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FILIAL DEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY IN THE STURM UND DRANG: READING KLINGER, WAGNER AND MÜLLER WITH ROUSSEAU

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ABSTRACT

The essay examines the representation of relationships between children on the cusp of adulthood and their parents in dramas by Friedrich Maximilian Klinger, Heinrich Leopold Wagner and Friedrich Müller (known as ‘Maler Müller’). It positions the Sturm und Drang in dialogue with the wider European Enlightenment, and especially with Rousseau’s theorising of human dependence in his *Discourse on Inequality* and *Emile*. In particular, it suggests that these writers demonstrate an association between inequality and social dependence, whereas flat social structures promote pluralism and autonomy. The article argues that, in contrast to the common view of the Sturm und Drang as characterised by wild filial rebellion and blind adoration of Rousseau, a close reading demonstrates how it sustains a critical dialogue with major currents of European thought and develops a subtle and self-critical sense of the possibilities and limits on autonomy. Indeed, it demonstrates how these writers were able to use literature to foreground the antinomies of their social order in a more radical way than direct approaches could – and thus illustrates the importance of considering literature as a serious participant in Enlightenment dialogues.

Der Aufsatz untersucht die Darstellung von Beziehungen zwischen Kindern an der Schwelle zum Erwachsensein und ihren Eltern in den Dramen von Friedrich Maximilian Klinger, Heinrich Leopold Wagner und Friedrich Müller (genannt ‘Maler Müller’). Er positioniert den Sturm und Drang als im Dialog befindlich mit der breiteren europäischen Aufklärung, hauptsächlich mit Rousseaus Theorie der menschlichen Abhängigkeit in seinem *Diskurs über die Ungleichheit* und *Emile*. Insbesondere weist der Aufsatz darauf hin, dass diese Autoren einen Zusammenhang zwischen Ungleichheit und sozialer Abhängigkeit aufzeigen, während flache soziale Strukturen Pluralismus und Autonomie fördern. Der Artikel argumentiert, im Gegensatz zur gängigen Auffassung des Sturm und Drang als geprägt von einer wilden Auflehnung der jüngeren Generation und blinder Rousseau-Anbetung, dass dieser einen kritischen Dialog mit wichtigen Strömungen europäischen Denkens aufrechterhält und ein subtiles und selbstkritisches Gespür für die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Autonomie entwickelt. Durch genaue Lektüre wird demonstriert, wie es diesen Schriftstellern gelungen ist, die Widersprüche ihrer Gesellschaftsordnung in literarischer Form radikaler darzustellen, als es direktere Ansätze vermocht hätten. Damit wird veranschaulicht, wie wichtig es ist, Literatur als ernsthafte Teilnehmerin an aufklärerischen Dialogen zu betrachten.

Jonathan Israel's thesis of a fundamental divide between moderate and radical Enlightenment is founded on the assumption of distinct intellectual traditions generating neat teleologies.¹ A monistic, materialist and revolutionary tradition of radicalism founded upon Spinoza's thought is contrasted with a dualistic, reformist tradition that compromises with the status quo. However, the genealogies of literary history are seldom susceptible to such neat categorisations. One of the most attractive aspects of Israel's concept of radical Enlightenment is that it places marginalised thinkers at its centre.² In his introduction to an important volume of essays on the radical Enlightenment in Germany, Carl Niekerk points out that the breakthrough of radical enlightened thought in the 1770s coincides with the short-lived heyday of the *Sturm und Drang*, whose writers mainly belonged to a politically marginalised middle class. Niekerk notes that the grouping's formal rebelliousness has often been explained as (apolitical) generational revolt, a position that Niekerk challenges, asking: 'But was the function of the *Sturm und Drang* not also to remind the Enlightenment of its concrete (and not merely abstract) ambition to reform and restructure society, of its ideals aiming for more social and gender equality?'³ Niekerk offers a helpful means of refocusing older debates on the *Sturm und Drang* and its relationship to the Enlightenment, noting, for instance, how its affirmation of the 'revolt of the body against social structures' might be productively reframed within radical traditions of the European Enlightenment, which 'conceive of the body as a source of ethical intuition and social energy'.⁴ Moreover, Niekerk helpfully calls attention to recent efforts to reconceive of Enlightenment writers as participants in debate rather than as exponents of a static reform programme.⁵ Such an approach fits neatly with Gerhard Sauder's important reconceptualisation of the literary programme of the *Sturm und Drang* as the 'Dynamisierung und Binnenkritik der Aufklärung', rather than as counter-Enlightenment.⁶

In this essay, I seek to understand the *Sturm und Drang* as part of a Europe-wide debate about the possibilities of overcoming dependence within a society caught between absolutist stasis and growing demands for individual autonomy. Its strength lay in posing sharp questions rather than proposing solutions. It did so by bringing into focus the difficulties faced

¹ For an accessible summary of Israel's thinking, see his *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*, Princeton 2010.

² See Carl Niekerk, 'How Radical was the German Enlightenment?', in *The Radical Enlightenment in Germany: A Cultural Perspective*, ed. Carl Niekerk, Leiden 2018, pp. 1–45 (p. 5).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶ See Gerhard Sauder, 'Einführung zu Band I/1', in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*, ed. Karl Richter *et al.*, I/1, pp. 755–75 (p. 756). For a fuller discussion of critical approaches to the *Sturm und Drang*, see Matthias Luserke-Jaqui, 'Einleitung: Sturm und Drang. Genealogie einer literaturgeschichtlichen Periode', in *Handbuch Sturm und Drang*, ed. Matthias Luserke-Jaqui, Berlin 2017, pp. 1–28.

by the individuals of all classes who were denied agency and by evoking the often extreme violence that could result from their predicament. I seek to challenge some of the clichés of Sturm und Drang historiography and to show how its exponents not only challenged intellectual and social norms but also critically examined antinomies within their own tropes, particularly the 'Kraftkerl' figure. I understand their transgression of aesthetic boundaries as a key part of their social radicalism, although it is important to restate Luserke-Jaqui's point that to search for a 'revolutionäre Wirkungsabsicht' in their writing is to start from the wrong premises.⁷

The writers of the Sturm und Drang commonly thematise family conflict and violence, focusing to a striking degree on patricide, fratricide, filicide and infanticide. As potential representatives of both the force of nature and the process of nurture, child figures potentially represent both utopian and conservative positions, and the question of the autonomy of the child relative to a flawed society. My essay takes up Niekerk's challenge to position German literary history within the European Enlightenment by considering how the Sturm und Drang responds to Rousseau. The latter's critique of a society choked by refinement and luxury, by alienation from nature and by insincerity and dependence bred from inequality was undoubtedly an important intellectual forebear. In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811–33), Goethe notes how Rousseau, alongside Diderot, gave his fellow writers 'von dem geselligen Leben einen Ekelbegriff', while also alluding indirectly to his own reservations about Rousseau.⁸ Goethe particularly portrays Klinger as a convert to the 'Naturevangelium' of Rousseau's *Emile* (1762), suggesting that this 'Kind der Natur' was particularly receptive to Rousseau's social critique.⁹ Klinger expressed his enthusiasm for Rousseau fulsomely in his novel *Geschichte eines Teutschen* (1798), where one character tells how *Emile* roused his generation from a loss of 'moralische Kraft' resulting from its 'Ueppigkeit, Selbstigkeit, Witz, überfeinerte Ausbildung'.¹⁰ We might certainly detect Rousseau's influence on Lenz's remarkable attack in 'Über Götz von Berlichingen' (c. 1773–5) on the materialist conception of the human being as 'eine vorzüglichkünstliche kleine Maschine', and his demand for a sense of 'seine selbstständige Existenz, den Funken von Gott'.¹¹ It is clear that 'der göttliche Rousseau' represented a particularly important influence for Lenz but, as Norman

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁸ See Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden*, ed. Erich Trunz, Munich 1998, IX, p. 488.

⁹ See Goethe, *Werke* (note 8), X, p. 13.

¹⁰ See [Friedrich Maximilian Klinger], *Geschichte eines Teutschen der neusten Zeit*, Leipzig 1798, pp. 146–7.

