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The Rhetoric of Romanticism

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Aesthetic Formalization: Kleist's *Über das Marionettentheater*

IN A letter to Körner dated February 23, 1793, Schiller gave the following description of the perfect aesthetic society:

I know of no better image for the ideal of a beautiful society than a well executed English dance, composed of many complicated figures and turns. A spectator located on the balcony observes an infinite variety of criss-crossing motions which keep decisively but arbitrarily changing directions without ever colliding with each other. Everything has been arranged in such a manner that each dancer has already vacated his position by the time the other arrives. Everything fits so skilfully, yet so spontaneously, that everyone seems to be following his own lead, without ever getting in anyone's way. Such a dance is the perfect symbol of one's own individually asserted freedom as well as of one's respect for the freedom of the other.¹

Schiller's English translators and commentators, Elizabeth Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, cite the passage as a fitting description of Schiller's main theoretical text, the *Letters on the*

Aesthetic Education of Mankind. It is said to reflect "the philosophic and aesthetic complexity of the [book's] form as a whole."² What strikes them as particularly suggestive in the model of the dance is what they call the *tautology* of art, "its inherent tendency to offer a hundred different treatments of the same subject, to find a thousand different forms of expression for the thoughts and feelings common to all men. . . . The perpetually repeated figures—so highly formalized that they can easily be recorded in notation—admit of only as much individuality in their successive execution by the different dancers as can be expressed through the grace of bodily movement."³ The privileged spectacle of the dance, which recurs in many authors and many texts, is also a particularly fitting figure for "the second nature of true wisdom which, though indistinguishable from the spontaneous play of childhood's innocence, is reached only on the other side of knowledge, sophistication, and awareness of self."⁴

The Schiller text, with its commentary, condenses the complex ideology of the aesthetic in a suggestive concatenation of concepts that achieve the commonplace, not by their banality but by the genuine universality of their stated aspirations. The aesthetic, as is clear from Schiller's formulation, is primarily a social and political model, ethically grounded in an assumedly Kantian notion of freedom; despite repeated attempts by commentators, alarmed by its possible implications, to relativise and soften the idea of the aesthetic state (*Aesthetischer Staat*) that figures so prominently at the end of the *Letters on Aesthetic Education*, it should be preserved as the radical assertion that it is. The "state" that is here being advocated is not just a state of mind or of soul, but a principle of political value and authority that has its own claims on the shape and the limits of our freedom. It would lose all interest if this were not the case. For it is as a political force that the aesthetic still concerns us as one of the most powerful ideological drives to act upon the reality of history. But what is then called, in conscious reference to Kant and to the questionable version of Kant that is found in Schiller, the *aesthetic*, is not a separate cate-

gory but a principle of articulation between various known faculties, activities, and modes of cognition. What gives the aesthetic its power and hence its practical, political impact, is its intimate link with knowledge, the epistemological implications that are always in play when the aesthetic appears over the horizon of discourse. We hear these claims, somewhat muted in Schiller's letter to Körner (though present in numberless instances throughout his writings) but clearly sounded in the cogent commentary of his interpreters.

It appears in this commentary in two closely interrelated of its aspects. First, and most traditionally, in the paradox of a wisdom that lies somehow beyond cognition and self-knowledge, yet that can only be reached by ways of the process it is said to overcome. Second, and more originally, in the reference to systems of formalization and notation rigorous enough to be patterned on the model of mathematical language. Such a degree of formalization is made possible by what is here called "the tautology of essential art," a term used by Wilkinson and Willoughby to designate the universality of "thoughts and feelings common to all men." As the privileged and infinitely varied mode of expression of this universality, art is in fact what defines humanity in the broadest sense. Mankind, in the last analysis, is human only by ways of art. On the other hand, as a principle of formalization rigorous enough to produce its own codes and systems of inscription, tautology functions as a restrictive coercion that allows only for the reproduction of its own system, at the exclusion of all others. Neither in Schiller's letter nor in the commentary on this letter is any allowance made for the possible tension between these two functions.

In the same literary tradition, other versions of the same theme tell a different tale and reveal some of what is hidden behind Schiller's ideology of the aesthetic. Kleist's *Über das Marionettentheater* is among the furthest-reaching of these texts.⁵ It has engendered a tradition of interpretation, primarily but not exclusively in German, rich enough to produce at least one anthology of critical essays,⁶ and it has inspired poets and

novelists, most prominently Rilke and Thomas Mann, as well as academic critics. Yet for all the attention it has received it has remained curiously unread and enigmatic. It belongs among the texts of the period which our own modernity has not yet been able to confront, perhaps because the Schillerian aesthetic categories, whether we know it or not, are still the taken-for-granted premises of our own pedagogical, historical, and political ideologies.

The reading of Baudelaire's "Correspondances" produced a version of the disruption of the tropological chain by way of a pattern of enumeration no longer accessible to the processes of anthropomorphism and naturalization that guarantee the intelligibility of tropes. The tension, in this poem, occurs indeed between number as trope (the infinitesimal as the underlying principle of totalization) and number as tautology (the stutter of an endless, but not infinitesimal, enumeration that never goes anywhere). "Correspondances," in other words, is structured like the distinction between calculus and arithmetic, with tropes of infinitude reduced to the literal, disfigured status of sheer finite numbers. The Kleist text is, or pretends to be, more overtly mathematical, though along somewhat different lines. Its model is that of analytical geometry, rather than of calculus, as an attempt to articulate the phenomenal particularity of a spatial entity (line or curve) with the formalized computation of number: the curve belongs to the order of the aesthetic or of the word (*logos*), the formal computation that produces it to the order of number (*arithmos*). Inevitably, the word that combines both "word" and "number," *logarithm*, makes at least a furtive, and somewhat dubious, appearance in the text.⁷

The articulation between trope and epistemology, in Baudelaire's poem, is carried out by the conceptualization of particulars that travels from individual sensations to such infinite generalities as "l'esprit," "la nature," or "les sens." Numbers are at first wrapped up in the infinity of words until they reappear, like the return of the repressed, in the disruptive quantification of specific instances as conveyed, for in-

stance, by the semantic ambivalence of the word "comme." Number is omnipresent but always already conceptualized in words, in language. Kleist's text is concerned with the same articulation of the aesthetic with the epistemological but by way of formal computation. Whereas aesthetic words turn out to produce material numbers in Baudelaire, aesthetic numbers produce material words in Kleist. If Baudelaire's text is about the disarticulation of entities by words, Kleist's is about the disarticulation of words themselves.

