

This concept can easily be transferred to our concern with the realm of communication, although Kleist only hints at this in the essay. Here the ideal situation would be non-verbal contact, wherein every feeling and thought could be conveyed by an intuitive process of soul-reading. Here and there in Kleist's dramas we can catch a fleeting glimpse into such a realm. But even his characters are vouchsafed such moments only on rare occasions. The ability to read a soul is reserved for such a creature as the fencing bear, which is the subject of the last illustrative example in the essay. The dancer, an excellent fencer, had roundly defeated a Russian friend in a match. The latter, in order to prove to him that every man has his master, takes him to a chained bear which had been reared on the estate, and tells him to fence with the animal:

> Ich fiel . . . mit dem Rapier auf ihn aus; der Bär machte eine ganz kurze Bewegung mit der Tatze und parierte den Stoss. Ich versuchte ihn durch Finten zu verführen; der Bär rührte sich nicht. Ich fiel wieder, mit einer augenblicklichen Gewandtheit, auf ihn aus, eines Menschen Brust würde ich ohnfehlbar getroffen haben: der Bär machte eine ganz kurze Bewegung mit der Tatze und parierte den Stoss. . . . Der Ernst des Bären kam hinzu, mir die Fassung zu rauben, Stösse und Finten wechselten sich, mir triefte der Schweiss: umsonst. Nicht bloss, dass der Bär, wie der erste Fechter der Welt, alle meine Stösse parierte; auf Finten (was ihm kein Fechter der Welt nachmacht) ging er gar nicht einmal ein: Aug in Auge, als ob er meine Seele darin lesen könnte, stand er,

> die Tatze schlagfertig erhoben, und wenn meine Stösse nicht ernsthaft gemeint waren, so rührte er sich nicht (342).

Exactly what position this unsophisticated animal assumes on the circular scale, Kleist does not state--nor is it important that he does so. The point is clear:

> Wir sehen, dass in dem Masse, als, in der organischen Welt, die Reflexion dunkler und schwächer wird, die Grazie darin immer strahlender und herrschender hervortritt (342).

The summation, which begins with this sentence, gathers all the threads of the essay and introduces concluding remarks which have elements nothing less than mystical. Kleist establishes a theorem of aesthetic geometry in which the two poles of the essay again form one immeasurable point on the circumference of the experiential world:

> Doch so, wie sich der Durchschnitt zweier Linien, auf der einen Seite eines Punkts, nach dem Durchgang durch das Unendliche, plötzlich wieder auf der andern Seite einfindet, oder das Bild des Hohlspiegels, nachdem es sich in das Unendliche entfernt hat, plötzlich wieder dicht vor uns tritt: so findet sich auch, wenn die Erkenntnis gleichsam durch ein Unendliches gegangen ist, die Grazie wieder ein; so, dass sie, zu gleicher Zeit, in demjenigen menschlichen Körperbau am reinsten erscheint, der entweder gar keins oder ein unendliches Bewusstsein hat, d.h. in dem Gliedermann, oder in dem Gott (342).

In the last analysis, it would seem that, at least theoretically, the gate were open to mortals who could eat again from the Tree of Knowledge on a kind of aesthetic Judgement Day. It is the gate to Paradise of which Kleist had written earlier:

> Wir müssen die Reise um die Welt machen, und sehen, ob es vielleicht von hinten irgendwo wieder offen ist (338).

What is of greatest importance to us, however, are the reference to "der menschliche Körperbau" and the clause: "Wenn die Erkenntnis gleichsam durch ein Unendliches gegangen ist. . . ." For they permit us to see that the theoretical aspects of this essay can be raised to a level of reality in the art of Kleist's dramas. There are, in other words, moments in his dramas when the protagonist is either a marionette or a god, when his "Erkenntnis . . . gleichsam durch ein Unendliches gegangen ist." The finest instance of the circular structure is in Prinz Friedrich von Homburg. The first and the final scenes are visually almost exactly alike. The set is the same, the same persons are on the stage, the trances are the same to all outward appearances. In Kleist's words, "der Punkt" is the same.[64] But by the end of the play the Prince has passed through that indefinable intersection and is "plötzlich wieder auf der andern Seite." In the same way nearly all of Kleist's major characters experience a transfiguration, but never a change in essence. Each remains the same person as revealed to us at the beginning of the drama. To a lesser or greater degree each is exposed during the course

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[64]Cf. Frau Marthe in Der zerbrochene Krug at the beginning and at the end of the trial.

of the action to stimuli which fold back layers of his nature. And it is this process which is conveyed to audience and reader frequently as pure pantomimic form. The moments before and after such a transfiguration are verbalized (our best example is the end of Penthesilea). But only gestures are capable of gaining access to its apex. Words then are nothing more than a hindrance. We have seen from Kleist's letters how it was his constant endeavor to rid himself of the necessity of the accepted vehicles to convey his feelings. The application of the essay on the marionette theater to literary art is identical to that of the famous letter to Rühle in 1806, in which Kleist writes that it is what he imagines which is beautiful to him, not that which he can set down on paper. Of literary creation he wrote:

> Es gibt nichts Göttlicheres als sie! Und nichts Leichteres zugleich; und doch warum ist es so schwer? Jede erste Bewegung [das Antigrave], alles Unwillkürliche [der Gliedermann, der Gott] ist schön; und schief und verschroben alles, sobald es sich selbst begreift (799).

6. The idea of a natural purity of movement and the torture of having to convey it within the framework of imperfect words, is a theme which Kleist pursued in other brief essays during 1810 and 1811.

a. The "Betrachtung über den Weltlauf" deals with the popular misconception that cultural progress runs parallel

with chronology, whereas history proves that just the opposite is true: that the age of heroic deeds was the purest and least articulated; that when the heroes were dead, the people wrote of imaginary ones; when they couldn't create new ones in their minds any longer, they invented rules for writing about the ones they had; entangled in these rules, they abstracted "die Weltweisheit selbst"; and when they finished doing this, "wurden sie schlecht" (343). As facile and arbitrary as this sketch of human history may seem, there is doubtless more than a germ of truth in its reflection of the loss of the "Unwillkürliche" and the substitution of words and concepts.

b. "Von der Überlegung: eine Paradoxe" maintains that reflection and hypothesis during combat are the greatest assurance of defeat. That which assures victory can be only "die zum Handeln nötige Kraft, die aus dem herrlichen Gefühl quillt." Kleist continues:

> Wer das Leben nicht, wie ein . . . Ringer, umfasst hält, und tausendgliedrig, nach allen Windungen des Kampfs, nach allen Widerständen, Drücken, Ausweichungen und Reaktionen, empfindet und spürt: der wird, was er will, in keinem Gespräch durchsetzen; viel weniger in einer Schlacht (345).

c. The "Brief eines Malers an seinen Sohn" praises the same immediacy of action and condemns the corrupting force of concepts and the suppression of the instinct. A son, like

his father a painter, has written to the latter of the impure and carnal feeling with which he is burdened in depicting the Madonna. He says that he is compelled to take Communion before attacking his work. This neo-medieval notion the father calls "eine falsche, dir von der Schule, aus der du herstammst, anklebende Begeisterung." The entire problem of honest painting, he says, is solved "mit einer gemeinen, aber übrigens rechtschaffenen Lust, deine Einbildungen auf die Leinwand zu bringen" (346). This advice, simplicity in itself, would be quite analogous to an admonition to an author to write in pure gesture; and of course Kleist was aware of the impossibility of doing this. He was, however, likewise aware that moments in art as in life suggesting ideal innocence and the age of the heroes are possible:

> Die Welt ist eine wunderliche Einrichtung; und die göttlichsten Wirkungen, mein lieber Sohn, gehen aus den niedrigsten und unscheinbarsten Ursachen hervor. Der Mensch, um dir ein Beispiel zu geben, das in die Augen springt, gewiss, er ist ein erhabenes Geschöpf; und gleichwohl, in dem Augenblick, da man ihn macht, ist es nicht nötig, dass man dies, mit vieler Heiligkeit, bedenke. Ja, derjenige, der das Abendmahl drauf nähme, und mit dem blossen Vorsatz ans Werk ginge, seinen Begriff davon in der Sinnenwelt zu konstruieren, würde ohnfehlbar ein ärmliches und gebrechliches Wesen hervorbringen; dagegen, derjenige, der, in einer heitern Sommernacht, ein Mädchen, ohne weiteren Gedanken, küsst, zweifelsohne einen Jungen zur Welt bringt, der nachher, auf rüstige Weise, zwischen Erde und Himmel herumklettert, und den Philosophen zu schaffen gibt (346-347).

This weightless and unencumbered marionette-like child of

the gods is a familiar symbol. It appears in a sense as Käthchen von Heilbronn, "als ob der Himmel von Schwaben sie erzeugt, und, von seinem Kuss geschwängert, die Stadt, die unter ihm liegt, sie geboren hätte" (I/i). But in a more tragic and memorable way it had previously appeared as an unobtainable goal for the "Kehrseite" and "anderer Pol" of Käthchen, for Penthesilea.[65] Achilles tells her:

> Du sollst den Gott der Erde mir gebären!
> Prometheus soll von seinem Sitz erstehn,
> Und dem Geschlecht der Welt verkündigen:
> Hier ward ein Mensch, so hab' ich ihn gewollt!
> (2230-2233)

In a somewhat different sense, but surely not without its tragic overtones, the symbol appears at the end of Amphitryon, where Jupiter announces that Alkmene, the mortal, is to give birth to his immortal son, a hero:

> . . . Dir wird ein Sohn geboren werden,
> Dess' Name Herkules: es wird an Ruhm
> Kein Heros sich, der Vorwelt, mit ihm messen,
> . . . . . .
> Und wenn die Pyramide jetzt, vollendet,
> Den Scheitel bis zum Wolkensaum erhebt,
> Steigt er auf ihren Stufen himmelan,
> Und im Olymp empfang' ich denn den Gott.
> (2335-2344)

In these last two cases the glimpses into a realm of bliss, which is denied to these modern heroines, inflict mortal wounds. Homburg, too, comes very close in his first monolog

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[65] See the letter to Marie von Kleist, late autumn, 1807, Kleist (ed. Sembdner), II, 830; also the letter to Joseph von Collin, December 8, 1808, ibid., pp. 852-853.

to a tragic entanglement, from which he never fully extricates himself. In speaking of himself:

> Heut, Kind der Götter, such' ich, Flüchtiges,
> Ich hasche dich im Feld der Schlacht und stürze
> Ganz deinen Segen mir zu Füssen um.
> (361-363)

It can be called the Prince's saving grace that he is able to live in order to moderate and rephrase this "sinful" ambition. But like every mortal he has lost his innocence and gained "Selbsterkenntnis"; in such a sense it can also be said that the end of this play, in its tragic implications, is closely akin to that of Amphitryon.

In any event, the seeds of both transcendent joy and tragedy are symbolized by the uncomplicated superman, "der . . . zwischen Himmel und Erde herumklettert." It is too much for humans to follow him and to speak his language--but it was Kleist's fate to try. What he accomplished in trying to tell us of the wordless (but now insufficient) language of human contacts and endeavors was accomplished by virtue of his uncompromising fidelity to his inner dictates. Borrowing again from the world of painting, he writes in the "Brief eines jungen Dichters an einen jungen Maler":

> Die Aufgabe, Himmel und Erde! ist nicht, ein anderer, sondern ihr selbst zu sein, und euch selbst, euer Eigenstes und Innerstes, durch Umriss und Farben, zur Anschauung zu bringen! (348).

"Umriss und Farben" are in Kleist's plays fully analogous to

pantomime and gesture.

7. Nowhere does Kleist express so perfectly the importance of the spirit over the word as in the Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen. Although, like the brief essays above, it uses as its point of departure an attack on the tenets of academic classicism (here in regard to prosody, rhetoric, and the like), it goes far beyond that in its implications for Kleist's own writings. The author of this letter has come upon another writer engrossed with his (the former's) works; whereupon the reader heaps upon them the most loquacious praise. This praise, however, has reference to the form, to the school in which he presumes the author belongs, to the "suitability of the basic meter," the rhythm, to "the charm of the euphony," and to "the purity and appropriateness of the expression and language." "Permit me to say to you," remarks the author, "that your thoughts were dwelling upon merits which would have demonstrated their greatest value by your not having noticed them at all."

> Dem Durstigen kommt es, als solchem, auf die Schale nicht an, sondern auf die Früchte, die man ihm darin bringt. Nur weil der Gedanke, um zu erscheinen wie jene flüchtigen, undarstellbaren, chemischen Stoffe, mit etwas Gröberem, Körperlichen, verbunden sein muss: nur darum bediene ich mich, wenn ich mich dir mitteilen will, und nur darum bedarfst du, um mich zu verstehen, der Rede. Sprache, Rhythmus, Wohlklang usw., und so reizend diese Dinge auch, insofern sie den Geist einhüllen, sein mögen, so sind sie doch an

> und für sich, aus diesem höheren Gesichtspunkt betrachtet, nichts als ein wahrer, obschon natürlicher und notwendiger Übelstand; und die Kunst kann, in bezug auf sie, auf nichts gehen, als sie möglichst verschwinden zu machen (349).

The discussion in the Marionettentheater about the weightlessness of the "Gliedermann" and the "Gott" versus the gravity of the human dancer, provides us with a familiar and exact analogy. For the human the inevitable moment of rest is identical to the necessary evil of words and form--"ein Moment," writes Kleist, "der offenbar selber kein Tanz ist, und mit dem sich weiter nichts anfangen lässt, als ihn möglichst verschwinden zu machen" (339).

And yet it is clear from the following passage from the "Brief"--and this in the final analysis is our most important point--that Kleist was aware of the necessity of entering into this paradox in order to fight it. He knew, that is, that only by perfecting form would it sometimes appear to be overcome:

> Ich bemühe mich aus meinen besten Kräften, dem Ausdruck Klarheit, dem Versbau Bedeutung, dem Klang der Worte Anmut und Leben zu geben: aber bloss, damit diese Dinge gar nicht, vielmehr einzig und allein der Gedanke, den sie einschliessen, erscheine. Denn das ist die Eigenschaft aller echten Form, dass der Geist augenblicklich und unmittelbar daraus hervortritt, während die mangelhafte ihn, wie ein schlechter Spiegel, gebunden hält, und uns an nichts erinnert, als an sich selbst (349).

Surely every writer whose primary concern is to reveal

the truths of the human condition has experienced at some time the awful chasm separating word and thought or feeling. It is an eternal paradox, not a particular insight of Kleist alone. Yet no one of equivalent stature in German literature was so persistently aware of it. We have seen this again and again in his letters, in the words of his contemporaries, and in his articles and short essays. Kleist's most consuming desire in this regard is epitomized in a single sentence from the Brief eines Dichters an einen anderen:

> Wenn ich beim Dichten in meinen Busen fassen, meinen Gedanken ergreifen und mit Händen, ohne weitere Zutat, in den deinigen legen könnte: so wäre, die Wahrheit zu gestehen, die ganze innere Forderung meiner Seele erfüllt (349).

There is a little fable which Kleist contributed to one of the first issues of Phöbus in 1808. From the time it appeared until the present, it seems never to have been understood in the light which it sheds upon Kleist's battle for the expression of his innermost feelings. We can appreciate today, however, that its unique appearance in Phöbus was intended as far more than the means of filling an extra page in that periodical, as has been maintained.[66] It is called

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[66]"Die 'Fabel ohne Moral' [ist] in das Märzheft des 'Phöbus' wohl nur eingelegt, um eine freie Seite zu decken. Die übrigen prosaischen Beiträge Kleists zum 'Phöbus' gehören zu den Dramen und Novellen."--Kleist (ed. Schmidt), IV, 259.

"Die Fabel ohne Moral" and can only be a metaphor of the "innere Forderung" of Kleist's soul and its predicament. In the sense that it claims to have no moral, it surely needs no discussion:

> Wenn ich dich nur hätte, sagte der Mensch zu einem Pferde, das mit Sattel und Gebiss vor ihm stand und ihn nicht aufsitzen lassen wollte: wenn ich dich nur hätte, wie du zuerst, das unerzogene Kind der Natur, aus den Wäldern kamst! Ich wollte dich schon führen, leicht, wie ein Vogel, dahin, über Berg und Tal, wie es mich gut dünkte; und dir und mir sollte dabei wohl sein. Aber da haben sie dir Künste gelehrt, Künste, von welchen ich, nackt, wie ich vor dir stehe, nichts weiss; und ich müsste zu dir in die Reitbahn hinein (wovor mich doch Gott bewahre), wenn wir uns verständigen wollten (346).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study has been an attempt to demonstrate how that quality in Kleist which is designated as "das Unaussprechliche" manifested itself stylistically in his works as "gesture," both in the sense of Gebärdensprache and Sprachgebärde. As an introduction to possible future analyses of this fundamental aspect of Kleist's works, the study has had a twofold aim. Our first concern was to give a current evaluation of the hidden and unarticulated recesses of the creative writer through an examination of modern scholarly and critical understanding of the role of gesture in his works, through a detailed review of what Kleist's contemporaries said of him and of his writings, and, most important, through a new reading and interpretation of Kleist's letters and certain of his short theoretical works. Our other concern was to suggest by illustration, as we proceeded, how this composite insight into the essence of Kleist could be meaningfully applied to any intended stylistic analyses of his works, in particular his drama, where the juxtaposition and alternation of speech and non-verbal communication are most abundant. As further illustration of this aspect, the appendix is

devoted to a consideration of four important scenes in Penthesilea.

Through the words of Kleist's contemporaries we have tried to delineate as accurately as possible Kleist's general behavior and those overt peculiarities of his personality which led us to conclude, along with most of his modern biographers, that he was in most essential respects a quiet, reclusive, and altogether introverted man--but a man who was somehow driven to invent new ways, within apparently traditional literary contexts, to convey his inner experience of existence. His ingenious and subtle solutions mark the advent of a new era in modern German literature. To the mid-twentieth-century reader Kleist is in many ways the most eloquent of the great German writers of his age.

No student of Kleist can fail to see the thorough projection of this unique personality into his characters. From the diffidence, ardor, and ambition of Ottokar in Kleist's first play to the same, but transfigured, combination of qualities in Prinz Friedrich, the self-portrayal of the author is everywhere evident--without ever compromising, through self-portraiture, the artistic integrity of each separate creation. He is as omnipresent in the persons of Michael Kohlhaas, Robert Guiskard, and, indeed, Hermann, as he is in the Marquise von O..., Käthchen, and Alkmene. Nowhere

perhaps is the identity of creator and creation more intimate than in the case of Penthesilea.

That Kleist was an uncompromisingly dedicated and phenomenally energetic worker, once he had found his goals to be literary, was frequently attested to by his contemporaries. And a few of them also penetrated somewhat deeper into the "Rätselhafte," "Stille," and "Wahre" of his nature. These few correctly sensed that Kleist was a man who had almost apocalyptic visions in his search for a new artistic medium of absolute communication.

But if there was actually a contemporary who could fully apprehend that Kleist, in a language quite unfamiliar to the drama and prose fiction of the time, was in fact trying to incorporate these visions into his works, we do not possess a scrap of evidence from that man. We can be certain that neither Ulrike von Kleist nor Wilhelmine von Zenge qualifies. Of those who knew him, Adam Müller and Marie von Kleist, and possibly Wieland, Rahel, and one or two others, seem to have come closest to fathoming "das Unaussprechliche" in him--but as far as we know, not one of them felt him to be the revolutionary "Gebärdendichter," as he was finally named by Max Kommerell in 1937.

This would seem to have been due in great part to the fact that no one during Kleist's lifetime and long afterward

had an adequate insight into this unsuspected language and also the opportunity to apply it at a realized performance of any of his dramas. What the limited range of his Novellen readers felt, we cannot establish with any degree of assurance. We do know that for a long period the majority of these works was judged to be unsound in style, scandalous and detrimental to their readers, indeed, to be the suspect products of a sick mind.

The magical reciprocation necessary between author and reader, the realization that the beholder must complete the work of art in and for himself, and consequently the tacit understanding that a prolonged pause, a wordless gesture, an incomplete sentence, and the repetition of words and phrases which generates symbols, are essential aspects of style--all these elements which were in Kleist's work from the beginning, seem never to have been understood by his friends and fellow writers.

Today we feel that Kleist's ultimate concerns were the communication of love, trust, and faith, and the infinite horror and tragedy which the lonely must experience when this communication fails or is severed. Each of his works is an exemplification of the fact that the confusion of words, the flow of rhetoric in a real situation, can be the agent of Verwirrung and Versehen in human contacts far more often than

eloquent silence. Kleist's singular reaction to the human condition, to the "gebrechliche Einrichtung dieser Welt"--a reaction which resides more in his mode of expression than in themes or summations--was not in sympathy with his times. As those times dictated, and in a real sense our times too, only the written words were read. In spite of the Romantic revolution, no one seems to have been accustomed to reading a gesture, or to any kinesthetic involvement with literature.

With his sensational suicide in 1811, Kleist attracted more attention to himself than his works had ever enjoyed while he was alive. This attention soon subsided, however; and with the gradual passing of his generation, the middle and late decades of the 19th century moved over Kleist almost as if he had never lived. If it had not been for Ludwig Tieck and the few enthusiasts who followed him, the general discovery of Kleist's works by theater and critics alike at the turn of the century might never have taken place. As it was, their author was subjected to incredible scrutiny from the 1890's on and was caught up by the practitioners of every literary trend from Naturalism to existentialism. The positivists, the Weltanschauungsproblematiker, the Geistesgeschichtler, dominated the field in turn. Yet in spite of the great bulk of literature which accumulated around Kleist's name, in spite of the familiarity with Kleist's repeated description

of himself as an "unaussprechlicher Mensch" and its clear implications for his work, scholarship has as yet not deemed it worth while to thoroughly investigate this literary phenomenon.

As we have seen, Georg Minde-Pouet's Heinrich von Kleist: Seine Sprache und sein Stil, published in 1897, remains to this day the only monograph devoted to Kleist's style as such; but with all its merits, it does not take into account the organic and symbolic unity of any single work, much less the position of gesture as a stylistic device. We have seen, too, that Paul Kluckhohn in 1943 had still to regret the all but complete neglect of the matter of style in Kleist's works; that Erik Lunding in 1952 called attention to the continuing absence of such investigations; and that even as recently as 1956 another critic (K. O. Conrady) dimly recalled the pioneering effort of Kommerell, which in the turmoil of the 1930's and 1940's prompted no emulation of its approach. For all the material we have been able to gather and condense in the second chapter, its primary interest for us today is as a foundation upon which more and closer attention to style, as the term is defined in the Introduction, might be built.

In investigating this material, one great paradox in the seemingly infinite expanse of Kleist studies has been encountered, a paradox which has generally obtained since the

inception of these studies. Faced with the essentially forthright and consistent evidence of Kleist's reactions and convictions, too many of his commentators have been loath to make the one elementary admission that he was first and foremost an artist--not a philosopher, or a social historian, or a psychoanalytical case study--and that therefore the style of his works, not only their "meaning" or their "message," is of primary importance.