¹¹ See J. M. R. Lenz, *Werke und Briefe in drei Bänden*, ed. Sigrid Damm, 3 vols, Leipzig 1987, II, pp. 637–8. For a discussion of Lenz's attitude towards the French materialists, see Martin Rector, 'La Mettrie und die Folgen', in *Willkommen und Abschied der Maschinen*, ed. Erhard Schütz, Essen 1988, pp. 23–41.

Diffey and Timothy Pope have argued, the relationship remained one of critical engagement, rather than blind adherence.¹²

In my analysis, I trace how three lesser studied dramatists of the Sturm und Drang analysed the problem of dependence through their representation of children from different classes on the cusp of adulthood. I argue that a close look at these other dramatists of the Sturm und Drang does not reveal ‘uncritical adulation’, as Diffey argues, but rather a critical and creative engagement.¹³ In each case, it is likely that Rousseau’s writings formed the general – and widely read – background to these plays, rather than a conscious point of reference for these writers or a deliberate intertext to which they aimed to allude. Firstly, I analyse Klinger’s *Die Zwillinge* (1776), with its stark examination of the effect of the institution of primogeniture on its hero Guelfo, leading to madness and violence that destroy the dynasty itself. Secondly, I examine how the problem of autonomy plays out in the bourgeois sphere in Heinrich Leopold Wagner’s *Die Kindermörderin* (1776). I will draw out the subtlety of Wagner’s portrayal of a beleaguered bourgeois autonomy, which leads him to question the feasibility of individual autonomy. Thirdly, I turn briefly to Maler Müller’s dramatic trilogy of *Pfälzische Idyllen*, which suggest the possibility that the emancipation sought by this generation of Stürmer and Dränger might be achieved in the flat structure of this rural idyll. The article will argue that the widely held view of the typical Sturm und Drang hero as a titanic ‘Kraftkerl’ who imposes his will upon the world is far from representative of the mature thinking of this generation. Rather, like Rousseau, they are sceptical of the possibility of attaining autonomy in either the aristocratic or bourgeois milieu. While Jonathan Israel generally identifies Rousseau with the moderate Enlightenment, the work of these writers shows that Rousseau could inspire radical social critique. This is not altogether surprising, given Rousseau’s importance for many key actors of the French Revolution, suggesting that historical trajectories between thought and action were less linear than Israel’s model implies.¹⁴ However, as David Hill has observed, Rousseau’s importance to the Sturm und Drang lies less in his specific proposals for political reform and education than in his analysis of how inauthenticity pervades social life.¹⁵ Building on Hill’s analysis, I shall argue that the strength of these writers’ analyses of social dependence lies in their rejection of simple solutions and their penetrating insight into the complex

¹² See Lenz, *Werke und Briefe* (note 11), II, p. 652. See also Norman Diffey, *Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz and Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Bonn 1981, pp. 199–200, and Timothy F. Pope, *The Holy Fool: Christian Faith and Theology in J. M. R. Lenz’s Writings*, Montreal 2003, p. 112.

¹³ See Diffey, *Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz* (note 12), pp. 199–200.

¹⁴ See further Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680–1790*, London 2020, pp. 726–7.

¹⁵ See David Hill, ‘“Die schönsten Träume von Freiheit werden ja im Kerker geträumt”: The Rhetoric of Freedom in the *Sturm und Drang*’, in *Literature of the Sturm und Drang*, ed. David Hill, Rochester, NY 2003, pp. 159–84, especially pp. 166–9.

constellations that prevent moral autonomy. Their radicalism lies in the starkness with which they bring problems into view, often provoking their audiences with acutely tragic or manifestly inadequate outcomes that only bring the problems of autonomy and dependence more sharply into view.

FRIEDRICH MAXIMILIAN KLINGER'S *DIE ZWILLINGE*

Die Zwillinge (1776) portrays the problems of autonomy and dependency through the young protagonist Guelfo, who chafes against his inferior status as the second-born son, whereas his twin, the first-born Ferdinando, will inherit the family's estate on the Tiber and marry Gräfin Kamilla, whom Guelfo also loves. The play has been seen as an example of Sturm und Drang irrationalism and as an uncompromising demand for autonomy. Korff, for example, reads the play as a plea for 'Teilnahme für eine von ihrem gesellschaftlichen Schicksal zurückgesetzte Kraftnatur, die mit einem blutigen Verbrechen gegen die Verdrehung der Naturordnung durch die Rechtsordnung rebelliert'.¹⁶ Such readings persist, with Matthias Luserke describing Guelfo as an 'unbeherrschten, leidenschaftlichen Kraftmenschen' who resists his family's efforts to tame him.¹⁷ Certainly, the play makes a frontal assault on the tastes of the period: Guelfo first kills his twin, and is in turn killed by his father. The play challenges public taste by pushing the moderate, sentimental figure of Ferdinando to its margins, while placing Guelfo centre-stage.¹⁸ The Hamburg public were shocked when the play was first staged on 23 February 1776 by the company of Friedrich Ludwig Schröder and Sophie Charlotte Ackermann, leading it to be replaced by Leisewitz's milder *Julius von Tarent* (1776).¹⁹ *Die Zwillinge* was staged in Vienna on 11 January 1777 in a revised version, in which the young knight Guelfo merely embraces Gräfin Kamilla rather than forcing a kiss upon her. However, the play remained unacceptable even to such a liberal viewer as Emperor Joseph II, who banned further performances, 'denn gar zu viel kommt darin gegen das vierte Gebot vor, das ich in Ehren halten muß'.²⁰

The play was only one of several iterations of the 'Bruderzwist' theme in the eighteenth century, which indeed recurs elsewhere in Klinger's own work.²¹ Other iterations included Schiller's *Die Räuber* (1781), which

¹⁶ See H. A. Korff, *Geist der Goethezeit: Versuch einer ideellen Entwicklung der klassisch-romantischen Literaturgeschichte*, 4 vols, Leipzig 1923, I, p. 235.

¹⁷ See Matthias Luserke, *Sturm und Drang: Autoren – Texte – Themen*, Stuttgart 1997, p. 190.

¹⁸ See Fritz Martini, 'Die feindlichen Brüder: Zum Problem des gesellschaftskritischen Dramas von J. A. Leisewitz, F. M. Klinger und F. Schiller', *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft*, 16 (1972), 208–65 (231).

¹⁹ See Edward P. Harris, 'Vier Stücke in einem. Die Entstehungsgeschichte von Friedrich Maximilian Klingers *Die Zwillinge*', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 101 (1982), 481–95 (487).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 488.

²¹ See Martini, 'Die feindlichen Brüder' (note 18), 210.

is analysed by Thiti Owlarn elsewhere in this volume. Klinger may have learned of Leisewitz's similarly themed *Julius von Tarent* via their common acquaintance Johann Martin Miller. Klinger later claimed to have completed the play at a furious pace over the course of two days.²² It was probably from Miller that Klinger learned of the possibility of earning twenty Louisd'or by submitting the drama to the Ackermann troupe in Hamburg for performance, and to add insult to injury, his play was praised more highly than Leisewitz's when the two were first published in the *Hamburgisches Theater* in 1776.²³ The two plays were based on a fable surrounding the deaths of the sons of Duke Cosimo I de Medici in 1562, which held that the youngest son Garzia had killed his elder brother Giovanni, according to the *Historia sui temporis* (1604–8) by Jacques Auguste de Thou, or more likely on Vertot's *Histoire des chevaliers hospitaliers* (Paris 1726).²⁴

More recent interpretations have moved away from Korff's reading of the play as a justification of the 'Kraftkerl', recognising that Klinger's play treats the figure critically. Karl Guthke argues that the play marks a turning point in the Sturm und Drang as it attains critical distance from the charismatic hero, whose infantilism and uncontrollable passions are critiqued. The play's composition came at a time when Klinger's letters reflect his growing awareness of the need to control one's passions.²⁵ Indeed, almost as soon as the figure of the 'Kraftkerl' had appeared on stage in Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), it was subjected to critical reflection by Klinger and Schiller.²⁶

A number of interpreters read *Die Zwillinge* politically. Olga Smoljan regards it as an attack on the feudal aristocracy, while Ladislao Mittner argues that the broad theme of the 'Bruderzweist' can be regarded as an indirect way of alluding to patricide and to attack primogeniture.²⁷ Thus Joseph II may not have banned the play purely on theological or moral grounds, but because he recognised its subversive political implications.