Still, the notion of the infinite appears in *Marionettentheater* as well, and even so conspicuously that it has become the target, the *thesis* of the text, ostensible enough to have mobilized the attention of its interpreters at the exclusion of most anything else. As is fitting in any well-conducted argument, the thesis emerges at the end, as the conclusion of a consistent development. The key term of this conclusion is indeed the concept of infinity:

. . . as one line, when it crosses another, suddenly appears on the other side of the intersecting point, after its passage through infinity; or as the image in a concave mirror, after retreating into infinity, suddenly reappears close before our eyes, so, too, grace will reappear after knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) has gone through infinity. So that we shall find grace at its purest in a body which is entirely devoid of consciousness or which possesses it in an infinite degree; that is, in the marionette or in the god.

The idea of innocence recovered at the far side and by way of experience, of paradise consciously regained after the fall into consciousness, the idea, in other words, of a teleological and apocalyptic history of consciousness is, of course, one of the most seductive, powerful, and deluded topoi of the idealist and romantic period.

Schiller's concept of the naive and the self-conscious which, as Wilkinson's commentary suggests, typifies the trajectory of his aesthetic theory, is a striking example of this ubiquitous model. No wonder that commentators as well as poets and novelists respond so selectively to Kleist's concluding state-

ment. Within the bewildering and mystifying context of *Marionettentheater*, it provides an enclave of familiarity, an anchor of the commonplace in the midst of an uncanny scene of extravagance and paradox. It has been very easy to forget how little this pseudo-conclusion has to do with the rest of the text and how derisively ungermane it is to the implications of what comes before.

For one thing, *Marionettentheater* is not composed as an argument but as a succession of three separate narratives enclosed in the dialogical frame of a staged scene. And since the very concept of argument is equated, in the body of the text, with mathematical computation and proof, one of the tensions in the text certainly occurs between a statement such as the one on infinity quoted above, and the formal procedures that allow one to reach and understand this statement. In a computation or a mathematical proof, the meaning and the procedure by which it is reached, the hermeneutics, if one wishes, and the poetics (as formal procedure considered independently of its semantic function), entirely codetermine each other. But in another mode of cognition and of exposition, such as narrative, this mutual supportiveness cannot be taken for granted, since it is not the only generative principle of the discourse. And although *Marionettentheater* can be said to be *about* proof, it is not set up as one but as the story or trope of such a demonstration, and a very cagy story at that.

The concluding commonplace on the restorative powers of consciousness, for example, does not reach us as an utterance attributed to an established authority, but as the statement of one of the two protagonists in the staged scene of a dialogue between a first-person "I" and a third person "he," neither of whose credibility goes unchallenged. The function of this scene, which frames the embedded narratives told alternately by the two characters (stories 1 and 3 told by "he" and story 2 by "I") is itself multiple and of some complexity. It is, on the first level of evidence, a scene of persuasion in which "he" apparently convinces "I" of a paradoxical judgment that the latter initially resisted. At the end of the con-

versation, K has apparently been convinced and the dialogue seems to end in harmonious agreement. The agreement is reached because K, at first confused, has now, as C puts it, been "put into possession of all that is needed to *understand* (him)" (*italics mine*). Persuasion is linked to a process of understanding and what is "understood" is that the increased formalization of consciousness, as in a machine, far from destroying aesthetic effect, enhances it; consciousness's loss is aesthetic's gain. What concerns us at this point is not the validity of this assertion but the formal observation that this loss of hermeneutic control is itself staged as a scene of hermeneutic persuasion.

This scene abounds in stage business to the point of achieving the pantomimic liveliness associated with texts such as Diderot's *Neveu de Rameau*. We are told when and how the interlocutors nod and smile, sniff tobacco, express enthusiasm or, on the contrary, manifest their doubts or hesitations; K and C, with the alternating symmetry of a dance figure in a ballet, cast down their gaze to the floor or lift it to eye-level. A second dialogue of gestures doubles the dialogue of words, and the parallelism between both is far from assured. When, at the moment of final agreement, K is said to be "ein wenig zerstreut" (slightly distracted), this signal should at least arouse one's suspicion. This stress on staging, on the mimesis of the diegetic narratives—the text *shows* people engaged in the act of *telling*—emphasizes the self-consciousness of the representational mode within the hermeneutic context of a persuasion and problematizes the relationship between a rhetoric and a hermeneutics of persuasion. When a persuasion has to become a scene of persuasion one is no longer in the same way persuaded of its persuasiveness.

This may well be why the scenes of persuasion are also scenes of instruction. *Über das Marionettentheater* is also a text about teaching, staging all the familiar devices of pedagogy. It appears as the pseudo-conversation or discussion of a "seminar" or a "tutorial" in which the cards are stacked from the beginning. Herr C., who is the successful first dancer of the

local opera, has all the authority of the professional on his side in this conversation about his own craft with a sheer amateur; K's apparent objections are there only to set off the mastery of the expert and the outcome of the debate is never in question. C's credentials guarantee from the start that he will have the last word, although the proposition he is made to defend—that mechanical puppets are more graceful than live dancers—is, at first sight, paradoxical to the point of absurdity. Moreover, when K in turn gets *his* chance to tell a story (the story of the young man who lost his gracefulness after seeing himself in a mirror), he acts himself, in the *mise en abyme* of the story within the story, as the ephebe's teacher whose unquestioned duty implies that he put the young man, for his own good, to the test (" . . . um die Sicherheit der Grazie, die ihm beiwohnte, zu prüfen . . .") (italics mine). The function as well as the devices or methods of education figure prominently in this latter-day *Emile*.

The education, moreover, is in a very specific discipline, closer to Schiller than to Rousseau: the ephebe, as well as K, are being educated in the art of gracefulness, *Anmut*. Their education is clearly an *aesthetic* education that is to earn them citizenship in Schiller's aesthetic state. This didactic aim, however, can only be reached if the discipline that is to be taught can itself be formalized or schematized to the point of becoming a technique. Teaching becomes possible only when a degree of formalization is built into the subject-matter. The aesthetic can be taught only if the articulation of aesthetic with mathematical (and epistemological) discourse—the burden of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*—can be achieved. This articulation, always according to Kant, is also the only guarantee that theoretical reason can be linked to the practical judgment of the ethical world. The possibility thus arises that the postulate of ethical authority is posited for the sake of maintaining the undisputed authority of teachers in their relationship to their pupils.

