

Different Aesthetics

Principles
Questions
Perspectives

Edited by
Annette Gerok-Reiter
Jörg Robert
Matthias Bauer
Anna Pawlak

ÄSTHETIK
ANDERE



KOORDINATEN

Translated by
David B. Dollenmayer

DE GRUYTER

DIFFERENT AESTHETICS

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|
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Herausgegeben von
Annette Gerok-Reiter

Beirat

Matthias Bauer
Sarah Dessì Schmid
Cristina Murer
Anna Pawlak
Jörg Robert
Dietmar Till
Saskia Wendel

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Foreword

What is art? What does it accomplish? Why does it move us so? These are the questions posed by the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391 in our examination of images, texts, objects, and musical works from Europe in the premodern era. We understand premodern Europe as a polycentric, regionally and temporally open field of cultural, social, and societal interactions, and we hope to present evidence of aesthetic self-awareness in the acts and artifacts in this field. We begin with the thesis that acts and artifacts from different times and cultures are not only embedded in the sociocultural spaces where they originate, but through the power of their artistry to a great degree help shape – and sometimes even themselves constitute – sociocultural processes. In order to show this, various disciplines within the CRC – from archeology to art history, musicology, classis, philology, linguistics, rhetoric, history, and theology – work together in a broadly interdisciplinary approach.

Each volume of the book series *Koordinaten* (*Coordinates*) will present important, historically differentiated force fields of discussion about premodern aesthetics. Gradually, a representative ‘network of coordinates’ of discourse on premodern aesthetics will emerge. Our intention is to produce neither a closed system nor a theory of premodern aesthetics. Instead, the concept of ‘coordinates’ highlights dynamic, open criteria and positions that were by no means discursively or practically determinate to the same extent for all times and places but were able to develop a highly productive power and influence within the interactive fields described above. Nor does the ensemble of coordinates under discussion aim for a mutually exclusive comparison of premodern and modern aesthetic criteria. Instead, we want to illustrate the extent to which two thousand years of European cultural history – precisely because during that time there was no functional separation between art and lived reality – can provide new impulses for an understanding of aesthetics even in the present day and recalibrate traditional ideas about the canon.

Annette Gerok-Reiter for the Collaborative Research Center 1391

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Introduction

With support from the German Research Foundation, the Tübingen Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391, *Different Aesthetics*, began work in July 2019. Its research plan was prompted by increasing interest in questions of aesthetics. Intense public controversies, in person and in the media, about art's meaning and responsibility, about its rightness or wrongness – or in fact what even deserves the title 'art' – point to a public need for orientation vis-à-vis art and for answers and standards no matter how disparate the occasion may be. These debates present an opportunity for a reevaluation of the aesthetic in light of its societal function and relevance.

But the timeliness of the topic goes well beyond popular debates, nor is it confined to the humanistic disciplines. Paradoxically, in fact, researchers in areas outside the humanities – and thus, as a rule, lacking historically differentiated perspectives – were some of the first to emphasize the omnipresent sociocultural importance of aesthetics and call for an 'aesthetic turn' in their work. In the social sciences, for example, the interdependence of aesthetic and social practices, the political appropriation of art, and the border between aesthetics and epistemology became subjects of discussion. Biologists and neuroscientists have sought empirical evidence of the fundamental artistic disposition of man (as well as of other animals). Research in empirical aesthetics, on the other hand, seeks measurable proof of its effective power.

These various approaches are obviously reactions to the new interest in and need for aesthetics. However, both popular discussion and academic research often explicitly or unconsciously presuppose standards of reception, judgment, and understanding that derive from 18th- and early-19th-century conceptions of an autonomous aesthetics whose influence and canon-setting power survives in many instances, despite various attempts to challenge it. Due to these anachronistic and mostly unreflected adaptations, the question of art's specific capacity in social and anthropological terms tends to be, if not undermined, so marginalized that it threatens to be lost sight of.

It seems all the more urgent to seek and reflect upon alternative aesthetic concepts, practices, and manifestations that approach the question in a 'different' way. The title of our collective research on a *Different Aesthetics* expresses this effort. Our goal is not simply to 'invent' a 'new' aesthetics or a normative counter-narrative to Kant's

postulate of ‘disinterested pleasure,’ but to argue for a decisive change in heuristic perspective. The thesis of our research program is that this change in perspective, which in the end claims comprehensive validity for the history of aesthetics and art, can be especially well explored based on premodern objects, i.e., aesthetic acts and artifacts from *before* the age of philosophical aesthetics. Conversely, our CRC hopes to show that crucial impulses for the discussion of aesthetics up to the present can emanate from an ‘aesthetics *before* aesthetics.’

This is why our research program begins in the premodern period and addresses the socio-anthropological irreducibility of the aesthetic posed by the social-, life-, and neurosciences, and correlates that debate with a fundamental humanistic discussion of how we understand aesthetic processes. This understanding can be systematically extrapolated from the intertwining of the technical and artistic inherent logic of the acts and artifacts with their historical and cultural context. In order to analyze this interaction, the CRC proposes a praxeological model with the central concept of the ‘figure of aesthetic reflection,’ which offers a heuristic instrument to differentiate and describe the dynamic interrelationship of both dimensions. With this instrument, the research collective also creates an interdisciplinary method that can effectively integrate the investigations of individual disciplines.

Thus the goal is both to achieve a reevaluation of the contribution of premodern aesthetic acts and artifacts within historical and systematic aesthetic research and, at the same time, outline relevant aspects of a *Different Aesthetics* that can have a temporally and culturally broad spectrum of applications beyond the premodern era. In sum, the CRC 1391 intends to ground current debates on the relevance of aesthetics with a deep historical perspective. On that foundation, even current questions about art, society, and cultural diversity can be better understood and profitably expanded.

The present volume introduces the research program of the CRC from various angles. The introductory essay provides a detailed description of the program itself and, above all, invites responses, both with different applications and extensions of our research, but also with critical comments. One such response is represented by the essays that follow that introduction. They have been divided into three sections that follow from central categories of differentiation in the research program. A number of contributions were written by principal investigators and researchers in the CRC. The intent was to present a broad panorama of individual projects that would demonstrate the methodological approaches and heuristic potential of the praxeological model. To encourage the most dynamic possible exchanges, it seemed equally important to the volume’s editors to include positions that were and will continue to be developed outside the immediate scope of the research collective and lead to aesthetic questions in their own areas of research. Therefore, scholars from different disciplines outside the CRC were invited to react to the methodological approach of the CRC and develop their own obser-

vational fields, phenomena, and insights in correlation with their own research interests. This has yielded contributions that take up the following central questions: what is the current status of premodern artifacts in their discipline's aesthetic discourse? What approach to a premodern aesthetics makes the most sense within their discipline? And can their discipline make productive use of the CRC's method and heuristic?

As the collected essays show, on the one hand, the approaches and tools of the CRC are tried out, discussed, and assessed in direct disciplinary and interdisciplinary applications for their capacity for heuristic differentiation in understanding premodern aesthetics. On the other hand, some of the contributions already represent adaptations in other fields and conceptual spaces. The various forms of dialogue as well as the correlation with new sources and fields of objects and research are especially significant because one's gaze can be unexpectedly drawn to new focuses within the research program, to challenging new theses, or to overlooked areas in our argumentation. It is precisely these explorative dynamics of debate that the CRC's heuristic wants to promote. The differentiation and continuing development of our approach and the identification of historically sustainable primary aspects of a *Different Aesthetics* can only be achieved in collective scholarly discourse beyond the bounds of the CRC. It is to this collective effort that the research program of the CRC invites participation from other colleagues.

We would therefore especially like to thank the external contributors who agreed to engage in a first round of using the CRC's approach and tools despite the difficulties of travel and communication imposed by the Corona virus.

We also thank De Gruyter for publishing the results of the CRC 1391, *Different Aesthetics*, in two monograph series. Special thanks to Ulrike Krauß and Christine Henschel for their competent and engaged support of this project. We thank Petra Florath for her creative designs for the cover and layout, and owe a debt of gratitude to the editorial team in Tübingen, especially Susanne Borgards and Marisa Irawan, who carefully organized and oversaw each step of the editing process; Mariam Hammami, who always provided competent advice on questions of picture acquisitions and rights; the research assistants Hilkea Blomeyer, Sarah Döser, Isabell Grupp, and Sabrina Kremling, without whose careful work this volume could not have taken proper shape. Finally, emphatic thanks to David Dollenmayer, the translator of this volume, who masterfully dealt with a huge variety of specialist German, and, in fruitful exchange with the authors and the responsible editor, arrived at excellent solutions to the most challenging of tasks.

Tübingen, Fall 2024

Annette Gerok-Reiter, Jörg Robert, Matthias Bauer, and Anna Pawlak

I. Principles and Program

Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert

Different Aesthetics – Premodern Acts and Artifacts

The Program of the Tübingen Collaborative Research Center 1391

Abstract

What is art? What does art achieve? Why does art move us? These are the questions which have occupied the Tübingen Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391 *Different Aesthetics* since its foundation in 2019 by the DFG. Through these, and by directing attention towards the 2000-year long history of European culture and art before the 18th century, it aims to change perspectives within aesthetic discussions and discourse. This article introduces the research undertaken within the CRC 1391. It explains the benefits of concentrating on premodern periods, lays out the necessary adjustments to analytical tools and methods, and presents the resulting consequences for studying aesthetics. The objective is to determine to what extent reflections on premodern aesthetics can also provide an impetus for current discussions on art.

Keywords

Aesthetics / Aesthetic, Pre-Modernity, Art / Arts, Praxeology, Autonomy / Heteronomy, Autological / Heterological, Aesthetic Figures of Reflection, Transculturality

Aesthetics is surely one of the oldest, most fascinating, and difficult fields in the humanities. It encompasses questions about art as a whole as well as its various manifestations – their forms and functions, their history, their sociocultural conditions, and their share in a broad spectrum of various disciplines, from archeological studies, art history, and visual studies to philosophy and philology. At the same time, it may be one of the most contested topics in the humanities since the turn toward cultural studies, and it is often involved in a fundamental debate about the significance and purpose of fields in which aesthetics plays a central role. It seems that the question *What is art for?* is inseparable from the question *What are the humanities for?* Why does a society need disciplines in which rigorous aesthetic analysis is central to their concerns? In a world of technology and commercialization, shaped by social media, is aesthetic inquiry appropriate,

* Translated by David B. Dollenmayer. Quotations for which no other translation is cited have also been translated by Dollenmayer. The work on this chapter was carried out within the Collaborative Research Center 1391 *Different Aesthetics*, project no. 405662736, funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG).

pertinent, or even relevant at all? What does *aesthetics* even mean? – especially in the eras preceding the founding of a philosophical theory of art that began so emphatically with Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* of 1750.

The Tübingen Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391 *Different Aesthetics*, established by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation [DFG]) on July 1, 2019, seeks answers to these questions. Our research is guided by a crucial proposition: We don't *still* need aesthetic inquiry, we need it *again* – but from a new perspective. This change in perspective is what the research group is aiming for; its program is designed to search for a *Different Aesthetics*, as will be explained in what follows.

First, we need a starting point in the search for a *Different Aesthetics*, and here contemporary public debates about art play an important role (1). Just as important, however, is the existing and extremely heterogeneous scholarly literature, and its findings need to be synthesized (2). Further steps will show why aesthetics as a heuristic concept needs to be made more flexible (3), and why it is both logical and promising to map out our field of research with a view to the wealth of artifacts and sources from the cultural history of Europe *before* the 18th century (4). We will then describe the heuristic apparatus we have developed for this historical approach. Central to that approach is the model of a praxeological aesthetics (5) and access via figures of aesthetic reflection (6). Beginning with *practices*, *manifestations*, and *concepts*, we suggest possible systematizations and fields of study (7). A final section argues that our research program is capable of both developing new reflections on premodern aesthetics, and stimulating further research (8).¹

1. The Impulse: Contemporary Controversies about Art

Only a few years ago, aesthetic questions sparked unusually lively public debate and passionate argument about art and its effects, attracting the attention of society at large. The controversy at the Alice Salomon Academy in Berlin regarding the poem

1 The research program of the CRC 1391 was first developed by a research training group led by Annette Gerok-Reiter, Stefanie Gropper, Jörg Robert, and Anja Wolkenhauer from 2014 to 2017. The results of their preliminary work appeared in the collection Gerok-Reiter et al. 2019. The following chapter expands upon the perspectives sketched out in the introduction to that volume, cf. Gerok-Reiter/Robert 2019. The enlarged dimensions of our research approach involve considering contemporary debates about art, clarifying our aesthetic inquiries, embedding the figure of aesthetic reflection in the model of a praxeological aesthetics, restructuring our fields of research according to how much they condense the markedness of aesthetic reflection, and aligning and differentiating our goals. For their active participation in this expansion we would like to express our thanks to the entire CRC team, who have all contributed to this chapter.



Fig. 1. Eugen Gomringer's poem *avenidas* on the south façade of the Alice Salomon Hochschule in Berlin, installed in 2011, painted over in 2017. Photo: Rudolph Buch.

avenidas by the Swiss-Bolivian poet Eugen Gomringer is a telling example of the current problematic state of affairs.² In 2011, Gomringer was awarded the Alice Salomon Poetics Prize. The academy decided to honor the author by inscribing the text of *avenidas* on the façade of its building (Fig. 1): “Covering two hundred ten square meters, this work of art is one of the largest poems on a public wall.”³

The Gomringer controversy was kicked off in 2017 by an open letter from three women studying at the academy. As part of the #MeToo movement, they asserted that Gomringer's poem exemplified a “classic patriarchal artistic tradition in which women are merely the beautiful muses who inspire male artists to acts of creation.” It was also “an unpleasant reminder of the sexual harassment women are exposed to every day.”⁴ This began a remarkably public sparring match in 2017 and 2018 about the limits

2 The poem first appeared under the title *ciudad* in 1953 in the periodical *Spirale*, founded by Marcel Wyss, Dieter Roth, and Eugen Gomringer. It appeared again that same year in Gomringer's volume *konstellationen*. The poem can also be found in the anthology Gomringer: *Poema*, p. 30, along with Gomringer's commentary (pp. 31 f.). This anthology also contains contributions by several authors discussing Gomringer's *constellations* and was published in reaction to the controversy surrounding *avenidas*.

3 Thus boasted the 2011 press release, Richert 2011.

4 Quoted in Rauterberg 2018, p. 90.

of aesthetic autonomy,⁵ i.e., the relationship between ethics, aesthetics, and social responsibility.⁶ On one side were Gomringer's critics. Their stance was adopted by the Allgemeiner Studierendenausschuss (General Students' Committee), which described the poem as patriarchal and sexist, and publicly honoring and displaying it was an inappropriate provocation. On the other side, the proponents of artistic autonomy followed two different paths in defense of the poem. Some, like the German PEN Center, issued warnings against "muzzling or even banning a work of art"⁷ and thus endangering freedom of expression. Others deployed literary analysis to defend Gomringer's poem. The text, they said, was not voyeuristic or sexist, but instead reflected on these attributes through its aesthetic structure (concision, allusion, emphasis on the visual rather than on tactile "groping").⁸ A third line of defense brought history and alterity into play. While conceding that the text, first published in 1953, might cause emotional discomfort and trigger "phobic reactions" in 2020, seeing the text in historical perspective ought to relativize its offensiveness.⁹

In the end, during a scheduled renovation of the academy's façade, Gomringer's *avenidas* was painted over and replaced, like a palimpsest, with a text by the contemporary poet Barbara Köhler (Fig. 2). But the controversy did not quite end there. The Berlin housing cooperative Grüne Mitte Hellersdorf (Fig. 3) countered Gomringer's detractors with *amplificatio*, displaying the text twice – in Spanish and German – and illuminating it with an especially beautiful glow.

Arguments over aesthetics, dueling wall-texts, media bruhas:¹⁰ Whatever the final outcome in this particular case, the controversy shows that art's topical relevance, its explosive power¹¹ in public discourse, is more alive than ever. There is talk of "democratizing aesthetics" and "aestheticizing the world we live in"¹² and much speculation about what lies behind such phrases. Is this a new artistic hype, i.e., a quasi-social craving for contentious engagement with art and about art? Is there a social need for orientation, standards of artistic value, and orderly patterns, a need that at the same

5 Hanno Rauterberg devoted an entire chapter of his book "Wie frei ist die Kunst?" (How Free is Art?) to this debate, Rauterberg 2018, pp. 87–116. For a summary of the debate from the perspective of literary studies, see Riedel 2019, pp. 27–40.

6 On this topic, see Rauterberg 2015. On the relevance of the "new moralism debate," see the exemplary discussion in Misselhorn et al. 2014.

7 See Venske 2017. Venske, president of German PEN, said she was "deeply troubled" by the incident. Also quoted in Rauterberg 2018, p. 91.

8 Riedel 2019, p. 31.

9 Neff 2018: "When Gomringer, now ninety-three years old, wrote *avenidas* in 1950, it was still possible to write poems about 'flowers' and 'women' and even bring in an 'admirer' at the end."

10 See the list of press reviews collected by ASH (Alice Salomon Hochschule): <https://www.ash-berlin.eu/hochschule/organisation/referat-hochschulkommunikation/pressespiegel-fassadendebatte/>.

11 See Rauterberg 2018, p. 12.

12 For examples of these ideas, see Schulze 1992; Dorschel 2002; Fischer 2018.

time submits such standards to “normative and evaluative” examination?¹³ Does the so-called cancel culture represent the end of art or the beginning of a new attentiveness to art as a societal event?

In public discourse, outrage and perplexity vis-à-vis such questions often seem not that far apart. But it is equally difficult to gain perspective on the diverse scholarly approaches to art in general, aesthetics, and individual artistic disciplines. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ästhetik (German Society for Aesthetics) boldly entitled its 25th anniversary convention in 2018 “Das ist Ästhetik!” (This Is Aesthetics!).¹⁴ In view of the diversity of approaches presented, however, that title (including its exclamation point!) must surely be understood as a provocation. Does this mean that in our era, while broadly popular artistic activities and debates about art draw attention to the potential societal impact of aesthetic expression,¹⁵ the humanities, in the wake of their turn to cultural studies, either give much less attention to aesthetic questions or see themselves confronted with a crisis and a loss of relevance?¹⁶ Or is the real source of the controversy a new *Kulturkampf*¹⁷ waged over the question of what qualifies as “art” in the first place?

2. The Basis: A Discussion of Scholarly Diversity

In the scholarly context, aesthetics is established as a transdisciplinary field of study. A look at that field defies the impression that aesthetics has been “lost” as a central concern in the humanities and beyond. On the contrary, the variety of disciplines in conversation about aesthetics seems larger than ever, and their theories and methods are correspondingly diverse. In this scholarly environment, the research program of *Different Aesthetics* benefits from three main approaches, two of which stand in a quasi-complementary relationship while the third draws stimuli from both. These three approaches can be summarized under the concepts of art’s *function*, its *autonomy*, and *alternative approaches*. The following sections present an outline of each approach.

13 Bertram 2019, p. 205.

14 The program of the 10th Congress of the German Society for Aesthetics, February 14–17, Hochschule für Gestaltung in Offenbach am Main, http://www.dgae.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/DGAeX_2018_Programm1.pdf (last accessed: December 14, 2024).

15 At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, art’s potential power was manifest when the citizens of Rome came out on their balconies or leaned out windows and drummed, sang, clanged, and clapped an improvised concert against the fear gripping their street, their city, their country, and the whole world.

16 For the beginning of this debate, see, e.g., Barner 1997 and the Graevenitz-Haug-Debate, Graevenitz 1999 and Haug 1998. For its continuation, see Keisinger et al. 2003; Erhart 2004; Gumbrecht 2015.

17 See Rauterberg 2018, especially pp. 7–20.

2.1. Discussions of Art's Function

Even aside from *Kulturkampf* and “cancel culture,” aesthetic questions are remarkably fashionable these days. Several commentators have even proclaimed an “aesthetic turn.”¹⁸ A closer look, however, shows that this turn has occurred mostly outside those humanities disciplines – particularly art history, literary studies, and musicology – that have always been primarily concerned with “the arts” (the *beaux arts* in the 18th-century sense of the term).¹⁹ The main proponents of this transdisciplinary aesthetic turn were the sociologists Andreas Reckwitz and Hartmut Rosa as well as the political philosopher Jacques Rancière. They described new, partially concealed functionalizations of art in postmodern and present-day societies and addressed the universalizing of aesthetic principles such as creativity,²⁰ the “resonance-theoretical” indispensability of art,²¹ and the regimes regulating the identification of art as art.²² Besides political science and sociology, it is especially biology that has adopted the aesthetic turn. In a continuation of Gustav Fechner’s “aesthetics from below,”²³ empirical – or more precisely, psychological – aesthetics has been attempting to reconnect art and a feeling for art to basic anthropological constants.²⁴ Moreover, the prehistoric roots of the human disposition for art are the object of “evolutionary aesthetics.”²⁵ In the light of philosophical anthropology²⁶ and especially of the most recent findings of evolutionary biology, neuroaesthetics,²⁷ evolutionary theory,²⁸ and prehistoric archeology,²⁹ there is renewed focus on the human being as an *animal poeta*.³⁰ According to the radicalized approach of evolutionary theory, art is an effect of nature, not its opposite.

The summary outlined above shows that the new interest in aesthetic inquiry has basically arisen outside of the humanities. However, it is crucial that the humanities, precisely because of their turn to cultural studies, can benefit in two ways from the recent prominence of aesthetics in the social and natural sciences. The first benefit is the reintegration of academic discourse on art into the public debate on man and

18 See especially Shapiro 2013, as well as Jernudd/Shapiro 1989; Ames 2000; Opondo/Shapiro 2012; Kompridis 2014.

19 For more details, see Gerok-Reiter/Robert 2019, pp. 11–16.

20 See Reckwitz 2016; Reckwitz 2017.

21 See Rosa 2019, p. 280 f.

22 See Rancière 2009.

23 Fechner 1871; see also Müller-Tamm/Schmidgen/Wilke 2014.

24 See Allesch 2006.

25 See Eibl 2004; Eibl 2009; Menninghaus 2003; Menninghaus 2019.

26 See Iser 1993; Arlt 2001; Fischer 2008.

27 See Dresler 2009; Zeki 2009; Herrmann 2011; Mühlmann 2013.

28 See Menninghaus 2019.

29 See, for example, Conard 2016; Floss 2017.

30 See Eibl 2004; Mellmann 2006; Wald-Fuhrmann 2017.

society. That means that art no longer counts as a free, autonomous (and therefore superfluous) *surplus* of highly developed societies. As a basic disposition of human beings in a biological, social, political, and psychological sense, art maintains its relevance for *any sort* of cultural understanding. Over and above academic discourse, this new attribution of relevance is likely to feed into the active public discussion and debate about art.³¹ However, the transdisciplinary aesthetic turn also challenges the humanities (including historical cultural studies) to arrive at a new position. And therein lies the second benefit: Current reflections on the function of aesthetics, especially from the point of view of evolutionary theory, invite us in the humanities to free ourselves more than ever from a fixation on the idea of aesthetic autonomy based on the philosophical aesthetics of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Thus the approaches of social and natural scientists lead us to reexamine the aesthetics of the premodern period in particular. This undertaking offers a chance to make accessible a different understanding of aesthetics, not only from a transhistorical, anthropological point of view, but also from the perspectives of cultural history and our own present moment. This is the guiding assumption of our research project. This different understanding will also enable a reexamination of entrenched presuppositions and provide solutions to the shortcomings of current approaches.

However much the discussion of aesthetics in the social and natural sciences has advanced our understanding, it also has two clear deficits: the absence of adequate historical and cultural differentiation and a conception of aesthetics and / or art that is diffuse and not well thought-out. Of course, their indifference to history makes sense to the extent that as a rule, in the research approaches cited above the goal is not to analyze aesthetic evidence or historically variable aesthetic criteria, but to study the fundamentally assumed *functions* of the aesthetic in their fields. At the same time, the same research in sociology, political science, and evolutionary aesthetics often revolves around concepts and problems predetermined by the argumentation of idealistic aesthetics (e.g., “art” as a collective singular, play vs. seriousness, freedom vs. purpose, autonomy vs. heteronomy, etc.),³² a contradiction that often remains unexamined in these studies. With their historical grounding, the fields of art history, musicology, and literary studies need to react critically to and raise consciousness of that contradiction. The critical examination of core assumptions of philosophical – and especially idealistic – aesthetics in the tradition of Baumgarten, Kant, Schiller, and Hegel has long been a central concern of scholarship in the humanities.³³

31 At the same time, this new relevance must be seen as the prerequisite for the interest shown by makers of science policy. To name only two examples: the 2012 opening of the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics in Frankfurt, and UNESCO’s 2017 decision to designate the Ice Age art in the valleys of the Ach and Lone a World Heritage Site.

32 See Gerok-Reiter / Robert 2019, pp. 13 f.

33 See most recently Auerochs 2006; Porter 2010; Robert 2011; Berghahn 2012; Beyer / Cohn 2012.

2.2. Debates about Autonomy

Central to this critical discourse is the concept of aesthetic autonomy,³⁴ which includes three facets: (1) the aesthetics of the artistic object itself conceived as a closed artistic organism “complete in itself” in Karl Philipp Moritz’s formulation;³⁵ (2) the aesthetics of the producing subject conceived as a genius – a free, natural creative force unconstrained by rules, corresponding to the aesthetics of reception as the “disinterested satisfaction in the judgment of taste”³⁶ of the recipient –, and (3) the sociological postulate of “art” as a functionally autonomous sector of society in the so-called *Sattelzeit* (c. 1750–1850), allegedly marking the beginning of the modern era.³⁷ The idea of aesthetic autonomy is thus also part of that epoch’s teleological narrative, a narrative that has had a persistent influence on the cultural landscape of Europe and beyond.³⁸ All of this has been frequently discussed. However, as much as this meta-narrative of aesthetic theory formation has been criticized, even explicit critiques show how difficult it is for philosophy – as well as art history, musicology, and literary studies – to free themselves from the suggestiveness of the teleological master narrative and its still normative criteria for judging the worth of real art.

Researchers in the history of visual arts, music, and literature in particular find themselves challenged by this narrative. For if one assumes the teleological perspective that it was only in the second half of the 18th century that art developed into a functionally autonomous social system, then the premodern era is merely a pre-history in which at best one can discern “preadaptive advances.”³⁹ Thus it is stuck in the status of “not yet.” Understandably, scholars of the premodern era have resisted this teleological narrative. A way out was offered by the alterity paradigm, i.e., the notion of a fundamental otherness of historical cultures, an idea frequently advanced especially in medieval studies.⁴⁰ The alterity paradigm sharpened scholars’ eyes for cultural and historical diversity, but also produced equivocal results. On the one hand, it opened up the premodern era to productive description by the disciplines of cultural studies⁴¹ and ethnology, for example in the adoption of ethnological and sociological paradigms in

34 See Robert 2024.

35 Moritz: *An Attempt to Unify*.

36 Kant: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p. 91.

37 See Luhmann 1986; Luhmann 2000; and for a musicological perspective, Tadday 1997. For an overall discussion, see Robert 2024.

38 For example, in musicology, see Hanslick: *On the Musically Beautiful*; Holtmeier et al. 1997. For an interdisciplinary overview, see Ingarden 1989 [1962]. For art history, Wölfflin 1932 [1915]; Imdahl 1980. For German Studies, Schmidt 1985. For Anglo-American Studies, Bernstein 2006; Goldstone 2013. For Romance Languages, Wolfzettel/Einfalt 2000. For Archeology, Gruben 2001; Grüner 2017.

39 For this concept, see Luhmann 1981, p. 191. Cf. Schlaffer 2002.

40 See Tatarkiewicz 1970; Jauß 1979; Peters 2007; Baisch 2013; Braun 2013; but also Elsner 2007.

41 See for example Belting 1994; Müller 2007.

research on ritual.⁴² On the other hand, there is a danger that continuities may remain unidentified, for example, the connection to rhetorical and poetological discourses that characterize especially literature in Latin well into modern times.⁴³ In addition, it often turns out that attempts to predate or postdate the first appearance of aesthetic autonomy and other fundamental concepts end up being dialectical, denying a teleological progression but often not its normative evaluations and categories.⁴⁴

Many approaches to the study of modernism are hardly less conflicted. Suggestive examples are “Die nicht mehr schönen Künste” (The No Longer Beautiful *Beaux Arts*),⁴⁵ the title of a volume in the series “Poetik und Hermeneutik,” and talk of “the end of art.”⁴⁶ This means that “no longer” is just as incapable as “already” of freeing itself from the spell of the teleological master-narrative. Philosophy too – or perhaps especially – has trouble escaping it, as Georg Bertram has demonstrated. His critique, however, is directed less at the teleology of the autonomy paradigm than at the related and mostly tacit assumption “that art can [only; addition: A.G.-R./J.R.] be defined by distinguishing it from other objects, experiences, practices, or institutions.”⁴⁷ Thus although “[m]any philosophical positions on art do not speak explicitly of aesthetic autonomy, of art’s internal laws, of separating art, and the like,”⁴⁸ nevertheless an approach that assumes the autonomy paradigm is still “more pervasive than one might imagine.”⁴⁹

2.3. Alternative Approaches

Central to the recent public disputes then – as well as to the complementary academic discourse regarding art’s function or independence – is the long-standing question of whether or to what extent art is autonomous or heteronomous. The crux of the problem lies precisely in those alternatives. Thus it is not surprising that correctives arise that more clearly than before attempt to escape the dichotomy of heteronomy versus autonomy and the subsequent teleological interpretive pattern from heteronomy to autonomy. These attempts range from philosophical aesthetics to scholarly groups or

42 For example, Burkert 1996; Althoff 2003; Althoff 2019.

43 See i.a. Boehm/Pfotenhauer 1995; Schellewald 2008; Curtius 2013 [1948]; Elsner/Hernández Lobato 2017.

44 For example, Gombrich 1962; Assunto 1982 [1961]; Eco 1986; Haug 2006 [1985]; Büttner 2006; Bychkov/Sheppard 2010.

45 Jauß 1968.

46 Danto 2014 [1997], cf. pp. 15–25, although he sees the “end” as an impetus toward a new beginning.

47 Bertram 2019, p. 15. Cf. also the chapter “A Critique of the Autonomy Paradigm,” pp. 15–54.

48 Bertram 2019, p. 15.

49 Bertram 2019, p. 15.

individuals within the broad field of humanities, the latter operating mostly with a clear historical perspective. Here we can adduce only a few examples.

In the field of philosophical aesthetics, Bertram's endeavor to define aesthetics not as a theory but as a practice shows the path toward understanding its ability to connect to human practices in general and also to establish a new basis for understanding autonomy.⁵⁰ Practical philosophy has also turned its attention to the relation between ethics and aesthetics.⁵¹ In literary studies, Andreas Kablitz⁵² has shown that modern discourse on autonomy constantly involves its opposite pole, mimesis, and is constituted by that opposition. In classical studies, a broad conception of literature has long been well established. It includes non-literary texts and always takes into account the relationship between aesthetic representation and social practice.⁵³ For medieval texts, Christian Kiening teases out "literary creation" not as a turning away from religious exegesis but rather as its consequence.⁵⁴ In archeology, Annette Haug argues in a new way that aesthetically produced atmospheres are the result of interaction between décor and social practice.⁵⁵ In art history, Klaus Krüger emphasizes the effort to heighten verisimilitude not in opposition to, but as a correlation of social and political effectiveness or the religious experience of salvation.⁵⁶ Especially Horst Bredekamp has brought historical perspective to the affinity of art and science.⁵⁷ In an interdisciplinary approach, Nicola Gess, Mireille Schnyder, Hugues Marchal, and Johannes Bartuschalt trace the contours of similar phenomena by way of the concept of astonishment.⁵⁸ Margit Kern; Karin Gludovatz, Juliane Noth, and Joachim Rees; as well as Christine Göttler and Mia M. Mochizuki bring a global perspective to a transcultural dynamics of art bound up with socio-cultural, religious, and societal processes of negotiation.⁵⁹ Works by Jean Wirth, Jean-Claude Schmitt, Klaus W. Hempfer, Bernhard Huß, David Nelting, and Susanne Köbele oppose a teleological debate on novelty with themes that span the time between the Middle Ages and the 18th century.⁶⁰ Many more examples could be cited.

50 Bertram 2019.

51 See, e.g., Misselhorn et al. 2014.

52 Kablitz 2012; Kablitz 2013. Cf. also Lobsien 1996.

53 For the first aspect, see, e.g., Graver 1990; Beer 2009. For the second, Arweiler/Gauly 2008.

54 Kiening 2015. Cf. also the anthology Braun/Young 2007, a central text for Germanic medieval studies.

55 Haug 2020. Cf. also the intensive engagement with questions of aesthetics in Bychkov/Sheppard 2010; Porter 2010; Peponi 2012; Destrée/Murray 2015.

56 Krüger 1997; Krüger 2015; Krüger 2018.

57 Bredekamp 2004; Bredekamp 2005; Bredekamp 2007.

58 Gess et al. 2017. Cf. also the contribution to this volume by Mireille Schnyder, pp. 413–431.

59 Kern 2013; Gludovatz/Noth/Rees 2015; Göttler/Mochizuki 2017.

60 Wirth 1988; Schmitt 2002; Hempfer 2016; Huß 2016; Nelting 2016; Köbele 2017.

2.4. Guiding Questions

Why do we need a renewed dialogue on aesthetic questions? We must keep in mind that the debates on art and scholarship sketched out above bear witness to the subject's relevance far beyond the bounds of the humanities. Scholars have long been unified in their discontent with a universalized autonomous aesthetics. Considering the impulses coming from the social and natural sciences, we have the chance to reemphasize the societal function and relevance of aesthetics. Currently, there are interesting, compatible, and diverse arguments that offer new ways out of gridlocked positions. It is all the more obvious that a fundamental discussion of how the approaches cited above are related and correlated has yet to take place. To put it another way, we lack an overarching paradigm that can give current debates on art a sound methodological and historical basis. This can only be achieved by developing an interconnected heuristic apparatus that engages with productive aspects of existing scholarship in an ongoing dialogue. The research program of CRC 1391 takes as its starting point the intersection of the fields of discussion sketched out above. We embrace the current popularity of aesthetic issues in the social and natural sciences, but – while by no means abandoning these transdisciplinary impulses – we want to steer these issues back into their original fields of art history, musicology, and literary studies as well as allied historical disciplines in cultural studies. There is solid justification for this project. These fields, with their direct engagement with historical sources, can contribute the following to the transdisciplinary discourse:

- (a) An explanation of what exactly counts as “aesthetic.” This foundational question must be taken up again by the humanities, but with new perspectives from cultural studies and social science.
- (b) Historical contour and depth, which the social sciences usually ignore in favor of radical contemporaneity and the natural sciences ignore in favor of anthropological continuity.
- (c) A serious heuristic proposal on how to integrate premodern and contemporary perspectives into a “dense” and mutually beneficial conversation about the definition of aesthetics and its functions.

For its research interest at the intersection of the three main approaches, the CRC has set itself the task of defining concrete fields of investigation as well as developing methods and heuristics that will prove useful across epochal and disciplinary boundaries. This undertaking is guided by the following questions:

1. Within the cultural history of aesthetics, where and how does one begin to recognize alternatives: on the one hand, to the master-narrative of aesthetic autonomy with its teleological focus on the modern era, and on the other, to theoretical evolutionary approaches that define art as an anthropological constant and neglect the historical diversity of aesthetic forms and functions?

2. What analytic apparatus can be developed that is phenomenologically, systematically, and historically compatible with the alternative perspective we are seeking, and how can it be put into operation?
3. What intended results of such a different aesthetics can also respond to contemporary debates?

3. Approach 1: Aesthetics as a Search Term

3.1. Making the Concept Flexible

The first guiding question presupposes a standpoint within the history of aesthetics.⁶¹ Heretofore one could distinguish three basic levels of definition.

(1) Based on Greek *aisthesis* (perception), aesthetics first appears as a key concept in Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1750–1758).⁶² Baumgarten moves a field which up to then had been part of poetics and rhetoric into a new epistemological framework defined by rationalistic Leibniz-Wolffian academic philosophy. Unlike that philosophy, however, this new aesthetics upgrades and rehabilitates sensory insight.⁶³ Aesthetics is defined as *gnoseologia inferior* (lower epistemology) and *ars analogi rationis* (the art of the analogue of reason).⁶⁴ What is important is not so much Baumgarten's aesthetic positions and dogma as the conceptual and disciplinary reordering of the field. From this point on, aesthetics is a philosophical subdiscipline that approaches questions about art via a critique of the cognitive faculty and *Urteilkraft* (judgment). Baumgarten's principal goal is a general theory of aesthetic experience. In its elaboration, he confines himself to literature and takes all his examples from classical Greek and Latin texts. The substance of the new doctrine is less innovative than its framework. Lessing already remarked that all Baumgarten's examples were second-hand. In opposition to "systematic books"⁶⁵ on aesthetics, Lessing puts forward his philological work with texts and images themselves, work that "will [...] smack more of the source."⁶⁶

(2) Nevertheless, Baumgarten's expansion of the field from poetics to aesthetics was an important step. In the mid-18th century, the notion developed of the fine arts as a

61 Cf. Barck/Heininger/Kliche 2000.

62 For Baumgarten's place in contemporary philosophical contexts, see Dagmar Mirbach's introduction to the bilingual edition of the *Aesthetica* (Baumgarten: *Aesthetica*, pp. xv–lxxx).

63 The topos is from Cassirer 2009, p. 355 ("emancipation of sensibility"); after him, Kondylis 2002, esp. pp. 42–59.

64 Baumgarten: *Aesthetica*, pp. 10f.

65 Lessing: *Laocoön*, p. 5.

66 Lessing: *Laocoön*, p. 5. Cf. Also Robert 2013. Thus a front is established that promotes a pluralization of aesthetics. A counter-theory to systematic, philosophical aesthetics has its origins in literary criticism and "older" poetics.

system that is held together by the principle of *mimesis*, for example, in Charles Batteux's influential essay *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe* (1746). In his *Laocoön* (1766), Lessing undertook to construct such a general system of the fine arts in alignment with Aristotle and distinct from Baumgarten. At the end of the 18th century, both traditions converge: "Aesthetics" comes to mean a general theory of the fine arts.⁶⁷ Kant's hugely influential *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Critique of the Power of Judgment) of 1790 integrates quite disparate things. It is simultaneously an epistemology, a general theory of the fine arts, and a poetics or poetology closely related to current popular themes (classicism, genius, the sublime). In Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the "aesthetic" (perceptive) dimension of aesthetics is still on an equal footing with a general theory of the fine arts. Only in Hegel's aesthetics is this aspect suppressed in favor of systematic and historico-philosophical perspectives that draw more on the tradition of Schiller's influential letters *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (On the Aesthetic Education of Mankind) of 1795. By 1800, the field of aesthetics is already widely differentiated. Kant and Schiller continue the 18th-century tradition of a "double aesthetics" of the beautiful and the sublime.⁶⁸ In the 1830s, Karl Rosenkranz continues the tradition with his *Ästhetik des Hässlichen* (Aesthetics of Ugliness). More specific aesthetics are then developed in the 20th century: aesthetics of literature, of images, of objects, of film, etc.⁶⁹

(3) At the same time, a diffuse everyday usage of "aesthetic" and "aesthetics" is slowly established. It detaches from artistic objects in the stricter sense and is used to describe whatever is "beautiful." This narrowing of aesthetics into *Kallistik* (the theory of beauty) and "beautiful objects," together with obvious value judgments, is a devaluation of the multiplicity of aesthetics in the sense of (2) above, excluding as "unaesthetic" all hint of irritation, disquiet, and "mixed feelings." In this sense, "aesthetic" is a synonym for *decorum* or *bienséance*.

The approach of *Different Aesthetics* is programmatically distinct from these three levels of definition. The CRC intends neither to continue the "essentialism and universalism of the older philosophical tradition,"⁷⁰ nor to strive for a new, homogenizing macro-theory. What "aesthetics" means – and whether the systematic claim of this concept can survive at all from the perspective of historical differentiation – is again up for discussion. For that reason, we will tentatively regard "aesthetics" as an open, heuristic search term. In order to achieve this heuristic openness, the term must become flexible and freed from its normative attributions. As an essential step in that direction, the CRC will at first put aside the term "aesthetics," with its suggestion of systematic

67 For example, Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (General Theory of the Fine Arts), which is precisely *not* an aesthetics.

68 Cf. Zelle 1995.

69 Cf. Welsch 1987; Kliche 2000, pp. 375–383.

70 Braun 2007, p. 5.

unity, in favor of “the aesthetic,” i.e., the historical variety of aesthetic phenomena. Within “the aesthetic,” our investigations will concentrate on the realm of artificially constructed practices, manifestations, and concepts. However, our starting-point is not an unequivocal conception of art as a collective singular, but rather aesthetic acts (performative actions such as rituals, ceremonies, enactments, performances, etc.) and artifacts (texts or objects such as sculptures, buildings, musical scores, etc.), whose aesthetic position between formal design and social practice is the first thing to be determined. Only on the basis of broadly conceived, historically open, explorative research will the CRC be able to return to the question of whether it makes sense after all to talk of an (overarching?) “aesthetics” (in the singular).

3.2. “Aesthetic” – A Minimal Consensus

We are aware of the hermeneutic danger of circular reasoning in our approach. We are looking for aesthetic acts and artifacts while their aesthetic status has yet to be determined. How can one avoid this danger? The CRC seeks to do so in three ways. In order to guarantee a sensible limitation of the phenomena, we agree on a minimal consensus about what acts and artifacts may count as “aesthetic” across cultures and history. That minimal consensus includes (a) a sensuous, material starting point (the body, construction materials, colors, sounds, words, actions, etc.) and (b) an attention guided by knowledge of design and fabrication (τέχνη, *ars*) in their production (e.g., purposeful use of materials, well thought-out arrangement), which (c) raises the formal dimensions of the act or artifact to an expressive level *sui generis*.⁷¹ This minimal consensus provides an initial, heuristically necessary framework to keep the field of research from random

71 Across the centuries of the premodern era, there are countless acts and artifacts that meet these criteria. A passage from Hartmann von Aue’s middle-high German epic *Erec* can serve as a paradigm for our consensus. At a central point in the epic, the passage describes a saddle, in the tradition of ancient ekphrasis, as an aesthetically created artifact. The description begins by naming the materials “artistically” brought together in its creation, and then expands upon the idea of bringing things together, casting ever wider circles of themes and images. The additive and combinatory material process that produces the artifact becomes as well a poetological chiffre for the process as well as the effectiveness of the writing itself: *von disen mâterjen drin / sô hâte des meisters sin / geprüvet diz gereite / mit grôzer wîsheite. / er gap dem helfenbeine / und dâ bi dem gesteine / sîn gevellige stat, / als in diu gevuoge bat. / er muosete dar under / den goltlîm besunder, / der muoste daz werc zesamene haben* (“From these three materials and with great experience, the master artisan produced this saddle. The ivory and the inset gems he put together in a pleasing way and with great art. He filled the interstices with gold solder to held the work together”; Hartmann von Aue: *Erec*, ll. 7534–7544). Boehm 2006, p. 30, basically goes a step further apropos works of visual art: the visual image belongs “indissolubly to material culture [...], [is] inscribed in material in an absolutely essential way [...] but at the same time allows a significance to emerge [...] that surpasses all facticity.”

hypertrophy. For another thing however, the guidelines for this framework must be historically and culturally specific, complemented by other aspects, and observed in their processual and flexible negotiations with social practice. Since the guidelines must be re-specified and contextualized again and again, from the outset they point beyond themselves and lead toward that open, dynamic search that the CRC has as its goal. Beginning with this minimal consensus, the research field must be differentiated with the necessary openness. And finally, our plan raises to a central question the problem at the root of the hermeneutic circle: How can we understand as “aesthetic” practices, manifestations, and concepts that are unrelated to the subsector of a functionally differentiated society known as “art,” but instead are bound up in the execution of various societal actions?

4. Approach II: The Potential of the Premodern Era

4.1. “Different” in Three Ways, or the Aesthetic before Aesthetics

In order to achieve the necessary flexibility of research perspectives and take up the specific challenge of the last question above, we base our program of *Different Aesthetics* on this working hypothesis: Different ideas of the aesthetic can be most readily discovered if one sets aside explicit aesthetic theory and theoretical meta-discourse as the dominant approach and turns instead to where the aesthetic is comprehended not as a “metaphysics of art”⁷² but as part of a socio-cultural *praxis*. With this orientation, we approach our subject in three different ways.

(1) *Different in time*: For the approach we have chosen, the premodern period is heuristically fruitful because as a rule, its aesthetic acts and artifacts are not related to a codified theory. This is also the case for large segments of classical Greek and Latin literature and the vernacular literatures of the European Middle Ages.⁷³ Pragmatically and heuristically, we subsume this long period under the rubric “premodern” without connecting it to any teleological assumptions.⁷⁴ We do *not* define *Different Aesthetics* as

- 72 Letter from Friedrich Schiller to Wilhelm von Humboldt (June 27, 1798). Cf. Schiller: Letters, p. 248. Such caution, however, is advisable not just vis-à-vis the philosophical aesthetics founded by Baumgarten. It seems just as misguided, for example, to read an aesthetic “theory of the beautiful” into medieval theology (Assunto 1982 [1961]), for example, into St. Thomas Aquinas’s frequently quoted explication, *Pulchra enim dicuntur, quae visa placent* (S. th. I q 5 a 4 ad 1) or Suger’s writings on the construction of the Church of St. Denis. See Speer 1990; Speer 2009; and especially Speer 1994.
- 73 To review this tension between different literary systems, see Ernst Robert Curtius 2013 [1948] and Haug 2006 [1985].
- 74 For the image of the premodern in this sense, see Ridder/Patzold 2013; Gehrke 2016; Dürr et al. 2019, esp. pp. 1–3 and 10–14. In principle, the CRC adopts an understanding of the premodern era that was formulated by Holzem 2013, pp. 248–253, during the post-graduate program *Religiöses*

the pre-history or “incubation” of modern aesthetic theory. Rather, we ask: Isn’t it precisely this historically “other” material, under a broader concept of aesthetics, that will open our eyes to quite different conceptions of the aesthetic and its functions⁷⁵ – even in the present? On the one hand, such alternative conceptions can trace the contours of premodern acts and artifacts in their diversity and individuality; on the other, they may uncover previously hidden traditions and approaches that are nevertheless still operative in modern times, or may come to have an effect precisely in the post-modern era and decisively influence our present.

During the first phase of our research, the CRC is aware of concentrating on premodern Europe, beginning with Greek antiquity, for our aim is not *in principle* to highlight alternatives to aesthetic conceptions of specifically European provenance, as would easily be possible if we focused on prehistoric or non-European cultures. Our task is first to identify “the other in what is our own.” We assume that this approach, applied inter- and transculturally, will then open up altered connections to cultures beyond the borders of Europe. What matters is that the European premodern era, envisaged in this way, is understood neither as absolute “alterity” nor as an evolutionary, superseded aesthetic “prehistory” of the modern era. Instead, it is an inherently contradictory, polyphonic, and dynamic space in its own right, defined by tradition, time, and reflection. In the controversy surrounding the alterity and actuality of the premodern era, the CRC chooses its own, third path. We do not consign the premodern era’s aesthetic contemplation and manifestations to a rigid “old European” continuity (as does, for example, the study of *topoi* in the tradition of Ernst Robert Curtius) or to a paradigm of alterity. Building upon scholarship that focuses on plurality, diversity, and heterogeneity as important aspects of a dynamic premodern era,⁷⁶ we now have an op-

Wissen im vormodernen Europa (Religious Knowledge in Premodern Europe): In order to forestall “conceiving of the premodern era” or “reducing” it to a “prehistory” of modernity, the “concept of what the premodern era is must be made consciously pragmatic [...] and dynamic [...]. One should thus not seek the essence of the premodern era. Instead, that chronologically vast concept should at first be used to bring into focus all the phases of increased dynamism and accelerated change, all the fractures and cesurae in the history of European knowledge that lay beyond the traditional boundaries between epochs from ‘antiquity’ to ‘the Middle Ages’ to ‘the modern era.’ To the extent that the premodern era will thereby become dynamic, the risk will disappear that it can congeal into an essentially unified epoch, a counter-world diametrically opposite to modernity” (p. 249).

75 Cf. the contribution of Johannes Lipps and Anna Pawlak in this volume, pp. 433–510.

76 The critical interrogation of the concept of epochs – its assumptions, implications, and consequences – was – for instance – part of the research program of CRC 923 *Bedrohte Ordnungen* (Threatened Order – Societies under Stress) as well as the Research Training Group (RTG) 1662 *Religiöses Wissen im vormodernen Europa* (Religious Knowledge in Premodern Europe). CRC 923 approached its critique from a historical and socio-political perspective, while RTG 1662 did so from the perspective of

portunity to understand the complex resources of premodern aesthetic evidence from a new perspective and bring them to aesthetic discourse in a productive way.

(2) *Different in place*: In the search for a “different” aesthetics, the choice of sources and objects to study is crucial. The CRC will begin with the concrete aesthetic acts, actors, and artifacts themselves. We will look for evidence – forms and constellations – in which aesthetic commentaries emerge in the execution of texts and images, music and objects, institutional practices and cultural representations. We understand aesthetic commentaries in execution to be markers, indices, and reflections that can be found in the phenomena (e.g., texts, images, etc.) themselves and which allude to their aesthetic status. Of course, knowledge derived from poetics or essays on rhetoric, art, music, etc. can also be included, and can be found in the numerous treatises on aesthetic questions in classical antiquity, the Latin Middle Ages, and the early modern era. To the extent that such knowledge is practical or poietic, it is always oriented toward concrete production. Texts, images, or actions can either simply apply and integrate aesthetic knowledge (e.g., of poetics or rhetoric) or consciously set themselves apart from this knowledge, reflect on it, and call it into question.⁷⁷ In every case in our approach to a “different” aesthetics, the CRC is primarily looking for this self-reflection of aesthetic evidence in order to understand how an aesthetic discourse is constituted even *without* or *in addition to* the formulation of explicit aesthetic theory. Much preliminary work has been done in various disciplines on the reflection inherent in the aesthetic evidence itself. The research group has set itself the task of aggregating and integrating previous, individual results by systematically relating them to the interdisciplinary concept of the “figure of aesthetic reflection.” In this way, the “preliminary” or “secondary” setting of only implicit aesthetic reflection could prove to be the actual, primary setting for a discussion of aesthetics.

This is all the more likely as it would mean that aesthetic practices and manifestations outside of an explicit artificiality must also be accounted for. Our research program offers the possibility that – in addition to artifacts highlighted by their contemporaries or by their reception – those fields, pieces of evidence, and traces be included in which aesthetic questions and their potential difference are only peripherally crystalized. We hope that by paying attention to these seemingly unspectacular observational fields – i.e., to aesthetic acts and artifacts that take place as “side- or and concomitant effects”

religious transformations. The CRC 1391 approaches its inquiries from an aesthetic-cultural perspective.

77 This is true of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, and Vitruvius’s *De architectura libri decem* as well as Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s *Poetria nova*, Matthew of Vendôme’s *Ars versificatoria*, Regino von Prüm’s *De harmonica institutione*, and Guido of Arezzo’s *Micrologus*, to name just a few examples. For a convincing analysis of the connection between the commentary tradition and work on artifacts, cf. Stellmann 2022.

of quite different concerns – we will not only be able to understand aesthetic rules in their fluid, and contextually dependent movements, but also to reflect anew on the criteria of the aesthetic.

(3) *A difference in social relevance*: By beginning with evidence from the premodern era, we focus on acts and artifacts that as a rule are correlated with societal processes and functional expectations.⁷⁸ Premodern acts and artifacts that conform to our minimal consensus of what qualifies as “aesthetic” often exist not in an autonomous sphere reserved exclusively for them, but rather are incorporated into everyday processes, scientific or religious contexts, etc., i.e., in heteronomous discourses and implementations (e.g., poetry as a vehicle for theology, natural science, etc.).⁷⁹ Before the invention of museums,⁸⁰ art was to be found in temples and churches. Music accompanied court festivities or became a subjective form of religious experience, a *praxis pietatis melica*.⁸¹ In the light of the premodern era, the autonomous aesthetic boundaries between social practice and aesthetic acts and artifacts that characterize modern artistic institutions as a social subsystem prove to be porous and anachronistic. In view of controversies like that raised by Gomringer’s poem, it seems attractive and important to make use of the rich sources and objects of pre-18th-century European cultural history to rethink the tension between form and function. If current discussions are about what function the arts have within a society where their status as *art* is by no means clear, then the answer may come from those eras and cultures that never presumed a sharp border between daily life and the arts, but rather thought that aesthetic artifacts of course have a sociocultural function. What was repeatedly adduced as a “deficit” of premodern acts and artifacts, namely, their lack of autonomy, now points to what makes them so interesting for the current discourse.

4.2. The Change of Perspective

The CRC responds to contemporary controversies about art and scholarship with the timeliness of the premodern era. Indeed, it attributes to that era a paradigmatic status on the basis of the three “differences” it offers for its heuristic procedures. Therein lies the change of perspective whose heuristic range the CRC will put to the test. Two things need to be stressed. First, beginning with the premodern era does not mean that our results will claim validity only for that time. The fund of aesthetic reflection from the two thousand years the CRC will investigate contains potential that overarching

78 Cf., e.g., with respect to religious instruction the contribution of Annette Gerok-Reiter und Volker Leppin in this volume, pp. 177–226.

79 Cf. Robert 2007; Robert 2020; Gerok-Reiter/Mariss/Thome 2020.

80 See, e.g., Savoy 2015.

81 Crüger: *Praxis pietatis melica*.

aesthetic controversies have made too little use of. And second, although the CRC certainly is not aiming for an “aesthetic re-turn” under the banner of autonomy, we still must note that it cannot be the goal of *Different Aesthetics* to base the relevance of the aesthetic *solely* on premodern artifacts’ functional, pragmatic integration. Mastery of artistic technique and form must go hand-in-hand with multidimensional, socially relevant function. The central task of our research group is to discover this interdependence in an act or artifact without losing sight of its unique technical and artistic logic on the one hand and its social function on the other. The “difference” of *Different Aesthetics* will be measured against this goal.

5. Apparatus I: The Praxeological Model

As an analytic apparatus that will meet the criteria described above, the research group proposes the interdisciplinary research concept of a praxeological model of processes of exchange and transformation, centered on the figure of aesthetic reflection. On the one hand, as described above, acts and artifacts in their individual, concrete, technical, and artistic manifestations will be at the center of our interest. On the other hand, we will focus attention on aesthetic creations as *social* manifestations (and vice versa). In its heuristic outline, our analytic apparatus must therefore confront the tension between those two positions. In contrast to older models of an “immanent”⁸² or “implicit”⁸³ aesthetics, as well as to sociological research of the 1970s,⁸⁴ the approach of *Different Aesthetics* will be to develop a comprehensive praxeology of aesthetic manifestations that assumes a relation – or better, correlation – between the logic of individual artistic technique and a societal function. Thus, we also avoid a purely system-theoretical conception of “art” as a functionally autonomous social subsystem.

5.1. Theoretical and Methodological Premises

The emphasis on the performative character of social practices is based on praxeological models that until now have been developed primarily in ethnology and sociology (especially the sociology of knowledge), but also in classical studies such as archeology.⁸⁵ While poststructural cultural theory did the exact opposite by defining all cultural acts as signs (or “texts”),⁸⁶ praxeological models challenge the hegemony of symbolic communication in favor of material, physical practices (“doing culture”). Thus they

82 Cf. Iser 1966.

83 Cf. Iser 1974; Eco 1984 [1979].

84 Cf. i.a. Köhler 1976; Lönnroth 1978; subsequently, e.g., Bürger 1983; Luhmann 2000.

85 For the archeological perspective, see Haug / Kreuz 2016. Hillebrandt 2014 gives an overview.

86 For the paradigmatic formulation, see Bachmann-Medick 1996.

focus above all on (non-intentional) everyday objects, practices, and processes.⁸⁷ To that extent, aesthetic acts and artifacts in a narrower sense tended to be sidelined or excluded altogether in previous praxeological models. Only fragmentary, isolated beginnings of a praxeologically oriented aesthetics can be found, and as a rule they concentrate on researching material objects.⁸⁸ *Different Aesthetics* offers a model that integrates aesthetic issues into the praxeological approach, thereby building bridges between genuinely praxeological social and cultural history, the history of mentality, and the approach of cultural semiotics (above all in the tradition of the New Historicism). If one understands social practices comprehensively as “a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings”⁸⁹ or in the sense of the actor-network theory as a network of diverse agents and their “associations,”⁹⁰ one can connect to praxeological impulses without having to exclude aesthetic issues. The core of this synthesis is the interpretation of aesthetic phenomena as active forces, i.e., as agents with dynamic powers of action in social processes. Aesthetic acts and artifacts preform behaviors, spaces, and options (e.g., as a painting preforms its reception in a sacred or profane environment) or they adapt them (e.g., as church buildings adapt the imperatives and needs of religious communities). Other acts and artifacts evolve their potential in cooperation with religious, political, biological, etc. agents (e.g., in performative acts such as ceremonies and liturgies). Thus they become “participants in the course of action” of social “translations,” transformations, and transmissions of energy.⁹¹ Thus aesthetic acts and artifacts must be conceptualized both in their design-based uniqueness and at the same time as “resources for practices”⁹² in the sense of processes of social exchange.

5.2. The Praxeological Model

Methodologically, this alignment of formal design and social function smooths the way to an integrative model of aesthetics that we designate as the praxeological model of *Different Aesthetics*. Our approach will be to see aesthetic acts and artifacts not only in relation to traditional studies of design (whether explicitly or implicitly), but also to social practice. Thus they assume a flexible position between the logic of their unique technical and artistic design on the one hand and their pragmatic, historical, everyday logic on the other. We designate these their “autological” and “heterological” di-

87 See, e.g., the approach of “object biographies” in Appadurai 1986; Boschung/Kreuz/Kienlin 2015; Hahn 2015; Göttler/Mochizuki 2017.

88 Cf. i.a. Gell 1998; for the premodern era Bielfeldt 2014; Meier/Ott/Sauer 2015; Mühlherr et al. 2016; for the modern era Niehaus 2009; Kimmich 2011; Cordez et al. 2018.

89 Schatzki 1996, p. 89.

90 See Latour 2005.

91 Latour 2005, pp. 70, 108.

92 Reckwitz 2008, p. 154.

mensions.⁹³ In this way we preserve the tension between auto- and hetero-referential aspects of aesthetic events without assigning these aspects a normative character (in the original, juridical sense of “autonomy” and “heteronomy”).⁹⁴ Our thesis is that aesthetic acts and artifacts gain social impact and agency only by mediating between autological and heterological demands. This double orientation of aesthetic phenomena has often been described, but as a rule modeled in a divisive way with clearly hierarchical valuation: autonomy here, heteronomy there. While sociological and cultural-historical approaches have emphasized the heterological pole, the concept of aesthetic autonomy was often regarded as a historical “overcoming” of heteronomy. The CRC’s research program intends to undo such binary oppositions – which are among the favored descriptive modes of modernism⁹⁵ – and change them back into dynamic structures of tension and processes of transformation. It is our thesis that in this way, an apparatus can be developed that can comprehend the distinctiveness of premodern aesthetic phenomena. The following figure is a graphic representation of the basic heuristic model (Fig. 4).

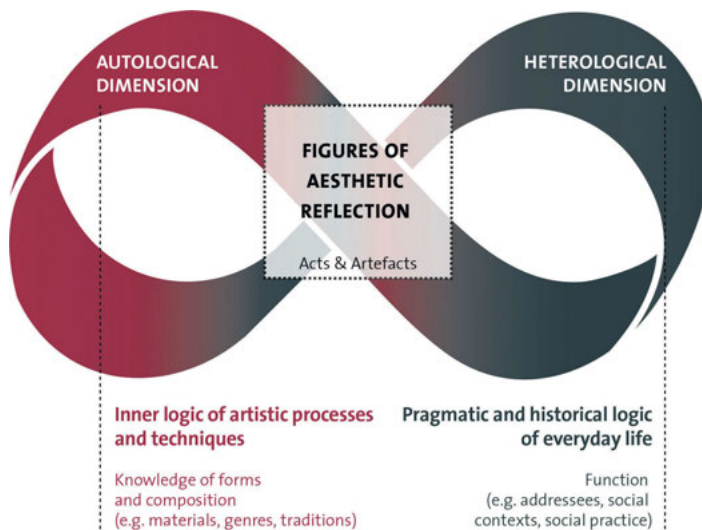


Fig. 4. The praxeological model of the CRC *Different Aesthetics*.

93 Here the CRC redefines a pair of concepts already in use in other contexts, for example, in medicine (autological tissue, autological transplant) or in linguistics and philosophy (words are autological if they share the characteristic they describe). In journalism, “autologization” occurs when one’s sources become increasingly other journalistic texts. In the context of modern subject constitution, the concept is used by Lobsien 1996.

94 Cf. the concise presentation in Vollhardt 2007.

95 E.g., Latour 1993 [1991].

Different Aesthetics assumes that aesthetic phenomena are not autonomous in relation to their concrete environments, whereby an environment can be a discursive context (e.g., theology, medicine, religion) as well as a social one (locations of aesthetic performance: a hymn in a church, ornaments in a Roman commercial building). Thus aesthetic agents, acts, and artifacts always operate in a relation between knowledge of form and knowledge of function, a tension that they reflect in some cases. We define their autological dimension as the available knowledge of form and design (in the sense of technical skills) that converges in the concept of *ars* (in the sense of a rules-based knowledge of the appropriate action or fabrication). The autological aspect can be understood as a reservoir that stores the knowledge of form and design. To this sphere belong not only explicit theories of art (poetics, rhetoric, rules of proportion) but also the entire fund of prior or implicit rules, models, topoi, and traditions that can be thought of as the ineluctable practical and technical point of reference for aesthetic production. Their heterological dimension, on the other hand, relates to the pragmatic determination of a goal and purpose and to the social environment where discursive competition plays a central role (e.g., the relationship of poetry, music, architecture to religion, politics, etc.). While the autological dimension is related to technical, artistic production (*poiesis*), the heterological dimension constitutes the exchange processes of the aesthetic act or artifact with the relevant historical, pragmatic, everyday world, the societal context, and social practices. Our model is praxeological⁹⁶ because it assumes that societal processes are not just “mirrored” in aesthetic acts and artifacts (“Widerspiegelung”), but that the latter themselves represent societal acts performed by concrete agents in concrete social environments, and are therefore always performative and oriented to those environments (e.g., occasional poetry). Aesthetic phenomena are part of a socio-cultural reality; they spring from the imagination of a society and leave their mark in return (as, for example, the Middle-High German courtly romances led to discussions of new values in knightly behavior, while *Minnesang* led to a new ideal of love).⁹⁷ In the societal network, the aesthetic is an important, energetic factor.⁹⁸

What is important is the basic permeability and continuous, dynamic interaction of both dimensions. This accounts for the fact that in premodern aesthetic processes, it is

96 The concept of praxeology as the “theory of praxis” was developed especially by Pierre Bourdieu in debate with ethnology and the social sciences. The decisive point is that social action is not attributed to structures, but to the interaction of “bodies” in a defined space. Culture is “made” or “done” (“doing culture”) in everyday processes. Cf. Bourdieu 1977 [1972]. This approach converges at important points (everyday knowledge, centering the agent) with epistemological approaches in the tradition of Berger/Luckmann 1966. Cf. Reckwitz 2008; Hillebrandt 2014; Schäfer 2016.