²² See Harris, 'Vier Stücke' (note 19), 484.

²³ For an overview of the circumstances of the play's composition and a refutation of the charge of plagiarism, see Constanze Baum, 'Die Zwillinge. Ein Trauerspiel', in *Handbuch Sturm und Drang*, ed. Matthias Luserke-Jaqui, Berlin 2017, pp. 404–16.

²⁴ See Max Rieger, *Klinger in der Sturm- Und Drangperiode*, Darmstadt 1880, pp. 87–9.

²⁵ See Karl S. Guthke, 'F. M. Klingers *Zwillinge*. Höhepunkt und Krise des Sturm und Drang', *German Quarterly*, 43 (1970), 703–14 (707–8). For similar arguments, albeit from a more psychological standpoint, see Alan C. Leidner, 'Catharsis and Self-Exoneration in Klinger's *Die Zwillinge*', *South Atlantic Review*, 50/4 (1985), 51–63.

²⁶ See Mariane Willems, 'Friedrich Maximilian Klingers *Die Zwillinge* und Friedrich Schillers *Die Räuber*. Zur Pathogenese der "Kraftkerle" im Sturm und Drang', in *Sturm und Drang: Epoche – Autoren – Werke*, ed. Matthias Buschmeier and Kai Kauffmann, Darmstadt 2013, pp. 158–79.

²⁷ See Olga Smoljan, *Friedrich Maximilian Klinger: Leben und Werk*, tr. Ernst Moritz Arndt, Weimar 1962, pp. 66–7; and Ladislao Mittner, 'Freundschaft und Liebe in der deutschen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts', in *Stoffe, Formen, Strukturen: Studien zur deutschen Literatur. H. H. Borchardt zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. A. Fuchs and H. Moket, Munich 1962, pp. 97–138 (pp. 114–15).

The suggestion of patricide is not far below the play's surface. For example, Alter Guelfo exclaims, as he and Guelfo stand before Ferdinando's body: 'Hast du nicht Vater, Mutter, Braut erschlagen mit diesem?'²⁸ Fritz Martini develops Mittner's astute observation to argue that the play is about the decay of stable 'Ordnungsnormen' in eighteenth-century society, particularly as the family came to be recognised as the seat, not of fraternal equality, but of social inequality.²⁹

Building on these readings, I argue that the play does indeed constitute an attack on the principle of primogeniture, but that we might read it, with Rousseau, as a reflection on the social consequences of inequality. In particular, Rousseau's emphasis on the relationship between inequality and social role-playing in the *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* (1755) illuminates the play's emphasis on the arbitrariness of property rights and on social role play. For Rousseau, property was first established by an act of arbitrary performance:

The first person who, having enclosed a plot of land, took it into his head to say *this is mine* and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. What crimes, wars, murders, what miseries and horrors would the human race have been spared, had someone pulled up the stakes or filled in the ditch and cried out to his fellow men: 'Do not listen to this impostor. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to all and the earth to no one!'³⁰

Rousseau's analysis on the contingent nature of property rights helps to illuminate an issue from *Die Zwillinge* that critics have seldom explained satisfactorily, namely the ambiguity around which brother was the first born. Guelfo pursues the issue obsessively through two interrogations, first of the doctor Galbo, and then of his mother Amalia. It emerges that the doctor was too focused on saving Amalia's life to notice the order of birth, and that Amalia herself was unconscious, and thus relies on the twins' father to confirm that Ferdinando was indeed the first-born. Guelfo himself imagines that even at birth it was Ferdinando's 'heuchlerische, sanfte Miene' (p. 32) that stole his parents' heart and secured his inheritance, in other words an act of performance similar to the one that Rousseau postulates. Grimaldi insists that his friend Guelfo's inner qualities confirm his entitlement: 'Du bist für ein Königreich geboren' (p. 30). Despite such rhetoric, Guelfo is preoccupied by the great gulf that separates him from his brother: 'warum hab' ich nichts, und er alles?' (p. 16).

Much as Rousseau located the potential for conflict in social inequality, Klinger emphasises how inequality in the aristocratic family destroys

²⁸ See Friedrich Maximilian Klinger, *Die Zwillinge: Paralleldruck der Ausgaben von 1776 und 1794*, ed. Edward P. Harris, Ekhard Haack and Karl-Heinz Hartmann, Tübingen 1997, p. 198. All further page references to this edition will be given in parentheses in the main text.

²⁹ See Martini, 'Die feindlichen Brüder' (note 18), p. 214.

³⁰ See Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings*, ed. and tr. Donald A. Cress, Indianapolis 1987, p. 60

familial affection. In the *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau imagines that natural man was endowed with a natural sense of pity alongside a benign love of self, whereas Klinger's Guelfo actively tries to eradicate any natural affections, to use Shaftesbury's term, due to his resentment of inequality: 'Vater! Vater! Mutter! ich will euch austreichen! will euch austreichen, euch bis aufs letzte Fäserchen aus dem Herzen reißen!' (p. 30). Guelfo's cruelty extends well beyond his own family. As a child he killed a horse gifted to him by Ferdinando, simply because it was first given to Ferdinando rather than to him. More seriously, he whips a tenant and later his own stable boy for no good reason. Guelfo has no principled grounds for disputing his brother's right to rule, nor does he appear better suited to rule. It is thus hard to see in Guelfo the typology of a 'Genie'; rather, his use of his physical strength is confined to destructive and self-indulgent displays of power.

Rousseau notably links inequality to inauthenticity: 'the savage lives in himself; the man accustomed to the ways of society is always outside of himself and knows how to live only in the opinion of others'.³¹ Social humanity is compelled to engage in display and inauthentic conduct as a result of inequality:

It was necessary, for his advantage, to show himself to be something other than what he in fact was. Being something and appearing to be something became two completely different things; and from this distinction there arose grand ostentation, deceptive cunning, and all the vices that follow in their wake. On the other hand, although man had previously been free and independent, we find him, so to speak, subject, by virtue of a multitude of fresh needs, to all of nature and particularly to his fellowmen, whose slave in a sense he becomes even in becoming their master; rich, he needs their services; poor, he needs their help.³²

The play superficially confirms Grimaldi's observation contrasting 'der rauhe Guelfo' and 'der süsse, empfindsame, kluge Ferdinando' (p. 14). And yet, while Ferdinando and his father are portrayed as the more civilised figures, they too can be ruthless in pursuit of social advantage. In Act Two, Klinger gradually reveals the origins of Grimaldi's melancholy. He loved Guelfo's sister Juliette, but Ferdinando prevented the marriage: 'ich ward auf die Wagschaale gelegt, mein Adel zu leicht befunden' (p. 68). Juliette was instead to marry a wealthy count, but she 'vermählte sich mit dem Tode' (p. 94). Thus, dynastic politics have already claimed the life of one of Alter Guelfo's children before the play begins. Moreover, Guelfo's father seeks to temper his behaviour because doing so will advance the family's rise: 'Wenn Du edel bist, Guelfo, [...] soll unser Haus bald ein Herzogthum blühen' (p. 48). Alter Guelfo imagines how Ferdinando's marriage to Gräfin Kamilla

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

will make their enemies suffer: 'sie werden sich verzehren in Marter, unser Haus so mächtig zu sehn' (p. 82). However, there is no recognition of how family structures have warped both Guelfo and Grimaldi. Alter Guelfo terms Grimaldi 'ein düstrer Mensch' (p. 86) and does not acknowledge the impact of Juliette's death; and he believes that reducing Grimaldi's influence on Guelfo and playing him harmonious music will help tame him ('zähmen'; p. 86).