The scene of instruction which repeats itself on all narrative levels of discourse also becomes, most clearly in the third

anecdote (that of the bear), a scene of *reading*. Whatever the bizarre figure of the bear may represent or symbolize, his relationship to C is marked by his apparent ability to *read* him. "Eye to eye, as if he could *read* my soul, he stood, with threateningly lifted paw—Aug in Auge, als ob er meine Seele darin *lesen* könnte, stand er, die Tatze schlagfertig erhoben . . ." (italics mine). The understanding (*begreifen*) aimed at by C occurs by way of a reading, of which the exemplary version is told in this episode. But this reading is also a combat, a battle of which it is not at all certain that it will remain harmless mock-combat. This element of battle will be present in the other scenes as well. All we wish to retain for the present is that the theatricality of the text is centered on agonistic scenes of persuasion, of instruction, and of reading. And since the scene of reading is the most explicit and the most dangerous test of the three, it follows that the reading of this text, *Über das Marionettentheater* by Heinrich von Kleist, is the testiest of all these juxtaposed tests, especially if the reader also happens to be a teacher.

One cannot avoid the perhaps most dangerous (for oneself, that is) of all observations, namely that academic as well as nonacademic literary readers have collectively flunked this test. *Marionettentheater* has produced fine articles of considerable subtlety, erudition, and wit (next to others of distressing banality) but its interpretation has certainly failed to coalesce into anything resembling a consensus, even on a relatively primitive level of signification.

The spectacle of so much competence and attention producing so little result certainly puts to the test any attempt to add one more reading to those that have already been undertaken. More often than not the diversity that becomes manifest in the successive readings of a text permits one to determine a central crux that works as a particularly productive challenge to interpretation. Not so with *Marionettentheater*; this brief narrative engenders a confusion all the more debilitating because it arises from the cumulative effect produced by the readings. Each of the essays (including the bad ones) is quite

convincing in itself, until one reads the next one, equally persuasive yet entirely incompatible with its predecessors. The outcome, seen from the perspective of literary scholarship, is anything but graceful. The collective body of interpreters resembles the harassed fencer of the final story rather than the self-assured teacher. C and his interlocutor maintain a measure of composure, but the dance performed by the commentators offers only chaos. Far from finding, as in Schiller's description of the aesthetic dance, that the spot toward which one directs one's step has been vacated, one finds oneself bumping clumsily into various intruders or getting entangled in one's own limbs and motions. One is left speculating on what it is, in this text, that compels one, despite clearly perceived warnings, to enter upon this unpromising scene. For it would appear that anyone still willing to engage a bear in a fencing match after having read *Über das Marionettentheater* should have his head examined.

Still, the interpretation of the enigmatic little text continues and, under the salutary influence of contemporary methodology, the readings have become increasingly formalized.⁸ They allow one to reach the true aesthetic dimension of the text, the uneasy mixture of affirmation and denial, of gracefulness and violence, of mystification and lucidity, of hoax and high seriousness, that characterizes it and accounts for its enduring fascination. This response, of course, carries out the program of the narrative which promises increased aesthetic pleasure as a reward for increased formalization. That this happens at the expense of stable and determinable meaning is a fair enough price to pay for the mastery over form. The real test comes later, after the possibility of assertion has been decanonized by means of a systematic poetics and this poetics threatens to become, in its turn, canonized as exemplary. A contemporary version of this story is familiar to us in the pedagogical success of semiotics. The formalization, which makes genuine teaching possible, is inherent in the linguistic medium; therefore it is not only legitimate but absolutely indispensable. Its negative impact on semantic certainty, on the

dubious status of referentiality, is equally persuasive. What remains problematic is whether the pedagogical function can remain compatible with aesthetic effect. Formalization inevitably produces aesthetic effects; on the other hand, it just as compulsively engenders pedagogical discourse. It produces education, but can this education still be called *aesthetic education*? It produces a special kind of grace, but can this elegance be taught? Is there such a thing as a graceful teacher or, rather, is a teacher who manages to be graceful still a teacher? And if he is not, what then will he *do* to those who, perhaps under false pretenses, have been put in the position of being his pupils? The problem is not entirely trivial or self-centered, for the political power of the aesthetic, the measure of its impact on reality, necessarily travels by ways of its didactic manifestations. The politics of the aesthetic state are the politics of education.

The problematization of reading conceived as the determination of meaning is signaled, in this text, in a variety of ways. It takes the form, first of all, of a complication of the mimetic function of narrative. In lyric poems, like those of Baudelaire, this was not the primary concern: the claim is that of a voice addressing entities or conceptually generalized expressions of particular entities, and the refinements of narrative strategy are not centrally involved. In the Kleist text, however, we are dealing, from the start, with the compatibility of narrative (which is aesthetic) with epistemological argument or, to be somewhat more specific, with the possibility of a system of formalization that narrative and argument would share in common. The various thematic components of the problem (teaching, combat, consciousness, etc.) occur as necessary components of this system. The problem of mimesis is also bound to assert itself, by ways of the possibility, or the necessity, of narrative formalization. Imitation, to the extent that it pretends to be natural, anthropologically justified to the point of defining the human species and spontaneous, is not formalized in the sense that mathematical language is; it is not entirely independent of the particular content, or substance,

of the entity it chooses to represent. One can conceive of certain mimetic constants or even structures but, to the extent that they remain dependent on a reality principle that lies outside them, they resist formalization. It is to be expected, then, that a text like Kleist's, which examines the epistemology of narrative, will engage the themes of mimetic imitation critically. Hence its necessarily theatrical mode, the emphasis on stage and scene; hence, also, the prominence of its critique of mimetic themes and the variety of its narrative stylistics.

For, just as *Jacques le fataliste* is a catalogue of narrative cruxes, *Über das Marionettentheater* condenses, in a very short space, the main stylistic devices by means of which narrative succeeds in both obeying and subverting the mimetic imperative under which it functions. The anecdotes of the ephebe and the bear are told as straightforward diegetic narratives, but the scene that frames them, the dialogue between C and K, is shown as a mimesis and set up, like Rousseau's Preface to *Julie* or like *Le neveu de Rameau*, in the form of a dialogue, with all the possibilities of substitution and exchange this implies. This mimetic model is itself complicated, however, by the constant alternation between direct quotation (pure mimesis, so to speak) and the evasive device of *style indirect libre*. The two modes constantly alternate and intertwine over brief narrative spaces.⁹ The result is a deliberate foregrounding of the narrator that reintroduces a diegetic element and weakens the mimesis, exactly in the same way that subjunctive or conditional verb forms weaken the authority of assertions made in the indicative. The resulting narrative pattern is of some complexity: purely diegetic narratives are encased in a mimetic framework which, however, reintroduces its own diegetic components.