97 Cf. Müller 2004.

98 Instead of emphasizing the “circulation of social energy” (cf. Greenblatt 1989, pp. 1–20), the CRC will focus on the circulation of aesthetic energy; see Gerok-Reiter 2022.

often hard to distinguish between aspects of artistic technique (e.g., in poeology) and non-technical aspects; questions of pragmatic function are often a genuine component of the formation of artistic norms (e.g., questions of *decorum*, choice of genre, use of precious materials, etc.). Conversely, knowledge of form and design can become part of the social performance of the aesthetic (e.g., stylistic modes, color choices, spatial proportions, rhetorical figures such as metaphor and personification, strategic reflections on encomiums, deliberations on artistic theory in treatises). In addition, elements of the autological dimension itself can be at the same time aesthetic acts (e.g., Horace's *Ars Poetica* is an influential resource of poeological knowledge and at the same time an aesthetic artifact – an epistle in verse). The specific intention of our model is founded on this participatory openness of the dimensions, in which – as in a reversible figure – foreground and background can change, or in which there are constant, dynamic processes of shifts, translations, and transformations. Thus the model, which will be constantly under development in the course of our analyses, offers a chance to dismantle the rigid and “rules-based” dichotomy autonomous / heteronomous, in favor of a flexible, scalable dynamic of relationships and feedback. This is central to a differentiated and adequate description of aesthetic phenomena in their historical diversity in the framework of a praxeological approach.

6. Apparatus II: Figures of Aesthetic Reflection

6.1. Figurations of Aesthetic Reflection

Just as praxeology in its sociological conception reconstructs the implicit knowledge of the everyday world, *Different Aesthetics* intends to reconstruct the implicit self-conception of aesthetic acts and artifacts by tracing and analyzing their knowledge of the connections between understanding “art” and social practice. While everyday objects like computers conceal their complex knowledge (which attracts attention only when they become “recalcitrant”), aesthetic processes tend to highlight, reveal, and reflect upon their complexity. Because of this highlighting, *Different Aesthetics* adopts the art-historical concept of the figure of reflection⁹⁹ to describe the references and configurations in which autological and heterological dimensions are mirrored, displayed, and discussed, but in a considerably expanded way. In art history, the figure of reflection usually refers to a concrete figure in a picture that offers identification and connection to the viewer (e.g., the painter himself gazing out at the viewer). Based on its use in art-historical studies on self-reflectivity in art,¹⁰⁰ the CRC will adopt a more abstract conception of

99 The foundational texts are Fried 1980 and Busch 1993.

100 Cf. i.a. Stoichita 1997 [1993]; Krüger 2001; Rosen/Krüger/Preimesberger 2003.

a “figuration of aesthetic reflection.” This can, but by no means must be a concrete human figure (e.g., the figure of the poet in a poem). Thus the concept will prove not just interdisciplinary for the CRC’s diverse acts and artifacts, but will also be able to capture their oscillation between autological and heterological dimensions.

In this broad sense, figures of aesthetic reflection become a key heuristic concept for our interdisciplinary research.¹⁰¹ By way of the figure of aesthetic reflection, our task is to comprehend how the dimensions of form and function, artistic technique and pragmatic purpose are inscribed in aesthetic acts and artifacts. We understand figures of aesthetic reflection to be configurations manifest or materialized in concrete objects, texts, practices, or institutions, in which the tension between the unique logic of aesthetic acts and artifacts and their interpenetration with nonaesthetic spaces and facts – i.e., the dynamic relation of autological and heterological dimensions – becomes visible.¹⁰² Figures of aesthetic reflection in this sense permeate aesthetic acts and artifacts on their surfaces as well as in their depths, in the form of exponentiations, choice of imagery, interaction with media structures, or in the semantic supercharging of individual concepts and in the adaptation of aesthetic norms, but also in the form of concrete figures. In and of themselves, acts and artifacts can represent a figure of aesthetic reflection (e.g., a musical performance in the interaction of musicians, audience, employers, imposing edifices, decorative excess, and in some cases, social or political intention).¹⁰³

Decisive is always the flexible character of the figures of reflection. They occur in aesthetic acts and artifacts without having to be part of a systematic theory or coherent narrative. For instance, a personification can be part of a plot and also reflect upon whether and why the narrated situation can be made plausible to a specific audience. At the same time, this can advance to a self-reflective commentary on the quality of the narrative in progress, including accounting for its actual, contemporary audience, without such multifarious considerations – relevant to the aesthetic discourse of the time – rising to the status of a literary or theoretical artistic judgment.¹⁰⁴ Thus an extremely fine-woven, reflective, expressive potential emerges next to a theoretically grounded, explicit aesthetics. Scholarship has again and again set its sights on this

101 Central aspects of this approach are already discussed in Gerok-Reiter/Robert 2019, pp. 19–23. Case studies of how to approach the figure of aesthetic reflection (without depending on the praxeological model, however) are present in the same volume. For the distinction from the concept of self-referentiality, see Braun/Gerok-Reiter 2019.

102 Via reference to the conceptual pair, the concept of the figure of aesthetic reflection gains a more precise heuristic character than in its earlier iteration (cf. Gerok-Reiter/Robert 2019, p. 21). Figures of aesthetic reflection are the heuristic apparatus we use to read from an aesthetic phenomenon a reflection on the relationship between its autological and heterological aspects.

103 Cf. the contribution of Silke Leopold in this volume, pp. 87–115.

104 Cf. the contribution of Sandra Linden and Daniela Wagner in this volume, pp. 227–264.

potential,¹⁰⁵ but it has hardly been comprehensively appreciated in its interdisciplinary relationships. The goal of the CRC is to map as broadly as possible the diversity and richness of premodern aesthetic reflection and systematize it as a *Different Aesthetics*.

6.2. An Example

To suggest the potential of the new approach, we select as an example the sociocultural phenomenon of language purity (*puritas linguae*, *puritas sermonis*, etc.) from the 16th to the 18th centuries.¹⁰⁶ Arguments about language purity in Italy, France, and Germany were intimately bound up with aesthetic questions – much more so than today’s reductive *Fremdwortpurismus* (a move to purify German of borrowed words from other languages, primarily English). In early 16th-century Italy, Pietro Bembo elevates Petrarch to the rank of *modello di lingua* (i.e., of Tuscan) and *modello di stile* (i.e., of Petrarchism). The codification of language is the prerequisite for the codification of poetry; both are closely related to a normative requirement of *imitatio*. It was the language academies (*Accademia della Crusca*, *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*) that attributed to aesthetic questions a clear societal, cultural, and identity-forming function. It is true that the figure of aesthetic reflection – the ideal of *puritas* so tangible in the texts – is in the first instance borrowed from the repertoire of rhetorical stylistics (*elocutio*), in which the demand for *puritas* is applied as an autological *terminus technicus*. In literary texts however – but also in grammars, dictionaries, treatises on language, encomiums, and their paratexts – the concept of *puritas* has a much wider range. It proves to be a bundle of metaphors that connect linguistic and aesthetic norm formation to grammatical, rhetorical, and courtly-societal norms. Connections to theology and science (“pure” understood as “clear” “shining,” and “innocent,” but also as “true,” “absolute,” and “perfect”) lead to ideological exponentiation, which in turn provokes contrary (“impure”) or alternative (“hybridity”) concepts. Not the concept itself in its autological dimension, but only its supercharging with such connotations and its acceptance into sociocultural and institutional contexts (academies, language societies) makes purism into an aesthetic ideal with societal influence. Think, for example, of the model courtier or the ideals of *sprezzatura* or *honnêteté*.

The praxeological model and the figure of aesthetic reflection provide an apparatus for following the trail of premodern conceptions of the aesthetic, in close contact with the era’s lived reality and on the basis of a multiplicity of sources. The latter do not need to be drawn exclusively from the traditional canon of the loftiest examples.

105 For example: Moog-Grünwald 2001; Schipperges 2003; Köbele 2012; Wesche 2004; Fricke 2007; Männlein-Robert 2007; Bauer 2010; Robert 2011; Wolkenhauer 2011; Strohschneider 2014; Gerok-Reiter 2015; Pawlak 2016; Schellewald 2016; Kellner 2018; Bleumer 2020.

106 See the contribution of Sarah Dessì Schmid and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 51–86.

Moreover, in this way we can trace functional mechanisms that connect aesthetic terms (such as “pure”) with larger social and cultural practices and thus make it possible for figures of aesthetic reflection to become topoi or even stabile concepts and aesthetic programs. It may be of particular interest that in the process, connections and analogies to theology, science (technical texts), nature, and handicrafts, or between various arts will play an important role. The concept of the figure of aesthetic reflection shows that aesthetic processes of reflection are by no means initiated only by self-reference, but to an important degree also by reference to other sources, i.e., by way of the heterological dimension. In this regard too, our aim is a “different” aesthetics.

7. Concepts – Systematics – Research Fields

7.1. Condensation of Aesthetic Markers

A methodological challenge, but also a basis of further differentiation, is the systematic inquiry into the various kinds and degrees of aesthetic reflection observable in acts and artifacts. The crucial question is, where is the border between aesthetically “relevant” art and the mass of mere things, actions, and everyday objects? Making that border fluid is a goal of our research group and an advantage of the heuristic instrument of the figure of aesthetic reflection. Art and non-art no longer stand in dichotomic relation to each other; the aesthetic becomes scalable and capable of differentiation. In a similar way, the kind of reflection we observe in aesthetic acts and artifacts is characterized by a significant spectrum of form and intensity, which can range from a mere earmarking of “madness” via questions of presentation that naturally occur in the manufacturing process (materiality, communicative situation, handicraft techniques), to an explicit “reflection on the artistic character of a work.”¹⁰⁷ Fundamentally, one can distinguish between implicit reflections in the process of execution¹⁰⁸ and explicit reflections in the sense of a direct “contemplation of art” (e.g., in prologues, epilogues, or excursus that expressly discuss the conditions of production and reception).¹⁰⁹ If the second variant can be understood (to varying degrees) as metaization¹¹⁰ and discursivation, that is usually not true of the first variant. The spectrum between the two possibilities, on a scale that measures how prominently the reflection is highlighted, is thus very broad and mostly characterized by fluid transitions.

107 Braun 2007, p. 5.

108 Cf., e.g., Freund 2019; Gropper 2019; Kiening 2019.

109 For literary studies, see for example Linden 2017 and the classic study by Haug 2006 [1985]. For meta-painting, see the foundational Stoichita 1997 [1993].

110 Cf. Hauthal et al. 2007.

For heuristic purposes, the CRC distinguishes three “condensation levels” in the earmarking of aesthetic reflection. These conceptual levels we label *practices*, *manifestations*, and *concepts*. Different methodological assumptions are associated with each condensation level, and their clarification will contribute to sharpening the praxiological model as well as the approach to the figure of aesthetic reflection. These heuristic distinctions also serve to systematize the wealth and diversity of the objects of study and their figures of reflection with a view to particular methodological challenges, and to adumbrate various fields of study.¹¹¹

7.2. Practices, Manifestations, Concepts

(1) *Practices*: Under *practices* we subsume objects of study that – with the understanding of *praxis* as acting – are firmly embedded in concrete historical acts of everyday life or in comprehensive sociocultural nexuses and active processes. Since in most cases these are aesthetic acts and agents in a public space, the sociocultural extent, scope, and visibility of these phenomena are especially pronounced. For that reason, in the praxeological model the heterological dimension of these objects of study emerges more strongly than their autological dimension. Their reflective assumptions, on the other hand, are often less strongly marked. To some extent, they can only be accessed from the heterological pole, while their autological criteria can be apprehended only vaguely and with a great deal of difficulty. Thus research on aesthetic acts and artifacts from the realm of practices – and their figures of aesthetic reflection – to some extent takes its soundings of the preconditions and horizons of a praxeology of the aesthetic from boundary zones. At the same time the realm of practices suggests a universality of the aesthetic, a sort of “everyday aesthetics.” This outline of a popular aesthetics as it is manifested, for instance, in ancient mercantile centers as well as in early modern event spaces such as spas and baths, shows our research project’s heuristic potential and interpretive field, as well as its topicality. Thus the realm of practices has the specific task of illuminating precisely the aesthetics of everyday processes neglected by both systematic aesthetic theory and research focused on a sub-aesthetic material turn.

(2) *Manifestations*: Our research program uses *manifestations* for aesthetic acts and artifacts in which the aesthetic figures of reflection are as a rule more easily discernable than in the realm of practices. Here we pursue on the one hand small-scale, reflectively designed units whose potential for concept formation is, on the other hand, not at all ensured. Proceeding from the literal meaning of “manifestation” – i.e., the actual process of making something tangible or visible – individual concretizations of

111 With the aid of these heuristic distinctions, the CRC structures its field of research in three project areas. We are interested in the methodological implications as well as the points of contact and transitions between these areas.

aesthetic reflection are investigated that only tentatively emerge within an artifact or group of artifacts or acts. To some extent, these tentative manifestations are quite capable of programmatic potential, but often make only isolated appearances in the acts and artifacts (e.g., in some lexemes, in inserted metaphors, in an incidental constellation of text and image). Thus only “indications” or “traces” of aesthetic reflection are at the center of a manifestation. Although they are quite visible and tangible as such, at first they appear fleeting and peripheral. They can occasionally (but not necessarily) establish themselves and become distinctly displayed rhetorical images or poetological statements. While these “indications” – on account of their occasional nature – struggle for status, as it were, it is especially appealing to analyze in what way they actualize the potential of the autological and/or the heterological dimension for their justification. The figures of reflection in the sense of manifestations have in common that they are reflections more *in statu nascendi* than fully formed concepts, so that only an exacting hermeneutic search for traces can decipher their potential, even from the periphery, to point the way to the center of *Different Aesthetics*.

(3) *Concepts*: The CRC reserves the term *concepts* for acts and artifacts that explicitly exhibit their (self-)reflection (e.g., in competitions between images and text), individuate themselves in debate with other concepts (e.g., aesthetic “appearance” versus theological “vision” as revelation) or announce their own conceptually consolidated claim, although often in heterological respects (e.g., “illusion” as a demonological, not an aesthetic, category). Compared to manifestations, concepts are the highest level of explicitly highlighted aesthetic reflection, although the term “concept” of course also alludes to a certain openness (cf. Italian *concetto*, English *conceit*, German *Einfall* [sudden idea] or *scharfsinnige Ausdrucksweise* [astute expression]). From this standpoint a direct path opens up to central problematic fields, traditions, and norms of historical poetics, aesthetics, and art theory. At the same time, however, well-known concepts can also appear in surprising contexts or in bewildering negation (the “original genius” as a category of autonomous aesthetics is called into question by forms of co-creativity and collaboration). The praxeological model seeks on the one hand to reveal these oppositions within the *autological* repertoire and on the other hand to call attention to their *heterological* circumstances and functions. The heuristic movement of *concepts* thus is a mirror image of *practices*, whose objects of study are anchored in the heterological realm. With this kind of figures of reflection as well, a glance at the autological-heterological relationship should lead us to inquire after the preconditions and mechanisms that influence, promote, or hinder conceptualization or conceptual shifts.

8. Challenges and Goals: Mapping and Coordinates

The CRC's research program hopes to demonstrate the potential and resources of pre-modern aesthetic acts and artifacts for aesthetic discourse. What is needed is a heuristic shift in direction. We circumscribe this shift with the search for a *Different Aesthetics*, initiated via the model of a praxeological aesthetics as well as access to figures of aesthetic reflection. Based on the approaches we have presented, the CRC assumes the following challenges and goals:

8.1. Differentiation and Evaluation of the Analytical Apparatus

The first step will be an interdisciplinary test of the model of a praxeological aesthetics as a research concept in order to differentiate it and to offer it for discussion as a valid, compatible apparatus for the analysis of premodern acts and artifacts. By way of the autological-heterological "double vision," we intend to work up a finely woven descriptive inventory. In addition to a new perspective on traditional attributions and evaluations of "art" and the painstaking search for evidence in methodologically difficult fields,¹¹² the CRC hopes to advance into realms of objects that have so far received too little attention in aesthetic discourse, indeed, as blind spots could often not even be located. So it is also the case that the source material of aesthetic acts and artifacts needs to be newly mapped via this "double vision." What this might mean can be demonstrated by research into spa music of the early modern period. Here music is bound up with the interactive space of the public bath. Numerous sources from the 15th to the 18th centuries refer to the socio-cultural presence of this phenomenon with its varied functions, from entertainment and healing to spiritual edification and associations with *Vanitas*. In view of the unmistakable presence of this phenomenon in its time, it is surprising that in the twenty volumes of the encyclopedic *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Music in the Past and Present), there is not a single rubric such as *Bademusik* or *Bädermusik*. Spa music comes to the attention of music history only when the significance of fully composed and written out works increases, i. e., since the 18th century, and at the same time, the interactive potential of the communicative space "public bath" is relativized.¹¹³ It is due to this one-sided perception of autological aspects of the phenomenon that the spa music of the early modern period remains even today a blank space in the aesthetic-cultural archive. On the basis of the model of a praxeological aesthetics, however, it is exactly the interaction of musical reflection and dietetics, artistic performance, and

112 Supporting this search we will be using digital tools and instruments applied to larger corpora. Cf. the contribution of Anna Katharina Heiniger, Nils Reiter, Nathalie Wiedmer, Stefanie Gropper, and Angelika Zirker in this volume, pp. 265–288.

113 See Probst 1971; Lins 1995; Herzog 2016.

social convention that is highly attractive as an object of research that now for the first time can be adequately apprehended.¹¹⁴

8.2. Coordinates of a *Different Aesthetic*

The second challenge is to identify and position the “coordinates” of a *Different* (premodern) *Aesthetics* in a broad historical and disciplinary spectrum. With the help of these coordinates, the goal is to determine the criteria of aesthetic self-understanding that have had a long-term impact without ever finding their way into discursive theory formation. The critical question motivating this effort is whether a *Different Aesthetics* is plausible and if so, how it can be concretely described. Based on results from both synchronic and diachronic levels, we are certain that between concrete, historically variable individual cases and an abstract theory, we need to envisage a third level of description that will not unduly fix the dynamic of fluid aesthetic negotiations while still allowing for systematization. With respect to this systematic third level, we will speak of the coordinates of aesthetic reflection.

Using these coordinates in the course of our research, the basic constituents of *Different Aesthetics* will be identified step by step. In a first step, the CRC investigated the following coordinates and discussed them in cross-sectional areas and conferences: 1. Individual and Collective,¹¹⁵ 2. Mediality and Materiality,¹¹⁶ 3. Norm and Diversity,¹¹⁷ 4. Shine and Semblance.¹¹⁸ In the second funding phase, we focused on new coordinates and categories, i.e., 1. Canonisation and Revision, 2. Reuse and Creativity, 3. Object and Performance. We are aware of operating with concepts of medium abstraction that should not be taken as static oppositions. “Individual” is not the opposite of “Collective,” “Diversity” not the inversion of “Norm,” etc. Instead, in the pairs of concepts there is mutual dynamic stimulus, continuous circulation, and dialectic feedback. The heuristic benefit is that the coordinates, through their sometimes asymmetrical relationships, highlight the latitude within which acts and artifacts negotiate and articulate their aesthetic identity. Since the search for and identification of further coordinates will be constantly underway,¹¹⁹ various polarities may emerge in which specific criteria of a *Different Aesthetics* can be identified without having to sacrifice flexibility with

114 Cf. the contribution of Lorenz Adamer and Thomas Schipperges in this volume, pp. 117–149.

115 Cf. Gropper et al. 2023; English translation: Gropper et al. 2025.

116 Cf. Stellmann / Wagner 2023.

117 Cf. Dessì Schmid / Linden 2025.

118 Cf. Gerok-Reiter et al. 2023; English translation: Gerok-Reiter et al. [forthcoming].

119 The CRC’s instruments for this search are above all cross-sectional areas where in our joint efforts and workshop discussions we hope to constantly identify new productive connections across the boundaries of practices, manifestations, and concepts. The cross-sectional areas will be constituted by highlighting and discussion of the pairs of coordinates.

regard to the diverse content or historical shifts of emphasis that such a comprehensive field of study demands. Concretely, the research – in its interdisciplinary cooperation in engagement with the conceptual pairs – will yield essential aspects of a *Different Aesthetics* for discussion in interdisciplinary and international exchange. If thereby our eyes are sharpened for systematic points of intersection in synchronous as well as diachronous perspectives, and individual significant coordinates emerge, this should prove a special gain.¹²⁰

8.3. Transcultural and Transhistorical Interchanges

A second challenge is to examine points of connection of a *Different Aesthetics* in transcultural and transhistorical perspective. It makes sense to begin the search for a *Different Aesthetics* in the European premodern period, since the examination of premodern acts and artifacts, because of their integration in functional situations, is especially suited for the necessary change of perspective. The particular density and controversial diversity of aesthetic artifacts, figures of reflection, technical-artistic traditions, and social interrelations from premodern Europe, that stretch in a chronological and topographic arc from the world of the Greek polis to the 18th century, make the premodern period particularly suited for the task of seeking a corrective to a one-sided narrative of European autonomy “on site” in its own space. Nevertheless, a third goal of the CRC is also to test the heuristic validity of the praxeological model beyond the bounds of premodern Europe. For the model is not in principle confined to premodern Europe. In other words, premodern Europe is the model’s paradigmatic starting-point but not its necessary limit.

Thus the model could doubtless prove useful for understanding phenomena of aesthetic reflection in transcultural or transhistorical contexts. Examples in modern times could be the Gomringer debate or the so-called cancel culture and the relationship between aesthetics, the arts, and ethics. Thus we need to clarify the extent to which the praxeological model allows us to describe developments, processes, dynamics, and transformations over and above historical snapshots and constellations. In any case, a temporal index is already inherent in the presentation of continuous negotiations that congeal in concrete acts and artifacts. Only when we succeed in including such temporal dynamics without slipping into a teleological winner- or conquest-narrative (e.g., “overcoming models of re-narration,” “overcoming multiple authorship,” “overcoming mimesis”) will the approach of *Different Aesthetics* become useful for a different history

120 Further conferences will discuss other coordinates the CRC is currently pursuing in interdisciplinary and international conversation. *Andere Ästhetik – Koordinaten*, the CRC’s monograph series, brings together this level of results and, we hope, in the long term be able to map out the spectrum of coordinates of *Different Aesthetics*.

of aesthetics. We must also ask to what extent the model can be usefully transferred as an instrument of analysis in more remote cultural spaces (e.g., prehistoric times or an Asian context). In such cases, will it enable a dialogue on equal terms without smoothing out differences or smuggling in hierarchies? Can we use it to work against a Eurocentric, hegemonic perspective on aesthetic reflection and definition? Or will it fail in that regard?

In a longer perspective, the geographic and diachronic expansion of the spectrum of sources offers a chance to test the praxeological model under changed circumstances and advance its conceptualization. In the same way, the choice of comparative perspective can focus attention on the historical and cultural specifics (or generalities) of the corresponding phenomena. In order to begin a comparison concisely, one could investigate whether and in what form already elaborated, concrete figures of reflection occur in other cultures and historical contexts. For example, how does the origin and development of puristic argumentation – which we will investigate in exchanges between Italian, French, and German programmatic works – appear in non-European cultures? Does Islamic mysticism, like medieval Christian mysticism, have recourse to a legitimizing metaphysics of light in the tension between light and appearance? Do models of collaborative authorship change between the premodern period and the literature of the 18th and 19th centuries? Beyond that, engagement and exchange with the present will be continuously pursued. This takes into account that many constituent aspects of premodern aesthetics are regaining importance and being discussed in the postmodern present. Numerous artistic movements, theoretical formulations, and research interests are reviving premodern figures of thought and reflection (e.g., the discussion of compilation and plagiarism, intertextuality / *imitatio*, the return of mimesis and illusion and their foundation in veristic sculpture, co-authorship in the production of modern television series, transmedial theories of narration, everyday design, etc.). Only in a broad investigative field can we finally clarify whether a *Different Aesthetics* will prove to be the “actual,” foundational aesthetics.

In regard to its cultural, historical, and social consequences, the research program of *Different Aesthetics* describes an extensive field of interdisciplinary research. Only in broad cooperation among disciplines that differ in the periods and media they study, and in graduated, long-term progress can this research accomplish its tasks of collecting, historically differentiating, and systematizing its material. The broadly interdisciplinary CRC 1391, which also includes disciplines such as history, theology, linguistics, and computational philology, emphatically and energetically assumes the challenges enumerated above. But we cannot master such a broad field of inquiry alone. The coordinates of a premodern – and not just premodern – *Different Aesthetics* can only be discovered successively, on the basis of and in constant exchange with international research. Thus it is the express desire of the CRC to seek intensive cooperation with individual scholars and research groups engaged in similar aesthetic inquiry. We are convinced that only

such a communal research effort can make visible and bring together the coordinates of a *Different Aesthetics*. This explanation of our research program is thus meant as an invitation, on the basis of scholarship far beyond the CRC alone, to seek those coordinates and reflect upon them by using, criticizing, expanding, or adapting the CRC's program.

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II. Practices and Performances

Purism – Discourses and Practices of Language Purity

Abstract

Linguistic purism is one of the most important aspects of the European language debate between the 15th and 17th centuries. The quest for a “pure” language, which could be considered prestigious and exemplary, became a guiding concern for European vernaculars. This contribution explores this debate within the closely related linguistic cultures and literatures of Italy, France, and Germany. Its fundamental thesis is that only in the early modern period did purity of language become a “figure of aesthetic reflection,” according to the terminology of the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391. It was during the course of the 16th and 17th centuries, that the rhetorical and stylistic questions of *puritas sermonis* were linked back, through standardization attempts in the vernaculars, to socio-political discourses and institutions. In this way, the demand for and promotion of linguistic purity gave rise to various aesthetics, as well as social attitudes, programs, and practices aimed towards linguistic purification. These were initially carried out systematically by institutions, in particular by language academies and language societies. This contribution describes standardization strategies in the three respective languages and literatures, in order to illustrate the central role and concrete practices and goals of the *Accademia della Crusca*, the *Académie française*, and the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*. The conclusion examines three documents within the context of the linguistic politics and agendas of the respective academies: the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, Vaugelas’s *Remarques sur la langue françoise* and Harsdörffer’s *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*.

Keywords

Purity, Language, Rhetoric/Grammar, *Accademia della Crusca*, *Académie française*, *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*, Normalization, Standardization

- * Translated by David B. Dollenmayer. Quotations for which no other translation is cited have also been translated by Dollenmayer. The work on this chapter was carried out as part of projects A3 “Purism – Discourses and Practices of Linguistic Purity” (first funding phase) and A3 “Pure Language, Good Form – Purism and the Aesthetics of Social Interaction in Early Modern Courtesy Books” (second funding phase) of the Collaborative Research Center 1391 *Different Aesthetics*, project no. 405662736, funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG).

1. Linguistic Purism and a Different Aesthetics

Linguistic purism, the striving for a “pure” language understood as clear and elegant, exemplary and prestigious, informs the development of the linguistic and literary history of European languages.¹ Today, the rejection of expressions from other languages (e.g., Latinisms, Gallicisms, or Anglicisms) is the most familiar and perhaps most salient tendency. However, purity from foreign words is only one of the many complex aspects of puristic language work. This is especially true in the early modern period. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the demand for language purity gave rise to various aesthetic and social attitudes, programs, and practices of language purification. They were for the first time pursued institutionally and programmatically in Italian, French, and German-speaking regions, especially by linguistic academies and societies. And while all of them shared the goal of cleansing their own language of foreign elements, what was promoted as native or resisted as foreign under the banner of language purity could mean different and often contradictory things.² In the process, purification was always preceded by a diagnosis of crisis. The early modern period in particular can be regarded as the apogee and turning point in the history of linguistic purism; purifying efforts and discussions experienced a boom not only in the autological field of specialized discourse. Beyond that, they also informed to an unprecedented degree communicative social practices, whether in administrative correspondence, school and university instruction, the poetics of letter-writing, or the language of book and stage.

While the aesthetic ideal of language purity had a place within stylistics (*elocutio*) in the rhetoric of classical antiquity,³ as the ancient sources (especially Cicero and Quintilian) were rediscovered in the early modern period, linguistic purism underwent a profound transformation. This was induced by the application of rhetorical guidelines to early modern efforts to normalize contemporary vernaculars and their literatures,⁴ so that language purity can be characterized as a figure of reflection in the sense of an open-ended negotiation between language, literature, and social practice. The humanistic program can be taken as the starting point of vernacular debates whose goal was to cleanse Latin from the barbarisms of supposedly medieval Latinity. The debates about

1 Hafner/Kocher 2005; Dessì Schmid/Hafner 2014; Dessì Schmid 2017.

2 Dessì Schmid 2020. Puristic linguistic policies typically defend the traditional against the new (neologisms, foreign words, etc.); they oppose diastatic variety with the “good” and “noble” and in the name of “clarity” and “brilliance” are against dialectalisms and archaisms (although apropos the latter, there are illustrious and very successful exceptions, e.g., the radically archaizing model of the Florentine *trecentesco*). Linguistic purism thus proves to be an enhanced form of humanistic *imitatio* and *renovatio*.

3 On rhetorical terminology and systematics, Lausberg 1998, pp. 220–240 (§ 463–527).

4 Cf. Dessì Schmid 2017; Dessì Schmid 2020. Müller/Robert 2007 offer a phasic model of literary history from the 15th to the 17th century under the aspect of norms and pluralization.

Ciceronianism that began to gather momentum toward the end of the 15th century display a radicalization of this humanistic *imitatio*-poetics and rhetoric.⁵ In the early 16th century, central lines of argument from those debates are carried over into the vernacular languages.⁶ In the process, cultural efforts in various languages follow quite similar principles, often based on one another, but at the same time diverge since what was to be protected in one location was to be rejected as foreign in another.

The following discussion places new weight on comparing three closely related linguistic cultures. The primary aim of this international and intercultural comparison will be to reveal the aesthetic implications of discourses and practices related to linguistic purism. In this way, snapshots of a pan-European development will be sketched out and the present state of research recapitulated. Selected examples will show how the model of a praxeological aesthetics⁷ can be a useful heuristic for addressing the topic of linguistic purism.⁸ The theoretical arguments growing out of the demand for language purity in the 16th and 17th centuries reveal a dynamic interaction between autological and heterological dimensions, an interaction that can be especially well captured by the concept of praxeological aesthetics. Debates on linguistic theory beginning in Italy and spreading to France, Germany, and beyond become the basis for poetological concepts and social practices. Thus, within the framework of the CRC's praxeological model, language purity represents a figure of aesthetic reflection capable of integrating various aspects that up to now have been treated only in isolation – whether heterologically or autologically (among others: modelling efforts at standardization or analyzing the literary-historical, socio-cultural, and institutional conditions of texts and the practices of the academies).

Against this background, the question informing this chapter is this: what are the *aesthetic* implications of the *institutional* efforts to standardize the vernacular languages, and what was their effect on social practices? In order to trace the complicated interrelations between aesthetic, societal, and theoretical linguistic ques-

5 Vitale 1978; Robert 2011.

6 Think of i. a. Toffanin's successful formula of *umanesimo volgare*; cf. Toffanin 1940.

7 Cf. the contribution by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48, here pp. 23–26.

8 We cannot here go into later historical phases. However, we recognize that the history of the effects of purism is not linear. The Europeanism and cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment was followed by an epoch in which national roots were (re)discovered with a vengeance. For instance, in circa 1800 there arises in Italy a puristic linguistic and literary movement *per antonomasiam*, with a counterpart in art (cf. the manifesto *Del purismo nelle arti*, 1842). This movement and early-modern purism share a theoretical rhetorical horizon coming from ancient sources and resting on the principles of *consuetudo*, *imitatio* and *incorrupte loqui* (cf. Vitale 1986, pp. 39–66). This aspect, however, is missing in some later movements also described as puristic (e. g., fascist language policy in various countries). On the aftereffects of purism in Germany, cf. Gardt 2000; Pfalzgraf 2006; Dröse/Robert 2021.

tions, it is especially important not only to interrogate the central programmatic texts of the linguistic and literary debates, but also to include other sources with no apparent connection to questions of aesthetics, but which are deeply rooted in everyday life and influence the speech habits of numerous individuals. For example, in addition to grammars, dictionaries, and linguistic treatises there are the statutes of linguistic academies, administrative documents and legislative texts, schoolbooks, conversation guides, manuals of behavior, and even popular broadsheets. Thus, argumentative patterns of linguistic purism cross boundaries of language and culture and migrate between literary and pragmatic texts. With three examples from the closely allied linguistic and cultural regions of Italy, France, and Germany, we intend to show one such migration. First we will examine the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, then Claude Favre de Vaugelas's *Remarques sur la langue françoise* (1647), and finally Georg Philipp Harsdörffer's *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* (1641–1649). Each of these texts exists in the context of the language politics – or better, language work (*Spracharbeit*)⁹ – of their respective academies: the *Accademia della Crusca*, the *Académie française*, and the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*. In our examples, the role of these institutions on the one hand and, on the other, the significance of pragmatic text types for the heterological integration of linguistic objectives into social practice will become clear. For the construction of a linguistic norm and a literary aesthetics are closely interwoven not only in scholarly programs but also in the communicative practices of (courtly) society. For instance, while literary texts and rules of poetics adopt puristic argumentation, technical texts on linguistics and works of codification such as grammars, dictionaries, and linguistic treatises invoke literary models (such as Pietro Bembo invoking Petrarch or Johannes Clajus and Martin Opitz invoking Luther) to justify linguistic and literary norms and integrate poetological reflections in their consideration of linguistic objectives. These linguistic norms are then applied to fields of social practice and guide the actions that determine the ideal of courtly communication and interaction (e.g., the ideal of *sprezzatura* in Castiglione).

We shall proceed in three steps: after a discussion of the state of literature and desiderata for further research (2.), we will address purism and linguistic culture and politics in Europe (3.), provide an overview of efforts at standardization in Italy (3.1.1), France (3.1.2.), and Germany (3.1.3.), and discuss three concrete examples (3.2.1.–3.2.3.). A short conclusion collects our results and relates them to the aims of a *different aesthetics* and its heuristic model.

9 The concept of *Spracharbeit* seems to have been coined by Harsdörffer, who used it in the *Schutzschrift für die Teutsche Spracharbeit* (Defense of German Language Work, an appendix to the *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*).

2. The Current State of Research

In the past few decades, scholars of literature and linguistics have extensively researched efforts – beginning in Italy – to cultivate and standardize European vernacular languages between the 15th and 17th centuries. Literary historians have intensively discussed the elevation of Petrarch as the *modello di lingua* and *modello di stile* for the *volgare*.¹⁰ The rise of Petrarchism / anti-Petrarchism¹¹ takes place in connection with epistemic processes that can be understood as a dialectic of standardization and pluralization.¹² From a linguistic perspective, numerous studies examine processes of norm policy planning and standardization of the vernacular languages¹³ as well as with their variational sociolinguistic modelling.¹⁴ For example, if one assumes with Haugen¹⁵ that the selection and codification of the form of the norm (policy planning), as well as the extension or implementation and elaboration of its functions (language cultivation), are processes that concern two different developmental spheres (society on the one hand and language itself on the other), then the selection of the norm's basis and its extension are speaker-related aspects: communities of speakers either consciously or unconsciously choose a normative model and use it in more and more contexts. On the other hand, the initial fixing of the norm's basis (its codification in grammars and dictionaries) and its elaboration¹⁶ are aspects that concern the language as a system. To be sure, efforts at standardization as such are not necessarily puristic. Standardization in the first instance means selecting and securing, but not automatically also purifying in the categorical sense of expunging what is impure or contaminated. The latter represents a further step that occurs only under certain historical, political, social, and aesthetic conditions.¹⁷

10 Cf. Regn 2004; Mehlretter 2009.

11 Hempfer / Regn 1993; Bernsen / Huss 2011; Robert 2020.

12 Cf. i.a. Hempfer 1988; Hempfer 2001; Hempfer / Pfeiffer 2002; Müller / Oesterreicher / Vollhardt 2010; Nelting 2007; Müller 2019.

13 In Italian Studies, one classically speaks of *questione della lingua*; cf. i.a. Marazzini 1994; Marazzini 2000; Serianni / Trifone 1993/1994 and Vitale 1978.

14 Cf. i.a. Ayres-Bennet 2016; Ayres-Bennett 2019; Dessì Schmid / Hafner / Heinemann 2011; Grübl 2014; Haugen 1983; Kloss 1978; Koch 2010; Lodge 1993; Lüdi 1990; Rey / Duval / Siouffi 2007.

15 Haugen 1983.

16 Elaboration here means the further perfecting of the norm that becomes necessary through newly adopted functions and their growing prestige, e.g., through rules associated with usage in various discursive traditions. On the concept of discursive traditions, cf. i.a. Aschenberg / Wilhelm 2003; Frank 1994; Frank / Hays / Tophinke 1997; Hafner / Oesterreicher 2007; Jacob / Krefeld 2007; Kabatek 2005; Kabatek 2007; Kabatek 2011; Koch 1987 (where the term “discursive tradition” is used for the first time); Koch 1998; Koch 2010; Koch 2023; Oesterreicher 1988; Oesterreicher 1997; Oesterreicher 2009; Schlieben-Lange 1983; Schlieben-Lange 1996.

17 In the early modern period, general tendencies of “normative centering” are confronted contrapuntally with tendencies toward pluralization and diversification; cf. Hamm 2006.

For the linguistic regions of Italian, French, and German, scholarship has documented various situations of diglossia and polyglossia, regional fragmentation (which is not only linguistic), and/or politico-social multicentricity in which puristic discourse develops. Although the pan-European dimension of the phenomenon purism is often emphasized, it is surprising that it hardly ever became an object of comparative study¹⁸ – not even for the cultural and linguistic entities Italy, France, and Germany, which positively invite comparison because of their intimate linguistic, cultural, and literary interactions. The French debate, for instance, is unthinkable without the Italian one, while German positions only begin to take shape by engaging with French and Italian points of view. In this sense, purism can be defined as part of an international debate that aims to standardize language by strategies of selection and exclusion in the code. In the process, questions of language purity stand on the threshold between linguistic and literary history, for language work in the early modern period is not restricted to the construction of “ideal idioms”¹⁹ but influences the foundation of literature and social practice. Linguistic and aesthetic standardization go hand-in-hand.

Beyond the mostly historical and monolingual studies interested in variational sociolinguistics – but only marginally in aesthetic questions connected to purism or other linguistic ideals of beauty – there is a notable lack of approaches to more general models and typologies for the diverse processes of standardization in the pan-European sphere.²⁰ Similarly, there is a lack of more comprehensive studies. Instead, various core problems become apparent within the debate on purism to which some research is devoted, with differing approaches and emphases: a) the historical or exemplary treatment of the problem of plurality in models of linguistic standardization;²¹ b) the role of institutional involvement or takeover of puristic standardization models within the language academies;²² c) the relationship between (puristic) language theory and lan-

18 For an overview cf. Hafner/Kocher 2005, but also, in outline, Burke 2004.

19 Robert 2015.

20 Especially for the German region, we lack a depiction of purism from the perspective of its role in the founding of German literature since the 16th century (cf. the summary in Wolff 1888 [2017]; Gardt 1994; Gardt 1999; Hundt 2000; Conermann 2013; on the 18th century: Kirkness 1975; Orgeldinger 1999). Only the writings of the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* have been made available for the most part thanks to years of editing and research by Klaus Conermann and Andreas Herz at the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel: <https://www.hab.de/fruchtbringende-gesellschaft-die-deutsche-akademie-des-17-jahrhunderts/> (last accessed: October 22, 2024). By comparison, the other language societies and especially the early puristic programs of the 16th century have been researched only selectively and unsystematically, e.g., Johannes Clajus’s grammar. Cf. Robert 2022c.

21 Cf. among many others Chaurand 1999; Marazzini 1994; Rey/Duval/Siouffi 2007; Serianni/Trifone 1993/1994; Vitale 1978.

22 Cf. i.a. Dessì Schmid/Hafner 2016; Hafner/Kocher 2005; Oberto 2016; Rey/Duval/Siouffi 2007; Vitale 1986.

guage practice;²³ and d) the connection between language policy, (courtly) literature, and politics.²⁴ Thus a complete presentation of this complex social dynamic and its role in a *different* history of aesthetics remains an important desideratum. By contrast, there have been repeated scholarly efforts to make a distinction between puristic and classicistic objectives or – especially important in Germany – general linguistic patriotism. Surprisingly, however, even here the secondary literature has very rarely pointed out the variety in European purism.

In this chapter, we intend to highlight that variety. We will trace the transcultural dimension of the language question in Europe in its aesthetic and theoretical manifestations and its place in social and intellectual history. Not least, with the help of the praxeological model we will try to avoid what Oesterreicher²⁵ calls the “original sin” of the traditional historiography of language, namely, to regard individual developments in isolation from their contexts and only from the perspective of those that are in the end successful. Neglecting the plurality of side paths in linguistic history and taking only prototypical texts into consideration are not successful measures against an “inverted teleology.”²⁶ What seems efficacious is to describe purism as an open plurality of coexisting and opposing purisms that evolves between the autological perspective of specialized disciplinary discourses (of grammar, rhetoric, poetics, etc.) and the heterological perspective of societal practices.

3. Purism, Language Culture, and Language Politics in Italy, France, and Germany

3.1. Aesthetic Implications

3.1.1. Italy

Efforts to standardize the vernacular languages in early modern Europe appear in texts that closely link verbal and linguistic, poetological and aesthetic-literary levels, for instance, Baldassar Castiglione’s *Il libro del Cortegiano* (1527), Pietro Bembo’s *Prose della volgar lingua* (1528), and Niccolò Machiavelli’s *Discorso o dialogo intorno alla nostra lingua* (written in 1524/1525, published in 1730).²⁷ These dialogic works present various schemes for standardizing written Italian and in so doing, reflect on the importance of aesthetic qualities (such as *eleganza*, *naturalezza*, and *sprezzatura*) for literary and social

23 Cf. i.a. Ayres-Bennet 2014; Dessì Schmid 2017; Marazzini 2009; Jones 1995; Körver 1992.

24 Cf. i.a. Caput 1972; Caput 1986; Dessì Schmid / Hafner 2016; Grazzini 1968; Nencioni 1982; Trabant 2002; Trabant 2010.

25 Oesterreicher 2007, p. 16.

26 Oesterreicher 2007, p. 16.

27 This section contains many references to Dessì Schmid 2020.

communication and interaction. In the sense of the praxeological model of the CRC *Different Aesthetics*, linguistic ideals – which for their part are based on poetic ideals – are negotiated (think, for instance, of Bembo's Petrarchism)²⁸ and thereby become ideals of interaction and social norms that support or even determine the selection of particular literary forms and traditions.

In the first place, such texts are important locations of the *Questione della lingua*, the early modern learned discussion about the selection of a *single* variety of Italian, a *single* norm from the rich variety of *volgari* available in medieval and renaissance Italy.²⁹ The search was for a conceptually and communicatively precisely defined variety – a transregional and prestigious language for the domain of conceptual writing and communicative distance.³⁰ They strove to establish an elegant, clear, and beautiful language – an ideal language for literature. However, several different options competed in the *Questione della lingua*, all of which were diastatically similar: prestigious and therefore worthy of imitation – the language of the educated upper classes. These models differ on the diatopic level (whether a suggested model was associated with a geographic region or favored eclectic and thus transregional criteria) and on the diamesic level (whether the search was only for a language for conceptual writing or also for speaking, and whether only authors of literary texts or also educated speakers were considered worthy of imitation).

In this discussion, Castiglione's model makes an important option available: the *lingua cortigiana*, a variety close to the language spoken at court and thus eclectic and weakly tagged on the diatopic level. It represents a suggested norm that would not be successful in politically and culturally multicentric Italy, unlike in France where the *one* court in Paris would always play a decisive role in questions of language. Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* contains a different suggested norm strongly tagged on the diatopic level and oriented on the *Corone*, the great Florentine writers of the 14th century. In the *Prose*, Bembo advocates (through the figure of his brother) an archaic linguistic model based on the – for him – central principle of an *imitatio auctorum*.³¹ The same diatopic tag also characterizes Machiavelli's suggestion in his *Discorso o dialogo intorno alla nostra lingua*, which, however, privileges the modern, contemporary *volgare fiorentino*. Compared to those of Machiavelli and Castiglione, Bembo's model seems more advantageous with regard to an important pragmatic aspect; since it is rooted in eminent older

28 Cf. on this concept Regn 2004; on Bembo's *Petrarchismo* and in Italy cf. i.a. Hempfer 2001; Bernsen / Huss 2011; Jossa 2015; Kablitz 1993; Nelting 2011; Robert 2001; on Bembo's philological working habits and the topic of canonization cf. Patota 2017; Mehlretter 2009; on the reception of Petrarchism by Du Bellay and in France cf. i.a. Keller 2009; Robert 2012; Nazarian 2013.

29 Cf. i.a. Marazzini 1994; Marazzini 2000; Serianini / Trifone 1993/1994; Vitale 1978.

30 Cf. Koch 1988; Koch / Oesterreicher 2011.

31 Andreas Kablitz 1999, p. 137, emphasizes that Bembo's decision was also a strategy of self-presentation, and thus aimed at gaining authority. Bembo was also following the model he had established for Latin in his correspondence with Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1517), cf. Robert 2001.

texts whose meanings are relatively well defined and not subject to constant historical change, it offers the possibility of simple and speedy reproduction and multiplication. This aspect could not be ignored by Bembo's friend Aldo Manuzio, the Venetian publisher; it proved crucial, especially in an Italy where the book was becoming more and more the virtual location of culture, and thus contributed to curtailing the cultural role of courtly life.³² Parallel to this development, one can observe in the politically fragmented Italy of small cities the decline of the court as a model, whereas at the same time in other places in Europe, courtly life was flowering. Thus on several levels it is understandable that the eclectic, oral, difficult-to-pin-down courtly model of Castiglione (who in his work also provides outstanding insight in other fields of standardization in early modern culture) was less successful, especially in Italy; and why Bembo chose the eminently literary written model of the *Corone*. Bembo recognizes the cultural reach of Florentine literature and urges its elevation to the language of *Italian* literature and the language of Italy *tout court* – a language capable of competing with Latin and introducing to Europe models of classicism and the (Italian) Renaissance.³³

Such works can also be regarded not least as first evidence of the emergence of a genuine – if still very generally defined – puristic discourse in the early modern period. Especially in their dialogic form, performative character, and location at a court, they bear witness to the creation of a new connection between lexical, grammatical, ideological, and societal normative ideas. From the perspective of this social practice and its location, fundamental concerns not just of language but also of aesthetics were being newly formulated. However, to the extent that these are not prototypical poetical or poetological works, they are unusual sources of aesthetic reflection. Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* is a treatise on language that includes one of the first and most important grammars of the Italian of the future, while Castiglione's *Cortegiano* is a sort of handbook that contains rules for communication and behavior that lay down “di che sorte debba esser colui, che meriti chiamarsi perfetto cortegiano, tanto che cosa alcuna non gli manchi” (*Il libro del Cortegiano*, I).³⁴ Thus they allow us to pursue questions about the migration of figures of puristic argumentation between non-fictional and literary texts.

3.1.2. France

Texts such as Joachim Du Bellay's *Deffence, et Illustration de la Langue Francoyse* (1549), François de Malherbe's *Commentaire sur Desportes* (1606), and Claude Favre de Vaugelas's *Remarques sur la langue françoise* (1647) can be regarded as the most familiar evidence of an inner-European transfer of puristic discourse in the early modern period. For one

32 Cf. Mehlretter 2009; Trifone 1993, p. 427.

33 Cf. Dessì Schmid 2017.

34 Castiglione: *Il libro del Cortegiano*, p. 9.

thing, they represent the ideal basis for a comparative investigation of various authors and positions in the lively discussion, strongly marked by puristic tendencies, at the court in Paris; for another, they allow us to look beyond the explicit linguistic and literary intentions of such discussions and their institutional representatives to those aspects that aim at social practices and have to do with more or less explicit acts of language purification. The precondition for the relevant inner-European transfer is the absolutizing and ideologizing of Bembo's model of the *Fiorentino arcaico delle Corone* via the lexicographical work of the *Accademia della Crusca* in Italy which, as we will see below, adhered to a linguistic purism based on strict selection of vocabulary. That purism set the pan-European standards and became an export with far-reaching influence – in different ways – in both France and Germany.

From the outset, however, French efforts at standardization were aimed at a different aspect of the dimension of diamesic variation. Unlike in Italy, that language should serve as a norm which was efficient in *all* communicative domains – not just those of communicative distance but also those of immediacy.³⁵ This means that while it was of course in the service of literature – the domain of conceptual writing – it was at the same time close to the pure, prestigious language spoken at court. For a politically important reason, the spoken language of the court – more precisely, of the court in Paris – was to be granted further prestige. For if on the one hand the towering cultural achievements of Italy in art, architecture, and courtly life were acknowledged in France, on the other there were evident difficulties in accepting the political and linguistic Italianization of the French court.³⁶ This could be one of the reasons why the strongly puristic language question in France took on more radical and politically motivated features than the largely learned discussion in Italy and seems to be strongly related to other fields of standardization in early modern culture. The founding of the *Collège de France* (1530) and the *Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts* (1539) already testify to an official, royal, and courtly interest in the *langage maternel françois*. Thus, already at an early stage of efforts to normalize and standardize the language, we can speak of a decisive and consistent linguistic policy in France. It is only in this courtly political context, for example, that the court poet François de Malherbe's work on a new language of French poetry and a new aesthetics of literature is imaginable.

Another centrally important institution, created less on purely aesthetic and literary grounds than on the grounds of linguistic policy, was founded only in the second

35 Cf. Koch/Oesterreicher 2011.

36 Cf. Dessì Schmid/Hafner 2016. A similar situation can be repeatedly observed in the course of the history of the two countries, e.g., in the debate on the *génie de la langue*, cf. i.a. Christmann 1977; Dessì Schmid 2003; Gensini 1989; Rosiello 1965.

half of the 17th century.³⁷ Promoted by Richelieu and operated with political intent, the *Académie française*³⁸ carried out the normalization of French as well as its succeeding dissemination in Europe as official (court) goals.³⁹ Here too it is evident that the auto-logical field of linguistic reflection is determined by and integrated into heterological motives. The consistently applied strategy for reaching these goals was extremely puristic, namely, the elimination of impurity, linguistic waste, *ordures*. Like the *Cruscani*, the *Académiciens*, renowned scholars of the era, advocated a puristic conception of language that strove for strict selection as the basis of the norm. However, they opposed the principle of imitating an archaic linguistic model with the principle of *bon usage*, of a “Maistre des langues, celui qu’il faut suivre pour bien parler, et pour bien écrire.”⁴⁰ In Vaugelas’s suggested norm, formulated in his *Remarques*, we can discern the leading features of French linguistic policy: as a normative model, the variety that was regarded in the 17th century as highly prestigious and an indispensable aspect of good manners (*bienséance*). Vaugelas and with him the other academicians considered the purification of the language from *mauvais usage*, i. e., from the dialects of the “lower classes” and of any location other than the incomparable court in Paris, as their primary task.

Written in the form of thematically organized remarks, Vaugelas’s work played a central role in the standardization of the French language, and not just in terms of its contents. It might seem paradoxical that the *Remarques* – one of the most successful codifications in French linguistic history – is, at least formally, so unsystematic and represents a sort of anti-grammar.⁴¹ It is easier to understand if one considers the following: “Vaugelas refusait tout ce qui était ‘grammaire’ en bonne et due forme. Il ne voulait pas être confondu avec ces raisonneurs qui spéculent sans prêter attention à la réalité; pour lui, rien n’était plus important que l’usage.”⁴²

37 To be sure, there were private circles (also in Paris, cf. Brunot 1909, p. 31) devoted to questions of language and literature (and thus concerned for cultivation of the language). As a rule, they were oriented toward Malherbe’s new, clear, and unadorned linguistic ideal.

38 By attaching Valentin Conrart’s circle – from which the *Académie* emerged – to the court, Richelieu succeeded in placing the French language and its (regulated) usage in the hands of the state: “[...] l’amical cénacle va être confisqué par le pouvoir” (Seguin 1999, p. 233).

39 Cf. Dessi Schmid/Hafner 2016.

40 Vaugelas: *Remarques*, p. 67.

41 Marzys 2009, p. 15: “Les *Remarques* sur la langue française ne sont en apparence qu’un recueil décousu d’observations sur des points isolés et parfois infimes de morphologie et de syntaxe, de prononciation et d’orthographe, de vocabulaire et de style; mais elles sont sous-tendues par une doctrine qui, pour être peu voyante et avoir des contours parfois flous, n’en est pas moins très ferme dans ses fondements”.

42 Siouffi 2007, p. 686.

3.1.3. Germany

An international and intercultural perspective is characteristic of the German purism debate⁴³ as well as of German language work⁴⁴ in general. On the autological side, there was broad receptivity of theoretical standardization models in the European literary languages, especially New Latin, Dutch, Italian, and French. On the heterological side, a debate on identity politics gets underway that takes aim at unreflected imitation of French culture, literature, and language. Puristic efforts in the vernacular arise in the mid-15th century with the reception of early Italian humanism in south and southwest Germany.⁴⁵ In the 16th and 17th centuries, a critique of linguistic mixing and the adoption of foreign idioms becomes a broad argumentation system, the so-called “*Alamode-Kritik*.”⁴⁶ As in Italy and France, diastatic arguments and “*Dignitätserörterungen*” (considerations of dignity)⁴⁷ were central. The prestige of the language, the literature, and the nation were at stake. The apology for the vernacular was based on an established system of argumentation going back to humanism and the reception of Tacitus’s *Germania*.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the humanistic discourse on the crisis and decline of eloquence (*corrupta eloquentia*) continued.⁴⁹

Both arguments flow together in Martin Opitz’s early manifesto *Aristarchus sive de Contemptu Linguae Teutonicae* (1617).⁵⁰ Opitz starts with a diagnosis of general linguistic decline that has already infected Greek and Latin. Now German was beginning to lose its authentic nature:

Interim purissima et à peregrino squalore libera hactenus lingua mutat, et in miras loquendi formulas degenerat. Monstra vocabulorum et carcinomata irrepunt occulte, ad quae genuinus aliquis Germanus quandoque vix indignationem, quandoque nauseam vix tenet. Dicas in sentinam durare hanc linguam, ad quam reliquarum sordes torrente promiscuo deferantur. Nulla ferme periodus est, nulla interpunctio, quae non ascititium quid redoleat. Jam à Latinis, jam Gallis, Hispanis etiam ac Italis mutuamur, quod domi nascitur longe elegantius.⁵¹

43 The best comprehensive impression for the early modern era is the annotated anthology by Jones 1995.

44 Hundt 2000; Gardt 1994; Gardt 1999.

45 Bamberger / Robert 2024.

46 Robert 2022a; cf. Pattis / Robert 2025; on the relationship between literature and social practice in the *alamode*-discussion, cf. Ajouri 2020, esp. pp. 229–369 (on Moscherosch).

47 Hafner / Kocher 2005, p. 496.

48 Krebs 2005; Mertens 2004; Müller 2001.

49 Kühlmann 1982, esp. pp. 85–112.

50 Robert 2004; Robert 2007; Seidel 1994.

51 Opitz: *Lateinische Werke*, vol. 1, pp. 70, 72.

In the meantime, this purest language, thus far free of foreign filth, is changing and degenerating into outlandish expressions. Monstrous and ulcerous words sneak in secretly at which a true German can hardly restrain first his outrage, then his disgust. One can say that this language is a sewer into which pours an indiscriminate stream of other garbage. There is almost no sentence, no punctuation without a foreign taste. Whatever we borrow from Latin, from the French and Spanish too, and from the Italians, originates much more elegantly at home.

Opitz's remarks make clear how the autological field of linguistic reflection is increasingly motivated by heterological considerations. Questions of style usher in fantasies of puristic cleansing.⁵² True elegance lies concealed in the nature of German and does not need to be sought from abroad. Adoption of foreign words even endangers the body of German. Opitz uses the rhetorical form of *declamatio* for a combative paraenesis that concludes with a call to cherish and cultivate German: "How few among us would have the courage to either defend or cultivate this language."⁵³ In his program for reform, Opitz implements such cultivation in two ways. One is with his path-breaking poetics, the *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey* (Book of German Poetry, 1624).⁵⁴ The other is with his own concrete models of a new poetry which he offers in his *Acht Bücher Deutscher Poematum* (Eight Books of German Poetry, 1625).⁵⁵ To a large extent, they are based on translations from (Neo-)Latin, Dutch, Italian, and French.⁵⁶ The *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey* reveals the strong connection between language work and poetics. Purism plays a fundamental role; the purity of the language (*puritas*) must precede elegance (*elegantia*):

Die ziehrlichkeit erfodert das die worte reine vnd deutlich sein. Damit wir aber reine reden mögen / sollen wir vns befeissen deme welches wir Hochdeutsch nennen besten vermögens nach zuekommen / vnd nicht derer örter sprache / wo falsch geredet wird / in vnsere schriften vermischen[...].⁵⁷

Elegance requires that the words are pure and clear. But in order to be able to speak purely, we must study how best to follow that which we call High German, and not mix into our writings the language of those places where people speak incorrectly [...].

52 Burschel/Marx 2011; Burschel 2014.

53 Opitz: Lateinische Werke, vol. 1, p. 68.

54 Seidel 2022; Wels 2018; Robert 2007.

55 The collection had been already published in Strasbourg in 1624 by Julius Wilhelm Zinzgref without Opitz's involvement or knowledge.

56 The intercultural difficulties in naturalizing Petrarchism in Germany were usually underestimated, as shown by Opitz's translations of Veronica Gambara; cf. Robert 2019.

57 Opitz: Poeterey, p. 35.

At this point, he deploys parody to expose the mixing of languages:

So stehet es auch zum hefftigsten vnsauber / wenn allerley Lateinische / Frantzösische / Spanische vnnnd Welsche wörter in den text vnserer rede geflickt werden; als wenn ich wolte sagen:

*Nemt an die courtoisie, vnd die deuotion,
Die euch ein cheualier, madonna, thut erzeigen;
Ein handvol von fauor petirt er nur zue lohn /
Vnd bleibet ewer Knecht vnd seruiteur gantz eigen.*⁵⁸

Thus it is most impure when all sorts of Latin, French, Spanish, and Italian words are stitched into the text of our speech, as if I were to say:

Accept the *courtoisie*, and the *devotion*,
Madonna, which a *chevalier* shows you;
For but a handful of *favor* he *petitions* as reward /
And remains your menial and very own *serviteur*.

It is precisely such satirical sorties that reveal how the autological question of “good” style is influenced by heterological motivations. Pure language becomes a figure of aesthetic reflection of linguistic politics. Beginning with Opitz, practices of language work and strategies of language politics establish the basis of almost all subsequent theories of poetry (e.g., by Clajus, Buchner, Schottelius, Harsdörffer).⁵⁹ Opitz’s poems, too, have both an autological and a heterological function. On the autological side, they are prototypes and models of vernacular poetry that lay claim to normative authority, generate *imitatio*, and found literary genealogies. This appears clearly, to name only two examples, in Opitz’s translation of Petrarch’s sonnet RVF 132 (“S’Amor non è”)⁶⁰ and in the Corydon-eclogue.⁶¹ On the heterological side, Opitz’s texts are embedded in various social practices, aspects of everyday life, and discourses. Above all, they promote cultural self-assurance (patriotic discourse), reflection on processes of social differentiation (e.g., critiques of the court and *alamode*-language),⁶² linguistic practice of moral or civil skills and behaviors, or religious edification, comfort, paraenesis, etc.

In general, poetry and language work in Germany, as in Italy and France, were heterologically intertwined. This appears most clearly in discourses of linguistic patriotism, especially in metaphorology, and sometimes in a drastic form. The conviction that the pure, original nature of German was existentially threatened by an inva-

58 Opitz: Poeterey, p. 35.

59 On 17th-century poetics cf. Stockhorst 2008; Wels 2009; Wesche 2004.

60 Aurnhammer 2006.

61 Robert 2016.

62 On the poetological dimension of court critiques, cf. Robert 2020.

sion of foreign words was by no means merely a topos.⁶³ It was a mirror of experiences, fears, and imaginings from immediate, lived reality; the German language debate was both a continuation of the Thirty Years' War and an attempt to overcome the antagonisms of that religious civil conflict by reflection on a common linguistic culture.⁶⁴ With all its contradictions between “Gallopheilia” and “Gallophebia,”⁶⁵ as shown in the *alamode*-debate, the extraordinary scope of interest in and reflection on language and purism is characteristic of the early modern period in Germany and intimately connected to aesthetic and poetological considerations.

3.2. Purism and Praxeology – Three Examples

3.2.1. Lexicography and Aesthetics – The Dictionary of the *Crusca*

Is a norm model already puristic because it is based on a linguistically archaic principle of *imitatio*? Can Bembo's *Prose* be regarded as a puristic work, and if so, to what extent? To this day, these two questions have lost none of their relevance. To approach them with new energy, it helps to regard Bembo's work from two perspectives that stand in a constantly dynamic relation to each other. One is the fundamentally literary concern of Bembo's striving for a more regular, graceful, and pure language (“la fiorentina lingua più regolata [...], più vaga, più pura”),⁶⁶ another is the institutional application of the normative model in his writings and its consequences for literary practice. For the success of Bembo's model of the *Corone*, its adoption into the programmatic writings, institutional practices, and especially the lexicographical work of the *Accademia della Crusca* means at the same time the radical transformation of the model, as we shall see.