Fritz Martini argues that the play affirms the individual's right to their 'unbedingte[s] Selbst' and to rise up against the family where it is revealed as a 'gesellschaftliche Unrechtsinstitution'.³³ However, if we read the play through a Rousseauian lens, Martini's argument becomes less tenable, since self-assertion is not so much a natural right as a social flaw. Whereas Ferdinando and his father adopt hypocritical masks to control Guelfo, Guelfo himself seeks out models that authorise and justify his overweening sense of self. The play opens with Grimaldi reading to Guelfo from Plutarch's life of Brutus. However, Guelfo urges him to stop, as he cannot identify with Brutus: 'Ich fühl' den Caßius näher. Und Grimaldi, darauf kömmts doch an. Wie viel gewinnt der Mahler, wenn er mir ein Gemähldc hinstellt, wofür ich den Spiegel in mir habe' (p. 10). Here, and in much of the imagery of the play, Klinger obliquely alludes to Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* (1599?), specifically Act 1, Scene 2, where Cassius tries to persuade Brutus to join the conspiracy against Caesar:

Therefor, good Brutus, be prepared to hear.
And since you know you cannot see yourself
So well as by reflection, I, your glass,
Will modestly discover to yourself
That of yourself which you yet know not of.³⁴

However, Klinger's Guelfo signally lacks the capacity for reflection, love of honour and patriotism of Shakespeare's Brutus. Narratives function as mirrors that confirm his self-image, which is dominated by hatred for Ferdinando; they neither change nor challenge his self-image.

Rebecca Schuman has noted the violence in Guelfo's encounters with the women of the play. Extending David Wellbery's notion of a 'specular moment' in Goethe's 'Maifest' that reduces the beloved to a mere mirror that reflects the poet's sense of self, Schuman reads Guelfo's encounters with Amalia as an attempt to compel her to reflect his sense of his

³³ See Martini, 'Die feindlichen Brüder' (note 18), p. 240.

³⁴ See William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, Oxford 1988, p. 602. See also Richard Gray, 'The Ambivalence of Revolt in Klinger's *Zwillinge*. An Apologia for Political Inconsequence?', *Colloquia Germanica*, 19 (1986), 203–27.

birthright, and his anger as the result of her failure to do so.³⁵ However, *pace* Schuman, I argue that the play distances itself from Guelfo's obsessive attempts to fashion the world as his mirror, not least because his increasing monomania and obsession with his birthright leads towards tragedy. He first compares himself with Cain, who murdered his favoured younger brother Abel, and then justifies his suspicion of Ferdinando by comparing himself to Esau, who was cheated of his birthright by his younger brother Jacob (p. 32). Klinger demonstrates that narratives shape reality, as Guelfo's words anticipate the play's bloody course.³⁶ Following the murder of Ferdinando, however, Guelfo sees himself in another mirror and imagines the mark of Cain upon his face; unable to stand the horrific sight, he now destroys the mirror.

Klinger gives Guelfo another mirror in the play, namely his friend Grimaldi. Both are fixated on a past that dominates their present.³⁷ Gert Mattenklott has even suggested that they should be seen as the real 'Zwillinge' in the play, one a frustrated man of action, the other a melancholic crushed by his lost love, although this threatens to obscure some important differences.³⁸ What unites them is their association with death and an inability to be happy and productive.

Pace Martini, *Die Zwillinge* rejects the individual's claim to their 'unbedingten Selbst', demonstrating rather the bloody consequences of Guelfo's monomania. While Klinger highlights the arbitrary injustice arising from primogeniture, Guelfo presents no principled challenge to it; he merely seeks the power it accords to his brother. Nor does Klinger endorse Guelfo's effort to make the world mirror his inner sense of himself, and indeed he emphasises the violence inherent in it. In this sense, the play rather resembles Goethe's *Werther* (1774), which exposes the shortcomings of its hero's subjectivism and narcissism. Mary Helen Dupree offers a similar reading of Lenz's *Der Landprediger* elsewhere in this volume. *Die Zwillinge* repudiates Guelfo's specular remaking of the world: Guelfo ultimately covers his face and extinguishes his own image before his father. Klinger makes the practices of aristocratic succession appear anything but natural, but he equally questions the titanic founding myths of the Sturm und Drang. To adapt Gerhard Sauder's words, *Die Zwillinge* marks a 'Binnenkritik und Dynamisierung' of the Sturm und Drang itself.

³⁵ See Rebecca Schuman, 'The Mirror and the Tower: Masculinity and Specularity in Klinger's *Die Zwillinge* and Gerstenberg's *Ugolino*', *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures*, 63 (2009), 127–44.

³⁶ See Christoph Hering, *Friedrich Maximilian Klinger: Der Weltmann als Dichter*, Berlin 1966, p. 71.

³⁷ See Andreas Huyssen, *Drama des Sturm und Drang: Kommentar zu einer Epoche*, Munich 1980, p. 195.

³⁸ See Gert Mattenklott, *Melancholie in der Dramatik des Sturm und Drang*, Königstein im Taunus 1985, p. 64. Equally, however, Seán Allan traces key differences between the two men which he attributes to Grimaldi's experience of genuinely reciprocal love. See Seán Allan, '"Hat nicht alles den Stachel zur Rache?": Gender, Class and Revenge in J. A. Leisewitz's *Julius von Tarent* and F. M. Klinger's *Die Zwillinge*', *Colloquia Germanica*, 37 (2004), 109–27.

Like other Stürmer und Dränger, Klinger delivers a conclusion that is in many respects unsatisfying and denies his audience moral closure.³⁹ For Guelfo Senior's killing of his son is not driven by justice, but by two less noble motives: 'Rächen will ich Vater Guelfos Sohn! erretten von der Schande Guelfos Sohn!' (p. 206). Alter Guelfo ignores his wife's plea for mercy, and acts out of a twin desire to avenge his son and to protect family honour from public disgrace – and to this extent it perpetuates the monomania that precipitated the tragedy. In this sense, this father figure is quite different from Odoardo in Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* (1772), who overcomes his paternal feelings to kill his daughter. *Die Zwillinge* closes with Alter Guelfo a diminished, lonely and defeated figure on stage, his three children dead and his dynasty extinguished. In this sense, the play mirrors and inverts the ironies of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, which shows the failure of republican political action, whereas Klinger's play shows how the attachment to primogeniture provides the context for the decline of a noble family. Klinger's figures are all flawed, as each pursues only his own interests. While the play's formal properties – its five-act structure, small cast and respect for the traditional unities – outwardly obey classical norms, it withholds any sense of timeless principles that could restore order to this universe. Unsettling asymmetries remain between the play's formal balance and its moral disequilibrium and violence, raising urgent questions for its audience. Far from lauding the 'Kraftkerl', Klinger offers an acute reflection on the twin problems of inequality and of titanic narcissism.

HEINRICH LEOPOLD WAGNER'S *DIE KINDERMÖRDERIN*

Heinrich Leopold Wagner's *Die Kindermörderin* (1776) is a useful work for examining radicalism in the Sturm und Drang, precisely because it pushed the limits of what could be staged. The play was radical in several respects: its opening act was set in a brothel; it portrayed the rape of its heroine just offstage and within earshot; and it brought infanticide onstage. Moreover, Wagner used the Strasbourg dialect and dispensed with formal convention by arranging the action in six acts rather than five. The play has been read as an indictment of aristocratic intrusion into the bourgeois private sphere, but in fact it refuses to apportion blame neatly along class-based lines. It offers a complex structural analysis of the causes of the tragedy, and like *Die Zwillinge*, ends with an unsatisfactory resolution that underlines the intractability of the problems it portrays. Critical reception of *Die Kindermörderin* has long been overshadowed by Goethe's accusations that Wagner plagiarised from the Gretchen tragedy in *Faust*.⁴⁰ But as Schmidt

³⁹ On the deliberately unsatisfactory endings of many Sturm und Drang dramas, see Norbert Bachleitner, 'Die Dialektik von Gehorsam und Aufbegehren im Drama und auf den Bühnen des späten 18. Jahrhunderts', *Oxford German Studies*, 50 (2021), 285–304.