However, it is just here that we must proceed with caution. "Es ist uns [Literaturwissenschaftlern] durchaus bewusst," writes Erik Lunding,

> dass das wesenhaft irrationale Wortkunstwerk in seinem unwiederholbaren Sein nicht bis ins letzte gedeutet werden kann, da keine Begriffssprache imstande ist, ein echtes Symbol zu ersetzen. Die Erkenntnis, dass Dichtung "eine schlechthin einzigartige, eine unersetzbare und unübersetzbare Weise der Seinserhellung ist" (Johannes Pfeiffer), bedeutet aber nur einen weiteren Anreiz, die Mittel der approximativen Erfassung zu verfeinern.[1]

Among these "Mittel" are the background facts, the scrupulous preparation of a problem if its solution is to have any weight as scholarship. We cannot deny, for instance, that in the case of Kleist a knowledge of the facts of his turbulent life, seen in proper perspective, is indispensable. We must know that his anomalous and confused existence was in constant

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[1]Erik Lunding, Wege zur Kunstinterpretation (Copenhagen, 1953), p. 27.

conflict with his vague but inextinguishable sense of ambition and with the strictures imposed by his family and by society. We should know, further, that at first he wrote somewhat pretentiously and formlessly of this ambition, of tangible goals, of "Glück," of an all-embracing "Lebensplan"; and we should appreciate that, strangely enough, "das Unaussprechliche" makes its initial appearance here.

We have seen that too many Kleist scholars in the past have been unable to treat such data with the necessary insight and perspective. These men have descended upon each of Kleist's words and attitudes and, eschewing such non-academic approaches as the intuitive and empathetic, have constructed from the hapless material a stupendous fabric of research which still casts a suffocating pall over such matters as the "Kant crisis," Kleist's "theories" of the problems of life and death, and the like. Many a scholar, unable to really believe in Kleist's unsubstituting rejection of theory and logic, has in all seriousness posited a "Sendung" for the author, unaware of the resultant confusion. And so, of course, even before "1933" a baleful warping process had set in under the aegis of misdirected scholarship. More and more the essence of Kleist eluded those who were so bent upon finding, or failing that, upon inventing an ethnocentric and missionary core to his works.

Nor since the last war has Kleist scholarship altogether abandoned the involution characteristic of so much of it in the past. Still in evidence, for example, is the insistence upon a priori formulations of patterns and periods in Kleist's life and writings. In short, rarely in German literary history have the facts about a man and his work been so attenuated and distorted by speculation and outright invention.

It would appear that the time is overdue for the biography, the correspondence, the contemporary evaluations, and reliable past criticism to enter a new, intimate alliance with the works themselves, and for the energy still to be expended on Kleist studies to be directed to the complexities of his "Innerstes und Eigenstes," his inner form. It is here that Kleist's enduring reality resides. Among the most rewarding goals, as we have tried to show, would lie the cautious deciphering and description of his language of gesture, the repository of Kleist's symbols.

To such an undertaking must be brought far more than a sympathetic heart. In deploring certain aspects of past Kleist scholarship, it is necessary at the same time to be wary of two things: of condemning the indispensable contributions of the positivists and other earlier scholars, and of overweighting the methodology on the other side; that is, toward a too facile interpretation of the terms "close reading"

and "the intrinsic approach." General feeling for and a vague sense of possession of a work of literary art may suffice for the uninvolved reader--but not if they appear in the guise of scholarship. This does not in any way deny that sensitivity and an intuitive approach are absolutely essential in a style critic--but they are not enough. A foundation in the facts is just as essential.

It should be recalled that to the New Critics the "close reading" of a text (whose function is expressly to promote intimacy with particulars and to judge standards of achievement, while preserving the sanctity of the text) cannot ignore a background in the sober facts of biography and history in favor of a subjective evaluation. "A good critic," writes R. P. Blackmur,

> keeps his criticism from becoming either instinctive or vicarious, and the labor of his understanding is always specific, like the art which he examines; and he knows that the sum of his best work comes only to the pedagogy of elucidation and appreciation. The object remains, and should remain, itself, only made more available and seen in a clearer light.[2]

The objectified fervor behind these words is very much in accord with the best German (and Swiss) approaches to style criticism today. The quotations which follow, from the methodological writings of two eminent modern practitioners

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[2]Quoted by Clarence A. Brown, The Achievement of American Criticism (New York, 1954), p. 568.

of literary "Interpretation," Wolfgang Kayser and Emil Staiger, might be said to embody an ideal modus operandi. The first represents an ideal practicality, the second a practical idealism.

In his excellent book, Das sprachliche Kunstwerk,[3] Wolfgang Kayser, after noting the importance of a thorough familiarity with facts and techniques, says that a continual shifting emphasis and backing and filling are basic to the interpreter's work; for it is by no means his exclusive assignment to observe what the work of art expresses, but at the same time also to detect how it is expressed. Style investigation "will erkennen, was Sprache leisten kann und wie sie es leistet."

> Die Möglichkeiten des Fehlens, die in dem intuitiven Charakter der Stiluntersuchung liegen, können nur durch grösste Behutsamkeit und Ehrlichkeit bei der Arbeit ausgeschaltet, bzw. zurückgedrängt werden. Es ist vor allem not, nicht zu schnell die "Einheit des Stils" ins Treffen zu führen und im Vertrauen darauf nicht passende Stilzüge oder Kategorien zu entwerten oder zu verschweigen.
>
> Jeder, der eine Stiluntersuchung durchführt, wird erleben, wie er bei der Arbeit von Ehrfurcht und Begeisterung ergriffen wird, wenn sich immer neue Geheimnisse der Sprache enthüllen, wenn sich die Leistungskraft der Sprache immer eindrucksvoller zeigt, wenn sich das Zusammenwirken der verschiedenen sprachlichen Formen im Stil und zum Stil immer klarer hervorhebt. In solcher Begeisterung und gänzlichen Hingabe an das Werk darf aber nicht die Möglichkeit

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[3]Wolfgang Kayser, Das sprachliche Kunstwerk: Eine Einführung in die Literaturwissenschaft (3rd rev. ed.; Bern, 1954).

> zum Abstandnehmen verlorengehen und jene Festigkeit des Blickes, die Stilfehler wahrzunehmen erlaubt. Eine "heilige Nüchternheit" wird der Arbeit und den Dingen am ehesten gerecht (p. 330).

Such would be the method. Here, in the words of Staiger, is a credo and rationale in nuce:

> Ich sehe nämlich doch immer nur das, was mir persönlich zu sehen vergönnt, was mir in der ersten echten Begegnung am Kunstwerk aufgegangen ist. Ich habe mein Gefühl geprüft und ich habe den Nachweis erbracht, dass es stimmt. Nun mag ein anderer kommen, eine andere Auslegung versuchen und seinerseits den Nachweis erbringen, dass sein Gefühl ihn nicht getäuscht hat. Wenn beide Darstellungen wahr sind, so werden sie sich nicht widersprechen, auch wenn sie im Einzelnen und im Ganzen nichts miteinander zu schaffen haben. Sie deuten mir beide nur an, dass jedes echte, lebendige Kunstwerk in seinen festen Grenzen unendlich ist. "Individuum est ineffabile."[4]

It would seem to be an important part of the task of the American Germanist to promote a more vivid mutual awareness of such viewpoints in German Stilwissenschaft and related American approaches to the investigation of inner form than has apparently been the case so far, and to advocate further experimentation with the details of a plurality of methods. There is certainly agreement in one fundamental respect. Kayser expresses this when he says that all theoretical preoccupation with literature must first and foremost serve "der grossen und schweren Kunst, richtig zu lesen." He continues:

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[4]Emil Staiger, Die Kunst der Interpretation: Studien zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte (Zurich, 1955), p. 32.

> Nur wer ein Werk richtig lesen kann, kann es für andere zum richtigen Sprechen bringen, d.h. es richtig interpretieren. Und nur wer ein Werk richtig lesen kann, wird den weiteren Anforderungen genügen, die mit der Wissenschaft von der Dichtung gestellt werden.[5]

To the many advocates of this point of view, in Europe as in America, it is evident that prominent among these demands set by literary science must be both a thorough awareness of all pertinent biographical and psycho-biographical data and just as thorough a familiarity with the past history and current state of each individual problem. It is this necessary orienting and bolstering process which has prompted and, it is hoped, has justified the present study. In this sense it has been called a prolegomenon to the "close reading" of Kleist's texts from one particular point of view. Without such corroborative background it is self-evident that the field of literary interpretation would soon become a morass of aimless speculation and amorphous subjectivisms. But with it "das richtige Lesen" can come into its own.

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[5]Kayser, op. cit., p. 12.

APPENDIX

An Investigation of Penthesilea, Scenes i, ix, xv, and xxiv.

After failure upon failure in Kleist's personal life and in his work, after two calamitous nervous breakdowns, a projected suicide, and incarceration in France as an enemy spy, Dresden in 1807 proved to be one of the few havens in Kleist's tortured career. His hopes had never been so high as immediately prior to the publication of the "organic fragment" of Penthesilea in the first issue of Phöbus. When Goethe--to whom Kleist had dedicated the play "auf den Knieen meines Herzens"--rejected it in the famous letter of February 1, 1808, and when in the following month the Weimar production of Der zerbrochene Krug under Goethe's personal direction proved such a debacle, Kleist's hopes were at a correspondingly low ebb. Infuriation this time preceded depression, and his rage was directed at Goethe. He would tear the laurel wreath from the latter's brow and would place it upon his own. In subsequent issues of Phöbus Kleist aimed his most scathing epigrams at Goethe's personal life.

This is not the place to pursue the matter of right and wrong in the unfortunate, if perhaps inevitable, chapter of Kleist's relations with Goethe. We have touched upon it here only to indicate the ferocity with which Kleist was willing to defend his soul. For it will be remembered that it was "der ganze Schmerz . . . und Glanz" (830)[1] of this soul which he had poured into the creation of his Amazon queen; and now its very authenticity was slighted by the one man whose favor he would have cherished above all else--but who had written:

Mit der Penthesilea kann ich mich noch nicht befreunden.

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[1]A number following a quotation from the letters refers to the page in Heinrich von Kleists sämtliche Werke und Briefe, ed. Sembdner (2 vols.; Munich, 1952), Vol. II. (Hereafter: Kleist, ed. Sembdner.)

> Sie ist aus einem so wunderbaren Geschlecht und bewegt sich in einer so fremden Region, dass ich mir Zeit nehmen muss, mich in beide zu finden. Auch erlauben Sie mir zu sagen . . . , dass es mich immer betrübt und bekümmert, wenn ich junge Männer von Geist und Talent sehe, die auf ein Theater warten, welches da kommen soll.[2]

The reaction of the press and the theater to the "organic fragment" of Penthesilea was also generally uncomprehending and unfavorable. Appreciation by Kleist's contemporaries in the literary circles was likewise limited. The play was felt to be poorly constructed, undramatic, "confusing to the senses" (a favorite phrase), bloodthirsty, deleterious to the social mores, and thus unfit reading for ladies and gentlemen. When the full version was printed in book form by Cotta in 1809, it was generally withheld from the shops and received restricted circulation until some years later.

The most vigorous contemporary championing of Penthesilea came from the pen of Adam Müller, who, aside from his vested interest in Kleist's success at the time, evinced a real comprehension of the magnitude of the work. In the following extract from a letter he clarifies and justifies his publishing venture with Kleist to the illustrious and influential German political figure and journalist, Friedrich von Gentz:

> Sie, mein Freund, reden unserm ökonomischen Vorteil das Wort, und missraten uns die Paradoxien, z.B. die anscheinende der Penthesilea. Wir dagegen wollen, es soll eine Zeit kommen, wo der Schmerz und die gewaltigsten tragischen Empfindungen, wie es sich gebührt, die Menschen gerüstet finden, und das zermalmendste Schicksal von schönen Herzen begreiflich, und nicht als Paradoxie empfunden werde. Diesen Sieg des menschlichen Gemüts über kolossalen, herzzerschneidenden Jammer hat Kleist in der Penthesilea als ein echter Vorfechter für die Nachwelt im voraus erfochten. . . .[3]

Although Erich Schmidt in the introduction to Penthesilea

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[2]Heinrich von Kleists Lebensspuren, ed. Sembdner (Stuttgart, 1957), No. 224. (Hereafter: Sembdner, Lebensspuren.)

[3]Ibid., No. 226.

in his first edition of Kleist's works suggested that the puzzled reaction of Goethe to the drama might still be shared by the majority of readers in 1905, it is safe to assert that Müller's prophetic words are more intelligible and more realized today than they were at the beginning of the century.[4] It is true that Penthesilea has never become a really standard work in any German repertory theater. It has been performed relatively seldom since its first, garbled production in Berlin in 1876. It has never attained anything like the popularity of Käthchen, Prinz von Homburg, or Der zerbrochene Krug, nor is it ever likely to do so. As a reading experience of emotional power and visual imagery, however, it is without peer. And yet we cannot justifiably class it as closet drama. For with actors equal to the demanding roles of Penthesilea and Achilles, with convincing renditions of the other Greek and Amazon characters, and with a director possessing the keenest sense of stagecraft, Penthesilea must also be a theater experience of the highest order, if only to the select few.

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An investigation of Penthesilea which makes use of philosophy or history as prime criteria in approaching the work cannot possibly uncover the author's intent. For Kleist's aim is as far removed from setting up or attacking any philosophically based system as it is from reworking some sort of ancient mythology. Indeed, it was very likely the ambivalent transmission of the Hellenic saga which most appealed to Kleist. For according to some sources it was Achilles who killed Penthesilea (more in keeping with the archaic form of the myth)--according to others it was the reverse. Although it is true that the ancient Greek setting was somewhat more in keeping with the taste of the times, especially since the appearance in 1808 of the fragments from Goethe's Pandora and from his epic Achilleis, Kleist could quite as easily have worked from a Viking or an Indian legend, for no matter what background material he might have used for Penthesilea, it would have emerged from essentially the same psychological matrix.[5] It is the passion of both love and hate, the terrible

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[4] H. v. Kleists Werke, ed. Erich Schmidt et al. (5 vols.; Leipzig and Vienna, 1905ff.), II, 19. (Hereafter: Kleist, ed. Schmidt.)

[5] This seems to have been first appreciated by Adam

implications of a misplaced trust, and the tragic misunderstanding between two human beings which form the entire substance of the work.

The twenty-four scenes are conceived as a one-act, fluid panorama in a vacillating war of emotion-at-arms upon an almost neutral stage. There is neither traditional dramatic development of plot nor traditional division into acts. The analogy of Penthesilea to a late-nineteenth-century symphonic composition is a very apt one, and it is not surprising to learn that the material was worked into musical form on two occasions by Hugo Wolf.[6] According to the canons of the late eighteenth century it is indeed an "undramatic" composition.[7] Apart from the extensive fifteenth scene, in which Penthesilea relates to Achilles her personal history and that of the founding of the Amazon state, it will be discovered that scarcely a single important step in traditional plot development is enacted on the stage. Rather it is narrated in epic style, either as a Botenbericht (report of something that has

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Müller; he wrote to Gentz: "Kleist ist gemütsfrei, also weder die antike noch die christliche Poesie des Mittelalters hat ihn befangen. Sie werden in der Penthesilea wahrnehmen, wie er die Äusserlichkeiten der Antike, den antiken Schein vorsätzlich beiseite wirft, Anachronismen herbeizieht, um, wenn auch in allem anderen, doch nicht darin verkannt zu werden, dass von keiner Nachahmung, von keinem Affektieren der Griechheit die Rede sei. Demnach ist Kleist sehr mit Ihnen zufrieden, wenn Sie von der Penthesilea sagen, dass sie n i c h t antik sei."--Sembdner, Lebensspuren, No. 226.

[6]Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Eric Blom (5th ed.; New York, 1955), Vol. IX, pp. 338-339. Wolf worked on the Penthesilea material during the years 1883-1885.

[7]This is exemplified by an admiring but confused reaction such as K. W. F. Solger's, who writes to Tieck: "In der Penthesilea . . . fand ich immer ein sehr hervorstechendes poetisches, aber wenig eigentlich dramatisches Talent. Was ihn mir den Dichtern der Zeit gleichstellte, war der grosse Wert, den er auf gesuchte Situationen und Effekte legte, wie auch ein absichtliches Streben, über das Gegebene und Wirkliche hinwegzugehen, und die eigentliche Handlung in eine fremde, geistige oder wunderbare Welt zu versetzen, kurz, ein gewisser Hang zu dem willkürlichen Mystizismus, der am Ende mehr interessant als wahr und tief sein will."--Sembdner, Lebensspuren, No. 678.

already happened) or as a teichoscopy (eye-witness report of something happening off-stage). This is the way in which Kleist has fashioned a new epic-narrative style which constitutes part of his unique contribution to German drama.

To be sure, Kleist did not altogether cast off the bonds of traditional dramatic structure in this play. The unity of place is by and large adhered to. That of time has been expanded within its limits to near incredibility: the entire action takes place during the course of one of the longest single days in dramatic literature. The scenes of ebb and flow of the Greeks and Amazons, now the victors, now the vanquished, are in no sense arbitrarily arranged. A most stringent concept of form has made a parallelism of this action. Finally, the iambic pentameter is scrupulously maintained throughout.

More important, however, than any of these formal considerations is the interiorizing of the truths inherent in this inexorable battle. We feel that it was at all times paramount in Kleist's mind. Having once chosen his material and setting from the ambiguities of the late-Greek myth of the Trojan War, he was thenceforth not concerned with extending the tradition of Virgil's, Tasso's, and Calderon's warring Amazons, who are suddenly overcome by love or some other such distraction. Likewise there is very little profit to be gained from a juxtaposition of Penthesilea and Schiller's idealized Joan of Arc, whose militant nature stems ultimately from the Idea and not from the Psyche.

We are led in turn to another criterion by which we are emboldened to judge the judges of Kleist's Amazon. He who sees the crux of the conflict in Penthesilea as merely a religio-social dilemma with the heroine as a representative symbol or, indeed allegory, is hardly able to appreciate the depths of this very personal tragedy, the tragedy of Gefühlsverwirrung. The drama is an investigation of the most inward and silent secrets of the heroine. In it myth and psychology have been united in a way which Wieland recognized when, in writing of the Guiskard fragment in 1804, he stated that to him Kleist represented the new union of the spirits of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Shakespeare. "Von diesem Augenblick an," he continued, "war es bei mir entschieden, Kleist sei dazu geboren, die grosse Lücke in unserer dermaligen Literatur auszufüllen, die . . . selbst von Goethe und Schiller noch nicht ausgefüllt worden ist."[8]

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[8]Ibid., No. 89.

Of all Kleist's dramas Penthesilea contains the greatest number of scenes with elements of what we have chosen to call "das Unaussprechliche" in its most literal form: the pantomime. Long stretches of the twenty-fourth and final scene are nothing but pantomime, accompanied by stage directions and the partially explanatory comments of the Amazons grouped about the queen. The ballet-like qualities of this remarkable scene were grasped to some extent not long after the appearance of the drama, and in the spring of 1811 were subjected to a generally unsuccessful pantomime interpretation by the celebrated actress, schooled in the strict gesticulatory language of the neo-Classic theater, working her way toward the "high style" histrionics of the Amazon queen's dénouement--with her husband, Professor Schütz, declaiming at her side from his script. It seems, however, to have been the introductory and explanatory remarks of the Professor which enjoyed the lesser success. This is evident from the following excerpt from the Vossische Zeitung for April 25, 1811. At the same time the remark is perhaps the first glimmer of appreciation of that "ineffable" quality in Penthesilea:

> Dass die Amazonenkönigin einen Mord begangen, erst von den Priesterinnen mit Fluch belegt, dann entsündigt wird; dass sie den Leichnam des Ermordeten vor sich sieht und neben ihm seelenlos und entseelt (wie sich der Cicerone ausdrückte) hinsinkt, s a h man hernach besser, als man es vorher g e h ö r t hatte.[9]

But it is with far more than the purely pantomimic moments that we must deal. Although they will be one aspect of our considerations, of more importance are the silences and that which is concealed behind the written or spoken words; the ways in which the words themselves generate images and gestures; and the various methods whereby Kleist makes it clear that what we are to comprehend is often a meaning despite, or in contradistinction to, the words.

In developing a play for discussion of such aspects as these, we must necessarily deal constantly with the feeling--in the urgent sense in which Kleist uses "Gefühl"--of the language itself. A silence per se is, of course, meaningless. Just as a rest in an orchestrated line can function only within the framework of its musical brackets, a pause in the

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[9] Ibid., No. 488.

spoken line of a drama is meaningful only in the context of what precedes and (secondarily) what follows it. To extract merely the pregnant moments of silence and gesture would be as forlorn a task for the purposes of our discussion as if an orchestra were to neglect the notes in its score in favor of the rests. Since silence is the lot of every dumb animal as well as of the most sublime of all states, it is only by passing through that point in infinity of which Kleist speaks in his essay on the marionette theater, where the lines of action intersect, that is, by exhausting and only then rendering unnecessary the human capacity for verbal speech, that the progression to the pure language of gesture, the genuinely ineffable arises.

It is with this realization, central to our entire analysis, that we can grasp and evaluate Kleist's unique and revolutionary contribution to the German drama. Beginning with a foundation in Shakespeare, Schiller, Goethe, and the Classics, he exploited and then transcended the rhetorical, the didactic, and the ideal of an ever-articulate "reine Menschlichkeit." He instilled in his works his view of man in tragic confrontation with other men and with an anonymous reality. This new hero is convincingly made to come to the realization of the limitations of human articulation--for he is made to run its gamut, only in the end to speak most meaningfully in gesture and, thus, in symbols. There would seem to exist a positive correlation between the sheer length and fervor of the rhetoric in Kleist's dramas and the importance of the gesture and the symbol. Of all these dramas it is Penthesilea which exhibits the greatest abundance of both. It will be part of the task of the following to demonstrate that, far from standing in a paradoxical relationship to each other, it is unthinkable that one could function without the other.

Scene i.

From the first words of scene one we are swept up into the dynamism of the action. It is almost as if Odysseus and the other Greek kings were aware of what is about to happen in the exceedingly long day ahead of them and were obliged to unfold the exposition as rapidly as possible. The words and actions have an immediacy about them almost without precedent in the dramatic literature of Germany. There is no lyricism, no reflection, no pondering. Odysseus immediately plunges into a vivid description of the rout of the Trojans

by the Amazons under Penthesilea. The language is one dominated by the verb as he summons up images to the right and to the left, the skirmishes, the battle, the rout, the attempts at alliance with the Amazons, the first confrontation of Penthesilea and Achilles, her rejection of a pact, and all that follows. The reader is made to experience the reality of what is being merely reported in words, and this is done in so vivid a manner as to convince him, upon reconstructing the scene in his memory, that all this was really enacted. This effect of the words already constitutes language as gesture in the fullest sense.

It is significant that one of the reviews of the "organic fragment" of Penthesilea reveals alarm at word coinages which appeared even on the first pages of the drama. The reviewer was quick to single out "sich unkämpfen" (5), "die Strasse verschlingen" (26), "die wetternde Flucht" (40), and several others.[10] He writes:

> [Es]finden sich eine Menge Stellen, wo der Sinn entweder ganz und gar nicht zu finden, oder doch sehr verdreht und verschroben ist. . . . Was sagt man zu neuen Worten wie--[11]

And then he proceeds to make his list. There seems to have been no realization of the fact that Kleist's intention was hardly to obscure his meaning, rather that he had to exploit the dynamics of existing vocabulary through new combinations in order to attempt the articulation of verbal gestures for which there were previously no adequate terms. It would require much time to compile a complete list of such new coinages. Their very number is one indication of the lengths to which Kleist went to exhaust the limits of the expressible before gesture manifested itself in monosyllabism, stammering, silence, or pantomime.

Odysseus conjures an unusually vigorous image in his prophetic anticipation of the tragic outcome of this day's

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[10]All quotations from Penthesilea, the other dramas, and the short stories follow the first critical text edited by Erich Schmidt, op. cit. Words which Kleist emphasizes will be left in s p a c e d t y p e; words which we emphasize will be underlined.

[11]Sembdner, Lebensspuren, No. 225.

ventures:

> Tot sinken die Verbissnen heut noch nieder,
> Des einen Zahn im Schlund des anderen.
> (10-11)

This is an almost diabolically accurate prophecy of the literal Verbissenheit of Penthesilea (2981ff.). At this point, after a pause, Odysseus demands a helmet of water to quench his thirst.