Perhaps the most famous and influential academy of the early modern era, the *Accademia della Crusca*, had its beginnings in the meetings of a group of learned Florentine friends, the *brigata dei crusconi* (brigade of brans). The group had no intention of founding an institution, and their meetings cannot be regarded as the first evidence of an incipient academy in Italy.⁶⁷ In Italy – “la terre promise des Académies”⁶⁸ – there indeed existed several more or less learned societies more or less interested in questions of language. They can be regarded as the products of courtly learned discussions and document that such discussion was happening in many sections of the country. The

63 Gardt 1994, pp. 109–115.

64 The interactions between war and literature – *Mars* and *Ars* – are stimulatingly traced by Kaminski 2004.

65 Meier 2011.

66 Bembo: *Prose delle volgar lingua*, p. 32.

67 Cf. on this point Dessì Schmid/Hafner 2016.

68 Charlier 1935, p. 231.

meetings of the *brigata dei crusconi* from 1570–1580 were initially intended as opportunities for playful speeches on *cruscate*, frivolous subjects.⁶⁹ In time, these light-hearted goals would give way to a language academy – accompanied and inspired by its symbol (*il frullone*) and the entire imagery of grain-growing and -processing – that initiated a larger revolution. Beginning with the admittance of Lionardo Salviati to the *Accademia della Crusca* in October 1582, the academy began to separate the bran (the *crusca*) from the flour in questions of language to cleanse and filter the language. Salviati had extensive experience with such puristic philological operations and soon became one of the central figures in the *Crusca*. Even before his admittance, he had been occupied with the *rassettatura* of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a task which, as Marazzini often stresses,⁷⁰ enters and defines the lexicographical work of the *Accademia*. As a codification effort, work on the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* would prove to be the most important task of the *Cruscani*.

In the *Prose della volgar lingua*, Bembo demands the elevation of the “pure language” – Petrarch's poetry and Boccaccio's prose – to the language of Italian literature. If the *Accademici* adopted his thesis in their work of codification, they went far beyond it under the leadership of Lionardo Salviati. The aesthetic, qualitative principle of selection based on Bembo's norm model, the *imitatio auctorum*, is generalized in a manner and to the extent that one of its most characteristic features, its pervasive Petrarchism, is abrogated.

In his search for linguistic purity, Salviati's generalizing of the *imitatio*-principle, i.e., expanding it from the *Corone* alone to everything written in the 14th century, meant not only the creation of the myth of the *trecento* as a golden age but also a revision of Bembo's fundamental aesthetic-literary concern.⁷¹ Thus we can understand Salviati's work as the birth certificate of a prototypical purism: every linguistic production of the *trecento*, independent of its aesthetic quality and the reputation of its author, is declared to be “pure.”

In the *A' lettori* – the foreword of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, a text which is an unusual source for aesthetic questions – this radical manifestation of language purism becomes visible:

Nel compilar il presente Vocabolario [...] abbiamo stimato necessario di ricorrere all'autorità di quelli scrittori, che vissero, quando questo idioma principalmente fiorì, che fu [...] dall'anno del Signore 1300 al 1400 poco più, o poco meno: perché [...] gli scrittori [...] dal 1400 avanti, corrompero non piccola parte della purità del favellare di quel buon secolo.⁷²

69 In this regard, the *cruscate* reflect the attitude of the Renaissance and early Baroque toward the comic and grotesque.

70 Cf. Marazzini 2011, p. 118.

71 Cf. Sinn 2025.

72 *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, “A' lettori,” 1612, 6.

In compiling the present dictionary we have regarded it as necessary to have recourse to the authority of those authors whose lives fell in the golden age of the language, that is, from about 1300 to 1400; for authors after 1400 spoiled a not insignificant part of the purity of the language of that excellent century.

The *Accademici* thus consistently included *all* the words of all Florentine authors of the 14th century in their dictionary, not just those of Petrarch and Boccaccio. All other words – not only foreign words or words from other *volgari* but also any that were not *old* Florentine words – were systematically excluded. They were supposedly not pure language, since later authors had done considerable damage to the linguistic purity of the 14th century.

The passage also clearly displays the dynamic interaction between the aesthetic-literary and sociocultural spheres; the formal qualities that result from the requirement of linguistic purity (e.g., clarity, naturalness, delicacy, elegance) as well as the strategies for authorizing this ideal cannot be separated from the prescriptive, selective, and purifying function and the pragmatic dimension of the dictionary. In an analysis using the praxeological model of the CRC *Different Aesthetics*, this dynamic (which can also be observed in the French and German linguistic and cultural spheres, cf. 3.2.2. and 3.2.3.) can be represented as in Fig. 1.⁷³

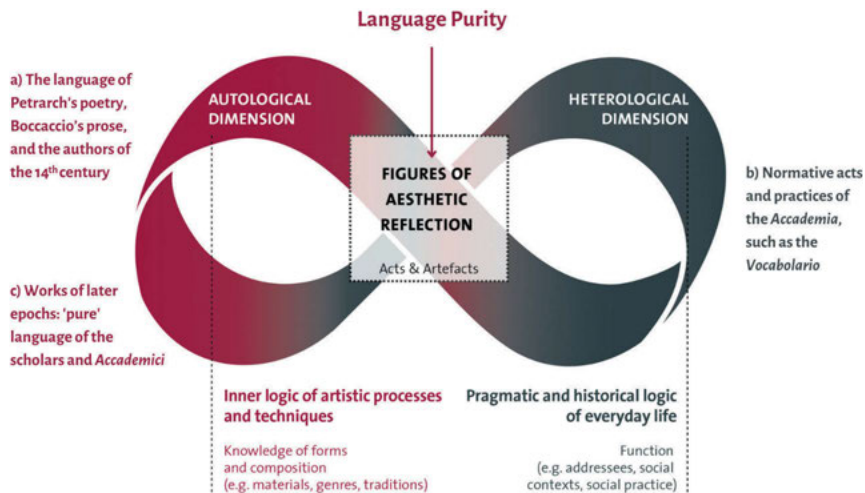


Fig. 1. The praxeological model of the CRC *Different Aesthetics* using the example of the preface to the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*.

73 Cf. the chapter by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48, here pp. 23–26.

Boccaccio's prose and Petrarch's poetry – the “entire” literature of the 14th century, and proclaimed the model – constitute on the side of inherent artistic logic, the foundation for the ideal of linguistic purity (cf. a) in Fig. 1). This takes practical, concrete shape in the normative acts of the *Accademia* – here, for instance, in a dictionary that implements the programmatic linguistic ideals in concrete linguistic practice (cf. b) in Fig. 1). For behind such acts, we recognize the social logic of educated society and, along with it, of political power. It is no accident that the dictionary is dedicated to Concino Concini, a Tuscan nobleman and Maria de Medici's most important advisor at the French court (which already on this level underscores the close connection between Italy and France). Also subsequently, the successful implementation of the *Crusca*'s ideal of linguistic purity evinces a dynamic interaction between the heterological and autological poles; in the artistic design of their works, authors of later epochs (think, for example, of Ariosto's revision of *Orlando furioso*) would align themselves with the pure language that harkens back to the practice of the scholars and *Accademici* (cf. c) in Fig. 1).

This by no means comprehensive but illustrative depiction allows us to observe on several levels the aesthetic implications and the historical relevance and scope of a text such as the *Vocabolario*. A dictionary creates a new connection between grammatical, lexicological, and societal normative ideas. At the same time, precisely from this social practice, fundamental concerns of aesthetics are newly formulated. For in the end, this dictionary – although one would initially hardly imagine it treating genuinely aesthetic questions – influences both the communicative and aesthetically expressive speech acts of numerous individuals, and thus its influence reaches deep into everyday life. In the end, far-flung negotiations had their origin in the discussion about language purity that occurs in this text; precisely by absolutizing, ideologizing, and implementing Bembo's model, which closely linked aesthetic-poetological and standardizing concerns, there arose in Italy by way of the lexicographical work of the *Accademia della Crusca* the linguistic purism, which, as suggested above, set the standard for Europe in general.

3.2.2. (Anti-)Grammar and Aesthetics – Vaugelas's *Remarques*

What we have said about the *Vocabolario* applies equally to the *Remarques sur la langue Française*. We must regard Vaugelas's work from two dynamically related perspectives: one is that of the fundamental aesthetic, communicative concern (in both the language of immediacy and the language of distance) of defining pure language as *bon usage*; the other is that of the institutional applications of the puristic standardization model contained in the text and their consequences – not just for the literary language and practice of future generations. As in Italy (but with different emphases), linguistic purism in France proves to be an inseparable fusion of literary programs and authorities, linguistic reflection and politics, standardizing efforts and the business of the academies.

Thus it serves in an exemplary way as a figure of aesthetic reflection in the sense of the praxeological model.

Vaugelas's principle of *bon usage* – his suggestion for the selection of a variety to serve as the basis for standard French – draws on linguistic and literary (and thus aesthetic) norms that the court poet Malherbe (a central member of the famous and influential cultural circle around the Marquise de Rambouillet) formulated in his commentary on the poetical work of Philippe Desportes, one of the last representatives of the *Pléiade*. Malherbe hoped to clean up and revise several aspects of the language of literature and the court. In particular, he took aim at contemporary authors who continued to be devoted to the generously integrating linguistic expansionism of the 16th century. Everything Du Bellay had recommended for expanding French in his *Defence et Illustration de la Langue Française* was radically rejected by Malherbe: Latinisms, archaisms, dialectalisms, specialized vocabulary, and neologisms. Stylistically and syntactically, he strove for *précision*, *pureté*, *clarté*, *ordre*, and *élégance*. In the name of decency (cf. the ideal of *bienséance*), he especially fought against the use of words and phrases tagged as drastically vulgar (the so-called *mots bas*). Although this was a position that earned Malherbe many opponents, one of his indisputable accomplishments was that he ensured that courtly circles became interested in questions of language and – along with an ambitious bourgeoisie – became vehicles of a new linguistic consciousness.⁷⁴

In the following passage from the *Préface des Remarques sur la langue française*, Vaugelas's version of linguistic purism, which will be typical for France, takes shape. It is not inappropriate to claim, along with Marzys,⁷⁵ that the *Préface* is far from representing only the personal opinion of its author but is instead the best description of the puristically normative linguistic attitude of 17th-century France:

2. Il y a sans doute deux sortes d'Usages, un bon et un mauvais. Le mauvais se forme du plus grand nombre de personnes, qui presque en toutes choses n'est pas le meilleur, et le bon au contraire est composé non pas de la pluralité, mais de l'élite des voix, et c'est véritablement celui que l'on nomme le Maistre des langues, celui qu'il faut suivre pour bien parler, et pour bien écrire en toutes sortes de stiles, si vous en exceptez le satyrique, le comique, en sa propre et ancienne signification, et le burlesque, qui sont d'aussi peu d'estenduë que peu de gens s'y adonnent. Voicy donc comme on definit le bon Usage.

3. C'est la façon de parler de la plus saine partie de la Cour, conformément à la façon d'écrire de la plus saine partie des Auteurs du temps. Quand je dis la Cour, j'y comprends les femmes comme les hommes, et plusieurs personnes de la ville où le Prince reside, qui par la communication qu'elles ont avec les gens de la Cour participant à sa politesse.⁷⁶

74 Cf. Dessì Schmid/Hafner 2016, pp. 386f.

75 Marzys 2009, p. 16.

76 Vaugelas: *Remarques*, p. 68.

2. Doubtless there are two kinds of *usage*, one good and one bad. The latter includes the great majority of persons and is in almost no respect the best one. The good one, on the other hand, does not comprise many voices but represents an elite, and it is truly the one that we call the master of languages and must follow if we want to speak well and write well on all levels of style – except for satire, comedy in its genuine and ancient definition, and burlesque, which are after all so uncommon that very few people are occupied with them. This is the definition of good usage.
3. It is the way the most distinguished part of the court speaks, which corresponds to the way the most distinguished contemporary authors write. When I speak of the court, I mean both men and women as well as many persons from the town in which the king resides who, after all, based on their communication with the court, have adopted its courtly manner.

The dynamic interrelation between aesthetic-literary and sociopolitical – autological and heterological – spheres is especially obvious in this passage. The formal qualities that follow from the requirement of purity (e.g., linguistic *pureté* and *netteté*) as well as the strategies of authorization for this ideal (*le bon usage* at court) cannot be separated from the strictly prescriptive function and the linguistically pragmatic dimension of the *Remarques*. The linguistic and literary criteria suggested in Malherbe's commentary on Desportes constitute on the side of inherent artistic logic the basis of the ideal of purity that Vaugelas strives for (cf. a) in Fig. 1). This idea is concretized in the *Remarques* and in many subsequent standardizing acts of the *Académie* that implement the programmatic linguistic ideals in concrete linguistic practice (cf. b) in Fig. 1). Vaugelas's principle of *bon usage* is characterized by its embeddedness in the heterological sphere; the main role in this development is played by the Paris *cour* at which pure language can ideally flourish. For that is where the linguistic variety is both cultivated and, above all, *used* which – thanks to typical courtly linguistic contact – displays a high diastratic value as well as a diaphasic manifestation, and dispenses with both vulgarisms and technical jargon as well as anything tagged as diatopically “foreign.” Thus it is no surprise that Vaugelas's model of *bon usage* finds its way into the institutional practices of the academy, which for its part is linked to the power of the court and thereby also enjoys great success in the practice of individual authors.⁷⁷

In subsequent years, the successful implementation of Vaugelas's idea of language purity displayed a dynamic interaction between the heterological and autological poles. It is well known that the literary creations of 17th-century authors such as Corneille, Racine, and Colletet were strongly influenced by Vaugelas's standardizing model (cf. c) in Fig. 1).

Further study is needed, however, to determine whether that *bon usage* in fact corresponded to the language spoken at court, or if it was more influenced by the forms and traditions of literary writing (“conformément à la façon d'écrire de la plus saine partie

77 Marzys 2009, p. 14: “Le succès du livre fut considérable: une vingtaine d'éditions en moins de soixante ans, plus d'innombrables commentaires et imitations. Toute la littérature grammaticale de la seconde moitié du XVII^e siècle prend Vaugelas pour modèle, ou du moins pour repoussoir”.

des Auteurs du temps”).⁷⁸ Much has already been said in general about this question,⁷⁹ but few works have attempted a systematic verification of this influence on the level of either linguistics or aesthetics, i.e., with the question whether all or only some (and then, which?) of the *Remarques* were applied in linguistic practice.⁸⁰ This remains a desideratum.

The aesthetic implications and historical scope of this technical text are evident: a grammar that does not follow the formal characteristics of that genre establishes a new relationship between grammatical and lexical, ideological and societal normative concepts. Then fundamental aesthetic concerns are reformulated under the influence of exactly this social practice, for the *Remarques* influence the linguistic behavior of numerous actors both in their communication and their artistic creations and penetrate deep into everyday life.⁸¹ Finally, we again discover in this work’s discussion of language purity aesthetic negotiations between autological and heterological dimensions. In the very implementation of Vaugelas’s puristic linguistic model, led by the court and its loyal *Académie*, a further form of language purity comes into being that has different, diamesic emphases.

3.2.3. Language Academy and *Gesprächspiel* – Georg Philipp Harsdörffer and the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*

The *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* (Fruitbearing Society) – later called the *Palmorden* (Order of the Palm) after its symbol, the coconut palm – was founded in Weimar in 1617.⁸² In the beginning, it comprised little more than its founder and benefactor Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen (1579–1650) and his entourage.⁸³ The *Palmorden* would become the model for subsequent organizations such as the *Aufrichtige Tannengesellschaft* (True-Hearted Society of the Fir Tree, founded in 1633 in Strasbourg), the *Deutschgesinnte Genossenschaft* (Patriotic German Association, founded in Hamburg in 1642/1643), and the *Pegnesischer Blumenorden* (Pegnitz Flower Society, founded in 1644 in Nuremberg).⁸⁴ From its inception, the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* pursued the goal of language purity. At the intersection of language work (the autological sphere) and cultural politics (heterological sphere), linguistic purism became a figure of aesthetic reflection. The society’s programmatic *Bericht* (report) of 1622 emphasizes

78 Vaugelas *Remarques*, p. 68, continues: “4. Toutefois quelque avantage que nous donnions à la Cour, elle n’est pas suffisante toute seule de servir de règle, il faut que la Cour et les bons Auteurs y concourent, et ce n’est que de cette conformité qui se trouve entre les deux, que l’Usage s’établit”.

79 Cf. Ayres-Bennet 1987; Blochwitz 1968; in general Chaurand 1999; Rey / Duval / Siouffi/2007.

80 Cf. Braun 1933; Aulich 2017.

81 Cf. Fezer 2025.

82 Hundt 2000, pp. 108–120.

83 Cf. Pattis 2025.

84 The best overview is still Otto 1972, pp. 14–33.

daß man die Hochdeutsche Sprache in jhrem rechten wesen und standt / ohne einmischung frem-
bder ausländischer wort / auffß möglichste und thunlichste erhalte / und sich so wol der besten
aussprache im reden / als der reinesten und deutlichsten art im schreiben und Reime-dichten
befleissige.⁸⁵

that as far as possible and doable, one preserve the High German language in its correct nature and
state, without intrusion of foreign words, and thus cultivate the best pronunciation in speaking as
well as the purest and clearest manner in writing and versifying.

The passage identifies four closely related goals: (1) a conservative consciousness of the immutable nature of German, which one must (2) cleanse of external influence, or better, preserve in its purity. This goal should be (3) diamesically valid for both oral and written communication, but also and especially (4) for literary production, which would become the decisive motor of the society's language work.

At this point, it is important not to misinterpret the patriotic tone. Paradoxically, the German purism debate combined appropriation and rejection. It was not a question of excluding outside influences (i.e., the hegemonic French culture, language, and literature) but of their effective appropriation, translation, and adaptation. The *Bericht* refers explicitly to the "unterschiedene[n] Academien, die in frembden Landen zu [...] nützlicher ausübung jedes Volcks Lands sprachen auffgerichtet [worden seien]" (the various academies established in foreign countries for the fruitful use of each nation's language).⁸⁶ Therefore, in Germany too one sought to bring into existence a "sothane Gesellschaft [...] / darinnen man in gut rein deutsch reden / schreiben [propagieren wolle]" (such a society in which one would propagate speaking and writing in good, pure German).⁸⁷ Language work proves to be part of a process of cultural negotiation. The idea of preserving the purity of the German language was itself "basically an import from Italy."⁸⁸ During his grand tour in 1600, Prince Ludwig himself was admitted into the *Accademia della Crusca* and dubbed "the Inflamed" (*l'Acceso*).⁸⁹ Ludwig and his entourage (esp. Diederich von dem Werder, Tobias Hübner, and G. Ph. Harsdörffer) made a concerted effort to naturalize Italian fashions, models, forms of communication, and institutions (like the *Accademia della Crusca*). Translations constitute an important medium for their practical language work, and theoretical reflections on translation find their way into grammars (e.g., Schottelius's *Ausführliche Arbeit Von der Teutschen Haupt-Sprache* [Comprehensive Work on the Primary German Language]) and works on poetics (Opitz,

85 Jones 1995, p. 66.

86 Jones 1995, p. 65.

87 Jones 1995, p. 65.

88 Dünnhaupt 1978, p. 521.

89 Otto 1972, p. 16: His motto was "La stoppia che arde," his emblem included the verse: "Fecemi ardendo pensar mia salute."

Harsdörffer). Prince Ludwig translated, among others, Giovanni Battista Gelli's *Capricci del Bottaio* (1619) and Petrarch's *Trionfi* (1643) into German, edited numerous Italian texts, and translated Wolfgang Ratke's/Ratichius's *Grammatica universalis* into Italian.⁹⁰ Diederich von dem Werder translated Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1634) and Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (1626) into German.⁹¹

Some Italian impulses, however, went unfulfilled. The idea of a German dictionary was not realized. During his sojourn in Florence, Ludwig participated in work on the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*. In 1647 Georg Philipp Harsdörffer planned a "Teutsches Dictionarium oder wortbuch,"⁹² but it was never completed. Caspar von Stieler's *Der Teutschen Sprache Stammbaum und Fortwachs / oder Teutscher Sprachschatz* (Genealogy and Development of the German Language, or German Vocabulary) did not appear until 1691. The work on German grammar and orthography was more successful. Christian Gueintz's *Deutsche Rechtschreibung* (German Spelling, 1645) and Justus Georg Schottelius's *Teutsche Vers- und Reimkunst* (The Art of German Verse and Rhyme, 1645) were more or less officially commissioned by the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*.⁹³ This is less true of the important grammars by these two authors because of the limited institutional status of the *Gesellschaft*, which was more a forum for discussion than a rigidly structured academy.⁹⁴ Although regular meetings were held – for instance, for the induction of new members – there were no official conferences or plenary sessions except for a meeting in 1645, when the question of orthography was on the agenda. Other practices of language cultivation were more strictly regulated: according to their bylaws, before being printed, all publications had to be submitted to the leader, Prince Ludwig, who then circulated them to the circle of experts for review. Letters were the primary medium for the concrete business of the society – the performance of language work.⁹⁵ Extensive correspondence followed the appearance of Gueintz's *Deutscher Sprachlehre Entwurf* (Outline of German Grammar, 1641) and Harsdörffer's *Specimen Philologiae Germanicae* (1646).

The most important literary personality among the the members of the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* was Georg Philipp Harsdörffer (1607–1658), who was inducted in March 1642 and given the name *Der Spielende* (The Player).⁹⁶ By 1650, he had brought in more than fifty new members, making him "the most important public relations worker

90 Dünnhaupt 1978.

91 On Ariosto, cf. Aurnhammer / Zanucchi 2020; on Tasso Aurnhammer 1994.

92 Hundt 2000, p. 118.

93 Hundt 2000, pp. 109 and 115.

94 Hundt 2000, p. 118: "The FG was more than just a loose collection of men interested in language and literature who came together because it was a prestigious thing to do. But it was also less than a centralized, active institution."

95 Hundt 2000, p. 117.

96 The best overview is in Keppler-Tasaki 2021; from the extensive Harsdörffer-research cf. Keppler-Tasaki / Kocher 2011; Battafarano 1991; Zeller 1974.

of the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*.⁹⁷ He is a prime example of how networked and mutually transparent the various levels, forms, and discursive traditions of German language work were. With his *Specimen*, Harsdörffer presented the basic principles of German linguistics and language policy.⁹⁸ His *Poetischer Trichter* (Poetic Funnel, 3 vols., 1648–1653) displays the intimate connection between language work and poetics. Harsdörffer's numerous translations from Italian, French, and Spanish promoted language formation and the knowledge of international literature.⁹⁹ With regard to a praxeological aesthetics, the eight volumes of the *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* (Conversations with Women) are especially significant.¹⁰⁰ An enormously popular and frequently imitated collection of exemplary dialogues on a variety of topics,¹⁰¹ aimed at the refinement of bourgeois conversational culture on the Italian model. From the point of view of praxeological aesthetics, they are an ideal example of the interrelation between autological and heterological aspects: purification of the language serves the cultivation of manners, which are not just *thematized* but *performed* by the dialogic form. Harsdörffer defines *Gesprächspiel* (literally “conversation-game”) as an “artige Aufgab / so zu nutzlicher Belustigung einer einmütigen Gesellschaft beliebt / und auf manche Art beantwortet werden kan” (polite exercise, popular for the beneficial entertainment of a congenial company, which can be responded to in several ways).¹⁰² The protagonists of all three hundred conversations (fifty per volume in vols. 1–4 and twenty-five each in vols. 5–8) are a matron, two young unmarried women, a courtier, a soldier, and a student (who is later promoted to noble courtier). A two-page copper engraving that serves as the frontispiece for the first volume (beginning with the second edition of 1644) shows how Harsdörffer imagines the heterological contexts, the concrete situation of a *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiel* (Figs. 2a and 2b).

We see the six participants gathered in social conversation in a pleasant, rural setting. Harsdörffer communicates the rules of behavior for 16th-century courtly society (*honnêteté*, *civilité*, and *sprezzatura*) to new, bourgeois-patrician circles. The title page is addressed to all “honor- and virtue-loving associations.” Harsdörffer takes his topics and materials “from Italian, French, and Spanish writers,” as the title page clearly states. They range from the “new” sciences, mathematics, and geography; to the arts, numismatics, horticulture, and even such hermetic themes as chiromancy, oneiromancy, and

97 Hundt 2000, p. 114.

98 Cf. esp. Banneck 2012; Hundt 2000, pp. 71–83.

99 Cf. Robert 2011.

100 Harsdörffer 1641–1649 (1968ff.). In what follows, FZG with volume and page number.

101 *Gesprächspiele* is the German equivalent of “dialogue”. On genre continuity cf. FZG I2, p. 348 (= *Schutzschrift*, p. 5): “The *Gesprächspiele* are not to be counted among new inventions, but rather renewed ones, insofar as they are usual in Italy, and Plato, Lucian, Vives, Erasmus Majolus, and others make use of their like in their writings.”

102 FZG III, p. 135.



Figs. 2a and 2b. Unknown artist: FrauenZimmer Gesprächspiele. j. Theil., in: Georg Philipp Harsdörffer: Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele [...], Erster Theil, Nuremberg: Wolfgang Endter, 1644 (VD17 23:234616Y), frontispiece. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Sign: M: Lo 2622:1.

astrology. The *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* belong to the Italian tradition of instructional literature on behavior and conversation for courtiers. Harsdörffer refers explicitly to Castiglione's *Cortegiano*.¹⁰³ Other sources are Scipione Bargagli's *Delle lodi dell'accademia* (1569), Girolamo Bargagli's *Dialogo de' giuochi che nelle vegghie sanesi si usano di fare* (1574), and Stefano Guazzo's *La civil conversation* (1574). On his study tour, Harsdörffer had become personally familiar with the conversational culture of the *Incogniti* (Venice), *Intronati* (Siena), and *Oziosi* (Naples), and corresponded with Gian Francesco Loredano (1607–1661), the founder of the *Incogniti*. He also suggested to Prince Ludwig that he be named an official linguistic diplomat to the *Accademia della Crusca*, but the attempt foundered on questions of protocol.¹⁰⁴

The collective efforts of the members of the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* – especially Prince Ludwig and Georg Philipp Harsdörffer – show how seemingly purely autological aspects of language work were always embedded in heterological concerns – on the one hand in the social practice of communication itself and on the other in the web of *other* discourses (e.g., politics). Harsdörffer's *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* aim to provide not just autological linguistic knowledge but also practice in performative civil skills, on the level of both spoken language and body language.¹⁰⁵ The emphasis on “einmütig” (congenial) conversation connects the traditional, autological form of the dialogue to its heterological purpose: to pacify and civilize the participants in the midst of the final decade of the Thirty Years' War. It should be clear that the model of a praxeological aesthetics offers the possibility of illustrating this dynamic interplay more precisely than has been possible with the means of the older social history of literature.¹⁰⁶

4. Summary

This chapter explored linguistic purism and the concept of purity of language in the early modern period. We have been at pains to show the close interrelations between autological and heterological perspectives, i.e., between the linguistic knowledge of the experts and aesthetic-literary, institutional, and social practices. The diversity of concepts, forms, and characteristics of pure language – its historical and intercultural variation – became clear. The aesthetic and political implications and potentialities of puristic argumentation can be found in a broad spectrum of texts and text types in the early modern period. The topic of purity of language migrated between literary and pragmatic texts, and both constituted and crossed genre boundaries. In analogy to re-

103 FZG III, p. 101.

104 Hundt 2000, p. 119.

105 On this performative aspect cf. esp. Tonger-Erk 2012, pp. 167–179.

106 A discussion of the praxeological model in relation to social-historical approaches in Robert 2022b, pp. 11–18.

search on intertextuality, one can distinguish the levels of *thematization* and *performance*: in Harsdörffer's *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, linguistic purism is an explicit theme, and at the same time his dialogues themselves follow the principle of language purity – e.g., by avoiding foreign words – and demonstrate how this can be realized in the practice of educated conversation. The same is true, with regard to the dialogic form, of Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua*, which promotes linguistic purism both programmatically and performatively, and of Vaugelas's *Remarques*, in which performativity goes hand-in-hand with the ideal of *bon usage* (the spoken language of the Parisian court). Literary texts integrate reflections on language purity or are even based thereon (this is true of both Petrarchan and anti-Petrarchan poetry as well as of dialogues); conversely, non-literary texts – grammars, dictionaries, and treatises on language, but also statutes, legal codes, schoolbooks, and encomia – take up aesthetic questions or codify norms and models with the help of texts (e.g., Petrarch's poetry, Boccaccio's prose) and apply them to fields of social practice. The authorization of the archaic Florentine variety of the *Corone* through the “quarta Corona” by Pietro Bembo¹⁰⁷ is confirmed and universalized by the lexicography of the *Crusca*. Thus strategies for enforcing a pure language are to be found in ceremonials and courtly oral and written communication, but also in literary works, the theater, as well as in scholarly, academic, juridical, and political discourse.¹⁰⁸ In the early modern era, the expansion of the function and influence of linguistic purism – its penetration into all social realms and its increasing relevance driven by theological, philosophical, sociological, and political impulses – assumes an unprecedented dimension.

In pan-European perspective, however, the *imitatio veterum* is only *one* possibility to establish linguistic norms. Especially in Germany, the lack of a classic vernacular canon insured a plurality of authoritative options, some of which coexisted, others overlapped with or contradicted one another.¹⁰⁹ The French purists developed a distinct classicism, which, though oriented on the Italian model, still protected itself against Italianization. The result – especially in the German discussions – is ambivalent movement in opposing directions, whereby the exclusion of foreign linguistic elements is associated with an adherence to common principles of standardization. Our textual examples clearly reveal the common objective as well as the individual historical and cultural strategies of establishing and implementing norms. Pure language is not just always beautiful, it is also a proof of distinction.¹¹⁰ All of this testifies to the fact that in the early modern

107 Cf. Patota 2017.

108 On performance and staging in the Renaissance, cf. esp. Hempfer/Pfeiffer 2002.

109 On this plurality, the fundamental work is still Josten 1976.

110 This social dimension of the language question and courtly communication strongly fueled so-called anti-Petrarchism. As a collateral phenomenon, it teased out in satiric and parodistic style Petrarchism's intentions and ulterior motives. Cf. the texts collected by Höhle 1970. On the heuristic value of literary satire for a praxeological aesthetics cf. Robert 2020.

era, the constitution of a vernacular norm was not restricted to learned circles but penetrated deep into the communicative practices of society, hence the return to the realm of expert knowledge. Between certain puristic normative models' absolute demand for language purity and perfection on the one hand and the heterogeneity of linguistic theory and practice, poetics, as well as political and societal practices on the other, there develops in the early modern period a powerful dynamic that is constitutive of aesthetic artifacts in the sense of the CRC *Different Aesthetics*. In the relations between the puristic programs and the practices of different linguistic and cultural regions of Europe, one can discover similarities and filiations – whether openly acknowledged, only alluded to, or even erased, unacknowledged, and concealed.

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Silke Leopold

Tafelmusik

Music and Banqueting in the Premodern Era

For Susanne Fontaine on her 60th birthday

Abstract

Music that is not listened to for its own sake but which, such as dance music or table music (*Tafelmusik*), fulfils a specific social function has been considered inferior in musicology. This evaluation has stemmed from two very different influences. On the one hand, the self-contained and autonomous aesthetics of the 19th century sought to derive the quality of a piece of music solely from the complexity of the composition and consequently considered as lesser such works as demanded less attention to the compositional process and details. On the other hand, the field was for a long time dominated by an interest in extant written scores, which meant that music which was only documented in pictorial or written sources received less critical attention. The combination of these two aspects has led to a false conclusion: because the majority of pre-modern table music has not been handed down, its musical value must not be that great. By using examples from the 15th to 18th centuries – including courtly celebrations in Lille, Ferrara, and Florence, courtly musicians such as Heinrich Schütz, Michael Praetorius, and Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber, as well as 18th-century middle-class table music – this chapter examines the role table music played in social life and how the quality and complexity of the music related to the occasion for which it was conceived.

Keywords

Occasional Music, Professional Singer, Feast of the Pheasant, Christofaro di Messisbugo, Heinrich Schütz, Immanuel Kant, D'Este, Medici

1. Table Music for Digestion

“Bravi! Cosa rara!” No cost is spared when Mozart’s Don Giovanni arranges a festive dinner for the Guest of Stone. He spends a fistful of money to engage two oboists, two clarinetists, two bassoonists, and two horn players. Such wind ensembles, also known as *Harmoniemusik*, had lately become very popular among the nobility. Players arranged music specifically for this instrumentation – otherwise heard only in the military, at

* Translated by David B. Dollenmayer. Quotations for which no other translation is cited have also been translated by Dollenmayer.

masked balls, or in the opera – and they regaled their patrons and their guests with everything that was entertaining, spirited, or simply in style.

To accompany roasted pheasant and gleaming red Marzemino wine, Don Giovanni's musicians play the best and most popular Viennese opera tunes of the last few years. Of course, Mozart was probably not sure if the public in Prague (where *Don Giovanni* premiered in late October 1787) would recognize the musical references, so as an aid to guessing, he had Leporello allude to the title of the opera each tune comes from. Things get underway with "O quanto un si bel giubilo," a melody from Vicente Martin y Soler's opera *Una cosa rara*, which had been enjoying huge success at the Burgtheater since November 1786. It is followed by the somewhat older "Come un agnello," an aria from Giuseppe Sarti's *Fra I due litiganti il terzo gode*, which premiered in Milan in 1782 and had a successful run in Vienna in 1783. Already in 1784, Mozart had written a set of piano variations on this aria. There was no need for Leporello to announce the third and last piece, Figaro's aria "Non più andrai farfallone amoroso" ("Now forget quiet pleading, sweet caressing"). Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* had premiered on May 1, 1786 in Vienna, and although it was bumped from the schedule by *Una cosa rara*, it was such a huge and long-lived hit in Prague after its first performance there in December 1786 that it earned Mozart the commission to compose *Don Giovanni*. *Figaro* continued to be performed until a few days before the opening of the new opera. So it was enough for Leporello to point out that he knew very well the piece just now being played by the wind ensemble ("Questa poi la conosco pur troppo"), establishing a winking conspiracy with his audience.

With the table music in the second finale of *Don Giovanni*, Mozart audibly transferred the old Don Juan story to the present and musically confronted his audience with the world of their own experience – at a time when the idea of table music had already come under criticism. Immanuel Kant, who was not much of a music fan to begin with and declared in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Critique of Judgement, 1790) that music "possesses less worth in the judgement of reason than any other of the fine arts,"¹ had already revealed a certain disdain for table music in his lectures on anthropology in 1772–1773:

There is nothing more absurd than table music. There are much finer sorts of pleasure at table, but music fills the empty space where thought could be taking place and can contribute to digestion.²

1 Kant: Critique of Judgement, p. 156f.

2 Kant: Anthropologie, p. 414.

Later, in his *Critique of Judgement*, he describes it as

a quaint idea intended to act on the mind merely as an agreeable noise fostering a genial spirit, which, without anyone paying the smallest attention to the composition, promotes the free flow of conversation between guest and guest.³

Mozart's *Don Giovanni* could have disabused Kant. Even in the late 18th century, table music by no means served primarily as background music. Leporello definitely pays some attention to composition and invites the audience to form their own judgments about the music. To be sure, in his disparaging remarks about table music, Kant was less concerned with the quality of its composition and more with the use of music in a context that was not focused on the work of art.⁴ Nevertheless, his remarks established a disparagement of table music that became the majority opinion in the 19th century and even found its way into music history. In the middle of that century, Eduard Hanslick coined the famous phrase describing music as “tönend bewegte Formen” (sonically moved forms)⁵ and became thereby the main proponent of an aesthetics of autonomy that accepted music only as an absolute art, free of any extramusical contents and requirements.⁶ Hanslick was obviously referring to Kant in his influential work *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (On the Musically Beautiful, 1854) with respect to table music when he chided its “accillary service”:

A picture, a church, a play cannot be guzzled, but an aria certainly can. That is also why the enjoyment of no other art lends itself to such ancillary service. The best compositions can be played as dinner music and facilitate the digestion of pheasants.⁷

It almost seems as if Hanslick were referring explicitly to Don Giovanni's roast pheasant. Of course, Hanslick's critique too does not call the quality of music into question. On the contrary: At a time when table music was attracting enemies on all sides, he was defending it from cooptation by supposedly non-artistic activities. For the 19th century had not only developed a new understanding of music as an autonomous art, but also produced composers and musicians who defined themselves as artists instead of service providers and had increasing difficulty playing a background role at aristocratic or bourgeois dinner parties. The belief that music is good for digestion reaches back to the Middle

3 Kant: *Critique of Judgement*, p. 135.

4 Mohr 2013 advocates this interpretation.

5 Hanslick: *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*, p. 32; Hanslick: *On the Musically Beautiful*, p. 41.

6 From the legion of literature on absolute music, the influential work of Dahlhaus 1989 can serve as representative. Cf. on this problem area also the contribution of Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48.

7 Hanslick: *On the Musically Beautiful*, p. 83.

Ages; in 1618, the poet and composer Thomas Campion asserted in his *Ayres sung and played at Brougham Castle in Westmerland in the Kings Entertainment* that “Musicke helps digesting.”⁸ But 19th-century physicians supplemented this old doctrine with the opinion that music hinders unimpeded ingestion. Moreover, culinary experts began to complain that music deprived dishes of the attention they deserved and was at best tolerable at table to calm heated tempers. In his *Geist der Kochkunst* (The Spirit of Culinary Art, 1832), Karl Friedrich Freiherr von Rumohr suggested “making a noisy table music” for choleric individuals at table, “which in all other cases I reject as harmful and disruptive.”⁹

In the course of the 19th century, a judgment about the quality of the music itself did indeed insinuate itself into the new disapproval of table music. Richard Wagner used the example of symphonies by Mozart, of all people, to announce what he thought about table music. He criticized them because of their proximity to Italian opera arias, with their shifts from (sung) melody to instrumental interludes, “these dubious voids between the melodic main motifs.” Mozart, wrote Wagner,

often – indeed, almost habitually – fell back into that banal phrasing that frequently casts his symphonic movements in the light of so-called table music, namely, the music that, between the performance of pleasant melodies, offers pleasant noise for conversation: at least for me, it is as if during the so frequently recurring, noisily intrusive half cadences of Mozart’s symphonies, I hear the noise of serving and clearing at a princely banquet set to music.¹⁰

In music history, which in the mid-19th century was just establishing itself as an academic discipline, the term *Tafelmusik* had acquired a bad sound. On the one hand, it belonged together with *Gebrauchsmusik* (utilitarian music) and *Gelegenheitsmusik* (occasional music) to the group of terms that describe not the music itself but the context of its performance. On the other hand, it is subsumed under the rubric *Unterhaltungsmusik* (entertainment or light music), which was (and is) also suspect as being trivial, banal, and marginal. And although an increasing number of voices consider the distinction between “art music” and “entertainment music” to be outdated, attempts to define the latter are still characterized by value judgments about lack of originality and compositional simplicity.¹¹

Is table music entertainment music? Yes, is the answer. Is entertainment music trivial? Only a historically differentiated answer to this question is possible, for it would be a mistake to transfer the dichotomy between art music and light music, autono-

8 Cf. also on this aspect the contribution of Lorenz Adamer and Thomas Schipperges in this volume, pp. 117–149. Cited from Kümmel 1976, p. 390.

9 Cited from Kümmel 1976, p. 396.

10 Wagner: *Zukunftsmusik*, p. 126. See also Reimer 1971, p. 7

11 Representative of these failed attempts to assess light music without prejudice, see the article in the new MGG by Ballstaedt 1998.

mous and utilitarian music, as it emerged in the German-language discussion of the 19th century, into earlier centuries and apply it to their music. Is table music trivial? My answer is: on the contrary. If it were possible to judge the table music of previous centuries on the basis of contemporary sources, the result would be: the more prestigious, exclusive, and luxurious the presentation of dishes at a princely banquet, the more prestigious, exclusive, and luxurious the arrangement of the table music with which the host hoped to impress his guests. Unlike in the 19th century, where the prevailing wisdom was that music and eating were mutually harmful, the ruling classes of earlier centuries placed great value on demonstrating their power, wealth, and culture not only with sumptuous banquets but also with table music. The fact that we do not know most of that music since it has not been preserved in notation, i.e., in written, reproducible form, should not be taken as proof that there was no interest in it. On the contrary, it suggests an intention to emphasize the uniqueness of the event and the privilege of those in the circle of invited guests. Few other arts were better suited to celebrate extravagance – that “most splendid form of annihilating capital,”¹² – than food and music. As art, both were materialized in the act of “consumption” – the best dishes were those of which nothing was left over, and the music developed its efficacy by fading away. Sometimes the aim was a conjunction of culinary and musical effect, as when a celebration took place under a specific motto. In a chapter on “table ceremonial” in Julius Bernhard von Rohr’s *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft der großen Herren* (Introduction to the Study of Ceremony in the Houses of Great Lords, 1733), the author describes the practice of selecting table music according to the requirements of the particular event:

On solemn occasions, one hears beautiful musical pieces at the table. Sometimes they include only trumpets and drums, but sometimes also the most beautiful vocal and instrumental music. One hears castrati and cantatrices who sing mostly Italian pieces. If it pleases the princely lords to dine in military tents, in hunting lodges or forester’s cabins, or in the manner of a peasant wedding or in some other costume, the music is adjusted accordingly, so that everything harmonizes.¹³

At great celebratory banquets at the tables of princes, music served not as background noise but was considered an equal, integral component of the splendid staging of sovereignty and affluence. And even at the quotidian table, music helped to ennoble mere ingestion and make it a special moment in the course of a day, a significant social event.

Three areas of investigation help us understand how table music was perceived by contemporaries: first, the occupational profiles of musicians; second, musical publica-

12 The quote referred originally to fireworks. See Kohler 1988, p. 10.

13 Rohr: *Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft*, p. 120.

tions together with their paratexts (i.e., their dedications and forewords); and third, reports and descriptions of celebrations, including documentation of courtly events but also cookbooks.

2. Table Music as a Profession

The files of court administrators and the correspondence of responsible officials often provide information about how table music was perceived and evaluated. It is striking that it was often not lesser-known musicians but the most prominent who were engaged to perform at banquets – performers like the virtuoso Venetian violinist Biagio Marini, whom Count Palatine Wolfgang Wilhelm “hired for table music and concerts” in 1624.¹⁴ Table music was one of the normal duties of a court musician, and the court Kapellmeister was responsible for organizing it.

Heinrich Schütz is an especially good example of such an official, since for a musician of the 17th century his life is comparatively well documented. In addition to court files, many letters and memoranda from his own hand have survived. Under the patronage of Landgrave Moritz of Hessen, Schütz matured as a musician and began service as the second organist at the court in Kassel in 1613. Before the landgrave had time to reap the benefits of his patronage, however, Schütz came to the notice of the Saxon Prince-Elector Johann Georg I, who hired the promising composer away. From 1615, Schütz worked in Dresden, at first quasi on loan from Kassel, but later as official court Kapellmeister. According to the privy councilor and lord steward of the household Christof von Loß, Schütz’s presence in Dresden was indispensable “if the *musica* at the church and at the table is to be conducted as before.”¹⁵ As this passage makes clear, service at the princely table was as much a part of the court musician’s profession as service in church.

There was no question of Schütz the organist himself playing at the princely table. As court Kapellmeister, however, he was expected to see to it that the table music was appealing and appropriate. How important this was is clear from a memorandum that Lord Steward von Loß wrote to the attention of Court Kapellmeister Schütz on the occasion of the visit of Emperor Matthias to Dresden from July 25th to August 13th, 1617. Accompanying the emperor was his wife Anna; his brother Archduke Maximilian, Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights; Archduke Ferdinand, the emperor’s cousin, recently crowned king of Bohemia and the future Emperor Ferdinand II; and a string of highly-placed dignitaries, among them Adam von Wallenstein, uncle of the field marshal. Lord Steward von Loß laid out precisely what he expected of his kapellmeister in eight items – five of which have to do with table music:

¹⁴ Quoted from Reimer 1971, p. 1.

¹⁵ Quoted from Moser 1959, p. 89.

1. Schütz was to see that all instruments were in good working condition and well-tuned.
2. He was also to make sure that all musicians – singers as well as instrumentalists – were on constant call and also well-behaved.
3. Whenever the emperor held an open table, Schütz was to make a careful selection of good pieces – not too many – and to assign the best court musicians to perform them, not play too much pompous music but rather pleasant things in various styles, and to arrange them such that the emperor and his retinue could derive fame and honor from it.
4. But when a princely banquet was to be held simultaneously with the emperor's in a separate room, Schütz was to put together another ensemble of musicians not performing at the imperial table – for example, capable young players. He should instruct them to play at the princely table and not to get drunk.
5. If Archduke Ferdinand or Archduke Maximilian wished to dine in their private chambers and wanted some music to accompany the meal, Schütz should put together an appropriate small ensemble and carefully select the music to be played.
6. If the emperor dined alone and the prince elector dined with Archduke Ferdinand, Archduke Maximilian, and other gentlemen, the entire court orchestra should be at the disposal of the prince elector. Some of them – namely, the best players – should be available to the emperor.
7. Early each morning, Schütz was to inquire of the lord steward which banquets were planned and for where, so he could promptly prepare the music appropriate for each one.
8. And in case an evening dance was planned for the Great Hall, Schütz should pledge all the instrumentalists to perform with care and play appropriate dances. In no case should they be negligent, or the prince elector would punish them.¹⁶

The lord steward himself gave thought to the musical accompaniment to the banquets and even to more intimate meals; there could be no better evidence that in the pre-modern era, table music was by no means a marginal phenomenon but a central event in a court's self-presentation. In this particular case, there was also an extra diplomatic difficulty: Before the assembled leadership elite of the Catholic Reformation, who soon thereafter would resort to arms to assert their determination to re-Catholicize the empire, the Saxon prince elector could hardly show off his sacred music, which would surely have been featured during a visit by Protestant princes. The practice of singing several hymns before the meal as a part of the table music was unthinkable in the context of an imperial visit. But with exquisite table music tailored to the situation and performed by the best musicians, the ruler of Saxony could let the emperor know

16 The exact wording of the instructions is in Kobuch 1986, pp. 85–87.

every day that his court ranked very high among the empire's competing principalities. Thus the table music – as well as the food itself and the exertions of the elector's kitchen staff – became an act of political communication.

Johann Georg I also took his court musicians along to the Electoral Diet in Mühlhausen in the fall of 1627, and Schütz provided him with an “extensive list [...] of those persons from among the musicians who could be taken along to Mulhaussen to attend both on the days of preaching and at table.”¹⁷ He chose nineteen musicians for this occasion, or sixteen as a less expensive alternative. But he asked his lord to approve the larger number, since the smaller group would make a lesser impression.

Thinking about how a court orchestra should be composed is a common thread running through all of Schütz's professional life and through the surviving documents. After his second journey to Italy in 1628/1629, he wrote that

ever since the first time I was in these places, this whole undertaking has changed greatly, and the music that is useful for representational purposes at princely tables, comedies, ballets, and the like has now noticeably improved and increased.¹⁸

Schütz was often asked to provide expert opinion and recommendations on the organization of court music at courts smaller than Dresden – for the first time in December 1617, when he advised Heinrich Posthumus Reuß, the Lord of Gera, on how even with limited funds, a functioning court music could be established. He recommended a court organist, other instrumentalists, and singers, and finally wrote extensively about how the schoolboys at the recently established Gymnasium Ruthenaeum could be integrated into the court music. Table music also played a prominent role: Schütz recommended that Heinrich Posthumus Reuß have musically talented boys trained specifically for service at banquets:

With regard to the two boys to be kept, gracious Lord, I append the recommendation that Your Grace could make them the foundation of your music, for the reason that they will be partly supported free of charge, as I also understand from Your Grace, and thus will have to accommodate themselves totaliter ad nutum of Your Grace. And when hereafter Your Grace's intention will be put into practice, those same boys – be they few or many – can be trained in singing by the cantor and can take lessons from Your Grace's court instrumentalists on the violin (of necessity), but also on other instruments such as cornett and sackbut, according to their preference. In this endeavor, God willing, Your Grace will make good order, and for my part, I shall always be happy to advise you if God lend me life, etc.¹⁹

17 Schütz: Briefe, pp. 85f.

18 Schütz: Briefe, p. 96.

19 This report is reproduced in Jung 1961, here p. 245.

“Table boys or descants who serve at table”²⁰ are also mentioned in a memorandum Schütz wrote shortly after his return from Italy in 1629, in which he discusses the improvement of the Dresden court music. In 1645, he responded to Countess Sophie Elisabeth von Braunschweig’s request for recommendations about her court music. Schütz asked for more information, including on

the use of religious music

1. at table
2. with a sermon
3. at an important-extraordinary musical service in church

and

secular table music.²¹

And at the end of his long life, probably after 1667, as Schütz was advising the new dean and court preacher von Zeitz on establishing a library of scores, table music still played an important role. After the rubric of psalms and religious concerts for full orchestra and chorus, the next rubric was psalms and religious concerts scored for fewer voices, which could also be performed “at a princely table.”²² And the last of six rubrics had the title, “Secular and Moral Songs for a Princely Table Music.”²³

To be sure, no composition is ever mentioned by name, so that we cannot know which pieces were actually performed at table. Besides, we can assume that the compositions of the Dresden court Kapellmeister that have survived in print or manuscript, as numerous as they are, represent only part of his total œuvre. Not a single instrumental composition by Schütz has survived, as have none of his many works for the stage. Schütz chose very carefully the image he wanted to leave posterity – the image of a composer of Protestant sacred music, not that of a secular servant of a prince. We know of no instrumental work by Monteverdi either, except when it is embedded in a larger dramatic context like the ballet music in *Il Ballo delle ingrate* (1608).

3. Table Music on Paper

In order to imagine what table music sounded like, one must turn to other sources. At the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries, there is an increase in musical publications, suggesting that published scores were being used for table music.²⁴ For

20 Schütz: Briefe, p. 107.

21 Schütz: Briefe, p. 156.

22 Schütz: Briefe, p. 295.

23 Schütz: Briefe, p. 295.

24 A collection of these musical sources can be found in Reimer 1971.

one thing, there are collections with titles such as *Christliche Hauß und Tisch Musica*²⁵ (Christian Music for House and Table) by Bartholomäus Gesius or *Kirchen- und Tafel-Music*²⁶ (Music for Church and Table) by Andreas Hammerschmidt, both of which confirm the practice of including religious songs at table, also evident in the Schütz documents. Moreover, there are collections of clearly secular vocal music, for example, Johann Melchior Caesar's *Musicalischer Wend-Unmuth, bestehend in unterschiedlichen lustigen Quodlibeten und kurtzweiligen Teutschen Concerten*²⁷ (Music to Banish Discontent, Consisting of Various Jolly Quodlibets and Entertaining German Concerts) or Valentin Rathgeber's famous *Augsburger Tafelkonfekt*²⁸ (Augsburg Table Confection). And finally, there is an increasing number of publications with instrumental music. An early and prominent example is a collection by Michael Praetorius, published in 1612, with the title

Terpsichore

Musarum Aoniarum Quinta

Darinnen Allerley Frantzösische Däntze und Lieder [...] Wie dieselbige von den Frantzösischen
Dantzmeistern in Franckreich gespielet / etc. unnd vor Fürstlichen Taffeln / auch sonsten in
Conviviis zur recreation und ergötzung gantz wol gebraucht werden können.
In which all sorts of French dances and songs [...] as they are played by French
dancing masters in France / and at princely tables /
and also otherwise can be used very well in conviviis for recreation and delight.

Terpsichore is also one of the earliest publications to explicitly link dance music and table music. Praetorius began his extensive introduction with a justification for why – after composing religious music – he was now presenting the public with a secular work, and stated more precisely what was already said in his title:

Considering that it is customary not only at princely tables / but sometimes also at other honest and often secular conventibus, conviviis, weddings / and similar joyful gatherings of respectable people / not to let the occasion pass without special charming entertainment.

If Praetorius had not explicitly intended *Terpsichore* for table music as well as dancing, one could conclude that he wanted above all to document the high level of dance culture – both in the ballroom and on stage – at the court in Wolfenbüttel. Many of the over three hundred dance movements are stand-alone compositions, such as the pan-European hit “Branle de la Torche” or the equally popular “Spagnoletta.” Others are grouped together, like the first nineteen dances in the collection, consisting of

25 Gesius: *Christliche Hauß Und Tisch Musica*.

26 Hammerschmidt: *Kirchen- und Tafel Music*.

27 Caesar: *Musicalischer Wendunmuth*.

28 Rathgeber: *Tafel-Confect*.

various branles and diverse gavottes. Some of these suites of dances are called “ballets,” and their titles indicate either a theatrical performance – for example the “Ballet des coqs” or “Ballet de trois aages” [sic] – or they honor specific persons, such as the “Ballet de Monseigneur le Prince de Brunswieg,” written for the heir to the throne of Braunschweig, Friedrich Ulrich, to whom the entire collection is dedicated. Which genre should claim the “Ballet du Roy pour sonner apres” remains, alas, unknowable.²⁹

But with *Terpsichore*, Praetorius had more in mind than praising the high standard of dance culture at the Braunschweig court. Above all, he intended to enhance the artistic status of dance music and understand it as more than just the necessary accompaniment for a social activity, but instead give it a distinct compositional identity. Many of the dances were, like “Branle de la Torche” and “Spagnoletta,” tunes known across Europe. By embedding them in a multi-voiced setting, Praetorius conferred artistic ennoblement. He did not see it as his task to invent new thematic material but to clothe familiar melodies in compositionally sophisticated settings. These polyphonic settings would not have been necessary for dancing, since all a dance needed was a clearly audible rhythm and a melody, in which one could recognize the dance and its appropriate choreography. For centuries, dance music was not written down at all. Beginning in the mid-15th century, melodies began to be written down in choreographic primers – usually monophonically – quasi as a reminder for dancing masters. Until almost the end of the century, dance music occupied a very low rung in the hierarchy of instrumental music. It was text-less and therefore sense-less music, unlike instrumental arrangements of motets and madrigals, where one could assume that listeners would be familiar with their original texts. Here is where table music comes into play. As music for a banquet, dance music could not be presented without being embedded in a polyphonic movement. By composing such arrangements, Praetorius elevated traditional dance tunes to the status of art music. The princely table was the place where music for dancing became music for listening. It no longer served primarily to regulate sequences of movement but now demanded to be recognized and taken seriously as an artistic product. The musical promotion of traditional dance tunes to polyphonic instrumental pieces must not be misunderstood as an advance in artistic autonomy. There was no change in the music’s functionality, but only in its function. Table music too was functional music, but its task was no longer to set the rhythm for bodily movement, but rather to enhance a meal – whether formal or informal – by adding a musical sensation to the culinary one. At first, the increase in musical complexity led not to more compositional independence from the music’s assigned role but continued to be understood as part of a social act.

Later, however, as instrumental music established itself as an expressive form equal to vocal music, it also began to free itself from functional assignments. If one regards

29 Praetorius: *Terpsichore* is published by Günther Oberst.

the continued development of instrumental table music in the 17th and 18th centuries, it becomes clear how much 19th-century aesthetic theory – which decried table music as trivial – misunderstood its actual historical development. Rather than retiring behind the function it was supposed to fulfill as seemingly worthless *Gebrauchsmusik* (utilitarian music), instrumental table music developed an inherent artistic dynamic and made a significant contribution to freeing instrumental music gradually from its dependence on vocal music – a process that in the last third of the 18th century came to an end in so-called Viennese classicism.

This functional change from dance music to table music is evident in the third part of Wolfgang Caspar Printz's primer on composition, *Phrynus Mytilenaeus* (written in 1679 and published in 1696). With a satirical wink, he draws a distinction between dance music for dancing, which must be played with rhythmic precision for the sake of coordinating the steps and figures, and dance music at table, which allows for more rhythmic freedom.³⁰ This component of performance practice must not be underestimated; in the act of performance, table music could be artistically reshaped and become the focus of attention, while dance music could only be effective in the background as the maintainer of rhythm. One did not engage a musician like Biagio Marini in order to play dance tunes, but to play at table – possibly between courses to allow full concentration on the music and his virtuoso performance.

In any event, *Terpsichore* soon set the standard. In 1617 Johann Hermann Schein, cantor of the Church of St. Thomas in Leipzig, published a collection entitled *Banchetto musicale*, in which the sequence of dances – padoana, gagliarda, courante, allemanda with tripla – became established as what was later called a "suite." Moreover, although Schein's individual movements had become so polyphonic that they made dancing to them noticeably more difficult, they still retained an ideal relationship to their original function. In the course of the 17th century, many composers followed in his footsteps. In 1680, a collection entitled *Mensa sonora seu Musica instrumentalis. Sonatis aliquot liberius sonantibus Ad Mensam* from the pen of the violin virtuoso and Vice Kapellmeister Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber and dedicated to Archbishop Maximilian Gandolph appeared in Salzburg. Its German title was *Die klingende Taffel oder Instrumentalische Taffel-Music Mit frisch-lautenden Geigen-Klang* (The Sonorous Table or Instrumental Table Music with a Fresh Violin Sound).³¹ This collection also contained suites – called "Pars" – with the sequence sonata, allamanda, courante, sarabanda, gavotte, gigue, sonatina. The fact that their character went beyond providing a pattern for the movements of a dance is evident from the freely composed "sonatas" that appear at the beginning and the end of each suite like a musical frame for the dances. In his foreword, Biber emphasizes that his table music is not meant to show off musically, but rather to revere simplicity:

30 Printz: *Phrynidis Mytilenaei*, p. 110. See also Reimer 1971, p. 5.

31 Biber: *Mensa sonora*.

It is thus not my concern to set a rare delicacy from the notoriously profligate Apicius on Your Princely Highness's table, nor to lay thereon an incalculable little pearl from the extravagant Cleopatra, but rather with obedient and humble admiration and indebtedness to entrust to You the noble jewel of simplicity.³²

And in 1698 Georg Muffat, Kapellmeister and supervisor of pages at the court of Johann Philipp von Lamberg, Prince-Bishop of Passau, published his *Florilegium Secundum* with a series of instrumental dance sequences, each with an overture and some, as in the case of Praetorius, with a connection to scenic presentation. Thus the movements of the second fasciculus have titles such as "Cooks Stirring Something in Their Pots," "Chopping Meat," or "The Kitchen Boys." In his foreword, Muffat explains how the published suites came to be:

It contains not a few of the ballets, newly set by me in Passau, that resounded pleasantly at dances and many instrumental performances at Your Princely Court, which – although they also served various other functions, as for example chamber, table, or night music – nevertheless owe their existence more to Your Princely Grace's all-encompassing zeal for the rearing of the aristocratic youth at Your Court than to my desire to delight the ears.³³

Dance music, chamber music, table music, or serenade: Muffat lengthened the list of occasions for his suites by two more applications. In both cases – in a chamber or in a nocturnal garden – the extramusical context receded further into the background, making more space for attention to the music. Nevertheless, when Georg Philipp Telemann published *Musique de Table* in 1733, it was a clear indication that he intended to present exquisite art music – in various settings, with and without winds, in differing genres such as suite, quatuor, trio sonata, and solo sonata. Telemann's *Musique de Table* presented the entire spectrum of what the art of instrumental composition had accomplished in the meantime. At the same time, his title kept alive the functional aspect of the music, be it for dancing or at table.

Printed scores like Praetorius's *Terpsichore*, Biber's *Mensa Sonora*, or Muffat's *Florilegium Secundum* also served to carry the prestige of the dedicatees into the world beyond the narrow circle of their own court. They were documents – documentation, really – of the splendor and importance of the place where they originated. If aristocrats such as the heir to the throne of Braunschweig, the archbishop of Salzburg, and the brothers Johann Traugott and Liebgott von Kueffstein, cathedral canon and lord steward of Passau, had not financed these publications, the brilliance of their courts would not have been able to shine so wide and bright. Such collections were especially suited as costly gifts for their equals; for the public music market, they would have been, as a

32 The title and dedication in Latin and German are reproduced in Biber: *Mensa sonora*, p. VIII.

33 Muffat: *Florilegium Secundum*, foreword, p. 19.

rule, too expensive. In this regard, Telemann's *Musique de Table* represents a further development. The income from over two hundred subscriptions enabled him to cover the costs of production. Among the subscribers were princes such as the margrave of Brandenburg and the duke of Sachsen-Weimar, musicians like Johann Joachim Quantz in Dresden and George Frideric Handel in London, diplomats from many countries, but also simple – although no doubt wealthy – citizens of Germany and elsewhere. The price of the *Musique de Table* was exorbitant.³⁴ Mademoiselle Rhode from Frankfurt an der Oder or Monsieur Nebelthau from Meerholz no doubt subscribed in order to acquire and study the music itself rather than have it for performance at their modest tables.

4. Table Music in the Pie

In an age when the success of artistic expression is measured by the extent of its availability and the media attention it garners, it is hard to imagine that there were also times when music, to whose performance only a small, exclusive circle was invited, was much more highly regarded than music available to everyone. However, evidence from several points in the premodern era suggests that the sovereign aura with which a prince surrounded himself could also be created by music intended not for the public, but only for the most intimate circle of the privileged – quiet instruments like the lute or theorbo, solo performances by select virtuosos or members of the court who would never have appeared on a public stage. In this regard too, the role played by Biagio Marini in the Wittelsbach court in Neuburg was remarkable. Before Marini entered service there in 1623, the Neuburg court had already sent out its feelers and formulated a list of conditions under which the Italian violin virtuoso would work. In the corresponding contract, which also engaged him to perform at table, his role was described as that of a “*musicco riservato*” not obliged to play in the orchestra, since one would not have been able to distinguish his playing from the total sound.³⁵ From his personal correspondence with the count palatinate, we also know that Marini wished to report directly to him.³⁶

There is ample evidence for the role of a “*musicco riservato*” – although this phrase is not encountered anywhere else – and for music that was only made available to a small circle of the elect. Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria was well known for preferring to keep the music of his court kapellmeister Orlando di Lasso to himself rather than granting Lasso permission to have it printed, much to the latter's displeasure. But the most famous example is probably the “*Concerto delle Dame*” in Ferrara, an ensemble of three virtuoso singers who could be heard only in the private rooms of Duke Alfonso II and his wife

34 The list of subscribers is in Georg Philipp Telemann: *Tafelmusik*.

35 On this point, see Clark 1957. This chapter is intended to be a contribution to the discussion of the concept “*Musica Reservata*,” which belongs in a different context and will not be explained here.