⁴⁰ See Goethe, *Werke* (note 8), X, p. 11.

notes, the plot borrowings are of 'rein äusserlicher Natur'; unlike Goethe, Wagner places Evchen's tragedy squarely at the centre and marginalises her male seducer.⁴¹

Wagner shows a strong interest in what we might call middle-class habitus, which is characterised superficially by Humbrecht's focus on the bourgeois values of 'Tugend und Ordnung'.⁴² As his wife notes, Humbrecht's frugality is such that he castigates her for buying new clothes and resists his daughter wearing new fashions, insisting rather that she don an old-fashioned bonnet that 'höchstens Gärtners und Leinwebers Töchter' (p. 23) would wear. Wagner is alive to the subtle ways that social status is mediated in fashion and learning. Evchen has been allowed to learn the piano and has acquired French, giving her access to fashionable works such as Edward Young's melancholy *Night-Thoughts* (1742–5) in Pierre le Tourneur's French translation.

Humbrecht seeks to protect his family by preventing them from leaving the house, insisting that 'ich hab auch einen Stand, und jeder bleib bey dem Seinigen!' (p. 21). The second act sees Humbrecht returning from a trip to discover that his wife and daughter have taken the opportunity to attend a ball with Lieutenant von Gröningseck. Humbrecht reacts with typical fury, claiming to know that the consequences for a young bourgeois woman can only be damaging:

Wenn denn vollends ein zuckersüßes Bürschchen in der Uniform, oder ein Barönnchen, des sich Gott erbarm! ein Mädchen vom Mittelstand an solche Örtter hinführt, so ist zehn gegen eins zu verwetten, daß er sie nicht wieder nach Haus bringt, wie er sie abgehohlt hat. (p. 22)

While Humbrecht is controlling and often violent, he is of course proven correct. However, the price of stability is inertia. Moreover, the play demonstrates that his goal of bourgeois autonomy from a threatening outside world is a vain one. Indeed, his attempt to isolate his daughter is not dissimilar to the utopian educational strategy proposed in *Emile* for children up to the age of twelve: 'the first education ought to be purely negative. It consists not at all in teaching virtue or truth but in securing the heart from vice and the mind from error'.⁴³ The difference is that Humbrecht employs this strategy with a much older child in the real world. It proves impossible to isolate the bourgeois household from the world. Humbrecht presumably accommodates libertine von Gröningseck in exchange for money. Indeed, this is not Evchen's first encounter with the aristocracy; six years ago she took dancing lessons alongside three barons who were quartered nearby, showing how cultural

⁴¹ Erich Schmidt, *Heinrich Leopold Wagner: Goethe's Jugendgenosse*, Jena 1875, p. 46.

⁴² Heinrich Leopold Wagner, *Die Kindermörderin. Ein Trauerspiel*, ed. Jörg-Ulrich Fechner, Stuttgart 2014, p. 66. Further quotations from the play are cited directly in the main body of the text.

⁴³ See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, ed. and tr. Allan Bloom, London 1991, p. 93.

advancement compromises Humbrecht's class-based isolationism. The danger is considerably heightened now that Evchen has reached the age of eighteen.

Evchen is also endangered by her mother's flirtation with the aristocracy. Wagner thematises the dangers that lurk in this unfamiliar milieu, which result not just from Frau Humbrecht's unworldliness, but from her gauche effort to feign knowledge of high society. The first act opens with Evchen correcting her mother, as she fails to address the lieutenant correctly, promoting him unwittingly to Captain, and then even higher, to Major. The aristocrat exploits her naivety by taking them to a known brothel for refreshments midway through the ball, then insisting that the punch will sober them up. Frau Humbrecht is unaware of the inn's reputation, and accepts von Gröningseck's assertions that 'alles, was beau monde heißt' (p. 6) assemble there daily. In fact, this may not be a lie; indeed, it soon becomes clear that he regularly frequents the place and sleeps with the serving-girl Marianel. Von Gröningseck is confident of his ability to deceive. He flirts openly with mother and daughter, which is the source of considerable comedy. He manipulates Frau Humbrecht's insecurities, assuring her that the neighbours will laugh at them if they return home as early as 2.30am (p. 12). As Frau Humbrecht plays the sophisticate, she does not question his assertions and falls victim to his scheme to drug her and then sleep with Evchen.

While the middle classes profess concern for inward virtue, Wagner shows that they too are playing a role. When Frau Humbrecht realises that her dress is dirty, she says that it matters little as long as no-one will notice when she puts her mask on. The appearance of purity trumps the reality. Evchen struggles to police the boundaries of proper conduct, objecting to von Gröningseck's use of the familiar 'du', but nonetheless allowing him to steal kisses. In this way, Wagner acknowledges the reality of female sexuality and subjects middle-class conceptions of virtue to critical scrutiny, while also maintaining Evchen's status as a victim of von Gröningseck and of wider social pressures.⁴⁴ Evchen's knowledge of the world derives from novels such as Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), but they offer no protection: 'ja ich hab Romanen gelesen, laß sie um euch Ungeheuer kennen zu lernen, mich vor euren Ränken hüten zu können – und dennoch!' (p. 17). These allusions to literary precursors have even led some critics to surmise that Evchen is *merely* playing a role throughout, that even her protestations when von Gröningseck rapes her and her later reproaches against him are mere

⁴⁴ By contrast, Barbara Mabee argues that Wagner blunts his social critique by representing Evchen as an embodiment of female virtue exploited by an aristocratic seducer, and by sentimentalising her reconciliation with her father at the end of the play. See Barbara Mabee, 'Die Kindesmörderin in den Fesseln der bürgerlichen Moral: Wagners Evchen und Goethes Gretchen', *Women in German Yearbook*, 3 (1987), pp. 29–45.

performances.⁴⁵ However, this argument strains credulity, as Evchen would surely have been acutely aware of the social consequences of giving in to her desire before marriage, and it requires audiences to disregard much of her speech as mere rhetoric. Karin Wurst is surely on firmer ground when she argues that bourgeois culture makes the heroine vulnerable. Evchen's piano-playing brings the Magister, who later betrays her secret, into her house, while sentimental novels arouse desires that her world cannot fulfil: 'Education and reading [...] destabilize without offering new order and stability'.⁴⁶

Yet it is not merely ignorance of the real world and reading that leave Evchen vulnerable to abuse, but also blind respect for the aristocracy. The Magister assures Humbrecht that his concern about balls is misplaced: 'so seh ich am Ballgehn an und für sich eben nichts sündliches: es ist eine Ergötzung, und nach der neuen Theologie, die aber im Grund auch die älteste und natürlichste ist, ist jede Ergötzung auch eine Art von Gottesdienst' (p. 21). Wagner satirises the young neologist's way of speaking, his use of Latinate phrases ('exegesiren') and his attempt to use Socratic dialogue to reason with Meister Humbrecht. Just as the neologists were accused of intellectual incoherence, Wagner shows the incoherence of Meister Humbrecht's social understanding, when he claims that balls cannot possibly be sinful when they are attended by 'so viele rechtschaffene Mütter, brave Weiber, die so gar Personen vom Stande sind' (p. 21).⁴⁷ Yet this blind bourgeois respect for the aristocracy is precisely the problem, as it leaves them vulnerable to exploitation.

The potential perils of intellectual exploitation become apparent when the Magister expounds his educational theory to von Gröningseck, telling him that when a young man begins to search for the '*physischen* Ursache seines Daseyns', as he delicately puts it, he would expose him 'die zügellosesten und ausgelassensten Örter', which would 'gewiß einen unauslöschlichen Eindruck machen, den keine Verführung jemals auslöschen könnte' (26). This 'cure' strikes even von Gröningseck as extreme. Moreover, it runs counter to Rousseau's advice in *Emile* that 'either their curiosity must not be aroused in any way, or it must be satisfied

⁴⁵ See Yvonne-Patricia Alefeld, 'Texte und Affekte. Zur Inszenierung der Leidenschaften in Heinrich Leopold Wagners *Die Kindermörderin*', in *Von der Liebe und anderen schrecklichen Dingen*, ed. Yvonne-Patricia Alefeld, Bielefeld 2007, pp. 163–88, especially pp. 174–9. See also, in similar vein, Christine Künzel, 'Johann Heinrich Leopold Wagners *Die Kindermörderin*: Geschlechterkodierung und Rechtskritik im Sturm und Drang', in *Sturm und Drang: Epoche – Autoren – Werke*, ed. Matthias Buschmeier and Kai Kauffmann, Darmstadt 2013, pp. 203–19; and Nagla El-Dandoush, *Leidenschaft und Vernunft im Drama des Sturm und Drang: Dramatische als soziale Rollen*, Würzburg 2004, pp. 123–47.