It might be well, at this point, to consider briefly the technique by which Kleist indicates such a pause as this, in order to pave the way for a consideration of the more important stops later in the play. The author was never one to lavish superfluous ornamentation upon his manuscript. Thus, wherever we find a dash it is worth reading its meaning into the context. Kleist was extremely economical with stage directions, reserving them in the main for moments of primary importance. Consequently, when a less significant gesture is implied by syntax, vocabulary, or tempo in the dialog, it is frequently accompanied by the dash and should not be overlooked. This first use of the dash in Penthesilea is meant to indicate to us the haste and the breathlessness with which Odysseus has entered upon the scene and delivered his opening lines. It is the first non-verbal suggestion of the ambiance in which the entire drama unfolds and of the pitch which the author would like to see maintained. Needless to say, an accurate reading of the text depends upon the fidelity with which the editor has adhered to the slightest matter of punctuation in the original manuscript or, lacking that, in the first printed edition. In the case of Penthesilea we are especially fortunate in being able to compare the final standard version with a manuscript copy of an earlier version. In the matter of punctuation alone a comparison is most illuminating, indicating as it does the infinite attention to detail with which Kleist went about making his changes.

Before receiving his water, Odysseus has ample opportunity to continue his story for the benefit of Antilochus, who in turn punctuates the energetic account with staccato interjections. These interjections: "Element!" (12), "Seltsam, bei unserm Gott!" (39), "Beim Styx!" (56) function as generators in sustaining contrapuntally, as it were, the insistent rhythm of the account, which, it must be noted, is kept consistently in the present tense, adding to the feeling of immediacy. A vibrant rendition of this background

material is sufficient to make its every element visible and palpable to an audience.

Another technique, the intent of which is closely related to that just considered, is one peculiarly Kleistian. To understand it is central to our concept of language as gesture. Indeed, an appreciation of this technique will help to clarify the seeming paradox which obtains between the two terms: language and gesture. It is a paradox which resides in the difference between a lapse of time and a moment in time. What the early detractors of Kleist saw as utter confusion in syntax, a graveyard or battlefield of mangled clauses and phrases, can now be seen to have been a revolutionary approach to dramatic dialog and to narrative monolog.

We have seen that it is the author's intention to convey a sense of haste and immediacy in the account given by Odysseus and continued later by Diomedes. The mass of detail, however, necessitates considerable length, and this length gives the false impression, upon first glancing at the printed page, of protracted rhetoric in epic proportion. This is its appearance. But it is not as Kleist envisioned it on the "stage of the future," to which he alluded in his letter to Goethe. In other words, the problem as Kleist must have seen it was to solve the paradox inherent in creating a <u>seemingly continuous present moment</u> or series of moments (the verbal gesture) by means of a material (language) which to unfold frequently necessitates a far longer lapse of time than would the gesture (with its attendant details) that it means to convey. The problem, in short, was to capture and fix in words a physical gesture, and to make these words <u>seem</u> to take as long to utter (and to develop in the same sequence) as the gesture.

Kleist does not wait long in this drama before using the technique which he evolved to solve this problem. And he uses it again and again in these opening accounts. A glance at lines 39-42, 50-53, 84-89, 97-102, 110-121, and 187-192 will suffice for the moment to suggest the persistency with which he puts this technique into effect. Also a careful study of the heralds' reports and the teichoscopies in Kleist's dramas--likewise given rapidly and with a desire to impress the listener with the breathless immediacy of the report--will reveal the identical technique in one variation or another. Even Odysseus' long description of the initial meeting of Achilles and himself with Penthesilea (57-102) constitutes one such example.

Just what is this technique? In brief, it is most frequently a matter of bracketing by means of the extremities of the main clause (usually, but not always, the subject and the predicate or dependent verb) an often very lengthy and convoluted verbal gesture. It is the function of these major brackets to encapsulate the time lapse, so to speak, and thus to give the impression of simultaneity rather than dry sequence of action.[12] There are many possible variations of this technique. If, for example, the subject of the main clause becomes lost in the ensuing cascade of language, which Kleist typically twists and turns within its confining brackets, it often happens that he repeats it. The following is such an example:

> Sie muss, beim Hades!, diese Jungfrau, doch,
> Die wie vom Himmel plötzlich, kampfgerüstet,
> In unsern Streit fällt, sich darin zu mischen,
> Sie muss zu einer der Partein sich schlagen.
> (50-54)

Sometimes the verbal gesture consists of a series of independent or dependent clauses after, before, or intermingled with a primary clause--each one individually elaborated so as to form a complex tapestry on the printed page--which, when spoken, unravel with precisely the logic or illogic which Kleist intended.

The nominal, pronominal, and adjectival inflection of the German language and the method whereby relative clauses are formed are uniquely appropriate to these mosaic constructions. They consequently render the translation of certain passages into another language unusually difficult, if not impossible. André Gide exhibits a keen appreciation of this aspect of Kleist's style in the following passages from his wartime journals:

> 10 octobre 1942 -- J'ai déchiffré, d'abord cursivement, Penthésilée; que je reprends à présent, dégustant l'un après l'autre lentement, chacun de ces vers

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[12]To some extent this runs contrary to the "nacheinander" and "nebeneinander" antithesis which Lessing considered in the Laokoon. Kleist's solution is more an "Ineinander." Intimately associated with the simultaneity of words and action in the drama is the construction of the independent clause beginning with indem, so frequently encountered in the Novellen.

> splendides, avec ravissement et considérable profit. Jamais encore, me semble-t-il, autant que chez Kleist (non pas même chez Hölderlin), je n'avais goûté les possibilités poétiques de la syntaxe allemande, avec ses atermoiements, ses retours, ses retombements.
>
> 13 octobre 1942 -- Je lis très lentement la Penthésilée, ne laissant rien passer que je ne comprenne et sente parfaitement, avec un ravissement indicible. Le parti que Kleist tire de la syntaxe allemande est admirable et permet d'en apprécier les ressources, les autorisations subtiles, la souplesse. Le bel enchevêtrement de la phrase, où il se joue, reste à peu près impossible en français, où le rôle des mots sans flexion n'est indiqué le plus souvent que par leur place. De quoi former deux peuples très différents.[13]

At times Kleist also intersperses one or more appositions, synonyms, prepositional phrases, and even entire clauses within these brackets. In this connection it is important to watch carefully his use of the comma. At times he is very sparing with it, even omitting it when it might otherwise be expected. This is generally meant to indicate a firm and even delivery of the lines. Perhaps more typically he lavishes the text with commas, inserting them in staccato fashion at moments of unusual energy--another device to suggest both breathlessness and vigor.

This technique of capturing a past moment (in the Botenbericht) and recreating it in the present, or of using a single eye-witness or a chorus of voices to make vividly present an action whether on- or offstage, is employed not only in each of Kleist's dramas but also in his Novellen. (These latter are in every sense dramatic stories; extensive sections of Die Marquise von O.... and Michael Kohlhaas, for example, and many of his shorter anecdotes are essentially the same in style as the aspects of his dramas we are here considering.) By so dynamically dramatizing the epic, a wholly new approach to the traditional epic style of exposition was effected. It

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[13]André Gide, Journal 1939-1949: Souvenirs ("Bibliothèque de la Pléiade"; Paris, 1954), pp. 137-139. (Despite Gide's great sensitivity to Kleist's syntactical style, however, he was quite unable to grasp the grandeur of the second half of the drama.)

is no wonder that only the smallest handful of Kleist's contemporaries could appreciate this strange and new dialog.[14] The Classic line of iambic pentameter was subjected to the most tortured halting, twisting, and fracturing, a phenomenon which aroused attention and criticism at an early date. Frequently three, and at times even four speakers share the five feet in one verse. Apart from the times at which the author demonstrated that he could write even, metrical verse as well as the acknowledged masters, it was doubted by some that he had his wits about him.[15]

Kleist was capable of writing all his lines in smoother, more "rational" sequence. It was, as we have suggested, not a matter of learning to control the medium. It is illuminating to observe in a comparison of the earlier version of Penthesilea with the final version that the author tended, on the contrary, more and more toward the broken, punctuated line, toward a more realistic dialog--maintaining at the same time strict iambic pentameter. We possess earlier versions of four of Kleist's dramas: besides Penthesilea, also Die Familie Schroffenstein, Der zerbrochene Krug, and Das Käthchen von Heilbronn. While the form of each is kept within the confines of Classic verse, it is a remarkable fact that every significant stylistic revision in these plays tended paradoxically to resist that same form--to deny the artificiality of the strictures while at the same time preserving their appearance. This confined realism lends Kleist's dramatic creations their singular and unmistakable combination of tautness and resiliency.

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[14]J. F. Bertuch, in the Journal des Luxus und der Moden in 1808, exemplifies the contemporary lack of understanding in this respect: "Ein wahrhaft dramatischer Genius beseelt ihn, der sich nur hin und wieder noch in Detailmalerei zu sehr gefällt, und ihn leicht an die gefährliche Klippe führen kann, wo die Darstellung ins Epische übergehend, nicht mehr die Wirkung des Dramas tut, dessen Seele die Handlung ist."--Sembdner, Lebensspuren, No. 237. The reviewer's appreciation is of everything but the drama's revolutionary contributions.

[15]Cf. Brentano's famous evaluations of Kleist, especially: "Was den Kleist besonders kurios macht, ist sein Rezept zum Dialog. Er denkt sich alle Personen halb taub und dämlich. . . ."--Sembdner, Lebensspuren, No. 455.

If, as Kleist intended, the short essay Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden (written in Königsberg in 1805 or 1806) had been published during his lifetime, it might very well have suggested to some of his confused critics a way to cope with this unprecedented type of "immediate" dialog. As it was, the essay did not appear in print until 1878. And even then it was many years before scholars were able to see in it a unique source of information about Kleist's approach to the unravelling of speech as a thought process.

Before continuing the analysis of Penthesilea, it will be well to observe (beyond the analysis in Chapter III) the direct bearing which this little essay has upon Kleist's dramatic style. Its title alone suggests a very different idea of the thought and speech processes from that which the writers of the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment periods had. By implication it denies the concept of the pure and unarticulated Idea Triumphant, and modestly submits the contention that the best way to think out a problem, if meditation fails, is to speak about it to (not with) another person. This is legitimate, Kleist implies, since the processes of thinking and speaking are actually inseparable. The thought will unravel itself in speech. He parodies the French aphorism "l'appétit vient en mangeant" as "l'idée vient en parlant." This was not an altogether new concept with Kleist, to be sure; but it is the lucid and thorough way in which he develops this process, giving concrete and pertinent examples from history, literature, and personal experience, which constitutes his original contribution, surprisingly modern in its psychological insights.

We cannot escape the impression that we are actually watching the first steps in the creative process of a scene from Penthesilea, for example when we read the following formula for developing a line of thought:

> Weil ich . . . irgendeine dunkle Vorstellung habe, die mit dem, was ich suche, von fern her in einiger Verbindung steht, so prägt, wenn ich nur dreist damit den Anfang mache, das Gemüt, während die Rede fortschreitet, in der Notwendigkeit, dem Anfang nun auch ein Ende zu finden, jene verworrene Vorstellung zur völligen Deutlichkeit aus, dergestalt, dass die Erkenntnis, zu meinem Erstaunen, mit der Periode fertig ist. Ich mische unartikulierte Töne ein, ziehe die Verbindungswörter in die Länge, gebrauche

> auch wohl eine Apposition, wo sie nicht nötig wäre, und bediene mich anderer, die Rede ausdehnender Kunstgriffe, zur Fabrikation meiner Idee auf der Werkstätte der Vernunft die gehörige Zeit zu gewinnen. Dabei ist mir nichts heilsamer, als eine Bewegung meiner Schwester [Ulrike was living with Kleist at the time in Königsberg and was the person who functioned as catalyst in this hatching process], als ob sie mich unterbrechen wollte; denn mein ohnehin schon angestrengtes Gemüt wird durch diesen Versuch von aussen, ihm die Rede, in deren Besitz es sich befindet, zu entreissen, nur noch mehr erregt und in seiner Fähigkeit, . . . noch um einen Grad höher gespannt. . . . Es liegt ein sonderbarer Quell der Begeisterung für denjenigen, der spricht, in einem menschlichen Antlitz, das ihm gegenübersteht; und ein Blick, der uns einen halbausgedrückten Gedanken schon als begriffen ankündigt, schenkt uns oft den Ausdruck für die ganze andere Hälfte desselben.[16]

Such a process must have been exactly the one which Kleist used in the construction of dialog from the amorphous material of unformed thoughts. Read in connection with the report by Odysseus to Antilochus, we cannot fail to see a vital connection between the substance of the essay and the dramatic dialog--with the important difference that in the latter we are confronted with thought-as-speech, which has undergone a transmutation in Kleist's "Werkstätte" and has become form, i.e., art. That is, we no longer think of the thought process with which the creator has imbued his character. Material has become form. And we experience step by step (in a constant present tense, as it were) its dramatic unfolding. Kleist puts it thus:

> Ein solches Reden ist ein wahrhaftes lautes Denken. Die Reihen der Vorstellungen und ihrer Beziehungen gehen nebeneinander fort, und die Gemütsakte für eins und das andere kongruieren. Die Sprache ist alsdann keine Fessel, etwa wie ein Hemmschuh an dem Rade des Geistes, sondern wie ein zweites, mit ihm parallel fortlaufendes Rad an seiner Achse.[17]

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[16] Kleist, ed. Sembdner, II, 322.

[17] Ibid., p. 325.

It is quite a different matter, however, when thought and its articulation do not go hand in glove, Kleist continues. The development of this idea in the essay is also of great interest to our investigation, as will be seen on the frequent occasions later in the drama when a character finds himself in the position of being unable to express what we, the reader or spectator, realize he is thinking or feeling. This aspect comes closer to our concern with the literally Unaussprechliche. When Kleist writes the following we can appreciate, from the biographical information we have investigated in Chapter III, that to a large extent he is speaking for himself, the now reticent, now stammering "armer Kauz aus Brandenburg":

> Etwas ganz anderes ist es, wenn der Geist schon, vor aller Rede, mit dem Gedanken fertig ist. Dann muss er bei seiner blossen Ausdrückung zurückbleiben. . . . Wenn daher eine Vorstellung verworren ausgedrückt wird, so folgt der Schluss noch gar nicht, dass sie auch verworren gedacht worden sei; vielmehr könnte es leicht sein, dass die verworrenst ausgedrückten grade am deutlichsten gedacht worden. . . . In solchen Fällen ist es um so unerlässlicher, dass uns die Sprache mit Leichtigkeit zur Hand sei, um dasjenige, was wir gleichzeitig gedacht haben und doch nicht gleichzeitig von uns geben können, wenigstens so schnell als möglich aufeinander folgen zu lassen.[18]

This desideratum is applied here, of course, to actual social intercourse, and not to the needs of all dramatic dialog. However it is worth observing how closely it expresses the form and function of Odysseus' and Diomedes' account in the first scene of Penthesilea, where precision and immediacy of imagery are paramount. Later in the drama, when the exposition has given way to the central core of action, the very half-articulated thoughts, the exclamations, the stammerings, and the very silences which he regrets in the social situation are appropriated for some of the most crucial points in the dialog. Form superimposed has removed them from the sphere of the merely ungainly and has rendered them art. It is doubtful whether any other German dramatist has been able to suffuse the simple interjection "Ach," for example, with such piercingly effective meaning as does Kleist in Penthesilea and Amphitryon. The supercharged effect which he is able to

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[18] Ibid., p. 326.

create with such a linguistic gesture comes from his demonstrated conviction that, although more than we had previously known is, in his dramas, utterable, the ultimate emotions are not.

Odysseus' description of the first meeting with Penthesilea (57 ff.) is unusually rich in both physical and verbal gesture. Aside from its quality in toto as a series of as one might say, "allmähliche Verfertigung der Beschreibung durch Reden," it consists of a number of gesticulatory ingredients. Most obvious is the persistent use of the present tense: "Wir finden sie" (57), "der Helmbusch wallt" (60), "ihr Zelter zerstampft" (62), "sie sieht" (64), "ihr Auge trifft" (68), "Glut färbt" (69-70), "sie schwingt" (72), "sie fragt" (74), and others, together with present subjunctives present participles, and adverbial and adjectival constructions suggesting present time, all within the space of a few lines. Particularly outstanding are the lines 63-70. Before catching her first glimpse of Achilles--for he is present, too a fact which Kleist renders more significant by Odysseus' pause, indicated with the second dash in the drama (58)--Penthesilea

> Sieht . . . in unsre Schar, von Ausdruck leer,
> Als ob in Stein gehaun wir vor ihr stünden.
> (64-65)

Odysseus renders concrete this important moment (and the one which follows immediately with a flash of recognition) by a metaphor and a gesture:

> Hier, diese flache Hand, versichr' ich dich,
> Ist ausdrucksvoller als ihr Angesicht,
> (66-67)

and then even more immediate by the use of "jetzt":

> Bis jetzt ihr Aug' auf den Peliden trifft:
> Und Glut ihr plötzlich bis zum Hals hinab,
> Das Antlitz färbt . . . .
> (68-70)

A further technique in rendering the various aspects of the following moment simultaneous was to insert one independent clause parenthetically into another, in quite the fashion in which such observations are described in reality:

> Sie schwingt, mit einer zuckenden Bewegung,
> -- Und einen finstern Blick wirft sie auf ihn --
> Vom Rücken sich des Pferds herab, und fragt,
> Die Zügel einer Dienrin überliefernd,
> Was uns, in solchem Prachtzug, zu ihr führe.
> (72-76)

We may note also at this point another aspect which must come under the heading of gesture: expressions suggested by facial coloration; they occur both in reports of others and on stage. Employed extensively by Kleist in both his dramas and his stories, he can, in the one case, hardly have demanded of the actor that he blush or blanch on cue. It constitutes an excellent example of the uncompromising attitude which Kleist had toward the necessity of conveying the appropriate gesture. It is an aspect which was extensively studied by Ottokar Fischer fifty years ago and one which we shall have ample opportunity to observe.[19] In this same section of Odysseus' account we find: ". . . Glut ihr plötzlich . . . das Antlitz färbt" (69), and then in strong contrast: ". . . und einen finstern Blick wirft sie auf ihn . . ." (73); this returns to

> Drauf mit der Wangen Rot, war's Wut, war's Scham,
> Die Rüstung wieder bis zum Gurt sich färbend.
> (97-98)

These descriptions, together with: ". . . mit einer zuckenden Bewegung . . ." (72); ". . . sie wendet/Mit einem Ausdruck der Verwunderung . . ." (84-85); "Sie ruht . . . mit trunknem Blick . . ./Auf des Äginers schimmernder Gestalt" (93-94); and most concisely the description of Penthesilea as "Verwirrt und stolz und wild zugleich" (n.b., "zugleich")--all these, give us uniquely tangible evidence for Penthesilea's psychic commotion and prepare us well in advance for her first appearance in scene v. It is instructive to compare in this connection the far weaker formulation in the first version:

> Drauf mit Verwirrung sie und Stolz: sie sei
> Penthesilea, kehrt sie sich zu mir,

with its later expansion into the unclassic Pathos of lines

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[19] Ottokar Fischer, "Mimische Studien zu Heinrich von Kleist," Euphorion, XV (1908), 488-510, 716-725; XVI (1909), 62-92, 412-425, 747-772.

97-100:[20]

> Drauf mit der Wangen Rot, war's Wut, war's Scham,
> Die Rüstung wieder bis zum Gurt sich färbend,
> Verwirrt und stolz und wild zugleich: sie sei
> Penthesilea, kehrt sie sich zu mir.

We can compare also, a few lines above, the earlier and likewise weaker:

> Sie wendet,
> Die Hände plötzlich mit Erstaunen faltend,
> Zum Kreise ihrer Jungfraun sich und ruft
> Beklemmt . . . ,

with the final version:

> Sie wendet,
> Mit einem Ausdruck der Verwunderung,
> Gleich einem sechzehn jähr'gen Mädchen plötzlich,
> Das von olymp'schen Spielen wiederkehrt,
> Zu einer Freundin, ihr zur Seite, sich,
> Und ruft . . . .
>
> (84-89)

Both the simultaneity of words and action and the image in the mind's eye are enhanced by the simile. We shall have ample opportunity to observe that in many other places in this drama, where previously there were no images, Kleist later substituted for the less active writing a gesture through the addition of a simile or a metaphor.

The frenzy and confusion within Penthesilea after her first encounter with Achilles are suggested verbally by the extraordinary flow of words in the two sentences beginning at line 110:

> Sie [the Trojans] beschliessen
> Im Wahn, sie seien die Begünstigten,
> Und nur ein Irrtum, der sich lösen müsse,

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[20]See the Lesarten in Kleist, ed. Schmidt, IV, 328-251; this is the standard source for all earlier versions. Cf. also Tino Kaiser, Vergleich der verschiedenen Fassungen von Kleists Dramen (Bern, 1944), the most thorough investigation of the problem, discussed in Chapter II.

Sei an dem Zorn der Amazone schuld,
Schnell ihr, durch einen Herold, Herz und Hand,
Die sie verschmäht, von neuem anzutragen.
Doch eh' der Bote, den sie senden wollen,
Den Staub noch von der Rüstung abgeschüttelt,
Stürzt die Kentaurin, mit verhängtem Zügel,
Auf sie und uns schon, Griech' und Trojer, ein,
Mit eines Waldstroms wütendem Erguss,
Die einen, wie die andern, niederbrausend.
(110-121)

On the first level of meaning these two sentences record the mistaken assumption of the Trojans at Penthesilea's rejection of the Greeks and the attack of both armies by the Amazons. But more than that, these lines constitute a new height in the process of torturing, compressing, then spinning out the language, testing its tensile strength, as it were. This deluge of words is in itself an embodiment of Kleist's often-used metaphor of the twisting torrent or cascade. When Odysseus speaks the lines:

Mit eines Waldstroms wütendem Erguss,
Die einen, wie die andern, niederbrausend,

his very words have become exactly what they are intended to convey. This identification of words and image is indeed "ganz unerhört" as Antilochus exclaims. The following rather too elaborate comparison of the illogicalness of Penthesilea's attack with the physical properties of fire and water (125-138) somewhat compromises the electric excitement of the foregoing. But when, after more than one hundred lines, Odysseus breathlessly thanks the soldier who has just arrived with the water, we are brought back to reality with a jolt. With this pause we suddenly realize how rapidly Kleist must have wanted the intervening lines (12-139) delivered.

While Odysseus quenches his thirst, Diomedes assumes the account and continues it in very much the same vein. In general, each of the Greeks, except Achilles, speaks as a chorus, very rarely letting the pitch of the scene abate for the sake of differentiation of character.[21] Diomedes shifts Odysseus' metaphor of the battle as a torrential river to

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[21]This is only somewhat less true in the Amazon camp, where more attention is given to Prothoe, Meroe, and the Oberpriesterin. (In xxi Odysseus and Diomedes assume somewhat more individuality.)

another favorite metaphor of Kleist, the storm:

> Seit jenem Tage
> Grollt über dieser Ebne unverrückt
> Die Schlacht, mit immer reger Wut, wie ein
> Gewitter, zwischen waldgekrönter Felsen Gipfeln
> Geklemmt. . . .
>
> (139-143)

This is the first instance of the subtlety and variety with which Kleist continues this storm metaphor to the end of the drama. In his first passage Diomedes has Penthesilea "mit Donnerkrachen einschlagen" (145) as if she wanted "den ganzen Griechenstamm bis auf den Grund zerspalten" (147). Appropriating the phrase "mit immer reger Wut" (141) he develops it, in the form of an apposition six lines later: Penthesilea as "die Wütende." Likewise we find the phrase: "Der Krone ganze Blüte liegt . . . / . . . vom Sturm herabgerüttelt" (148-149).