The unsettling of mimesis extends to the themes as well as to the style and ironizes the ordinary supports of intelligibility. The first and most obvious of these devices is verisimilitude or plausibility (*Wahrhaftigkeit*) which, in the narrative mode of a dramatized scene of persuasion or instruction, becomes equivalent to the reliability of the narrator. After having told the anything but self-evident story of the fencing bear, C asks:

"Do you believe this story?" "Absolutely, replies K, with enthusiastic approval. Even coming from a stranger, so plausible it is: and how much more coming from you!" Narrative authority, so it seems, can get away with any degree of absurdity. When K has just completed his almost equally fantastic tale of the repining ephebe, sentenced to narcissistic paralysis by critical self-consciousness, he feels compelled to add: "Someone is still alive today who witnessed this strange and unfortunate incident and who can confirm it word for word, just as I told it."

From the moment the narrator appears in the guise of a witness and recounts the events as a faithful imitation, it takes another witness to vouchsafe for the reliability of the first and we are caught at once in an infinite regress. The point is not that these narratives are devoid of meaning; both are eminently instructive but, like most parables or fables, they are not likely to occur historically. Yet, to be at all persuasive, they have to be presented in a historical mode. The mimesis, however, is not historically determined; it is part of an ideal content, of a proof that is not itself in essence historical. The result is an unstable combination of reported and narrated discourse: the source of trustfulness is not located in the event (as in an imitation) but in the narrator (as in a diegesis), yet the narrator can establish his credibility only by way of a mimetic authority that can never be certified. The authentication of the diegesis can only proceed mimetically, but this mimesis turns out to be itself diegetically overdetermined.

The problem is a particular version, on the level of narrative, of the necessity and the validity of examples in any cognitive inquiry, not surprisingly so since narrative itself functions here as an illustrative example in a demonstration. When K has finished telling his story, C takes over at once: "On this occasion, said Herr C in a friendly tone, I must tell you another story of which you will easily understand how it belongs here." And he proceeds to tell the story of the bear, which is not less enigmatic in context than it is by itself. Why does it belong in this place, after the story of the puppets and

of the ephebe, and how does it relate to the ostensible argument, the superiority of marionettes over real dancers? The answer, if there is one, is certainly not "easily understood." The discrepancy, in fact, is such that one spontaneously reads K's enthusiastic assertion of verisimilitude ironically. Yet every reader will attempt, and probably succeed, in making the anecdote fit the argument, following K's own example when he interprets the figure of the bear as an intermediary stage between the lifeless puppet and an omniscient god.

But can any example ever truly fit a general proposition? Is not its particularity, to which it owes the illusion of its intelligibility, necessarily a betrayal of the general truth it is supposed to support and convey? From the experience of reading abstract philosophical texts, we all know the relief one feels when the argument is interrupted by what we call a "concrete" example. Yet at that very moment, when we think at last that we understand, we are further from comprehension than ever; all we have done is substitute idle talk for serious discourse. Instead of inscribing the particular in the general, which is the purpose of any cognition, one has reversed the process and replaced the understanding of a proposition by the perception of a particular, forgetting that the possibility of such a transaction is precisely the burden of the proposition in the first place. Literary texts by no means take the legitimacy of their considerable illustrative powers for granted. Much rather, like *Über das Marionettentheater*, they will take this problematization for their main concern. In this case, the problematization occurs in the ironic treatment of such devices of narrative persuasion as plausibility and exemplification.

One is left with the three narratives (the puppets, the ephebe, and the bear) as allegories of the wavering status of narrative when compared to the epistemologically sound persuasion of proof. They correspond to three textual models that offer varying degrees of resistance to intelligibility. These models offer different versions of the same theme: aesthetic education as the articulation of history with formally arrived-at truth.

The easiest to understand, least absurd (at least at first sight) of the three stories, despite its hyperbolic assertiveness, is certainly that of the ephebe [the second in order of narration]. One easily enough understands, as K puts it in the general proposition that the story is supposed to illustrate, "what disorders consciousness produces in the natural gracefulness of man." We can all remember personal versions of such a fall from grace, of such loss of innocence. (I for one remember trying to drive down a Swiss street after having just read, in a local newspaper, that for every 100 metres one drives one has at least thirty-six decisions to make. I have never been able to drive gracefully since.) But the moral of K's story does not quite correspond to the conclusion stated by C: whereas the latter speaks of a recovered state of naïveté after an experience of infinite self-consciousness, the young man remains frozen in deadly self-alienation.

The principle of specularity, much in evidence in this story of mirrors (the young man at first catches a fatal glimpse of himself in a mirror and finally pines away, Narcissus-like, staring day after day at his image in a mirror) is not really denounced by this unhappy ending. It might be that the ephebe was not specular enough, that his vanity did not allow him to forget himself to the point of becoming, as it were, his reflection—that he was unable to reach for the infinity of self-consciousness, for the absolute knowledge, that is the necessary condition for a recovered self-presence. Or it might be the narrator-teacher, K himself, who is at fault: after all, he deliberately lies when he breaks the young man's self-assurance by telling him his gracefulness is mere illusion ("I laughed and replied—he must be seeing ghosts!") when, in fact, it is quite genuine.

Both readings lead to sound enough pedagogical conclusions. In the specular model of a text-reader or actor-spectator relationship, the first denounces the reader's unwillingness to become the reflection as well as the object of his own image. As for the lie-detector test applied by the teacher, it would de-

nounce the latter's urge to intervene forcefully in a binary structure that has no room for him. Both are valuable hints but they don't do justice to the complexity of this particular episode. For what K actually tells differs considerably from what he announces, thus supplying another instance of the possible discrepancy between an example and the proposition it is supposed to exemplify.

The scene of the fall from grace is indeed more intricate than the story of self-reflection and self-consciousness. The relationship, in fact, is never simply specular. Since this is an aesthetic education and not a parable of consciousness, what the young man confronts in the mirror is not himself but his resemblance to another. This other, moreover, is not another subject but a work of art, a piece of sculpture susceptible of endless reproduction. It is easy enough for the handsome ephebe to be one more cast, one more *Abguss* in the long series of reproductions of the Spinario figure which, as the text tells us, "are to be found in German collections." If aesthetic education is the imitation of works of art considered as models of beauty or of moral excellence, then it is a rather mechanical process that does not involve a deeper problematization of the self.