⁴⁶ See Karin Wurst, '"Wilde Wünsche": The Discourse of Love in the *Sturm und Drang*', in *Literature of the Sturm und Drang*, ed. David Hill, Rochester, NY 2003, pp. 217–40 (p. 229).

⁴⁷ On Lessing's struggles with the 'half-baked' neologists, see H. B. Nisbet, 'Introduction', in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, ed. and tr. H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge 2005, pp. 1–22 (p. 7).

before the age at which it is no longer without danger'.⁴⁸ By contrast, the Magister advocates exposing his pupils to prostitution precisely at the point of puberty.⁴⁹

Wagner's exploration of class-based habitus also extends to his portrayal of an aristocratic rape culture. Von Gröningseck's fellow officer Hasenpöth cynically dismisses the Lieutenant's pangs of conscience: 'Ich hab wenig Frauenzimmer angetroffen, die nicht sehnlichst wünschten bestürmt zu werden' (p. 35). Yet it seems unlikely that von Gröningseck would have felt any scruples had he not unexpectedly fallen in love with Evchen's 'Tugend' (p. 34). His later decision to marry her is not, then, evidence that Wagner is relativising this culture of abuse.

Wagner rounds out this image of an aristocratic habitus with the otherwise irrelevant story told by Major Lindsthal to a mixed audience of aristocratic and middle-class listeners. The Major tells of how the lieutenant Wallroth von Salis has reported a fellow officer for cheating at cards, which has turned his regimental colleagues against him and forced him either to leave his post or to duel to restore his honour. Von Gröningseck and the Major instinctively understand this attachment to honour, but it is incomprehensible to the bourgeois Magister, who believes that duelling is just as likely to lead to dishonour given that it is illegal. Yet the Major responds, with equal incomprehension: 'das Verbot gilt uns nicht! gilt keinem Kriegsmann!' (p. 41). This otherwise superfluous episode shows how the codes of the different classes are mutually unintelligible; the Magister fails to understand that the honour code overrides civil law in the aristocrats' view. Similarly, the officers' sexual libertinism is a code that cannot lapse, even when von Gröningseck himself seeks to override it. Thus, when Hasenpöth intervenes in the story by sending a fake letter of mockery to Evchen and signs it with von Gröningseck's name, on the one level it represents an arbitrary element in Evchen's downfall, but at a deeper, structural level, the problem appears to be a military honour code that overrides what Hasenpöth calls von Gröningseck's 'überspannten Begriffen von Tugend' (p. 45).⁵⁰

Bourgeois autonomy and privacy are thus assaulted from several directions: economic pressures presumably lead the Humbrecht family to accommodate von Gröningseck; Frau Humbrecht is dazzled by aristocratic glamour and gallantry and fails to understand this world; and Evchen is kept ignorant of this world, save for novels that do little to protect her. The play also explores how the family are conscious of surveillance. In

⁴⁸ See Rousseau, *Emile* (note 43), p. 217. By contrast, Jörg-Ulrich Fechner argues – without evidence – that the Magister's views are influenced by Rousseau's. See his 'Nachwort', in Heinrich Leopold Wagner, *Die Kindermörderin. Ein Trauerspiel*, ed. Jörg-Ulrich Fechner, Stuttgart 2014, pp. 163–74 (p. 171).

⁴⁹ For a thoroughly positive assessment of the Magister as the liberal antipode to the conservative Meister Humbrecht, see El-Dandousch, *Leidenschaft* (note 45), pp. 137–9.

⁵⁰ Pace Karl S. Guthke, *Das deutsche bürgerliche Trauerspiel*, Stuttgart 1972, pp. 74–5.

Act Four, during her illicit tryst with von Gröningseck, Evchen worries that the neighbours will realise that something is amiss because her light stays on late. She is later forced to swap clothes with her maid to escape the house without detection. Moreover, the previous evening the Magister reads Evchen's guilt and alarm as she sits in the women's gallery while the law on infanticide is read aloud. The state's penetration of the private home is illustrated when the Fiskal and his men enter the Humbrecht household, and again later when Frau Marthan feels compelled to denounce Evchen's infanticide to the authorities: 'das muß ich gleich gehn anzeigen, sonst bin ich verlohren. In der Seele dauert sie mich – aber' (p. 81).

Indeed, Evchen's decision to kill her child is directly linked to the state's harsh judicial practices and society's ostracisation of outsiders, as illustrated by Frau Marthan's story of the matricide who was dragged through the streets. Frau Marthan is unaware of Evchen's real identity, but imagines a similar fate awaits the infanticide. Evchen then projects her own story onto that of the matricide and accepts the shame of society upon her. Her final words before killing her child emphasise that she seeks to protect it from a fate similar to hers: 'sollst auch nie werden, was *ich* bin, nie ausstehn, was *ich* ausstehn muß' (p. 80).

Wagner's play can be seen as a contribution to wider debates on infanticide in the late eighteenth century. Indeed, a particularly lively debate would ensue after 1780 in response to the 'Preisfrage' posed by Ferdinand von Lamezan in the *Rheinische Beiträge zur Gelehrsamkeit*, which asked: 'Welches sind die besten ausführbaren Mittel, dem Kindermord abzuhelpen, ohne die Unzucht zu begünstigen?', which drew some 400 responses.⁵¹ The question stimulated Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi to compose his *Über Gesetzgebung und Kindesmord* (1783), in which he laid the blame for infanticide at the door of the state and argued that laws criminalising or stigmatising unmarried motherhood meant that any mother who cared for her child would wish to protect it from such stigma – if necessary by killing it.⁵² As Maximilian Bergengruen points out, Joseph von Sonnenfels had already written in 1770 of the necessity of recognising that social stigma around pregnancy outside marriage would have the effect of encouraging mothers to harm their infants in the name of protecting their reputation. Moreover, as Bergengruen notes, thinkers such as Kant would later grapple with the problem of recognising the role of legitimate 'Ehrliche' in crimes such as infanticide within a system

⁵¹ On the ensuing debates, see Otto Ulbricht, 'The Debate about Foundling Hospitals in Enlightenment Germany: Infanticide, Illegitimacy, and Infant Mortality Rates', *Central European History*, 18 (1985), 211–56; Matthias Luserke, 'Kulturelle Deutungsmuster und Diskursformationen am Beispiel des Themas Kindsmord zwischen 1750 und 1800', *Lenz-Jahrbuch*, 6 (1996), 198–229; and Kirsten Peters, *Der Kindsmord als schöne Kunst betrachtet: Eine motiengeschichtliche Untersuchung der Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Würzburg 2001, pp. 54–62.

⁵² See Fritz Breithaupt, 'Anonymous Forces of History: The Case of Infanticide in the Sturm und Drang', *New German Critique*, 79 (2000), 157–76 (172–6).

of universal law.⁵³ Indeed, Bergengruen even identifies the Magister, with his criticism of aristocratic exceptionalism, as the mouthpiece of a Kantian legal universalism, and goes on to note the influence on Kant of Rousseau's republicanism in *On the Social Contract* (1762).⁵⁴ However, as we will see, Wagner underlines the limits of such universalism both by scrutinising the very idea of autonomous agency and by discrediting the Magister's intellectual coherence and moral integrity.