It is at this last juncture that we can observe yet another of Kleist's devices to indicate a physical gesture for the actor without any stage direction. He could have listed in dull order the names of the young Greek soldiers in this passage ("der Krone ganze Blüte") without breaking the meter, thus:

> Der Krone ganze Blüte liegt, vom Sturm
> Herabgerüttelt, auf dem Schlachtfeld da,
> Astýanáx, Aríston únd Menándros.

We note, however, in the actual version the necessity of a threefold gesture with the hand to suggest to the imagination the places where the heroes fell:

> Der Krone ganze Blüte liegt, Ariston,
> Astyanax, vom Sturm herabgerüttelt,
> Menandros, auf dem Schlachtfeld da, den Lorbeer
> Mit ihren jungen, schönen Leibern gross,
> Für diese kühne Tochter Ares', düngend.
>
> (148-152)

At the same time it is far more effective for the names to occur to (and thus be spoken by) Diomedes in this irregular order, especially since they are only three examples among many. The phraseology constitutes another instance of the gradual completion of thought through speaking. Likewise

the syntactical confusion arising from the insertion of the prepositional phrases in lines 150-152 (between "den Lorbeer" and "gross," and between "gross" and "düngend") is removed the moment the lines are read with the pauses and gestures implicit throughout.

In contrast to the accepted practice in the late eighteenth century, nearly every metaphor used in these scenes tends to invigorate and make more dynamic the factual content. The language and the reaction of the reader follow the direction of the play together: upward, downward, forward, and backward. This empathetic, almost kinesthetic movement is far different from the striving for the firmness and plasticity of "Form" in Goethe's almost anti-metaphorical Classic period, for example--with the important exception that with Kleist form is held as strictly within lapidary confines as it is, for instance, in Iphigenie. Consequently Kleist's use of the metaphor never became the so-called "auflösende Metapher" of the Romantics. For them, but certainly not for Kleist, all Being was in so mysterious a bond that there were no firm boundaries setting one eternally fluid and metamorphosing phenomenon apart from another. Completely different from the doctrinaire Romantics, the extensive imagery (Bildhaftigkeit) of Kleist never suffers from either amorphousness or rigor mortis.

We can suggest Kleist's use of metaphorical language by a few examples from the first scene. Its gesture-laden nature is unique in German literature. Asked by Antilochus whether anyone has been able to determine the basis for Penthesilea's obsessive pursuit of the Greeks, Diomedes answers:

> Kein Mensch, das eben ist's: wohin wir spähend
> Auch des Gedankens Senkblei fallen lassen.
> (157-158)

Suggesting that the "sonderbare Wut" (158) of Penthesilea might be based on a personal hatred of Achilles, Diomedes continues metaphorically:

> So folgt, so hungerheiss, die Wölfin nicht,
> Durch Wälder, die der Schnee bedeckt, der Beute,
> Die sich ihr Auge grimmig auserkor,
> Als sie, durch unsre Schlachtreih'n, dem Achill.
> (163-166)

In the next few lines, by way of further example, we find:

Da schon
Sein Leben war in ihre Macht gegeben,
Gab sie es lächelnd, ein Geschenk, ihm wieder:
Er stieg zum Orkus, wenn sie ihn nicht hielt.
(167-170)

. . . stürmt Deiphobus her
(174)

Mit einem tück'schen Schlag die Rüstung prasselnd,
Dass rings der Ormen Wipfeln wiederhallten.
(177-178)

Die Locken dann
Entrüstet um entflammte Wangen schüttelnd,
(180-181)

Und senkt, wie aus dem Firmament geholt,
Das Schwert ihm wetterstrahlend in den Hals.
(184-185)

Although it is basically the nature of metaphor to make the inexpressible perceptible in imagistic writing, and despite Kleist's undisputed mastery of its technique, we should not be altogether justified in appropriating it for our discussion of "das Unaussprechliche," were it not for a particularly interesting and anything but subsidiary usage Kleist makes (or to be more precise, does not make) of it. This usage is first seen clearly in the lines just quoted above ("So folgt, so hungerheiss," etc.). Not content with selecting the most powerful images from nature (usually unbridled nature) and comparing them by simile or identifying them by metaphor with the actions and emotions of his characters, Kleist frequently rejects them, in the context itself, as inadequate. There are many examples of this singular device both in his letters and his plays. They are particularly evident in Penthesilea and constitute eloquent evidence for the assertion that Kleist felt words insufficient to express all he wished to convey. Rhetorical as some of these passages may be in demonstrating their own deficiency, at the same time they paradoxically deny rhetorical metaphor its former powers and constitute another stage in the progression toward the wordless gesture. As examples of the inadequate and the "rejected" metaphor we find (looking for the moment beyond scene one) this remarkable variety:

Gehetzter Hirsche Flug ist schneller nicht!
(384)

Numid'sche Pfeile sind nicht hurtiger!
(400)

Das Aug' erkennt nichts mehr . . . .
. . . Das Chaos war,
Das erst', aus dem die Welt sprang, deutlicher.
(435-437)

Die Katze, die so stürzt, verreckt; nicht sie!
(455)

. . . Du hast in einem Kampf
Wetteifernder Geschwindigkeit bestanden,
Neridensohn, wie losgelassene
Gewitterstürm', am Himmelsplane brausend,
Noch der erstaunten Welt ihn nicht gezeigt.
(493-497)

Heuschrecken lassen dichtgeschlossner nicht
Auf eine reife Saatenflur sich nieder.
(544-545)

. . . Zehntausend Sonnen dünken,
Zu einem Glutball eingeschmelzt, so glanzvoll
Nicht, als ein Sieg, ein Sieg mir über ihn.
(631-633)

. . . Eh' würdest du
Den Strom, wenn er herab von Bergen schiesst,
Als meiner Seele Donnersturz regieren.
(635-637)

In Stahl geschient sein Ross und er; der Saphir,
Der Chrysolith, wirft solche Strahlen nicht!
(1038-1040)

Der Perser könnte, ihren Wünschen frönend,
Geflügelter sich in die Luft nicht heben!
(1065-1066)

Dir scheinen Eisenbanden unzerreissbar,
Nicht wahr? Nun sieh: sie bräche sie vielleicht,
Und das Gefühl doch nicht, das du verspottest.
(1282-1284)

Der junge Tag, wahrhaftig, liebste Freundin,
Wenn ihn die Horen von den Bergen führen,

Demanten perlen unter seinen Tritten:
Er sieht so weich und mild nicht drein, als er.
(1787-1790)

. . . Ein Traum, geträumt in Morgenstunden,
Scheint mir wahrhaft'ger als der Augenblick.
(2019-2020)

Der Krieg, der unter Bürgern rast, wenn er,
Die blutumtriefte Graungestalt, einher,
Mit weiten Schritten des Entsetzens geht,
Die Fackel über blühnde Städte schwingend,
Er sieht so wild und scheusslich nicht, als sie.
(2613-2617)

Lustgärten, die der Feuerstrom verwüstet,
Gekocht im Schoss der Erd' und ausgespieen,
Auf alle Blüten ihres Busens hin,
Sind anmutsvoller als ihr Angesicht.
(2764-2767)

It will be noticed that in each of these examples Kleist has raised the metaphor one degree above the tertium comparationis by denying the possibility of adequate comparison.

At the conclusion of Diomedes' account of the first skirmish between the two protagonists we find an illustration of the identity between language and gesture more vivid still than anything heretofore. In this instance it is not only a matter of conveying through Einschachtelung a single action with its simultaneous details, but also of suggesting a rapid series of events in the second half of the passage by means of very brief clauses connected with "und." At the beginning of this titanic "game" Penthesilea has saved Achilles' life by killing Deiphobus, the Trojan.

Er [Achilles] jetzt, zum Dank, will ihr, der Peleïde,
Ein Gleiches tun; doch sie bis auf den Hals
Gebückt, den mähnumflossenen, des Schecken,
Der, in den Goldzaum beissend, sich herumwirft,
Weicht seinem Mordhieb aus, und schiesst die Zügel
Und sieht sich um, und lächelt, und ist fort.
(187-192)

This is in every sense a galloping-away of horse, rider, and language. The conclusion of Kleist's Anekdote aus dem letzten preussischen Krieg is remarkably similar in feeling:

> . . . Und in dem Augenblick reiten die drei Franzosen schon ins Dorf. "Bassa Manelka!" ruft der Kerl, und gibt seinem Pferde die Sporen und sprengt auf sie ein; sprengt, so wahr Gott lebt, auf sie ein, und greift sie . . . , dergestalt, dass . . . er alle drei vom Sattel haut, die Pferde, die auf dem Platz herumlaufen, aufgreift, damit bei mir vorbeisprengt, und "Bassa Teremtetem!" ruft, und "Sieht er wohl, Herr Wirt?" und "Adies!" und "Auf Wiedersehn!" und "hoho! hoho! hoho!"[22]

The last sentence of the anecdote: "- - - So einen Kerl, sprach der Wirt, habe ich zeit meines Lebens nicht gesehen," functions in precisely the way as Antilochus' "Ganz wunderbar!"--namely (1) as an expression of astonishment within the story's context, (2) as the reader's applause, as it were, for the tour de force, and (3) as final punctuation. In the case of the anecdote the exclamation is the last sentence; in Penthesilea it is at this point that the introductory accounts are concluded.

The remainder of scene one consists of Antilochus' report from Agamemnon and the kings' agreement to halt Achilles' obsessed pursuit of Penthesilea. Of particular interest here is only Odysseus' extended simile (which typically becomes a metaphor) with its ballet-like imagery:

> Denn wie die Dogg', entkoppelt, mit Geheul
> In das Geweih des Hirsches fällt: der Jäger,
> Erfüllt von Sorge, lockt und ruft sie ab;
> Jedoch verbissen in des Prachttiers Nacken,
> Tanzt sie durch Berge neben ihm, und Ströme,
> Fern in des Waldes Nacht hinein: so er,
> Der Rasende, seit in der Forst des Krieges
> Dies Wild sich, von so seltner Art, ihm zeigte.
> (213-220)

The nearly identical, but even grimmer, dance and hunt motif is used again, much later, in scene twenty-two by the Oberpriesterin in her description of Penthesilea leaving for the final encounter with Achilles:

> Jetzt unter ihren Hunden, wütet sie,
> Mit schaumbedeckter Lipp', und nennt sie Schwestern,

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[22] Kleist, ed. Sembdner, II, 283.

Die heulenden, und der Mänade gleich,
Mit ihrem Bogen durch die Felder tanzend,
Hetzt sie die Meute, die mordatmende,
Die sie umringt, das schönste Wild zu fangen,
Das je die Erde, wie sie sagt, durchschweift.
(2567-2573)

In this second passage description and metaphor have become even more inseparably fused than in the first.

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In considering this first scene of Penthesilea, in which physical stage action is at a minimum, it has been our objective to indicate the astounding wealth of gesture inherent and unmistakable in the language itself. We have found it in the restless, verbal nature of the language; in the "tortured" syntax; in the continuous use of the present tense; in the many Einschachtelungen, whose purpose it is to render various aspects of the action as simultaneousness; in the application to drama of Kleist's theory of Die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden; in an imagistic vocabulary, enriched with coinages; in the new use of the epic as drama; in the unusual importance of the comma and the dash; in the inadequate (or "rejected") metaphor; and finally in the tension arising from the subjugation of the dynamic content to the rigorous demands of iambic pentameter.

With the diminishing importance of the report (although it is true that both the Botenbericht and the teichoscopy continue through the drama) and with the increasing importance of stage action, it can be seen that gesture in words becomes supplanted more and more by specified or implied physical gesture, an element all but absent from the first scenes. Interest, therefore, may gradually be extended to include more than linguistic matters alone. From scene iv on one could begin to examine the words which more and more are accompanied by implied gesticulation; and one could gradually direct attention toward the upper register of the scale where non-verbalized gesture takes on symbolic meaning.

Scene ix.

Scene ix was subjected by Kleist to more extensive revision than any other in preparation for the final version

of the drama. Each change and addition was made to illuminate through more and more gesture the torment within Penthesilea. It is in this scene, the culmination of scenes v-viii, that she attains the titanic proportions for which we are prepared in the first four. With the approach of the Queen, Prothoe, Meroe, and a group of Amazons, the action of the scene unfolds. Although more vitally wounded by "Amors Pfeil," it is the actual fall from her horse (1127) in combat with Achilles which has exhausted Penthesilea, and we must visualize her in a state of both physical and emotional depletion at her entrance. Her first words, regardless of the fury in them, are said "mit schwacher Stimme" (before 1170); and with the one exception of the passage following 1215, we should not speak of any towering rage in the scene.[23]

It is important for the apprehension of the Sprachgebärden and the Gebärdensprache of this pivotal scene to contrast it briefly with its earlier form. It would be impossible to investigate here every change and addition which Kleist made; some, however, are too central to our purpose to overlook. The first version was conceived as immediately flowing out of the preceding scene. It consisted, on the one hand, of a series of pleas on the part of Prothoe for Penthesilea to save both herself and those left with her by fleeing from the Greeks and, on the other, of a Penthesilea who paid almost no attention to these pleas and who proceeded resolutely on her path toward the gigantic vision of "den Ida auf den Ossa wälzen" (1375). It was a much shorter and a more consistently realistic action, for logically we must consider the Greeks, led by the unarmed Achilles, in pursuit of the Amazons. The final version, consistent as it is within itself, lifts us onto a different level of action, in which the time element is temporarily slowed, while the urgency of flight is, dramatically, just as great. Many new lines were added and the action is rife with a new pantomime.

The most important new aspect of the revision, however, is that of the two lines of action. Whereas earlier there were also two parallel lines (i.e., flight and fancy), they crossed at no point. In the final version these same lines

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[23]This one exception itself ends in an even greater state of exhaustion, a shattering sigh, and exclamation (1231 and 1237); her having to sit down can be compared with a number of similar gestures in the Novellen and, with special significance, in Guiskard (after 488).

intersect at many points. At times Penthesilea is lost in her visions, at times she seems to sense the urgency of realities. One of the most remarkable agencies for conveying this conflict is the ambiguity of the dialog, the "An-einander-Vorbeireden" which depends so much upon gesture for its effect. There are moments of pure ambivalence at which we are made to see the double implications clearly. Such moments are effected with an absolute minimum of words, sometimes with none at all. Ten times in this scene the flow of the action, in ballet style, tends toward the flight for safety; and ten times sufficient impulse for this expedient fails to be generated due to Penthesilea's confusion, exhaustion, and to the paradox and total illogicality of her basic counter-impulse, which is fixed in the highly important symbolic verbs "bleiben," "warten," and "fallen." At six of these times (1184ff., 1207ff., 1236ff., 1296ff., 1320ff., 1246ff.) Prothoe urges flight, and six times Penthesilea fails to act. Four more times it seems as if Penthesilea were herself counseling escape (1196ff., 1295ff., 1319ff., 1345ff.), but the suggestion either comes to nought or is realized to be an aspect of her private vision. The implicit gesture is one of never-coming-into-contact, a double focus, a mis-understanding in its literal sense.

Prothoe, in the original version, does not identify at all with Penthesilea; her concern is for escape alone. As part of her argument she paints a vivid picture of the shame and horror awaiting the Queen in Greek captivity. The revised version, however, has these words of Prothoe transferred to the mouth of Penthesilea, and in such a way as to reverse their very meaning (1233ff.). They become gestures of despair, but insignificant in their physical inference when compared to the desperation in the new line which concludes them: "Staub lieber, als ein Weib sein, das nicht reizt" (1253). In addition, Prothoe's function as mouthpiece for inner aspects of Penthesilea is brought into far greater play here. Her role of giving voice (as far as is possible) to the gestures of Penthesilea, of formulating the only really pithy and summary "quotations" of the drama (how different from Schiller in this), is brought to its highest point here. Nothing better illustrates the difference between the Classical drama and one of Kleist's plays than that the few moralizing and rhetorical formulations which remain are put into the mouth of a subsidiary character, whose purpose is to partially illumine aspects of the protagonist, whose most eloquent moments are silence. It is impossible to imagine Penthesilea saying of herself, for example:

> . . . Das ist [mein] Schicksal!
> Dir scheinen Eisenbanden unzerreissbar,
> Nicht wahr? Nun sieh: [ich] bräche sie vielleicht,
> Und das Gefühl doch nicht, das du verspottest.
> Was in [mir] walten mag, das weiss nur ich ,
> Und jeder Busen ist, der fühlt, ein Rätsel.
> (1281-1286)

On the other hand, as the passage stands, it is just what Prothoe--the embodiment of the articulateness of the Lebensplan aspect of Kleist--would be expected to say as the spokesman for Penthesilea.

It is no coincidence that the three most memorable and quotable passages of the play (in the traditional sense) have their roots in the Schroffenstein period and are all spoken by Prothoe. First, her words to the High Priestess that Penthesilea's "töricht Herz" is precisely her fate (1281) are a distinct echo of ". . . das Schicksal oder mein Gemüth--und ist das nicht mein Schicksal?" in a letter of 1802 to Ulrike (Sembdner, II, 741); while in the same passage from the play the line, "Und jeder Busen ist, der fühlt, ein Rätsel" (1286), is a direct descendant of Sylvester Schroffenstein's statement to Jeronimus: "Ich bin dir wohl ein Rätsel?/ Nun tröste dich, Gott ist es mir" (1213f.). Secondly, the extended simile in the famous lines:

> . . . Sinke nicht,
> Und wenn der ganze Orkus auf dich drückte!
> Steh, stehe fest, wie das Gewölbe steht,
> Weil seiner Blöcke jeder stürzen will,
> (1347-1350)

likewise has a double source in Kleist's earlier years: Wieland's exhortation to Kleist to finish the Guiskard, "und wenn der ganze Kaukasus und Atlas auf Sie drückte";[24] and a passage in a letter of 1800 to Wilhelmine (Sembdner, II, 606), in which the identical image of the arch and its keystone is developed. And thirdly, the famous metaphor of the dead and

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[24]Wieland to Kleist, July, 1803, Sembdner, Lebensspuren, No. 104a, not (as Erich Schmidt says) in Wieland's letter to Dr. Wedekind; this is also reflected in the earlier version of lines 1375ff.; the entire matter of the Guiskard dilemma and Kleist's frustrated ambition is intimately connected with this scene.

living oaks spoken by Prothoe in the last lines of the drama appeared almost identically in Schroffenstein (960ff.). This is a strong indication of the growing tendency in Kleist to make his chief characters more human and sympathetic by restricting to a voice in the background chorus anything which might sound like rhetoric or ethical summarizing. Thus even Prothoe, the third most important character in the tragedy, must be relegated to the ranks of this chorus in the last analysis. The language which she speaks never partakes of any real aspect of the subconscious or the subjective as Kleist learned to convey them.

In this scene as in no other Penthesilea is a figure who is made to weave in and out of the chorus. A purposeful continuation of the basic gestures of falling and drawing downward lies at the foundation of this scene. When suggestions of these gestures occur in the words of persons other than Penthesilea, they invariably call forth a kinesthetic response from her, which in turn is manifested in her refusal to take action, that is, to flee. Her every motion and word make it clear that there is no longer a possibility of rescue for her, that she has "fallen" in the literal and symbolic senses of the word. When she says: "Der Würfel, der entscheidet, liegt, er liegt:/Begreifen muss ich's -- -- und dass ich verlor" (1306f.), she has, in a very personal way and with a most appropriate metaphor, revealed not only her fate, but also an inner knowledge of it. Hence, all the hesitant, stammered, and incomplete conditional sentences in which she weighs escape against her inward knowledge of its impossibility, become the more devastating in their effect. They are the movement of a spirit fighting itself. Yet at the same time they have another, even deeper, significance. When Penthesilea speaks the elliptical conditions: "Wenn ich zur Flucht mich noch -- wenn ich es täte" (1295), "Wenn es mir möglich wäre -- ! Wenn ich's vermöchte -- ! (1302), and "Wenn ich rasch wäre -- -- . . ." (1319), she is weighing the possibility of the flight to the sun (Achilles) more than that of a physical escape.

In other words, throughout this scene Penthesilea is speaking in two languages, the two languages of which Max Kommerell writes:

> Die Sprachen, die Kleists Helden sprechen, sind abgestuft nach ihrer Treue oder Untreue gegen das Unbewusste. Die Sprache der Nebenfiguren ermangelt dieser Abstufung, da sie weder ein Geheimnis sind noch ein

> solches fassen. Eine Szene der "Penthesilea," die neunte, ist von dieser Abstufung so beherrscht, dass derselbe Mensch hier eigentlich zwei Sprachen spricht, eine Sprache, in der er seine Gefühle nach einer geprägten Denkform auslegt, eine andere, die nicht mehr von ihm gewählt, sondern ihm gegeben, die Ursprünglichkeit des Inneren aufschliesst.[25]

In a conflict of these two languages Penthesilea's words open the ninth scene. The vision which she calls up of hounds, elephants, torches, and Sichelwagen anticipates, of course, the fearsome realization of the most extreme act in the drama (scene xxiii). The verbal gestures are immediately carried into this scene in this first suppressed tirade: Achilles is to be "mowed down." The fateful word "üppig," however, already reveals the more basic, unconscious intent of the woman who was in the arms of Achilles at the moment in which she fainted (1127). "Und mähet seine üpp'gen Glieder nieder!" (1173). She hears none of the admonitions of the Amazons about her (these were shortened to a more breathless urgency in the final version). Penthesilea is occupied here, as she is consistently throughout the play, by the bosom and the symbolic gesture toward it, the Amazon disfigurement of her femininity and her constant subconscious reassertion of it: "Mir diesen Busen zu zerschmettern, Prothoe!" (1177). It is noteworthy that Kleist underscored the importance of this gesture by removing in the final version from the line immediately following, the apposition "die Brust, so voll Gesang," which, in its reference to a metaphorical breast within, compromised the real, if suppressed, sensual force of the foregoing "Busen." The contrast of this inward meaning to the subdued rage of her opening lines must be emphasized. The role of these words, and thus their gesture, is suddenly reversed as her identification become more feminine. Was not Achilles' action on the battlefield (in her swoon she knew, on the "real" level, nothing of his tenderness) like trampling a lyre underfoot because it whispered her name, she asks? And she further reveals her subconscious desires in the following image of nestling beside or stroking the bear or the panther, which might approach her with the same feeling (she uses the word "Regung") with which she approached Achilles.

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[25]Max Kommerell, "Die Sprache und das Unaussprechliche," Geist und Buchstabe der Dichtung (4th ed.; Frankfurt, 1956), p. 309.

Again Penthesilea ignores the chorus, which in contrast to the earlier stilted version (Schmidt, IV, 337) has become so stylized here as to be almost a musical dialog: "So willst du nicht entweichen?" "Willst nicht fliehen?"/ "Willst dich nicht retten?" (1184f.). And Prothoe concludes the variation with a question which is a marvel of ambiguity, purposely unknown to the speaker: "Was kein Name nennt,/ Auf diesem Platz hier soll es sich vollbringen?" (1185f.). In verbalizing this profound quandary, Penthesilea cannot deny the one most urgent demand within her, which again is conveyed through, and epitomized in, the gesture toward her breast:

> Ist's meine Schuld, dass ich im Feld der Schlacht
> Um sein Gefühl mich kämpfend muss bewerben?
> Was will ich denn, wenn ich das Schwert ihm zücke?
> Will ich ihn denn zum Orkus niederschleudern?
> Ich will ihn ja, ihr ew'gen Götter, nur
> An diese Brust will ich ihn niederziehn!
>
> (1187-1192)

Much as in the last scene of the play Penthesilea's pantomime, which follows these words and must be interpolated, is narrated by the chorus: "Sie rast --" "Unglückliche!" "Sie ist von Sinnen!"/"Sie denkt nichts als den Einen nur." "Der Sturz/Hat völlig ums Bewusstsein sie gebracht" (1193ff.). There is an irony of concreteness in this last line, spoken by Prothoe.