This however is not what happens in this case: the young man could have continued his game undisturbed for several years if it had not been for the intervention of a third party, the teacher. Gracefulness was clearly not an end in itself but a device to impress his teacher. When the device fails, he at once loses his talent, not because he has grown self-conscious but because he cannot endure the critical gaze of another in whom his desire for selfhood has been invested. The work of art is only a displaced version of the true model, the judgment of authority. The structure is not specular but triangular. The ensuing clumsiness is the loss of control, the confusion caused by shame. And what the young man is ashamed of is not his lack of grace but the exposure of his desire for self-recognition. As for the teacher's motives in accepting to enter into these displacements of identity, they are even more suspect than

those of the younger person, to the precise extent that sadism is morally and socially more suspect than masochism. Socrates (or, for that matter, Winckelmann) certainly had it coming to him.

But is all this bad faith not precisely what the aesthetic, as opposed to the mimetic, specular education, is supposed to avoid? Is its purpose not to fix the attention on the free integrity of the work in order to turn it away from the inevitable lack of integrity in the self? This seems to have been Schiller's entire purpose in substituting the detachment of aesthetic play for the heavy breathing of a self that remains incapable of such disinterestedness. Kleist's story, however, has less to do with self-deluded and self-deluding villains than with the carelessness of classical aestheticians who misread Kant. Their motives are open to the worst of suspicions as well as to the most convincing of excuses, thus making the entire question of intents and motivations a great deal less compelling than the philosophical question from which it derives: the assumed integrity, not of the self, but of the work.

Does K's somewhat cryptic statement of denial (" . . . er sähe wohl Geister!") refer necessarily and exclusively to the young man's vanity in believing that his gracefulness equaled that of the statue? Maybe the delusion was to believe that the model was graceful in the first place. The statue, we are reminded, represents the figure of a young boy who is extracting a splinter from his foot, an action very unlikely to be the least bit graceful or requiring, at the very least, a considerable amount of idealization to be made to appear so. More important still is the fact that the original perfection, the exemplary wholeness of the aesthetic model is itself, however slightly yet unquestionably, impaired. Up till now, we have read the young man's blushing ("er errötete . . .") as mere shame, a wound of the ego, but it now appears that the redness may well be the blood of an injured body. The white, colorless world of statues is suddenly reddened by a flow of blood, however understated. What is not more than the pinprick of a splinter will soon enough grow to a very different order of magnitude.

But, again, is it not the point of aesthetic form that imitates a work of art (ek-phrasis) to substitute the spectacle of pain for the pain itself, and thus sublimate it by drawing away from the pains of experience, focusing instead on the pleasures of imitation? The splinter-extracting ephebe, thus becomes a miniature *Laokoon*, a version of the neo-classical triumph of imitation over suffering, blood, and ugliness. But if this were to be the lesson of the anecdote why then is the wound so carefully hidden from sight that very few commentators, if any, have hinted at the potential ridicule of trying to imitate gracefully someone engaged in minor repairs on his own body. Even if he had been cutting his toenails, it would have been ludicrous, but extracting a splinter . . . !

The point is that the neoclassical trust in the power of imitation to draw sharp and decisive borderlines between reality and imitation, a faculty which, in aesthetic education, becomes the equivalent ability to distinguish clearly between interested and disinterested acts, between desire and play, depends, in the last analysis, on an equally sharp ability to distinguish the work of art from reality. None of the connotations associated with reality can invade art without being neutralized by aesthetic distance. Kleist's story suggests however that this may be a ruse to hide the flaw that marred aesthetic perfection from the start or, in a more perverse reading, to enjoy, under the cover of aesthetic distance, pleasures that have to do with the inflicting of wounds rather than with gracefulness. The scene would be closer to Michel Leiris than to Schiller unless, of course, one is aware of the potentially violent streak in Schiller's own aesthetic theory. If the aesthetic model is itself flawed or, worse, if it covers up this lesion by a self-serving idealization, then the classical concept of aesthetic education is open to suspicion. The theoretical problem, however, has been displaced: from the specular model of the text as imitation, we have moved on to the question of reading as the necessity to decide between signified and referent, between violence on the stage and violence in the streets. The problem is no longer graceful imitation but the ability to

distinguish between actual meaning and the process of signification. This distinction remained concealed in the specular model in which meaning is taken for granted (the statue *is* graceful) and in which the semiotics of this meaning, when it is transposed in the sign-system of dancelike gestures, is made to correspond unproblematically to its model—although the crucial difference was signaled in the story: the imitator is merely drying himself off whereas the original is curing a wound. The imitation conceals the idealization it performs. The technique of imitation becomes the hermeneutics of signification. This progression (if it is one) occurs between the stories of the ephebe and of the bear, between the story of text as a specular model and text as the locus of transcendental signification.

The third story, narrated by C and enthusiastically decreed to be *wahrscheinlich* by his interlocutor, is dominated by the figure of a super-reader who reduces the author to near-nothingness. The apparently one-sided balance in favor of reader over author does not correspond to an actual shift in their respective status. The superiority of reading over writing, as represented by the superiority of the reading bear over the fencing author, reflects the shift in the concept of text from an imitative to a hermeneutic model. From being openly asserted and visible in the first case, meaning is concealed in the second and has to be disclosed by a labor of decoding and interpretation. This labor then becomes the only *raison d'être* of a text for which "reading" is indeed the correct and exhaustive metaphor. This also implies that the relationship between author-reader and reader-reader now becomes in a very specific sense antagonistic. For the meaning that has to be revealed is not just any meaning, but the outcome of a distinction between intended and stated meaning that it is in the author's interest to keep hidden. What is at stake is the mastery of the writer over his text. If the author knows that he produces meaning, and knows the meaning he produces, his mastery is established. But if this is not the case, if meaning is produced that

he did not intend and if, on the other hand, the intended meaning fails to hit the mark, then he is in difficulty. One consequence of such loss of control over meaning will be that he is no longer able to feign it. For this is indeed the best and perhaps the only proof of his mastery over meaning, that he is free to decree it, at his own will, as genuine or as fake; it takes a stolid realist to believe in the existence of pure, unfeigned fiction. Hence the need to mislead the reader by constantly alternating feints with genuine thrusts: the author depends on the bewilderment and confusion of his reader to assert his control. Reading is comparable to a battle of wits in which both parties are fighting over the reality or fictionality of their discourse, over the ability to decide whether the text is a fiction or an (auto)biography, narrative or history, playful or serious.

The status of the reading performance thus remains perilously poised between being a simulacrum and being the real thing; fencing is an apt metaphor for this state of affairs. Death is at the center of the action and it is impossible to know at what point the comedy of dying may turn into actual violence, just as it is impossible to know, in a dance, when the display of feigned eroticism may turn into actual copulation. The possibility that this might happen is never entirely absent from spectacles of mock-combat or mock-seduction; it creates the tension between aesthetic contemplation and voyeurism without which neither theater nor ballet would be in business.