While Wagner's play certainly responds to these wider legal debates, it also deepens them by underlining the assault on individual agency faced by a young woman such as Evchen. The bourgeois milieu in which she lives is predicated on the agency and integrity of the individual as the basis for unimpeachable virtue, whereas in reality the autonomy of the bourgeoisie is eroded economically and culturally. Evchen does nothing more reprehensible than flirt with von Gröningseck, and yet the double standards of this society are such that she pays the price for getting raped. Von Gröningseck's promise of marriage may have encouraged her to conceal the rape, but it is unclear whether it would have been safe to reveal the truth in any case. Mere concealment of the pregnancy would also have been treated as a crime. The flipside of Frau Humbrecht's view that having dirt on your clothes is not a problem if nobody notices is the reality that this world does not look beyond the surface in judging moral infractions. The Fiskal notes clemency is unheard of and that von Gröningseck's appeal to the King is unlikely to succeed: 'ist nun das Faktum, wie es der Anschein gibt, auch klar, so können sie die Müh sparen' (p. 84). Wagner exposes the double standards of the judicial system by inserting the story of a child of five beaten to death for illegal begging with no consequences. The law overlooks the death of a marginalised child, while applying 'kriminalische Unfühlbarkeit' to the prosecution of an infanticide.⁵⁵

While Rousseau was keenly alive to the prevalence of dependency in civilised society, his solution in *Emile* was a radical programme of education outside society, allowing the child to develop free of the distortions wrought by vanity and reason. Wagner's emphasis on the impossibility of autonomy can be seen as a radicalisation of Rousseau's emphasis on social dependency, as well as a critique of the impracticality of an educational programme that emphasises separation from society.

Only twice in the play does Evchen imagine an alternative world where she might live independently. In Act Four, she exclaims, 'O wenn ich ein Mann wäre! [...] Noch heute macht ich mich auf den Weg nach Amerika, und hälft für die Freyheit streiten' (p. 46). Revolutionary America

⁵³ See Maximilian Bergengruen, 'Das neue Recht und der neue Körper: Wagners *Kindermörderin* zwischen Anthropologie und Rechtstheorie', in *Die Grenzen des Menschen: Anthropologie und Ästhetik um 1800*, ed. Maximilian Bergengruen, Roland Borgards and Johannes Friedrich Lehmann, Würzburg 2001, pp. 37–49.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵⁵ See Huyssen, *Drama* (note 37), p. 184.

represents the possibility of overcoming her enforced passivity and evokes the possibility of bridging the class divides that have blighted her life; and yet her sex places it beyond reach. Evchen's other vision of life outside society is a nightmarish one. Even before her downfall, she expounds to von Gröningseck her situation if he fails to keep his word and return to marry her. Rather than facing her family's rage, she would escape:

die grauenvollste Wildniß würde ich aufsuchen, von allem was menschliches Ansehn hat entfernt, mich im dicksten Gesträuch vor mir selbst verbergen, nur den Regen des Himmels trinken, um mein Gesicht, mein geschändetes Ich nicht im Bach spiegeln zu dürfen; und wenn dann der Himmel ein Wunderwerk thäte, mich und das unglückliche Geschöpf, das Waise ist noch eh es einen Vater hat, beym Leben zu erhalten, so wollt ich, so bald es zu sammeln anfieng, ihm statt *Vater* und *Mutter*, die gräßlichen Worte, *Hure* und *Meyneid*, so lang ins Ohr schreyn, bis es sie deutlich nachspräche, und dann in einem Anfall von Raserey durch sein Schimpfen mich bewöge, seinem und meinem Elend ein Ende zu machen. (pp. 52–3)

Unlike Klinger's Guelfo, who seeks mirrors of his inner self everywhere, Evchen eschews even the natural mirror of the water, such is the horror of imagining herself an outcast. Society brands her a 'Hure', a shallow and unfair judgment that she meekly accepts. Evchen tries to escape judgment by remaining in her room, for exposure to this society will make her 'ein Kind des Tods' (p. 47); yet her parents block this tactic too. Images of death dominate her language; she later tells von Gröningseck that her inner voice tells her that her fate is written in blood (p. 52). While this could be seen as an effect of her melancholy, it is more convincing to see Evchen's melancholy as the result of society's degradation of the subject.

Wagner's aesthetic radicalism – particularly the representation of a rape scene just offstage, its staging in a brothel, and the portrayal of child murder onstage – is inextricably linked to his social critique. This becomes clear during the controversy over Karl Gottlieb Lessing's adaptation of 1777. Lessing removed the first act set in the brothel, claiming it was unsuitable for 'keuschen Augen' (p. 94). He criticises the play's lack of form, terming two-thirds of it 'Wicken und Unkraut' (p. 92). Lessing clearly fails to understand why Wagner integrates several apparently extraneous stories, which, I argue, convey the habitus of the aristocracy and middle class. In fact, Lessing's version was itself banned, due to the critical comments he introduced about the Prussian military.⁵⁶ Wagner responded by creating his own reworking under the title *Evchen Humbrecht* (1779), which concludes with a happy, moralising ending, as Evchen's father reaches her before she kills the child. Some critics have misunderstood the new ending, in my view wrongly, as an example of 'problematische[]

⁵⁶ See further Huyssen, *Drama* (note 37), p. 176.

Sozialdisziplinierung'.⁵⁷ In a biting preface, Wagner reflects on his aesthetic and moral aims. Given present mores the theatre cannot be a 'Schule der Sitten'; indeed, he evokes Rousseau in asserting 'dies von ihr zu erwarten müssen wir erst dem Stande der unverderbten Natur wieder näher rücken, von dem wir Weltenweit entfernt sind' (p. 121). He turns Lessing's words against him:

Jetzt ist es Mode tugendhaft *scheinen zu wollen*, vielleicht *wird* man es einmal aus der nemlichen wichtigen Ursache. Jetzt hat alles keusche Ohren, der größte Haufen freche und buhlerische Augen, und ein unreines Herz: Tugend sitzt den meisten bloß auf den Lippen, und giebt alle andre Zugänge der unverschämtesten Ausgelassenheit Preis. (pp. 121–2)

In a sense, public reception of his play exemplifies the superficial commitment to virtue displayed by Frau Humbrecht. Wagner admits that he has deleted the first act to make the play fit for 'unser[e] sogenannten gereinigten Bühnen' (p. 122), and that he has therefore also offered a happy ending:

Da es nur denenjenigen neueren Trauerspiel-Dichtern erlaubt ist traurige Katastrophen anzubringen, denen man es bey jeder Scene ansieht, daß es ihr Ernst nicht ist, und daß die Leute auf dem Theater nur so zum Spaß sterben, so hab ich um allen meinen Zuschauern eine schlaflose Nacht zu erspahren auch die Mühe über mich genommen dem Ding am Ende eine andre Wendung zu geben, wofür mir, wie ich gewiß weiß die meisten Dank wissen werden. (p. 123)

Reflecting back on Wagner's original version, we might say that the harrowing scenes portraying Evchen's distress reflect Wagner's concern to sharpen moral questions. Huyssen argues that the key influence on Wagner was Louis-Sébastien Mercier, whose *Du Théâtre, ou Nouvel Essai sur l'Art Dramatique* (1773) Wagner translated and published in 1776.⁵⁸ Mercier's essay may have strengthened Wagner's opposition to classical tragic aesthetics and his class criticisms.⁵⁹ Certainly, as El-Dandoush notes, Mercier advocated the aesthetic value of portraying feeling on stage as a means of moral education.⁶⁰ Wagner confronts the audience with the brothel scene to bring sexual exploitation and rape to public attention. He concludes the original play with an evidently unsatisfactory solution, as von Gröningseck sets off for Versailles to seek clemency for Evchen from the French king. It does nothing to address the structural issues the play has illustrated, while the conclusion of his revised version *Evchen Humbrecht*

⁵⁷ See Hannes Fricke, *Das hört nicht auf: Trauma, Literatur und Empathie*, Göttingen 2004, p. 178.

⁵⁸ See Wagner's anonymously published translation *Neuer Versuch über die Schauspielkunst*, Leipzig 1776.

⁵⁹ See Huyssen, *Drama* (note 37), pp. 182–3.

⁶⁰ See El-Dandoush, *Leidenschaft* (note 45), p. 61.