36 Clark 1966, pp. 254 f.

Margherita. Whoever was invited to an intimate dinner or just a recital of these three musically trained ladies-in-waiting to the duchess could consider themselves fortunate, and they spread the fame of those angelic voices far and wide.³⁷ Music composed for the ensemble was kept under lock and key. Not until Alfonso II died without a legitimate heir in 1597 and the duchy was reabsorbed into the Papal States was the composer for the “Concerto delle Dame,” Luzzasco Luzzaschi, permitted to publish the compositions. In 1601, his collection of madrigals from the repertoire of the three singers – called “Dame principalissime” in the foreword – appeared, including the virtuoso embellishments that adorned the melodies. Thereby, the mystery that surrounded this music was at least partly revealed.

Exclusivity by means of non-disclosure – from this angle, the fact that table music was specifically *not* written down when played at a large, important feast or celebration gains new significance. For it was especially at the most brilliant, sensationall staged events that fireworks, delectable dishes, decorated dining halls, and music all lived from their unrepeatability, the irretrievability of the moment reserved for those permitted to attend. But they were often communicated in extensive descriptions to those who were expected to react with amazement and admiration. Three examples – one each from the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries – will support the thesis that table music belonged to the exclusive attractions.

4.1. Lille

One of the most famous banquets of the 15th century was the so-called Feast of the Pheasant, hosted in Lille in 1454 by the Burgundian Duke Philip the Good to raise money for a crusade to retake Constantinople, conquered by the Ottoman Empire the previous year.³⁸ The feast, at whose conclusion the guests swore an oath to make the crusade possible, comprised a luxurious banquet of forty-eight courses on each individual plate, elaborate decorations, *tableaux vivants*, and staged scenes. The latter ran the gamut from a lifelike, naked little boy standing on a rock and urinating rosewater, to a magical forest with animated exotic animals, to a series of extended representations of Jason’s heroic deeds – battles with steers, serpents, and dragons – as a tribute to the Order of the Golden Fleece and its founder, the host Philip the Good. Probably the most important source for the description of the feast are the memoirs of the chronicler Olivier de la Marche, who devoted a long chapter to it.³⁹

37 Reports on the singing of the “Concerto delle Dame” can be found in Newcomb 1980, especially pp. 53–56.

38 A summary of this banquet is in the chapter “Der ‘Voeu du faisan’” in: Müller 1993, pp. 60–64.

39 Olivier de la Marche: *Les Memoires*, pp. 160–194. There are numerous reprintings of the description of the Feast of the Pheasant, most recently in Régnier-Bohler 1995, pp. 1135–1163.

Up to the present day, historians and musicologists have cast a cold eye on this event. This began in 1919, when Johan Huizinga spoke of “manifestations of barbaric princely luxury,” “excessive, foolish ostentation,” and “all that bizarre adornment that has vanished without a trace,” and also deplored the “pies in which musicians play.”⁴⁰ That set the tone for subsequent evaluations of the Feast of the Pheasant as a “laughable masquerade” or a “county fair farce.”⁴¹ Even Peter Gülke, who devoted several pages of his Dufay monograph to the Feast of the Pheasant and translated Olivier de la Marche’s report into German, rated the event as a “weirdly bizarre, gigantomaniacal spectacle” and “ceremonious mummerly.”⁴²

Gülke’s observation that in Olivier de la Marche’s description, there is “frequent but seldom concrete or detailed talk about music”⁴³ needs to be supplemented. For one gleans from the report how important music was for the organization of the event and how it gave order to the supposed confusion of scenes. Music demands attention, interrupts conversation, and contributes to framing events. Since the Middle Ages, the task of calling guests to the table, announcing individual noble guests, and indicating the next course to be served fell to the loud wind instruments – the shawms, pommers, and brass that since the 15th century were collectively known as the “Alta.”⁴⁴ At the Feast of the Pheasant as well, trumpets blared out fanfares now and then to announce a new event, usually another deed of Jason. The church and the pie, however, had an additional function: They signaled the caesura between two moments of the feast with artistic offerings instead of acoustic events. They acted like a musical curtain between two numbers of a revue. Remarks about the music in the memoir usually begin with “Quand chacun fut assis,” “Cest entremets acompli,” or simply “Après ce.”⁴⁵ Music was part of an enactment that regarded church and state, religion, and representation as equally important and complementary. On the middle table of three in the hall, a church with glass windows and a bell had been erected, with an organ and three singers inside. On the largest table, however, was a pie in which twenty-eight musicians sat with their instruments. All the musical caesuras Olivier de la Marche describes began with music from the church and ended with music from the pie. Sometimes the bell began to toll, sometimes the organ began to play, sometimes the singers began a motet. Sometimes a shepherd climbed out of the pie and played the bagpipe, sometimes three singers in the pie sang a chanson, sometimes one heard flutes, a horn, or a hurdy-gurdy. And quite incidentally, Olivier de la Marche confirms that music marked the caesura between per-

40 Huizinga 2024, pp. 263–270.

41 Müller 1993, p. 62.

42 Gülke 2003, pp. 272f.

43 Gülke 2003, p. 272.

44 See Welker 1994.

45 Olivier de la Marche: Les Memoires, pp. 172, 175.

performances when he remarks, “faisoyent ansi tousjours l’eglise et la pasté quelque chose entre les entremets.”⁴⁶

As if that were not enough, music even contributed to little surprises in one of the performances: At one point in the festivities, when the church and the pie had sung and played four times in turn, a white stag entered the hall, ridden by a twelve-year-old boy. The lad began to sing in his bright, clear child soprano and was accompanied by the stag, that sang the “teneur,” or lower voice. The two circled the tables until they had sung all eight verses of the chanson. Olivier de la Marche even names the tune, *Je ne vis oncque la pareille*,⁴⁷ and adds that this number was a great success. “I never saw a woman your equal, my lovely lady” – that may have been an homage to the ladies present in the hall. Today the song *Je ne vis oncque la pareille* is attributed to the Franco-Flemish composer Guillaume Dufay as well as the Burgundian Gilles Binchois; contemporaries regarded them as equally talented artists. But whoever was the composer, the mention of this chanson again makes clear that the music at the Feast of the Pheasant was by no means music to be ignored, mere sonic background. On the contrary, it came from the most important composers and demanded full attention. It may be regrettable that Olivier de la Marche did not describe it more precisely or name its creators, but it would be a misunderstanding to take that as proof of its unimportance. That he mentions it so many times underscores the significance he attributed to it.

4.2. Ferrara

In the course of a century or two of advantageous marriages with several aristocratic European houses, the d’Este family, lords of the city of Ferrara, rose from margraves to dukes and their territory, strategically located between the Republic of Venice and the Papal States, from a margravate to a duchy. In 1471, Pope Paul II had named Borso d’Este Duke of Ferrara, with the proviso that Ferrara would revert to the Papal States if no legitimate heir were available. Until that eventuality occurred with the death of Alfonso II in 1597, five successive dukes made Ferrara into a cultural center of the highest order. What they lacked in terms of the lengthy family tree needed to join the circle of rulers by God’s grace, they strove to make up for by promoting culture. In his epic poem *Orlando furioso*, published and repeatedly expanded between 1516 and 1532, the d’Este courtier Lodovico Ariosto traced the family tree back to Troy and reshaped genealogical reality with literary fantasy. With their municipal construction projects, palace architecture, painting, literature, music, and an extravagant culture of theater and celebration, the dukes of Ferrara set a standard that was known and copied throughout Europe.

46 “Church and pie always do something between the courses”; Olivier de la Marche: *Les Memoires*, p. 175.

47 An edition of this song is most accessible in Gülke 2003, p. 454.

Cuisine too was an art for which the Ferrara Court was internationally famous. Christofaro di Messisbugo, who worked his way up the ladder of court offices as major-domo and seneschal and married into the Ferrara aristocracy, oversaw the ducal kitchen for decades and organized countless banquets in Ferrara, Mantua, and various country estates. His position in the social hierarchy is clear from the fact that he was often able to invite the ducal family and their entourage to dine at his own house. One such banquet occurred on Carnival Saturday in February 1548, shortly before his death that same year. A year later, his culinary legacy was published as *Banchetti, composizioni di vivande e apparecchio generale*, and under that or the alternative title *Libro novo nel qual s'insegna a far d'ogni sorte di vivande secondo la diversità de i tempi così di carne come di pesce* had gone through fifteen editions by 1626.⁴⁸ As the dedication to Ippolito d'Este on the occasion of his appointment to a cardinalate in March 1539 reveals, the manuscript of this book had evidently originated years earlier and had been expanded by the descriptions of several later banquets. The book comprised several sections. The first gave recommendations about all the things to keep in mind when planning a banquet, from accommodations for the guests, tableware and table linen, wine selection, ingredients and spices, and *batterie de cuisine*, to the necessary personnel and their duties. Among the latter were also the musicians, along with the advice that the “piffari” – the brass fanfare players – should see to their own meal while the duke was eating.⁴⁹ Conversely, that meant that the trumpeters were to accompany the duke’s every step – his arrival as well as his departure – with a fanfare and were therefore constantly on call. This is confirmed by a remark in the description of a banquet at which the *piffari* began to blow between two courses and everyone thought the meal was over, but the tablecloths were only being replaced.⁵⁰ A second part of the book describes fourteen banquets between 1529 and 1548 with their menus, and four of them include the music played at table. The third and longest part contains the recipes of the dishes served as well as of many other dishes.

Messisbugo’s work is an important source for the performance practice of instrumental ensemble music in an era when it was usually not noted down.⁵¹ However, the literature contains no reflection on the function of this music as table music. Howard M. Brown and Pierre M. Tagmann devoted their attention primarily to the instruments and the composition of the ensembles at two great banquets celebrating the marriage of the heir apparent Ercole d’Este to Renée de France on January 24 and May 20, 1529. And indeed, the descriptions of these two events contain the most extensive documen-

48 See Westbury 1963.

49 Messisbugo: *Libro novo*, fol. 8r.

50 “Il che fatto cominciarono a sonare i Piffari, & quivi pensò ogni uno che fosse finita la cena, si levò solo il primo Mantile [...]”; Messisbugo: *Libro novo*, fol. 12r.

51 Brown 1975; Tagmann 1978.

tation in that regard. But an interesting comparison is to a rather intimate dinner that Duke Alfonso I of Ferrara gave at the home of his sister Isabella, marchioness of Mantua, for several high imperial dignitaries. All of these descriptions indicate that Messisbugo placed great importance on striking a balance between the culinary and the musical. While the music in Mantua was varied but of rather small dimension, at the court feasts in Ferrara, one sensation followed another. Thus the first course on January 24 consisted of

- chicken dredged in almond batter, deep fried, and sprinkled with fine sugar
- roast quail, meat dumplings, and chicken livers
- roast pheasant dressed with orange slices
- onion soup
- puff pastry with pine nuts
- tartlets stuffed with fish innards
- deep fried and pickled trout tails
- deep fried red mullet
- eel wrapped in marzipan dough
- fish soup

The music for this course was composed by Alfonso della Viola; Madama Dalida and four other voices sang; besides, there were Maestro Alfonso with five musicians and five viola da gambas, a harpsichord with two stops, a lute, and a tenor and an alto recorder. For the second course, four singers performed madrigals. The third course was accompanied by dialogues in a mixed ensemble of eight voices and instruments. For the fourth course, in addition to five singers, the duke's entire instrumental forces were deployed: five viola da gambas plus a violin and a contrabass dubbed "orchessa" (the ogress), a dulcian as second contrabass, a krummhorn, two alto recorders, an organ with several stops, and a mute cornett. Five sackbuts and a cornett played for the fifth course. During the sixth course, the writer of comedies, Angelo Beolco – who owed his nickname "Ruzante" to his caricature of a Paduan peasant –, with five other men and two women circled the tables, sang madrigals in dialect, and argued with each other like Paduan peasants. The seventh course too was accompanied by buffoonish foolery in Venetian, Bergamasque, and Paduan dialects. During the eighth and final course, wind instruments intoned and the following desserts were further sweetened by five singers, five viols, a harpsichord, a tenor recorder, a lirone, a sackbut, and a flute.

The banquet in the Palazzo Belfiore, some distance outside the city, in May of the same year went off with similar opulence. Since the weather was warm, the table was set beneath an arbor in the garden. In another arbor near the head of the table, there were musicians playing and singing through the entire evening. There were ensembles similar to those in January, and this time there were several special attractions: a musician with a "fagotto" he had built himself, a young woman singer who accompanied

herself on the lute, four French boys singing chansons with many ornamentations, and a singer with a “lirone” who sang “al modo d’Orpheo” and “divinely,” as Messisbugo notes.⁵² During the final course, Alfonso della Viola once again deployed the full contingent of ducal musicians: six singers, six viola da gambas, a lirone, a lute and a “cittara,” a sackbut, a tenor and an alto recorder, a flute, a “sordina,” and one large and one small harpsichord. According to Messisbugo, the music was so wonderfully performed that the audience thought they were in paradise.

At all three banquets, one finds a thought-out dramaturgy based on the principle of variety. Each course of a banquet had its own table music, and each table music was differently populated than the preceding one. Vocal and instrumental music succeeded each other, or a new instrumental ensemble followed its predecessor. Little dramatic scenes and dances injected variety of mood, and at the end everyone who could sing or play was mobilized. In between, individual musicians could show off the finesse they were capable of. What the sophisticated dishes offered the palate, the table music claimed for the ear. And of course, these celebrations of the senses offered something for the eye as well. On the tables were decorated statues made of sugar, each a half meter (“tre palmi”) high, that were always traded out whenever the tablecloth, napkins, knives, and salt cellars were changed. In honor of the heir apparent Ercole, these statues told the Labors of Hercules – how he bested the Nemean Lion and the Hydra. These sugar statues were painted in lifelike colors with some gilding. There could have been no clearer demonstration of the host’s wealth, for sugar – along with the extravagantly employed spices – was one of the most expensive ingredients on the market. At the garden feast at the Palazzo Belfiore in May 1529, the Labors of Hercules were not featured, but instead themes paying tribute to nature, spring, inebriation, and love: five statues of Venus, five of Bacchus, and five of Cupid, all gilded. As the second table decoration, however, Messisbugo presented something so unusual that he wanted it accompanied by unusual music as well.

The tables were reset for the tenth course. Fifteen figures baked from a firm, very sweet short pastry seasoned with cinnamon, pepper, and rose water represented “eight naked Moors and seven naked Moorish women,” partially gilded, with laurel wreaths on their heads, while the anatomical parts conventionally concealed were covered with vegetables and flowers.⁵³ For this course, “M. Aphranio” played “il suo fagotto” – a statement that needs some explaining. Afranio degli Albonesi was a canon of the Ferrara Cathedral and, at this juncture, already more than sixty years old. He was a music lover and a collector of instruments who, in the 1520s, had worked on an instrument that he

52 Messisbugo: Libro novo, fol. 14^r.

53 “Quindeci figure, che furono otto mori ignudi, & sette femine ignude pur more, di pasta di Sosameli, con ghirlande di Lauro in testa dorate in parte, & concie con certe Verdure, & diversi fiori, che coprivano le parti che naturalmente si nascondono.” Messisbugo: Libro novo, fol. 12^v.

called a “phagotum.”⁵⁴ This was a sort of bagpipe, a complicated device of several pipes and various materials that could play two voices at once. If one can believe his nephew, who wrote an extensive report on the instrument and its invention in 1539, Reverend Afranio preferred to play religious music on his instrument. But at this banquet, his phagotum – with its authentic-sounding bagpipe skirling and “exotic” appearance – undergirded the presentation of the supposedly exotic and primordial statues with a dash of frivolity. When Duke Alfonso I hosted the imperial dignitaries in Mantua in 1532, Alfranio with his phagotum was among the performers in his musical entourage.

The great significance Messisbugo and his duke attributed to table music is also evident from the names of the musicians who are mentioned. Alfonso della Viola was the director of instrumental music and thus one of the leading musicians at the court in Ferrara. And the aforementioned Madama Dalida had already had a long career at the court: First mentioned in 1507 as a singer at the court of Lucrezia Borgia, she moved in 1512 to the household of Cardinal Ippolito I d’Este, the brother of Duke Alfonso I.⁵⁵ She became the cardinal’s mistress and bore him two children. After his death in 1520, she apparently remained at the court of Ferrara and preserved her reputation as an excellent singer; in 1529 she must have been about forty years old. Of special significance is also the singer, who sang “like Orpheus” to the sound of the *lirone*. “Like Orpheus” – at the beginning of the 16th century, that meant a solo vocalist accompanied by a *lira da braccio*, a stringed instrument played chordally. With it, a performer could accompany themselves and recite musically, i.e., sing epic poetry in particular. For the performance of epics, there was a standard melodic model available that was either repeated unchanged for each strophe, or could be varied *ad libitum* depending on the textual content and situation. This epic recitation was not noted down; its fascination consisted in the fleeting moment of musical improvisation, the art of the singer to convey the content in a different way each time. In times when polyphonic composition represented the high point of musical art and complex arrangements were often better understood by reading and studying than listening to them, epic recitation was in principle a different art form: oriented on the text, free of the technical rules of composition, improvisational, bordering on dramatic presentation. A vocalist who sang “*al modo d’Orpheo*” demanded undivided attention, for their performance was unique and unrepeatable.

Unlike the names of the most famous musicians, we do not know the title of even one of the pieces played at the ducal table. Thanks to Messisbugo, we know how magnificent the music was, but unlike the dishes whose recipes he wrote down, he kept secret what had sounded in the guests’ ears.

54 See Tagliavini 1960. On the instrument, see Galpin 2001.

55 See Prizer 1985.

4.3. Florence

Dalida dei Putti may have been one of the first women to become a paid, professional singer. For singing was a masculine profession. In church, women were to keep silent, and there were no opportunities elsewhere for female vocalists to perform in public. But at princely courts, talented female singers could find a place as ladies-in-waiting to an aristocratic lady. Especially at the court of Ferrara, female voices were prized, and the rulers were aware that with the unusual sonic experience of this high, virtuoso singing, they could attract the attention of the aristocratic and musical world far beyond the borders of their duchy. The charisma emanating from the mysterious “Concerto delle Dame” toward the end of the 16th century resulted from the deliberate promotion of musically gifted women who otherwise would have had no opportunity to turn their talent into a profession. In Baldassare Castiglione’s *Libro del Cortegiano* of 1528, one could read that musical training belonged in the repertoire of courtly behavior for both sexes. But the author insisted that the courtier should play music only as a pastime and by no means exhibit his talent like a professional musician before an audience of his inferiors. Castiglione also knew exactly how musical ladies should behave: Since women were bidden to be delicate, gentle, and modest, when singing or playing instruments they should forego all loud and repeated embellishments that are more virtuosic than charming. But it was exactly this virtuosity that characterized the art of the “Concerto delle Dame.” Music as a profession was made possible by Margherita Gonzaga, the wife of Duke Alfonso II, who took these singers into her household and saw to their musical training. Tarquinia Molza, Anna Guarini, and Laura Peverara were the daughters of bourgeois merchants or intellectuals and thus actually not part of court society. Livia d’Arco belonged to the lesser nobility in Mantua, and without her musical talent, would probably never have found a place in the entourage of the duchess. With their glamorous musical performances, the duchess’s ladies became a model for a new generation of female vocalists who began to make a profession of their art.

One was Vittoria Archilei, a celebrated singer from Rome, wife of a lutenist, who made her first international debut at the Florentine Intermedi in 1589. Another was Ippolita Recupito, who, as the wife of a Roman composer, performed in the entourage of Cardinal Montalto and was famous far beyond the boundaries of the Vatican. Also among this group were the female members of the family of the composer, singer, and vocal teacher Giulio Caccini: his wife Lucia and especially his two daughters Francesca and Settimia. Virtuoso singers of their caliber were few and far between, so it is not surprising that the entire family was hired for one of the most ostentatious celebrations of the early 17th century. The wedding of the Tuscan heir apparent Cosimo de’ Medici with a woman from the House of Habsburg was one more connection between the former banking family of the Medici and the most prominent royal families of Europe. The bride, Maria Magdalena, was the sister of the future Emperor Ferdinand II. As in Ferrara,

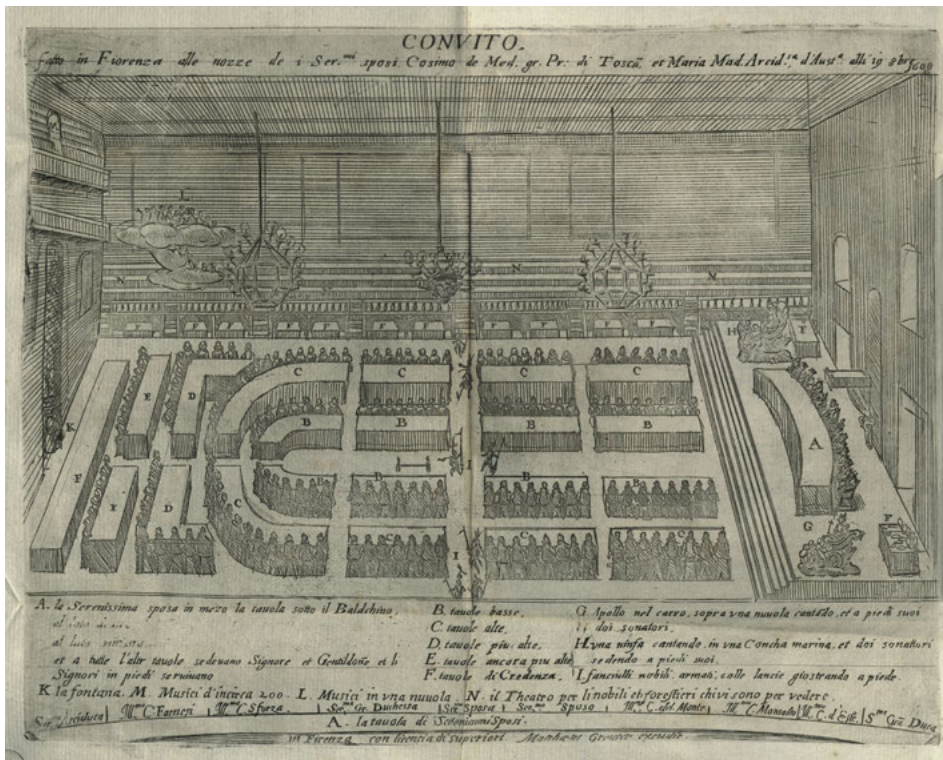


Fig. 1. Matthäus Greuter: Wedding banquet of Cosimo de' Medici and Maria Magdalena, Archduchess of Austria in 1608, Copperplate engraving, in: Camillo Rinuccini/Francesco Cini: *Descrizione delle feste fatte nele rali nozze de' serenissimi principi di Toscana D. Cosimo de' Medici, e Maria Maddalena arciduchessa d'Austria, Florence: Appresso I Giunti, 1608. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 4 P.o. it. 99 # Supplement 1.*

here in Florence, pomp and pageantry made up for the relative brevity of the family tree. For days, one sensational event followed another. The banquet of the evening of the wedding was only one, but one that all the reports describe as particularly successful. Cesare Tinghi, chronicler at the Medici court between 1600 and 1615, wrote in his diary that the table music played in the banquet hall was so beautiful one could imagine that the Heavenly Gates were opening.⁵⁶ A print of the banquet⁵⁷ shows a group of musicians on a cloud, as if to confirm Tinghi's report.

56 "et mentre si cenava fu cantato una gran musica in alto sopra la credenza che pareva il paradiso s'aprì tanto bene erano accomodati"; quoted from Solerti 1905, p. 44.

57 Solerti 1905, p. 43. See also https://tuttatoscana.files.wordpress.com/2018/08/wedding_banquet_-_matthaeusgreuterpcsimomariamaddalena.jpg?w=720 (last accessed: October 25, 2024).

A book in the tradition of Messisbugo again provides a description of the table music. In 1627, Vittorio Lancellotti, the majordomo of a cardinal, published the work *Lo scalco prattico*, which describes the numerous banquets he arranged in the course of his career. Lancellotti devoted himself to describing the dishes, the decorations, and in one case the music as well. His specialty was statuettes of sugar, marzipan, and even butter. Twice he mentions an Orpheus holding a lyre and surrounded by many animals – all sculpted from the latter ingredient.⁵⁸ He had organized the banquet for the marriage of Cosimo II to Maria Magdalena von Habsburg, and in his description of that feast at the end of the book, he also mentions the music, especially the female vocalists.

As the first course was being served in the grand hall of the Palazzo Vecchio, Vittoria Archilei and Ippolita Recupito, gorgeously attired, floated down on two clouds and sang “singolarissimamente”⁵⁹ (most uniquely) poems in honor of the bride for a quarter hour, until the next course was brought out and the clouds disappeared. During the second course, a triumphal chariot appeared in the air, from which the bass Melchiorre Palantrotti, a singer in the service of Cardinal Montalto, sang verses in honor of the couple until the third course was served. Then another triumphal chariot carrying the sisters Francesca and Settimia Caccini and another with Vittoria Archilei and Ippolita Recupito appeared and competed – sometimes in solo song and sometimes in ensemble – with such virtuosity that Lancellotti lacked the words to adequately describe the beauty of their music. The closing performance too, featuring all the singers and instrumentalists (the print of the banquet mentions two hundred musicians) before a backdrop of Paradise, caused Lancellotti to compare it to the music of heaven.

Four prima donnas, the most famous singers of their time, performing together at a banquet – there can be no clearer indication that as much care was devoted to the table music as to the other components of a celebratory banquet. Why would the Medici have gone to so much trouble if the music at table were considered a minor matter? There was probably no one present at the banquet who was not enthralled by the performance of these four “human nightingales.” This is confirmed by a remark of the Ferrara envoy in his report on another event during the wedding celebrations; he wrote that the room was filled with noise except when Ippolita Recupito sang. Then, an exquisite silence reigned.⁶⁰ Once again, we do not know what the singers sang. However, it could hardly have been written down, even if they had wanted to. For their art lived from improvisation, embellishing the melody, from the sensation at the moment of performance.

58 Lancellotti: *Lo scalco prattico* 1627, pp. 30, 281.

59 Lancellotti: *Lo scalco prattico* 1627, p. 238. Excerpts from the report are published in Bianconi 1987, pp. 266–271.

60 “Il vanto nella musica toccò alla Sig.^{ra} Hippolita del S.^{re} Car.^{le} Montalto, e ben si conosceva, poichè sempre vi era strepito, se non quando essa cantava, ch'allora si serbava universalmente uno esquisito silenzio.” Solerti 1905, p. 47.

Particularly in this situation, when four of them were singing – in any case, one more than the Ferrara “Concerto delle Dame” – the competition for the most seductive Siren song must have been an added incentive.

5. Conclusion

When one stops seeing table music through the derogatory lens of the 19th-century aesthetics of autonomy, it raises one of the fundamental problems of dealing with music in general. For music is embodied not only in written – and therefore unchanging – compositions but also in sonic – and therefore ephemeral – events. The latter, however, elude the knowledge of future generations. Over the centuries, the steadily increasing amount of written music – which allows us to recreate the compositions of a Heinrich Schütz, a Georg Philipp Telemann, or a Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – should not blind us to the fact that the essence of music was its realization as sound. But for music to sound, it needed interpreters who put their own stamp on the music. In the table music I have been investigating, there were frequent situations in which the interpretation went beyond serving the composition and played its own, completely independent, creative role.

In describing table music in the premodern era, then, it would be false to accept the surviving musical examples as *pars pro toto* and equate table music in general with the pieces published as such by Michael Pretorius, Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber, or Valentin Rathgeber. Table music was a European phenomenon, and if it was not defined or published as such in other countries, we must take this as further evidence that music made at table was no different from music played on other aristocratic or bourgeois occasions. At least, that is suggested by the *Symphonies pour les soupez du roy*, a large manuscript collection assembled in 1703 by Michel-Richard Lalande. It comprises the usual suites and, to a large extent, Lalande’s music for the theater. What was published in England as a “Musical Banquet” had little to do with table music but presented instead various compositions “like a banquet.” Robert Dowland, who invented the designation, entitled a volume published in 1610 *A Musicall Banquet. Furnished with varietie of delicious Ayres, Collected out of the best Authors in English, French, Spanish and Italian*. In his foreword, Dowland continued to play with the metaphorical comparison of the musical and the culinary: “I have fitted my Banquet for all tastes.”⁶¹

Of course, the idea that only the surviving table music scores provide information about this music would lead us astray. According to everything we learn from the forewords and dedications of the surviving collections, table music was not a separate

61 Dowland: *A Musicall Banquet* 1610, unpaginated. URL: <https://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2248508070/Sec0008/1?accountid=11359> (last accessed: October 25, 2024).

genre but was assembled from the best music also played in other places – madrigals and frottolas, religious songs, Italian arias and cantatas, instrumental arrangements of vocal music, dance music, and independent instrumental compositions. That is what the sources teach us if we read them with the eyes of their own time. Table music was a musical snapshot, appropriate for its occasion; it could be discreet and elegant but also outlandish and startling. And according to what the reports on the successful banquets teach us, the quality of the table music rose with the quality of the culinary arrangements. If you were going to eat a dove stuffed with veal sweetbreads, beef fat and marrow, sliced truffles, ground salami, and egg yolk, served on a marzipan plate, coated with fondant and sprinkled with gold dust,⁶² you could expect to hear similarly exquisite table music.

Familiar opera arias were enough for Don Giovanni, the country squire from the Spanish provinces, but for a Maria Magdalena von Habsburg, it had to be the unprecedented vocal art of four prima donnas who had never before been heard singing together.

We don't know what this courtly table music sounded like. It was not written down, probably in order to preserve its aura of uniqueness and unrepeatability. There is no mention of table music in contemporary theoretical discussions of music. An aesthetics of table music first developed when the phenomenon fell under critical examination and was found wanting. Only if we succeed in letting table music come alive as a performative phenomenon can we accurately determine its importance in the life of music. It is true that we lack almost all the necessary scores so that an "immanent or implicit aesthetics" could develop "in the texts or objects themselves."⁶³ However, all the evidence about table music that goes beyond its musical transmission can help us understand the social, artistic, and aesthetic dimension of this musical practice. It is a fundamentally different aesthetics than that of the 19th century. Embedded in a network of contemporary descriptions of feasts and graphic documents, ego-documents, official files, cookbooks, and writings of majordomos, an image of table music emerges that helps us understand why this cultural practice claimed such a large place in social intercourse.

62 Lancellotti: *Lo scalco prattico*, p. 238.

63 Gerok-Reiter/Robert 2019, p. 20.

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Bathing and Spa Music as a Space of Reflection for a *Different Aesthetics*

Abstract

Bathing in the early modern period is integrated into a wide circle of social, historical, and regional contexts. Bathing practices are therefore reflected in a broad corpus of sources. This includes medical and dietetic journals, bathing and cultural magazines, local bathing regulations and ordinances, and ecclesiastical sermons that used physical cleansing within the discourse of spiritual purity. There are also encyclopedias and dictionaries, reports on bathing trips, diaries and letters, historiographica and calendars, biographies and autobiographies, as well as genuinely literary texts. Bathing is reflected in paintings, woodcuts, copperplate engravings, or etchings and exemplified in sacred and secular bath songs. Many of these historical testimonies and art forms reveal insights into musicobalneological processes. Music for bathing and health resorts is primarily oriented towards its effect on visitors. Used during and outside of the actual moment of bathing, sometimes also practiced by bathers themselves, bathing music operates within a nexus of social performance (acts and actors), aesthetically autonomous art production (artefacts), and reflective consciousness (discourses). A praxeological approach to bathing culture and music addresses the dynamic interaction between these forces. In the interplay between heterological and autological references, we can unfold the aesthetic potential of the associative field around the practice, terminology, and word “bath.”

Keywords

Early Modern Period, Bath, Music Therapy, Dietary, Purity, Sanity, Affects, Balneology

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In his poem *Brunnenpromenade*¹ (Fountain Promenade), written in 1890 toward the end of the classic era of the health spa and with his typical distanced observations and ironical undertones, the novelist Theodor Fontane captured impressions that today are still generally associated with the music played at spas: the idyllic natural surroundings; the participants more or less involved in the action; the subtle, healthful effect of nature, music, and ceremonial idleness; the random repertoire of musical numbers; their positively offhanded scoring; the mood of the musicians; and last but not least, the music's effect on its intended audience. And although Fontane is describing a spa culture institutionalized during the 18th century in the wake of changing forms of public life and social interaction,² he also captures general phenomena and concrete examples of a *different aesthetics* that also apply to spa music in the early modern period.

“Nul bain pendant mille ans”³ – a thousand medieval years without a spa culture? In this case, Jules Michelet was mistaken: “N'en déplaie à Michelet, l'hommes du Moyen Âge se baignaient.”⁴ Even in the Middle Ages, people went to baths. The ancient Greek and Roman bathing traditions – both private (*balnea*) and public (*thermae*)⁵ – continued not just in the Byzantine Empire and Muslim Spain. In the West as well, beginning in 8th-century Italy, there was a revival of bathing in hot mineral springs (the Phlegraean Fields west of Naples are an early example).⁶ In the 12th and 13th centuries, these practices spread to urban populations in Germany and Britain as well. Around 1200, Petrus de Ebulo composed his *De balneis Puteolanis*, with an epigram for each of the thirty-five mineral springs around Pozzuoli.⁷ A miniature in the Codex Manesse from the early 14th century, entitled *Herr Jakob von Warte*, shows a springtime bath with a wreath of fresh

- 1 Fontane: *Brunnenpromenade*; Salmen 1997, pp. 217–219: “Kurmusiker – In den Residenzen des Glücks”.
- 2 Apart from cursory insights (Salmen 1994; Salmen 1999), the few music-historical discussions of this field treat it only from the mid-18th century forward (cf. especially the works of Christian Storch: Storch 2014a; Storch 2014b; Storch 2015). The encyclopedic *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* has no entry on spa music and provides only scattered references to *Kurmusik* in the 19th and 20th centuries.
- 3 Jules Michelet: *La Sorcière*, Brussels 1853, pp. 1–16; quoted from Boisseuil 2002, p. 5.
- 4 Boisseuil 2002, p. 5.
- 5 For Rome in the year 330 CE, Křížek 1990, p. 5 (without a source), names 860 baths and eleven *thermae*. The literature on this subject is vast, cf. Manderscheid 1988; some examples: Heinz 1983; Gros 1996; widely distributed but also often questioned: Brödner 1983.
- 6 Braunstein 1985; Braunstein 1986; Duerr 1988/1992; Squatriti 1998; Boisseuil 2002; Boisseuil/Wulfram 2012.
- 7 Petrus de Eboli: *De balneis Puteolanis*; 13 of the 28 surviving manuscripts are illustrated (beginning in the 14th century), and there are also printed versions since the 15th century; on the manuscripts, translations, and editions, see *Geschichtsquellen des deutschen Mittelalters*. Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften: <http://www.geschichtsquellen.de/werk/3957> (last accessed: October 30, 2024).

herbs, rose petals, clover, a lush tree with heart-shaped leaves, and twittering birds.⁸ In the same way, European bathing culture was renewed (and also aesthetically reflected) in the 15th century.⁹

In 1416, Gian Francesco Poggio Bracciolini described the bath as a space of action, communication, and reflection in his often-quoted epistle from Baden im Aargau (*Epistola ex Balneis apud Thuregum*).¹⁰ Returning from the Council of Constance, the Florentine humanist reported to his friend, the merchant and manuscript collector Niccolò Niccoli, about the topographical, climatic, and architectural features of a spa town north of the Alps and what one saw and heard while taking the waters.¹¹ Although Poggio Bracciolini reported directly from Baden – where he hoped to cure a pain in his wrist – his letter can be read less as a primary historical source than as the typological outline of a place of longing. Nevertheless, like Fontane’s poem, his report imaginatively captures and summarizes central components of activities at a spa: a cultivated “locus amoenus” (pleasance)¹² close to nature, often originating at a remote spring, provides the venue for a lived reality which, although with a clear functional purpose, is removed from everyday concerns and correspondingly aesthetically embellished and idyllically elevated. The cult of the body and conversation, the pleasures of food and wine, floral arrangements and finery structure the daily routine along with music and round dancing. Singing and playing instruments, mentioned in several places in the letter, are seamlessly integrated into the course of the day and are part of bathing itself, where music develops its harmonious effects. Conversely, it is not least an aesthetic potential that structures the spa as a space for communication and action and characterizes its functionality. Poggio Bracciolini does not hesitate to compare it to paradise.

Bathing and taking the waters occur in a wide variety of historical and regional cultures in the early modern era,¹³ interwoven with a wide circle of social contexts

8 Masters of the Codes Manesse, followup painter I; C: Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift (Codex Manesse). Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, fol. 46^v (Zurich, c. 1300 to 1340). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.2222> (last accessed: October 30, 2024).

9 A cursory overview of the iconography and architecture in Vassallo 1992.

10 Bracciolini: *Epistola*, letter no. 46; for a critical interpretation, cf. Duerr 1988/1992, pp. 59–73.

11 Schweizer 2016, p. 118.

12 Curtius 2013, pp. 195–200.

13 The diversity of bathing practices and cultures is put into practice via flowing water and springs; fountains; swimming pools; thermal, mineral, and sulfur baths; mud and moor baths; sweat and steam baths; institutionalized in acratotherms, thermal baths, or water baths in public health spas; in open-air swimming pools or bath houses; in health spas with formalized infrastructure or in private bath halls with tubs; also in drinking cures; and finally as a *fons salutis* in courtly society, as the entertaining ritual of a *balneum nuptiale* (in the widely reproduced copper engraving from the life of a woman by Wenzel Hollar in the 17th century), or in a metaphorical sense in the topos of the Fountain of Youth.

and their associated praxeological “technologies of the body.”¹⁴ Bathing practices are reflected in a correspondingly broad corpus of sources, including medicinal-dietetic journals,¹⁵ local bathing laws and regulations, rules of behavior with socio-moral undertones, penitential sermons that are part of a convoluted discourse on bodily hygiene, dictionaries and encyclopedias, reports of journeying to spas – so-called *badenfahrten* – diaries and letters, historical accounts, calendars, biographies and autobiographies, as well as fictional texts. Bathing practices are depicted in paintings, woodcuts, copper engravings, and etchings and were the subject of songs both sacred and secular. Many of these historical documents and artworks portray musico-balneological communicative processes that are often an integral part of spa culture and throw light on texts and images, as well as notes and texts, whose effect and evaluation are intertwined.

Spa music should be seen primarily in the context of its intended use. Depending on the situation – whether integral or peripheral to the primary activity of the spa, and even as music made by the guests themselves – it is integrated into a force field of social performance (acts and actors), the inherent logic of production (artifacts), and reflective consciousness (discourses). A praxeological approach to spa culture and spa music addresses these three interconnected levels that have dynamic influence on one another. In the interplay between heterological and autological connections, the field of associations called “baths” unfolds its aesthetic potential. Here it realizes its unique institutionalized space of action and interaction that emerges as a “heterotopia” in Foucault’s sense. The heterotopic space “bath” is not just a physical but also an “effectively enacted”¹⁶ location in which acts, actors, artifacts, and discourses meet. Established by and within society, it proves to be locally shielded, often achieved only after a long development, temporally limited by its expected curative effect – whether in the sense of a utopian sense of well-being or a religious healing. In this “system of opening and closing,”¹⁷ a musico-balneological aesthetics develops in the intertwining of sensation and effect.

1. The Aestheticizing Space

Baths are “spaces of imagination and the concentration of urban society.”¹⁸ As a space of action and communication, they at the same time implicate practices that gener-

14 Mauss 1936/1979 (originally in a lecture in 1934).

15 Fürbeth 1995 lists 69 titles; further historically oriented treatments in Bäumer 1903; Martin 1906 or more recently in Probst 1971; Rudolph 1982; Bitz 1989; Lins 1995; Loleit 2008; Büchner, R. 2014; after the first funding phase (2019 to 2023), the database of Project A4 in Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391 contains over 400 titles from the 15th to the beginning of the 18th century.

16 Foucault 1967/1986, p. 24.

17 Foucault 1967/1986, p. 26.

18 Schober 2019.

ate their own “acoustical and musical aura.”¹⁹ Here subtly therapeutic and redemptive sounds are subject to medical, dietetic, hygienic, sanitary, cleansing, or simply restful and entertaining standards, but also to social, moral, and religious contemplation and reflection. Phenomena of the acoustic environment are integrated into the space itself as well as into social rituals, compositional style, norms, and context. Space is the ordering concept, whose sense function can be seen as its primary and determining factor, while spatial structure remains a secondary, dependent factor.²⁰ The sense function takes shape by way of the aestheticizing of the bath as an experiential space. Its essential features as a *locus amoenus* include acoustic references that enrich the beauties of the landscape belonging to this topos – trees and meadows, springs and brooks, bird-song, flowers, and gentle breezes.²¹

Acoustic phenomena can be systematized hierarchically, from the sounds of water and animals to sounds metaphorically comparable to – or actual perceptions of – human voices or instrumental sounds. In the process, direct dietetic-medicinal effects emerge; in the spa environment, the “sweet concertizing of the little birds” chases away “all melancholic fancies”²² and the “music of water between the stone walls”²³ banishes the pains and heavy thoughts of the spa guests. Due to the variety of sources and the variables of author, time, place, and genre, it is not easy to decide whether such descriptions are accurate reflections of the acoustic environment, exaggerations, or topoi. Nevertheless, some aspects can be systematically singled out. For instance, a clear dichotomy in the descriptions of the noise of water emerges: on the one hand lovely, soothing sounds, and on the other, an unpleasant roaring. There is a direct transition from one to the other in Johann Kolweck’s description of the Pfeffersbad. The stream and its inflow make

such a great racket and roar [...] that the people who come there to recover their health, on their first entrance into the mountain gorge, think they hear the melody or song of a music composed of human voices and all sorts of instruments. Then, however, their ears become so overburdened with the constant noise that what seemed to them at first a lovely music becomes an unpleasant annoyance. Others, however, for whom the roar at first seems like a drum or some other loud instrument or the turbulence of a millwheel, find it in the end unendurable.²⁴

In spa texts from the early modern era, birdsong too should be regarded primarily as a topos, especially when the nightingale sings a spa poet to sleep or its “loveliness”

19 Salmen 1994, p. 14.

20 Cf. Cassirer 1969, p. 10.

21 Curtius 2013, p. 195; cf. Salmen 2006; Kremer 2012.

22 Jaser: *Thermologia Wemdingana*, pp. 4f.

23 Schmuz: *Neue Wunder beschreibung*, p. 18.

24 Kolweck: *Tractat*, p. 67.

helps the guests in their regimen.²⁵ The instruments described in these sources are often associated with descriptions of nature and are called “hautboen,” the classical instrument of bucolics.²⁶ But there are also more specific descriptions – for instance, of water that sounds like it is “played on a clarion or quiet trumpet.”²⁷ Thus the spa environment and its associated acoustic activity are reflected on the one hand in topoi or metaphors, but on the other hand, a free space opens up for acoustic perceptions and comprehends a highly differentiated and individualized “acoustic aura.”²⁸ The early modern balneological sources, however, leave open the actual – i.e., not metaphorically exaggerated – acoustics of the physical rooms and architectural specifics of the spas.²⁹ Descriptions of volume, echoes, or similar acoustic effects can be found at most in connection with individual performers. By their nature, actual acoustic conditions differ widely according to the size of the bathing space and the number of bathers.

Graphic art also provides specific information about bathing activity in the early modern era and configures the bath as a space of activity and communication. The pen-and-ink sketch for a wall fountain (Fig. 1) – but possibly only for a wall decoration – by the Nuremburg architect, sculptor, goldsmith, and graphic artist Peter Flötner (c. 1530/1540)³⁰ is an idealized and highly artificial scene of a forest spring. Besides the rugged rocks and sparse vegetation, three tiny mountain goats indicate a (more aspirational than representational) mountainous environment. The construction of the bathing pool is also clearly articulated, with a back wall of smoothly chiseled stone and a knee-high cordon in front. Water pours into the pool from two putti heads (that are anything but natural), exits through the head of a satyr, and flows toward the viewer across the lower edge of the picture frame. Music enters the scene by way of a fiddler. He stands in an acoustically advantageous niche, somewhat in the background but directly participating in the bathing activity. Indeed, the entire group of figures on the left – including the putti head – gazes at him.

Lucas van Valckenborch’s painting *Emperor Rudolf II Taking the Waters* (c. 1593)³¹ embeds the scene in a universal landscape already well established by the end of the

25 Wasserbach: *Perpetuum Mobile*, p. 8.

26 In spa music, many more instruments were used, but it is notable that when associated with descriptions of nature, it is mainly instruments typical of pastoral poetry that appear.

27 J.J.A.M.L. u. P.: *Kurtze doch ausführliche Beschreibung*, p. 21.

28 Salmen 2006, p. 114.

29 Only isolated examples of descriptions of acoustic conditions in acratotherms exist, e.g., in Johann Daniel Gohl’s *Ausführungen über den Freyenwalder Gesundbrunnen*. He mentions a “triple echo, where very pleasant music can be heard.” See Gohl: *Gantz Generale Instruction*, pp. 38f.

30 Peter Flötner: *Sketch for a wall fountain* (c. 1530/1540), pen-and-ink drawing in black with green, brown, and blue watercolor tints.

31 Lucas I. van Valckenborch: *Emperor Rudolf II Taking the Waters* (c. 1593), oil on oak panel, 25.3 × 40.2 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, 5655; <https://www.khm.at/de/object/2000/> (last accessed: October 30, 2024).

16th century (Fig. 2). The sunken pool is smoothly integrated into the rising cliff, while in the valley below, an idyllic landscape with traditional elements such as a winding river and massive rock formations stretches to the distant horizon. The group of visitors taking the waters stands on a plateau enclosed by a wall. Despite variously occupied individuals and groups, the scene exudes a peaceful harmony. In the center of activity stands the court lutenist in contemporary dress and holding his instrument – depicted in great detail – in playing position. Music rounds off the idyll evoked by the location via the old topos of a harmoniously tuned lute. It aestheticizes the act of taking the waters, thereby perfecting the curative experience and guaranteeing its positive outcome.

2. Dietetic Practice

The elaboration of spa culture happens casually. To begin with, the wish for health and healing is at the center of the visit to the spa. The Middle Ages reflected on the path to a healthy life via the *sex res non naturales*, adopted from ancient dietetic practice. In contrast to the *res naturales* – the natural givens of one's wellbeing (the four elements, the four humors, the organs, etc.) – there are things that man himself is obligated to regulate. In the balance of these *res non naturales*,³² the *affectus animi* (emotions) have a central role and influence all the others. And according to Pythagorean and Platonic conceptions, the regulation of the emotions is in turn intimately related to music. The parallelism between a world order founded on numbers (*musica mundana*), the body and soul of man (*musica humana*), and actual musical sounds (*musica instrumentalis*) aims for harmonious interaction and begins a long tradition of describing the *effectus musicae*, the effects – or better, characteristics of music. Many early modern authors describe music as *gubernatrix* of the affects.³³ Music not only stimulates the emotions, but through them also affects physical relations, an idea still present in the 17th century in the works of René Descartes and Athanasius Kircher.

Kircher describes the relation between music and the emotions in great detail. He identifies eight general emotions³⁴ and explains music's various effects on the body

32 Breathing (*aer*), nourishment (*cibus et potus*), movement (*motus et quies*), sleep (*somnus et vigilia*), excretion (*repletio et evacuatio*), and emotions (*accidentia animi*); Schmitt 1995/2003; Schipperges, H. 1985; Schipperges, H. 2003.

33 Finck: *Practica Musica* [p. 13, unpaginated]: “[...] *quod ea [musica] est gubernatrix affectuum, Potest enim anxias curas discutere & omnes affectus optime temperare & regere, ut ex tristibus laeti, ex iratis sedati efficiantur.*” “[...] because this [music] is the ruler of the emotions. Namely, it can shake off anxious fears and excellently moderate and control all affects, so that happy [affects] can be produced from sad ones and tranquil [affects] from angry ones.”

34 Kircher asserts that music influences only the eight general emotions, but not affects of love or hate. However, the general emotions can also induce further affects; Kircher: *Neue Hall- und Thonkunst*, p. 127; Kircher: *Musurgia universalis*, pp. 158f.



Fig. 2. Lucas I. van Valckenborch: *Emperor Rudolf II Taking the Waters*, shortly after 1593, oil on oak, 25.3 × 40.2 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, Inv. No. 5655.

and the spirit from several perspectives. He assumes that the *affectiones* or *passiones* in man have “physical conditions”: “Because the affectiones or passionis [...] occur in the appetitu sensitivo corporeo & materiali, they must necessarily also have physical conditions.”³⁵ In anger, for example, the gall bladder emits “hot vapors,” but under pleasant circumstances, the liver emits “sweet vapors.”³⁶ Thus, music activates the motions of the organism. External movements of air (sound) are initiated and excite “the inner air or spirit,” which “drives the imagination” and thus activates the affects and “vapores.”³⁷ As a consequence, whoever comprehends this connection between outward and inner conditions – i.e., the interplay of the physical and psychological – “would be able with only his voice to move any person in all emotions.”³⁸ But although Kircher ascribes to music almost universal healing powers on the emotions, he also points out that music can heal only those illnesses which “flow directly from black and yellow bile.”³⁹ For the excitation and effect of the emotions, he considers four aspects to be central: 1) the “diverse and artificial mixture of tones and voices,” 2) the “definite number of verses or pieces occurring in a certain sequence,” 3) the “song text,” and 4) the condition and “suitable disposition” of the listener.⁴⁰ However, music does not move the emotions of all listeners in the same way, since “the subjecta are not the same” and do not have “the same temperament.”⁴¹ Kircher identifies three sorts of “music-cure”: 1) a “supernatural” cure (theological miracles), 2) “the artful work of the evil spirit,” and 3) a “natural” cure, in which he concentrates on the natural music-cure.⁴²

René Descartes has a unique approach: he defines the emotions as perceptions or feelings of the soul, which they maintain and strengthen by a certain movement of the spirits.⁴³ With its varying tempi, music can evoke different emotions: slow music

35 Kircher: *Musurgia universalis*, p. 138. In addition, Kircher, on p. 318 of *Musurgia universalis*, asserts that based on the physical and psychological context, the affects can be identified “ex pulsibus.”

36 Kircher: *Musurgia universalis*, p. 138.

37 Kircher: *Musurgia universalis*, p. 139. On p. 171 of *Musurgia universalis*, Kircher adds: “We assume that there is present not only an external but also an internal air of everything, which moves according to the sono [...].”

38 Kircher: *Musurgia universalis*, p. 153f.

39 Kircher: *Musurgia universalis*, p. 172.

40 Kircher: *Neue Hall- und Thonkunst*, pp. 128 and 153. Thus, according to Kircher’s ideas, both the composer and the interpreter, as well as the listener, are required to produce the best possible excitation and effect of the affects.

41 Kircher: *Musurgia universalis*, p. 152. Kircher also mentions on pp. 156f. of his *Musurgia universalis* an attempt to compare the way different composers generate certain affects in order to see how the compositions are distinct from one another. According to his report, however, this experiment was not carried out.

42 Kircher: *Neue Hall- und Thonkunst*, p. 138.

43 Descartes: *Passions de l’Ame*, p. 38.

elicits quieter feelings (weariness, sadness, etc.), faster music more fervid feelings such as joy.⁴⁴

Well into the 18th century, evaluative judgments of music's effects constituted a standard component of treatise prefaces, or had their own chapter.⁴⁵ They were arranged in an exemplary system of twenty aspects in Johannes Tinctoris's *Complexus effectuum musices* (c. 1470/1480)⁴⁶ and understood as negatively evaluative paradoxes in Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim's discourse *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et atrium* (1530).⁴⁷ Reflection on these effects and characteristics of music belongs to the traditional frame of reference for spa music. Balneological sources offer frequent and characteristic examples for the ambivalent effects of music.⁴⁸

In his treatise *Pyrmontisches Curioses Brunnen-Gespräch* (Curious Fountain Conversation in Pyrmont),⁴⁹ Desiderius Gottfried describes on the one hand music's concrete, positive effects on depressed or melancholy spa guests. On the other hand, additional attention is given to material ranging from the biblical stories of Saul and David to historical examples and anecdotes. In the *Amusements Des Eaux De Cleve*,⁵⁰ the description of a morning song while the guests are taking the waters leads to a discussion of music's effects: Besides driving out harmful feelings of melancholy as well as healing physical ailments such as gout, etc., it also refers to both music's powerful benefits and the harm resulting from its misuse. Detrimental consequences come above all from singing in the bath, which, according to barber-surgeons, fills the head, makes it "weak and fluid"⁵¹ and generally weakens the spa guest. Of the beneficial effects for health, the strengthening of positive emotions in the psycho-physical interrelation is especially emphasized. Music enlivens the disposition and strengthens the *spiritus*, so that "they are dispersed everywhere" and "could be purged through all parts."⁵² During the course of the cure, all sadness, concern, anxiety, and fear must be set aside, and the spa guests should "be

44 Descartes: *Musicae compendium*, p. 10: "Quod autem attinet ad varios affectus, quos varia mensura Musica potest excitare, generaliter dico, tardiores lentiores etiam in nobis motus excitare, quales sunt languor, tristitia, metus, superbia &c: celeriores vero etiam celeriores affectus, qualis est letitia &c." 'But as for the various affects that music can evoke through different tempi, I say in general that a slow [tempo] causes quieter feelings in us, e.g., weariness, sadness, fear, pride, etc., a faster one faster affects, e.g., gaiety, etc.'

45 E.g., Affligemensis: *De musica*, um 1100.

46 Tinctoris: *Complexus*.

47 See Schipperges, Th. 2003; Schmidt-Beste 1999/2016.

48 Schipperges, Th. 2003.

49 Gottfried: *Pyrmontisches Curioses Brunnen-Gespräch*.

50 *Amusements Des Eaux De Cleve*.

51 Pansa: *Kurtze Beschreibung*, p. 107 (Part 2).

52 Geiger: *Fontigraphia*, pp. 134f.

diverted and enjoy the *musica vocali & instrumentali*.”⁵³ The voice too can be improved by drinking the mineral water, as long as singing and calling out in the baths are not practiced to an excessive degree. Taking the waters also has an additional positive effect on the senses: drizzling water on the head and into the ears strengthens the sense of hearing so important for music reception. Various remarks by barber-surgeons suggest that active performance of vocal music could impair the curative process, while no sources claim adverse effects from active instrumental performance.⁵⁴ All sources seem to agree, however, that receptive listening to music is good for health.

“This idea [...] not only remained alive in the literature, but from the beginning had direct, practical consequences:”⁵⁵ *musica aegrotos sanat* – music heals the sick. In describing his *quartus decimus effectus*, Tinctoris names Asclepius of Bithynia, Galen, and Avicenna, all of whom are repeatedly quoted as authorities in medical spa literature and popular guides to health.⁵⁶ Music in the communicative and interactive space of public baths exists in the dynamic interplay of *curare* and *delectare*. Thus dietetics in the baths must be understood as a process that brings together autological-creative and heterological-functional aspects and is thereby a paradigm for a praxeological understanding of the aesthetic that the Collaborative Research Center advocates.

In the Middle Ages and early modern era, an entire, extensive literary genre dealt with the regulation of a healthy life, the *Regimen sanitatis*. To this genre belongs a widely-read compilation of tables pertaining to health education by the 11th-century Christian Arab physician Ibn Butlān.⁵⁷ It was translated into Latin as *Tacuinum sanitates* and in 1533 into German by the Strasbourg municipal physician Michael Herr as *Schachtafel der Gesuntheit* (Chess Boards of Health). Music constitutes a paradigm of this dietetics, borrowed by Arab physicians from ancient ethical instruction.⁵⁸ While the richly illustrated *Tacuinum* manuscripts depict precious objects⁵⁹ from the last quarter of the 14th century, popular calendars are a frequent source for medicinal dietetics.⁶⁰

53 Sebizius: Beschreibung, pp. 106f.

54 This could suggest that during bathing, guests themselves sang, but did not play musical instruments.

55 Kümmel 1977, p. 91.

56 Tinctoris: Complexus; cf. Schmid 1986; Schipperges, Th. 2003.

57 Butlān: Taqwīm aṣṣiḥḥa (Tabular Overview of Health) by Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Muḥṭār ibn al-Ḥasan ibn 'Abdūn ibn Sa'-dūn ibn Buṭlān.

58 Abert 1968; Kümmel 1977, pp. 245–257.

59 E.g., the so-called Housebook of the Cerruti, c. 1390; music is represented by organ and string playing (Organare cantu vel sonare) as well as dance music with an alta-capella (Sonare et balare).

60 The first serially issued German popular calendars go back to a manuscript by Johannes Wissbier von Gmünd (not to be confused with that of the Viennese mathematician, astronomer, and humanist Johannes von Gmunden); see Zinner 1925, pp. 806–808; Zinner 1952, pp. 46–50; Brévar 1988. A comprehensive examination of this genre was recently published by Kiening 2020; on the Roman tradition, cf. Wolkenhauer 2011.

In addition to the days of the year and their saints, such calendars and almanacs⁶¹ contain illustrations of the zodiac signs and the planets and brief essays on the humors and temperaments or health remedies of the time, such as bloodletting, cupping, and bathing.

Music's connection to spa culture is especially reflected in the typical woodcuts that often illustrate the calendars and almanacs.⁶² To cite just one example, three of the hundred woodcuts in Johann Blaubirer's often reissued Augsburg calendar (Fig. 3) of 1481⁶³ have spa themes that show the medicinal-dietetic acts of cupping and bloodletting. In the course of the year, May was the classic month in which to address the theme of spas since in May, the mineral water was supposed to have especially curative properties.⁶⁴ Moreover, the notion of the "merry month of May" exemplifies the popular connection between hygiene and erotic adventures at the spa.

In Blaubirer's calendar as well, the month of May brings good living into the spa activities: "In disem Monat man auch baden sol / Tantzen, singen, springen und leben wol" (In this month one should take the waters / Dance, sing, leap, and live well).⁶⁵ The accompanying woodcut⁶⁶ shows a male musician – either a beau of the woman in the bath or a professional musician – dressed in a simple, collarless doublet, leggings, and crakows (the latter cut off by the edge of the print and only suggested). He stands by the wooden tub, playing the lute for the female bather and perhaps singing as well. In this image, which should not be thought of as a realistic picture, music underlines the harmonious feelings of the bath. That this is so artfully conveyed by verse, image, and the depiction of music emphasizes the cultivated conception of the bathing process.

The depiction of music and its effects extends into the treatises on bathing as well, especially those that treat bathing in natural thermal and mineral springs rather than in enclosed bath houses or Turkish baths. In the title-page woodcut of Gallus Etschenreutter's *Aller heilsamen Bäder und Brunnen Natur / krafft / tugendt / und würckung* (The

61 On the terminology, see Kiening 2020, pp. 25f.

62 Amelung 1980.

63 *Deutscher Kalender*, Augsburg: Blaubirer 1481: Text begins: "Es spricht der Meyster Almensor," BSB Shelf mark: 4 Inc.c.a. 190 I, pp. 130f.

64 This is reflected, for example, in the *Meinauer Naturlehre* (Meinau Natural Lore, c. 1300) and was a popular belief widely spread in the calendars of the 15th and 16th centuries and also in the often quoted song "Man sagt wol: in dem meien / da sind die brünlein gsund" (It's said in May the springs are healthful). The first mention in the sources is in Johann Fischart, called Mentzer: *Af-fentheurlich Naupengeheurliche Geschichtklitterung*, 1575, the eighth chapter, p. 118: "Man sagt wol inn dem Meyen: da sind die Prünlein gsund"; without attribution identified as "strophes 1 and 2 of a broadsheet, Nuremberg c. 1530"; from a *Kommersbuch* (a songbook from a student fraternity); other sources from the 15th century: Scandello: *Deutsche Liedlein*, no. 3; Eccard: *Neue deutsche Lieder*, no. 22.

65 *Deutscher Kalender*, Augsburg: Blaubirer 1481, p. 16.

66 *Deutscher Kalender*, Augsburg: Blaubirer 1481, p. 17.

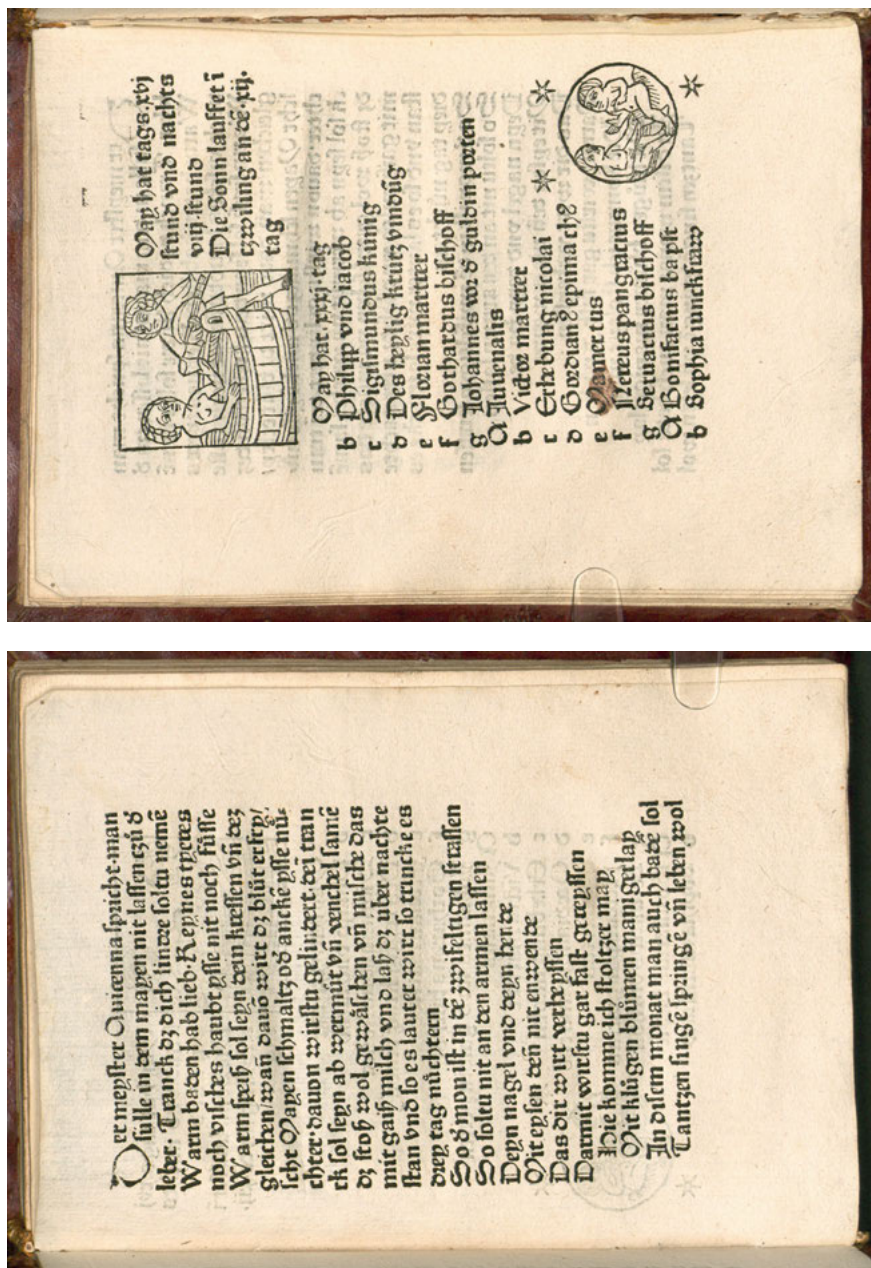


Fig. 3. Calendar: Iatromathematisches Hausbuch, Augsburg: Johann Blaubirer, 1481, fol. 7^r and 7^v. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Sign. 4 Inc. ca. 190 l.