Kleist puts his own text *en abyme* in the figure of the super-reader or super-author made invincible by his ability to know feint from what is so aptly called, in German, *Ernstfall*; the words *Ernst* and *ernsthaft* occur prominently at this point in the text. What is at issue is clearly also a matter of economy. The need to assert control by repeatedly testing the ability to tell feint from thrust is eminently wasteful. The entire hermeneutic ballet is a display of waste: either we master the text and then we are able but have no need to feint, or we don't and then we are unable to know whether we feint or not. In the first case, interpretation is superfluous and trivial, in the sec-

and it is necessary but impossible. Why then indulge in reading (or writing) at all since we are bound to end up looking foolish, like the fencer in the story, or to become the undoer of all pleasure and play, like the bear has become by the end of the story, when he has killed off all possibility for play by scoring whenever he deigns to enter the fray—which he does only out of defensive necessity. No one is hurt, for the bear never attacks, except for the game itself, forever slain in the unequal contest between seriousness and play. Thus Kant would have forever ended the play of philosophy, let alone the play of art, if the project of transcendental philosophy had succeeded in determining once and forever the limits of our faculties and of our freedom. If it were not for the mess of the *Critique of Judgment* and the breakdown of aesthetic theory, we would all be fighting this transcendental bear in vain.

And how about Kleist's own text? By staging the figure of the super-reader, has he himself become like the bear and achieved the infallible discrimination of genuine seriousness—"der Ernst des Bären"—reducing his commentators to a harassed pack of snipers beaten in advance? Can *he* say, for example, with full authority, that his text is or is not autobiographical? The received opinion is that, in this late work, Kleist achieves self-control and recovers "a naive form of heroism"¹⁰ by overcoming a series of crises, victories over "Todeserlebnisse" that can only be compared to as many deaths and resurrections. This is, of course, a very reassuring way to read *Marionettentheater* as a spiritual autobiography and, as we have suggested, it is not entirely compatible with the complications of the tone and the diction.

The only explicit referential mark in the text is the date of the action, given as the winter of 1801. Now 1801 is certainly an ominous moment in a brief life rich in ominous episodes. It is the year when Kleist's self-doubts and hesitations about his vocation culminate in what biographers call his "Kant crisis." It is also the year during which Kleist's engagement to Wilhelmine von Zenge begins to falter and during which he is plagued by doubts similar to those which plagued Kierke-

gaard in his relationship to Regina and Kafka in his relationship to Felice. Between the two events, the Kant crisis and the forthcoming breach of promise with Wilhelmine (the final break occurred in the spring of 1802), there seems to be a connection which, if only he could understand it, would have relieved Kleist from his never resolved self-desperation. To uncover this link would be the ground of any autobiographical project.

The link actually and concretely existed in the reality of Kleist's history, but it took a somewhat circuitous route. For when Kleist next met his bride-to-be, in 1805 in Königsberg, she was no longer Fräulein Wilhelmine von Zenge but Frau Professor Wilhelmine von Krug. Dr. Wilhelm Traugott Krug was Kant's successor in the latter's chair in philosophy at the University of Königsberg. Kleist, who had wanted to be, in a sense, like Kant and who, one might conjecture, had to give up Wilhelmine in order to achieve this aim, found himself replaced, as husband, by Krug, who also, as teacher philosopher, replaced Kant. What could Kleist do but finish writing, in the same year 1805, a play to be called—what else could it have been—*Der zerbrochene Krug*?

All this, and much more, may have been retained, five more years later, in 1810, when he wrote *Über das Marionettentheater*, in the innocuous-looking notation: winter of 1801. But he may just as well have selected this date at random, as he wrote city of M——, like Mainz, although he was to go to Mainz only in 1803. Who is to say that this notation is random while the other isn't? Who can tell what terrible secrets may be hidden behind this harmless looking letter M? Kleist himself is probably the one least able to tell us and, if he did, we would be well-advised not to take his word for it. To decide whether or not Kleist knew his text to be autobiographical or pure fiction is like deciding whether or not Kleist's destiny, as a person and as a writer, was sealed by the fact that a certain doctor of philosophy happened to bear the ridiculous name of Krug. A story that has so many K's in it (Kant, Kleist, Krug, Kierkegaard, Kafka, K) is bound to be suspicious no matter how one interprets it. Not even Kleist could have dominated such

randomly overdetermined confusion. The only place where infallible bears like this one can exist is in stories written by Heinrich von Kleist.

Why did Herr C, once he had discovered, as we can assume he had, that the bear could tell feint from thrust, persist in trying to feint? Could he not have matched the bear's economy of gestures by making all his attacks genuine, forcing the bear to take them seriously? Granted it would have been tiresome, but not more so than the actual situation, and the fatigue would have been shared. Both would have sweated instead of C alone—and, for all we know, he might have scored. Such a commonsensical solution however is logically possible only if one concedes that C is free to choose between a direct and an oblique attack. But this is precisely what has to be proven. It is only a hypothesis, and as long as it has not been verified, C can never unambiguously attack. From the point of view of the bear, who knows everything, he always feints and, as seems indeed to be the case, the bear hardly ever has to make a move at all. From C's own point of view, which is deluded, no thrust ever goes where it is supposed to go. His blows are always off the mark, displaced, deviant, in error, off-target. Such is language: it always thrusts but never scores. It always refers but never to the right referent. The next textual model—actually the first in the order of narration—will have to be that of the text as a system of turns and deviations, as a system of tropes.

The puppets have no motion by themselves but only in relation to the motions of the puppeteer, to whom they are connected by a system of lines and threads. All their aesthetic charm stems from the transformations undergone by the linear motion of the puppeteer as it becomes a dazzling display of curves and arabesques. By itself, the motion is devoid of any aesthetic interest or effect. The aesthetic power is located neither in the puppet nor in the puppeteer but in the text that spins itself between them. This text is the transformational system, the anamorphosis of the line as it twists and turns into

the tropes of ellipses, parabola, and hyperbole. Tropes are quantified systems of motion. The indeterminations of imitation and of hermeneutics have at last been formalized into a mathematics that no longer depends on role models or on semantic intentions.

The benefits of this formalization are considerable. They guarantee, among other things, the continuity and the balance that are a necessary condition for beautiful lines and shapes. This is possible because they are once and for all cleansed from the pathos of self-consciousness as well as from the disruptions and ironies of imitation. Unlike drama, the dance is truly aesthetic because it is not expressive: the laws of its motion are not determined by desire but by numerical and geometric laws or *topoi* that never threaten the balance of grace. For the dancing puppets, there is no risk of affectation (*Ziererei*), of letting the aesthetic effect be determined by the dynamics of the represented passion or emotion rather than by the formal laws of tropes. No two art forms are in this respect more radically opposed than drama and dance.