With a mighty attempt at control, Penthesilea's next words (1196ff.) belie the entity of her consciousness. They are only in part the words of that other, liminal language of which Kommerell speaks and which here try to deny that she has been felled by the arrow of Amor. A noble and stoic declamation of these lines would fail utterly to convey the deep inner discord behind them. "Ich will mich fassen," she says. She will do, "was die Not erheischt," and she will do it "mit Grazie." The words stumble on from one impossibility to another, making concessions which can never be fulfilled. She asks why she should childishly break with the Gods (Mars and Artemis) just because "ein flüchtiger Wunsch" will not be fulfilled? The words keep giving themselves the lie, for again the familiar gestures and vocabulary force their way through the tragic guise:

> Das Glück, gesteh' ich, wär mir lieb gewesen;
> Doch fällt es mir aus Wolken nicht herab,
> Den Himmel drum erstürmen will ich nicht.
>
> (1202-1204)

And lest we should still be in doubt about the dichotomy here, Kleist has told us that these lines are to be said "mit erzwungener Fassung" (before 1196). This is one of those astonishingly unclassic stage directions which one encounters in Kleist and which describe the emotional quality of what is said and give words something they never before had in German dramatic literature. Tino Kaiser writes of these Anweisungen:

> Wie Form, Klang und Wort bei Kleist nicht um ihretwillen, sondern um dessentwillen, was sie formen, was sie zum Klingen bringen, was sie im Wort aussprechen, da sind, so wird durch die Parenthese das Schweigen, das Physiognomische, die Geste ebenso zum sprechenden Ausdruck des Gedankens gemacht.[26]

It is this new quality of words as gesture which Kleist realized was untenable for the stage of his day. It is this quality which made Penthesilea "ebensowenig für die Bühne geschrieben, als jenes frühere Drama: der Zerbrochene Krug," as he wrote to Goethe.[27] For heretofore it had been the purpose of the drama to give an atmosphere solely through formed and spoken words and through a strictly delineated gamut of gesticulations.

Another gesture is demanded of the seemingly acquiescent Penthesilea as soon as her relieved comrades are about to flee: "mit plötzlich aufflammenden Gesicht" she sees the preparations which have been made for the "Rosenfest" in the previous scenes. As earlier in the fifth scene and again in the nineteenth (2298ff.), she momentarily becomes again "die rasende Megär'" (393). With a triple damnation she "zerhaut die Rosenkränze" (1224). And with a projection of her inner desires she summons up all too elaborately, and condemns all too vehemently, the orgiastic mating scene, whose anticipation attracts and repels her simultaneously (1215ff.). Kleist's choice of words conveys the very inherent writhing gesture of this imagined revelry: the "schnöde Ungeduld" which calls it up; the thoughts of the orgy "im blutumschäumten Mordgetümmel"; the "Begierden . . . im Busen keuscher Arestöchter,/. . . die, wie losgelassne Hunde,/Mir der Drommete erzne Lunge bellend,/ . . . überschrein!" Primed by these images, Penthesilea ascends the scale to a magnificent condemnation of all existence which confounds her senses. The springtime of these

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[26]Tino Kaiser, op. cit., p. 115.

[27]Kleist, ed. Sembdner, II, 840.

roses recalls her former supplication to the "Frühlingsblumen" to cushion Achilles' fall before she receives him as prisoner (861). And it is this recollection which is too much for her here. With progressively expansive embrace she cries:

> Dass der ganze Frühling
> Verdorrte! Dass der Stern, auf dem wir atmen,
> Geknickt, gleich dieser Rosen einer, läge!
> Dass ich den ganzen Kranz der Welten so,
> Wie dies Geflecht der Blumen, lösen könnte!
> (1226-1230)

The condemnation has burgeoned too rapidly, from the springtime of the flowers, to the earth, to the entire universe. There is no further step in this progression for which there is also a word in her vocabulary. So, after a pause, the inexpressibility of her situation finds a vocal outlet in her imploring entreaty to the one goddess who stands farthest removed from her background. This "--O Aphrodite!" is a wail, an Urlaut. It is the only occurrence in the drama of the name of that goddess and is a moment of pure gesture akin, in some degree, to the final "Ach!" of Alkmene and to Penthesilea's own beseeching "Neridensohn!" (2308).[28]

Following commentary by the chorus upon the desperate state of Penthesilea's situation, a priestess announces the rapid approach of Achilles. Again Kleist gives to a standard metaphor an additional and deeper meaning: "Im Schuss der Pfeile naht er schon heran!" (1235, cf. also 1242). From the first the arrow has become an attribute of Achilles. With the words, "Ach meine Seel' ist matt bis in den Tod!" Penthesilea, like Guiskard in a similar situation, is compelled to sit down, carrying the gesture in the words over into physical demonstration; and her next words are of the same simplicity as this gesture: "Ich will hier bleiben." Every action and every word is a further demonstration of the gesture: she wants to be tired; she wants to wait and, like Saint Theresa in ecstasy, to receive the arrow and to be dead, in the double implications of these symbols. "Ich kann nicht stehen./Soll das Gebein mir brechen?" (1240f.). With the insistence upon the demonstrative "dies" in Penthesilea's next lines, she accompanies, in a sense, her own pantomime. Let Achilles come, she says, let him place his steel boot upon this neck!

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[28]This exclamation follows the other threefold damnation in the drama: an identical development of an identical gesture.

In a direct recall of 615 she says: "Lasst ihn mit Pferden häuptlings heim mich schleifen" (1248). Let him cast "diesen Leib hier, frischen Lebens voll," to the hounds and the vultures. And the famous words, "Staub lieber, als ein Weib sein, das nicht reizt" (1253), echo the lamentation and supplication of her "O Aphrodite!" The "pantomime" continues as Penthesilea tears away her necklaces, "verdammte Flitter!" (1254). The adornments of her headgear are next in this strangely ambiguous divestiture. She damns the "wilde Höllenkünste" of the hypocrites who had dressed her for battle, who stood about her with mirrors ("rechts und links"), praising "der schlanken Glieder/In Erz gepresste Götterbildung" (1262ff.). And the last step in this development is given as a mimic stage direction: "Die Tränen stürzen ihr aus den Augen, sie lehnt sich an einen Baum" (after 1270).

At this point the two lines of action converge, as Prothoe--"plötzlich gerührt, indem sie sich neben ihr niedersetzt" (before 1271)--articulates for the silent Penthesilea. The effectiveness of these lines as gesture lies in the strength gained from the repetition and the exhaustion of their fundamental meaning, which is "nicht können." It is, however, a somewhat different gesture in words from the literal repetition of this phrase. Rather it is an approach from several directions, with the purpose of entering into the idea by exhausting the possibilities of synonymous formulation. This verbal hammering-on-the-doors is not unlike the description by the "Rosenmädchen" in scene vi of the one perfect rose which she has found for the Queen. Such passages as these illustrate well Kleist's battle with words in order to force them to reveal the dynamism of his intention. In this sense Prothoe says:

> Wenn du <u>nicht kannst</u>, <u>nicht willst</u> -- sei's! . . .
> . . . Was <u>nicht möglich</u> ist,
> Nicht ist, in deiner Kräfte Kreis <u>nicht liegt</u>,
> Was du <u>nicht leisten k a n n s t</u>: die Götter hüten,
> Dass ich es von dir fordre! . . .
>
> (1271-1275)

These words are followed by Prothoe's famous formulation of the enigma within Penthesilea's breast, which we have already touched upon ("Was in ihr walten mag, das weiss nur sie,/Und jeder Busen ist, der fühlt, ein Rätsel.") More important, we assert, is that Penthesilea's pantomime continues through this rhetoric; and when asked why she is weeping, the only words she can utter are: "Schmerzen, Schmerzen" (1291); to the

question "Wo?" she answers merely: "Hier." And when Prothoe asks her if she can help, the answer is: "Nichts, nichts, nichts" (1292; cf. 2343f.). The gesture in this repetition continues the astonishing usage of the negative in this scene. It is strikingly like King Lear's "Never, never, never, never, never" (V/iii) and, in a somewhat different way, like Hamlet's "Well, well, well" (III/i). As in music, repetition constitutes gesture. Blackmur writes:

> In a sense any word or congeries of words can be pushed to the condition of gesture either by simple repetition or by a combination of repetition and varied preparation. . . . It is not at all the meaning that the words had that counts, but the meaning that repetition, in a given situation, makes them take on.[29]

The convergence of Prothoe's line with Penthesilea's is only momentary, for Prothoe presently urges flight again. The futility of Penthesilea's stammered "wenn ich . . ." (five times in all) is particularly gripping in lines 1302ff. which, with their wealth of dashes indicating indecision and confusion, constitute an irony of classical Heldenfassung. Here, too, it is the pauses which speak:

> W e n n es mir möglich wär' -- ! W e n n ich's
> vermöchte -- !
> Das Äusserste, das Menschenkräfte leisten,
> Hab' ich getan -- Unmögliches versucht --
> Mein Alles hab' ich an den Wurf gesetzt;
> Der Würfel, der entscheidet, liegt, er liegt:
> Begreifen muss ich's -- -- und dass ich verlor.
> (1302-1307)

But Prothoe is already moving away, as Diomedes from Achilles, with her "Vernunft keilförmig" (230), and with the same type of Athene's logic which Odysseus has previously evolved (cf. 48ff.). And Penthesilea pays no attention. Her next words, instead, are a marvel of ambiguity. "Nach einer unruhigen Bewegung," she soliloquizes: "Wenn ich rasch wäre -- -- Ach, es macht mich rasend!" (1319) and asks "-- Wo steht die Sonne?" Prothoe, of course, interprets this to mean: what time is it? Is there yet time for escape? and points out: "Dort, dir grad' im Scheitel." But Penthesilea means: where

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[29]Richard P. Blackmur, Language as Gesture (New York, 1952), p. 215.

is Helios with "seinem goldnen Lockenhaar," of whom she had previously had a vision (678)? With such subtle devices, which we can call only the gestures of the language, Kleist reveals Penthesilea's thorough confusion of Achilles, Helios, and "Ruhm." Of Prothoe's intervening eighteen lines Penthesilea hears only the first: "Dort, dir grad' im Scheitel" (1320) and the last three:

> Bis meiner lieben Schwester Wunsch erfüllt,
> Und der Pelid' ihr doch, nach so viel Mühen,
> Besiegt zuletzt zu Füssen niedersank.
> (1335-1337)[30]

All the while she has been looking into the sun "unverwandt"; and her next words are certainly not those of someone who has collected herself in preparation for flight: "Dass ich mit Flügeln, weit gespreizt und rauschend,/Die Luft zerteilte -- !" (1338f.). The chorus can make no incursions upon this growing trance:

> Zu hoch, ich weiss, zu hoch --
> Er spielt in ewig fernen Flammenkreisen
> Mir um den sehnsuchtsvollen Busen hin.
> (1341-1343)

And when asked about whom she is speaking, Penthesilea says only "Gut, gut" (1344). After a (long) pause, she asks: "Wo geht der Weg?" and "sammelt sich und steht auf" (1345). If, perchance, Kleist intended this question and stage direction to signify a sudden return to the conscious level on the part of Penthesilea (which is dubious), it endures for a fraction of a second only. For Meroe's "So willst du dich entschliessen?" and Prothoe's "So hebst du dich empor?" return her immediately to the realm of her superhuman vision. It seems never to have been noted before by critics of this scene that the paradox of this situation is uniformly continued in Penthesilea's unarticulated reaction to the extended symbol of the arch (ironically the most famous lines of the drama), with whose grandiloquence Prothoe attempts to urge her back to reality. In other words, the position which maintains that at this point Penthesilea has comprehended the nature of

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[30]The technique of "Vorbei-" and "Heraushören" here is identical to that in Homburg, when the Prince grasps and reinterprets only the words: "Dann wird er die Fanfare blasen lassen" (322), of Dörfling's orders.

her dilemma, is profoundly moved by the stoicism of the rhetoric, and is again, even momentarily, willing to be led to safety, is absolutely untenable. Kleist's use of this well-known and concrete image here is almost in the nature of a serious and yet somehow parodistic remembrance of its original application in the letter to Wilhelmine. It is not possible to share, for instance, Fricke's unbridled enthusiasm for what he sees as the key significance of this passage for Kleist's later work:

> In jenen Worten . . . spricht Kleist selbst sein eigenstes Erlebnis aus, seine tiefste Wirklichkeit, die verzehrende Herrlichkeit des Ich, die vernichtend ist und rettend zugleich,--das heilige Gesetz seines Lebens, den Ursprung seiner Qual wie seiner Herrlichkeit. . . . Es liesse sich kaum ein zweites Bild finden, das mit so unerhörter Symbolkraft jene innerste Wirklichkeit, die die Seele der Dichtung Kleists ist und die die Untersuchung deutlich zu machen sich bemüht, zur Darstellung bringt.[31]

Quite to the contrary, we maintain that it is the unspoken reaction of Penthesilea to this passage which must arouse our enthusiasm and which epitomizes "jene innerste Wirklichkeit, die die Seele der Dichtung Kleists ist." It is central to our apprehension of the "An-einander-Vorbeireden" in this scene that we appreciate that the protagonist sees, hears, speaks, and feels <u>past</u> Prothoe's motives and that she applies only certain half-heard snatches of the speech (for that is what it is) to her own confused state of mind: "So sei's auch wie ein Riese!" "Sinke nicht!" "Stehe fest!" "Beut deine Scheitel . . . der Götter Blitzen dar!" "Lass dich bis zum Fuss herab zerspalten." "Nicht wanke in dir selber." In other words, within the framework of her vision Penthesilea applies these charges <u>literally</u>. On her private level, metaphor has become reality. Her next words: "Geht's hier, geht's dort?" (1357), are a repetition (and thus an enforcement) of her last previous words and are a gesture which indubitably demonstrates that Prothoe's fine words have not dissuaded Penthesilea one whit from the pursuit of her vision. And Prothoe's suggestion of "die Felsen" as a possible route of escape only enmeshes the fate of the Amazons more deeply in Penthesilea's psychic state. For consistent with the imagery

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[31]Gerhard Fricke, <u>Gefühl und Schicksal bei Heinrich von Kleist</u> (Berlin, 1929), p. 113.

of the drama, yet without making it explicit through words, Kleist subtly reveals to us that Penthesilea is reliving the moment of "impossibility" in scene ii, in which she, despite everything, was finally able to scale the "Felsen" (300-350). Here she exclaims: "Den Felsen!/Da komm ich ihm um soviel näher" (1361f.). The question: "Wem, meine Königin?" goes unanswered. On a bridge where the sun is significantly brightest, the Queen stops and the cunning and obsessed mind seems to take a turn: she must exhaust every possibility to attain her goal. Prothoe, now along with all the others deceived by this turn of events, despairs. Yet Penthesilea is "erschrocken," for she does not comprehend that she is in any way acting against Prothoe's advice: "Was ist? Was fehlt dir?/Was hab' ich ihr getan, ihr Jungfraun, sprecht!" (1371f.). Yet asked what she intends, her "Nichts, nichts, gar nichts" (1374) echoes the same words in 1292 and shows the impossibility of rational explanation. With tranquillity she reveals her mighty plan:"Den Ida will ich auf den Ossa wälzen,/Und auf die Spitze ruhig bloss mich stellen" (1375f.). (This is her way of reacting to Prothoe's words: "Beut deine Scheitel, einem Schlusstein gleich,/Der Götter Blitzen dar, und rufe: trefft!")

The magic of this moment lies in the sudden revelation to the chorus of Amazons surrounding her, that all the time they thought Penthesilea sane, she was speaking past them with mysterious double-innuendo. Kleist was so intent upon making this moment electrifying for the audience, that he recast the entire section to emphasize the quality of speechless stupefaction. The original version had the following: Penthesilea: "Den Ida will ich erst auf Pelion Und Pelion wieder auf den Ossa wälzen Den Ossa will ich auf den Kaukasus, Und Kaukasus auf den Altai thürmen, Mir von Altai, Pelion, Kaukasus, Den Weltgebirgen eine Leiter bauen, Und auf der Staffeln höchst' empor mich schwingen." Prothoe: "Nein, meine Theuerste --." Penthesilea: "Nicht? Und warum nicht?" Prothoe: "Dies Werk ist der Giganten --." Penthesilea: "Der Giganten! Worin denn fühl' ich schwächer mich als sie?" Prothoe: "Jedoch, gesetzt -- !" etc. This relatively tame exchange between Penthesilea and Prothoe was replaced with the longer and infinitely more potent final version with its rapid flow of ellipses (1377-1385). It is instructive that even such a small matter as the exclamation mark originally after "Doch gesetzt -- !" was replaced with the interrogative gesture of the question mark, although syntactically it would scarcely be expected. The exclamation stops the gesture's flow, while the question extends it indefinitely. Such a

feature as this can be observed again and again in Kleist's revisions of his dramas. His surprisingly unorthodox use of punctuation must never be overlooked: nearly every dash, comma, question mark, and exclamation point implies a gesture which the author was able to indicate through these tangible means alone.

"Gesetzt nun, du vollbrächtest dieses Werk -- ?" asks Meroe, and Prothoe continues: "Gesetzt, was würdest du -- ?" "Blödsinnige!" cries Penthesilea, "Bei seinen goldnen Flammenhaaren zög' ich/Zu mir hernieder ihn -- " In desperation Prothoe asks again: "Wen?" And with an expansive gesticulation Penthesilea answers: "Helios,/Wenn er am Scheitel mir vorüberfleucht!" (1382ff.). By this point in the drama Kleist, with a most surprising economy of words, has transformed the flaming hair of Helios-Achilles and the word "Scheitel" into true symbols, much as he makes symbols of "Busen," "Felsen," "Rosen," "Wunden," and above all "Themiscyra," "Tempel unter Eichen," "Kuss," all without recourse to "explanations" of their meanings. It is always the gestures which generate the symbols. In this connection we quote again from R. P. Blackmur's outstanding essay on "Language as Gesture":

> A symbol, I take it, is what we use to express meaningfulness in a permanent way which cannot be expressed in direct words or formulas of words with any completeness; a symbol is a cumulus of meaning, which, once established, attracts further meanings to it until, overloaded, it collapses. The making of symbols is a steady occupation for minds at all aware, and they are especially the objects in which meaning is shared and transmitted by those who have life in common. . . . Gestures are the first step toward the making of symbol.[32]

And in a more recent discussion he continues:

> What writing drags into being and holds there while the writing lasts may be called the experience of the actual; what writing creates--what goes on after the writing has stopped--may sometimes be called symbol. It is symbol when it stands, not for what has been said or stated, but for what has not been said and could not be said, for what has been delivered by

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[32]Blackmur, op. cit., p. 217.

> the writing into what seems an autonomous world of its own. Symbol is the most exact possible meaning, almost tautologically exact, for what stirred the words to move and what the moving words made. Symbol stands for nothing previously known, but for what is "here" made known. If symbol stands for anything else than itself continuing, it stands for that within me the reader which enables me to recognize it and to illuminate it with my own experience at the same moment that what it means illuminates further corridors in my sense of myself.[33]

In this sense there is no other work by Kleist of more captivating symbolic content than Penthesilea.

After the Queen's astonishing revelation of her subconscious, Prothoe's reaction in the original version was to exclaim to the Amazons: "Habt ihr dies Wort gehört!" This was changed instead to the awe-stricken silence of the chorus: "Die Fürstinnen sehn sprachlos und mit Entsetzen einander an" (after 1386). In this self-induced trance Penthesilea has been looking only upward. Suddenly she now sees the reflection of the sun on the water's surface below the bridge. And there "he" (Helios-Achilles) appears: "Ich Rasende!/Da liegt er mir zu Füssen ja! Nimm mich --."[34] Hereupon she falls forward, and it is only physically that she is stopped from entering the water's embrace. Psychologically she is again in Achilles' arms on the battlefield as in her previous swoon (scene viii). When Meroe says: "Da fällt sie leblos,/Wie ein Gewand, in unsrer Hand zusammen" (1389f.), this is quite true. All that is left of her psychically at the moment is her robe, and we

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[33]Blackmur, The Lion and the Honeycomb: Essays in Solicitude and Critique (New York, 1955), p. 224.

[34]Cf. this passage in Kleist's letter of June, 1806, to Freiherr von Stein zum Altenstein: "Ich sitze wie an einem Abgrund, . . . das Gemüt immer starr über die Tiefe geneigt, in welcher die Hoffnung meines Lebens untergegangen ist: jetzt wie beflügelt von der Begierde, sie bei den Locken noch heraufzuziehen, jetzt niedergeschlagen von dem Gefühl unüberwindlichen Unvermögens. . . . Stünd ich vor Ihren Augen, so würd ich Sprache finden, Ihnen deutlicher zu sein. . . . Obschon ich es niemandem in der Welt bin."--Kleist, ed. Sembdner, II, 792.

know that Kleist purposely sought this specific image, since earlier he had the less effective: "Sie sinkt uns athemlos -- ." Again the metaphor is made a reality. It cannot be over-emphasized that Kleist's constant purpose in revising was to supplant the simile with the metaphor and to make the metaphor a symbol, i.e., an intensification from Gleichnis to Bild to Sinn-Bild.

Central to the understanding of the scenes following ix is the identification of this moment with two others: the account of the second battle with Achilles in which we are told of Penthesilea's fainting in the arms of her foe, and the account of a similar (psychologically the same) dream when she awakens in scene xiv (1556ff.). Indeed, the entire action of this ninth scene is symbolic of an inner turmoil in Penthesilea so great that when its combination of torture and bliss becomes too much to endure it culminates in the emotional outlet of unconsciousness. This escape valve technique of Kleist is, of course, one of his most unique dramatic gestures and is used for many other figures: Sylvester, Käthchen, Alkmene, Homburg, to name the most prominent. This faint of Penthesilea (which is simultaneously a kind of mystic union with Helios), is one of the "Kleistischen Ohnmachten, in denen die Seele zu ihrem Urgrund zurücktaucht," as Kommerell puts it.[35] Such an act of fainting as we see here fulfills a twofold function. Not only does it provide an emotional stopgap for the moment when a continuation on the conscious level would be deleterious to the mind of the character, but it also goes one step further by functioning as an opiate for some time after he has awakened refreshed.

By returning even momentarily to the primordial state, as it were, balance or "Grazie," as Kleist says, is reinstated. This gesture of the entry of Penthesilea's spirit into the mirror of the water's surface (very engaging symbols with Kleist) would seem to be a forerunner of the final paragraph in the 1810 or 1811 essay, Über das Marionettentheater, in which, as we have seen, Kleist speaks of the pure gesture of the "Gliedermann" and the "Gott." Penthesilea is to be

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[35]Kommerell, op. cit., p. 273. It is somewhat difficult to appreciate Hans Wolff's description of the act as "ein vereitelter Selbstmordversuch," or to see as "ein störender Widerspruch" the fact, "dass Penthesilea in der zweiten Ohnmacht träumt, was ihr in der ersten Ohnmacht zugestossen ist." --Heinrich von Kleist (Bern, 1954), pp. 26 and 27.

vouchsafed such a state of bliss for a very short period--for she is above all human. But at moments she does partake of the inexpressible buoyancy of the unencumbered. It is true that as a result of her fainting she has been placed on an artificial plateau for the immediate purposes of the plot: her Vertrauen becomes tragically victimized under false pretenses. However, an illustration of the salubrious effects of her fainting, were she to be left in peace, is given by her in several places in scene xiv (1557ff. and particularly 1586ff.). Were it not for Prothoe's words, which, instead of comforting her as intended, initiate further restiveness through the extreme subtlety with which Kleist incorporates the symbols of the bridge, the rock, and the water, Penthesilea would indeed be "selig."