Nature, Power, Virtue, and Effect of All Healthful Baths and Springs, 1571),⁶⁷ a fiddler accompanies a group of bathers in a fountain pool in a natural setting. The musician stands a bit in the background but is naked like the others, i.e., is himself part of the bathing activity. At the same time, from his slightly raised outsider perspective, he stands for the healing “power, virtue, and effect” of music.⁶⁸

3. Spiritual Bathing

In almost all religions, purification commandments and regulations reflect the nexus of water, healing, and salvation. As exemplified by the Jewish mikvah and the Muslim hammam, such religiously motivated systems of order go beyond mere hygiene; their established rules extend into culture and society.⁶⁹ The purity of spirit and soul stand above physical health.

Based on ancient Jewish traditions,⁷⁰ Christian baptism is also a lustration ritual.⁷¹ John the Baptist’s “baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4)⁷² in the Jordan River – intended as a one-time event and typologically anticipated by the healing of the leprous Aramean Naaman in the Jordan (Second Kings 5)⁷³ – occurs against the background of the impending Judgment Day.

In this context, depictions such as the 25 woodcuts (after his own templates) from Thomas Murner’s *Ein andechtig geistliche Badenfahrt* (A Devoutly Spiritual Journey to a Spa, 1514)⁷⁴ gain heterological and autological relevance. In accord with accompanying verses, the titlepage woodcut alludes to the heavenly origin of the purifying spa water: “Wer sich in disem bade reint / Und wie ich schreib mit got vereint / der west in einem bad zumol / Leib / und seel / als er dan sol” (Whoever washes in this bath / And as I write unites with God / he dwells especially in a bath / Body / and Soul / as he should).⁷⁵ The Franciscan Murner himself is the spa guest and Christ the “barber-surgeon who

67 Etschenreutter: *Aller heilsamen Bäder und Brunnen Natur*.

68 The fact that the artist apparently borrowed from the arrangement of figures in Dürer’s woodcut *The Men’s Bath*, with its depiction of the four temperaments and the five senses, possibly gives the woodcut a further dimension; see Mentzel 2013.

69 Douglas 1966; Şahin 2017.

70 On the origin of Christian baptism in the baptism of John and the distinction between the one-time ritual and regular immersion baths of the Essenes, cf. Avemarie 2011; Gnlika 1961 provides insight into older, partly divergent opinions of other investigators (while having his own assessment of a relevant sacerdotal component to the baptism of John).

71 Alles 2011.

72 Here and throughout in the King James translation.

73 In the Septuagint translated as βαπτίζειν (*baptizein*); on parallels in art, cf. Koenen 2018.

74 Murner: *Ein andechtig geistliche Badenfahrt*.

75 Murner: *Ein andechtig geistliche Badenfahrt*, p. 6.

came from heaven.”⁷⁶ He “publicly” invites “everyone” to the act of “baptism,” “as God himself bids us to bathe.” The signal that the baths were open was traditionally a trumpet blast (“in’s Bädli blasen”).⁷⁷ In Murner’s account, God is the spa herald: “God himself trumpeted us to the bath” (“Got hat uns selbst ins bad geblasen”).⁷⁸

A woodcut⁷⁹ depicts an apparently one-piece instrument to blow fanfares and signals, with a long, cylindrical resonating tube and a slightly flared bell. Known as a *buisine*, this instrument had been used by military heralds since the 11th century. The Hebrew Bible mentions such an horn, with both secular and sacred connotations, as a *ḥăṣôṣrā* (חֲצוֹצְרָה).⁸⁰ In the Septuagint it is a *salpinx* (σάλπιγξ) and in the Vulgate, a *tuba*. Luther calls it both a *Trompete* (trumpet) and a *Posaune* (trombone), like the “Posaune Gottes” (trump of God: First Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 1:10, i.a.) of the Last Judgment.

In the visual arts, an angel playing the *tuba* or *Posaune* is an iconographic topos, especially in the context of the Ascension and the Apocalypse⁸¹ and as a watchman on capitals or church roofs. An eschatological orientation⁸² also characterizes Murner’s purification ritual. The sere plant just below the instrument’s bell may be an implicit *memento mori*, well before the entrance to the bathhouse visible in the background. Thus in this woodcut, the praxeological model of a *different aesthetics* is doubly reflected: On the one hand, the allegorical level of purification from sin is superimposed on the traditional bathing process in the dietetic context of a *regimina sanitates*. On the other hand,

76 Murner: Ein andechtig geistliche Badenart, pp. 9f.

77 Martin 1906, p. 14; Salmen 1994, p. 14; Křížek 1990, p. 67: “After the morning heating of the bath hall, the attendants gave a horn signal or a trumpet blast, or banged a pan or drum to announce that the bath was warm enough and the people could come.”

78 Murner: Ein andechtig geistliche Badenart, p. 14.

79 Murner: Ein andechtig geistliche Badenart, p. 13; <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb00083105?page=12,13> (last accessed: October 30, 2024).

80 Braun 1994/2016.

81 In contrast to the predominant choruses of singing angels in a liturgical setting or, beginning in the 13th century, angels with stringed instruments such as lute, vielle, rebec, mandora, psaltery, lira da braccio, and sometimes quiet wind instruments such as recorders; also angels playing musical instruments, e.g., in depictions of the Nativity and images of Mary or the saints, among them the topos of the *Sacra Conversazione*. Cf. Walter/Jaschinski/Winternitz 1995/2016; also in Stefan Lochner’s *Last Judgment* as apocalyptic instruments of the devil (c. 1435, Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum); Hammerstein 1962/2000; Hammerstein 1959/2000. Georg Wolfgang Panzer mentions a “cow horn” (Annalen, p. 273); and in fact, early on there are depictions of angels holding curved horns (e.g., Apocalypse, Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Hs. 31, fol. 135^v, 8th/9th century; depictions of the Last Judgment from the Pericopes of Henry II, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4452, fol. 202^r, beginning of the 11th century, cf. Hammerstein 1962/1990, figs. 26 and 31).

82 While here Christ holds the instrument with his right hand on the mouthpiece and his left on the tube, the hand positions are reversed in the depiction of two angels standing by the enthroned St. Francis and holding similar straight military trumpets on a fresco in the church of San Francesco in Pistoia (school of Giotto, mid-14th century).

there is the autological-artistic communicative form in verse, graphic art, and the sonic association of a concrete musical instrument. Art imparts to the powerful existential message a “conceptual form”⁸³ intentionally homiletic in the best sense of the word.

Early modern spa literature repeatedly refers to the triune God who, as creator of water, makes possible spa healing in the first place. Multifarious references in balneological discourse to water as a basic element of the creation offer points of contact that reach from biblical stories of healing to miracles in the local spa. Devotions and various other religious exercises in the daily spa routine are also described. On one hand, there is quiet, personal prayer that dispenses with audible singing or music making altogether – in harmony with the Pauline and Augustinian doctrine of *non voce sed corde*. In Kolweck’s description of the Pfeffersbad, spa guests – in recollection of the sins they have committed – are encouraged to sing a “little spiritual song of contrition, sorrow, and consolation sotto voce” (“Geistlichs / Rew / Leyd / und Trostliedle / in stiller Stimme”)⁸⁴ in the course of the day. On the other hand, there are references to worship services in which guests sang hymns together. The pastor of Wolckenstein comes to the spa regularly on Sundays and holidays and invites guests “to a spa-service pleasing to God, with singing, preaching, and prayer.”⁸⁵ This corresponds to Johann Christian Schwedler’s recommendation that “pious” spa guests sing Christian hymns together and, while praying and singing, think about baptism as a water cure.⁸⁶ To be sure, hymns were not necessarily sung only during services; spiritual repertoire could also be struck up as entertainment during bathing activities. In his account of the acratotherm in Weltzen, Johann Rummelin writes that the spa guests sang a “lovely hymn and spiritual song” to patiently pass their time in the bath.⁸⁷ In addition, there are references to the typical procedure if a guest died at the spa; in preparation for the death, music was played and there were quiet devotions, while angelic music was played after the patient died. One should also not underestimate the role of religious differences among the guests. The singing of hymns with German texts was forbidden at the (Catholic) Pfeffersbad,⁸⁸ while in a description of the spa in Cleve,⁸⁹ there is a discussion of church

83 Büchner, F. 1974, p. 105.

84 Kolweck: Tractat, pp. 68f.

85 Müller: Thermae volccensteinenses, p. 273.

86 Schwedler: Der Gottseelige Bade-Gast, pp. 76f.

87 Rummelin: Ferinae VVeltzheimenses, p. 39.

88 These prohibitions on singing are codified, for example, in the bathing regulations of the Pfeffersbad in 1568 and 1619, which state that singing German psalms is forbidden, especially “when one [wants to] sing so boisterously in defiance of the Catholics.” Quoted from Martin 1906, p. 350.

89 Protestant church music is central to the discourse in the *Amusements Des Eaux De Cleve*. There is reference to the table talk of Martin Luther in which music is called a “present and gift of God” and occupies “the next *locum* after theology and the highest honor.” *Amusements Des Eaux De Cleve*, pp. 235f.

music inspired by Luther's thoughts on the subject. On one hand is the normative duty to purify the body and, above all, the soul; on the other, the prohibition of lewd songs and other immoral behavior.⁹⁰

For in the context of healing for body and soul, the significance of sensuously experienced music can be ambiguous. Thus Johannes Pharamund Rhumelius appends to *Nymphographia* (1632), his treatise describing the spa in Gastein,⁹¹ an apocalyptic story as a "magic prophecy."⁹² Besides the physical and spiritual aspects of purification, it introduces the categories "white" and "black" for the purity of the Temple versus impure wantonness, symbolized by a larger-than-life minstrel's fiddle:

[...] die Drachen tanzeten vorher ein jeder in seiner ordnung deme folget ein jedes häufflein in seiner ordnung / vnd wie der Drach sich in geberden vnd tanzten erzeiget / also erzeigete sich das nach folgende häufflein der schwartzen Leut / die Spielleut hatten eine so grosse Geigen / daß sie solche von keiner stell tragen möchten / die Drachen waren so schröcklich vnd jämmerlichen an zusehen / daß mir grauet dieselbe[n] zu beschreiben.⁹³

[...] the dragons danced first, each in its turn, followed by little groups [of people], each in their turn / and just as each dragon showed itself in gestures and dances / the following group of black people showed themselves / the minstrels had such a large fiddle / that they could not move it from its place / the dragons were so terrifying and dismal to look at / that I shudder to describe them.

Musically as well as functionally in relation to purifying salvation, the secular order of the dragons and minstrels differs from divine order; whoever surrenders to the wild, wicked dance music of that giant fiddle will be destroyed and cannot participate in the lovely music and joys of the temple.

4. Ambivalences

Simone Loleit entitled her book about the semantics of spas in 16th-century German-language literature *Wahrheit, Lüge, Fiktion* (Truth, Lie, Fiction),⁹⁴ three concepts in fact not always easy to distinguish from one another. That goes especially for the erotic and sexual connotations that for centuries have been part of the semantic field of "baths"

90 Peter Leonhard Monquetin asserts that Christian spiritual songs may be sung in the baths, but "courting songs and shameful words" must not be used and will be punished. Monquetin: *Thermologia Badauino-Austriaca*, p. 80.

91 Rhumel: *NYMPHOGRAPHIA*.

92 Rhumel: *NYMPHOGRAPHIA*, fol. D2^v.

93 Rhumel: *NYMPHOGRAPHIA*, fol. E1^r.

94 Loleit 2008.

and have their place in every cultural history of taking the waters at spas. This theme also plays a central role in the controversy – now somewhat in abeyance – around Norbert Elias’s *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation* (*The Civilizing Process*)⁹⁵ and Hans Peter Duerr’s ethnological-empirical and less evolutionary-historical view in *Der Mythos vom Zivilisationsprozess* (*The Myth of the Civilizing Process*).⁹⁶ Duerr devotes four chapters to “nudity and shame” (the title of his first volume) in their connection to life in the spa in medieval and early modern civilization. It is no accident that his book cover bears an often-reproduced⁹⁷ Burgundian bathing scene, a miniature by the so-called Master of Anthony of Burgundy in a manuscript from Bruges (c. 1470) of Valerius Maximus’s *Facta et dicta memorabilia*.⁹⁸

The artistically appealing miniature scenes of licentious pleasures in ancient Rome, translated into 15th-century costume, show a crowd of naked banqueters in a bathing trough on the right and public sex acts in progress on the left, while in the background of the noble setting, princes and clergy observe the immoral goings-on. In the foreground, a professional minstrel plays the lute, while the presence of a dog suggests moral condemnation. We agree with Duerr, however, that like Poggio’s epistle from the Aargau, this image of uninhibited sexuality must not be taken as typical of spa life. Such images, always very similar to one another, represent extreme exceptions (if not masculine wish fulfillments) to the upstanding bathhouse with separate facilities for men and women and compulsory bathing costumes. Of course, we concur with Duerr that both spa brothels and respectable bath halls existed. At any rate, he is undoubtedly correct to state “that for practically every era [...] one can adduce eyewitness accounts to support one thesis or its opposite.”⁹⁹ It is difficult to keep contemporary attitudes and individual ideas about morality out of the discussion. Moreover, there is an inherent double semantic level to the term “baths.” For one thing, eroticized and sexualized activity can be depicted both in actual goings-on at spas as well as in activity that can be interpreted metaphorically.¹⁰⁰ For another, the “bath” operates as a metaphor in unrelated discourses or visual motifs, such as that of *Venuskinder* (children of Venus, representing the influence of the planet) in books about the seven planets as well as in

95 Elias 1994/2000.

96 Five volumes, 1988–2002; vol. 1: Duerr 1988/1992.

97 Büchner, R. 2014, p. 151, footnote 169 provides an extensive list of illustrations from the secondary literature on bathing (illustration and explanation in Büchner, R. 2014, pp. 43–45).

98 Faits et dits mémorables des romains, copy in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Depot Breslau 2, vol. 2, fol. 244; tempera and gold on parchment.

99 Duerr 1988/1992, p. 65.

100 For instance, Hans Bock the Elder copied a central female figure from his *Venustanz* in his so-called *Bad zu Leuk*: *Venustanz* (Fountain of Youth Setting) (c. 1570/1580), mixed media on canvas; 60 × 80 cm, Frankfurt a. M., Städel Museum; *Das Bad zu Leuk* (1597), oil on canvas; 78.4 × 109.6 cm, Kunstmuseum Basel.

popular calendars. All this makes evaluation of written and graphic sources a slippery and hard-to-calculate business.

On the one hand, the motif of music in the context of dietetic regulation guarantees a specific enhancement of one's positive emotional life. On the other, it is precisely this enhancement – well-being with bath and music – that again and again puts in motion a negative connotation as well. The fool is a symbol for this. A timeless metaphor for all sorts of secular vanity and misery, he is often associated with the baths, specifically in the guise of the fool as minstrel.

One example is the gallantly depicted bathhouse with a garden of love and a fountain in the Housebook of Wolfegg Castle near Ravensburg (Fig. 4, after 1480), in which the fool with his lute is supplemented by animal symbols of sin – monkey, dog, and bird.¹⁰¹ Another is the fiddling fool on the titlepage (Fig. 5) of the *Tractat der Wildbeder nature / wirckung und eigenschafft* (Treatise on the Nature / Effect and Characteristic of Acratotherms) by the Alsatian physician and astrologer Lorenz Fries (1519).¹⁰²

The musical fool is also a traditional iconographic motif in the allegory of the Fountain of Youth, with a theological interpretation of the sinful bath of rejuvenation, as in a copper engraving of the so-called Master with the Banderoles (mid-15th century, with a fool playing the bagpipes)¹⁰³ or a woodcut by Sebald Beham (1531, with several musicians in the entourage of a fool on the roof balustrade).¹⁰⁴

5. An Overview of the Musical Repertoire

A discussion of the autological creation of spa music in the early modern era must include an overview of its repertoire. Although both instrumental and vocal music were heard in the spas, the sources provide much clearer information about the latter.

101 Hausbuch Schloss Wolfegg, fol. 18^v–19^r; the bathing scene on the Venus-page of the Housebook (fol. 15, with references to music in text and image) was one of the main points of contention between Duerr and Elias.

102 Fries: Tractat; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 4 M.med. 295,16, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb10164505?page=4,5> (last accessed: October 30, 2024).

103 Master with the Banderoles: The Fountain of Youth (c. 1450/1470), copper engraving, 23.1 × 31.5 cm (Graphische Sammlung, Albertina, Vienna).

104 Hans Sebald Beham: Fountain of Youth and Bathhouse (1531), woodcut in four blocks, first state, 37.8 × 119.3 cm (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Kupferstich-Kabinett); see Mentzel 2015. In Cranach's depiction of the Fountain of Youth, there is a typical ensemble of the time – flute and drum – in the middle of the scene (Lucas Cranach the Elder: The Fountain of Youth, 1546, oil on limewood panel, 120.6 × 186.1 cm; Berlin, Gemäldegalerie).

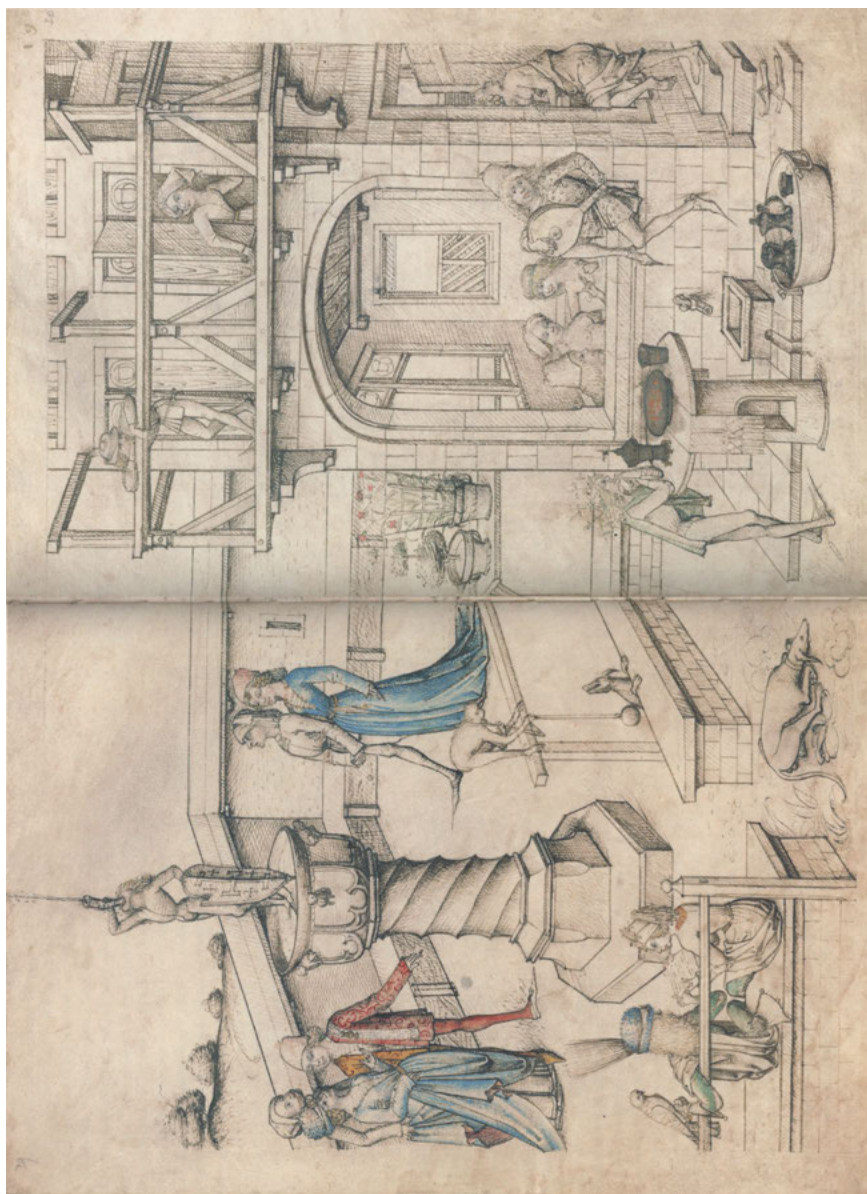


Fig. 4. Master of the house book: The bathhouse, c. 1482, partially colored pen drawing on vellum, 250 × 150 mm (book), in: Hausbuch Schloss Wolfegg, fol. 18^v-19^r, private collection.

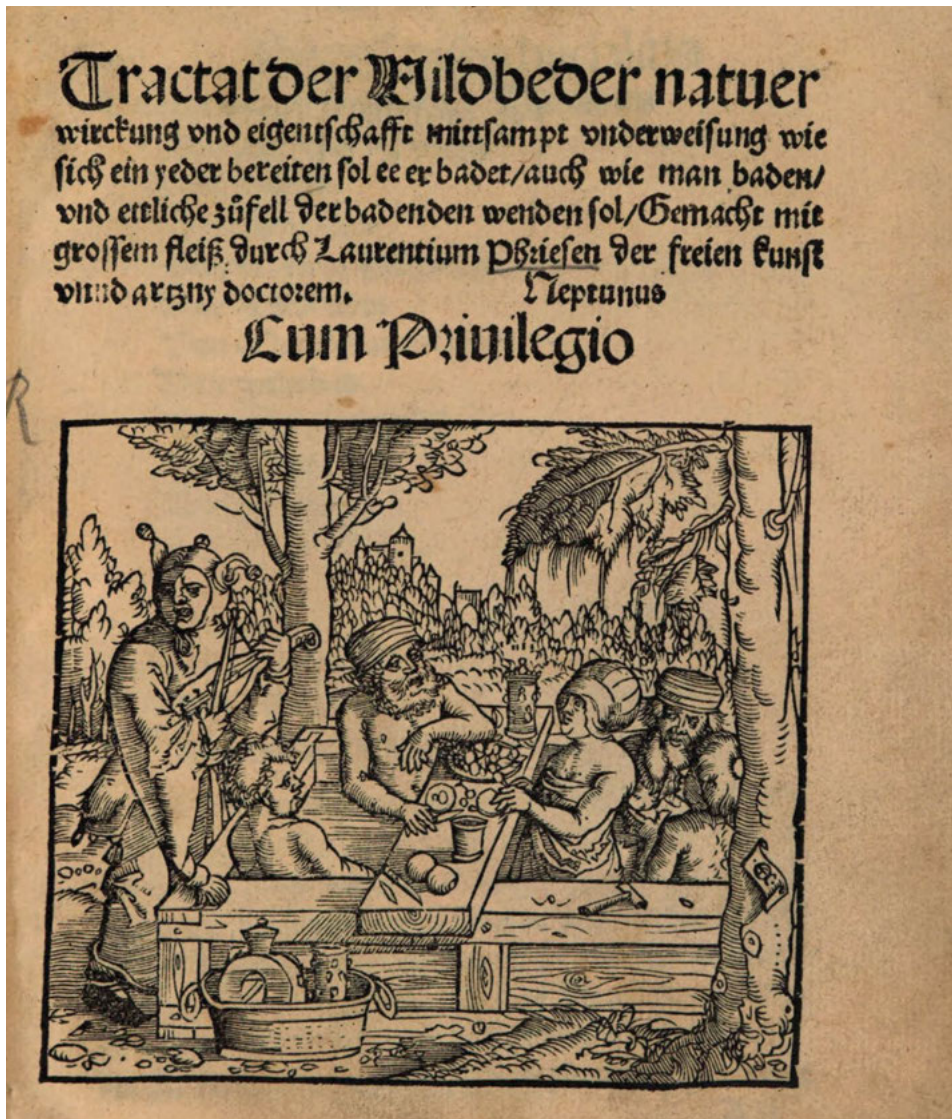


Fig. 5. Lorenz Fries: Tractat der Wildbeder natuer wirckung vnd eigentschafft [...], Strasbourg: Grieninger, 1519, title page with woodcut. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Sign. 4 M.med. 295,16.



Fig. 6. Ludwig Senfl: Im Bad wöl' wir recht frölich sein, in: *Der dritte teyl, schöner, lieblicher, alter, und newer teutscher Liedlein [...]*, Nuremberg: Johann vom Berg / Ulrich Newber, 1549, No. XXIII. London, British Library, Sign. Music Collections DRT Digital Store K.3.g.6.

Compositions like the song “Im Bad wöl' wir recht frölich sein” (In the bath we'll be quite merry; Fig. 6) by Ludwig Senfl¹⁰⁵ prove that some music was written specifically for the entertainment of spa guests. The texts even include elements such as spa illnesses¹⁰⁶ or the advantages of local bathing establishments.¹⁰⁷ Religious spa songs, on the other hand, emphasize the moral regulation of the bathing routine and the spiritual purity of the guests and sometimes show evidence of the potential for confessional conflicts.¹⁰⁸ Sometimes already available religious vocal music was performed as is, but texts specifically written for spas were also set to familiar hymn melodies.

105 Senfl: Im Bad wöl' wir recht frölich sein, pp. 46f. On Senfl, see <https://senflonline.com/> (last accessed: October 30, 2024).

106 A song from the 17th century (printed with three melodies) ironically takes up the pain of a spa rash; cf. Martin 1906, p. 339.

107 For example, the 17th-century Zurich poet Johann Wilhelm Simler celebrates local spas; cf. Martin 1906, p. 339.

108 Cf. Pietschmann 2006.

We can classify the surviving repertoire of spiritual and secular vocal music according to the type of its source. For one thing, there are single compositions such as song broadsheets (e.g., *Ein nūw Lied* by Meliora Muchheimin von Uri, prioress of the Convent of Hermetschwil in the Aargau),¹⁰⁹ south German tablatures, and songs composed specifically for use in spas.¹¹⁰ However, most spa songs survive in comprehensive collections or as an appendix to medical-balneological works.¹¹¹ Traditional chorales, hymns, and folk-songs often betray where they were used by such notes as “im [...] Bade gesungen” (sung at the bath).¹¹² The surviving spa songs can be divided into three categories: 1) notes and text, 2) texts with reference to a corresponding melody, and 3) texts without notes. *Ein nūw Lied* (Fig. 7) has both notes and text and presents a complete picture of a separately preserved religious spa song. In many appendices to medical-balneological treatises, only the song text is printed with the note “im Thon von” or “in der Weise” (to the melody of), so that the tune can be found in other sources.¹¹³ The melodies of spa songs that survive only as a text are of course unknowable. There is very little evidence about the ratio of monophonic to polyphonic compositions. Polyphonic pieces like Senfl’s “Im Bad wöl’ wir recht frölich sein” or a “Bader-Gesang” for four voices in Simler’s collection *Teutscher Getichten* (German poems)¹¹⁴ are rare, and in the case of many other surviving compositions, it is hard to know for sure whether they were performed in spas mono- or polyphonically.¹¹⁵ However, graphic works often show singing guests or spa personnel holding polyphonic scores.¹¹⁶ Many graphic works as well as sources such as Desiderius Gottfried’s *Pymontisches Curiosos Brunnen-Gespräch*¹¹⁷ reveal – especially in the context

109 Melchiora Muchheimin von Uri: *Ein nūw Lied*; cf. Martin 1906, Fig. 146, p. 339; Salmen 1994, p. 17.

110 As an example, the composition of funeral music that goes back to the 1589 spa visit of the Tübingen professor of Greek Martin Crusius and the Stuttgart court musician Wolfgang Rhau to the Wildbad.

111 E.g., Heinrich Georg Neuß: *Brunnenlieder denen gottseel. Brunnen-Gästen, 1706* or as an appendix to Hellmund: *Thermographia Paraenetica*.

112 *Vier schoen neue Weltliche Lieder*; Salmen 1994, p. 18.

113 In the anonymous treatise *Neu-entsprungener Heil-Gesundheit- und Wunder-Bronnen* (1677), for example, a song is appended to achieve “God’s helpful blessing and providential addition to use of the curative spring,” with the additional note that this song is to be sung “in the melody of Zion laments with fear, etc.”

114 Simler: *Teutsche Getichte*.

115 Pero Tafur gives an early report of polyphony in a spa: “The people there can all sing well, including even the commoners, and sing artfully in three voices like practiced artists”; cf. Fuhrmann 2014, p. 85.

116 As examples: by a Lombard master (perhaps Christopher de Predis), [Garden of Love]: illustration for Planet Venus from *Sphaerae coelestis et planetarum descriptio* [*De Sphaera*] (c. 1450/1470), tempera and gold on parchment, 24.5 × 16.5 cm, Bibl. Estense Modena alfa.x.2.14 (Lat. 209), fol. 9^v; [depictions of the planet] Venus, in: *Eyn nyge Kalender recht holende*, Lübeck: Steffen Arndes, 1519 (reproduced in Martin 1906, Fig. 10, p. 13; on this calendar: Warburg 1908/1932).

117 Gottfried: *Pymontisches Curiosos Brunnen-Gespräch*, p. 66.

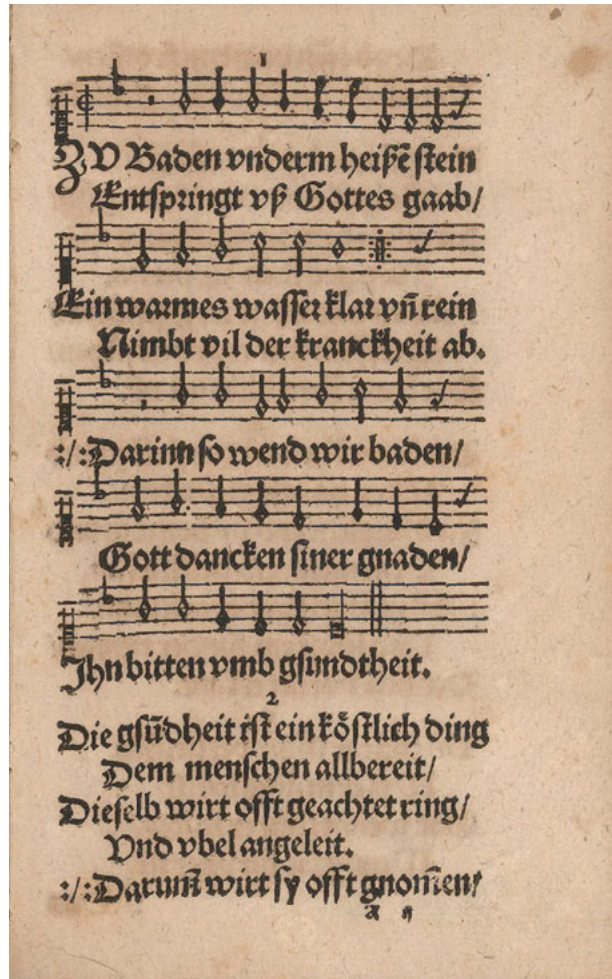


Fig. 7. Meliora Muchheim: Ein nūw Lied in Badenfaerten lustig zezingen, Zurich (?): Bodmer (?), 1617, first page of music. Zurich, Zentralbibliothek, Sign. 18.2016,17.

of other musical practices of the time – that singing at the spas was accompanied by instruments and that all sorts of instruments were also played solo or in ensembles.¹¹⁸ Pantaleon's *Wahrhaftige und fleissige Beschreibung der Uralten Statt und Graveschafft Baden*

118 Actual instrumental compositions relating to bathing, however, are only documented beginning in the 18th century, e.g., Georg Philipp Telemann's *Pyrmonter Kurwoche: Scherzi Melodichi, per divertimento di coloro, che prendono l'Acque minerali in Pirmonte*, including "Ariette semplici e facili a Violino, Viola e Fondamento" arranged in weekly cycles (1734).

(True and Painsstaking Description of the Ancient City and County of Baden, 1578) mentions “drums, fifes, harps”¹¹⁹ and later “drums, fifes, fiddles.”¹²⁰ Some descriptions even mention musical genres. Hörnigk’s description of the mineral springs and spas in Langenschwalbach, for instance, says that “from other locations, instruments – harps, lutes, fiddles, etc.” were brought to the spa, and the guests were entertained “with various lovely musical pieces such as pavaues, intradas, courantes, ballets, arias, vilanelles, etc.”¹²¹

6. Conclusion

Spa music of the early modern period is intimately involved in the enactment of social performances and in discursive relations to lived reality. In it, the functional-pragmatic and the creative-artistic levels are intertwined and together constitute its specific aesthetic structure. For precisely that reason, the spa as a location of musical production, distribution, and reception can become a space of reflection on a praxeological aesthetics.¹²²

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119 Pantaleon: Wahrhafftige und fleissige Beschreibung, p. 55.

120 Pantaleon: Wahrhafftige und fleissige Beschreibung, p. 89.

121 Hörnigk: Langen Schwalbacher Saurbrunnen, p. 277.

122 As Fuhrmann remarks, a musical work is always the “result of the workings [...] of human (and sometimes all too human) activity”; this simultaneous material and cultural activity produces the “often overlooked nexus between composed music and the rest of the world” (Fuhrmann 2018, p. 151).

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Ars militaris

The Art of War as Aesthetic Practice in the 18th Century

Abstract

The armies of the late 17th and 18th centuries can be understood as an aesthetic figure of reflection in the sense of the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391. They were hybrid, mobile collective bodies, living machines, that consisted of a perfect interplay of people and arms. The material – human bodies and equipment – was shaped into a geometric figuration on the basis of a very sophisticated and explicit knowledge of form and rules, resulting in perfectly symmetrical and synchronous movement that could be controlled from the outside, similar to courtly ballets or ceremonies. The military became an object of artistic perfection – an ideal that, however, proved to be a hindrance on the battlefield. My thesis is that the inherent logic of design, which primarily followed the rules of geometry, tended to displace and dominate the pragmatic-instrumental military logic, according to which an army serves to fight a battle. I attempt to show that this was taken to the extreme in the case of the so-called Soldier King, Frederick William of Prussia.

Keywords

Art of War, Frederick William I, Geometry, Military, Prussia, Representation

1. The Army as a *Figure of Aesthetic Reflection*?

Is the ‘art of war’ an aesthetic practice? Can an army be a figure of aesthetic reflection? The Tübingen CRC 1391 investigates aesthetic practices in the context of concerns apart from aesthetics, and in so doing employs the broadest possible heuristic concept of aesthetics.¹ Aesthetic practice in the widest sense means creative engagement with material based on a particular knowledge of form and design. The CRC intends to analyze the interaction between the inherent logic of artistic technique and the pragmatic logic of daily life, between the autonomy and heteronomy of form and function. Design will

* Translated by David B. Dollenmayer. Quotations for which no other translation is cited have also been translated by Dollenmayer.

1 On the research program of the CRC 1391 *Different Aesthetics*, see the contribution by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48, especially section 6, “Figures of Aesthetic Reflection.”

be regarded from a praxeological perspective. This can be understood as the ability to always look at the aesthetic object as simultaneously a material product and a concrete, physical practice, as both a made product and a process of making – parallel to the praxeological approach of historians, who use it primarily to analyze social and political configurations.² At a time when no one was yet talking about praxeology, Norbert Elias adduced dance as an example of a social “figuration” that appears as both object and process, in other words, a thing that arises in practice – performatively – and actually exists only by being carried out.³ Thus there are structural patterns that take shape in and through physical practice as participants follow (mostly implicit and informal, but sometimes explicit and formal) rules.⁴

A figure of aesthetic reflection should be a figuration in which the interaction of formal autonomy and functional heteronomy is manifest. What I want to introduce here as such a figure of aesthetic reflection are the armies of the late 17th and the 18th centuries: hybrid, mobile collective bodies – living machines – that comprise men and weapons in perfect synergy. With the help of extremely sophisticated and explicit rule-based formal knowledge, the material of human bodies and equipment was designed as a geometric figuration consisting in perfectly symmetrical and synchronous movement controlled from without. An army as a living machine only exists performatively, in rule-directed physical implementation itself. My thesis is that the internal logic of design that primarily followed the rules of geometry gradually overruled and suppressed the pragmatic, instrumental military logic according to which an army exists to fight battles. In the case of the so-called Soldier King, Frederick William I of Prussia, this tendency was carried to an extreme.

As evidence for my thesis, I will first briefly sketch where the ‘art of war’ – *ars militaris* – was located in the conceptual coordinate system of the time between acting, producing, and knowing. Then I will examine the double role of geometry, which was both a method of knowing and producing and a standard of beauty. Finally, I will describe the army of Frederick William I as an object of two aesthetic practices: as an artifact of production and an artifact of collection and exhibition. In this regard, one can see the example of the Soldier King as ‘extraordinarily normal,’ an extreme case that allows us to better recognize what was average and normal.

2 The literature on this topic is vast. Cf. for historical studies, e.g., Bevir/Rhodes 2010; Brendecke 2015; Haasis/Rieske 2015. The similarity between the praxeological and performative approaches is obvious, cf., e.g., Martschukat/Patzold 2003; Fischer-Lichte/Wulf 2004.

3 Elias 1978, p. 262.

4 Along these lines, Zedlers *Universal-Lexicon* writes “Art sometimes also means the work itself that art has created”; Zedler: *Universal-Lexicon*, col. 2141; cf. Rogg/Nowosadtko 2008, p. 13.

2. *Ars militaris* in the System of Disciplines

Where did the ‘art of war’ fit in the conceptual coordinate system of the time, circa 1700, between acting, producing, and knowing? Zedler’s *Universal-Lexicon* – as always the first source in such questions – writes under the lemma “Kriegs-Kunst” (art of war; 1737) that ‘art’ or ‘the arts’ is nothing but “certain reflections and observations, initially founded on experience, whose foundation has been subsequently investigated after they have been codified in certain rules from which consequences are drawn.”⁵ Diderot, who is known to have favored *ars* over *scientia* as well as the *artes mechanicae* over the *artes liberales*, advanced a similar argument in his *Encyclopédie*. In the central article on *art*, which explicitly encompasses both *artes liberales* and *artes mechanicae*, including *art militaire*, he writes that every art has its theory and its practice (“Tout art a sa spéculation et sa pratique”). The former is the abstract, non-operative knowledge of the rules (“connaissance inopérative des règles”), the latter their habitual, unreflective use (“usage habituel et non réfléchi des même règles”); both things must come together. Diderot defines *art* in contrast to *science*: “Si l’object s’exécute, la collection et la disposition technique des règles selon lesquelles il s’exécute, s’appelle art.” The goal of every art, including the art of war – *art militaire* – consists in “d’imprimer certaines formes déterminées sur une base donnée par la nature.”⁶ The *artes mechanicae*, he asserts, stand in the middle between craft and science. The craft involves orally transmitted knowledge and experience, the science abstract, generalizable, academic knowledge transmitted in writing.

The Encyclopedists encapsulated what had been developing since the 15th century, namely, the cognitive and social upgrading of artisanal production. Traditionally, the *artes mechanicae* were clearly subordinated to the *artes liberales*; they were regarded as *artes serviles* since they provided the necessities of life and were the business of the third estate, the commoners.⁷ That changed gradually as the sensational technical advances of the Renaissance – from optics and engineering to navigation and weaponry – promoted the wealth and social standing of those who devoted their talents to them. More and more disciplines were added to the *artes mechanicae*, from horticulture to horology and even politics. Social advancement depended on cognitive advancement in the formulation of explicit, written rules for art (*ars*) that instructed mere practical habit (*usus*), as Hendrick Goltzius depicted in an allegorical work of 1582 (Fig. 1). His allegory

5 Zedler: *Universal-Lexicon*, col. 1916.

6 Diderot: *Art*.

7 Krafft 1999; Leng 2002; Leng 2008. Raimundus Lullus associates the activities of waging war, trading, and manufacturing with the classes *milites*, *mercatores*, and *populus*. On the other hand, in *Didascalicon* (c. 1130), Hugh of Saint Victor, in addition to *architectura*, also names *ars theatrale* (knights’ games) as one of the *artes mechanicae*.



Fig. 1. Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617): *Ars et Usus*, 1582, copper engraving, 198 × 138 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Inv. No. RP-P-OB-10.091.

reflects the explosive increase in the number of instructional manuals for all fields of human endeavor – from recipes to fortifications – that verbalized formerly implicit, practical knowledge of production and transformed it into explicit written rules.⁸ As early as circa 1500, first manuals of the *ars belli* began to appear.

3. Geometry as Method and Principle of Aesthetic Design

What linked head and hand and made production capable of theory was mathematics, and in particular geometry. Diderot too emphasized that its mastery was indispensable for most arts – indeed, that academic geometry was simple compared to the geometry of the workshop (“géométrie de la boutique”).⁹ Intellectual and experimental geometry complemented each other, he maintained, and their unprecedented, fruitful cooperation was responsible for the immense technical progress of recent centuries. The examples he mentions are printing, shipbuilding, and last but not least, the art of war.¹⁰ The latter included not just the artifacts produced by artillery engineers and fortress architects. Military tactics also obeyed the rules of the productive arts, since in them, men as well as weapons were construed and treated as material, as objects of technical design. Thereby, the character of the art of war was transformed from *actio* – the brilliant commander’s strategic art in controlling fortune – to *factio*: construction of a technical plan. Or put another way: from virtuoso dealing with contingency to eliminating contingency as completely as possible.¹¹

Geometry was not just the method that had ennobled the *artes mechanicae* and led to rapid civilizing progress in fortress construction, navigation, and weapons technology. It was not just a scientific method but also a principle of aesthetic design. The crux of the matter is that geometry guaranteed both theoretical robustness and aesthetic perfection because it represented the design principle of divine creation. According to Johannes Kepler it was “coeternal with the divine mind and is God himself,” for it offered God as well as humankind the patterns with which God had created the world.¹² Geometry promised beauty and harmony not just in heaven but on earth as

8 Stichweh 1984, p. 177; Daston 2022.

9 Diderot: Art.

10 Diderot: Art (*De la Géométrie des Arts*). Christian Wolff had already defined *technica* or *technologia* as the discipline of art. Art is the capability of man, “partly by the powers of his mind and partly by the powers of his body to bring a thing to realization, which without him would not be realized.” Artists themselves, Wolff thought, were often unaware of the rules they applied to their work; the science of technology would make them explicit; Buschmann 1999, pp. 26f.

11 Cf. the distinction between acting and producing, based on the Aristotelian distinction between *actio* and *factio* in Arendt 1998.

12 Kepler: *Harmonices Mundi Libri*, p. 304, cf. p. 146.

well. It contained the rules for imposing order on the omnipresent chaos, not least in politics. Hobbes also made geometry the foundation of his new political science, promising absolute certainty independent of religious conflict.¹³ According to an often-cited passage in the Introduction to *Leviathan*, “Nature, the art whereby God hath made and governs the world, is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an artificial animal. [...] For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE, in Latin CIVITAS, which is but an artificial man [...]”.¹⁴ And as Hobbes points out in *Leviathan* II, chapter 20, this imitation follows clear, infallible rules: “The skill of making, and maintaining commonwealths, consisteth in certain rules, as doth arithmetic and geometry [...]”.¹⁵ As a product of human construction, the state appeared not less calculable than a geometric figure or a clockwork.

The *mos geometricus* was dominant not only in political theory but everywhere – in architecture and horticulture, music and dance, fencing and equestrianism, in court ceremonial,¹⁶ and, last but not least, in the military (Fig. 2).¹⁷ In the case of fortress construction, the central role of geometry is obvious. From the basic figures of circle and rectangle, mathematicians, construction engineers, and trained laymen built more and more complicated fortifications and outdid themselves in creating works of great beauty and symmetry.¹⁸ But even here, the logic of design was superimposed on practical functionality. This is already evident in the fact that various ideal examples were often carried out only on paper, in elaborate printed works.

And even the armies themselves were subjected to the theoretical and aesthetic standards of geometry. And that had the effect of placing the art of war in very close relation to a court ceremonial that around 1700, by way of geometry, was also raised to the status of a science, *scientia* (Fig. 3). Choreography was of central importance in both cases, the performative production of order and harmony through precisely calculated movement in space; in both cases, precise staging guaranteed centralized control and mastery of contingency. Hanns Friedrich Fleming, a classic author of Baroque military science, considered war as the prime mover of standard ceremonial procedure in general, of which his contemporaries were so proud.

13 Röd 1970.

14 Hobbes: *Leviathan*, p. ix.

15 Hobbes: *Leviathan*, p. 195.

16 Examples in Mulryne 2004.

17 Already noted by Eichberg 1977; Kleinschmidt 1989; Bröckling 1997; Preisendörfer 2000; Luh 2004; Sikora 2008; Birk 2012; Füssel 2019; a brief survey in Schönauer / Hohrath 2020.

18 Duffy 1985 is seminal.



Fig. 2. Anonymous artist: Athena, goddess of war and the (mechanical) arts, copper engraving, in: Hanns Friedrich von Fleming: *Der vollkommene teutsche Soldat [...]*, Leipzig: Johann Christian Martini, 1726. ETH Zurich, Sign.: Rar 9315.

In our times, ceremonial procedure has reached an apex; war itself has had a great part therein. The ceremonial of war is quite clearly expressed [...] in the formation of battalions, passages, taking prisoners, [...] declaring war, assaulting and storming, challenging, capitulating, and surrendering forts, but especially in military exercises and various other actions.¹⁹

Nota bene: not just the preliminaries, not just maneuvers, but also assaults and storming of forts – the violent actions themselves – were regarded as ceremonial events regulated by geometry. From today's perspective, this seems grotesque, for war is the very epitome of chaos, violence, and unpredictability. But the fact that one could regard war as a perfectly ceremonial, choreographed *theatrum belli*, as a dance or a board game, shows that it was waged within a framework of specific class-based rules shared in principle by the European nobility, independent of quickly shifting alliances and enmities.

19 Fleming: *Der vollkommene teutsche Soldat*, p. 94; cf. Füssel 2019.



Fig. 3. Georg Paul Busch: Ceremonial and Geometry, copper engraving, in: Julius Bernhard von Rohr: *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft Der großen Herren [...]*, Berlin: Johann Andreas Rüdiger, 1733, Frontispiece. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Sign.: J.publ.e. 372 b.

4. The Army as an Object of Aesthetic Practice, 1: Producing

Because they needed to defend themselves against the Spanish, around 1600 the counts of Orange-Nassau – as commanders of the rebellious Netherlands – introduced a new form of military discipline.²⁰ In order to make foot soldiers more mobile and the extremely awkward use of firearms more efficient, they subdivided the actions of their soldiers into the smallest possible units, which had to be precisely performed upon command. The motility of an entire body of troops was to be increased by restricting the motility of each individual soldier.²¹ Instruction manuals contained precise illustrations of each element of a movement so that they could be precisely rehearsed (Fig. 4).

20 Cf. footnote 17; *Kriegsbuch des Grafen*; as well as the older literature: Jähns 1890; Jany 1967; Delbrück 1985.

21 Kleinschmidt 1989, pp. 146f.

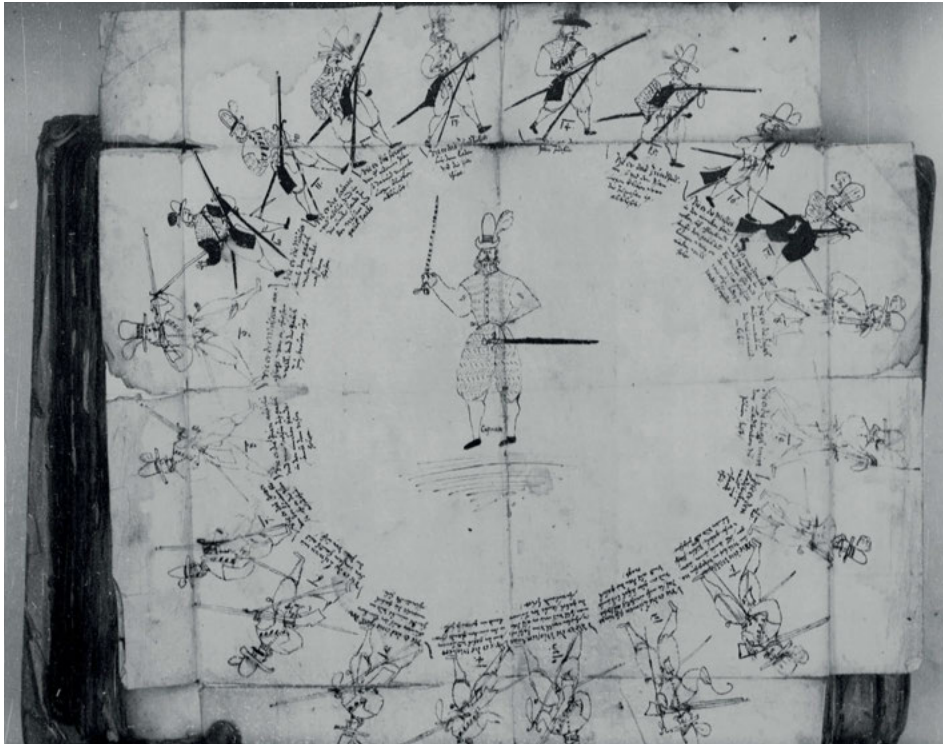


Fig. 4. Standardized series of motions for loading a musket, pen and ink drawing, from the military science papers of Count Johann VII of Nassau-Siegen, vol. 3 (in the original: Tomus 1 and 2), fol. 155^v–156^r. Wiesbaden, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (old Dillenburg Archive), Sign.: HHStAW Bestand 171 Nr. K 923.

Establishing each individual movement in the sequence of loading and firing ensured that an entire troop would fire in a regular rhythm of ordered salvos. Individual soldiers were precisely lined up in rank and file and their movements so synchronized that they could be moved in any direction on command. Through perfect “drill” – also a new concept – the troop was to be transformed into a flexible, steerable, artificial body whose movements in a battle would function as precisely as during exercises in camp. Soldiers were supposed to react not individually to the enemy but collectively to an order. Personal valor and heroic single combat were to become superfluous. In the sources, one finds the aesthetic concept of “Zierlichkeit” (elegance)²² to describe troops thus trained. And in fact, the innovative drill doubtless raised the central controllability of military operations and accounts for the superiority of the Netherlandish troops

22 Kleinschmidt 1989, pp. 146f.

against the Spanish, as well as for the successes of Swedish troops in the Thirty Years' War. The military reforms of Orange-Nassau were a tactical revolution but also a revolution in military aesthetics.

While European armies came to a standstill after the Thirty Years' War, this method experienced further refinement and is generally agreed to have achieved near perfection in Brandenburg-Prussia under the Soldier King, who was deeply influenced by the set of regulations issued by his admired fellow ruler, Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau, in 1704.²³ However, Frederick Wilhelm violated the aristocratic norms of his time, first by himself becoming head drill master of his army – a task normally left to non-commissioned officers – and second, especially by not waging any wars at all with it, except one at the beginning of his reign. With his perfectly drilled troops, he basically found himself in concord – but also competition – with other European potentates, as shown for example by the lavishly produced manual *Der vollkommene teutsche Soldat* (The Complete German Soldier, Figs. 5–8).

One can easily follow the increasing geometricizing and aestheticizing of the army – and more precisely, the infantry – in the Prussian military regulations of the early 18th century. The Soldier King's infantry regulations (1714, 1718, and 1726) expanded steadily from 246 to 642 pages, despite the fact that in 1726, all passages concerning economics and logistics were moved to a separate manual. The regulations contained descriptions of unequaled minuteness and precision for the assembly, deployment, and movement of various units – from the alignment, marching, and turning of individual platoons to an entire regiment – and for the handling of muskets: loading and firing in changing circumstances, while standing or moving. Moreover, the regulations contained precise instructions for equipping, training, and discipline in the field and in the garrison, from the oath of allegiance to the burial of the dead.

The first task was to train the “material,” to bring the “plastic mass” into a “solid form” – a metaphor also prized by Prussian historians of the 19th and 20th centuries.²⁴ To do so, it was necessary to standardize the individual human and non-human elements that formed the collective body in their external appearance, not only in the cut and color of their uniforms but also by selecting recruits according to their size and attractive features, and above all by training their posture and movements. For example:

23 The first drill regulations were written by Margrave Philipp Wilhelm von Brandenburg-Schwedt (1702); cf. Hinrichs 1941, pp. 345 and 360–362; Jany 1967, p. 557. Rohrschneider 2008 points to the fundamental difference between *disciplina* of the counts of Orange-Nassau and the Prussian drill. Discipline of the former was a moral category, namely “self-discipline” in the sense of the Stoics and Justus Lipsius, while Prussian drill was conducted under the constant threat of physical punishment and consisted in making bodily movements automatic and habitual.

24 Droysen 1869, p. 17; Hinrichs 1964, pp. 131f.; typical of many others: Delbrück 1985, pp. 253f.

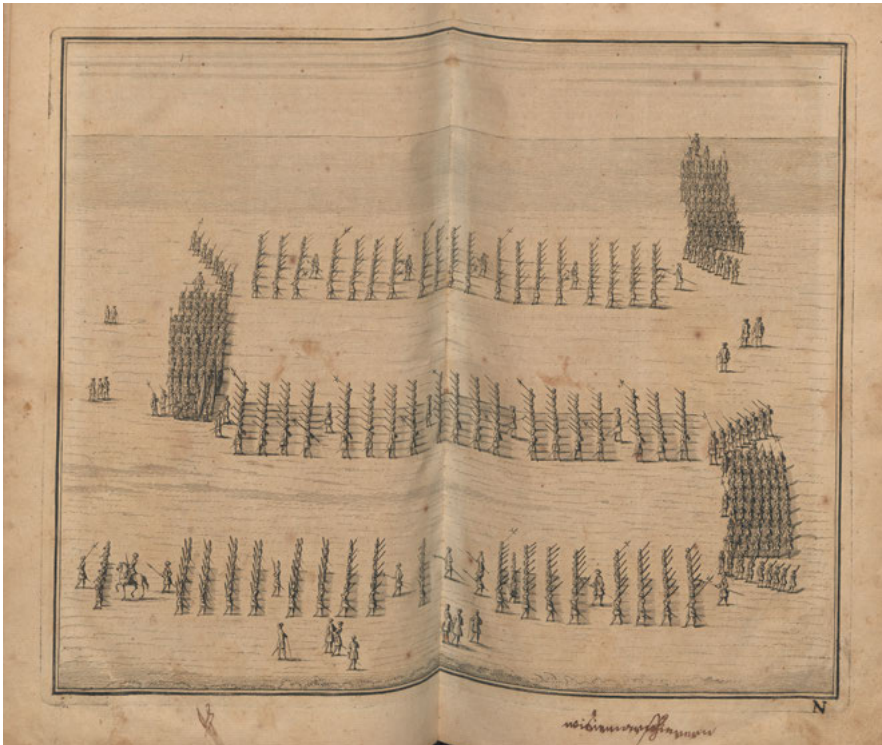


Fig. 5: Anonymous: Movements of troops, in: Hanns Friedrich von Fleming: *Der vollkommene teutsche Soldat* [...] Leipzig: Johann Christian Martini, 1726, Part Three, Ninth Chapter, ETH Zurich, Sign.: Rar 9315.

The first thing in drill must be to train a fellow and give him the air of a soldier, so that the peasant comes out of him [...]: How to hold his head, namely, not to let it hang, not to lower his eyes, but rather holding the musket with his head upright, looking over his right shoulder at his right hand [...] That a fellow stand stiffly on his feet and not with his knees bent, also feet together, with approximately a span's length distance to the next soldier. That a fellow hold his body straight up, not bending back and sticking out his belly, but with his chest out and pulling in his back.²⁵

The color and cut of uniforms is minutely described (a uniform the king shared with his soldiers, contrary to tradition): the short vest and tight-fitting hose, the gold and silver braid and pompoms, the brass drums and tall, gleaming grenadier hats, the beards and powdered wigs – nothing was left to chance right down to the correct sit of the knee straps (Fig. 9).

²⁵ Reglement, pp. 39f.

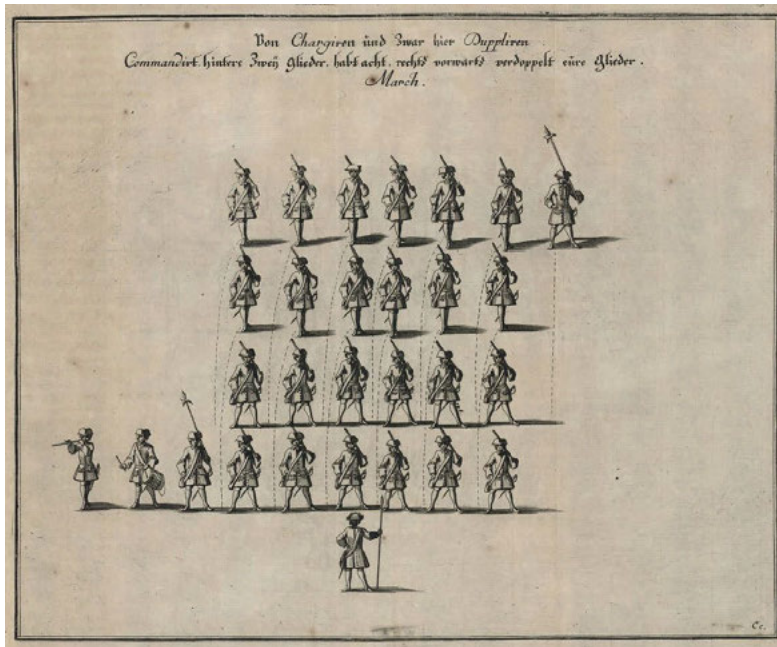


Fig. 6. Anonymous: Loading, in: Hanns Friedrich von Fleming: *Der vollkommene teutsche Soldat* [...], Leipzig: Johann Christian Martini, 1726, Part Three, Chapter Sixteen, Opole, Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna w Opolu, Sign.: 1653 st.

Once the individual elements were standardized, the soldiers needed to learn to line up an exact distance from one another and move as quickly as possible and with complete, synchronous symmetry according to a strict choreography dictated by their weapons. As the regulations state, they had to learn “to conform to their musket,”²⁶ i.e., to make themselves and their weapon into a perfectly tuned hybrid body. Man and weapon “were fused into a shooting automaton whose hardwired mechanism went into action on command.”²⁷ The rhythm for the entire operation was laid down by the army drummer, but even more by the soldiers’ regular, loud foot stamping and striking their metal ammunition pouches. Otherwise, complete silence was to be maintained. According to the regulations, the series of movements was to become so ingrained that it could never be forgotten. Again and again, it was stressed that all must take place “still as a mouse,” “swiftly,” “ramrod straight,” “with the greatest accuracy,” and “as still as wood.”²⁸ In

²⁶ Reglement, p. 225.

²⁷ Bröckling 1997, p. 71.

²⁸ Reglement, passim.

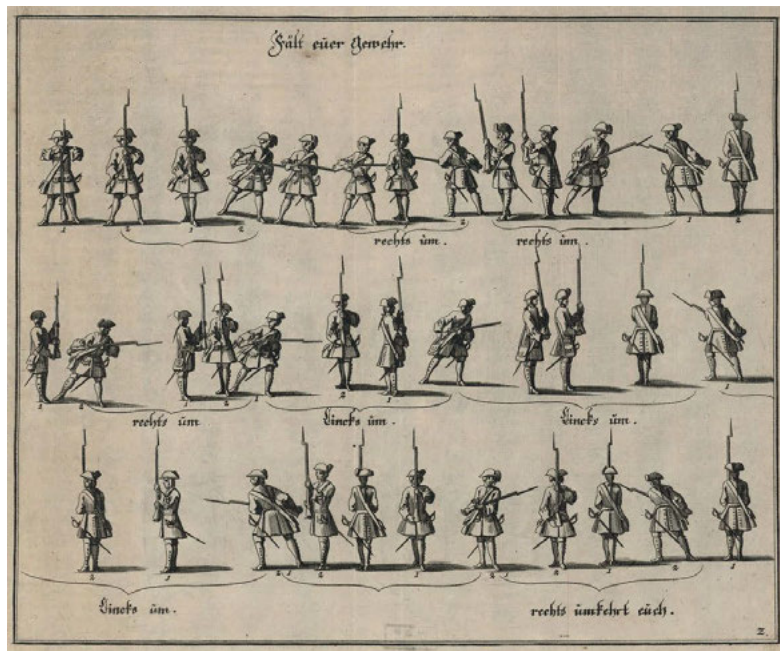


Fig. 7. Anonymous: Preparing for a bayonet charge, in: Hanns Friedrich von Fleming: *Der vollkommene deutsche Soldat [...]*, Leipzig: Johann Christian Martini, 1726, Part Three, Chapter 16, Opole, Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna w Opolu, Sign.: 1653 st.

the end, the entire performance should go off nearly automatically and almost without verbal commands from the officers.

What is almost entirely absent from the Prussian *Regulations* of 1726, however, is war itself. Of its 642 pages, a total of six are devoted to “orders, when the army must do battle with an enemy,” namely, “with shouldered muskets, flying colors, and martial music.”²⁹ There is even enough room on those six pages to mention officers’ “equally clean saddle pads and equally clean equipment.”³⁰ There is, however, a certain regret that “charging in battle cannot happen as accurately as in drilling,”

nevertheless, no unit may fire before its turn comes, so that the battalions keep up continuous fire [...]. In action, everything must be done in the greatest silence [...]. Until the battle has ended, no soldier may step out of his rank, plunder, take clothes from the dead or wounded, or search the same.³¹

29 *Reglement*, pp. 358–364.