Balanced motion compellingly leads to the privileged metaphor of a center of gravity; from the moment we have, as the aesthetic implies, a measure of phenomenality, the metaphor of gravity is as unavoidable, in sequential art forms such as narration or dance, as is the metaphor of light in synchronic arts such as, presumably, painting or lyric poetry. The great merit of the puppets, "the outstanding quality one looks for in vain in the large majority of our dancers" is that they follow "the pure law of gravity (*das blosse Gesetz der Schwere*)."²⁸ Their motion exists only for the sake of the trope, not the reverse, and this guarantees the consistency and predictability of truly graceful patterns of motion.

On the other hand, it is said of the same puppets, almost in the same breath, that they are *antigrav*, that they can rise and leap, like Nijinsky, as if no such thing as gravity existed for them. The contradiction is far-reaching: if one gallicizes *antigrav* by hearing the French "grave" in "grav," then one can hear in *antigrav* a rejection of the seriousness connoted by *Ge-*

setz der Schwere, in which *Schwere* has all the implications of *Schwermut* and heavy-heartedness. The undecidability between seriousness and play, theme of the story of the bear, would then be resolved in a very Rilkean synthesis of rising and falling. By falling (in all the senses of the term, including the theological Fall) gracefully, one prepares the ascent, the turn from parabola to hyperbole, which is also a rebirth. Caught in the power of gravity, the articulated puppets can rightly be said to be dead, hanging and suspended like dead bodies: gracefulness is directly associated with dead, albeit a dead cleansed of pathos. But it is also equated with a levity, an un-seriousness which is itself based on the impossibility of distinguishing between dead and play. Rather than speaking of a synthesis of rising and falling one should speak of a continuity of the aesthetic form that does not allow itself to be disrupted by the borderlines that separate life from death, pathos from levity, rising from falling. More than Rilke's angel, the puppet inhabits both sides of these borders at the same time.

The text indeed evokes the puppet's dance as a *continuous* motion. A nonformalized, still self-reflexive consciousness—a human dancer as opposed to a puppet—constantly has to interrupt its motions by brief periods of repose that are not part of the dance itself. They are like the parabases of the ironic consciousness which has to recover its energy after each failure by reinscribing the failure into the ongoing process of a dialectic. But a dialectic, segmented by repeated negations, can never be a dance; at the very most, it can be a funeral march. And although a march can resemble a minuet in its structure—theme, trio, theme da capo—it can never come near it in the gracefulness which, in this text, is the necessary condition for aesthetic form. By freeing the tropes of their semantic function, one eliminates the discontinuities of dialectical irony and the teleology of a meaning grounded in the weightiness of conceptual understanding. The aesthetic form “needs the ground only . . . in order to skirt it, to recharge the elasticity of the limbs by momentary friction; we [dancers, that is, that are not puppets] need it in order to *rest* on it.” The puppet's

ground is not the ground of a stable cognition, but another anamorphosis of the line as it becomes the asymptote of a hyperbolic trope.

Thus conceived, tropes certainly acquire a machinelike, mechanical predictability. They animate the forms like the crank turned by an organ-grinder. This does not prevent the creation of a dialogue between the puppet and the crank-turning puppeteer. Such a dialogue occurs as the visible motions of the puppets are linked to the inner, mental imaginings of the puppeteer by what Kleist calls "the way of the dancer's soul—der Weg der Seele des Tänzers." The "soul" results from the substitution of the machinist's consciousness for the movement of the marionettes, one more substitution added to the transformations that keep the system going. As an affective exchange between subjects, dialogism is the most mechanical of figures; nothing is more mechanical than the overpowering romantic figure of interiorization and self-consciousness. Hegel will say the same thing in a crucial passage from the *Encyclopedia* when he defines thought (*Denken*) as the substitution of *Gedächtnis* (the learning by rote of a conventional code) for *Erinnerung* (interiorization, represented in Kleist's text as the affective response of a consciousness to a mechanically formalized motion).

We have traveled some way from the original Schiller quotation to this mechanical dance, which is also a dance of death and mutilation. The violence which existed as a latent background in the stories of the ephebe and of the bear now moves into full sight. One must already have felt some resistance to the unproblematic reintegration of the puppet's limbs and articulations, suspended in dead passivity, into the continuity of the dance: "all its other members (are) what they should be, dead, mere pendula, and they follow the law of pure gravity."

The passage is all the harder to assimilate since it has been preceded by the briskly told story of an English technician able to build such perfect mechanical legs that a mutilated man will be able to dance with them in Schiller-like perfection. "The circle of his motions may be restricted, but as for those available to

them, he accomplishes them with an ease, elegance and gracefulness which fills any thinking mind with amazement." One is reminded of the protest of the eyeless philosopher Saunderson in Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles* when, to the deistic optimism of the Reverend Holmes, disciple of Newton, Leibniz, and Clarke, he opposes the sheer monstrosity of his own being, made all the more intolerable by the mathematical perfection of his highly formalized intellect: "Look at me well, Mr. Holmes, I have no eyes. . . . The order (of the universe) is not so perfect that it does not allow, from time to time, for the production of monsters."¹¹ The dancing invalid in Kleist's story is one more victim in a long series of mutilated bodies that attend on the progress of enlightened self-knowledge, a series that includes Wordsworth's mute country-dwellers and blind city-beggars. The point is not that the dance fails and that Schiller's idyllic description of a graceful but confined freedom is aberrant. Aesthetic education by no means fails; it succeeds all too well, to the point of hiding the violence that makes it possible.

But one should avoid the pathos of an imagery of bodily mutilation and not forget that we are dealing with textual models, not with the historical and political systems that are their correlate. The disarticulation produced by tropes is primarily a disarticulation of meaning; it attacks semantic units such as words and sentences. When, in the concluding lines of Kleist's text, K is said to be "ein wenig zerstreut," then we are to read, on the strength of all that goes before, *zerstreut* not only as distracted but also as dispersed, scattered, and dismembered. The ambiguity of the word then disrupts the fluid continuity of each of the preceding narratives. And when, by the end of the tale, the word *Fall* has been overdetermined in a manner that stretches it from the theological Fall to the dead pendulum of the puppet's limbs to the grammatical declension of nouns and pronouns (what we call, in English, the grammatical *case*), then any composite word that includes *Fall* (*Beifall*, *Sündenfall*, *Rückfall* (§46) or *Einfall*) acquires a disjunctive plurality of meanings.