(1779) merely soothes the audience, while simultaneously mocking their shallowness.

In Wagner's original version, the representative of the moderate Enlightenment on Wagner's stage, the Magister, offers a shallow assessment of her downfall: 'Gerechter Gott! wie tief kann dein Mensch herabstürzen, wenn er einmal den ersten Fehltritt gethan hat!' (p. 83). He fails to recognise the structural barriers to Evchen's moral autonomy and resorts to spouting a mere cliché of classical tragedy rather than displaying real insight. What hope there is for the future derives not from the enlightened clergyman, but from the less polished figures of the drama. One is Evchen's father, who offers her forgiveness, commenting 'ein Vater bleibt immer Vater, und ist da oft am meisten, wo ers am wenigsten scheint' (p. 81). The other is the washerwoman Frau Marthan, who sympathises with Evchen as soon as she discovers her true identity, and speculates that she must have been seduced (p. 78). Such moments of humanity point the way towards a better way of dealing with social crimes such as infanticide by accounting for human complexity and the claims of the body. We might speculate that these are the characters who, in Rousseauian terms, have preserved more of humanity's natural pity by virtue of being the least conventionally civilised.

MALER MÜLLER'S PFÄLZISCHE IDYLLEN

Malder Müller's trio of *Pfälzische Idyllen* from the mid-1770s suggest that the best possibility of overcoming social dependency lies with the peasantry. Each of the idylls, *Die Schaaf-Schur*, *Das Nuß-Kernen* and the incomplete *Der Christabend*, portray a sociable evening in the fictional village of Lämmerbach, as the rustics work, sing and recount tales. The question of children's autonomy is particularly critical in the first two of the idylls, which culminate in the engagements of Lotte and Guntel respectively, the two daughters of the cantankerous peasant Walter.⁶¹

Throughout the idylls, the songs and tales presented by the sociable groups throw the action in the dramatic present into relief by reminding the reader of the possibility of tragic outcomes in parallel situations. One of the key relationships running through the trio of idylls is that between the peasant Walter and the intellectual village schoolmaster. At first, Walter seems bigoted and violent towards his daughter Guntel, while the Schoolmaster is initially presented as an effete intellectual. Yet Walter is easily Müller's most emotional and least refined character, which seems to be key to his ability to sympathise. When his daughter Guntel sings the tragic ballad of Cunigunde, who is first abandoned, then accidentally killed by her beloved Pfalzgraf Friedrich, it elicits immediate sympathy

⁶¹ This final section of my argument draws on the fuller analysis of Müller within the pastoral tradition in my monograph *The Shepherd, the Volk, and the Middle Class: Transformations of Pastoral in German-Language Writing, 1750–1850*, Rochester, NY 2020, pp. 64–84.

from Walter, who is horrified at the notion that his own daughter might meet such a fate.⁶² Critics have sometimes portrayed the schoolmaster's role as a civilising one, but I argue that Müller portrays his education as unnecessary.⁶³ For example, the Schoolmaster tells a tale of a pastor's daughter whose father tries to make her marry a wealthy older man. The girl grows desperate and runs away with a gypsy boy whom she loves. Walter spontaneously reacts by blaming the father for trying to force the girl to marry: 'Das geht wider die Natur' (p. 117). By contrast, the Schoolmaster pathologises the girl's affection as 'verirrte Leidenschaft' and 'Liebeskrankheit' (pp. 117–18). Similarly, when the Schoolmaster tells the tale of an infanticide who falls pregnant outside wedlock and kills her child amid malicious gossip, it elicits Walter's spontaneous sympathy for the 'armes Mädchen', and he calls for 'Barmherzigkeit und Milde' (p. 124). Walter possesses an instinctive psychological insight based upon natural pity. While the Schoolmaster confirms his judgment, he does so in intellectual terms, explaining that she should be considered 'nicht mehr im eigentlichen Stand der Natur' (p. 124) and thus not responsible for her actions.

There is doubt whether the parents' generation will accede to the wishes of the children, for there is conflict between the generations that is only resolved happily at the last moment. Indeed, when Walter catches his daughter Lotte kissing her beloved Veitel, he is cross at first. However, it soon emerges that he is not angered by their display of affection, but because they have not been candid with him. The relationships between Walter and his daughters are mirrored in the difficult relationships between the Schulz and his son Carl. Yet again, Walter acts as a broker for reconciliation. When the Schulz becomes outraged that Carl has stopped studying to become a pastor but has begun writing for the theatre instead, Walter laconically urges him to accept the change: 'Studir' er, wozu er inclinirt' (p. 154). Müller portrays the peasantry as characterised by an instinctive liberality, allowing generous relations to flourish between the generations based on natural sympathy. In this sense, Müller's ideal community is based, not on dualistic principles derived from Christian doctrine, but on a monistic, instinctive morality that accounts for physical desire and human diversity.

Müller suggests that the unalienated peasant Walter actually holds the greatest potential for humanity. In an unfinished letter from autumn

⁶² See Maler Müller, *Idyllen*, ed. Peter-Erich Neuser, Stuttgart 1977, p. 84. Further quotations from *Die Schaaf-Schur* and *Das Nuß-Kernen* refer to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the main text.

⁶³ See Dieter Kafitz, 'Gattungskonvention und Dorfmilieu in den "Pfälzer Idyllen" Friedrich Müllers', *Blätter der Carl-Zuckmayer-Gesellschaft*, 3 (1977), 96–122 (118); and Hartmut Dedert, 'Kindsmord in Arkadien: Aufklärung und ihre Grenzen in Maler Müllers Idylle *Das Nuß-Kernen*', in *Critica Poeticae: Lesarten zur deutschen Literatur*, ed. Andreas Gössling and Stefan Nienhaus, Würzburg 1992, pp. 113–24 (p. 115).

1777 possibly intended for Friedrich Christian Exter, Müller mocked the idealised portrayal of virtuous and happy peasants in literary idylls, protesting that real country people need no idealisation: 'o war haftig es giebt noch Sitten aber mann muß Sie zu finden wißen'.⁶⁴ This comment suggests an alignment between Müller's view and Rousseau's argument that civilisation has driven out natural pity other than in isolated rural communities. At the same time, the innovative, episodic structure of all three idylls reminds the audience of the possibility of tragic outcomes in more advanced communities where sympathy has been driven out by the advance of civilisation.

Thus, the writers of the Sturm und Drang appear to suggest, following Rousseau, that inequality correlates with social dependence, whereas flat social structures promote pluralism and autonomy. All three writers deploy aesthetic innovations not for their own sake, but to force their elite audiences to reckon with the ills of the present. None of them offers large-scale solutions for the ills they portray, preferring instead to confront their audiences with the stark failings of aristocratic and middle-class society. While Müller's peasant idylls adumbrate a way out of the problem of dependence, they do so in the hypothetical mode of the idyll, portraying only an ideal, small-scale community, rather than a solution that could be adopted in the complex modern societies of Enlightenment Germany. In this sense, even Müller's idylls belong in their quiet way to a radical challenge of an unsatisfactory status quo that demands a rethinking of settled certainties.

More generally, the three plays studied demonstrate that while the writing of the Sturm und Drang was not characterised by a 'revolutionäre Wirkungsabsicht', in Luserke's words, it could nonetheless point its audiences towards radical conclusions. Jonathan Israel's divide between a moderate and a radical Enlightenment risks simplifying a much more complex configuration. While none of the plays studied above calls for a wholesale revolution, all three mobilise innovative aesthetic forms to confront their audiences with deep-seated structural issues relating to the possibilities and limitations of autonomy. Indeed, my analysis has also demonstrated how literary writers were able to present a diverse range of perspectives on these questions and to foreground the antinomies of the current social order in a more radical manner than directly political or philosophical approaches could. Moreover, it demonstrates the value of reading literature as an integral element in enlightened debates, and challenges the exponents of intellectual history to take literary writers more seriously as participants in the Enlightenment.

⁶⁴ See Friedrich Müller, *Briefwechsel: Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Rolf Paulus and Gerhard Sauder, 4 vols, Heidelberg 1998, I, pp. 67–8.