30 *Reglement*, pp. 359f.

31 *Reglement*, pp. 360f.

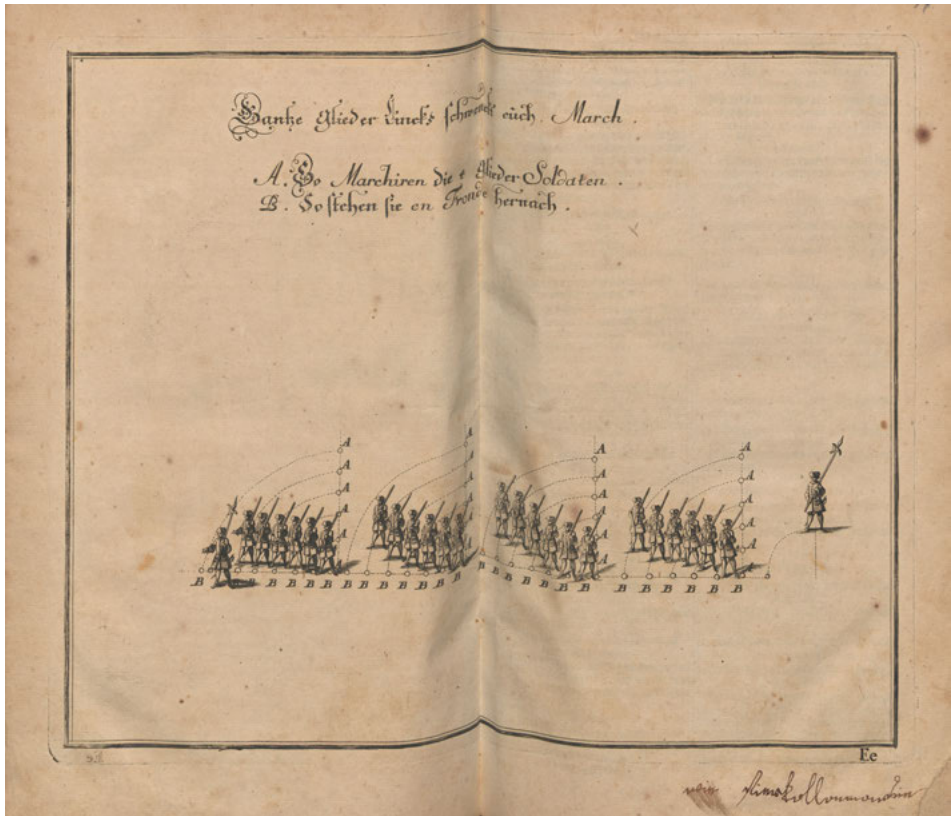


Fig. 8. Anonymous: Marching, in: Hanns Friedrich von Fleming: *Der vollkommene teutsche Soldat* [...], Leipzig: Johann Christian Martini, 1726, Part three, Chapter 17. ETH Zurich, Sign.: Rar 9315.

All noise (!) and “confusion” was to be avoided, no one could step out of his rank or push forward. What the regulations have to say about battle was obviously not suited to contend with chaos and actual violence in the field.³²

Prussian historians of the 19th and 20th centuries had some difficulty substantiating the military usefulness of the innumerable “delicate” movements and difficult manipulations called for in the regulations; some even expressed cautious skepticism. A history of the Royal Prussian Army written in 1928 pointed out that such maneuvers were “unhelpful and time-consuming,”³³ and even the editor of a 1968 facsimile reprint

³² Füßel/Sikora 2014; Füßel 2015.

³³ Jany 1967, p. 621.

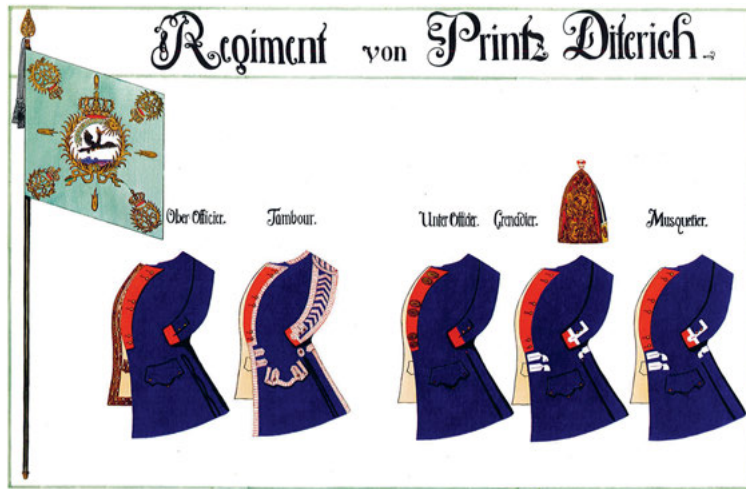


Fig. 9. The Regiment of Prince Diterich, anonymous color drawing, 1729.
In: Fritz-Günther Melzner (ed.): *Die Dessauer Spezifikation von 1737*,
Osnabrück 1970.

of the regulations concedes their “ballast of over-complicated manipulations.”³⁴ They did indeed slow down the process of loading instead of speeding it up. That is especially true of the rhythmically synchronized striking of the ammunition pouch that was a standard accompaniment to the loading process. The point, however, was not accuracy of targeting but speed and synchronicity; the salvoes were supposed to sound like a single shot.³⁵ Also impractical in battle were the heavy brass drums³⁶ and the colorful, elaborately decorative uniforms that had become common since the end of the 17th century, especially the tall Prussian grenadiers’ caps. The complicated “evolutions” in which the various units had to regroup according to height after a march were also a hindrance in the field. Finally, the Prussian king’s obsessive fixation on the height and comeliness of his soldiers was difficult to justify under the criterion of expediency, and much argumentative effort was expended to prove that their unusual size produced the “greatest power in battle” and “superlative combative value.”³⁷ The argument was first

34 Reglement, p. XLIII.

35 Bröckling 1997, p. 72.

36 Already as crown prince, Frederick William insisted on introducing exclusive use of drums made of gleaming brass rather than wood, which his war council sought to avoid, since they were both expensive and too heavy. The heavier drums were then an excuse to assign only large, strong men as drummers; cf. Hinrichs 1941, p. 364.

37 E.g.: Legendäre “lange Kerls,” pp. XXI, XXVI and XLVI.

that their size intimidated the enemy, and second that one needed especially long arms to use the ramrod while loading the long-barreled muskets. The weapons' construction did in fact dictate the soldiers' movements, but on the other hand, the geometric beauty of the entire enterprise influenced the structure of the weapons. Especially long muskets with a straight stock were preferred in order to emphasize the vertical symmetry of the body of troops. Short-barreled rifles as used in hunting would have been more accurate.³⁸ Soldiers' height was "only good for the eye," as contemporary critics noted.³⁹

Yet for nationalistic German historians of Prussia, it was (and is) simply unthinkable that the king's preference for "lange Kerls" – tall (and also handsome) fellows – could have been "nothing but a whim."⁴⁰ According to the master narrative already promulgated by Frederick the Great himself, it was the perfectly drilled troops that established Prussia's status as a great power. But more recent military historians have shown persuasively the extent to which this version of the art of war was increasingly dysfunctional in actual war. Armies were becoming more and more perfect, but at the same time more and more vulnerable. Whenever battalions stood facing one another in lines several kilometers long and without cover on completely open ground, as a rule a third of the soldiers were killed or wounded, however not because of the dangerous precision of the perfectly drilled sequence of loading or the continuous, synchronized salvoes. It has been demonstrated that in fact, most soldiers died in the battles of the 18th century not from bullet wounds but either from artillery fire or the bayonet thrusts and blows in the chaos of hand-to-hand combat.⁴¹ This was why combat on an open field was avoided whenever possible. The idea of a decisive battle is also misleading; in fact, very few campaigns were decided by battles.

Something else was at stake in the production of an army as an automaton-like collective body. It was the internal logic of certain politico-aesthetic ideals that asserted themselves and developed their social dynamic, quasi behind the backs of the human participants. As a completely symmetrical, harmoniously ordered body set in motion by the single word of an individual, the drilled troops seemed the epitome of aesthetic perfection as well as sovereign omnipotence. *Pars pro toto*, they symbolized and anticipated a perfectly disciplined society of subjects, which in reality of course never existed anywhere.⁴² "If absolutism was ever complete reality anywhere, it was on the parade ground."⁴³ In other words, armies had become living fantasies of political

38 Luh 2004, p. 230.

39 E.g., Mauvillon and Guibert according to Luh 2004, pp. 196f.; cf. Deflers 2020.

40 E.g., even Rohrschneider 2008, pp. 61f. ("again and again dismissed as nothing but a whim"); this tendency is also present in a recent biography of the king: Göse 2020.

41 Extensively in Luh 2004; also Birk 2011.

42 Cf. Kroener/Pröve 1996; Pröve/Kroener/Strauß 2010.

43 Thus in Sikora 2008, p. 166. Cf. the concept of "analogous violence" in the sense of Riekenberg 2019, pp. 56f.

omnipotence. Potentates exhibited them for one another in order to “make an éclat.” The formation and equipping of the troops served not so much the ‘art of war’ as the representation of sovereignty. In terms of the praxeological model of the Collaborative Research Center, a redeployment of functional strategy took place.

5. The Army as an Object of Aesthetic Practice, 2: Collecting and Exhibiting

This leads us to the second form of aesthetic practice, the practice of collecting and exhibiting that corresponds exactly to the logic of repurposing the armies. In this case, Frederick William I seems to me an extreme special case. I have described above how he collected young, handsome, well-built, healthy, and above all, tall men for the royal regiment he exercised in person. In doing so, he was following a pattern of class-based behavior to the extent that collecting was a widespread practice among the rulers of the time. But what a cabinet of curiosities, a porcelain collection, a menagerie, or a picture gallery were for other monarchs, the royal grenadier regiment in Potsdam was for him.⁴⁴ Contemporaries were already making this comparison; at the sight of the royal regiment, one visitor spoke of a “great cabinet [...] where an inquisitive king has produced a very special collection of extraordinarily tall people from all parts of the world.”⁴⁵

The gems of his collection enjoyed numerous privileges; he had their portraits painted (Fig. 10) and hung in his palace. When they died, he had some dissected and their skeletons preserved.⁴⁶ In correspondence with intimate friends, he sometimes called his giant soldiers not only his “blue children,” but according to context spoke of them as “rarities,” “curiosities,” “wares,” and even “human flesh” or “white Moors.”⁴⁷ Despite his legendary miserliness, he spent copiously on his collection, including for genuine Africans whom he purchased and employed as fifers and drummers.⁴⁸ Tall grenadiers were also the currency that one could exchange for whatever one wanted from him – offices and privileges, titles and honors. He even exchanged the legendary Amber Room for a couple of Russian giants. For the acquisition of additions to his collection, he was known to use systematic violence and took into account serious conflicts with neighboring princes. Preoccupation with his collection – constantly new arrangements

44 Sophie von Hannover: Briefwechsel, p. 267: “He was told that the king [Frederick William I] cared nothing for his beautiful porcelain; he said he would give him many grenadiers for that and for his lovely curiosities and paintings.”

45 Bielfeld: Freundschaftliche Briefe, p. 77.

46 Berliner Zeitungen, pp. 110f., 120, 123, 201 and passim.

47 Legendäre “lange Kerls,” pp. XXVII, 118–120 and 301f.

48 Cf. in general Theilig 2013; Bevilacqua 2021.



Fig. 10. Johann Christof Merck: Schwerid Rediwanoff of Moscow, from the Red Household Battalion of the Giant Guards of Frederick William I of Prussia, 1718–1719, oil on canvas, 274 × 110 cm. Berlin, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Inv. No. Kg 54/292.

and decorations, enhancements and increases, inspections, exercises, and maneuvers, but also parades and displays – was his favorite activity to which he devoted the greatest part of his time.⁴⁹

With his peculiar collecting habits and personal drilling of beautiful tall men into a perfect collective body, Frederick William exceeded the bounds of the usual behavior of his peers. My thesis is that this idiosyncratic passion constitutes the key to the monarch's entire politics (which is not at issue here). The spectrum of reactions from outside observers ranged from incomprehension and disconcertment to amusement and astonished admiration. One observer enthused about the troops and their uniforms, "[...] so neat, so dainty, and so well fitting that one can see nothing more beautiful. No other people compares to the natural stature and noble appearance of the Prussians."⁵⁰ Another was "almost beside himself" with astonishment at the first sight of the Prussian troops on parade, but then found the whole thing to be rather monstrous, "more wonderful than beautiful."⁵¹ Significantly, contemporaries were puzzled about what the king planned to do with his wonderfully trained troops, and on which battlefield he intended to intervene.⁵² They simply could not imagine that he had no such plans at all.

The phenomenology of collecting distinguishes between quantitative, economic and qualitative, aesthetic collections.⁵³ In the former, the point is sheer accumulation of many objects of a certain kind; in the latter, it is the collection of individual objects distinguished by the minutest of differences, so that duplicates are worthless. Accumulative collecting only defers the use or consumption of things. Aesthetic collecting, on the other hand, is independent of the economic functions of use or consumption and does not aim for either. "All collecting is conservative," although "at first and usually" it appears in its tarnished, 'inauthentic' namely, economic version." But "emancipation from economic subservience of gathering and keeping together" is an inherent tendency in all collecting.⁵⁴ That is an accurate description of Frederick William's practice as a collector. He crossed the threshold from accumulative to aesthetic collecting. While other rulers also treated their armies as aesthetic objects to a certain extent, they were still ready to be deployed at some time or other. Only Frederick William's army was detached from its original purpose. Its hugely increased personnel were intended not to be deployed at all, if possible. All the more reason why the function of

49 Cf., e.g., *Berliner Zeitungen*, p. 201; numerous details in Kloosterhuis 2011.

50 Loen: *Schriften*, p. 23.

51 Bielfeld: *Freundschaftliche Briefe*, pp. 60, 75.

52 E.g., *Berliner Zeitungen*, pp. 95, 584, 643.

53 Sommer 2014, p. 113.

54 Sommer 2014, p. 115.

being used and consumed was overshadowed by the goal of demonstrating sovereign omnipotence.

Thus the *raison d'être* of the collection was to display it to his fellow rulers and other nobility. In all their details, his infantry regulations were calculated to produce a theatrical effect. To that extent, Prussian *ars militaris* followed court logic, which was a theatrical logic that essentially rested on the difference between what occurred on the stage and what occurred backstage. Frederick William placed great value on making the tedious work on the military collective body invisible. Non-participants were forbidden under threat of punishment to watch troops exercising. And the script for the performance – the drill book that each officer was issued against receipt and was required to read regularly – was treated like a state secret. Copies that were no longer needed had to be destroyed. How well that functioned is shown by the fact that despite their widespread issue, there are almost no surviving copies. An officer who lost, loaned out, or “communicated” his drill book to an outsider was punished; it was not regarded as a trivial offense but punished by being dishonorably discharged and imprisoned.⁵⁵ The marvel of the drilled troops had to appear on the public stage as a perfect product. Great reviews were court spectacles to which the king’s fellow rulers were invited. Afterwards, they were made public to the general courtly audience by a specific commemorative practice. Frederick William had a veritable monster of a medal – over thirteen centimeters in diameter – struck to commemorate the gigantic military review of 1728, corresponding to the uncontested immensity of the Prussian army (Fig. 11). In the ubiquitous aesthetic competition of European potentates, Frederick William specialized in a single discipline, the *ars militaris*, to outshine all his competitors.

The metaphors used by contemporary observers to describe the troops of the Prussian king are revealing, be they the imperial field marshal Seckendorff or the famous war hero Prince Eugene of Savoy. Like Frederick William’s grandmother Sophie von Hannover, they all spoke of his soldiers as “playthings.”⁵⁶ They were described as dolls, clockwork toys, a perfect machine, but also as a Punch-and-Judy show.⁵⁷ What made the army into a sort of windup toy (for which 18th-century courtiers had a great weakness) was already obvious to contemporaries: the combination of mechanical automatism, aesthetic perfection, and purposelessness. Frederick William carried the contemporary aestheticization of the army to its furthest extreme.

The French Revolution, as we know, left nothing unchanged – neither war nor art, to say nothing of politics. It transformed the entire coordinate system of politics, the military, art, and science. Geometrically choreographed troops proved to be resistant

55 Reglement, pp. 637–639.

56 Sophie von Hannover: Briefwechsel, p. 239.

57 Seckendorff: Journal secret, p. 29 (“punch-and-judy show in the army”); cf. also the disparaging judgment of the French ambassador, Deflers 2020.



Fig. 11. Friedrich Eberhard Marl: Large medal to commemorate the military review of Frederick William I, 1728, obverse: bust of Frederick William I facing right, reverse: *Pro Deo et Milite*, troops on parade, silver, diameter: 120 mm. Berlin, Münzkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ident. No. 18202057.

to reform; the military automaton failed the practical test of the wars of revolution.⁵⁸ Clausewitz no longer understood the art of war as the technical production of a perfect body of troops but as the science of commanders' correct decisions. Not by accident at about the same time, the emergence of the modern concept of art – i.e., the separation of art from engineering – had the effect of denying an aesthetic quality to the military. All that remained was the Prussian goosestep.

58 Kunisch 1990.

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III. Manifestations and Interactions

Aesthetic Negotiations in Devotional Texts

A Comparison of Chapter II,25 of *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* and Meister Eckhart's Sermon 57

Abstract

This chapter brings together literary studies and theological investigations in the field of Church History. It examines aspects of a Christian aesthetics as prevalent in the Middle Ages, focusing on Chapter II,25 of *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, handed down under the name of Mechthild of Magdeburg and Meister Eckhart's Sermon 57. Christian aesthetics finds its place here somewhere between the concealment of a transcendent God and his becoming visible in the incarnation. With its rhetorical inventory, Chapter II,25 of the *Flowing Light* aims to achieve a performative comprehension of what is said in order to lead, qua identification, to the experience of unity (*unio*) with God. Even if the structure of argumentation in Meister Eckhart's Sermon 57 largely follows scholarly and learned guidelines and patterns, the goal here is also to convey and visualize the salvation of the biblical events in the here and now. In the tension between the religious reference to salvation and the linguistic design, whose mediating power is both doubted and celebrated, aesthetic processes of negotiation become tangible with great intensity. Therefore, this article aims to show how functionally bound texts, especially those claiming to mediate religious salvation, could become an outstanding site of aesthetic reflection in the pre-modern era.

Keywords

Flowing Light of the Godhead, Eckhart, Aesthetics, Transcendence, Incarnation, Mysticism

1. Defining the Problem: Christian Aesthetics?

The scholarly consensus on medieval aesthetics is that it is largely to be understood as a Christian aesthetics. The term "Christian aesthetics," however, contains contradictions¹

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1 Köbele 2004; cf. also Kiening 2019, p. 31.

paradigmatic of the difficulty in speaking of “aesthetics” in the premodern period.² This is especially evident in medieval mysticism, particularly in the influence the tradition of Neoplatonic concepts and images of light had upon it, as they were conveyed by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. His paradoxical concept of divine presence in brilliant earthly appearance (ὑπέρφωτος γνώφος / *hyperphotos gnophos*)³ is connected to the use of light imagery to describe Christ in the Gospel of John 1:4f. Thus it leads directly to the center of Christological ideas⁴ which, via the concept of a connection between divine and human nature, prepare the theological solution to a problem that presents challenges in terms of both media and aesthetics: how to comprehend transcendence in immanence. For what has already taken place in Christ but always needs to be newly accessed in the experience of each individual can only be conveyed through material or linguistic signs. At the same time, however, this gives rise to a paradoxical tension: On the one hand, in order to appear (i.e., be always available to be experienced anew) divine truth must be conveyed by earthly means. In the process, the earthly *signum*, as a reflection of divine light, is accorded the highest dignity. On the other hand, earthly radiance remains ontologically only a secondary referential medium whose own claim must take second place to its referential character if it is not to be mere appearance or diabolical self-conceit. But how the complex relationship between divine radiance and earthly reflection, brilliance and semblance, truth and its conveyance, theological and aesthetic reference,⁵ is to be expressed by the earthly *signum* will only emerge anew in each negotiation.⁶

- 2 Andreas Speer has often pointed this out, i. a. Speer 1993; Speer 1994. Statements about the “beautiful” cannot be assembled into a “theory” (Assunto 1982) nor can they be assumed as the foundation of “art” or “aesthetics” in the modern sense, since phenomena as well as concepts (beauty, *claritas*, *proportio* etc.) remain tied to their heterological frames of reference in ontology or theology. On the project of an aesthetics in medieval literature and its methodological handicaps, cf. also Braun 2007.
- 3 Pseudo-Dionysius: *De mystica theologia* I,1 [PTS 67], pp. 142,1f.: κατὰ τὸν ὑπέρφωτον [...] γνώφον (“in the over-bright darkness”).
- 4 See also the Nicene Creed with its famous phrase: φῶς ἐκ φωτός / *lumen de lumine*; Denzinger: *Compendium*, no. 150; pp. 65 f.
- 5 The thematic interconnections between shining, appearing, and emerging (cf. German *scheinen*, *erscheinen*, *in-Erscheinung-treten*) are characteristic of the reflections in medieval contexts between theological and aesthetic semantics with respect to individual concepts; i. a., *claritas*: cf. Eco 2002, pp. 81 f.; *lux* and *lumen*: cf. Perpeet 1977; regarding Neoplatonic approaches: Olejniczak Lobsien 2007; courtly narratives: Müller, J.-D. 2006; theoretical reflections on images: Ganz/Lentes 2004; Schellewald 2012 etc. Such reflections continue to this day, but are mostly divided between philosophical-aesthetic and theological discourses: e.g., Mersch 2002; Seel 2005; Welte 2015. For an interdisciplinary study of images of emerging, see Eusterschulte/Stock 2016. Cf. also Gerok-Reiter et al. 2023, with a forthcoming English translation (2025).
- 6 The question of shine (*Schein*) and semblance (*Anschein*) must be raised since the attribute “Christian” can be precarious when applied to mysticism. Even where mystical authors proclaim their

In the framework of the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391 and proceeding from these questions, project C3 of the group, entitled “The *schoene schîn* in Mysticism,” aims to clarify the specific presuppositions, conditions, and manifestations of premodern aesthetics with regard to medieval vernacular mysticism. Against this background, the project investigates two bodies of texts that give insight into extremely different ways of staging the thematic field of radiance and reflection, brilliance and semblance, truth and its conveyance, theological and aesthetic reference, in order to approach the basically paradoxical idea of a “Christian aesthetics.” Central to our investigation are *Das Fließende Licht der Gottheit* (*The Flowing Light of the Godhead*), traditionally ascribed to Mechthild of Magdeburg (1207/08–1282), and the German-language sermons of Meister Eckhart (died 1328).⁷ Both corpora are especially relevant to the CRC 1391, since contemporaries certainly did not regard them as ‘works of art’ but rather as compendia of religious didactics or as practical guides to meditative experience of the divine. They are thus the kind of sources that are not only chronologically “different”⁸ (i.e., premodern) and deploy aesthetic assertions implicitly, if at all, but that also correspond to that expanded, “different” area of the research group’s program to the extent that there too, we seek aesthetic negotiations where cultural practices rather than artistic aspirations are at the forefront.⁹ Our approach to religious devotional texts thus explicitly touches on a contested area of aesthetic discussion.

As a starting point for our analysis, we have selected from the two corpora of medieval mystical texts both argumentative passages in which the problematic areas mentioned above are explicitly discussed, as well as passages where they are implicitly the-

own Christianity, many of them became the object of investigations and convictions for heresy. The problematics of brilliance that can become mere semblance can also be reformulated in dogmatic language, for instance, when the papal bull *In agro dominico* makes Meister Eckhart’s statement in his commentary on John that God’s glory shines (*relucere*) even in an evil work the basis for its condemnation; Denzinger: Compendium, no. 954. Here the dogmatic critique responds to the dogmatic implications of Eckhart’s metaphysics. Thus the emergence of such dogmatically vulnerable statements can be traced back to claimed experience and aesthetic forms of conveyance, which also means that not only their problematic character but also their productive power could have an effect on theological content.

- 7 The corpora thus span two generations of vernacular mysticism. *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* was begun in 1250, and by 1265, five books were finished. Eventually an edition of seven books was assembled. Meister Eckhart’s sermons were composed at various points in his life, and their order and dating is a contentious issue to the present day. The modern critical edition founded by Josef Quint attributes them to him, as does the edition of Niklaus Largier, which is the one we use, on the basis of their correspondence to a corpus of sermons Eckhart used in his defense during his trial for heresy.
- 8 Cf. the chapter on the research program of the CRC: Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, especially section 4.1 (“‘Different’ in Three Ways, or the Aesthetic before Aesthetics”).
- 9 Cf. Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48.

matized. We have selected passages, for instance, that invoke the conditions for divine revelation, constellations of corporeality and the experience of truth, possibilities of earthly perception, or reflections on the effectiveness of verbal transmission, often in conjunction with images of light or light phenomena or the exegesis of the *Song of Solomon*. In this context, individual arguments, elaborations of motifs, or lexemes are to be understood as “figures of reflection”¹⁰ whose aesthetic modus remains to be unpacked, case by case from each text passage, in the relationship between theological conceptualization and social functionality on the one hand and the inherent logic of their presentation on the other. Our working hypothesis is that implicit, collaborative aesthetic negotiations arise from the opposition and cooperation between the religious claim to direct revelation of salvation and the new, vernacular expression which aims to convey the radiance of divine manifestation in the *barbara lingua* and its social context.¹¹

However, this also means that answers to the questions raised can be found only in the dynamic relationship between textual strategies of form and presentation on the one hand and contextual influences and functions on the other. The praxeological model of the CRC¹² serves to analyze the interplay between autological (i.e., textual) and heterological (i.e., contextual) aspects. The corpora establish not only parallel but also differing autological and heterological perspectives, for instance in the texts’ separate transmission histories, forms, dialogic character, and argumentative structure, and also in the divergent ways in which they are connected to institutions, educational backgrounds, and gender perspectives determining those backgrounds. The differences between the corpora raise questions about their often complementary profiling of the problem as well as the capacity of the praxeological model itself.

Based on these questions, we outline the implications of a premodern aesthetics that remains beholden to a Christian frame of reference even while contributing to its formation. To do justice to the challenge of this double perspective, we must consistently bring together theology and literary studies in an interdisciplinary perspective.

10 On the toolset of the “figure of aesthetic reflection,” cf. Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, especially section 6. Preliminary studies to this toolset, with examples, can be found in Gerok-Reiter et al. 2019.

11 “Collaborative” refers here to the fact that quite different participants and text networks are involved. On the concept of translingual and transcultural text networks, cf. Selden 2019; on the phenomenon of plural authorship, cf. foundational Gropper et al. 2023 (English translation forthcoming 2025); on the *Flowing Light*, cf. Gerok-Reiter 2023.

12 On this point, see the chapter by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume. We should point out that the conceptual pair *autological* – *heterological* has different connotations than the triad of heteronomy, autonomy, and theonomy introduced especially by Paul Tillich 1967, pp. 83–86. While Tillich’s concern is above all the “structural elements of reason” (Tillich 1967, p. 83), the CRC’s praxeological model is oriented around determining, for an aesthetic product, the relationship between the inherent logic of composition and its external or socially determined influences.

Hence, we must account for the fact that these disciplines view aesthetic ideas from basically different professional and intellectual traditions, whose diversity cannot be fully presented in a brief outline. The following summary will therefore focus on asking to what extent both approaches involve problematic correlations that can be traced back on the one hand to the contradictions mentioned above and, on the other, to difficulties in dealing with the historical variance of aesthetic constellations.

2. Theology and Literary Studies: Similarities and Differences in Aesthetics Research

In the field of theology, the state of research on aesthetics is extremely disparate, for several reasons. The discipline of theology is characterized today by a great diversity of subjects and methods, which is made even more complex by the way different confessions, especially in the German-speaking world, locate theology. Despite many convergences in individual research projects and in the ecumenical world as a whole,¹³ theologians of different confessions have developed different heuristic approaches to the question of aesthetics.¹⁴ According to a recent interpretation of Martin Luther's *Theology of Beauty*, it was precisely a difference in the understanding of aesthetics that made Luther take issue with his opponents in the Heidelberg disputation of 1518.

What makes Christ beautiful simply violates the standard medieval criteria of proportion, clarity and perfection. In aligning himself with sinners of all sorts, Christ associates with the disproportionate, the dark, and the imperfect, and he himself becomes all this ugliness. Hence, Christ's beauty is one which is "hidden under the opposite appearance."¹⁵

Thus declares Mark C. Mattes in his monograph on Luther's understanding of beauty, and he follows this thread of difference into 20th-century theologies. Mattes contends that whoever, like Aquinas, defines beauty as that which is in itself pleasing to perception,¹⁶ is liable to the charge of endorsing a theology of glory, a *theologia gloriae*, to which Luther in his disputation opposes the theology of the cross, the *theologia crucis*. Luther's dialectical interpretation of beauty by no means blocks access to aesthetics, but it does caution against serving an inappropriate *theologia gloriae*.

13 See especially Holzem/Leppin 2020.

14 These are not only grounded in the individual educational history of the researcher but in the resonating space of a believing community. On religion as a resonating space, cf. Rosa 2019, pp. 258–268.

15 Mattes 2017, p. 96.

16 Thomas Aquinas: *Summa theologiae* I–II q. 27 a. 1 ad 3, 2b: *pulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet* (We call that beautiful whose perception elicits pleasure).

Against this background, it is noteworthy that the 20th-century rediscovery of aesthetic theology in Roman Catholic systematic theology is linked to precisely the concept of “glory.” Hans-Urs von Balthasar introduces his comprehensive presentation of theology with several volumes on this topic.¹⁷ He can do so because he understands beauty, along with truth and goodness, against the background of the medieval doctrine of transcendentials, above all as a fundamental ontological determination.¹⁸ Aesthetics means uncovering the beauty inherent in being. Thus for him, *gloria* is not in opposition to *crux*, as it is for Luther. Instead, God’s glory consists precisely in the revelation of his love on the cross. Thus for Balthasar, Christianity is eminently aesthetically determined, and he can declare that a “theory of beauty [can be deduced] from the data of revelation itself.”¹⁹ From this perspective, he says, it is the theologian’s task to delineate not merely an aesthetic theology but a theological aesthetics.²⁰ Accordingly, revelation has an aesthetic quality of beauty grounded in God, and vice versa.²¹ This genuinely aesthetic-theological approach has been continued in modified form and applied to the liturgy in an enormous project of Catholic theology: the eleven volumes of Alex Stock’s “Poetische Dogmatik” (Poetic Dogmatics).²²

Protestant approaches to an aesthetic theology are distinctly less developed. They center around the difference between written and visual media and the repeatedly evoked “crisis of the Scriptural principle,”²³ but with a broad spectrum of interpretation: Malte Dominik Krüger develops a theory of Protestantism as a critical religion of images that explicitly includes aspects of linguistic imagery.²⁴ Accordingly, there is

17 Balthasar 1982–1991.

18 See Balthasar 1965, p. 27: “God comes not primarily as a teacher for us (‘true’) nor as a purposeful ‘redeemer’ (‘good’), but to show and to broadcast and to radiate HIMSELF, the glory of his eternal triune love in that ‘disinterestedness’ that true love shares with true beauty. The world was created to God’s glory, through it, and to it the world will also be redeemed.”

19 Balthasar 1982, pp. 215f.

20 Balthasar 1982, p. 117.

21 Cf. Lenten 2004, pp. 13–15, who refers to the incarnation as the paradigm of medialization.

22 Stock 1995–2016. Stock argues less against a classic ontological background, as per Balthasar, and more within the horizon of liturgical practice. See the introduction to his project on liturgics and liturgy in Vol. 11, pp. 7f., pp. 15–90. The various approaches are collected in the *Handbuch der Bildtheologie*: Hoeps 2007–2021. On the emphasis on conditions of practice, see esp. Hoeps 2020, p. 7: “Religious images are the expression and vehicle of religious functions. In religious traditions, visual images are not produced for their own sake; they serve prescribed purposes of visual representation and the visual features of particular rooms and times. [...] Their conditions of practice influence the images down to their materiality, their outward shape, and their compositional structures.”

23 Cf., e.g., Bayer 1999; Stoellger/Klie 2011; Stoellger/Gutjahr 2014; Krüger, M.D. 2017; Stoellger 2019.

24 Krüger, M.D. 2017, pp. 489f.

an inherent tension in God's becoming visible due to the fact that "in Jesus the absolute is visualized."²⁵ The result is "a contemplative and differentiating impulse toward the absolute [...] which appears in human creativity and its image-making ability"²⁶ but without being subsumed therein. Thus the image of God in Christ and in all the linguistic images that follow has the quality of expressing in an exemplary way the relationship of religiosity to divine reality in their difference. As Oswald Bayer states, the classic principle of *sola scriptura* can then be introduced to put limits on the legitimacy of aesthetic phenomena.²⁷ But that principle can also be called into question – for example by Philipp Stoellger – because in the wake of the Enlightenment it became mired in crisis, or relativized by the revelatory quality of an image that possesses unique power.²⁸ As far as practical action is concerned, such considerations open up wide vistas in one direction or another, and it is no accident that aesthetic reflection plays a large role precisely in practical theology. Already in 1975, Rudolf Bohren published a manifesto entitled "Praktische Theologie als Ästhetik" (Practical Theology as Aesthetics),²⁹ and a good decade later Albrecht Grözinger issued a comprehensive theory of such a theology.³⁰

This situation makes it all the more obvious that in theologically focused ecclesiastical history, questions of aesthetics have so far not been clearly defined. Except for individual approaches, for instance, to the inclusion of imagery in research by Bernd Moeller,³¹ Berndt Hamm,³² and especially Thomas Lentjes,³³ aesthetic questions play only a secondary role. There are many reasons for this. It may result from a certain abstinence from theory in the field of ecclesiastical history or from the proximity of church history to history in general. The important thing is that because of this secondary status, the historical distinctions which are a central heuristic precondition of aesthetic analysis in disciplines that naturally pursue questions of aesthetics – such as literary studies, art history, and musicology – have not been sufficiently explored or integrated into systematic and practical theology. Even if from certain points of view revelation can count in general as an aesthetic phenomenon, nevertheless revelation as revelation can only be grasped and experienced by individuals in various historical phenomena, modes

25 Krüger, M.D. 2017, p. 522.

26 Krüger, M.D. 2017, p. 508.

27 Its status remains a basic theological question which must be debated in the theoretical framework of systematic theology.

28 Stoellger/Kumlehn 2018.

29 Bohren 1975.

30 Grözinger 1987.

31 Arndt/Moeller 2003.

32 See Hamm 2011.

33 E.g., Ganz/Lentes 2004; Lentjes/Gormans 2007.

of apprehension, and aesthetic practices³⁴ whose quality and claim to revelation can be extraordinarily disparate. The *historical* validation for how God's timeless beauty is "revealed" and apprehended thus remains an unfulfilled task of theological scholarship and leads back to the contradiction inherent in a "Christian aesthetics" with which we began.

On first glance, the situation in literary studies seems to be quite different. There is no lack of studies on aesthetic questions, and the emphasis on the historical variation in aesthetic practices and modes of staging and perception is one of the basic concerns of literary studies and of cultural studies in general,³⁵ especially in the field of medieval studies in the Germanic languages, where objections were raised early on to aesthetic generalization.³⁶ However, it should not be overlooked that the current concern with historical variation is in response to earlier ideas and aesthetic concepts that had been systematized and even canonized by literary history and that were marked by a tendency toward de-historicization as part of the claim to artistic autonomy. Whether explicit or latent, this tendency has long remained powerfully influential.³⁷ The tendency toward de-historicization followed entirely different patterns of argumentation and logic than those offered in the theological discourse on glory with its ontological arguments. Yet it was intimately connected to religious themes. In particular, it paradoxically proved to be the correlate of that teleological narrative of secularization which, with its foundation in religious studies, had success not only as a category of explanation for political and social changes in the modern era,³⁸ but also gained pow-

34 Cf. the approach to "religious knowledge" developed by the DFG research training group 1806. According to their analysis, the knowledge of revelation must be again and again acquired and actualized by believers: Holzem 2013; including especially aesthetic perspectives: Dürr et al. 2019; Gerok-Reiter/Mariss/Thome 2020.

35 Foundational: Belting 1994; Krüger, K. 1997; Kablitz 2012 et al.; Braun/Young 2007. More literature in the compact research report in the chapter by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, section 2.

36 See, e.g., the vehement critique of Haug's theory of the "discovery of fictionality" with its inherent claim to autonomy (cf. Haug 1997b) in Huber 1988; Heinze 1990; also, the alterity debate starts here, beginning with Jauß 1979, with measured perspectives: Peters 2007; Baisch 2013; comprehensive: Braun 2013.

37 Cf. Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, especially section 2.2. This influential idea, which continues to the present day, is discussed critically from a philosophical perspective in Bertram 2019, with productive suggestions for an alternative.

38 Cf. Taylor 2007. Köbele/Quast 2014 offer a good overview of the "variety of discourses of secularization" (p. 12) as well as the current opposite debate in the wake of "(re)sacralization" (p. 11). They rightly emphasize that the "current discussion among intellectual historians of the interpretive formula of secularization and (re)sacralization, de-Christianizing and re-Christianizing [...] leave behind the debates of the 1960s and 1970s, which were intensified by perspectives from the philosophy of history and the critique of ideology" (p. 11) and thus also work against "one-sided

erful influence precisely in the field of *aesthetic* discourse and evaluation.³⁹ Thus, the emergence of a categorical conception of art – indeed, the postulation of a genuine art liberated from all restraints and so possessing timeless value – was demonstrated especially often in literature and scholarship by the rejection or secular overwriting of any religious function. An example from literary practice is this passage from the ninth book of Lessing’s treatise *Laokoon: oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry, 1766):⁴⁰

If one wants to compare the painter and the poet in individual cases, one must first of all decide whether they have both had complete freedom, without the slightest outside constraint, to strive for the greatest effect in their art. For an artist in the past, religion was often such a constraint. His work, intended to be venerated and worshiped, could not always be as perfect as if he had been intent only on pleasing its beholder. [...] [Thus] one wishes to give the name of art only to those works in which the artist can show himself to be a real artist, and in which beauty is his first and last intention. Everything else on which one sees too obvious marks of having been commissioned for liturgical use does not deserve the name, since in that case, art does not operate for its own sake, but is a mere aid to religion, and the sensual ideas assigned by the latter look more to its significance than to its beauty [...].⁴¹

Lessing defines the “work of art” that “deserves” the name, where the artist can show himself to be a “real” artist, as a work which is emancipated from heteronomous pur-

teleologies” in the realm of aesthetics as well (p. 15). Braun 2014 convincingly shows de-historicization and de-differentiation as the “hidden preconditions” for theses of secularization.

39 Cf. Vietta / Uerlings 2008a; an overview in Stierle 2008; Vietta / Uerlings 2008b.

40 Cf. Robert 2024, pp. 37 f.; according to Robert, “the essence of aesthetic autonomy” is already outlined here, even before the philosophically idealistic drafts. “The emphasis is on the opposition of ‘freedom’ and ‘external constraint’ or purpose (‘intention,’ ‘preagreement’) represented above all by ‘religion.’” Lessing thereby dissolves “the Horatian unity of *prodesse* and *delectare*.” Robert adds that even if Lessing is referring only to painters and sculptors, “above all the surviving paralipomena [show ...] that besides differentiating those two genres, he had in mind for the first time an integral theory of *art in general*.” Cf. Robert / Vollhardt 2013.

41 Lessing: *Laokoon*, pp. 80–82, for the German original: “Wenn man in einzeln Fällen den Mahler und Dichter mit einander vergleichen will, so muß man vor allen Dingen wohl zusehen, ob sie beyde ihre völlige Freyheit gehabt haben, ob sie ohne allen äußeren Zwang auf die höchste Wirkung ihrer Kunst haben arbeiten können. Ein solcher äußerlicher Zwang war dem alten Künstler öfters die Religion. Sein Werk zur Verehrung und Anbetung bestimmt, konnte nicht allezeit so vollkommen seyn, als wenn er einzig das Vergnügen des Betrachters dabey zur Absicht gehabt hätte. [...] [So] daß man den Namen der Kunstwerke nur denjenigen beylegen möchte, in welchen sich der Künstler wirklich als Künstler zeigen können, bey welchen die Schönheit seine erste und letzte Absicht gewesen. Alles andere, woran sich zu merkliche Spuren gottesdienstlicher Verabredungen zeigen, verdient diesen Namen nicht, weil die Kunst hier nicht um ihrer selbst willen gearbeitet, sondern ein bloßes Hilfsmittel der Religion war, die bey den sinnlichen Vorstellungen, die sie ihr aufgab, mehr auf das Bedeutende als auf das Schöne sahe; [...]”

poses, for example religious practices. This point of view was conspicuously involved in the debates of the 18th century, and as such is historically contingent, i.e., understandable and plausible in that context. At the same time, this historical contingency is obscured by the way artifacts from antiquity are introduced into the argument and the contrast between the old and the progressive artist is transferred to ancient times. This indicates the decisive point: As valid as Lessing's understanding of "art" may be in his contemporary context, it implicitly makes the problematic claim of a *timeless* quality to the "perfect" work of art and the "real" artist. Since Lessing develops *fundamental* criteria of aesthetic quality from a specific, historically contingent understanding of "art" and "work of art," his perspective becomes ahistorically absolutized as a criterion of value. The approaches that subsequently appeared and emphasized aesthetic autonomy are already suggested in Lessing.⁴² The problem does not lie in the historically contingent and (from a historical perspective) plausible claim to the "complete freedom" of artist and work of art, but rather in the *timeless* evaluative categories that especially literary historians and philosophers derived from that claim, with the consequence that artifacts with a functional purpose – for example, components of a religious practice – had to be excluded from the canon of "genuine," "perfect" art.

Thus, dehistoricizing approaches are precarious, whether ontologically based, as in theology, or evaluatively based, as in literary studies. Literary studies has long since begun an offensive against historically undifferentiated approaches and value judgments;⁴³ it would be rewarding for theology to also pay more attention to historical perspectives when dealing with aesthetic questions. On the other hand, especially in historical research in the field of late medieval piety, literary studies ought to devote much more attention to the diversity of discourse on piety and especially to the variety of male and as well as female participants in that discourse, their institutional affiliation, devotional practices, social status, gender, etc.⁴⁴ Scholarly reflection should take more cognizance of the fact that according to some 13th- and 14th-century devotional practices, the presence of the divine on earth was considered to be literally incarnate and always already realized in the *hic et nunc* of the entire creation,⁴⁵ which makes phrases such as the "invasion of transcendence into immanence" obsolete. Our task in this chapter is not only to test the toolset of the CRC 1391 on devotional texts of the 13th and 14th centuries, but also, in an interdisciplinary combination of divergent perspec-

42 Cf. Robert 2024, pp. 35–37.

43 The discussion has often focused on the interference of religious and aesthetic aspects. From the abundance of sources, we include here several examples with various approaches: Kiening 2015; Köbele/Notz 2019; Kellner/Rudolph 2021.

44 Oexle was among the first to oppose the idea of the Middle Ages as a "unified Christian culture": Oexle 1991, quotation, p. 65.

45 Cf. Hamm 2011; Hamm 2016; Leppin 2021a, esp. pp. 109–197.

tives, to reconsider the presuppositions of both sides with regard to aesthetics and the history of piety.

We will compare and analyze two very different religious texts. Our point of departure will be to discover in a historical perspective the inherent value of linguistic formulations that, from a theological point of view, are often seen as a mere accessory. Our analysis will focus on aesthetic issues that play a productive part in the development of and reflection on divine speech. However, literary approaches leading to an aestheticization of religious discourse must not be misunderstood as a form of secularization but will be described as effects resulting from and leading back to the practice of religious action and experience.⁴⁶ The task of our interdisciplinary perspective, both theological and literary, is not to solve the contradictions and tensions of a “Christian aesthetics” by giving precedence either to the heterological or the autological side, or by reflecting separately on the theological discourse and the formal aspects of its presentation. Instead, our goal is to reveal the constructive and practical relatedness of both sides. After our analyses, we shall return to this interrelatedness in the conclusion.

3. *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* II,25: From the Hunt to *süsser einunge* (sweet union)

In its assemblage of heterogeneous texts, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, whose seven books were composed in stages between c. 1250 and 1282,⁴⁷ is a document of religious didactics and theological reflections with claim to a mystical encounter with God. In order to locate it in its milieu and in the history of piety, it is important to note that recent scholarship⁴⁸ has shown its attribution to Mechthild of Magdeburg to be biographically uncertain. In its declaration that the writer, who came from a noble background, was a beguine, that she had contact with the Dominican confessor Heinrich von Halle, and that she later transferred to the Cistercian cloister Helfta, it follows a narrative that aims at certification, authentication, and legitimation. In the process, it also reveals the different aspects of plausibility that, in the history of piety and the social milieu, could create legitimacy. For the text and our understanding of it, these declarations are important indications of its heterological context, and even in the absence of biographic certainty

46 Köbele/Quast 2014, p. 18, see the productive potential of a dynamic concept of secularization in these mutual dialectical interactions that must always be newly negotiated.

47 On its genesis in general: Ruh 1993, pp. 247–266; Vollmann-Profe 2003, pp. 671–673; more differentiated and skeptical: Nemes 2010, pp. 246–307.

48 Cf. Peters 1988, pp. 53–67; Poor 2004. A critical and comprehensive assessment of this attribution and its substance is offered by Nemes 2010, pp. 309–387. Cf. also Gerok-Reiter 2023.

do not lose their interpretive value, for example, when the text repeatedly hints at the precarious status of the untaught author (e.g., *Nu gebristet mir túsches, des latines kan ich nit; Now my German fails me; I do not know Latin*, FL II,3, p. 82, 24; FT 72,11)⁴⁹ and the apparent lack of protection from an institutional connection (FL II,26, p. 136, 3–5; FT 96, 17–20) or when Dionysian, neoplatonic associations crop up in the frequently occurring light metaphors and ideas about emanation,⁵⁰ whose transmission via the Dominican environment is plausible. One must also take into account the literary education of the obviously female writer, especially her knowledge of the language of *Minnesang* (courtly love lyric),⁵¹ and her intended audience, which we assume consisted of the believers in her immediate vicinity, especially the *mulieres religiosae* and fellow nuns. The function of the text, the “formation of a way of life directed toward sanctification,”⁵² is indisputable and documented in its later reception, to the extent that that is accessible.⁵³

We have chosen Chapter II,25 of the *Flowing Light* not only because it is “one of the poetically outstanding texts of German medieval literature,”⁵⁴ but because in it the relation between theme and presentation and between heterological and autological connections is especially clear.⁵⁵ In genre, the chapter oscillates between praise and lament in a dialogue between the Soul and the divine interlocutor.⁵⁶ From the units of dialogue, one can deduce the chapter’s structure, although those units have no sharp borders. Instead, the themes of separation and *unio*, difference and identity, longing and fulfillment are acted out and propelled forward across a widespread network of metaphors in constantly renewed allusions, elaborations, and modulations.

49 Quotations are from the edition of Vollmann-Profe 2003 (FL followed by the number of the book in Roman numerals and the chapter, page, and line in Arabic numerals. When the quotation is from Book II, Chapter 25, page and line numbers follow “FL” immediately.) The text is based on the Einsiedler manuscript. The English translation is Mechthild of Magdeburg: *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, trans. by Frank Tobin, New York 1998, and is followed by FT and the page and line number.

50 It is hardly possible to establish more than associations: cf. Balthasar 1989, pp. 390–392; Leppin 2007, p. 88. On other possible theological influences: Ruh 1993, pp. 285–292.

51 Generally on the writer’s knowledge of courtly culture: Vollmann-Profe 2003, pp. 677 f.; a critical assessment of her knowledge of *Minnesang*: Suerbaum 2019; on the style of lyrical language in the *Flowing Light*: Linden 2011.

52 Hasebrink 2007, p. 92.

53 On the manuscript transmission and the history and reception of the manuscript, briefly: Vollmann-Profe 2003, pp. 671–673; more thoroughly: Nemes 2010. – Stridde focuses on pragmatic aspects of the circumstances of communication of mystical texts: Stridde 2009, on the *Flowing Light* esp., pp. 122–146.

54 Hasebrink 2007, p. 91.

55 On this chapter, see esp. the commentary of Vollmann-Profe 2003, pp. 743–745, with further literature; Seelhorst 2003, pp. 102–104 und 123–125; foundational: Hasebrink 2007.

56 On the dialogic structure: Haug 1984; Suerbaum 2003; Volting 2003; Hasebrink makes the structure of the complaint the point of departure for his incisive interpretation: Hasebrink 2007.

On the basis of the network of metaphors, the structure is as follows:

- (1) Hymnic Praise (FL 126,9–11; FT 92,27–29)
- (2) Dialogue Part 1 (FL 126,12–130,10; FT 92,30–94,10):
ich brinne (I am on fire)
 hunt
 mutual desire
- (3) Dialogue Part 2 (FL 130,11–30; FT 94,11–28):
the fürige[] minne strale (the beam of your fiery love)
 wounding
 balance
- (4) Dialogue Part 3 (FL 130,31–134,10; FT 94,29–96,3):
 the abandoned bride
 the orchard of love
 the *lichte sunne der ewigen gotheit (the bright sun of my eternal Godhead)*
- (5) Close: The Bride's Song (FL 134,11–21; FT 96,4–15):
wort, sang and süsse[r] herzeklang (word, song, and [sweet] melody of the heart)

(1) The chapter opens with a triple invocation of God, who is visualized in his infinite fullness. This infinity is semantically underlined on the one hand by the elaborate apostrophes *schatz an diner richeit*, *wunder an diner manigvaltekeit*, and *herschafft diner edelkeit*; *treasure beyond reckoning in your abundance*, *marvel in your variety*, *power of your nobility* (FL 126,9–11; FT 92,27–29), and on the other by the denial of any restrictions whatsoever in the adjectives *unzählhaftig[]*, *unbegriffenlich[]*, and *endelos[]*; *beyond reckoning*, *incomprehensible*, and *infinite* (FL 126,9–11; FT 92,27–29), and emotionally emphasized by the anaphoric, triple adorative exclamation, *O du*; *Oh, you* (FL 126,9–11; FT 92,27–29). In this hymnic prelude, the problem that underlies the theme of separation and *unio*, difference and identity, longing and fulfillment is already predetermined. Namely: How can one strive for unity with what is *endelos*? How can such an everlastingness – i.e., earthly transcendence – be borne or even comprehended?

(2) The first dialogic part develops from this thought by initially supposing that God wants to protect the Soul from such infinite fulness and glory (FL 126,13; FT 92,31). Implicitly then, the above questions are answered negatively. However, that also means that God's unbounded fulness – his splendor, multiplicity, and glory (FL 126,9–11; FT 92,27–29) – is withdrawn from the Soul and cannot be grasped (cf. FL 128,16; FT 93,17f.). The result of this withdrawal (*Eya herre, [...] du [...] hast [mir] alles enzogen, das ich von dir han [...]*; *Ah*⁵⁷ *Lord, [...] you have taken from me all the things I have from you*, FL 128,17; FT 93,19f.) is the *unmenschliche not*; *inhuman anguish* (FL 126,17; FT 92,34) that

57 “Ah” here replaces “Please” in Tobin’s translation.

the Soul seeks to formulate in its despairing complaint. In response, however, there develops a dynamic of an equally endless desire that in insistent activity seeks – despite the withdrawal – to reestablish the connection between the I and the Thou – with clear allusions to the *Song of Solomon*: *Ich suche dich [...]* (FL 126,18), *[i]ch rüffe dir [...]* (FL 128,5), *ich beiten din [...]* (FL 128,7); *I seek you* (FT 93,1), *I cry out to you* (FT 93,7), *I hope for your coming* (FT 93,9). In a fourth attempt, emotional intensity remains the theme (*ich mag nit rûwen*; *I cannot rest* (FL 128,8; FT 93,10), while the transitive orientation changes into a participatory relation: *ich brinne / unverlöschen in diner heissen minne*; *I am on fire / Unquenchable in your burning love* (FL 128,8f.; FT 93,10f.). Even so, however, neither rest nor balance has been achieved.⁵⁸ The structure of this love is basically asymmetric. This is in keeping not only with the connection to God, ontologically speaking, as the “incomparable partner,”⁵⁹ but in the literary field – with the roles reversed – it is also in keeping with matches the connection to the first-person poems of courtly love. Thus the possible solutions that follow participate in the topoi of different fields of reference: The transitive searching impulse is taken up again, using the motif of the hunt in an almost aggressive way: *ich jage dich mit aller maht*; *I pursue you with all my might* (FL 128,10; FT 93,12). This, however, in a clear allusion to *Minnesang*, gives way to the twice repeated tender interjection, *[e]ya lieber* (FL 128,14), *[e]ya herre* (FL 128,17); *Ah, my Love [...]* *Ah, Lord* (FT 93,16 and 19), and to the attitude of undemanding fidelity, which, unlike in *Minnesang*, is not presented as the achievement of the lover but as a merciful gift (FL 128,18). In any case, that fidelity is obliged to maintain engagement within the withdrawal, even if fulfillment seems unattainable: *das ich dir getrúwe si in miner not / [...] des gere ich sicherlich / serer denne dins himmelriches*; *That I might be loyal to you in my misery / [...] This I do indeed desire / More than I yearn for heaven* (FL 128,20–23; FT 93,23–26). The goal of this struggling search is in the end to grasp God (cf. FL 128,16; FT 93,18), a grasping which here ambiguously refers to both intellectual and physical apprehension.⁶⁰ Theologically crucial is that through the central metaphor of the bride, including the appellation of dove (FL 128,24; FT 93,27) and the following reference to divine wisdom (*gótlichú wisheit*; *divine wisdom*: FL 128,25; FT 93,28), Christological allusions are present; the God being referred to is thus not simply the transcendent God, but the incarnate God, withdrawn again by Resurrection and Ascension.

In reaction to the Soul's desperate search for him, God draws near through his voice, responding with several suggestions. First, he takes up the theme of protec-

58 An exegetical allusion to the divine revelation in the burning bush (Exodus 3) is possible here – an image for the convergence of transcendence and immanence. Although the “difference between presence and absence” has been “suspended” for a moment, as Hasebrink 2007, p. 99, rightly remarks, the aspect of suffering remains; the “transformation in the process of union,” which can be connected to the metaphor of burning, seems not to be succeeding in this case.

59 Haug 1984.

60 Cf. Hasebrink 2007, p. 100.

tion: It is part of his wisdom to grant divine gifts to the Soul only to the extent that its *arme[r] l[í]p* (*frail body*) can bear them (FL 128,24–27; FT 93,27–30). This wisdom is *über* (*upon*) the Soul (FL 128,25; FT 93,28). Here too, the partnership is asymmetrical. Subsequently however, and in precise correspondence, the images of searching, hunting, being bound together, and burning are taken up again and opposed to *vinden* (FL 128,28; *reach*, FT 93,31), becoming *müde* (FL 128,30; *exhaust* [ed], FT 93,33), *kúle[n]* (FL 128,31; *cool*, FT 93,35), and the Soul's own boundedness (*ich* [bin] *in gebunden*, FL 128,33; cf. 128,1 f.; *I have been bound*, FT 93,36): The asymmetry seems to achieve balance in a promise (*müs*, FL 128,28; *shall*, FT 93,31), in a possibility (*mag*, FL 128,29; *can*, FT 93,32) and finally, in the presence of a reciprocal love (*din süßes jagen*; FL 128,30; *your sweet pursuit*, FT 93,33). The balance culminates in God's surprising acknowledgment, *Ich mag nit eine von dir sin!* (FL 128,37; *I cannot be without you*, FT 94,1).⁶¹ But even here, the tension of engagement within withdrawal, withdrawal within engagement, is by no means suspended, for [*w]ie wite wir geteilet sin – / wir mögen doch nit gescheiden sin*; *No matter how far we are apart, / We can still never be really separated* (FL 130,1 f.; FT 94,2 f.) is as valid as *Ich kann dich nit so kleine beriben: / Ich tũ dir unmassen we an dinem armen libe*; *No matter how softly I caress you, / I inflict immense pain on your poor body* (FL 130,3 f.; FT 94,2 f.). Although an almost unsurpassed connection is established – through the constitutive elements of the dialogic structure, the corresponding groups of images, and the (self-)portrait of God as a partner in love and suffering – on the level of theological logic the status quo is unchanged: Although the immanence is Christologically always connected to the transcendence that has preceded it,⁶² the unfolding of the omnipresent transcendence remains up to this point a miracle and as a miracle beyond human conception (cf. *du unbegriffenliches wunder*; *you incomprehensible marvel* (FL 126,10; FT 92,28).

(3) This internally contradictory structure is characteristic of the following two dialogic parts as well, which we will only summarize briefly. In the Dialogue Part 2, the Soul sharply rejects God's offer of protection with a pointed emphasis on the worthlessness of her physical body – which she describes as a *dank prison* (*pfüligen kerker*[], FL 130,11; FT 94,11) and beset by *frailty* (*bródekeit*, FL 130,14; FT 94,13). At the same time, she transforms the fire metaphors into the image of a *beam of* [...] *fiery love* (*fürigen minne strale*, FL 130,16; FT 94,15), connecting the partnership to an attribution of cause and liability; the sender of the beam of love is not *amor*, but God himself. Again, the response picks up the metaphoric strand precisely and balances out the declared shortcoming, at least in the course of the unfolding speech act: At the very moment the beam of love inflicts its wound (*in der selben stunde*; *immediately*, FL 130,22; FT 94,21), a healing salve is at hand. The humiliation is reversed in the presence of God's fulness. Unlike in

61 The emphasis on mutual desire is characteristic of the *Flowing Light*: Ruh 1993, p. 264; Hasebrink 2007, pp. 100f.

62 Cf. Bleumer 2020, pp. 154f.

the Dialogue Part 1, the endangering superior power of transcendence does not have the last word. Instead, the conception of a consonant harmony is completed phonetically by the rhyme *din / sin* (FL 130,23 f.) and visually by the image of the balance, even though the idea of separation in unity subtly remains in the image of counterbalancing with its future-directed auxiliary verb *wil ich [...] widerwegen; I shall balance off* (FL 130,28; FT 94,27), along with the conception of a salvation that cannot be realized as a presence in immanence, but only eschatologically.

(4) Nevertheless, the incipient harmony seems to take possession of the Soul to the extent that it now gives up its restless search. Its dramatically emotional complaint is replaced by two questions that seek an intellectual understanding of the paradoxical condition of suffering: How should the speaker understand her own physical suffering, again presented in extreme images: *min fleisch mir entvallet, / min blût vertrukent, min gebein kelleit; [...] my flesh melts away, / My blood dries up, my bones torture me* (FL 132,2 f.; FT 94,37 f.)? And where is God in the midst of his withdrawal? The emotional complaint thereby opens itself to theological discussion. God's response harkens back to the image of the forsaken bride to which the Soul has already alluded, again in a direct allusion to the *Song of Solomon's* allegory. The explanation strengthens the eschatological connection: *Die wile das dem jungeling sin brut ist nit heim gegeben, / so muß si dike ein von im wesen; As long as his bride has not been delivered to his house, / She must often be apart from her young man* (FL 132,18 f.; FT 95,15 f.). Yet immediately thereafter, God locates himself in an eternal present: *Ich bin in mir selben an allen stetten und in allen dingen / als ich ie was sunder beginnen; I am in myself in all places and in all things, / As I always have been eternally* (FL 132,25 f.; FT 95,22 f.). Both things are valid: immanence and transcendence interpenetrate, although the Soul remains in a state of deficiency. Once again, the basic theological problem of the asymmetric relationship is invoked and confirmed, the problem to which the Soul determinedly seeks a solution.

The final passages of Dialogue Part 3 are devoted to that solution. It becomes apparent in the images of the loving union in the orchard. The prerequisite of that union is first, that God's arrival – *Ich kum zû dir; I come to you* (FL 132,20; FT 95,17) – cannot be compelled, captured, or discovered but is dependent on God's pleasure (*lust*, FL 132,20; FT 95,17), choice (*wenne ich wil; when I will*, FL 132,20; FT 95,17), and mercy. The other prerequisite is the Soul's self-control and receptive *stille* (*calm*, FL 132,20 f.; FT 95,18 f.) as they already performatively appear in the change from complaining to questioning, for it is precisely this that increases the *minne kraft; power of love* (FL 132,23; FT 95,20). The danger that superabundance might break the Soul apart has been anticipated and is offset by the experience of *sweet union* (*süssen einunge*, FL 132,28; FT 95,25), the divine attractiveness (*lustlicheit*, FL 132,32 f.; FT 95,28), in which all the dialogue's acoustic, visual, and sensory impressions seem to coalesce synesthetically: *So brichestu denne die grünen, wissen, roten ôppfel miner saftigen menscheit; Then you shall pick the green, white, and red apples of my succulent humanity* (FL 132,37 f.; FT 95,31). In the erotically depicted en-

counter, the painful burning of love's fire is transcended in the gleam of divine love and desire: *und dú liehte sunne miner ewigen gotheit / beschinet dich mit dem verborgenem wunder miner lustlichkeit; And the bright sun of my eternal Godhead / Shall make you radiant with the secret wonder of my attractiveness* (FL 132,31–33; FT 95,27f.).

And yet, the Soul has obviously still not reached its goal. For what the verses FL 132,20–22 and 132,27–134,9 (FT 95,17–19 and 95,24–96,2) depict remains curiously open concerning the question of whether here a future, eschatological event is again imagined, or whether God's coming occurs in the actual present, *hic et nunc*, e.g., simultaneous to or within the text itself. On the one hand, the text continues to speak of a *verborgenem wunder* (*secret wonder*, FL 132,32; FT 95,28) and the scenery remains in a mood of preparation (for instance, of a *bette*, FL 132,29; *bed*, FT 95,26) and expectation (*ich warten din*, FL 132,27; *I shall be waiting for you*, FT 95,24) and the *herzeleit* (FL 134,3; *heartache*, FT 95,35) still exists. On the other hand, in the urgency of the temporal impulse as well as the symbolism of the approaching Trinity (*und da neige ich dir den höhsten bôn miner heligen drivaltekeit* (FL 132,35f.; *And I shall bend down for you the towering tree of my Holy Trinity*, FT 95,30) and the speaker breaking the apples (FL 132,35f.; FT 95,31), the *süsse einunge* (*sweet union*) seems to have been *in actu* achieved. This tension recurs at the end of the Dialogue Part 3, where the divine speaker holds out the prospect of teaching the Soul the song of the virgins at some future time (*So du den bûn umbevahest, / denne lere ich dich der megde sang*, FL 134,4f.; *When you embrace the tree, / I shall teach you the song of the virgins*, FT 95,36f.), and then only a few lines later encourages the Soul to complete the song now (*Liebü, nu sing an und la hören, wie du es kanst*, FL 134,10; *Beloved, begin the song and let me hear how well you sing*, FT 96,3).