C's story of the puppets, for instance, is said to be more

than a random improvisation: "die Äusserung schien mir, durch die Art, wie er sie vorbrachte, mehr als ein blosser *Einfall* . . ." As we know from another narrative text of Kleist,¹² the memorable tropes that have the most success (*Beifall*) occur as mere random improvisation (*Einfall*) at the moment when the author has completely relinquished any control over his meaning and has relapsed (*Zurückfall*) into the extreme formalization, the mechanical predictability of grammatical declensions (*Fälle*).

But *Fälle*, of course, also means in German "trap," the trap which is the ultimate textual model of this and of all texts, the trap of an aesthetic education which inevitably confuses dismemberment of language by the power of the letter with the gracefulness of a dance. This dance, regardless of whether it occurs as mirror, as imitation, as history, as the fencing match of interpretation, or as the anamorphic transformations of tropes, is the ultimate trap, as unavoidable as it is deadly.

Notes

Preface

1. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetische Theorie* in *Gesammelte Schriften*, (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), vol. 7. See also "Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins," in *Noten zur Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main, 1965), 3:156-209.

2. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

1. *Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image*

1. The line is ambiguous, depending on whether one gives the verb "entstehn" a single or a double subject. It can mean: words will originate that are like flowers ("Worte, die wie Blumen sind, müssen dafür entstehn"). But the meaning is much richer if one reads it: words will have to originate in the same way that flowers originate ("Worte müssen dafür entstehn wie Blumen entstehn"). Syntax and punctuation allow for both readings.

2. *The Image of Rousseau in the Poetry of Hölderlin*

1. "[Die] Beziehungen [zwischen Rousseau und Hölderlin] klarzulegen, ist eine der, auch für die allgemeine Kulturgeschichte, für die historische Grundlage des Begriffes Romantik, wichtigsten unter den anzustellenden Einzeluntersuchungen." Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, Propyläen-Ausgabe (Berlin, 1923), 4:327.

2. In his commentary on the ode "Rousseau," Friedrich Beissner gives some bibliographical information. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke: Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, Friedrich Beissner, ed. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1943ff.), henceforth cited as *St. A.* A good example of the way Rousseau is treated in German studies is Ernst Müller, *Hölderlin. Studien zur Geschichte seines Geistes* (Stuttgart, 1944), pp. 100ff. The French works on Hölderlin by Pierre Bertaux and E. Tonnelat are hardly more explicit. There are some indications, relating mostly to the work of Hölderlin's youth, in G. Bianquis, "Hölderlin et la Révolution française," *Études germaniques* (1952), 7:105-116, T. Claverie, *La Jeunesse de Hölderlin* (Paris, 1921) and Maurice Delorme, *Hölderlin et la Révolution française* (Monaco: Ed. du Rocher, 1959). There are some very valuable sugges-

121.

"For she had fiery blood
 When I was young,
 And trod so sweetly proud
 As 'twere upon a cloud,
 A woman Homer sung . . ."

(Var., p. 255)

122. Var., p. 809.

123. In his *Prolegomena to the Study of Yeats's Poems* George Brandon Saul asks: "Lacking Greek, was Yeats likely to insist on the strictly literal meaning of Eumenides?" He apparently did, in spite of his lack of knowledge of Greek, since in his *Oedipus at Colonus* he alludes to the etymology of the term: ". . . Remind them (the Furies) to be good to suppliants, seeing that they are called the Good People, and then pray for whatever you most need . . ." (*Plays*, p. 536). Yeats's Furies, who reappear in the late poem "To Dorothy Wellesley," are not so much the avenging spirits of the *Oresteia* as the divine powers under whose protection Oedipus chooses to die, the carriers of the will of the gods to man.

124. The Christian equivalent would be the "staring virgin" from "Two Songs from a Play" (Var., p. 437), a poem that deals with the emblematic continuity of the Christ-Dionysus myth and is thus very closely related to this poem.

9. Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn," *Werke*, Karl Schlechta, ed. (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1966), 3:314.
2. Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, Pléiade ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 1.11. Further citations will be made from this edition, identified as O.C.
3. See Ovid's version of the Narcissus story, *Metamorphoses*, III, 341ff.

10. Aesthetic Formalization: Kleist's Über das Marionettentheater

1. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters*, ed. and transl. by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1967), p. 300; translation modified.
2. *Ibid.*, p. cxxxi.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. cxxxii.
5. Heinrich von Kleist, "Über das Marionettentheater" in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, Helmut Sembdner, ed. (Munich: Hanser, 1961), 2:338-345. Translations of *Marionettentheater* are available in English, often dispersed in periodical publications; I have consulted several but often found it necessary to stay closer to the original in order to make specific points.
6. Kleist's *Aufsatz über das Marionettentheater*, *Studien und Interpretationen*, ed. Helmut Sembdner, ed. (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1967). For a recent critical overview of articles on *Marionettentheater* see William Ray, "Suspended in the Mirror: Language and the Self in Kleist's 'Über das Marionettentheater,'" *Studies in Romanticism* (Winter 1979), 18(4):521-546.

7. Kleist's mathematical references are not always correct and make mistakes unworthy of a gymnasium student. For example, a curved (as opposed to a straight) line could hardly be "of the first degree" (§14). Helmut Sembdner is certainly right in saying that the analogy between logarithms and asymptotes, in §17, is "nicht ganz treffend" (p. 930). The errors may be deliberate, with mystifying or parodic intent. Incorrect details in the mathematical language do not imply however that Kleist's notion of "the mathematical" as a model for aesthetic formalization is arbitrary or aberrant.

8. See, for example, Hélène Cixous, "Les Marionettes," *Prénoms de personne* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1974), pp. 127-152, or H. M. Brown, "Kleist's 'Über das Marionettentheater': 'Schlüssel zum Werk,' or 'Feuilleton?'" *Oxford German Studies* (1968), 3:114-125.

9. For example:

"Haben Sie, fragte er . . . haben Sie von jenen mechanischen
Beinen gehört . . ."
Ich sagte, nein: dergleichen wäre mir nie vor Augen gekommen.
Es tut mir leid, erwiderte er; . . .

The lines spoken by C are direct speech, but "Ich sagte, nein" is free indirect speech as is clear from the subjunctive "wäre." Alternations between the two modes of discourse occur continuously throughout the dialogue.

10. *Sämtliche Werke*, 2:1032.

11. "Lettre sur les aveugles," in Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, R. Lewinter, ed. (Paris: Club français du livre, 1969), 2:157-233.

12. "Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden," *Sämtliche Werke*, pp. 319-324.