By the end of the ninth scene the heroine has revealed in word and gesture the tragic nature of her soul in its conflict with the Amazons' law within her and with "Amors Pfeil" from without. Her path "in den Orkus" is inevitable even before this point. Her momentary and false escape will preserve her for the greater ecstasies and greater tortures which the balance of this titanic day holds.

Scene xv.

The fifteenth scene of Penthesilea, the longest in the drama, is actually a continuation of scene xiv, in which the Queen, upon awakening from her premonitory dreams, is finally persuaded that Achilles is her captive. There is no exit or entrance to demand the transition to a new scene; however, the fact that Achilles comes forward at this point for the extensive confrontation with Penthesilea, Kleist saw as ample cause for a division and for making this deceptive idyll an entity. The arc of the action in this scene is the most fateful in the play, inasmuch as on this plateau of false reality Penthesilea opens her soul to the man whom she feels she loves, whereas his every response to her is somehow tainted by his superior awareness of the ruse. A gesture of prone submission opens and closes the scene. At its opening Penthesilea (echoing lines 1615 and 1618 in scene xiv) says to Achilles: "Komm, lege dich zu Füssen mir" (1750), and "Fürchtest du, die dich in Staub gelegt?" (1753; "Staub" is, of course, another of the important word symbols in the drama). But at the end of the scene, after the tragic expedient has been exposed, it is Achilles who says: "Durch der Waffen Glück gehörst du mir;/

Bist mir zu Füssen, Treffliche, gesunken" (2246f.). Between these two moments there lies the panorama of Penthesilea's origins and soul. So complete is the articulation of her demonic love for Achilles, that when the returning Amazons proclaim in scene xix: "Sie ist gerettet!" (2297), we feel urged to amend this chorus ironically to: "Sie ist gerichtet!" (Penthesilea seems to be a kind of modern Faust whose only possible salvation would lie in the inner acceptance of the "töricht Herz" which, as Prothoe has said, is indeed her fate.)

Kleist was not so clumsy as to make of this scene one great epic account by the Amazon Queen. Despite appearances and the protestations of many a reader, a wealth of gesture lies in Achilles' gradual extraction of information from Penthesilea and in her subtly shaded transformation from reluctance to enthusiastic submission.[36] Her practicality, her impatience to depart for Themiscyra, the desire to compromise temporarily the fulfillment of her love in order to follow what she thinks to be the letter of the law, the residue of her intuition and anxiety from the previous scene--all these gradually vanish as her rapture and the fullness of her narration increase. The tragedy of the situation is that the more she reassembles the tatters of the Amazon code and weaves her love for Achilles into the heretical fabric which she has made from them, the more amused and distracted he is by her behavior. The situation is an impossible one. It is "die Einweihung eines Nichteinzuweihenden," as Kommerell says.[37] And why, indeed, should this hero who is "List und Stärke des Mannes und lachender Übermut des Bewusstseins,"[38] why should he be initiated into this preposterous society by the uncompromising Penthesilea, who, only as a man herself, can accept a man? The entire scene is both Penthesilea's most blissful hour and her most perilous misunderstanding. It is an immense gesture of "An-einander-Vorbeireden."

It begins with the reversal of a symbol, already an abnormality: "Sieh mich . . . wie deine Sonne an" (1755), says Penthesilea to Achilles, who until then was Helios to her. Submissiveness finds another statement of its familiar gesture:

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[36]Ever since Goethe's especially negative reaction to this scene, its basically theatrical conception and realization seem to have escaped critics.

[37]Kommerell, op. cit., p. 274.

[38]Ibid., p. 275.

". . . als du niedersankst, beneidete/Hier diese Brust den Staub, der dich empfing" (1761f.), she tells him. As the scene develops, the gestures of Penthesilea become softer; the words "Liebe," "Lieber," "Geliebte" are of unprecedented frequency. Bedecking Achilles with wreaths and garlands of roses, Penthesilea embodies a gesture in a remarkable simile: ". . . die Gefühle dieser Brust, o Jüngling,/Wie Hände sind sie, und sie streicheln dich" (1772f.).

The act of making and placing wreaths is encountered frequently in both Kleist's works and symbolically in his letters. It is connected with ambition and with idyllic moments. In the latter cases it is always associated with some sort of pantomime. There is in Schroffenstein a scene (II/i) with motifs so closely related to those in this scene as to suggest that Kleist must have had but one fixed concept, in gesture and in word, for all such situations. Agnes says of Ottokar in this scene: "Sein Antlitz/Gleicht einem wilden Morgenungewitter" (693f.); and about Achilles Penthesilea exclaims: "Wie sein gewitterdunkles Antlitz schimmert!" (1784). To Agnes Ottokar is like "die Sommersonne" (702). She also wishes that his reaction to her would be "Gleich einem jungen Rosse, das zuletzt/Doch heimkehrt zu dem Stall, der es ernährt" (707f.); Penthesilea asks Achilles to promise that he will come to her for his every wish, to which he answers, "Wie junge Rosse/Zum Duft der Krippe, die ihr Leben nährt" (1842f.). Agnes says to Ottokar: "Du bist so seltsam,/So feierlich - - bist unbegreiflich mir" (725f.); Achilles is repeatedly astounded by the phenomenon of Penthesilea and asks: "Unbegreifliche, wer bist du?" (1811), "Wer bist du, wunderbares Weib?" (1773), and says in another place again: "Du wunderbares Weib" (1877).

On the basis of these questions above, one scholar has overevaluated the literal meaning and, in his reconstruction of an "Urpenthesilea," has done some damage to the organic nature of this scene.[39] He claims that Achilles' questions are to be taken at face value, that he literally does not know Penthesilea's name or that she is the Amazon Queen. Is it not rather Achilles' gesture of astonishment and transport, together with his half-comprehended agreement with Prothoe to keep Penthesilea, by means of questions, from the sudden realization of her dilemma, which is the central issue here? It may be very true that parts of this scene were written

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[39]Wolff, op. cit., p. 24.

before some of the other scenes; but the fact that this "inconsistency" is exactly the same as that discovered by Niejahr half a century and more ago,[40] only suggests today that the finical approach of such scholars tends to ignore the absolute artistic consistency with which Achilles' questions fit into the context as word gestures. Kleist, who showed such phenomenal thoroughness in his revisions, would scarcely have overlooked a threefold question as to Penthesilea's identity if it were literally intended to be mere curiosity on the part of the interrogator.

The words in the actual placing of the garlands are a graphic commentary to the accompanying gestures. They are lucid demonstrations of how the author used punctuation for pauses and inferred action: "Gib her. -- [She reaches for a strand of roses]/Ich sagte: still! Du wirst es schon erfahren./ - - [She places the garland] Hier diese leichte Rosenwindung nur/Um deine Scheitel, deinen Nacken hin - - [A pause as she contacts these parts of his body]/Zu deinen Armen, Händen, Füssen nieder - - [Another such pause]/Und wieder auf zum Haupt - - - - [The same, even longer] so ist's geschehn" (1774ff.). Penthesilea's torment (partially, but not solely, because contact is forbidden before the appointed hour in Themiscyra) is reflected by the gestures implicit in the following exchange: "Penthesilea: ' -- Was atmest du?' Achilles: 'Duft deiner süssen Lippen.'/Penthesilea (indem sie sich zurückbeugt): 'Es sind die Rosen, die Gerüche streun./ -- Nichts, nichts!' Achilles: 'Ich wollte sie am Stock versuchen.'/Penthesilea: 'Sobald sie reif sind, Liebster, pflückst du sie.' (Sie setzt ihm noch einen Kranz auf den Scheitel und lässt ihn gehn.)" (1780ff.). It is instructive to compare the total absence of stage directions in the verses which follow this exchange, for here it is obvious to whom Penthesilea is speaking. We must always be aware of whom Kleist sees and where he sees him on the stage of his mind's eye.

Still cautious of compromising herself, Penthesilea demands in the nervous exchange of lines 1792-1805 that she be reconfirmed in her belief that this <u>is</u> Achilles, her captive. Her sixth sense speaks with a suspicious tautness: "Man möchte, wenn er so erscheint, fast zweifeln,/Dass er es sei"; "Sprich . . . warst das du? Hast du ihm wirklich, d u,"

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[40]Johannes Niejahr, "Kleists Penthesilea," <u>Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturgeschichte</u>, VI (1893), 506-553.

etc.; and: "Sprich! Rede! Was bewegt dich so? Was fehlt dir?" "Ich bin's," answers Achilles. And Penthesilea repeats "(indem sie ihn scharf angesehen)": "Er sagt, er sei's." Even Prothoe must corroborate his identity: "An diesem Schmuck hier kannst du ihn erkennen." "Woher?" demands Penthesilea, and Prothoe must be specific in her demonstrations of proof. Thus the entire procedure is revealed in a completely unarticulated way to have been the testing of reality as a prelude to the first kiss. (Penthesilea is almost like someone who has heard of Alkmene's fate and who will not be beguiled by blandishments and ruse.) For this kiss (1805) is the gesture which climaxes Penthesilea's self-compromising and exposes her on the pinnacle of her own soul. This is the very gesture of which Rilke speaks in the poem "Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen des Herzens," the one difference being that Penthesilea is fully aware of her "Ausgesetztsein" only when the kiss (as the ultimate symbol of the drama) is repeated in the final scene. Here in scene xv the gesture is the climax of Penthesilea's brief rapture; here she makes a complete identification:

> Nun denn, so grüss' <u>ich</u> dich mit <u>diesem</u> Kuss,
> Unbändigster der Menschen, <u>mein</u>! <u>Ich</u> bin's,
> Du junger Kriegsgott, der du angehörst;
> Wenn man im Volk dich fragt, so nennst du <u>m i c h</u>.
> (1805-1808)

To Achilles at this point Penthesilea is "eine Glanzerscheinung" who has descended from ethereal realms (cf. the reverse image in 2214). "Unbegreifliche, wer bist du?" he asks. "Wie nenn' ich dich, wenn meine eigne Seele/Sich . . . fragt, wem sie gehört?" (1811ff.). Penthesilea's answer to this question is evidence in her soul of the futility of words, a statement of the supreme position of feelings, gestures, images, of the literally unspeakable:

> Wenn sie dich fragt, so nenne diese Züge,
> Das sei der Nam', in welchem du mich denkst.--
> Zwar diesen goldnen Ring hier schenk' ich dir,
> . . . . . .
> Jedoch ein Ring vermisst sich, Namen schwinden;
> Wenn dir der Nam' entschwänd', der Ring sich misste:
> Fänd'st du mein Bild in dir wohl wieder aus?
> Kannst du's wohl mit geschlossnen Augen denken?
> (1814-1822)

And Achilles' answer is: "Es steht so fest, wie Züg' in

Diamanten" (1823). The confidence expressed by him in this answer does not correspond to that which her heart demands. But she does not realize it; she does not notice that Achilles' answer should have been: "Der Zug im Diamant steht nicht so fest." His nature is basically not as uncompromising as hers. (The answer which Penthesilea demands here, but which it is not her fate to receive, had already been written for another tragic situation: Alkmene, perplexed in her very heart by the dichotomy of fact and feeling, and despite her protestation: "Wie soll ich Worte finden, . . ./Das Unerklärliche . . . zu erklären," speaks a paean to trust and love, which is perhaps unequalled in the dramatic literature of Germany: Amphitryon, 1154-1167. That this and the passage above are most intimately related in style and intent, must be manifest.)

When Penthesilea finally names herself: "Und mich begrüsst das Volk: Penthesilea," Achilles repeats the name in such a way as to suggest that he only wanted to hear her speak it, certainly not that he had not known it, for, in addition, she says: "Ja, so sagt' ich dir" (1828), to which he then says with a gesture somewhat too gallant and too expansive to be, in Penthesilea's terms, completely genuine: "Mein Schwan singt noch im Tod: Penthesilea" (1826). And yet he would not be Achilles, were he to speak differently. The gesture in this line is of exactly the same order as that in: "Ich bau' dir solchen Tempel bei mir auf!" (2292). His love for her is real; it is merely that its intensity is of a lesser order--or merely perhaps that Penthesilea is not the Marquise von O.... . He does not comprehend the inflexibility of her nature, or that it is literally possible for her to "love him to death."

Nor does Penthesilea realize that her titanic love for him, but "in Themiscyra," is a symbol for something, the simple and natural actuality of which she fears.[41] In her haste to attend to duties prior to departure, the postponement of "Themiscyra" raises that word at each mention closer to symbolic significance: "Wir treten jetzt/Die Reise gleich nach Themiscyra an" (1844f.); "In Themiscyra erst, Neridensohn,/

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[41]Here, however, the application of psychoanalytical concepts ought to be limited. It would seem that the psychologists' next logical question: Does Penthesilea fear a disappointment?--a kind of question which has been over-bandied in Kleist literature--shatters the literary integrity of the drama; these "fears" cannot be clinically analyzed.

Kann ich mich ganz, aus voller Brust, dir weihn" (1852f.). Nervous interventions by Prothoe and Achilles give rise to doubts and hesitations on Penthesilea's part.[42] And when Achilles begs her to answer the many questions he has, she replies: "In Themiscyra, Freund" (1864). His "Hier, meine Königin!" is so forceful, that she repeats: "In Themiscyra, Freund, in Themiscyra -- /Lass mich!" (1865f.). Thus does Kleist irresistibly develop the theme which, by repetition of the key formula, attains powerfully tragic symbolic function in scene xvi and at the end of the drama.

Once convinced that temporarily she is not pressed for time, however, Penthesilea's practicality subsides. Kleist here makes a new and uniquely effective use of syntax to indicate the feeling of Achilles' words. In the latter's effort to placate the Queen and to gain time, he frames his questions in a particularly involved way. The plethora of commas and their feeling of infinitude indicate the gestures here. The following is essentially a single question, but the variety in the formulation is astonishing:

I. Was ist's, du wunderbares Weib, dass du,
[a] Athene gleich, [b] an eines Kriegsheers Spitze,
[c] Wie aus den Wolken nieder, [d] unbeleidigt,
In unsern Streit vor Troja [e] plötzlich fällst?
II. Was treibt [f] von Kopf zu Fuss in Erz gerüstet,
[g] So unbegriffner Wut voll, [h] Furien ähnlich,
Dich gegen das Geschlecht der Griechen an?
(1877-1883)

With the expansion of images one basic question has become a multitude. There is a gesture in each part, and each part invites an equivalently elaborate answer. Indeed, Penthesilea shifts quite immediately from her nervousness and terse objectivity to a correspondingly controlled and complex speech pattern. Thus gesture has provoked gesture.

It is at this point that the line of action reaches the actual plateau for the first time. Achilles' questions and interjections release a three-part account by Penthesilea of the origins of her race, of its laws and customs, and of her own life. Her epic-like verses (1905-2222) are prefaced by

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[42] N.b., the dashes in 1859, 1865, 1867, 1875; the stage direction: "befremdet" after 1867; Penthesilea's exclamation after a pause: "--sonderbar" in 1867.

a contrast with the life of the Greek maidens (1889), which is so enviously formulated that it again reveals the foundations of her conflict. The language which Penthesilea begins to speak here is the most outspoken and uncamouflaged thus far in the drama. The elaborations do not emerge from below, so to speak, but are calmly (albeit cruelly) on the surface. The feeling of these verses coincides with the tranquillity of the scene before the awakening in xiv, but it is nonetheless gesture for being exposed. The Kleistian gesture, "Ach!" begins this new theme: "Ach, Nereïdensohn!" (1887). It is like the blossoming of some melancholy flower. The contrast is at times too explicit to be satisfactorily interpreted on Penthesilea's conscious level. It is a verbal embodiment of the deficiency which she feels. She speaks of "die Kunst, die sanftere, der Frauen," "wetteifernd frohe Übungen," "die ganze Jugendpracht," "der Strauss," and "der verschämte Blick" used for the enticement of the man. It is not for her "in dem Nachtigall-durchschmetterten/Granatwald, wenn der Morgen glüht, ihm sagen,/Dass er's sei." She instead must seek her mate on the bloody battlefield, "und ihn mit ehrnen Armen mir ergreifen,/Den diese weiche Brust empfangen soll" (1888-1901).

In order to oblige Penthesilea to expand this remark, Achilles' next conversational verses constitute a fine illustration of the gradual development of thought in speaking: "Und woher quillt, von wannen ein Gesetz,/Unweiblich, du vergibst mir, unnatürlich,/Dem übrigen Geschlecht der Menschen fremd?" (1902ff.). This question is too inclusive to be answered cursorily. Penthesilea begins her answer just as expansively and with a very epical introduction: "Fern aus der Urne alles Heiligen" (1905). And now is the point for Achilles to deliver the coup de grâce: with his "Sei deutlicher" (1912), his prey is finally ensnared, speaks: "Wohlan! So höre mich," pauses for a moment, and begins the long account.

This account is anything but static, however. It is as verbal and as replete with gesture as the earlier teichoscopies and heralds' reports. The saga becomes alive. She tells of how Vexoris "die Männer rasch,/Die Kampfverbundenen, vor sich niederwarf,/Sich durch die Täler goss" (1921ff.). The invaders "ertrotzten . . . der Liebe Gruss sich noch:/ Sie rissen von den Gräbern ihrer Männer/Die Frauen zu ihren schnöden Betten hin" (1929ff.). In the sounds themselves we detect powerful gestures: "Die Sieger bürgerten, barbarenartig,/ In unsre Hütten frech sich ein" (1925f.); the women "höhlten weinend/Die Stufen mit Gebet um Rettung aus" (1938f.);

their "Betten füllten . . . sich/Mit blankgeschliffnen Dolchen an, gekeilt/Aus Schmuckgeräten" (1940ff.). The reflexive active construction in place of the passive (weak in gesture) is typical of the forcefulness of this narrative (the following are not verbatim): "der Tempel Ares' füllte sich sogleich" (1968); "die Kraft des Bogens würde sich regieren" (1980); "die feige Regung griff um sich" (1985); "nichts als der Bogen liess sich schwirrend hören" (1995); "der Bogen legte zu ihren Füssen sich" (2000); "der Frauenstaat pflanzte sich ohne Hülfe der Männer fort" (2022), etc. Kleist does not shy away from the repugnant metaphor in these passages; e.g.: "Und das gesamte Mordgeschlecht, mit Dolchen,/In einer Nacht ward es zu Tod gekitzelt" (1950f.). The impact of the moment at which Tanais severs her right breast from her body gains through the bracketing of the time sequence: "Sie riss die rechte Brust sich ab, und taufte/Die Frauen, die den Bogen spannen würden,/Und fiel zusammen eh' sie noch vollendet:/ Die Amazonen oder Busenlosen! -- /Hierauf ward ihr die Krone aufgesetzt" (1986ff.).

Kleist also borrows an occasional gesture from nature: "Frei, wie der Wind auf offnem Blachfeld, sind/Die Frauen . . ." (1954f.), or: "Und wie die feuerrote Windsbraut brechen/ Wir plötzlich in den Wald der Männer ein,/Und wehn die Reifsten derer, die da fallen,/Wie Samen, wenn die Wipfel sich zerschlagen,/In unsre heimatlichen Fluren hin" (2069ff.). In place of a sober and vapid listing of the Amazons' activities before departure into battle, Kleist introduced in the final version this dematerialized single image with all its attendant features:

> Der frohe Tag der Reise wird bestimmt,
> Gedämpfter Tuben Klang ertönt, es schwingt
> Die Schar der Mädchen flüsternd sich zu Pferd,
> Und still und heimlich, wie auf wollnen Sohlen,
> Geht's in der Nächte Glanz, durch Tal und Wald,
> Zum Lager fern der Auserwählten hin.
>
> (2062-2067)

A poignant reliving of Otrere's last moments is heightened by inserting direct quotation into the epic (2130ff.). The statement of her death is a simple gesture, the more noble in contrast with the surrounding elaboration: "Sie sagte: 'geh, mein süsses Kind . . ./Werd' eine Mutter, stolz und froh, wie ich -- '/Und drückte sanft die Hand mir, und verschied" (2137ff.). There is an equal simplicity in Penthesilea's retort to the excessive pathos in Achilles' words: "Wehmut

um die Verblichne lähmte flüchtig/Die Kraft, die deine junge Brust sonst ziert." "Ich liebte sie," is all she can say (2172).

Penthesilea's account of her first glimpse of Achilles (cf. Odysseus' version of the moment, 57ff.) contains a gesture which we note Kleist used in other situations of great moment: Käthchen's first sight of Graf von Strahl (". . . als ob sie ein Blitz niedergeschmettert hätte," I/i); at the moment when Homburg realizes that it is Natalie's glove which he holds ("steht einen Augenblick, wie vom Blitz getroffen, da," after 321); in Alkmene's account of the inspection of the diadem: "Und wie vom Blitz steh' ich gerührt -- ein J!" (1148); and in a number of the Novellen. In Penthesilea the heroine narrates her own thunderstruck pantomime: "Geblendet stand ich, als du jetzt entwichen,/Von der Erscheinung da -- wie wenn zur Nachtzeit/Der Blitz vor einen Wandrer fällt, die Pforten/Elysiums, des glanzerfüllten, rasselnd,/Vor einem Geist sich öffnen und verschliessen" (2212ff.).

Kleist does not permit the symbolic word "Themiscyra" to fade in the second part of this long scene. He further develops this paradisiacal image in the epic. "Der Tempel Dianas" now becomes a formula associated with it. Finally, through all the bulk of this narrative there emerges, above and beyond this symbol, a true confession of love: "O Pelide!/ Mein ewiger Gedanke wenn ich wachte,/Mein ew'ger Traum warst du!" (2186ff.).

Constantly the narration is interrupted with questions, remarks, and gestures by Achilles. These punctuations not only help to relieve the epic flow, but each one of them reveals more of Achilles' nature. Most of these are either pleasantly ingratiating or thoroughly naive. They tell more than a thousand descriptive words just what kind of man he is and how Kleist saw, in his mind's eye, his behavior. "Vernichtend war das Schicksal, Königin,/Das deinem Frauenstaat das Leben gab" (1932f.); "Solch eine Tat der Weiber lässt sich denken" (1951); "Nun denn, beim Zeus, die brauchte keine Brüste!" (1991); "Ich dachte eben,/Ob du mir aus dem Monde niedersteigst?" (2032). They all have the same basic tone and reveal his somewhat cavalier preoccupation with the physical and his jocosity (scene xxi is a goldmine of Achilles' characterizing language of gesture). His shock at realizing that all Amazons follow Tanais "in diesem Beispiel" (2003) is quickly overcome. Indeed, his smiling reaction to the mysteries of the Amazon cult is much the same as Goethe's to the passage

in which Penthesilea avows that her "junge, liebliche Gefühle" took refuge in the left breast, "wo sie dem Herzen um so näher wohnen" (2016).[43] Even in our own day André Gide, after the delight with which he tells us he relished the first part of the play, balks along with Goethe at this point.[44]

There is slight sarcasm in some of Achilles' words. How, for example, he asks, does the Amazon race go about its procreation? "Wirft euch Deukalion, von Zeit zu Zeit,/Noch seiner Schollen eine häuptlings zu?" (2024f.). Penthesilea must pause in her answer to this question, for Achilles is obviously smiling at her. "Warum lächelst du?" "Wer? Ich?" "Mich dünkt, du lächelst, Lieber." "--Deiner Schöne . . ." Kleist even suggests Penthesilea's slight discomfiture by having her repeat, in their entirety, her previous three lines, with a slight inversion of clauses. Such an unusual device (probably rare enough in today's "realistic" drama) gives the effect of momentarily lost composure. It is unique in the play. There are other illustrations of Kleist's keen awareness and ability to weave the ineffable "human touch" into the classic fabric. Penthesilea's next pause after the above exchange is brought about for much the same reason: the roving absent-mindedness of Achilles. "Was träumest du?" she asks (2088). "Ich?" "Du." His previous offhand manner has been here modified by Penthesilea's lengthy account of the Amazon customs and of the "Rosenfest" in particular. Indeed, Kleist specifically states that Achilles is "zerstreut." His answer is: "Geliebte, mehr,/Als ich in Worte eben fassen kann."