(5) Only at this moment, i.e., in the sound of the Soul's song, is identity in difference achieved, and [T]he melody, the words, the dulcet sounds (*die wise, dú wort, den süssen klang*, FL 134,6; FT 95,38) become an actual event.⁶³ It is as if the adoration of the apostrophe at the beginning (*O du*) is overwritten by the unity that has cancelled out the duality in complete reciprocity. The initial negations that refer to the dangerous infinitude of divine glory (*unzalhaftig*[], *unbegriffenlich*[], *endelos*[], FL 126,9–11; *beyond reckoning, incomprehensible, infinite*, FT 92, 27–29), now seem newly formed in relation to the mystery of the incarnation, and they again actualize the miracle of the *einunge* of God and man in the Soul's compelling song:

Herre, din blût und min ist ein, unbewollen –
 din minne und minú ist ein, ungeteilet –
 din kleit und min ist ein, unbeveket –
 din munt und min ist ein, ungekust – etc.
 (FL 134,15–18)

63 On the category of "event": Bleumer 2020, esp. pp. 13–19.

Lord, your blood and mine are one, untainted.
 Your love and mine are one, inseparable.
 Your garment and mine are one, immaculate.
 Your mouth and mine are one, unknissed.
 (FT 96,7–10)

Not only does the song declare the absorption of duality in unity, externalization in purity, and love in transcendent inseparableness, but it also realizes this absorption in language that is now clearly lyrical and rhythmic.⁶⁴ In these lyrical lines, the parallelisms in syntax and participial structure are bound together in the fourfold formula of identity *din [...] und min ist ein*, (*your [...] and mine are one*) the fourfold repetition of the prefix *un-*, and the melodic alternation of the vowels *-i-* and *-u-*. Performatively, the text lends a voice to those listeners or readers who have identified with the Soul in its dramatic vicissitudes. It draws them into the rejoicing and even turns them into actors in the encounter with God. Thus the text's primary function – to stimulate mystical experience – is achieved.

Yet the experience of unity in jubilation is immediately interrupted by the following reference to the inadequate presentation by the human hand (FL 134,21; FT 96,15) of the writer. The written *wort* alone, without [*d*]er *minne stimme* or the *süsse[n] herzeklang* (FL 134,19f.; *the voice of love [...] the melody of the heart*, FT 96,14), lacks the vitality that could guarantee the recreation of the incarnation. The text that was able to performatively actualize the presence of divine *einunge*, reverts to the status of a representation. In Section 6, we will return to this deconstruction from autological and heterological perspectives.

4. Meister Eckhart's Sermon 57: Fourfold Sense of the Scripture and Performative Kerygma

In our analysis of Eckhart's Sermon 57 we will examine the possibilities of reading it from a theological and literary perspective.⁶⁵ Intended as part of the liturgy for a church consecration with Revelation 21:2 as the central text,⁶⁶ and probably composed shortly after Eckhart's first sojourn in Paris,⁶⁷ Sermon 57 seems – unlike the passages from the

64 Cf. the foundational work in Emmelius 2013; Emmelius 2015; according to Linden 2011, p. 373, the Soul must now prove itself in song, which is “designated as the exclusive access to God”; also: Gerok-Reiter 2022a, pp. 57–59.

65 On Eckhart's sermons in general: Köbele 1993, pp. 123–129; Largier 1993, pp. 715–742; Leppin 2007, pp. 99–110; on Sermon 57, cf. Quint 1969, pp. 592f.; Theisen 1990, pp. 207–210; Largier 1993, pp. 1076–1082.

66 Buchinger 2011, p. 254.

67 See Largier 1993, p. 1076.

Flowing Light – at first difficult to approach through an aesthetic reading since it shows the Thuringian preacher to be above all the scholastic academic he was well-known to be, who primarily wants to teach and argue logically with sharp definitions. Nevertheless, distinct groups of images with a life of their own find their way into his exegetic argumentation. Similarly, in the staging of a dialogic scene toward its end, the sermon exhibits a formal element which, although not impossible in a scholastic context (recall Anselm of Canterbury’s famous dialogue *Cur Deus homo*), stands in sharp contrast to the gestures of scholastic argumentation. One must thus ask what function these different modes of presentation and explication serve within the genre⁶⁸ of the sermon and the space of its social resonance.⁶⁹

In the interpretation of the central verse, Revelation 21:2: *Vidi civitatem sanctam Ierusalem novam descendentem de caelo a domino*,⁷⁰ Eckhart’s sermon seeks to comprehend the conditions for a mystical experience of God, similar to Chapter II,25 of the *Flowing Light*. We must keep in mind the overall dominance of the structure of scholastic argumentation. This is already evident from an outline of the sermon, which is reminiscent of scholastic treatises in its internal divisions. Using the page and line numbering of Largier’s Eckhart edition,⁷¹ the outline follows:

Theme (EP 606,4): The Descent of Jerusalem from Heaven

- (1) Exposition of the theme on the basis of the concept of *stat* (city, EP 606,5–13)
- (2) *Ze dem êrsten: vride* (first: peace, EP 606,14–26)
 - vride* as an ordering force (EP 606,15–18)
 - vride* as love (EP 606,18–20)
 - vride* as a service community (EP 606,20–24)
 - vride* as a return to God (EP 606,24–26)
- (3) *Daz ander: heilic* (second: holy, EP 606,27–610,6)
 - heilic* as purity (EP 606,27–608,11)
 - heilic* as a separation from the earth (EP 608,12–610,6)
- (4) *Ze dem dritten: niuwe* (third: new, EP 610,7–610,25)
 - niuwe* in relation to time and eternity (EP 610,7–610,22)
 - niuwe* in relation to all *bilde* and *crêâtûre[n]* (images and creatures, 610,22–25)
- (5) Summary: the possibility of knowing God (EP 610,25–614,21)

68 On the sermon as a genre, see Schiewer / Schiewer 2009; on the form of Eckhart’s sermons: Largier 1993, pp. 740f.

69 Cf. Rosa 2019.

70 “And I [...] saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven” (King James Version).

71 Where not otherwise noted, quotations follow the edition of Largier 1993, vol. 1 (in the following abbreviated EP, followed by the sermon number, page, and line). When the quotation is from Sermon 57, EP is followed only by page and line number of the Middle High German text. Largier 1993, vol. 2, is abbreviated EP 2.

The sermon basically develops through a fourfold definition of concepts (*stat*, *vride*, *heilic*, *niuwe*). To begin with, these four ideas are not on the same level. The abstract concepts *vride*, *heilic*, *niuwe* serve to explicate the concrete noun *stat*, which through the thematic Bible verse and the opening vision (*Sant Johannes sach 'eine stat'*: Saint John saw 'a city', EP 606,4) is doubly emphasized.

(1) Eckhart explains that the city – at first still on a basic, material level – stands for the defense and unity of its inhabitants; he soon moves on toward his goal of a spiritual interpretation: *Disiu 'stat' bezeichnet eine iegliche geistliche sêle* (This 'city' represents every spiritual soul, EP 606,10). Obviously, he considers the possibility of this interpretation – which in the end implies a serious leap in conceptual and interpretive levels – is justified by the doctrine of multiple scriptural senses: An eschatological vision thus becomes (by way of allusions to the literal level) in the *sensus allegoricus* a statement of essential contents of belief and in the *sensus moralis* a reference to the soul of the individual believer. In a positively didactic way, Eckhart thus succinctly alludes to all four levels of fourfold scriptural sense, while at the same time emphasizing the *sensus moralis* as decisive, thereby also indicating how to understand what follows.

Eckhart's introduction to the spiritual interpretation as well as his continuation also show that he clearly sees that such an exegetic operation poses a challenge in the context of the sermon, and for that reason – and possibly also in view of a heterogeneous audience that could have included some who were not familiar with the multiple senses of Scripture – that it needs to be made plausible on further levels of coherence. Thus the *stat* is at first clearly delineated in a literal sense, both with references to its fortifications and its inhabitants and by omitting the powerfully symbolic name *Jerusalem*. Mention is made only of *ein stat* (EP 606,4f.). The Biblical quotation that follows⁷² then demonstrates, however, the dissolution of the concrete reading into a sort of reversible figure; a house of prayer (cf. Isaiah 56:7 and Mark 11:17) as well as the sun and the moon are concretely invoked, but only in negation: *Disiu stat enhâte kein betehûs; got was selber der tempel. Man endarf keines liehtes der sunnen noch des mânen; diu klârheit unsers herren erliuhtet sie* (This city had no house of prayer; God himself was the temple. One needs no light of the sun or the moon; the clarity of our Lord illumines it, EP 606,7–9). Thus the impression that he is describing a city on the literal level is sustained through the use of concrete nouns, only for the city's existence to be immediately denied. The concrete house of prayer is rejected in favor of God's all-encompassing presence. The concrete heavenly bodies are rendered superfluous by God's illuminating *klârheit* (clarity, EP 606,9). Both things derive from the eschatological announcement of the Biblical seer, but in the negation of everyday reality can be understood as a direct interpretive in-

72 It comes from the context of the verse being interpreted and occurs twenty verses further on in the same chapter, Revelation 21:22f. Eckhart thus consciously shifts it forward in his interpretation.

struction, preparing the listener for the concise exegesis of the *stat* in verse 606,10, which gives the *sensus moralis*.

(2) A complex concentration of Biblical and theological ideas also characterizes the next large segment, which concerns the theme of *vride* (peace). Just as in the emphasis on the individual in the first segment, *vride* is more precisely defined as *vride, der in der sêle sîn sol* (peace that should be in the soul, EP 606,14f.), with the further explanation, *Dar umbe ist si genant 'Jêrusalem'* (That is why it is called 'Jerusalem', EP 606,15). It is striking that the concept of *vride* is not explicitly present in the Biblical text being interpreted. Eckhart himself introduces the theme using the motif of harmony among the inhabitants of Jerusalem (*eintrehticheit der liute*; harmony of the people, EP 606,7) which was omitted in the explanations of the first segment. At the same time, but without calling explicit attention to this background, he has recourse to the basic exegetical knowledge that Jerusalem is etymologically related to שָׁלוֹם/*shalom*, peace.⁷³ The coherence of the connection – by no means obvious – is established, as before, by two procedures: on the accessible level by interconnecting motifs, already noted above, which even less informed hearers can understand, as well as on the level of academic knowledge.

Having introduced the concept of peace in this way, Eckhart goes on to develop it on a decidedly learned level – now, however, with explicit recourse to Neoplatonic traditions of discourse as well as to Dionysius – by introducing two basic ideas: on the one hand, a continuous order of interdependence, and on the other, a flowing out from God and a flowing back into him, i.e., emanation and the *exitus-reditus* model.⁷⁴ Thus the first two areas of definition – *stat* and *vride* – are in their commonality an indication of the close connection between mysticism and neo-Platonism, which support and determine each other. Eckhart establishes their mutual connection primarily by using Neoplatonic thought to integrate emphasis on the individual soul into the great interconnection of all creatures that take part in the relation between order and flow. The relationship between Biblical and patristic authority works similarly. It is noteworthy that in his elucidations of the *stat*, Eckhart quotes three Bible passages, but now refers to none explicitly and instead offers a lengthy quotation from Pseudo-Dionysius. But the link is given by the interpretation of Jerusalem in terms of peace, and in the context of the medieval hermeneutics of harmony, the discrepancy between the Bible and the Church Father need not be overemphasized.⁷⁵

73 Cf. Petrus Lombardus: *Commentaria in psalmos*, on Psalm 59 (60):1 (PL 191,553A): *Haec est civitas trinomia, quae prius dicta est Jerus, postea Salem, inde Jerusalem. Jerus conculcata; Salem, pax: Jerusalem visio pacis interpretatur.* (This is a city with three names. Earlier it was called Jerus, later Salem, then Jerusalem. Jerus means the despised one, Salem means peace, and Jerusalem means the vision of peace.)

74 Beierwaltes 2014, pp. 100–124, finds Neoplatonic influence on Master Eckhart above all in the doctrine of unity (and its opposite, multiplicity).

75 The medieval hermeneutics of harmony does not reckon with a possible opposition between a church father and the Biblical text. Instead it posits them together as an interpretive unit, especially when a figure is involved like Dionysius Areopagita who, according to the medieval concep-

(3) The question that still remains unanswered is to what extent the soul is included in the cycle of all creatures that Eckhart invokes, since it is to be thought of as immortal. The subsequent passage of explication, which also continues paraphrasing the conditions for a mystical encounter with God, provides the answer. The opportunity is offered by the remarks on sanctity that proceed from the corresponding attribute of the city Jerusalem in Revelation, and Eckhart elaborates on them especially. The Bible, Augustine, and Dionysius along with the Neoplatonic tradition again constitute the learned points of reference that Eckhart increasingly applies to his own understanding. Accordingly, sanctity means first of all the purity (*lûterkeit*) and freedom (*vriheit*) of the soul that allow it to reach perfection (*volkomenheit*) (EP 606,28f.), i.e., that point where God takes up residence in the soul and equality (*[g]lîchnisse*) between the soul and God is achieved (EP 606,30f.). In a complementary way, sanctity likewise means a distance from all earthly things. Eckhart emphasizes that in this context, sin is the antithesis of sanctity. By the mere mention of the words, he conjures up the encompassing context of the Christian doctrine of original sin in the Augustinian tradition. According to Eckhart, however, original sin can be overcome, so that the soul leaves behind the earth and its bodily and material demands (*lîchamen*; body, EP 608,5 – *lîphaftigiu dinc*; bodily things, EP 608,17 – *irdischen dingen*; earthly things, EP 608,24), and enters into God's purity. It is especially notable that to depict the path to purity (*lûterkeit*), Eckhart repeatedly demands a separation from all material things whilst also emphasizing that it is only with the body that the soul can be carried back up to God (*mit dem lîchamen ze gote*; EP 608,20). Similarly, in the account of the purification process, there is a notable increase in concretizing images (the soul that is carried by the body, EP 608,19f.), similes (Zacchaeus on the ground before climbing the tree to see Jesus, Luke 19:1–10; EP 608,21–23), and examples drawn from scientific or artisanal practice (gold mining, EP 608,26–29). Here, if not before, it is no longer possible to separate the register of learned knowledge from that of vividly concrete images; here, if not before, Eckhart returns to the problem of verbal communication in general.

(4) In the last explanatory segment, the necessary purification process is subsumed under the concept of newness: *Swanne wir mit ihm vereinet sîn, sô werden wir 'niuwe'* (When we are united with Him, we become 'new', EP 610,9f.). Much like the *exitus-reditus* scheme mentioned above, this *unio* consists in a return to God as *anvanc* (beginning, EP 610,9), but the beginning itself is timeless. The idea of newness seems to introduce a temporal dimension, which creates a tension with God's immediacy in the *unio*. Eckhart develops this complex metaphysical problem, which simultaneously invokes the paradoxical basis of mystical insight, in two ways that now even more clearly bring together substitutive scholastic knowledge and performative immediacy (EP 610, 10–25). One is

tion, belongs to the first post-apostolic generation. On the compilation of biographical material on Dionysius, see Leppin 2021b, pp. 126f.

that, in addition to the aforementioned authorities, a collective *wir* now appears (EP 610,9f.), alongside the speaker himself as explainer (*als ich iu sagen wil*; as I will tell you, EP 610,13f.) and as exemplary figure (*ich stân hie*; I stand here, EP 610,14f.). The other is the metaphor of the mirror, which Eckhart uses to conceive of eternity and newness together, a metaphor he presents in the most immediately vivid way. The image of a person in the mirror seems new every day, although the person remains identical with himself; according to Eckhart, this is the way to understand the creatures that God posited outside himself. There is no newness in God himself. More generally, there is no time except in the world presented in the mirror. Eckhart develops this in opposition to the possibility that God made things eternal with himself and then placed them into time (EP 610,10–12). Thus ontologically (he continues), the unity of God with his creatures is also a given. Their departure and return are merely an expression of God, not an alternate reality opposite to him in the dimension of time.

With these considerations, which lead us to the summarizing closing passage, a question arises about the relationship between the understanding gained through the process of definition and explication and the realization of perfect cognizance of God in the sense of the *unio* (EP 614,3f.). Eckhart now introduces another metaphor as a central illustration of this relationship, one that he has already used in passing but to whose deep roots in Neoplatonic metaphysics he now explicitly refers: the metaphor of light, for which he again cites Dionysius. Eckhart's doctrine of the five ways mankind deals with light (EP 612,9–27) is a kind of scale with which – beginning with those who fail to receive light at all – he describes a greater and greater reception of light, tied to cognitive ability. The subtext of these remarks is obviously John 1 with its talk of the light shining in the darkness and the darkness not comprehending it.

(5) Yet a different Biblical text will lead to an explanation of the fifth group of people, those most strongly gripped by the light: the *Song of Solomon*. Eckhart assembles several passages from it into a dialogue, using a method that relates content to presentation surprisingly concisely and binds together the previous modes of comprehension: learned explication and metaphorical vividness. To understand these final passages, one must also take into account the liturgical context, the consecration of a church. The Biblical context of Revelation 21 could refer not only allegorically to the church community as mentioned above – especially its heavenly, pure realization – but also in liturgical history to an image of the heavenly Jerusalem as embodied in the church erected on earth.⁷⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, however, interpreted the act of consecrating a church as connected to the encounter between God and the individual believer: “Therefore, brothers, let us strive with all our yearning and fitting thanksgiving to build for

76 See Böcher 2010, pp. 19–23; Berger 2017, p. 1386.

him a temple in ourselves.”⁷⁷ Obviously, Eckhart stands in this tradition whose liturgical and Biblical context is only fully grasped when one reads the Biblical text beyond the brief passage quoted at the sermon’s beginning. For Jerusalem’s descent from heaven is then compared to a bride adorned for her bridegroom. This allusion, which fits with the mystical metaphor of the bride – employed by Bernard but seldom used by Eckhart – and its source in the *Song of Solomon*, thus gives Biblical support to Eckhart’s insertion of the dialogue gleaned from that text into his sermon as its closing passage.

Like many previous passages, the dialogue is introduced by a source reference in an instance of the sermon’s typical appeal to authority: *Jâ, hie von sprichet diu sêle in ‘der minne buoche’* (Of course, the soul speaks about this in the ‘Book of Love’, EP 614,4f.). Moreover, the citations circle around the definitional idea of the soul’s purity as a precondition for the encounter with God. The lyrical⁷⁸ quotations, however, obviously chosen for the power of their images, cannot freely develop but are constantly interrupted by the staccato beat of an interpretive *daz ist [...]* (that is [...]) that brings the sermon’s close back to the technique of the fourfold sense of the Scripture and resolves the sensuality of the images in their spiritual interpretation – a masterpiece of exegesis. Nevertheless – and this is the astonishing thing – the inserted dialogic structure of the *Song of Solomon*, in league with its sensual imagery and rhythmically charged prose, becomes itself an element in which the method of presentation not only underscores and makes plausible the intended message; in its closing passage, it almost realizes that message performatively, thereby clearly differentiating itself from the sermon’s previous academic-definitional procedure. In the tempo with which the varying citations and concrete images of window, dove, rain, flowers, and north and south winds are invoked, the interpretive structure does not disappear entirely but loses its precedence. In the same way, the reference to authorities clearly recedes at the end in comparison to the event that is invoked. From the perspective of the history of piety, one sees here a phenomenon that can be observed elsewhere as well: a reenactment.⁷⁹ In the sermon, the past process of salvation is quasi reenacted, just as the liturgy is also a reenactment of the events on Golgotha. Such a reenactment would have had special appeal for Eckhart if one takes seriously his preceding thoughts on the suspension of temporal difference in God and thus in reality in general. Here, it is not that the past needs to be made present through action. Rather, in dialogic action, the omnipresent God can be experienced – and indeed, even heard – in a new way.

For although, in his explanatory interruptions, Eckhart permanently distances himself from the dialogic role-play, at the same time he quotes the dialogue without

77 Bernard of Clairvaux: In Dedicatione Ecclesiae Sermo 2, pp. 824f.: *Itaque, fratres, toto cum desiderio et digna gratiarum actione studeamus ei templum aedificare in nobis.*

78 On the *Song of Solomon* as Oriental love poetry, see Fox 1985.

79 See on this concept Leppin 2021a, pp. 17f.

naming the speakers. Indeed, in the course of the dialogue, he can slip from one first-person subject to another. In the following passage, there are three separate speakers, Eckhart, the bride / soul, and the bridegroom / Jesus:

- [Eckhart:] Jâ, hie von sprichet diu sêle in *der minne buoche*:
 [Bride / soul:] ‘mîn liep sach mich ane durch ein venster’
 [E.:] – daz ist: âne hindernisse –,
 [S.:] ‘und ich wart sîn gewar; er stuont bî der want’
 [E.:] – daz ist: bî dem lîchamen, der nidervellîc ist –
 [S.:] und sprach:
 [Bridegroom / Jesus:] ‘tuo mir ûf, mîn vriundinne!’
 [E.:] – daz ist: wan si ist zemâle mîn an der liebe, wan
 [S.:] ‘er ist mir und ich bin im aleine’;
 [J.:] ‘mîn tûbe’
 [E.:] – daz ist: einvaltic an der begerunge –,
 [J.:] ‘mîn schœne’
 [E.:] – daz ist: an den werken –,
 [J.:] ‘stant ûf snelliclîche und kum ze mir! [...]’
 (EP 614,4–12)
- [Eckhart:] Of course, the soul speaks about this in the *Book of Love*.
 [Bride / soul:] ‘My beloved looked at me through a window.’
 [E.:] – That is, without a barrier –
 [S.:] ‘and I became aware of him. He stood by the wall.’
 [E.:] – That is, by the body that is frail. –
 [S.:] ‘and said:’
 [Bridegroom / Jesus:] ‘Open the door for me, my beloved!’
 [E.:] – That is, she belongs wholly to me in love, for –
 [S.:] ‘He is with me, and I am his alone.’
 [J.:] ‘my dove’
 [E.:] – That is, naïve in desire –
 [J.:] ‘my beauty’
 [E.:] – That is, in her deeds –
 [J.:] ‘Get up quickly and come to me! [...]’

The interweaving of speaker perspectives in this brief passage,⁸⁰ however, is extremely striking: In the line *daz ist: wan si ist zemâle mîn an der liebe* (EP 614,9), it is carried even further, since here in his explication, Eckhart assumes the voice of the bridegroom / Jesus. If one considers the oral nature of a sermon,⁸¹ then the frequent change

80 Cf. Leppin 2021a, pp. 224f.

81 One problem for historical analysis of the sermon is that this genuinely oral genre comes down to us only in written form, through multiple stages of hearing, transcribing, and copying. To that extent, what follows includes a certain methodological caveat, but is intended to draw attention to how this dialogue functions.

of speakers, performed by the single voice of the preacher, lets his role blur into those of the role-players in the *Song of Solomon* and makes him into the first-person speaker of Christ. Thus, in the staging of its speech acts, the dialogue underscores the sermon's final promise that God himself commands all perfection to enter the soul (EP 614,20f.). This pledge comes from God, who is present to the soul and whose words were just now audible in the voice of the preacher. And it is precisely therein that, the distanced sermon, although retaining to the end its gesture of academic explication, becomes performative kerygma.

5. Between Autology and Heterology I: The Choice of Artistic Means

Both Chapter II,25 of *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* and Eckhart's Sermon 57 revolve around the realization of God in the conjunction of transcendence and immanence, conceived as a unity. This raises in both texts the basic theological question of how the soul may comprehend God and the equally basic question of how any verbal representation may serve to do so. Both texts strive to answer these questions, but in clearly different ways.

Chapter II,25 of the *Flowing Light* presents the theme by "staging a drama in which the paradox of the presence of transcendence"⁸² is acted out in constantly renewed approaches to and perspectives on the tension between withdrawal and engagement, separation and possible *unio*, difference and longed-for identity, desire and hoped-for fulfillment, duality and unity. In keeping with the idea of an exegesis "in process,"⁸³ as it offered itself especially to the unlettered in continuation of the Cistercian interpretation of the *Song of Solomon* what is foregrounded is not a propositional statement, a logical explanation of causality, or a learned explication. Instead, adapted to the expected listeners and readers, the numerous creative means employed aim for emotional enactment and performative participation.

Thus the complaint that emerges from the opening praise and flows back into it is per se an affective form of speech. Emotionality is further emphasized by lexemes of misery, suffering, and desire. Metaphors drawn from the classical vocabulary of amorous passion – the arrow of love, wounds, injuries, fire, fetters – underscore the emotion, as do words and paradoxical figures of thought from the vocabulary of courtly love (*triuwe* [faithfulness], engagement / withdrawal, and the salutation *Herzeliebú*⁸⁴ [dear heart], FL 130,19; FT 94,18), as well as, above all, the allegorical interpretation of the *Song of Solomon*. But this affective verve is also triggered by everyday images (*wider-*

82 Hasebrink 2007, p. 94.

83 Largier 2000, p. 104.

84 A conjecture from *liebú herze*, cf. on this passage Vollmann-Profe 2003, p. 743.

wegen [balance off], FL 130,28; FT 94,27 – zucker [sugar], FL 134,13; FT 96,5), animal and nature allegories (löwe[] [lion], FL 132,7; FT 95,4 – böngarten [orchard], FL 132,27 – öppfel [apples], FL 132,37; FT 95,37) or the network of lexemes of fire, light, and illumination derived from classical, Biblical, and Dionysian tradition. Central to the resulting impression of dynamic breathlessness is that the groups of images rapidly succeed one another, often overlapping and almost seamlessly melding with allusions to the Bible (e.g., Psalms 12:15 f. or Job 19:20)⁸⁵ and learned theological questions (e.g., *gabe von nature; per naturam* – *gabe von gnade; per gratiam* – *gifts of nature; gifts of mercy*, FL 128,18–23; FT 93,16–26; the color allegory of the apples, FL 132,37 f.; FT 95,31 f.).⁸⁶ Syntactic elements such as anaphora ([i]ch rüffe dir, ich beiten din, [i]ch jage dich; *I cry out to you, I hope for your coming, I pursue you*, FL 128,5,7,10; FT 93,7,9,12) and the rhythmic sentence structure that – through rhyme or its evocation – repeatedly assumes the character of verse contribute to the rapid flow of images and complaint, a flow into which the audience, like the Soul, can immerse itself.⁸⁷ Thus the Soul's disquiet is mirrored less in sentence content than in the constantly changing groups of images and rhythmical values; the artistic means become an equal – and sometimes the primary – agent of meaning.

The artistic means prove to be a strategy of immersion which brings together synesthetic experience and theological reflection, emotional connection and cognitive perception to support understanding of and participation in what is said. The goal is to enable, via the emotive stages of despairing pursuit and mutual counterbalance, the listeners or readers to experience performatively the *süsse einunge* themselves.⁸⁸ This goal is aided by the fact that the “I” of the text is not a biographically specific person but the depersonalized voice of the purified Soul, which offers the receptive audience a surface of identification permitting an infinite number of inscriptions.

Given Eckhart's scholastic background, his training in Latin, and mostly educated circle of listeners, the style of his Sermon 57 is quite different. The structure of his

85 Cf., e.g., Vollmann-Profe 2003, p. 743.

86 Cf. Hasebrink 2007, p. 100, or Vollmann-Profe 2003, p. 744.

87 On similar practices of immersion as part of mystical readings, see Nemes 2012. Cf. on Scripture's inherent “program of implemented action” also Kiening 2011, p. 13.

88 It is decisive that this immersive participation, initiated by aesthetic means, both includes difference of experiences and also enables knowledge (just as “unity is still operative in separation,” see Köbele 1993, p. 95). Precisely the “necessity of discerning the spirits” that accompanies sensuous sweetness (Largier 2007, p. 47), however, should counter the danger of an opposition between independent, autonomous aesthetic experience and the goal of *cognitio experimentalis* – thus implicitly Largier 2007, pp. 55–60 – a danger which in this form is probably due above all to a modern understanding of aesthetics. For a critique of Largier on this point, cf. Zech 2015, pp. 15 f. Hasebrink 2007, p. 105, sees the difference to modern aesthetics in the fact that “a transcendent connection is specific for the understanding of medieval aesthetics; thus the aesthetic is not completely subsumed in the beautiful appearance of the work of art, but also carries with it the difference of what has made it possible and thus expresses absence”.

argumentation follows predominantly learned scholastic models and patterns, clearly evident in its hierarchical outline, its constant appeal to authorities, its conceptual definitions, its continual quotation of Biblical and patristic sources, and above all in the way it employs the hermeneutic practice of the fourfold sense of the Scripture, especially in interpretation of the *sensus moralis*. It is therefore no accident that the interpretive practice of addressing the fourfold sense of the Scripture in homiletic endeavor is especially evident at the beginning of Eckhart's sermon – as an unmistakable demonstration of a receptive mode that is of fundamental importance to the entire sermon.

However, even here, specific rhetorical means support the understanding of the thematic fields and interpretive relationships.⁸⁹ As in the *Flowing Light*, these consist in connections made via internal structures, motivic correspondences, and semantic ambiguity. There is a use of metaphors, similes, and examples from various realms of imagery,⁹⁰ here too with a connection to everyday skills (EP 608,26–29). The end of the sermon deploys intensified syntactic and rhythmic concentrations. In contrast to the *Flowing Light*, however, the sermon tends to use such means sparingly and mostly in the service of rhetorical coherence and clarity in support of the objective, argumentative logic of explication in passages where the audience's knowledge of the arguments may not be adequate for a system of implied references that skims over traditions of complex commentary. But when they are combined with intensified verbal and sensual presentation, in the extreme case they can also aim at an actualization which – measured by the extensive prophecy of the literal sense – partially realizes the eschaton in the soul.

It is important to note that, like the author of the *Flowing Light*, Eckhart intends to convey and realize in the here and now the salvation connected to Biblical events. Both the author of the *Flowing Light*, as a fellow sister to whom God has given responsibility, and Eckhart, as a preacher and highly respected Dominican teacher, seek to carry out their task and bring that realization to fulfillment in the best possible way, with all the rhetorical ingenuity at their command. Despite their identical pastoral goal, its implementation is clearly different in each case, adapted to the genres of mystical praise and complaint on the one hand and sermon on the other, as well as to the educational and institutional conditions of the speakers and their audiences. In comparing them, it is obvious how firmly the means they employ in the autological dimension remain embedded in the speakers' heterological connections or their enactments and thus resist a purely literary, linguistic reading. It also emerges how much the different verbal resources on the level of reception aim to convey salvation according to their heterological environment, and thus – again, we say this with all necessary caution – how much they can reveal about that environment: a methodological gift from literary studies to theology.

89 Cf. esp. Seelhorst 2003, pp. 150–230.

90 On Eckhart's use of metaphor, see – with variable focus and emphases – Köbele 1993, pp. 123–191, and Seelhorst 2003, pp. 215–230.

6. Between Autology and Heterology II: Verbal Reflexions

The variation-rich and stringent application of resources – whether in the sense of consistent strategies of immersion as in the *Flowing Light* or the increasing convergence of an academically learned gesture of explication with immediate vividness, as in Eckhart’s sermon – also points to a level of reflection that allows obvious rhetorical considerations as to *ornatus* or *aptum* to become implicit aesthetic negotiations. Its claim of mediation aims not only at religious teaching but also at realization and even at the experience of a mystical *unio*. As a consequence, the fundamental theological problem, with which both texts struggle, of how the soul might comprehend God necessarily raises the paradox of how God might be comprehended (or perceived to withdraw) in the representations of the chosen verbal medium.⁹¹

One must take into consideration that both the speaker in the *Flowing Light* and Eckhart repeatedly make critical remarks about verbal presentation and its resources, although in part with completely different motivation. Thus it is notable that the speaker in Chapter II,25 describes her own bodily voice as *ellendig* (FL 128,6; FT 93,8), which can have the connotation “in a foreign place” as well as the sense of a weak, almost inaudible, “miserable” voice – the opposite of *great longing* (*grosser gere*, FL 128,5; FT 93,7). As lamentation takes over, the tongue can be lamed and the mouth closed tight (FL 130,34f.; FT 94,32f.). Likewise, the writer’s earthly hand (FL 134,20f.; FT 96,15) can become inadequate and offer only fragments; the written words with their (lifeless) letters lack the melody (*wise / stimme*; *melody / voice*, FL 134,6 and 20; FT 95,38 and 96,14) of love and *süsser herzeklang*, i.e., that which together constitutes the spirituality of the song of the virgins (FL 134,5; FT 95,37). Here, the earthly, physical conditions are limiting fetters. But even when it is not the corporeal speaker herself but her soul whose voice is raised, the adequate articulation of lack or fullness⁹² is obviously hard to find. And so the Soul’s shuddering sounds are like the loud roar of a hungry lion: powerful but unbalanced and inarticulate (FL 132,6f.; FT 95,3f.). Even at the very end, just before the voice will begin to sing from the *einunge*, it still describes itself negatively as inadequate and *hoarse* (*heiser*, FL 134,11; FT 96,5).

This skepticism surely points to a theological problem that is not per se gender-specific: No speech of any sort can capture the overwhelming experiences of God’s withdrawal or God’s engagement, as the beginning of the *lamentatio* already announces: *das möhten dir alle creaturen nit vollesagen* (*This all creatures would not be able to express to you fully*, FL 126,14; FT 92,32). Nevertheless, in the specifics of these repeated utterances, we recognize above all a perspective that reappears again and again in the *Flowing Light*:

91 Köbele 2004, p. 122, clearly states this “paradox of representation” with which all scholarship on mysticism struggles.

92 Kiening 2019, esp. pp. 1–29, and on the *Flowing Light* pp. 144f., provides an introduction to this fundamental tension from the perspectives of theology, anthropology, and media studies.

Because of her femaleness and her lack both of learning and the right to be speaking, she seeks to disappear into the staging of her text.⁹³ This bringing herself to disappear is at the same time the precondition for the speaker to become the pure medium for God's revelation and for the text written by her inadequate hand to become the flowing light of the godhead itself. On the heterological level, the result is that the speaker receives a veritable legitimation for utterances that would be precarious in an institutional context. On the autological level, it seems equally important that her radical, selfless, completely transparent "speaking from the other"⁹⁴ represents the only possible way to complete the transformation from *nit vollesagen* to *vollesagen*.

Such a transformation seems possible after the transition from complaint to a calmer question, and from the question to the beloved's request *nu sing an* (*Beloved, begin the song and let me hear how well you sing*, FL 134,10; FT 96,3). As with the assignment from God to make the *buoch* a revelation of divine flowing light, the initiative again comes from the divine partner. And here too, it is not the singer's own ability but God's kindness (*miltekeit*, FL 134,13; FT 96,5) that opens her throat to song. Nor is the resulting song her own, but a merging with *der megde sang* (*the song of the virgins*, FL 134,5; FT 95,37) which thus also means its actualization.⁹⁵ Only in this complete transference of self does the "I" of the singer achieve the status of a cognitive medium for grasping God in both senses of the word: to *begriffen* God (*catch*, FL 128,16; FT 93,18) and to understand the other in the self. The hallmark of complete comprehension is a synesthetic, sensuous sweetness (*süeze*) transcending all sensuousness: *das zucker diner süssen miltekeit* (*the sugar of your sweet kindness*, FL 134,13; FT 96,5), the *süssen klang* of *wort* and *wise* (*The melody, the words, the dulcet sounds*, FL 134,6; FT 95,38) and the *süsse herzeklang* ([*sweet*] *melody of the heart*, FL 134,20; FT 96,14) become one. Only in this *süssen einunge* (*sweet union*, FL 132,28; FT 95,25) can the *vollesagen* ([the act of] *express[ing]* [...]) fully, FL 126,14; FT 92,32) succeed as a speaking in which representation and presence, *signum* and *res* merge in the lyric song that now begins.

Even if this *vollesagen* – only to be accomplished performatively and emphatically – has no end in eternity (*etc.*, FL 134,18),⁹⁶ in the *hic et nunc* of the religious audience it cannot be permanently established. Thus the return to the limitations of the written word (FL 134,21; FT 96,15) does not mean that unity cannot be comprehended and expressed in immanence,⁹⁷ but as per the entire chapter, it refers from a new perspective

93 In addition to the declarations of inability, the formulae of humility, and the "disappearance" of the "I" behind the concept "Soul," one could also adduce the dissociation of the "I" into various body parts; cf. Gerok-Reiter 2023.

94 Hasebrink 2006.

95 Linden 2011, pp. 373f. explicitly emphasizes this.

96 With a somewhat different reading Linden 2011, pp. 374, cf. there also footnote 35.

97 See Seelhorst 2003, pp. 102–104 and 124f.; Hasebrink 2007, pp. 104f. Cf. Mechthild: *Lux divinitatis*, Liber IV,7, 30f. (p. 232).

to the conditions under which a *vollesagen* can be achieved. The semantics of *bliben* (*be left unrendered*, FL 134,20; FT 96,14) can definitely be understood as ambiguous, i.e., not only as failing to appear (*ausbleiben*). In order again and again to call *dú wort des sanges* back to life and experience them as the flowing light of the Godhead, love's desire – the *süsse herzeklang* – must remain (*verbleiben*) in the memory of the audience, at least as a trace of what they have just heard or read. Especially for imparting the knowledge of salvation in the everyday contexts of the writer's fellow sisters, this pragmatic retrospection is necessary. And it shows again how firmly the presentation is embedded in concrete pastoral ministry and the preaching of salvation.

Returning to Eckhart's thoughts, they begin characteristically not with his own physicality or dissatisfaction, but more fundamentally with the nothingness of creatureliness itself. Thus it is significant for the idea of aesthetic negotiation, in Sermon 57 that Eckhart contrasts, in a metaphysical-ontological sense, the somethingness of God with the nothingness of the creaturely being. The sin of this being consists in physicality itself, while the return to God, the mystical uniting, redirects the outflowing into physicality back to its beginning (EP 610,25f.). That corresponds to the ontological approach Eckhart developed in his Latin works, in which Eckhart famously advocated the thesis, *Esse est deus*⁹⁸ and drew the consequence for creatures:

[...] everything made by someone is nothing without him. For obviously anything without being is nothing. How could something be without being? But all being and the being of all is from God alone.⁹⁹

Thus the creaturely world can be described as existing at best in a derivative sense. And since language is a part of this deficient, physical world, it necessarily participates in the inadequacy and temporariness of the creatureliness that must be discarded in favor of *vriheit* and *lûterkeit*. Yet this one-sided and radical rejection falls short. This can be seen in what follows, in that Eckhart – at first almost in opposition to the theme of Sermon 57 – comes to speak about the fundamental necessity of medial communication, which is as firmly inscribed in the Christian intellectual horizon as the creatureliness of man, God's incarnation, and Christian revelation. For in his transition to the closing passages of the sermon, Eckhart repeatedly points out that on the ontological level, even the body is God-given and that it is to be loved as the carrier of the soul and thus

98 Meister Eckhart: Prologus generalis no. 12, p. 8; Meister Eckhart: Prologus in Opus propositionum no. 1, p. 16 and passim; cf. Manstetten 1993.

99 Meister Eckhart: Expositio in Iohannem no. 53, p. 44,12–15: *omne factum a quocumque sine ipso est nihil. Constat enim quod omne, quod est sine esse, est nihil. Quomodo enim esset sine esse? Esse autem omne et omnium a deo est solo, [...]*.

as an indispensable precondition and aid to the ascent to God.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, even God's light can only be perceived if it is "shrouded", as Dionysius says: *ist, daz daz götliche lieht in mich schînet, sô muoz ez bewunden sîn, als mîn sêle bewunden ist* (Whenever the divine light shines in me, it must be shrouded just as my soul is shrouded, EP 612,9–11). If one takes into account the allusion to John 1, then the light stands for the Divine Word or its revelation through Jesus Christ. Thus even the Word of God had to become engaged with an embodied medium in order to reach the world. Correspondingly, it must use human speech to bear fruit. Or the other way around: Because God's message becomes engaged with the limited conditions of a deficient creatureliness, even the Divine Word needs a medium in which to be conveyed.

If while preaching the preacher adapts and actualizes the work of revelation, his speech also remains indebted to the dichotomy between a communication always contained in (and annulled by) the being of God and its necessary realization. Eckhart had already pointed out this dichotomy in his explanation of the contradiction between beginning and eternity and interpreted it as a difference in identity. Thus, his homiletic efforts are placed in the dichotomy. Nevertheless, the preacher's goal, which he strives for and promises through the mediation of the sermon's words, is immediacy to God. In this immediacy, the soul overcomes the conditions of creatureliness and becomes itself God's temple, in which God is present in *volkommenheit* (EP 614,20). And so Eckhart must confront the fundamental paradox of communicating revelation: to make the experience of transcendence possible under the conditions of immanence, i.e., to ensure the realization of salvation in verbal representation.

In line with the discursive tradition of preaching, Eckhart proceeds step by step: Unlike what the mystical verbal gesture in Chapter II,25 of the *Flowing Light* demands, the learned preacher seeks no emotional participation and does not pile up metaphors or use evocative lyrical techniques. In the foreground is not the "application of the senses,"¹⁰¹ but scholastic argumentation and explication. The figures of speech support rather than carry out the exposition of content. The image counts less than its meaning.¹⁰² However, Eckhart also considers it important to make the hermeneutical process more dynamic in intellectual discussion. From this standpoint he develops the explanatory progressions (*stat*, *vride*, *heilic*, *niuwe*; city, peace, holy, new) within the art of allegorical explication of the fourfold sense of the Scripture, a constantly recurring level

100 He emphasizes this *intermediary* aspect again in the metaphor of a ship, EP 612,1–3: *Hân ich die liebe, daz ich über mer wil, und hæte ich gerne ein schif, ez wære aleine, daz ich gerne über mer wære; und als ich über mer kume, sô enbedarf ich des schiffes niht* (If I want to cross the sea and would like to have a ship, then only because I wanted to cross the sea, and as soon as I get across, I need the ship no longer).

101 Largier 2007.

102 Nevertheless, Köbele 1993, pp. 171–191, shows how much differentiation between "the concreteness of images" and "abstract-conceptual content" is possible (quotations from p. 190).

shift between the literal and the spiritual sense, and multiple appeals to the authorities and Biblical quotations.¹⁰³ As Sermon 57 shows, however, his homiletic struggle can also be seen in the fact that the learned academic explications and the dynamic passages sometimes slide into a vivid, performative style.¹⁰⁴

A comparison with the closing passage of Chapter II,25 of the *Flowing Light* once again reveals differences that even here, in these sensitive moments, point to differences in the speakers' respective heterological surroundings. While the speaking "I" in the *Flowing Light* seeks to make herself disappear – indeed, *must* structurally disappear – to become a pure medium of God's voice, the respected and admired preacher *in persona* (in the pulpit) remains visible – even if for a moment his voice and the voice of Jesus cannot be told apart. It is as if his voice fills itself with the divine voice, whereas the voice of the speaker in the *Flowing Light* spiritualizes itself and is completely subsumed in God. The relationship to their listeners is just as different. Whereas the audience for the *Flowing Light* is drawn into the process of transformation by the performative offer of identification so that in the best case, they themselves adopt the stance of the speaking

103 From this point, we also see developing the basic adaptation of those patterns of thinking that Dionysius especially brought into Christianity and which give preference to a *theologia negativa* on the basis of the inadequacy of concepts vis-à-vis God's omnipotence and glory. If appearance cannot be an adequate link to God's being, if expression is not a suitable *signum* of that appearance that points to God, then equality in the face of an ever larger inequality can only be attained by way of negation. Meister Eckhart's position is striking when compared to contemporary efforts to reach verbally logical precision in suppositional logic, which interrogated very precisely the relationship between concepts and the reality for which they stand (*supponere*) and thus in its own way included significant skepticism about language, which in the following decades would emerge in the form of nominalism and conceptualism. Meister Eckhart is far removed from such efforts but also arrives at skeptical reflections on language through the neoplatonic horizon of his thought. See, e.g., Kaufmann 1994.

104 This spectrum in Eckhart's work might be due to an ambivalence toward *schoene rede* (eloquence), as seen for example in Sermon 29 (EP 29, p. 330, 5f.). On the one hand, especially through the use of tropes, *schoene rede* can obscure or even distort. On the other hand, Eckhart uses these methods again and again, especially speaking in similes (see Sermon 9: EP 9, p. 112, 24–27). This appears to repeat the tension that Haug 1997b, pp. 18f., claims for the entire Christian tradition and already discerns in St. Augustine: "What Augustine juxtaposes in this way – on the one hand a recommendation not to dispense with the literary and rhetorical means placed at the disposal of Christianity by the classical cultural tradition, and on the other a programmatic *volte face* to the new aesthetics of the *sermo humilis* – is only a more intense form of the contradiction fundamental to the Christian attitude to the Word and the World which becomes manifest early on in both literary and theoretical documents of the new religion. On the one hand, [there are] attempts to present the articles of Christian faith as the greatest good and thus in the highest artistic form[...]. On the other hand, this was countered by the conviction that no significance should be attached to the formal aspects of the work; content should enjoy absolute precedence over form. *Simplicitas* and *rusticitas* become guarantors of sincerity."

“I,” the distance between the promulgating preacher and his audience is maintained to the end. And even at the moment when their vision is freed by the opening of a *venster*, there remains the guidance of the learned man, the scholastic, the preacher (*daz ist: âne hindernisse*, EP 614,6). In the *Flowing Light*, the break begins only after the performative consummation, as a return to an unavoidable attitude of *humilitas*.

7. Between Autology and Heterology III: Aesthetic Negotiations – Summary

On the basis of the preceding discussion, we will now return to the paradox of a Christian aesthetics. The insights gained so far should by no means be taken to stand for the broad and varied spectrum of Christian aesthetics in all Middle High German texts. Different kinds of texts establish their own criteria according to their time, concrete function, and discursive situation, which even within the Christian framework covers an extensive range.¹⁰⁵ Yet thanks to their heterological embeddedness in devotional practice and their claim to offer a religious didactics with the goal of performative kerygma, both our texts are especially suited for fundamental reflections on the criteria of aesthetic understanding in a medieval Christian context. Our thoughts on this question are set out below in seven theses.

(1) *Aesthetics and Religious Devotional Practice*: The consensus among scholars is presumably that “a transcendent connection is specific for the understanding of medieval aesthetics,”¹⁰⁶ at least for texts located in the field of religious discourse and expressly referring to it.¹⁰⁷ This transcendent connection in aesthetic practices is especially evident in texts concerning religious practices of piety, i.e., in texts that, as a rule, have a concrete function in liturgical, homiletical, or pastoral practice. To the extent that texts have an aesthetic form and structure, it remains deeply embedded in the pragmatic and contextual claims of religious devotional practice. The consequence is that the aesthetic form of the text is crucially determined, designed, shaped, and critiqued by the requirements of its individual socio-historical context;¹⁰⁸ in

105 Cf. the contributions of Sandra Linden and Daniela Wag in this volume, pp. 227–264, and Mireille Schnyder in this volume, pp. 413–431. Especially the chapter by Mireille Schnyder shows how various the approaches can be.

106 Hasebrink 2007, p. 105.

107 On the field’s breadth and heterogeneity and the methodological handicap that follows from this, see Braun 2014, pp. 422–425. It is noticeable that the incorporation of Christian perspectives is currently again in sharper analytical focus in medieval studies, especially from the point of view of aesthetics: see Benz/Nowakowski/Rippl 2020.

108 The claim of aesthetic perception can also lead to conflict: cf. applied to mystical speaking: Largier 2014, pp. 366–368; applied to concepts of edification in a broad sense: Köbele/Notz 2019.

the best case, it should have a practice-oriented effect on religious teaching, experience, and kerygma. This is exactly what the compositional methods and language-conscious approaches display in the *Flowing Light* and Eckhart's sermon. Such texts make it unmistakably clear that their aesthetic form in appearance, effect, and quality cannot be adequately described using criteria and concepts that arise from the literary standards that – in their historical context – demand or have completed a disengagement from pragmatic goals¹⁰⁹ or that link the “poetic function” of language to self-referentiality.¹¹⁰

(2) *Art versus Aesthetic Negotiation*: As a consequence, this insight raises the question: What terminology is *adequate* for both literary and religious history in working with pre-modern artifacts of religious devotional practice? If the emphatic and exclusive idea of the work of art in the historical process – for which Lessing's remarks are paradigmatic – is tied to the emancipation of artifacts from their heteronomous purposes, that explains why the modern concepts of the work of art or art in fact cannot be projected back onto devotional texts like the *Flowing Light* and Eckhart's sermon without serious misunderstandings. This is the sense in which Hans Belting speaks of the “history of the picture before the age of art” or Christian Kiening of “texts before the age of literature.”¹¹¹ One must be just as cautious in referring to the concept of aesthetics that has only gained programmatic shape since Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* and then only under specific historical circumstances.¹¹² Two things are incontestable, however. One is that the texts which analysis shows to be part of a religious practice deploy an abundance of means, together with complex reflections on language, that go beyond the purely rhetorical application of *ornatus* and justify in full the concept of aesthetic negotiation. The other is even more consequential: These devotional texts, embedded in their heterological functionality, are intent on achieving the “greatest effect” and “perfection”¹¹³ in their *vollesagen* (FL 126,14). According to their own self-conception, this implies that their aesthetic structure aims for a highly demanding effect and evaluation.

109 On the historicity of the claim to autonomy in the arts, as well as on the historicity of the concept of aesthetic autonomy, cf. Robert 2024, pp. 26–28 and 31–33. He stresses that “aesthetic autonomy,” in the period around 1800, is not an elaborate theory but a figure of aesthetic reflection. The latter goes back to traditional arguments and motifs (such as the topos of poetic truth and the *licentia poetica*) which combine, under the influence of the idea of “freedom,” to form a systematic set of arguments. On the historicity of the resulting structural contradictions: Kablitz 2012.

110 Jakobson 1981, pp. 27–29. Even an analysis as nuanced as that of Hasebrink 2007, p. 105, has recourse to a statement like this: “To that extent, it could be precisely the complaint in which the aesthetic can free itself from heteronomous purposes because in its pragmatism, the sublime expression of pain, it is above any suspicion of autonomy.”

111 Belting 1994; Kiening 2003.

112 Cf. the contribution by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp.3–48.

113 Lessing: Laokoon, p. 80, and the discussion in section 2 of this chapter.

(3) *Vollesagen – Criteria for Aesthetic Effect and Evaluation*: If concepts like “aesthetic negotiation” make plausible the use of artistic means as well as reflection on the options of verbal expression, a *vollesagen* that encompasses aesthetic experience, effect, and appreciation in the context of mystical speech obviously goes much further. The criteria that now come into play are much more difficult to grasp. However, it is obvious that the texts follow a practice in which *freedom* from functional integration – especially with regard to aesthetic experience, effect, and evaluation – plays *no* role. The texts under discussion assume the opposite: that there is intractable interference between pragmatic integration and aesthetic effect and evaluation. *Vollesagen* is only fulfilled by way of and within this interference. In this sense, we needed to begin with the tension – thematized in the texts – between immanence and transcendence and how it is conveyed in the kerygma of the unity of God and man in Jesus Christus. Only when the reenactment of that mediation – already completed in Christ – succeeds in performative realization under the given socio-historical conditions is a *vollesagen* in the sense of the *süssen einunge* – the homiletic goal of the reenactment of the divine and of salvation – realized in the here and now. Precisely here is where the aesthetic dimension becomes an epistemic¹¹⁴ dimension with great religious claims.

(4) *The Structural Analogy Between Religion and Aesthetics*: The precondition for opening this vast epistemic dimension is the experience of transcending the sensual, or the shift from the sensual to the extrasensory. The tension in this relationship is known to belong to the fundamental constituents of aesthetic experience.¹¹⁵ It vouches for – and aims at – the revelatory power of that experience. Because of the structure of this relationship or the aforementioned shift, religious and aesthetic experience are at first analogous. But this analogy favors their merger; indeed, it can bring religious and aesthetic experience into congruence.¹¹⁶ From this structural analogy one can, as it were, turn Lessing’s logic on its head and explain the *privileged status* of religious themes for aesthetic presentation and the fact that religious conceptions¹¹⁷ serve to describe aesthetic experience right up to the present.¹¹⁸ But even this relationship becomes eloquent only in its historical and cultural variance. Our texts discuss it on a human level

114 In this context, this concept is used in the broad sense of the Berlin CRC *Episteme in Bewegung* (Episteme in Motion): Cancik-Kirschbaum/Traninger 2015, pp. 1f.

115 From an art-historical point of view, this is especially clearly formulated by Gottfried Boehm 2006, p. 30: “[The image belongs] indissolubly to material culture [...], [is] in a completely unavoidable way inscribed in material [...], [but allows] a significance to appear there in [...] which at the same time surpasses the merely factual.” It remains open to discussion the extent to which the significance that appears can be understood as transcendental.

116 On the “reciprocal perspectives” of religious and aesthetic experience: Krüger, K. 2016, pp. 7–19.

117 E.g., Krüger, K. 2016.

118 Danto 1981, for example, uses the concept of “transfiguration,” Mersch 2002 that of the “aura,” Seel 2005 the concept of “appearing.”

in connection with the body and soul – or one’s own actions and God’s mercy – and on a linguistic level in the *aptum* between on the one hand the medium of expression (language and its aurality and implicit images) and on the other hand the allegorically interpreted levels of meaning of the fourfold sense of the Scripture, the “sacred knowledge” (*heiligen bekantheit*, FL 132,30) of God, or the *unio*, as the *Song of Solomon* conveys in its mystical interpretation.

(5) *The Incomprehensibility and Comprehensibility of Salvation*: The tension between immanence and transcendence, the sensual and the extrasensory, has extremely variable justifications and manifestations, not just diachronically and culturally but even within the confines of 13th- and 14th-century Christianity. In that period, the spectrum begins on the one hand with the formulation chosen by the Lateran Council in 1215: “Between the Creator and the creature, one can discern no similarity great enough that no greater dissimilarity would not be discernable.”¹¹⁹ But the range stretches from the eucharistic use of Psalm 34:8 (33:9 in the Vulgate), “O taste and see that the Lord is good,”¹²⁰ to those manifestations of the culture of Christian piety in which the sacred is gained by walking a pilgrimage route, is discovered in pictures, or is touched in reliquaries or other sacred locations.¹²¹ According to this understanding, the synesthetic – and even haptic – tangibility of the divine in the here and now is not excluded on principle; on the contrary, it is the Christian experiential reality that is to be captured. In the history of salvation, this concept finds its basis in the incarnation of Christ. From the “materialism of God’s incarnation,” Klaus Müller trenchantly says, “right up to the present, there is no religion more sensuous than Christianity.”¹²² Accordingly, one could say that, in the incarnation, the “paradox of representation”¹²³ comes to rest in its “performative self-contradiction.”¹²⁴ This characterizes the liturgy, especially in the concept of transubstantiation in the celebration of the eucharist, and also finds expression in the history of piety in the assumption that in the sacred object, the *virtus* of saints and of God himself is present.¹²⁵

119 Denzinger: Compendium, no. 806: *inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda.*

120 On the liturgical use, see Jungmann 1962, pp. 486f.

121 Numerous examples in Leppin 2021a, esp. pp. 109–197. Kirakosian 2021 has a detailed discussion on the approach to mystical experience via “material objects” (p. 211) in the vernacular tradition of the visions of Gertrude of Helfta. Cf. also Bynum 2011.

122 Müller, K. 2012, p. 219, previously explained: “It goes without saying that this characteristic aesthetic feature of the Christian faith – established by the materialism of incarnation – must have fundamental consequences for the understanding of religion and aesthetics.”

123 Köbele 2004, p. 122.

124 Cf. Müller, J.-D. 2001, in relation to *Minnesang*; cf. Hasebrink 2007, pp. 105f.

125 Leppin 2021a, pp. 112f.

In the two texts under discussion, the variations in this spectrum form no fundamental oppositions; in many ways, they are mutually dependent – at least in the logic of the way they are presented¹²⁶ – and can be expressed in one and the same text. Thus the logic of difference, which relies on the lack of similarity with and the incomprehensibility of God despite all convergence, predominates in Eckhart's interpretive practice of the fourfold sense of the Scripture, which is palpable in the basic structure of his sermon. It appears unmistakably in the *Flowing Light* in the repeated display of the writer's nullity and in the emphasis on the lifeless letters her merely *irdenschú hant* (FL 134,21) can produce. Not until the end of their deliberations, when both the writer and the preacher – to different degrees, as if neutralized in their personalities – emerge as permeable mediums, does the difference appear cancelled. This experience of mercy in the cancellation of difference is the goal of the reactualized dialogue of the *Song of Solomon* at the end of Eckhart's sermon as well as the performatively staged song of the Soul in the *Flowing Light*, in which the song of the virgins becomes presence *in actu*.

(6) *Historical Alterity – Beyond Difference*: Scholars of both theology and German studies have dealt with this spectrum,¹²⁷ but in contrast to the discourse among church historians, which is oriented more toward the history of piety, scholars of German literature have trouble with an approach that assumes participation of the temporal in the transcendental world. Recently, however, the emphasis on an irreconcilable difference between immanence and transcendence has been exposed to stronger criticism among Germanists,¹²⁸ especially among scholars studying legends. For our mystical texts, these ideas can be very fruitful. It is especially Hartmut Bleumer who has taken aim at the system-theoretical approach: "The primacy of difference in systematic thought" assumes that in the end, the sacred is in principle "excluded from immanence and systematically unavailable," which construes the experience of salvation as a "dilemma" and leads to the conception of an "endless" and "futile," as it were asymptotic narrative process.¹²⁹ Bleumer counters that "despite these system-theoretical assumptions," legends believe "in the accessibility of salvation."¹³⁰

126 On the gradual procedure in the *Flowing Light*: Gerok-Reiter 2017.

127 From the point of view of German studies, what is most important is the debate about the efficacy of metaphor: Haug 1986; Köbele 1993, pp. 64–68; Haug 1997a.

128 Hammer 2015, p. 4; Bleumer 2020, p. 153.

129 Bleumer 2020, pp. 152f.

130 Bleumer 2020, p. 153. "That is why, from a religious point of view, before modern, enlightened rationality there was no calculated descriptive dilemma between transcendence and immanence, postulated for the narrative system" (pp. 153f.). – However, one must consider whether a solution on the ontological, theological level completely solves the dead-end on the level of medium. Just as the experience of always present salvation can become precarious for the individual soul in the face of God's withdrawal, not every sign is effective in making salvation available.

The logical claim as valid that transcendence is what is excluded from immanence and rests on an “unbridgeable hiatus” suggests a primacy of the temporal in which the sacred is subsequently encountered as the other. But in religious communication, salvation is anything but secondary. Nor is transcendence excluded in principle. It is only invisible and thus always already present in immanence.¹³¹

Against this background, the “miracle” does not appear as a “technically impossible event.”¹³² Mercy, i.e., the “border-crossing of transcendence into immanence,” is thus “at any time [...] possible” in the discovery of an always existing, invisible salvation and is the “expressive momentum of salvation at any time.”¹³³ One should, it is true, not completely exclude the idea of a difference between transcendence and immanence in the mystical texts; at least on the verbal level, they both struggle too much with that idea. But Bleumer’s caveat made from a literary studies perspective converges with insights by historians of religion into the medieval culture of piety, which found expression especially in ideas touching, grasping, and tasting the divine that were meant quite concretely. While Eckhart’s philosophically saturated, speculative mysticism does not propagate precisely this haptic, synesthetic concretion, one often finds it, especially in late medieval works of piety for women, in sacramental ideas, and in the cultic use of images.¹³⁴

This concrete and sensuously intended tasting of transcendence¹³⁵ is probably what is meant in the *Flowing Light* when the concept of *süsse* advances in the emphatic closing passage to the central, key word (*süssen einunge*, FL 132,28; *das zucker* of the *süssen miltekeit*, FL 134,13; the *süsse klang* of *wort* and *wise*, FL 134,6; the *süsse herzeklang*, FL 134,20), but also beyond this proves to be the leading lexeme of fulfilled religious experience.¹³⁶ In his sermon, Eckhart obviously does not exploit the means of rhetorical *ornatus* in the same way as the *Flowing Light*. In view of the fact that the divine in the temporal can only be seen through a “chink,” (*schranz*, EP 612,26f.), as his sermon says, the *süezichkeit*

131 Bleumer 2020, p. 154; with the reference to the “unbridgeable hiatus,” Bleumer is quoting Strohschneider 2000, p. 105.

132 Bleumer 2020, p. 155.

133 Bleumer 2020, pp. 154 f.

134 Bleumer 2020, p. 155, locates the experience of salvation in a similar sense, but also in a learned context: “The occurrence of salvation is in this way a self-discovery in the sense of an integumental self-exposure of clerical semantics, which is always already given and invisibly present.”

135 On the coincidence of sensuousness and spirituality in this tasting: Trínca 2019, pp. 35 and 46 f. Largier 2007 has emphasized that the meditative *lectiones*, as they also represent the *Flowing Light*, can be described “as artificial self-affection in spiritual exercise” (2014, p. 364); they offer a “phenomenology of rhetorical affects” that aim to open the soul via affective and sensuous “application” to spiritual meaning.

136 More precise quantitative analysis is offered in the work on annotations directed by Marion Darilek in the component project B3 of CRC 1391 “Semantics of the Aesthetic in Medieval German-Language Literature”; cf. also Gerok-Reiter 2022a, pp. 48–53.

(EP 612,31) of the experience, as a “sweetness” of expression, may possibly not be able to reach the *himelriche* (EP 612,31f.), but instead, as Eckhart says in another sermon while using the terminology of *süeze*, only the “environs of eternity” (*umberinge der êwicheit*; Q 86; EP 2, 86, S. 216,20). Even in his emphatic ending, the explicative *daz ist [...]* still remains an intellectual element that at least keeps control of the offer of immersion. For that reason, while conceding that the sermon has breathtaking intellectual energy, one must adjudge its aesthetic energy¹³⁷ to be less than that of the *Flowing Light*, though their goal remains the same.