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[43]Goethe found that this "grenzt völlig an das Hochkomische," that it was a motif which, even in the mouth of a Columbine in the Neapolitan popular theater, might run the risk of ridicule. --Sembdner, Lebensspuren, No. 302. Indeed, this is all we know of Goethe's reaction to any specific moment in this extraordinary drama. It seems that he was incapable at the time he read the play of grasping the perfectly contained artistry and the complexity of the various language levels at which Kleist speaks.

[44]Gide finds this scene "vulgar" and in "bad taste"; in pure disenchantment he writes: "Dommage que le sommet du drame soit à ce point friable. . . . Même la qualité des vers s'en ressent, et l'on s'étonne presque, à ce moment, d'avoir pu tant admirer le reste. . . . Non moins ridicules, d'un comique non moins bas, les haletantes scènes qui suivent."--Gide, op. cit., p. 276.

This tone, however, does not last long. Jocular again, Achilles answers Penthesilea's question by cleverly twisting previous lines (e.g., 2097).

All these techniques convey, in the words of Kommerell, "dass Achill nicht nur nicht versteht, sondern dass Glosse und Witz die ihm natürliche Antwort sind, --ihm, dem Nichteinzuweihenden."[45] Until the penultimate moment of this remarkable scene the unspoken tension between the two characters maintains a fateful balance. This tension is pre-released to us at a moment of consummate irony, in which Penthesilea says: ". . . von zwei Dingen schnell beschloss ich Eines,/Dich zu gewinnen, oder umzukommen:/Und jetzt ist mir das Süssere erreicht" (2220ff.). At this instant the sounds of battle are heard, and the false plateau of this action ends at an abyss, as Achilles reveals that it is he who is the victor and Penthesilea the captive. Neither the frantic implorings of Prothoe nor the sweet protestations of Achilles avail now. It is completely in vain that the latter "mit erzwungener Heiterkeit" comes to the rescue with words which are strongly reminiscent of the compensatory prophecy of Jupiter in Amphitryon. Achilles tells Penthesilea: "Du sollst den Gott der Erde mir gebären!/Prometheus soll von seinem Sitz erstehn,/ Und dem Geschlecht der Welt verkündigen:/Hier ward ein Mensch, so hab/ ich ihn gewollt.'" (2230ff.). But more important, he tells her also that he has no intention of coming with her to Themiscyra. Indeed, he proposes a counter-symbol instead: "Nach der blühnden Phtia" (2235), not realizing in the slightest that with these words he seals his doom.

The words of Penthesilea from this point on are in the strongest contrast to her previous self-control: "Wie? Was? Kein Wort begreif' ich --"; "Was ist's? Was gibt's denn?" (2239f.). In one inexpressible moment she senses the horror of her situation. All the stage directions to indicate her emotional reaction were newly added in the final version: "sich aufraffend" (after 2248); "die Hände aufhebend" (after 2258); and "mit zitternder Lippe" (after 2266 in xvi). Her only words are exclamations: "Entsetzlicher!" (2249); "Ich die Gefangne dir?" (2258); and, with a gesture of desperation: "Ihr ewigen Himmelsmächt'! Euch ruf' ich auf!" (2259). The exhortation of Achilles: "Beherrsche dich, und höre, wie ein Felsen" (2251), shares both the same irony and the same image with the arch metaphor of Prothoe in the ninth scene. From this point until the last scene, the line of action is

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[45]Kommerell, op. cit., p. 276.

conveyed by all the gestures of fury. The techniques again mirror those used before xv: the vibrant dialog, the teichoscopy, and the Botenbericht. The resolution comes after the long pantomime in xxiv.

Scene xxiv

The twenty-fourth and last scene of the drama is its most famous. It was this scene which, even during Kleist's lifetime, inspired the first (if primitive) appreciation of the pantomime technique of its author: the performance in Berlin in 1811 by Henriette Hendel-Schütz. Whenever in earlier criticism the word pantomime has been applied to Kleist, it has been this scene which was most frequently used for demonstration. But merely to apply general criteria for simple "stummes Theater" to Penthesilea's ballet-like actions here, would be to overlook the fact that all the scene's aspects shed light on the entire development of the drama's gesture content. We should not even claim that Penthesilea's extensive pantomime in the first third of the scene is its most crucial aspect in this regard. It is later, when word and gesture are combined on the threshold of her death, that Kleist most fully reveals Penthesilea's feelings.

With the exception of xv this is the longest scene of the drama. The heroine enters immediately after Meroe's wonderful word-picture of her at the scene of the murder in xxiii: "Jetzt steht sie lautlos da, die Grauenvolle,/Bei seiner Leich', umschnüffelt von der Meute,/Und blicket starr, als wär's ein leeres Blatt,/Den Bogen siegreich auf der Schulter tragend,/In das Unendliche hinaus, und schweigt./Wir fragen, mit gesträubten Haaren, sie,/Was sie getan? Sie schweigt. Ob sie uns folgen will? Sie schweigt./Entsetzen griff mich, und ich floh zu euch" (2695ff.). And Penthesilea remains silent for nearly 150 lines. The larger arc of the gesture in the scene is one from silence, through words, and back to a final silence. Penthesilea gradually awakens from her trance to a hyperlucid realization of what she has done and what she consequently must do. Each of the author's numerous and important revisions in this scene was directed at minimizing, indeed, negating, the inhuman aspects of the murder (as so vividly related by Meroe in xxiii) and at making Penthesilea's final state transcendent. The earlier vigorous passages, reminiscent at times of the worst excesses of Sturm und Drang, underwent fundamental changes in wording and meaning. The brutal naturalism in the

descriptions was expunged. The inner confusion of Penthesilea and her destiny (we might say her "Gefühl und Schicksal") were more and more emphasized by Kleist. This viewpoint is concretely stated by Penthesilea herself: "Und gilt's den Meisterschuss ins Herz des Glückes,/So führen tück'sche Götter uns die Hand" (2889f.).

Kleist's intention is made clear from his revision for the opening passage in the scene. In place of the original and somewhat meaningless description of Penthesilea's approach: "Da schreitet sie heran,/Den Bogen, den erschlafften, auf der Schulter,/Und folgt der Leiche still und feierlich,/Als kehrte sie, ein Held, vom Siegen, heim," Kleist gave us new lines telling of the deranged appearance of the Queen which, in turn, directly reflect her psychic condition. Nettles and hawthorne are the attributes of her crazed state: "Seht, seht, ihr Fraun! -- Da schreitet sie heran,/Bekränzt mit Nesseln, die Entsetzliche,/Dem dürren Reif des Hag'dorns eingewebt,/An Lorbeer-Schmuckes statt und folgt der Leiche" (2704ff.). The similarity of these lines to the description of King Lear, "crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow weeds,/With burdock, hemlock, nettles" (IV/iv), strongly suggests that Kleist envisaged Penthesilea here as a victim of very much the same type of "insanity." (One might also find an analogy in the "mad scene" image of Ophelia and in the description of her death where she is wearing and carrying all manner of flowers, weeds, and twigs; Hamlet, IV/v and IV/vii.) With Penthesilea the poignancy of the specific image is heightened by the addition of the "laurel" which she must have imagined she was twining into her hair, the importance of this particular symbol already being familiar to us from many lines in the play. It finds expression again in Prothoe's later words: "Nimm dir den Lorbeer ab, den dornigen,/Wir alle wissen ja, dass du gesiegt" (2818f.).

As the Amazons turn away from Penthesilea and from the sight of Achilles' corpse under the red carpet, Prothoe's seeking of refuge at the bosom of the Oberpriesterin is the first symbolic step in her gradual transformation in the final scene. It can be seen throughout the drama that there is a direct correlation between the disintegration (or reintegration) of Penthesilea's personality and Prothoe's emotional remoteness (or her compassion). It is much as if the major function of Prothoe's character were as a weathervane or external gesture of Penthesilea's emotional balance. In direct proportion as this scene progresses and Prothoe becomes more and more the advocate of the Queen's soul, Penthesilea

rises from the "Ruine ihrer Seele" (2789) to her final speechless transport. As in the other scenes, Prothoe has been everywhere made more sympathetic in her attempt to fathom Penthesilea's fate.

On the other hand, the closer Penthesilea comes to her absolute renunciation of the Amazon code, the more unsympathetic the role of the High Priestess becomes. She is in the end the embodiment of the abnormal law, "die abgestorbne Eiche" (3041). To her rhetorical question: "War ich's, . . ./ Die diesen Mord dir schrecklich abgefordert?" (2731f.), we may answer yes, if we consider the larger implications of her as symbol. Yet paradoxically, she becomes a personality in this final scene; at any earlier point in the play it would have been unjustifiable to make a personal value judgment about this figure (who remains, despite all, the symbolic leader of the choral accompaniment to Penthesilea's actions, and her voice of doom). However, there is an ambivalence in the mixture of didacticism in her in xxiv; it breathes an independent reality into the Priestess at the eleventh hour and makes a subjective reaction to her pertinent at certain moments. Kleist, it would seem, was wise to add this new content to the drama at its conclusion. Catharsis is generally most meaningful in human terms and unattainable when the counter-foil remains purely an Idea. By contrast, the other Amazons eventually lose all uniqueness and, especially during the pantomime, are closer to the Greek chorus prototype than in any other scene. As observers and commentators they speak and react more than ever as a unity. Their elaborateness in rhetorical metaphor reaches a new height in the contrast of the simplicity of Penthesilea's tear and their baroque articulation of it: 2783ff.

As the Oberpriesterin seeks to escape the macabre figure at the beginning of the scene, her gestures are ones of "Entsetzen" (2711), as Kleist specifically states, and of fear, as we can read from her words. It is a fear for herself: "Diana ruf' ich an:/Ich bin an dieser Greueltat nicht schuldig!" (2711f.). As Penthesilea advances toward her, the uncanny silence and ominous gesticulation cause the Priestess to shrink back in horror. (The words, "Sie wink(e)t," occur four times as accompaniment to Penthesilea's gesture.) We can see the Queen in her unblinking, deathlike trance through the descriptive nouns: "Hades-Bürgerin" (2715), "die lebend'ge Leich'" (2717), and "Schatten" (2721). Unlike any previous gesture in the play, the High Priestess makes physical contact with her by flinging a veil in her face: "Nehmt diesen Schleier,

nehmt, und deckt sie zu" (2716). This has no effect on Penthesilea's nearly comatose state. The human agitation in the Priestess is clear: "Hinweg," "Geh' zu den Raben," "Fort! Verwese!" There is also a strong personal reference in this metaphor: "Du blickst die Ruhe meines Lebens tot" (2722).

Finally the meaning of Penthesilea's beckoning and pointing is clear: the body of Achilles is to be placed at the feet of the Oberpriesterin. The beauty in this gesture is that it remains ambiguous. We do not quite know whether Penthesilea is giving this order as if she were making a sacrifice to please the Priestess or to somehow demonstrate the outcome of what she has been forced to do; we do not know exactly how consciously aware Penthesilea is at this point of what she has done, if she thinks she has killed an animal on the hunt, or if she thinks she has brought back a wounded Achilles. All speculation is quite pointless at this very tenuous moment. It is through the gestures of the heroine that Kleist tells us how memory returns, how her subconscious fades, and that when she is later confronted with the real corpse, it is on an entirely different psychic level. This is a peculiarly Kleistian type of forgetting, in which projection and recollection, knowing and not knowing life, death, and love are intimately fused. (This can be seen again after 2858.)

The terror and confusion of the Oberpriesterin are further revealed by two devices, each of which has its own gesture, one orthographic and one grammatical: Sperrdruck, which Kleist required rarely and which always betokens unusual vigor, is used in 2727f., with particular effect in the case of the word "L e i c h e"; hypallage is used in 2733: ". . ./Die diesen Mord dir schrecklich abgefordert " the illogically misplaced adverb (significantly new in the final version) conveying the agitation of the Priestess. The relentlessness of Penthesilea's gaze was heightened by the later addition of 2736-2738, which, with their Gedankenstriche, have no other function than to prolong the duration, and thus the effect, of the gesture. Three Amazons share the words: "Sie blicket immer auf die Priestrin ein."/ "Grad ihr ins Antlitz --." "Fest und unverwandt,/Als ob sie durch und durch sie blicken wollte. --" The last line is directly related to the mysteriously unswerving stare of the fencing bear--the natural animal--in the essay on the marionette theater: "Aug in Auge, als ob er darin meine Seele lesen könnte," says Kleist.[46] In the

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[46]Kleist, ed. Sembdner, II, 342.

same sense it might be said of Penthesilea in this last scene that, no longer hampered by mundane considerations, she prefigures the sublime anti-gravity of the puppet or the god, as set forth in that treatise.

As in her despair, Prothoe renounces Penthesilea, the latter has already begun the second stage of her pantomime: the study and the cleansing of the arrow with which she slew Achilles. Desirous of being explicit, Kleist seems to have been needlessly obvious in the choral commentary of this action at this point. It is unnecessary--given the gestures--that the First Priestess and the First Amazon be so specific: "Das scheint der Pfeil, womit sie ihn erlegt."/"So ist's, ihr Fraun!" (2748f.). Surely the following alone (as Kleist doubtless must have felt) would have been more consistent with his elliptical technique: "Seht, wie sie jetzt den schlanken Pfeil betrachtet!"/"Wie sie ihn dreht und wendet --" "Wie sie ihn misst!"/ . . . "Wie sie vom Blut ihn säubert!/Wie sie an seiner Flecke jedem wischt!" etc. It is quite as obvious here as it is later, when for a moment she considers using the arrow again (3021), that this is <u>the</u> arrow.[47]

It is immediately apparent through the unusual wealth of stage directions that Kleist's visual awareness of this scene was particularly keen. Somewhat less immediately apparent than the express directions is the great number of dashes (and double dashes), each one calling for a pause of express length and purport, and for an accompanying gesture. The pantomime with the arrow is followed, after a double dash, by one with the bow. Words and action are newly fused here: "Jetzt den Köcher nimmt sie"; "Nun ist sie fertig"; "Nun ist es geschehen"; "Nun sieht sie wieder in die Welt hinaus --" (2760ff.). (The dash at the end of the last indicates the time it takes for Penthesilea to reveal that some dimly recalled horror has just transpired "out there," in the direction in which she is staring. A stage direction following suggests her emotional state: "Ein Schauer schüttelt sie

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[47]It is possible, however, that this over-explicitness may be a part of Kleist's intention to reflect Penthesilea's calm through a full and equally tranquil description. This might explain why the more natural lines: "Sie hat ihn immer Bogen so wie Pfeil,/Sie hat sie immer selbst gereinigt" (a fine instance of the gradual completion of syntax), was replaced with the more deliberate: "Pfeil und Bogen,/Sie hat sie stets mit eigner Hand gereinigt" (2755f.).

zusammen.") The "gestures" in the word-picture of the bow which Penthesilea drops at this point are a convincing reflection of the physical behavior of a resilient object as it falls and springs, quivers and "dies." As a symbol of the death of Penthesilea's supremacy as the Amazon Queen, the "death" of the bow is a verbal counterpart to Penthesilea's description in scene xv of its "birth" at Tanais' feet ("Nichts als der Bogen liess sich schwirrend hören,/Der aus den Händen, leichenbleich und starr,/Der Oberpriesterin daniederfiel./Er stürzt' der grosse, goldene, des Reichs,/Und klirrte von der Marmorstufe dreimal,/Mit dem Gedröhn der Glocken, auf, und legt,/Stumm wie der Tod, zu ihren Füssen sich - -"; 1995ff.). Exactly the same word-gestures are contained in the Amazons' lines in xxiv: "Der Bogen stürzt ihr aus der Hand danieder!"/ "Seht, wie er taumelt --" "Klirrt, und wankt, und fällt --!"/ "Und noch einmal am Boden zuckt --" "Und stirbt,/Wie er der Tanais geboren ward" (2769ff.).

It will be noted that the actions of the High Priestess at this point are curious. Only a moment earlier she had exhibited nothing but fear and revulsion. As Penthesilea drops the symbol of her authority, as it were, she shrieks: "O die Entsetzliche!" But after a pause (indicated after 2772) the Priestess--"sich plötzlich zu ihr wendend"--asks Penthesilea's forgiveness, says that Diana is satisfied with her, that Tanais herself was never a more worthy wielder of the bow. Here is another instance in which the full meaning of the words can be appreciated only from the closest reading of the accompanying gestures. The dropping of the bow--though the fact is nowhere articulated--is read by the Priestess as a sudden revelation, a thunderbolt of the divine; it means to her the imminent abdication of Penthesilea (presaging the latter's own verbal renunciation of the Amazon law). She expects that Penthesilea interprets it in the same way, for, consistent with this the Priestess suddenly becomes compassion itself, until, to be sure, it is clear again (2898) that the Queen's feeling for Achilles is love, indeed, and is primary. Hereupon the Priestess condemns her with greater vigor than before. We may find it significant that the Oberpriesterin is the very one who reveals to Penthesilea her identity as the murderess, and with sadistic precision (2970ff.).

In a reversal of gesture the High Priestess sinks upon Prothoe's breast as Penthesilea begins to weep. The overly ornamented metaphor of the First Priestess at this point should be regarded strictly as a subsidiary accompaniment

to the tear itself (2783ff.).[48] The return of Prothoe's compassion and fidelity to Penthesilea is suggested by a most explicit direction: "Prothoe drückt den heftigsten Kampf aus. Drauf, indem sie sich ihr [Penthesilea] nähert, mit einer immer von Tränen unterbrochenen Stimme" (after 2791). By means of a moment of pantomime very similar to that by which Guiskard, through his search for a place to rest, betrays his sickness (after 486), Penthesilea reveals her emotional exhaustion. As both she and Prothoe sit down, Penthesilea's face begins to reveal the first traces of a weary relief. She gently strokes Prothoe's cheek. (Curiously, the latter's reply to this gesture contains the same unusual metaphor which Kleist used in his well-known letter to Goethe: it was "auf den 'Knieen meines Herzens'" that he dedicated the first issue of Phöbus to Goethe. Prothoe's words are: "O du/Vor der mein Herz auf Knieen niederfällt,/Wie rührst du mich!)[49]

The painfulness of Prothoe's situation is revealed by several gestures at this point. That her words come with great difficulty, Kleist tells us by the use of numerous dashes. The fact that she kisses the hand of the Queen, even though she had just stroked her cheek with it, contrasts in this situation with the tenderer embraces with which she had always previously expressed the warmth of her affection. The stilted, proverbial nature of her words would be a sign of actual embarrassment in another, less dire moment: "Nun freilich -- Siegen geht so rein nicht ab,/Und jede Werkstatt kleidet ihren Meister" (2803f.). And finally the suggestion that Penthesilea wash herself, is made with timorous hesitation. In all events, Kleist reveals the first awkward, direct approach to Penthesilea through gestures far more than through words and concepts. Gradually, however, Prothoe's identification with Penthesilea (in so far as it can ever be called complete) is retrieved.

There is also notable gesture in a dialog which at this point is so elliptical as to be inconclusive. The First Priestess' warning that Penthesilea will come to her senses

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[48]Zschokke found it far too "Shakespearian": "So etwas pflegte man vorzeiten, da man noch auf das sah, was man Geschmack heisst, wohl Schwulst zu heissen," he wrote in 1808 in the Miszellen für die neueste Weltkunde.--Sembdner, Lebensspuren, No. 212.

[49]The metaphor was not original with Kleist; cf. note to line 2800, Kleist, ed. Schmidt, II 460.

when revived by water, is precisely the effect desired by the Oberpriesterin. Prothoe: "Du hoffst's, hochheil'ge Priesterin? - - Ich fürcht' es" (2813). To this the Oberpriesterin--"indem sie zu überlegen scheint"--has no opportunity to be more than elliptical; she asks: "Warum? Weshalb? -- Es ist nur nicht zu wagen,/Sonst müsste man die Leiche des Achills --." Exactly what Kleist intended the Priestess to say, cannot be definitely stated; it is relatively unimportant, for an eloquent gesture of Penthesilea interrupts here: "Penthesilea blickt die Oberpriesterin blitzend an," and Prothoe warns the latter not to speak further. Penthesilea has obviously heard the words, "die Leiche des Achills," and for a moment has half comprehended their horror. The Oberpriesterin attempts to pacify the Queen, and Prothoe finally concludes this swift and foreshortened exchange of words and glance. Her own words at this crucial point, just before the awakening of Penthesilea, have a highly symbolical significance; in two lines are revealed Kleist's intentions in the many revisions aimed at deepening Prothoe's meaning for the play. In the original version Prothoe was to help in the alleviation of Penthesilea's physical discomfort by removing her helmet at this point. But in keeping with the new, Lear-like opening lines of the scene, with their reference to the thorns and twigs "an Lorbeer-Schmuckes statt" (2707), Prothoe's new lines symbolize her function as gentle intermediary between the heroine and the players and the heroine and us: "Nimm dir den Lorbeer ab, den dornigen,/Wir alle wissen ja, dass du gesiegt" (2818f.). Her exclamatory aside at the end of this passage: "-- O Artemis!" compresses into pure gesture the tragic consequences of Penthesilea's confusion and deception.[50]

Continuing her pantomime, Penthesilea dips from the basin and pours the refreshing water upon her head. In a real sense it is the visual demonstration of what is merely metaphor in scene xiv: "O lass dies Herz/Zwei Augenblick' in diesem Strom der Lust,/Wie ein besudelt Kind, sich untertauchen;/Mit jedem Schlag in seine üpp'gen Wellen/Wäscht sich ein Makel mir vom Busen weg" (1674ff.). Water is clearly one of the fundamental and most rigorously pursued symbols in

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[50]We might also compare the similarity in the divestiture of Penthesilea here and at the end of the scene ("Und auch den Hals befreie dir," 2820)--already a substantial symbol in the play of the casting off of the fetters of the Amazon ethos--with that of Lear, particularly in the last scene: "Come unbutton here"; "Pray, undo this button" (V/iii).

this drama (cf. scenes ix and xiv), as indeed in all of Kleist's work. Prothoe's words of encouragement which accompany Penthesilea's repeated sprinkling and finally the submersion of her head in the water ("Vortrefflich!/Das Haupt ganz unter Wasser, Liebe! So!/Und wieder! So, so! Wie ein junger Schwan!--," 2830 ff.), are clearly reminiscent of the gesture in a passage from Die Marquise von O..., in which a similar instinctive attempt to cleanse and purify is described by the Russian count. (He speaks of a swan, "den er, als Knabe, auf seines Onkels Gütern gesehen; dass ihm besonders eine Erinnerung rührend gewesen wäre, da er diesen Schwan einst mit Kot beworfen, worauf dieser still untergetaucht, und rein aus der Flut wieder emporgekommen sei.")[51]

The entire baptismal pantomime was extended by the later insertion of 2829-2834, which serve the primary purpose of giving Penthesilea's inner transformation "die gehörige Zeit," in accordance with Kleist's theories in the essay Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden. Her first words in the scene are perfectly attuned to the pantomime: twice in succession there occurs the favorite and eloquent Kleist word-gesture: "Ach!" "Ach, Prothoe!" (2828); and, after a bit more of the water pantomime: "Ach! - - Wie wunderbar." The reinstatement of Prothoe's intimacy is given in the stage direction: "Sie verhüllt die Königin, hebt sie auf den Sitz, und drückt sie fest an ihre Brust" (after 2841). Penthesilea's rapture is complete. The regaining of consciousness, its intricate ramifications with the water symbol, the awakening at Prothoe's breast are the elements of "das Unaussprechliche" which are convincing reminders to us of the very closely related psychic state of Penthesilea at the opening of scene xiv. There is the same tranquillity with uneasiness, the same impatience with resignation, the same hesitation with foreboding. This time, however, her dream has told her, "dass ich mir den Peliden überwand" (2868). When asked by Prothoe how she feels, the answer ("lispelnd") is, "Zum Entzücken!" (2842). And wondering whether she is in Elysium, she again betrays, by means of an image filled with familiar gesture, just what sort of an Elysium her mind envisages: it is one in which she, "von Eichen-Wipfeln still umrauscht,/In die

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[51] Kleist, ed. Schmidt, III, 263. This purification by water is encountered again in the story, where the Marquise, renouncing the Count, "griff in ein Gefäss mit Weihwasser, das an der hinteren Tür befestigt war, besprengte, in einem grossen Wurf, Vater und Mutter und Bruder damit"; ibid., p. 291.

kristallne Grotte niedersteigt" (2847f.). Again, as always, it is her intimate association with the symbols of "Themiscyra" and with the gestures in "niedersteigen," "fallen," "stürzen." The water symbol is also present.

But Penthesilea is not in Elysium. The melancholy and sobriety in Prothoe's existential answer are closely related to a number of passages in Kleist's letters and stories: ". . . was du hier erblickst,/Es ist die Welt noch, die gebrechliche,/Auf die nur fern die Götter niederschaun" (2853ff.).[52] A calm and resignation in Penthesilea's growing, hovering consciousness are reflected in the monosyllabic and Hamlet-like words: "So, so. Auch gut. Recht sehr gut. Es tut nichts" (2856). If she is not yet in Elysium she can wait. "Ich bin vergnügt," are the next words, so puzzling to her listeners. And then, no more rationally: "Dass ich noch bin, erfreut mich. Lasst mich ruhn." The pause following these words and the next two lines (significantly, later additions) tell us that Penthesilea's pantomime is not at an end, that an additional transition to dawn is needed before the famous words ("Nach einer Pause, mit einer Art von Verzückung"): "Ich bin so selig, Schwester! Überselig!/Ganz reif zum Tod', o Diana, fühl' ich mich!" (2864f.).[53]

It is now that she reveals the content of her "dream"; that she believes that she has conquered Achilles and taken him captive; that somehow in her psyche she has made "the journey around the world" (in the words of the Marionettentheater), and that the terrifying outcome of xv will here be emendated. Kleist has made of Penthesilea's volant sense of time a subject for infinite marvel and speculation. Consistently the gestures echo those in scene xiv. The Queen relives step by step the confusion of horror and ecstasy there--but in a reverse order, or with hindsight, so to speak. Overhearing the tone, but not the words, of Prothoe's order:

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[52]Cf. Die Marquise von O...: "um der gebrechlichen Einrichtung der Welt willen"; ibid., p. 294. Michael Kohlhaas: "ein richtiges, mit der gebrechlichen Einrichtung der Welt schon bekanntes Gefühl"; ibid., p. 149; also letters, Kleist, ed. Sembdner, II, e.g., p. 921.

[53]Cf. line 1682 in scene xiv. A further possible connection with King Lear might be seen in the similarity of this "Todesreife" motif and the famous line from the Shakespearean play: "Ripeness is all" (V/ii).

"Rasch jetzt die Leich' hinweg!" (2869), Penthesilea imagines that Prothoe must be speaking to Achilles, telling him again, as before (1533ff.), to conceal himself. "Sich lebhaft aufrichtend," Penthesilea demands: "O Prothoe,/Mit wem sprichst du?" "O Diana," she exclaims, and four times repeats this formula (cf. 2865, 2870, and 2878) ". . . O Diana!/So ist es wahr?" It is of the utmost importance that the actress make it perfectly clear through her gestures here that the meaning of the question in full be: "So ist es wahr, [dass Achilles hinter mir steht]?" But Prothoe is not meant to understand this sudden exhilaration; "Was, fragst du, wahr, Geliebte?" (2871), whereupon she causes the priestesses to group themselves as a shroud about the corpse. That Penthesilea's belief is as we have stated, is made even clearer by Kleist in his next stage direction: Penthesilea "hält ihre Hände freudig vors Gesicht" (2872), for at no other point in the drama is there such a stage direction except in scene xiv, precisely when Achilles tells the Queen that he is her captive (1613): "Penthesilea drückt ihre Hände vors Gesicht." Reliving now the earlier moment, a bewildering moment of both fear and the anticipation of a glorious revelation, she says: "Ihr heil'gen Götter!/Ich habe nicht das Herz mich umzusehn" (2872f.). Nevertheless, she does so, but seeing no Achilles, she speaks "mit immer steigender Ungeduld." And standing up, she decides to seek him behind the group of Amazons: "O Diana! Warum soll ich nicht? O Diana!/Er stand schon einmal hinterm Rücken mir" (2878f.).

Her next gesture is revealed in a line spoken by Meroe: "Seht, seht! Wie sie Entsetzen fasst!" (2880). Seeing the covered body, Penthesilea's gestures must convey the transitions from rapture to a puzzled disbelief to fear. Her words at first may, indeed, suggest that she thinks Achilles is only wounded: "--Es ist unmöglich nicht, das seh' ich ein" (2884). But as the simultaneous development of her thought and speech gradually progresses, her hesitant analogies with the hunt and its irreparable consequences become a slow and articulated realization that Achilles is actually dead: "--Traf' ich zu nah ihn, wo es gilt?" (2891). The use of the singular noun in the following tells us, however, that Penthesilea does not apprehend the full extent of the truth: "Hinweg! Und wenn mir seine Wunde,/Ein Höllenrachen, gleich entgegen gähnte:/Ich will ihn sehen" (2893ff.).

Penthesilea's "Todesreife" we have found to be, in clinical, but nonetheless accurate, terms, an ambivalent combination of both a death-urge and an erotic impulse. By

this point the latter element has gradually disappeared. She is, indeed, prepared to give up her own life. We cannot be surprised by the relative equanimity with which she accepts the knowledge of Achilles' death. It is rather the horrific condition of his corpse which causes her last lapse into wrath, and this fact, once understood, permits the transcendency of the concluding passages. As she lifts the cover from the body, she is plunged back into cruel reality. "Wer von euch tat das, ihr Entsetzlichen!" (2896); and "O Artemis! Du Heilige!/Jetzt ist es um dein Kind geschehn!" (2896f.) Falling upon the corpse, she hears no one. "Halb aufgerichtet," her lamentations are punctuated with the expressive "Ach!": "Ach, diese blut'gen Rosen!/Ach, dieser Kranz von Wunden um sein Haupt!/Ach, wie die Knospen, frischen Grabduft streuend,/Zum Fest für die Gewürme niedergehn!" (2907ff.). Such was the "Rosenfest" which she and Achilles finally celebrated. These are cruel, even violent, plays on words.

A metaphorical gesture dominates each of Penthesilea's frantic questions: "Wer mir den Toten tötete, frag' ich" (2919); "Wer . . . bei diesem Raube/Die offne Pforte ruchlos mied, durch alle/Schneeweissen Alabasterwände mir/In diesen Tempel brach" (2926ff.);[54] "Wer ihn so zugerichtet,/Dass ihn das Mitleid nicht beweint, die Liebe/Sich, die unsterbliche, gleich einer Metze,/Im Tod noch untreu, von ihm wenden muss" (2932ff.). The gesture within the last of these rhetorical questions must reach a new height of pathos. Personification of "die Liebe" in the form of a simile is identified with its very opposite ("eine Metze"), in an attempt to convey the inexpressibility of Penthesilea's feelings. It is a technique fundamentally related to the inadequate metaphor, perhaps even a step beyond it in intensity.

In the original version, the Oberpriesterin's harsh revelation of the truth followed immediately upon Penthesilea's demanding "Sprich!" (2636). Later Kleist here, too, inserted a number of lines of inconsequential content (2937-2942) to allow Penthesilea further time to awaken to reality before the inevitable statement of the truth of the murder (now revealed by the High Priestess, "schüchtern"). Penthesilea's original reaction to the half-articulated statement was: Du schändlichste der Lügnerinnen! Du Teufel!" A more potent image was substituted: "Du Höllenfürstin im Gewand des Lichts"

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[54]Is it possible to hear an echo of the symbolic "Tempel unter Eichen" ("Themiscyra") even here?

(2944).

Penthesilea is unable to articulate what she actually did "in der Verwirrung [ihrer] wilden Sinne" (2608). It is the incompletion of her lines (2956-2061) and the many gestures which now directly involve the use of her hands and mouth (the agents of the murder) which convey with far greater power than the foregoing rhetoric the sense of an almost physical re-enactment of the scene. Here is revealed something that cannot ever be effectively stated in words alone, namely, denial and admission at the same moment: "Was! Ich? Ich hätt' ihn - - ? Unter meinen Hunden - - ?/Mit diesen kleinen Händen hätt' ich ihn - - ?/Mit diesem Mund hier, den die Liebe schwellt - - ?/Ach, zu ganz anderm Dienst gemacht, als ihn - - !/Die hätten, lustig stets einander helfend,/ Mund jetzt und Hand, und Hand und wieder Mund - - ?" (2956ff).

(Kleist was wise in realizing that he had been explicit enough in the incompletion of those lines, for the following brutal passage, which was originally appended, he later deleted: "Nein du Geliebter bei den ew'gen Göttern/Eh bog ich hungrig auf mich selbst mich nieder,/Also, sieh her - - ! Und öffnete die Brust mir,/Und tauchte diese Hand so - - sieh her!/Hinunter in den blut'gen Riss und griff/Das Herz, das junge, dampfende, hervor,/Um es zu essen, ach, als dass ich nur,/Ein Haar auf seinem lieben Scheitel krümmte"!)

With an uncomprehending and cruel frankness the Oberpriesterin uses words and evokes symbols which Penthesilea cannot endure hearing from this source. When she says: "Er liebte dich, Unseligste! Gefangen/Wollt' er sich dir ergeben"; and: "Die Brust voll süssen Friedens kam er her,/Um dir zum Tempel Artemis' zu folgen" (2970ff.), Penthesilea's retort is merely: "So, so - -." The rendition of this moment must finally contain a gesture which will reveal her full comprehension of the truth. This "So, so - -" is the mark of transfiguration. Her shock is over. What follows is the expression of Penthesilea's transparent vision. These are no longer the inaudible mutterings of a mind in chaos. These are not the grim plays on words for which they were long mistaken and reviled by critics. What was once thought by many to be the crassest sadism is actually a moment of pure irony, where comedy and tragedy are one. With an inexorable calm Penthesilea develops the key concepts: "zerreissen," "küssen," "beissen." And, of course, the more lucid the train of her gestures and thoughts becomes, the more deranged the others think her.

With what can be called nothing less than a stroke of genius, Kleist recalls and completely recasts the meaning of two lines from scene xix. Whereas in that scene Penthesilea, in a state of utter chaos after the shattering revelation of scene xvi, says "Ich will in ew'ge Finsternis mich bergen!" (2351), the words: "Verberge dich,/Lass fürder ew'ge Mitternacht dich decken!" (2979f.), are now spoken by the High Priestess; but they no longer can have any real effect on Penthesilea's condition. And whereas in scene xix the Oberpriesterin says with consummate sarcasm of Penthesilea's plight and the necessity of her rescue: "Ein Versehn war's, weiter nichts" (2324), the Queen, not only recalling these words, but also speaking of the sublime "pun" in "Küsse, Bisse," says: "- - So war es ein Versehn. Küsse,Bisse,/Das reimt sich, und wer recht von Herzen liebt,/Kann schon das eine für das andre greifen" (2981ff.). With a deliberate inversion of lines such as these Kleist molds the gestures which allow us to see that Penthesilea is here, in the terms of the Marionettentheater, passing through that point where the infinite and various strands of her nature converge and on whose transcendent side she will soon emerge.

The culmination of the profound paradox of the intent and the interpretation of Penthesilea's behavior is attained at the moment when she tears herself away from Meroe, the High Priestess, and even from Prothoe--"Sie wickelt sich los, und lässt sich auf Knieen vor der Leiche nieder" (after 2984)--and speaks these words:

> Du ärmster aller Menschen, du vergibst mir![55]
> Ich habe mich, bei Diana, bloss versprochen,
> Weil ich der raschen Lippe Herr nicht bin;
> Doch jetzt sag' ich dir deutlich, wie ich's meinte:
> Dies, du Geliebter, war's, und weiter nichts.
> (Sie küsst ihn.) (2985-2989)

This is the kiss which she meant to "say," but which she could not say, for there are, of course, no words for it. In short, this is the most meaningful gesture in the entire drama, and its apex. We know that Kleist meant this to be the supreme moment of "das Unaussprechliche."[56] It is

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[55]It will be noted how much more power there is in this simple address than in the earlier version of the line: "Du lieber, süsser Bräutigam. . . ."

[56]He wrote in the autumn of 1807 to Marie von Kleist:

fortunate that he changed the words which originally followed this kiss; their grotesqueness was abandoned in favor of a passage which reveals Penthesilea's full insight into what was her performance of a metaphor. It is both the realization and the articulation of her demonic consistency, and concludes appropriately: "Ich war nicht so verrückt, als es wohl schien!" 2999.

The seven lines which she next speaks are one of the most unusual passages in Kleist's dramatic composition, and metrically the most unorthodox in this play. As Penthesilea rises slowly from the body of Achilles, the Oberpriesterin even now thinks she might acquiesce and asks her: "So folgst du uns?" (3002). Penthesilea answers:

> Euch nicht! -- --
> Geht ihr nach Themiscyra, und seid glücklich,
> Wenn ihr es könnt --
> Vor allen meine Prothoe --
> Ihr alle --
> Und -- -- -- im Vertraun ein Wort, das niemand höre:
> Der Tanaïs Asche, streut sie in die Luft!
> (3003-3009)

Four of the lines are purposely truncated. The pentameter is complete in the other three; but these, as well, are punctuated with long pauses. Line 3008 has the very unusual triple dash. This punctuation marks one of the highpoints in Kleist's writings of the demonstration of the feebleness of words and yet, of course, each of these lines is as complete in its way as any in the play. The strewing of Tanais' ashes is clearly a symbol of the complete renunciation of the Amazon code; but that, as Penthesilea says, is now a matter for the others. Her own personal renunciation is contained in this simple statement: "Ich sage vom Gesetz der Fraun mich los,/ Und folge diesem Jüngling hier!" (3012f.).

The lines of action of the Queen and her erstwhile retinue diverge more and more. The Amazons' growing conviction

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"Ich [muss] Ihnen gleich das Fragment schicken . . . , worin Penthesilea Achilles küsst, und <u>wodurch jenes allererst rührend wird</u>. Diese Ihre Neigung, sich auf die Partei des Dichters zu werfen, und durch Ihre eigne Einbildung geltend zu machen, <u>was nur halb gesagt ist</u>, bestimmt mich, Ihnen . . . [noch] abgerissne Stücke . . . zuzusenden (830).

of the physical peril in Penthesilea's derangement is accompanied by a most unclassical elliptical exchange (3014-3016), which further demonstrates the inability of the Amazons, including Prothoe, to grasp the inevitability of Penthesilea's fate and her tacit understanding of it. Prothoe's attempts to remove the dagger from her are thoroughly unnecessary, and Penthesilea's detached interplay with Prothoe (suggested by the many dashes in 3017-3019 as much as by the words), serves to further illuminate the clarity and autocracy of her mind. It is a demonstration of the purity of her intentions over against all connivance and all material things. She surrenders the dagger to Prothoe, and (again like Lear who, before he, too, dies of a broken heart, wishes to divest himself of his clothing) unburdens herself of all other weapons.

Kleist reveals his feeling for the circular form by prefixing the final moment with an arrow pantomime much like the one at the beginning of the scene. But here the pantomime is one of lucidity, grace, and weightlessness, contrasting with the ponderously tragic overtones of the earlier sequence. It shares the same mimetic texture, so to speak, as in the penultimate scene in Homburg, in which the Prince, having spoken of the nocturnal fragrance of the flowers in the courtyard, says of the carnation, which Stranz has just given him: "Lieber! --/Ich will zu Hause sie in Wasser setzen" (1845). In this brief disembodied and reflective moment there is in the Prince the same "antigrav" feeling counterposed to the dramatic environment as there is in Penthesilea's words, when shaking the arrows from the quiver, she says: "Zwar reizend wär's von einer Seite --[57]/Denn dieser hier -- nicht? Oder war es dieser --?/Ja, der! Ganz recht -- Gleichviel --! Da! Nimm sie hin!" (3021ff.). It is not too bold to conjecture perhaps that the fact that there would seem to be in one of these lines four, in another six, feet, is in itself a gesture indicating a hovering detachment of Penthesilea. In a sense it is a purposeful momentary end to metrical strictures.

Gathering the arrows, Penthesilea gives them to Prothoe. In an act which confounds all logic and renders feeble rational understanding, she fashions a dagger from the depths of her feeling. That we are able to believe in Penthesilea's death from this symbolic weapon, is the ultimate tribute to the persuasiveness of Kleist's language of gesture: "Denn jetzt

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[57]I.e., "to find my death through the same arrow which killed Achilles."

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steig' ich in meinen Busen nieder,/Gleich einem Schacht, und grabe, kalt wie Erz,/Mir ein vernichtendes Gefühl hervor." (This was originally followed by: "Dies Erz, dies nehm' ich/ Und läutr' es dreimal in der Glut des Jammers/Hart mir zu Stahl." Kleist made of this unnecessary articulation of the gesture the more concentrated:) "Dies Erz, dies läutr' ich in der Glut des Jammers/Hart mir zu Stahl" (3025ff.).[58] Penthesilea's final act is both words and pantomime: "Und diesem Dolch jetzt reich' ich meine Brust:/So! So! So! So! Und wieder! -- Nun ist's gut" (3033ff.).

The famous concluding lines spoken by Prothoe are provoked by three lines of moralizing rhetoric spoken by the Oberpriesterin: "Ach! Wie gebrechlich ist der Mensch, ihr Götter!/Wie stolz, die hier geknickt liegt, noch vor kurzem,/ Hoch auf des Lebens Gipfeln, rauschte sie!" (3037ff.). Prothoe's words not only make a more vivid and precise metaphor of this generalizing observation but they constitute a corrective to it as well, by emphasizing the superhuman nature of Penthesilea and by suggesting a contrast between the moribundity of the Oberpriesterin as a symbol of the Amazon law, and the uncompromising self-exposure of the unique individual. The negative inference in the High Priestess' use of "stolz," becomes positive in Prothoe's "zu stolz und kräftig" (3040). Penthesilea does not lie "geknickt"--she was "schmetternd niedergestürzt" (3042). We may, indeed, read a reference to the victory wreath into the last line. The ultimate sentiment, then, is a resigned defiance of the abject <u>memento mori</u> of the Oberpriesterin and of the tragic world:

> Sie sank, weil sie zu stolz und kräftig blühte!
> Die abgestorbne Eiche steht im Sturm,
> Doch die gesunde stürzt er schmetternd nieder,
> Weil er in ihre Krone greifen kann.[59]

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[58]Originally Penthesilea said of the "ore" of her feeling: "Und hämmr' es auf der Liebe Ambos mir." In the final version "Liebe" was changed to convey the meaning "ewige Hoffnung"; but through a curious hypallage the line became instead: "Trag' es der Hoffnung ew'gem Amboss zu," this phraseology giving unusual durability to the suffering in this image.

[59]These final words in the drama were borrowed directly from Kleist's first play, <u>Schroffenstein</u>, line 961ff., their use here illustrating again Kleist's retention of a vigorous picture from nature and fixed in words.

But these summations are in the nature of epilog. As elsewhere in Kleist's dramas, the finale is something of a concession to contemporary practice. The real ending Kleist could not express in such words. Just as the true end of Käthchen is not in the words of the Kaiser or in the damnation of the evil Kunigunde, but in the collapse of the heroine; just as the end of Homburg is not in the triumphant tumult of "In Staub mit allen Feinden Brandenburgs!" but in the fainting of the Prince and his bewildered: "Nein, sagt! Ist es ein Traum?"; just as the end of Amphitryon is not in the unmasking and ascension of Jupiter, in the "Triumph" and "Ruhm," but in the emotion-laden "Ach!" of Alkmene--so the end of Penthesilea is not in an eloquent moral, but in the kiss and the simple words: "Dies, du Geliebter, war's, und weiter nichts."

In the last analysis, any critical attempt to convey the intimate connection between word and gesture in a play such as this is bound to shatter on the paradox of the undertaking. One cannot hope to reproduce the sequence, the pace, and the tone of its spoken and unspoken elements. These extracts from a longer analysis of Kleist's language of gesture already under way can claim to be nothing more than a running commentary and an examination of techniques. It is hoped that such close inspection of the text itself may help the understanding of those elements in the drama which distinguish every genuine masterpiece: consistency and inevitability. But only a careful reading or a sensitive performance can bring them to life.

There can be no doubt that it was Kleist's awareness of the fundamental position of his new concept of gesture in this drama which dictated his familiar comment to Goethe: "So sehr ich auch sonst in jedem Sinne gern dem Augenblick angehörte, so muss ich doch in diesem Fall auf die Zukunft hinaussehen, weil die Rücksichten gar zu niederschlagend wären." (840) Earlier than this, he had written to Marie von Kleist of Penthesilea: "Ob es, bei den Forderungen, die das Publikum an die Bühne macht, gegeben werden wird, ist eine Frage, die die Zeit entscheiden muss. Ich glaube es nicht." (829)

Kleist's feeling for this product of his imagination must have been profound. We recall his words once more. "Es ist wahr," he wrote, "mein innerstes Wesen liegt darin, . . . der ganze Schmerz zugleich und Glanz meiner Seele." (830)

In the letter to his cousin Marie, which we have quoted above, he speaks of the impact which the report of Penthesilea's death purportedly had on his friend, Ernst von Pfuel: "Als ich aus meiner Stube mit der Pfeife in der Hand in seine trat, und ihm sagte: jetzt ist sie tot, traten ihm zwei grosse Tränen in die Augen. . . . Er ist mir so lieb dadurch geworden, und so Mensch." (829) Pfuel's version of the incident, as set down by Varnhagen von Ense, in which the roles are completely reversed, and which may, indeed, be more factual, somehow does neither harm nor injustice to the integrity of Kleist's strong identification with his product. Varnhagen writes: "In dieser Zeit dichtete Kleist seine Penthesilea. Eines Tages trat er ganz verstört und tiefseufzend bei Pfuel ein, der besorgnisvoll auffuhr und fragte: 'Was ist dir denn, Kleist? Was ist geschehen?' Dabei sah er, dass ihm die hellen Tränen über die Backen flossen. Kleist antwortete mit dem Ausdruck verzweiflungsvoller Trauer: 'Sie ist nun tot!' - 'Wer denn?' - 'Ach, wer sonst als Penthesilea!' Trotz des erschütternden Eindrucks wahrhaften Schmerzes, den hier Kleist fühlte, konnte Pfuel sich doch einiges Lächelns nicht erwehren, und sagte: 'Du hast sie ja selber umgebracht!' - 'Ja freilich!' erwiderte Kleist, und ging nun allmählich in die heitre Stimmung des Freundes über."[60]

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[60] Sembdner, Lebensspuren, No. 198.

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