(7) *Aesthetic Energy – Alternative Evaluative Concepts*: Finally, through comparison and scaling, we must again address, from a heuristic perspective, the question of judging aesthetic quality. Because of CRC 1391’s wide array of source material and its praxeological approach, this question is a particular challenge and especially consequential. At this point, it is too soon to attempt to provide applicable transdisciplinary answers, but certainly we would agree with the theoretical positions of Georg Bertram, who emphasizes that the “value” of art is derived from “negotiating the definitions of human practices in its own specific way.”¹³⁸

Against this background, the concerns of this chapter come into better focus. We have tried to show the inadequacy of attributing the aesthetic energy in both texts only to the quantity or expressive power of their rhetorical figures and tropes or to their rhythms and networks of images, thus making only the autological side – the formal means – responsible for that energy. But just as inadequate would be a purely religiohistorical or sociohistorical reconstruction of the background of the genesis and functions of the texts. Such reconstructions are essential but remain as mere background, only a non-binding offer of connection. Neither the urgency of the homiletic goal of Eckhart’s sermon, nor the dimension of the *Flowing Light*’s *lectio contemplationis* that opens up Salvation – both aesthetic “practice,” according to Bertram – can be derived from such background. It was thus all the more important to bring to light how concretely the means of verbal composition as well as the focus of the verbal reflections themselves have recourse to or are functionally determined by aspects of the heterological side – down to sublime details that elude intentional staging. The amplitude of this exchange in

137 On the concept of energy or intensity cf. Kiening 2015, pp. 11f. In conceptional elaboration: Gerok-Reiter 2022b. Compared to formulations like aesthetic evaluation, this concept has the advantage of not judging in dichotomies but rather on a descriptive scale. It also not only includes the standpoint of the observer but also assumes the interplay – so central to aesthetic experience – of what the artifact offers and the attentiveness of its recipients; cf. Seel 2005, pp. 21f. and 112f.

138 Bertram 2019, p. 233. Bertram understands these “definitions” as the outlining of the significance, function, or epistemic potential of those practices that constitute a society in any historical period: “Artworks always develop a demand for proper definitions of this practice in relation to the historical and cultural state of human practice in general, and in this respect they struggle with other artworks” (pp. 201f.).

Chapter II,²⁵ of the *Flowing Light* seemed to be more extreme than in Eckhart's sermon – more intense in its exchange of tension; more dynamic in its movement between the radiance of its project and the worry that it may be hubristic, or the fear of falling prey to all too beautiful language;¹³⁹ more fraught between the hope to effect a direct message of salvation by the *buoch* (e.g., FL II,26, p. 136,10–22) and the fear that doing so might jeopardize one's own salvation (e.g., FL II,26, p. 136,1–10); between an expressive abundance for which no rhetorical flourish seems adequate to the task at hand and the pronounced *diemûtekeit* (e.g., FL IV,2, p. 236,32–238,3) of the writing “I” that presents itself as not male, not learned, and not backed by an institution and that repeatedly describes itself with the metaphor of a dog (e.g., FL II,3, p. 82,24–27). The result of the *performative cooperation* of these extreme tensions right down to semantics and motifs – indeed, to the syntax, rhythm, and phonetics – is the specific aesthetic energy of the *Flowing Light*.

Our conceptual suggestion is that today, aesthetic evaluations that seek to do justice to historical variance must take as their criteria, firstly, the dynamics and intensity of the performative exchange between the autological and the heterological side from the perspective of the time¹⁴⁰ and secondly the epistemic reach communicated via this exchange in historically and culturally varied offerings.¹⁴¹ Instead of searching for a timeless conception of art or for the genuine artist, we need to explore historically deployable criteria of aesthetic energy. It is with regard to these criteria that the praxeological model of the CRC should continue to be developed. Only with this approach, which changes the structure of the aesthetic itself, can an evaluation do justice to the aesthetics of artifacts embedded in contexts of practice.¹⁴² Conversely, only when one decisively frees evaluative aesthetic judgments from one-sided, anachronistic ideas of autonomy, self-reflection, or a mere play of forms can one understand why artifacts that are constituent parts of religious practice often encompass especially complex aesthetic negotiations to each attain its own particular “[V]ollkommen seyn” (perfection).¹⁴³ From the perspective of such a concept, it would then also be possible to establish why pre-modern contexts of practice such as “liturgical arrangements”¹⁴⁴ could have the potential to become not an adversary but a promoter of outstanding aesthetic negotiations.

139 The danger of “aesthetic pleasure for its own sake” derives from the “aspects of sensuous-affective production of experience that must always be newly evoked and dramatically intensified in aesthetic experiments,” but in the process “raise a number of ethical problems whose solution is a discernment of spirits”; Largier 2014, pp. 367 f.

140 Cf. the contribution of Johannes Lipps und Anna Pawlak in this volume, pp. 433–510.

141 From this perspective too, there are points of contact to philosophical arguments in Bertram 2019, esp. pp. 201 f., 204–225.

142 In this regard, the difference from artifacts without a direct practical context is only one of degree and not kind.

143 Lessing: Laokoon, p. 80.

144 Lessing: Laokoon, p. 82.

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The Violence of Caritas

Acting Personifications as Figures of Aesthetic Reflection

Abstract

This chapter explores the aesthetic dynamics unfolding from acting personifications in medieval literature and visual art. It aims to contribute to a better understanding of the artistic concepts of personification in the Middle Ages. Focusing on Caritas's acts of violence against Christ, the authors trace aesthetic reflection by asking how these uncommon representations are related to practical functions such as religious didactics and practice. The discussion encompasses two case studies of personified charity harming Christ's body, the literary Daughter Zion theme and the Wienhausen stained glass window of the crucifixion with virtues. Together, both show that medieval artists and writers reflected on the potential of personification and purposefully employed it in works of art and literature.

Keywords

Personification, Crucifixion with Virtues, Daughter Zion, Allegory, Caritas, Personification of Charity, Piety, Religious Practice

1. Prolegomena

Every day the nuns in the convent of Wienhausen, southeast of Celle, encounter an iconographically unconventional image of the Crucifixion (Fig. 1). In a stained-glass window from c. 1330, the traditional depiction of the Crucifixion, in which the cross is flanked by Mary and John, is expanded to include personified virtues. Justitia (Justice) and Pax (Peace) appear above the crossbeam while Misericordia (Mercy) and Veritas (Truth) are positioned to the left and right of the foot of the cross. Caritas (Christian

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Fig. 1. Crucifixion with Virtues, c. 1330, stained glass, 67.5 × 71 cm. Wienhausen, Monastery, upper cloister.

love) is somewhat larger than her companions and, unlike them, is presented in full figure. She is at the same level as Mary and John, in Christ's immediate vicinity, and is certainly the most interesting figure of all. For while *Misericordia* and *Veritas* raise their hands in lament and *Justitia* and *Pax* gently touch the crown of thorns, *Caritas* holds Christ in an intimate embrace, looks straight into his face, and plunges a dagger into his chest. She performs an action at odds with the concept she embodies. On the meta-level, this action culminates in the very concrete wounding of Christ's body by an abstract idea. Her action turns love into suffering.

The personified virtue also acts violently in the tradition of bridal mysticism, in which *Caritas* helps the Daughter Zion reach her heavenly bridegroom. In this textual

tradition, the highest Christian virtue is often armed and – as in Lamprecht of Regensburg's *Tochter Sion* – uses a bow and arrow to inflict Christ with *zwei[] verwunden* (two flesh wounds).¹ The logical consequence of the wound inflicted by Caritas in this literary depiction is that emotional proximity becomes for Christ physical suffering, the real pain of a wound: *des enmohte er den smerzen / von den schuzzen in dem herzen / niht vertragen mêre* (so he could no longer bear the pain from the shot in his heart).²

In both representations, visual art and literature, personified charity acts contrary to what is expected, breaching conventional iconography and literary topoi. A further similarity lies in the fact that Caritas's act is linked to a functional context. It is not the result of an arbitrary artistic choice but instead is intended to communicate difficult figures of theological thought to a concrete audience in a specific religious community.

Personifications occur with remarkable frequency in medieval literature and visual arts, and their ability to act – which goes hand-in-hand with the anthropomorphic embodiment of an abstract idea – is repeatedly pushed to the limit. Personifications inflict physical wounds and are themselves wounded, as mothers they offer their children for sale, and in dialogue they seek entry into the hearts of narrators and kings. In all cases, these active figures are connected to a wide variety of sociocultural and religious contexts. In texts and images, richly associative moments of poetic and visual creation arise which, beyond the actions of the personification, draw attention to an involvement with aesthetic questions. With the violent Caritas as an example, we shall show how active personifications are configured against a background of autological knowledge and praxeological requirements and thus emerge as figures of aesthetic reflection.³ Our examples are a promising starting point for the following investigation since both display a high degree of theological and artistic reflection. Already in their elements, both the Crucifixion with Virtues and the Daughter Zion texts exhibit evidence of thought about questions of design and the creation of meaning; both the Wienhausen window and Lamprecht's text prove to be regions of aesthetic concentration. Thus it makes sense to trace in these works the evidence of visual and literary deliberation on the means and possibilities of personification and thus on aesthetic reflection.

1 Lamprecht: *Tochter Syon*, verse 3736.

2 Lamprecht: *Tochter Syon*, verses 3737–3739.

3 On the concepts of the praxeological model of the Collaborative Research Center 1391 *Different Aesthetics*, see the contribution of Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48.

2. Personifications and their Actions: Approaches and Fundamentals

If the present interdisciplinary investigation approaches personification from the perspective of art history and literary studies, it follows an example inherent in personification itself. Since antiquity, personification has been understood as a phenomenon of both language and visual imagination.⁴ In his characterization of the rhetorical figure of *prosopopoeia*, Quintilian already points to this connection. He argues that fictive speech can only be imagined if the speaking person is also imagined.⁵ Along with Cicero and others, he used *prosopopoeia* to give a voice to inanimate things and distant persons to make them vivid in his speech. Isidore of Seville also explains in his *Etymologiae*: *Prosopoeia* [sic!] est, cum inanimalium et persona et sermo fingitur.⁶ Quintilian says that *prosopopoeia*'s ability to bring the gods down from heaven and give cities a voice is intrinsic to personification.⁷ Thus for the early theoreticians, it is already a question of more than just a vivid figure in human form. Most important is the ability to speak, for it enables the personification to interact with other figures and perform other activities. The most impressive and perhaps best-known example is the *Psychomachia* by Prudentius (c. 348–405 CE). The personified virtues and vices make self-explanatory speeches and battle one another to the death, which – predictably in a work of moral instruction – befalls the vices, not the virtues. Like no one before him, Prudentius demonstrates the potential inherent in giving an abstract idea human form, so that what is essentially disembodied becomes capable of action. Against this background of ancient rhetoric and its reception in late antiquity, personification can be defined as an anthropomorphic figuration in a text or picture that is capable of, but not confined to, human activity. With this limitation, we distinguish anthropomorphic personifications from non-human figurations of objects (e.g., wisdom as a book) or of inanimate objects brought to life (e.g., the complaining pen in the *Welscher Gast* of Thomasin von Zerclære), since these always act under the constraints of their nature as things.⁸

4 Especially Kiening 1994, p. 354, emphasizes this point; but it was also already indicated by Gombrich 1971.

5 Quintilian: *Institutio oratoria*, IX.2.29–32.

6 Isidore of Seville: *Etym.* II, 13. Translation Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies*, trans. Barney et al.: “*Prosopopoeia* occurs when personality and speech are invented for inanimate things.” Isidore goes on to refer to a passage from Cicero’s *Catalinarian Orations* (1,27): “*Etenim si mecum patria mea, quae mihi vita mea multo est carior, loqueretur, dicens*”, et cetera. 2 *Sic et montes et flumina vel arbores loquentes inducimus, personam inponentes rei quae non habet naturam loquendi; quod et tragoedis usitatum et in orationibus frequentissime invenitur.* (“If, in truth, my fatherland, which is far dearer to me than my life, were to speak with me, saying,” etc. 2. Thus we bring in speaking mountains and rivers or trees, imposing personhood on a thing that does not have the captivity for speech. This is common in tragedies and very frequently in orations.)

7 Quintilian: *Institutio oratoria*, IX.2.29–32.

8 Cf. Linden 2007, pp. 83–86.

Personification is per se an artistic figure; as soon as it appears, it draws attention to the madeness of the text or picture and thus to its own status. If in what follows we speak of personification in literature as a rhetorical figure and in the visual arts as a figure of pictorial rhetoric, this is on the one hand owing to its roots. On the other hand, we want to make clear that personification must be acknowledged as an independent device useful for allegorical representations but should not be assumed to be synonymous with allegory or even simply one of its variations or instruments.

In fact, in literary studies and art history up to now, personification has been usually considered in the context of allegory, and its independent potential for both literary and pictorial rhetoric was hardly acknowledged.⁹ Within allegorical works, personification was mostly understood as a simpler building block for more complex structures. It was (and frequently still is) thought of as the means to an allegorical end. However, the fundamental classification of personification as allegorical marginalizes its inherent possibilities for design and expression and assigns it from the beginning to a different level of meaning that aims at an allegorical significance which the personification, initially, does not possess. Unlike allegory, personification corresponds to the abstract idea it embodies; the variety and variance of meanings result from its subsequent configuration, for instance in attributes, gestures, and actions.

In what follows, our goal is to contribute to a new conceptual evaluation of active personifications and their significance for the literature and visual arts of the Middle Ages. Our methodological starting point is the praxeological model of a *Different Aesthetics* that takes into account the importance of both an artifact's artistry and its functional context. In view of the close interconnection between the rhetorical, poetical,

9 Similarly, analysis of personification in literary studies and art history is usually anchored in research on allegory, cf., e.g., Meier 1976; Tambling 2009; Heck 2011; Smout 2017; more thought out in Melion/Ramakers 2016. In art history, subsuming personification under allegory has two tendencies: one is to deny a conceptual or functional difference between the two (e.g., Heck 2011; more recently Winkler 2018, p. 5, who sees in personification "always a form of allegory") or to overlook the fundamental question of representability and pictorial-rhetorical function (e.g., Wartenberg 2015). Another tendency is that, in the context of its marginalization, above all iconographic questions have been applied to personification and relations between text and image explained (e.g., Katzenellenbogen 1969 [1939]; Logemann 2014). Only peripherally was the visual-rhetorical or poetological functionality of medieval personifications noted by scholars (e.g., Bogen 2001; Tammen 2004); we still lack a study of personification that goes beyond the analysis of selected figures. Fruitful theoretical reflections on personification in the visual arts are offered by Gombrich 1972, who argues for the proximity of personification and antique mythography and derives from it a common poetological potential. Although Logemann (2011, 2014, and 2017) is also interested in iconographies and their contribution to allegorical interpretation, she emphasizes in her search for the "pictorial means" that constitute the "principle of personification" the understanding of the personification as a "thought form" (Logemann 2017, p. 7) already suggested in Gombrich 1972 and Kiening 1994, and thus attributes autonomy to personification.

and graphic practices from which a professional mastery of personification develops and the embeddedness of art and literature in concrete, real-world practice and social performance, the praxeological model offers a promising approach to analyzing personification. It allows a focus on the question of whether the reflective potential of personification results more from its inherent technical-artistic logic or from its functional versatility, and how both dimensions can cooperate in many senses. For even though a work's functional connection always plays a role in medieval art and literature, the relationship between autology and heterology in medieval personifications has not yet been adequately examined and differentiated. With the help of the praxeological approach, an applicable, theoretical understanding of medieval personification can be derived from analysis of the works in which it occurs.¹⁰ The importance of artifacts for investigating the aesthetic potential of personifications is also based on the fact that medieval artists were not yet able to refer to a generally accepted set of rules since vernacular literature – unlike Latin – as well as the visual arts did not yet possess fixed theories of aesthetics.

Furthermore, the interdisciplinary approach presented here is meant as a contribution to better understanding the nature and function of personification within each discipline. The body-centered art historical observations should not be understood in opposition to the iconographic and iconological methods with which the discipline has so often approached personification. Rather, in supplementing the praxeological model with an anthropological approach, which considers the body both as an image and as a vehicle and generator of meaning, we draw attention to an approach to personification that as yet has been hardly ever used. It enables us to focus on the pictorial functionality and mediality inherent in these figures.¹¹

The point of departure for our literary analysis is the observation, borrowed from the concept theory of metaphor,¹² that among the possibilities for metaphor, personification is an especially efficient and obvious figure of thought, since by anthropomorphizing an abstract idea, it builds on a familiarity with human nature and usual patterns of human action. Literary representations of personifications allow one to depict characteristics or circumstances as action. For the personification, this implies that its personality is not simply emphasized but that only its specific actions form a personal character, which the audience then projects onto the abstract idea, thus setting in motion a semantic dynamic.

10 For a work-based reflection on another figure of visual rhetoric, the list, that displays theoretical reflection on the composition and functionality of the *enumeratio*, see Wagner 2022.

11 The body of the personification has usually been viewed in relation to questions of gender. On the body of the personification, see Assmann 1994; Tammen 2000; Karkov 2001; Lipton 2002; Tammen 2004.

12 Cf., e.g., Lakoff/Johnson 1980 or Lakoff/Turner 1989.

It is precisely the personification's ability to act that opens up special possibilities of displaying the immaterial. Previous research has at most only implicitly addressed action as an initiator for the formation of a personification but not analyzed it systematically. Not even Katzenellenbogen's distinction of 1939 between *dynamic* (i.e., involved in action) and *static* (i.e., inactive) personifications, which the author drew in his widely noticed study of the motivic history of vices and virtues, inspired any further scholarship in this direction.¹³ As the following study of Caritas will show, however, the purposeful (inter-)action of personifications is a category that opens up new dimensions of composition and meaning in which heterological and autological aspects merge.

More through actions than design, the personification can advance to a figure of artistic exploration whose composition, although determined by rhetorical, poetical, and iconographic traditions, norms, and practices, also enables great freedom of functionalization. Besides its clothing and attributes, the personification's disposition – i.e., the place where it is deployed – and its ability to act make it highly flexible in terms of the sociocultural spheres in which it can be used, the various aims it serves, and the differentiated meanings it can be given. This catalogue of possibilities pertains not just to different personifications; even one and the same personification can be specified according to its aspects and thus concretized in its purpose and meaning.¹⁴

3. Caritas

Caritas, too, is a personification that has had very different manifestations in literature and visual art. If one starts by defining the term, Caritas is on the one hand the love of God (*amor dei*) that binds humans and God to each other, but also charity, the love

13 Katzenellenbogen 1969 [1939].

14 One of the best-known examples of such a diversification of aspects and attributes is Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fresco *The Allegory of Good and Bad Government* in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, in which Justitia appears in five variations. As one of the qualities of good government, Justitia appears along with five other personifications on a bench-like throne beside the personified Siennese *comune*. She holds a sword, and on her lap lie a man's head and a crown, and she is accompanied by soldiers. A second Justitia stands on the left, next to the throne; as the basis for a well-ordered urban community, she is subordinated to Sapientia and turns to face her. Wisdom holds an oversized scale on the head of the second Justitia, on whose balance pans a third and a fourth Justitia figure are kneeling. The one on the left reaches down as distributive justice (*iustitia distributiva*) to human figures, punishing with a sword or rewarding with a crown. The one on the right, as equalizing justice (*iustitia commutativa*), directs the just exchange of goods and services. In the fresco depicting a bad government, a fifth Justitia, now in fetters, leans against the pedestal of the throne of tyranny personified.

of one's neighbor (*amor proximi*), and loving care (*amicitia*).¹⁵ In Latin, the concept of *caritas*, unlike *amor*, is always used in a positive sense.¹⁶ Unlike *diligere*, the verb *amare* can also denote spontaneous, passionate love, while *caritas* is the highest Christian love but also designates natural familial love. In addition, both *caritas* and *dilectio* are more often used in philosophical contexts than *amor*. Since Middle High German has only two equivalents for *amor*, *caritas*, and *dilectio*, namely *liebe* and *minne*, vernacular texts that originate from a background of works in Latin contain inherent conceptual uncertainties and ambiguities.

Even though its original definition did not comprise it, within philosophical and theological discourse the idea of a dynamic *caritas* of violent action developed. In Richard of Saint Victor's treatise *De quattuor gradibus violentae caritatis*,¹⁷ the power of love is increased four times. The four steps in a loving ascent toward God are *caritas vulnerans* (wounding love), *caritas ligans* (captivating love), *caritas languens* (exhausting love), which refers to the breakdown of the loving soul's intellectual activity, and finally *caritas deficiens* (fading love),¹⁸ which continues beyond the negation of all being and cannot be clearly expressed in language. The logic of this mystical Christian step-by-step ascension of spiritual love is that concretion is steadily reduced.¹⁹ With its theme of wounding, the first step is clearly most open to depiction through dynamic action, yet Richard does not make use of personification. In *De laude caritatis*, Hugh of Saint Victor addresses the personified *Caritas* and, besides her power, emphasizes the enforcement of her position by the pattern of violence and wounding. However, this violent aspect is not concretized but is immediately made positive via the process of salvation's pattern

15 St. Augustine repeatedly refers to *Caritas* as *amor* or *dilectio dei* and *amor* or *dilectio proximi*. Isidore of Seville talks of *amicitia*. Althoff 2015 gives an overview with references to literature. See also Lentes 2015 for an overview of how *Caritas* is integrated into medieval theology of piety.

16 On the terminology, cf. Seppänen 1967, pp. 14f., who also points to Jerome's synonymous use of *caritas* and *dilectio* while avoiding the concept of *amor* for Christian love, which provided an important linguistic impulse through his Bible translation. However, it also represents a powerful confounding of the semantics originally adopted from classical Latin, cf. Seppänen 1967, p. 21.

17 Cf. Richard of Saint Victor: *De quattuor gradibus violentae caritatis*. On the Power of Love. On the model of stairs leading to a loving convergence with God, cf. Ruh 1989. On the systematics of love in Richard of Saint Victor, cf. Huber 2003 and Keller, H.E. 1998, p. 29, who also finds that love is explained but not personified. Richard's treatise is in this case an important piece of evidence because one can see clear lines of reception to vernacular mysticism, cf. Suerbaum 2012, p. 115.

18 The four kinds of love are named in Section 4, and a stepwise explication follows, which emphasizes a violent moment for each step – corresponding to the title of the work – and only in Section 24 specifies the positive results in the elucidations of the loving convergence with God.

19 In Sections 18 and 20, Richard reflects on the fact that secular and spiritual longing for love lead in diametrically opposed directions.

of redemption: *O caritas, quanta est victoria tua! Vnum prius uulnerasti, et per illum omnes postmodum superasti.*²⁰

The notion that a person can be wounded by love is ubiquitous in literature and the visual arts, and not just in their depiction of human interactions but also explicitly with respect to love for God. Thus, in reference to its biblical source, the *St. Trudperter Hohelied* calls love the *siechtuom* [...] *der gezarteten sêle*²¹ and the *Flowing Light of the Godhead* uses, as a matter of course, the descriptive pattern of love sickness to describe the soul's longing for nearness to God.²² That even God himself – based on the *Song of Songs* 4:9²³ – is seized by love is an idea that occurs sporadically in mystical texts²⁴ but in its presentation is usually confined to an internal love sickness. The combination of a personified Caritas and the wounding nature of love opens the possibility of creating a violent Caritas who inflicts a concrete, corporeal wound on God with a lance, a dagger, or an arrow, as one can see in the Crucifixion with Virtues and the Daughter Zion narratives.

4. Violent Caritas in Literature and Art

4.1. The Wienhausen Crucifixion with Virtues

For a long time, Caritas figures in the visual arts²⁵ without any individual attributes. She is often crowned as the highest virtue and named or specified in inscriptions – for instance, in the Floreffe Bible in the British Library (vol. 2, c. 1170), in which she holds a scroll with the words *diligens diligitur* (the lover will be loved) and is flanked on the left by Fides and on the right by Spes.²⁶ Later, love for God is also symbolized by flames or a heart being held or handed to someone else. In Giotto's *Mystical Marriage of St. Francis*

20 Hugh of Saint Victor: *De laude caritatis*, p. 196, 12 (208–210; Oh Caritas, how great is thy victory! First thou hast wounded a man, and through him thou hast soon overcome all.)

21 *St. Trudperter Hohelied*, 74,16 (Sickness of the beloved soul.). Cf. also Ohly 1993 and Keller, J. 2015.

22 Cf. Mechthild of Magdeburg: *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit*, Book VII,31, p. 588,6–10: *Minnen siech und libes krank, / pinen not und harten twang, / das machet mir den weg ze lang / zû minem lieben herren. / Wie sol ich dich, lieb, alsus lange enberen?* (Lovesickness and the body's frailty, excruciating distress, and hard duress make the path very long to my beloved Lord! How can I do without you, Beloved, for so long?)

23 See below, p. 240.

24 Cf., e.g., Mechthild of Magdeburg: *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, Book I,4; I,16; I,22; II,2 f.; II,24 or III,9.

25 On medieval Caritas iconography in general, see Freyhan 1948; Thadden 1951; Wellershoff-von Thadden 1952.

26 London, British Library, Add MS 17738, fol. 3^v. *diligens diligitur* in reference to John 14:21. On the virtues in the Floreffe Bible, see Bouché 2000, who also discusses its naming of Caritas as *Unctio*, and Kuder 1997.

to *Poverty* (c. 1320), Caritas offers a heart to the couple as her wedding gift.²⁷ As personification of charity, Caritas carries bread and a bowl on the St. Valentine's Reliquary of the Servatius Shrine from the late 12th century.²⁸ 14th-century sculptures show her with a cornucopia, accompanied by children, or nursing an infant – the latter a motif that often recurs in the following centuries.²⁹ With respect to the inseparability of *amor dei* and *amor proximi*, the attributes are also combined, for instance, when Nicola Pisano's Caritas on the pulpit of the Siena cathedral (1266–1268) has flames spouting from her cornucopia.

In the cases where Caritas presents (or offers) a heart or nurses an infant, she is provided with attributes whose specific, symbolic significance lies not just in their denotation but to an important extent in what she does with them. In these cases, the action of the personification takes place in small, self-contained units and must be understood as attributive. This means that it is not intended as a narrative – i.e., as advancing a complex sequence of events or actions, but as the immediate and concrete production of symbolic meaning within the frame of the action. Nevertheless, even these small units of action anticipate a broader dynamic that goes beyond rhetoric, figuration, and animation. The connection between embodiment and unit of action is consciously deployed to configure the personification.

In the Crucifixion with Virtues in Wienhausen, the figure named *karitas* in its inscription cannot be immediately identified as personified love since a dagger stab and an embrace are not her characteristic behaviors. Only knowledge of the iconographic, literary, and especially allegorical traditions united here can reveal the identity of Caritas and explain her actions.³⁰

In an Easter sermon, Bernard of Clairvaux provided a decisive impulse for the emergence of the motif of the Crucifixion with virtues when he spoke of the virtues as jewels adorning the cross:

With these four pearls of virtues namely, the ends of the Cross are adorned: Love surmounts everything, on the right shines Obedience, on the left Patience, but the root of the virtues is at the foot: Humility. As the suffering of the Lord reached its consummation, it enriched the victorious sign of the Cross with these pearls; as the Lord was internally pierced by tongues, externally by nails,

27 On the heart and flames as attributes of Caritas, see Freyhan 1948.

28 St. Valentine's Reliquary, c. 1180–1200, Brussels, Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire, Inv. No. 1038.

29 On 14th-century sculptures, see Freyhan 1948; Weissert 2016 discusses 16th-century representations of Caritas as a (nurturing) mother.

30 The various strands summarized in the following pages are brought together by Kraft 1976 and Barth 1983; more on the motif of the Crucifixion with Virtues in Schiller 1968, pp. 149–152; Hamburger 1989; Franzen-Blumer 2000; Stork 2010. Extensive analysis of the Wienhausen window in Kraft 1976, pp. 65–77; Koch 1986; Becksmann/Korn 1992, pp. 214–222 and 224–226; Siart 2008, pp. 60–70; Siart 2010; Schleif 2014.

he was humble at the invective of the Jews and patient at his wounds. Love too was consummated therein, that he gave up his life for his friends, and obedience as “bowing down his head, he surrendered his spirit” (John 19:30), “becoming obedient even unto death” (Philippians 2:8).³¹

Another central source is Caesarius of Heisterbach’s description of the monks’ Crucifixion, in which the monks were supposed to imagine themselves, like Christ, crucified by the virtues that are synonymous with the nails.³² Oboedientia nails Christ’s right hand to the cross, Patientia his left, while Humilitas drives the nail through his feet.³³

With these writings as background, the visual arts in the 13th century developed their own basic iconographical composition for the Crucifixion with Virtues that differs slightly from the written sources. Its point of departure is the iconography of the Crucifixion. The visual representations of the Crucifixion with Virtues dispense with the characterizing attributes and attributive units of action discussed above, and as a rule, the personifications are only identifiable by their inscriptions. Caritas, whom Bernard positioned at the top of the Cross, is usually found on the left, next to it. In these allegorical images of the Crucifixion, her special task as the supreme virtue is to inflict the wound in Christ’s side. Usually this is done with the lance familiar from the Passion,

31 *His nempe virtutum gemmis quattuor cornua crucis ornantur, et est supereminentior caritas, a dextris oboedientia, patientia a sinistris, radix virtutum humilitas in profundo. His ditavit trophaeum crucis consummatio Dominicae passionis, cum ad Iudaeorum blasphemias humilis, ad vulnera patiens, intus linguis, clavis exterius pungeretur. Nam et caritas in eo perfecta est, quod pro amicis animam posuit, et oboedientia consummata, cum, INCLINATO CAPIT, TRADIDIT SPIRITUM, FACTUS OBOEDIENS USQUE AD MORTEM.* Bernard of Clairvaux: In Resurrectione Sermo 1.3. Kraft 1976, pp. 12–20, sees in this passage a further explication of Ephesians 3:18. Here and throughout, the English translation of quotations from the Vulgate is taken from the Catholic Public Domain Version: <http://www.sacredbible.org/studybible/index.htm> (last accessed: October 19, 2024).

32 On this motif, see Seebohm 1996 and Smith 2012. The oldest known visual representations of the monk’s Crucifixion are in a manuscript from c. 1420, but earlier depictions may exist.

33 There are three nails with which the body of a monk must be fastened to the Cross: They are the three virtues, through which according to Jerome one becomes a martyr, namely, obedience, patience, and humility. Obedience pierces the right hand of the monk without complaint; unfeigned patience pierces the left hand. Yearning for the higher freedom drives the nail of obedience (into the flesh), and fear of the punishment of hell drives the nail of patience. True humility pierces the feet of the monk, so that for the sake of Christ he subordinates himself not only to his superiors, but also to his fellow brothers and can say with the psalmist, “I have been deeply humiliated, O Lord.” – *Tres clavi quibus corpus monachi cruci debet esse affixum, tres sunt virtutes, per quas teste Hieronimo martyres efficiuntur, scilicet oboedientia [sic!], patientia, humilitas. Manum monachi dexteram configat oboedientia [sic!] sine murmuratione; sinistram patientia sine simulatione. Clavum oboedientiae [sic!] impellat amor supernae libertatis, clavum patientiae timor poenae gehennalis. Pedes illius vera humilitas configat, ut non solum praelatis, sed et fratribus se propter Christum subiiciat, ut dicere possit cum Psalmista: ‘Humiliatus sum usquequaque Domine’.* Caesarius of Heisterbach: *Dialogus Miraculorum* 8,19: De crucifixione religiosum.

not as in the window in Wienhausen with a short dagger.³⁴ In addition, the number of figures has been expanded. Mary and John are often present, as well as Ecclesia and Synagoga, who are positioned to the right and left of the Cross. The other personified virtues vary; some depictions follow Bernard of Clairvaux and Caesarius of Heisterbach, but Sapientia – Wisdom – can also appear in a Crucifixion with Virtues as well as the figures present in Wienhausen: Justitia, Pax, Veritas, and Misericordia. The latter four have been borrowed for this scene from Psalm 84:11.³⁵

The possibilities for individual variation on the motif while retaining the basic iconographic model are well illustrated in the Bonmont Psalter (Fig. 2).³⁶ Mary and John are not present in the Crucifixion with Virtues on fol. 15^v, and Misericordia – a figure not in the group described by Bernard and Caesarius – is introduced while Patientia is eliminated. As in most depictions, Caritas wields the lance and inflicts the wound in Christ's side. The iconographic traditions of the Crucifixion with Virtues are easy to identify: by driving the nails into Christ's body, the virtues assume the role of the henchmen who do the handiwork in scenes of Christ being nailed to the cross,³⁷ independently occurring in narrative cycles of the Passion. Caritas is merged with Longinus, who drives the lance into Christ's side in representations of the Crucifixion.³⁸ While in the narrative, Christ's blood falls into Longinus's eyes, making him see again and thereby enabling him to perceive Christian truth, in the depiction in the Bonmont Psalter, it is Ecclesia who catches the blood spurting from Christ's wound in a chalice, thus constituting a reference to the Eucharist. By contrast, Synagoga turns away from the scene, her eyes covered with a blindfold, so she does not recognize the meaning of salvation.

Regardless of the shifting combinations of biblical figures and personifications, the Crucifixion with Virtues makes visible by way of the violent action that Christ died because of his virtues. They determined his actions, and he evinced them on the Cross. Thus, they wounded him as surely as the nails that pierced his body. As personifications outside his body, Christ's inner qualities become visible for the faithful, as does the consequence that ensues for Christ from actions motivated by the love of God and of his neighbor.

In this allegory, Caritas adopts a role, the deeper understanding of which is, once again, available only to viewers with previous knowledge. After all, this allegorical

34 However, Caritas also wields a close-quarters weapon in the Warendorp retable, whose composition shows a clear similarity to the Wienhausen window and is dated from about 1340.

35 "Mercy and truth have met each other. Justice and peace have kissed." – *misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi iustitia et pax osculatae sunt*. This and subsequent quotations from the Bible are from the Biblia Sacra Vulgata. On the depiction of the virtues in Psalm 84:11, see Savage 2017.

36 Circa 1260, Besançon, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 54, fol. 15^v. On the motifs of the Bonmont Psalter, see Franzen-Blumer 2000.

37 Kraft 1976, p. 9.

38 Kraft 1976, p. 10, already finds that Caritas "formally [...] has taken the place of Longinus."



Fig. 3. *Sponsa and Sponsus*, in: Rothschild Canticles, around 1300, 11,8 × 8,4 cm. New Haven, Yale University, Beineke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Beinecke MS 404, fol. 18^v–19^r.

reconfiguration of the Crucifixion motif is addressed above all to an audience familiar with Christian mysticism. Through her adoption of the lance of Longinus, *Caritas* becomes not just a witness to the truth of salvation and the one virtue that bears most responsibility for the death of Christ, but also to the *sponsa*, the bride of Christ.³⁹ By way of the lance, a reference is made to the aforementioned biblical *Song of Songs*, which speaks of the wounding love that invades the body via the glance. The *Song of Songs* 4:9 brings this thought into focus: “You have wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse. You have wounded my heart with one look of your eyes [...]” – *vulnerasti cor meum soror mea sponsa vulnerasti cor meum in uno oculorum tuorum* [...].

One of the best examples of the visualization of this nexus of lance and wounding, glance and love, can be found in the Rothschild Canticles, a manuscript from about 1300 that collects Latin texts with a connection to mysticism and is furnished with numerous paintings.⁴⁰ On the two-page spread fol. 18^v–19^r (Fig. 3) the bride aims Longinus’s lance at her bridegroom Christ, who already bears the wound in his side.⁴¹ The lance thereby also exemplifies the violent power of the glance and becomes a metaphor for seeing.

39 Hamburger 1989, p. 171.

40 New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Beinecke MS 404. A thorough analysis of this manuscript in Hamburger 1990, pp. 72–77 on fol. 18^v–19^r.

41 On the superimposition of *sponsa* and Longinus, Hamburger 1990, p. 75.

Silke Tammen described this invasion of Christ's body, initiated by the superimposition of lance and glance, which is as if completed by the eyes of those beholding the picture, as violent introspection.⁴² In the Crucifixion with Virtues of the Bonmont Psalter as well, the lance in Caritas's hands becomes a symbol of the injuring glance of wounding love that penetrates the heart of the beloved and thereby refers to the double meaning of *passio* as the suffering and passion of love.⁴³

The Crucifixion with Virtues in the Regensburg Lectionary⁴⁴ (Fig. 4) even identifies the figure with the lance as *sponsa* in an inscription within her halo. Here the characters conflated in the figure with the lance are varied with an awareness of artistic possibilities. Action and inscription allow us to see that here Longinus and the Bride of Christ were brought together. But since the *sponsa* stands for the love for Christ and her clothing resembles that of the other personifications who are present – Misericordia, Sapientia, and Oboedientia, as well as Ecclesia and Synagoga – the idea of Caritas as *amor dei* also suggests itself.⁴⁵

The conflation of love and the bride is already a clear indication that the Crucifixion with Virtues was especially attractive for a female audience. The evocation of the *sponsus-sponsa* relationship between Christ and the loving female Christian makes Caritas an appealing figure of approach to the body of Christ. Consequently, again and again one encounters the Crucifixion with Virtues in the context of female mysticism. The Bonmont Psalter was probably written by a nun for other nuns, the Regensburg Lectionary was prepared for the Dominican nuns of the Holy Cross Convent in Regensburg, and the Wienhausen stained-glass window is in what was a Cistercian convent.⁴⁶

The amalgamation of Longinus, Caritas, and the *sponsa* shows that in the conception and production of images, personifications were understood as a means to the greatest possible creative openness. This goes both for the figures and their actions. The body of a personification can absorb other figures and their characteristic actions and thereby generate new possibilities of identification for the viewers. The conflation of figures took place with an eye to conveying complex theological connections between the mortal wounding of Christ by love, the simultaneous overcoming of death and redemption

42 Tammen 2006, p. 104

43 Auerbach 1965, pp. 67–81, to which Hamburger 1990, p. 75, already refers.

44 Circa 1267–1276, Oxford, Keble College, MS 49, fol. 7r.

45 Ecclesia can also appear as the *sponsa* of Christ, but in the depiction of the Regensburg Lectionary, she is already present: With her chalice she collects the blood from Christ's wound. Franzen-Blumer 2000, p. 24, points out the equation of Ecclesia and Caritas in the context of the *sponsa* idea in the Bonmont Psalter.

46 Franzen-Blumer 2000, pp. 21–24, on the Bonmont Psalter. There is evidence that the Rothschild Canticles were addressed to a female audience as well, Hamburger 1990, p. 3 and passim. Apparently Wienhausen was never admitted into the Cistercian order, although its wish to be so had been granted. Nevertheless, the nuns lived by Cistercian rules. See Siart 2008, p. 21.

through love, and the necessity to see and acknowledge the truth of salvation inherent in the figure of Longinus. Caritas proves to be a figure of aesthetic reflection, for in her is manifest an artistic consideration of the potential of a personification and the possibilities for deploying this figure of visual rhetoric in devotional practice. Reflections on the artificiality, functionality, and ability to convey information of the personification's body as well as the utilization of these aspects emerge, especially in the Wienhausen Crucifixion with Virtues with its dagger thrust that combines violence and visual attention.

The Wienhausen depiction is different from other Crucifixions with Virtues in various details. Ecclesia and Synagoga are not present, the blood from the wound is not collected in a chalice but runs down Christ's body, and the four virtues that surround the Cross are not nailing Christ to it. By placing the crown of thorns on his head, however, Justitia and Pax again do take over something usually assigned to the henchmen, but this time another independent motif from the Passion serves as the model: the crowning with thorns, also known as the second mocking of Christ. Misericordia and Veritas, on the other hand, are reminiscent of the mourning Marys who are often to be found in late medieval depictions of the Crucifixion. Compared to other Crucifixions with Virtues, here the relation of the four virtues to Christ is less concentrated on his body since they do not injure it – and let us again remember how gently Justitia and Pax rest their hands on the crown of thorns. This lack of violence is a peculiarity among the other Crucifixions with Virtues, but corresponds to the character of the virtues in Psalm 84:11, as mentioned above. There, the kiss of Justitia and Pax bespeaks mutual affection. With regard to this kiss of peace, Schreiner remarked that in this Bible verse, the linguistic metaphor and the bodily gesture refer to each other; the physical gesture honors what the metaphor expresses as an image.⁴⁷ With reference to the role of a personification – its actions as well as its physicality – Cassiodorus's commentary on the Psalms is enlightening, as Schreiner also points out:

In the image of a “corporeal embrace” (*amplexus corporeus*), writes Cassiodorus [...], the psalmist wanted to give a visual impression of something “incorporeal” (*incorporea*). The loving embrace (*amplexus dilectiones*) between Justice and Peace makes their “mutual concord” (*mutua concordia*) visible. That usually happens when people embrace after a longer period of separation to show their joy at the reunion. The *nexus brachiorum* is a sign for the *studium charitatis*.⁴⁸

The fact that in the Wienhausen Crucifixion with Virtues it is precisely the personifications Justitia and Pax – who in Psalm 84:11 kiss each other and according to Cassiodorus embrace – who place the crown of thorns on Christ's head, corresponds to the equally gentle embracing yet violently acting Caritas. Thereby, however, a shift becomes

47 Schreiner 1996, p. 43.

48 Translated from Schreiner 1996, pp. 43f. in a paraphrase of Cassiodorus: *Expositio psalmorum*, ps. 84.



Fig. 4. Crucifixion with Virtues,
in: Regensburg Lectionary,
c. 1267–1276, 44,2 × 30,5 cm.
Oxford, Keble College,
MS 49, fol. 7r.

all the more obvious: While the four virtues of the psalm are not crucifying Christ in Wienhausen, but encountering him with gentle affection, they draw back closer to the abstract, bodiless ideas they represent. But with Caritas, the opposite occurs: She draws even further away from the abstract notion of love, and her physicality becomes more intense. The cause is the change of weapon. While in other Crucifixions with Virtues the lance has maintained a spatial distance between the wounding figure and the crucified Christ, a physical closeness is introduced in the stained-glass window by replacing the lance with a dagger. The proximity of the bodies is even heightened by the mutual, tender embrace of Caritas and Christ: Caritas's left arm encircles the stigmatized body,⁴⁹ her hand rests on Christ's shoulder, and her gaze meets his face. In response, Christ

49 The *amplexus* motif appears in the embrace and was also prominently represented in Cistercian visual art as the *amplexus Bernardi*. Here, Christ drops down from the Cross into the arms of Bernard of Clairvaux. On this motif, see Posset 2003, according to whom the oldest known depiction of the *amplexus Bernardi* dates from c. 1340, so that it is uncertain whether the *amplexus Bernardi* is a possible model for the *amplexus* depictions in Wienhausen.



Fig. 5. Crucifixion, Deposition, and Entombment, c. 1335. Wienhausen, Monastery, nuns' choir.

embraces Caritas with his right arm as though he wants to pull her toward him and hold her fast. Thus she supports him, whose body – because of his freed right arm – is in danger of sinking from the cross and more deeply into her thrust. This unusual proximity can also be read as a symbol of spiritual affinity, for Caritas, as the highest virtue, is also the closest to Christ. The exchange of the lance for the dagger makes the Longinus reference fade, but it is precisely this stabbing weapon, surprising in the context of the Crucifixion, that directs viewers' attention to the center of the picture in which a new iconographic twist can be discovered.

In this embrace, Caritas absorbs another figure of the Passion story: Joseph of Arimathea, who, in scenes of the Deposition, takes the body of Christ down from the Cross. It is unlikely that the superimposition of Longinus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Caritas escaped the notice of the nuns of Wienhausen, for in the richly painted choir of the convent, situated like the window on the second floor and directly next to the cloister wing where the Crucifixion with Virtues is located, they could find depictions of the Crucifixion and the Deposition (Fig. 5).⁵⁰ The former shows Christ wearing the Crown

50 Both are located next to each other in the eastern severy of the second bay. The third scene in the same location is of the Entombment. The painting of the nuns' choir dates to c. 1335. On the convent and its cloister, see Siart 2008, pp. 21–90; on the paintings in the nuns' choir, Wittekind 2010.

of Thorns and nailed to the Cross, surrounded by Mary, Longinus, the centurion who recognizes the Son of God, and John. The tip of the lance held by Longinus touches the wound, already open and bleeding. Here blood also runs from the wounds to his hands and feet. In the painting of the Deposition, there are the three Marys, a bearded and simply dressed figure whose position suggests an identification as Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, John, and two assistants with a ladder and a pair of tongs, freeing the body from the Cross. Here too, traditional iconography is modified. Joseph of Arimathea is only assisting at the Deposition. He stands on a ladder behind the Cross and reaches down to Christ from the upper left. Here it is Mary who receives the body of Christ, holding him by the torso and touching her forehead to her son's. As in the Christ and Caritas grouping, Christ's right arm lies across Mary's shoulder, but instead of embracing his mother, it dangles lifelessly. The middle of the three Marys gently takes his hand, its wound clearly visible.

If the lance-bearing Caritas expresses the wish to see the corporeal Christ, the dagger-bearing Caritas who embraces Christ makes visual the need for physical contact – a direct approach not just mediated by the gaze that is already articulated in the painting on the vault. But this is only possible for the body of the personification who becomes the mediator between the viewers and Christ. The personified Caritas, a non-human abstraction, becomes a figure of identification in which the nuns' wish for contact and physical proximity is fulfilled. But the unusual iconography must have had its own allure and inspired a longer, contemplative engagement with the depiction, for the Cistercian nuns of Wienhausen were well trained visually by the stained-glass windows of the cloisters, the rich visual program of the nuns' choir, and the allegories of Bernard of Clairvaux.⁵¹ They will not have been unaware of the picture's inherent dualism of imparting highly abstract and spiritualized content through drastically direct physicality. Moreover, the window was originally placed in the context of narrative depictions of the Passion, but of the surviving scenes, the Crucifixion with Virtues is the only one that iconographically merges history and allegory. The window with the violent Caritas was one of a trio of two lancet windows and a rhomb that showed the flagellation, crowning with thorns, and the Crucifixion – those episodes of the Passion in which Christ's body is wounded.⁵² Only the nailing to the cross is again omitted. This combination of images also directs the viewers' attention to the aspect of physicality and the wounded body.⁵³

In the Wienhausen Crucifixion with Virtues, it is precisely the iconographic deviations that direct the viewers' attention to the body and promote Caritas to a figure of

51 Wittekind 2010, p. 157, also sees in the visual program of the nuns' choir the nuns' theological knowledge.

52 Today there are two saints in the lancet windows. On the other scenes in the series, see Becksmann/Korn 1992, pp. 223–231, as well as Siart 2008 and Siart 2010.

53 The devotional significance of the opening of the body has been discussed, i.a., by Lentes 1995 and Bynum 2007.

aesthetic reflection. The dagger is essential to this process. As an unexpected element, it is involved in an action unexpected in the context of the Crucifixion. The unsettling dagger thrust focuses the viewers' gaze and thus, via the aesthetic surface, initiates an intellectual engagement with the depicted content. As a provocative impetus, as Peter von Moos has described it, the dagger thrust fulfills a clear purpose with regard to devotional practice:

Through this impetus to independent thought and independent interpretation of the image, attention is attracted; as Quintilian says, the good orator presents something to the listener in such a way that he "hides something else and leaves him to discover it for himself." Not explicitness, but a darkness, an empty space or a hint creates genuine interest in the image signal. The opposite is mere spectacle or discursive boredom. In this communicative-strategic context, involuntary attention serves as a sort of bait for curiosity and thus promotes precisely deliberate attention.⁵⁴

4.2. Mediations between the Loving Soul and her Heavenly Bridegroom: Daughter Zion Narratives

The allegorical texts about Daughter Zion, which survive in both Latin and several vernacular languages, tell of the search for a worthy spouse. When all earthly suitors prove inadequate, Christ is chosen as the ideal bridegroom, and so begins Daughter Zion's journey to heaven – "a pious antithesis to the 'Anticlaudianus'"⁵⁵ – with the support of allegorical companions. The most important help is given by the virtue Caritas who ascends to heaven with the Daughter and shoots an arrow into Christ's heart so that he falls passionately in love with the Daughter.⁵⁶ In the Old Testament tradition, Zion is the personified Jerusalem, but in this group of texts she is also combined with the bride in the *Song of Songs*.⁵⁷ Via the mystical motif of the bride's path, the human bride's ascent to her heavenly bridegroom models the approach of the soul to Christ. It is a depiction shaped by the easily perceived principle of personification, whose transparency is well suited to the didactic intention of a guide to a virtuous life and religious performance. The capabilities and virtues of Daughter Zion are personified as helpers on her path to God; the interior is transformed into an exterior.

The *Tochter Zion* by the Franciscan Lamprecht of Regensburg (circa 1250) is close to the Latin W-redaction in the broad tradition of Daughter Zion texts and begins with the Daughter's self-reflection on the Latin translation of the name Zion as *speculum*. Thus, the theme of aesthetic reflection is already introduced in the *speculum* metaphor of the

54 Moos 2001, p. 95.

55 Schmidtke 1995, col. 953: "eine fromme Gegenbildung zum 'Anticlaudianus'".

56 Authoritative on the textual history, Volting 2017, pp. 22–34. A concise overview of the German-language texts is also offered by Schmidtke 1995. Cf. also the older study by Wichgraf 1921.

57 On the connection of the text to Origen's interpretation of the *Song of Songs*, cf. Volting 2017, pp. 3–5.

prologue.⁵⁸ Man is a mirror in which God can mirror himself, i.e., the *speculum* metaphor produces proximity to God. At the same time, one should regard the story as a mirror in which one can find a higher truth. The moderator of these processes of comprehension is the narrator who casts himself as an authority who wants to reveal the *bezeichnenunge* (meaning, verse 140) to his audience. Sometimes one has the impression that the narrator, in a *mise en abyme*, is directly supporting the Daughter by giving advice.⁵⁹ This conspicuous narrator who draws attention to his role as a mediator opens a discourse on the aesthetic nature of the narrative.

For her journey to Christ, Daughter Zion obtains help from Fides and Spes, who help her out of the world. Sapientia, Caritas, Oratio, and Miseratio join in as further companions. Unlike these personifications, the Soul herself is surprisingly passive on her path to Christ, and even faints several times – the inner events are completely externalized as actions of the personifications, and the protagonist is immobilized. Caritas performs the decisive approach to Christ by wounding him with an arrow, which clearly draws on the topos of Venus or Amor. She inflicts two wounds on Christ that for a human would be fatal:

Alsô hete Karitas,
diu der frowen bote was,
ir bogen gespannen rehte.
dâvon traf sie alsô slehte
den künic zuo zwein stunden
mit zwein verhwunden.
des enmohte er den smerzen
von den schuzzen in dem herzen
niht vertragen mêre.⁶⁰

Thus Caritas, who was the lady's messenger, bent her bow. Thus she wounded the king twice with two flesh wounds so that he could no longer bear the pain of the wounds to his heart.

It is not the Soul herself (who waits on the sidelines) but the personified Caritas who carries out the approach to the beloved bridegroom. The loving encounter is not de-

58 The significance of the mirror symbol and the integration of the object in the epistemic concept of the *speculatio* is considered by Volting 2017, pp. 7–13. The mirror motif also occurs in the further course of the text, as in verses 898–901, with the idea common in spiritual exegesis and usually founded on First Corinthians 13:12, that one can see God on earth only as in a mirror. This is formulated by the personified Fides in the form of a prophecy: *daz man hie, swenne ez geschiht, / als in einem spiegel siht / und in einer glîchnisse, / das siht du dort gewisse* (What one, if it happens, sees here as in a mirror and in the form of a simile, you will see it there in truth).

59 Thus, for example, he advises Zion to always take care to keep the personifications nearby, so that she suffers no injury on the journey, cf. verses 1527–1531.

60 Lamprecht: Tochter Syon, verses 3731–3739.

picted directly but by means of the personification within a pattern of violent behavior. The secular topos of the arrow of Amor is taken up, while at the same time in Christ's suffering, mystical *unio* and Passion are suggestively combined. Caritas shoots Christ, and he literally but also symbolically bleeds again. The bleeding Christ of the mystical encounter with his bride is connected to the Christ of the Passion; the *tertium comparationis* is Caritas. Just as Christ died on the Cross out of love for humankind, he allows Caritas to wound him anew out of love for Daughter Zion.⁶¹ Thus Caritas's attack is a retelling of the sacrifice Christ made on the Cross for mankind; narrating the *unio* involves reflection on the Passion and also on the possibilities for depicting it. Caritas's act, which contradicts usual norms, opens a space for contemplating the divine act of redemption.

Immediately after being shot with the arrow, Christ says to a female figure he addresses as *swester unde gemahel* (sister and bride, verse 3742) that she has wounded him with love. In the setting as described, he can only mean Caritas, who stands before him, while Daughter Zion waits apart, yet the Daughter is the actual recipient of his address. Caritas is an entity within Daughter Zion, and the logic of the personification makes possible such superimpositions, but in the concrete narrative there are still points of friction when Christ confesses his love to a different female figure than Daughter Zion.⁶²

Caritas catches four drops of blood from Christ's heart⁶³ and pours them into the Daughter's heart (verses 4004–4019), which enables her to embrace and kiss Christ. Since the drops of blood become relevant for the *unio* with the bride, the bloody act of violence of the shot is integrated via a second action into the pattern of an act of love in which both hearts are united in a concrete, material sense.

Lamprecht's story is strongly informed by an interpretive gesture: the explanation is designed primarily as spiritual communication, but at the same time a line of aesthetic reflection is established that thematizes how this information is imparted. In the doubling of explanatory function by the narrator and the personifications, the work draws attention to its allegorical structure.

Our second example, the *Alemannische Tochter Sion* from the late 13th century, narrates the events in a brief five hundred verses and is based on the Latin Z-redac-

61 Already earlier in his description of the journey, the narrator designates the Passion as an act of Christ's love toward Zion, with which he chooses her as his bride. Cf. Lamprecht: *Tochter Sion*, verses 1519–1522: *und alrêst, dô er erstarp, zuo einer brût er sie erwarp. von Syon tohter nû sich, wie tiure er hât gemahelt dich!* (And when he died, he won her as his bride. Daughter Zion now see, how preciously [i.e., with what great equivalent value] he has wed himself to you.)

62 Cf. Volfing 2017, p. 34, who points out that although a fundamental unity exists between Caritas and the Daughter, the recognition of their identity is made difficult by the way they act as opponents.

63 Cf. Lamprecht: *Tochter Sion*, verses 3769–3787. The four drops receive a spiritual interpretation as *gratie infusio* (infusion of mercy), *cognitio dei* (knowledge of God), *celestes desiderium* (heavenly longing) und *spirituale gaudium* (spiritual joy).

tion.⁶⁴ Here, the final approach to Christ comprises a more concentrated series of events. Unlike in the W-redaction, where only Caritas and Oratio approach Christ and leave the Daughter waiting at a safe distance, here Caritas and the Daughter go to the bridegroom together.⁶⁵ It is also noteworthy that Caritas is here the only one of the companions who does not bear her Latin name, but instead is always called *minne* (love), thus entering more clearly into a discourse that is also influenced by courtly literature.⁶⁶ Full of confidence, Frau Minne appears as holder of the highest court office:

Ich pin sein oberigste chelnerein.
 Ich mag die hohsten gâbe geben,
 Ich nim den tot und gib daz leben,
 Swer mich niht hât, der ist ein niht [...].⁶⁷

I am his chief cellarer. I can bestow the highest gift, I take away death and give life, whoever has not me is a nothing [...].

With her claim to overcome death, the personification already in her self-introduction draws a clear connection to Christian redemption, which is summoned via the shot at Christ. Although the Daughter and Caritas approach the bridegroom together, shortly before they reach him, the Daughter loses consciousness and is thus incapable of action while Frau Minne shoots the arrow:

Di minne vergaz ir selber nit;
 Sie tet nach irem alten sit,
 Si nam iren minnen pogen
 Piz an di oren eingezogen,
 Si schoz den chunik auf seine trôn,
 Daz er der tohter von Syon
 viel minneleich an den arm.⁶⁸

64 In what follows, the *Alemannische Tochter Sion* is quoted from the edition of Merzdorf, which follows the Heidelberg manuscript. In the central passages about the *unio*, the lost Klosterneuburg manuscript contains no significant discrepancies. Cf. the edition of Graff: [*Alemannische Tochter Sion*].

65 Cf. *Alemannische Tochter Sion*, verses 516–518.

66 As evidence that an aggressive Frau Minne was quasi basic knowledge, see Thomasin von Zerclære's pedagogical text *Der welsche Gast*, verses 1181–1200, which contains the motif of the fire of love while the marginal illustrations show Frau Minne with a bow and arrow (cf., e.g., Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg 389, fol. 19^v). Reflections on an aggressive Minne, acting as an unpredictable force of fate with her arrows, figure prominently in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, 532,1–534,9, cf. Linden 2017, pp. 337–344. On the characteristic violence of personified Minne, cf. also Keller, H.E. 1998, pp. 26–29.

67 *Alemannische Tochter Sion*, verses 458–461.

68 *Alemannische Tochter Sion*, verses 523–529.

Minne was quick-witted; She acted according to her old habit, took her bow of love, drew the string to her ear, and shot at the king on his throne, so that he fell lovingly into the arms of Daughter Zion.

The *alten sit* (old habit) alludes to the archery of the ancient gods of love, Amor and Venus, while also ascribing to Minne a consistent pattern of action that transcends all eras and which one can access without having to justify it, even when, as here, the aggression is not directed as usual toward a human target but to God incarnate. Frau Minne is a concrete person and a superordinate principle at the same time, i. e., she acts in an actual setting and with real consequences, but her action is repeated identically since the beginning of mankind and thereby possesses a timeless character.

The bodies are precisely synchronized in their movements. Through the dynamic of the arrow, movement enters the previously ideally static body of Christ, and, wounded by Minne, he falls into the arms of the unconscious Daughter. The weight of his body pushes the arrow – and thus also the love that it symbolizes – into the Daughter's body. The wounded Christ thus actively and passively produces a loving union with her:

Durch peide chom der viel gevarn,
Er twanck sie in ein alsô
Daz furpaz chainer sweren drô,
Mangel, durst, noch hungers nôt
Daz swert, noch der bitter tôt
Si schaiden moht in chain wîs.⁶⁹

The arrow pierced them both and pinned them together so that ever since, no looming threat, neither want, thirst, hunger, sword, or bitter death could divide them in any way.

Two bodies impaled together by an arrow constitute an arrangement dominated by violence, but at the same time a connection that nothing can separate.⁷⁰ Although the bodies pierced by an arrow are an image of death, the depiction also emphasizes the paradox of the violent Minne and the wound from which one does not die. In its assurance that the violently accomplished unity cannot be broken by any misfortune, the wound functions positively as absolute loyalty compared to the list of dangerous threats. In the violent but longed-for unity, the two wounded bodies paradoxically achieve invulnerability to threats from without; sword, famine, and death have no hold on them. The figures are dominated by love, not pain. Immediately after the shot, the

69 Alemannische Tochter Sion, verses 530–535.

70 In this arrangement of the two loving bodies, Ovid's story of Pyramus and Thisbe – which was widely familiar in medieval vernacular literature in the context of the *Liebestod* motif – probably also contributed to the tradition. Pyramus und Thisbe die by the same sword.

Daughter regains consciousness and copiously speaks about the joys of love. Her faint has taken her very briefly from the stage during the critical act of violence of the personification and so distances her from the violence toward Christ that she does not experience consciously. For the Soul, conceived as a figure with whom the audience can identify, this brief period of inability to act is an important circumstance, for it makes her not the aggressor but like Christ, a victim of Minne, for which the arrow piercing both bodies provides a striking image. In this construction of a passion through the violence of the personified Minne, the Soul suffers just like Christ. Compared to Lamprecht's version, the Daughter in the *Alemannische Tochter Sion* is brought closer to the actions of the personification of Caritas and forms a clearer consubstantiality with it, so that the love event makes a more direct impression. In her aggression against the Soul, the personified Minne is transformed from an objectification of the interior life of the Daughter to a goddess of fate who rules over all mankind. Thus the love of the Daughter strikes Christ in the heart, but his fall into her arms that pierces her with the same arrow must also be read as a sign of reciprocal love. Now the personified Minne applies to both figures equally.

For the Soul, the arrow is not death but the path to new life, as she expresses it in conscious contradiction of regular ways of understanding: *Ich lebe dir und stirbe mir. / Wir sein vereinet nach beider gir.*⁷¹ In the words of both partners, the union of suffering imposed by the arrow is legitimized in retrospect as their own volition, and the violent act of Minne is redefined as a willed surrender of self. This detail of the *Alemannische Tochter* can also be read as a commentary on Christ's act of redemption, since although Christ was crucified by an external power, he accepts his suffering voluntarily, motivated by love. It is interesting that because the personification acts independently, the question of whose interior life she actually represents becomes perilously ambiguous. As a superordinate principle – which she always is in addition to being assigned to a concrete person – the personified Minne can be the emotion of the Soul and of Christ simultaneously, while at the same time, her loving devotion to Christ offers the possibility of identification to the audience. This offer of mediation to the audience is made explicit when the narrator expresses the hope that he and the audience can reenact the loving convergence. The narrator grounds the call to active emulation in the experience of a linguistic and also a literary deficiency in description. Precisely because what the Daughter experiences with Christ cannot be adequately conveyed by words, the audience should complete the ascent itself in the meditative perfection of their own virtues:

71 *Alemannische Tochter Sion*, verses 561 f. (I live for you and die for me [i.e., in reference to my previous earthly existence – S.L./D.W.] We are united according to the wish of us both.).

Wer chonde nu ze grunde
 Gesagen wie der lieben waz?
 Ach Jhesu Crist, du minnen vaz!
 Laz uns auch werden inne
 Der weishait und der minne,
 Die si auz deinem munde tranck;
 enpfahē uns in den umbevanck
 Do di tochter inne waz:
 So ward uns nie auf erden paz.⁷²

Who could now say completely how it was for the beloved? Ah, Jesus Christ, thou vessel of love!
 Let us also experience the wisdom and love that she drank from your mouth. Receive us with the
 embrace in which the Daughter was. Then it would never be better for us on earth.

By resorting to metaphor, the narrator once again makes it unmistakably clear that the loving experience with Christ cannot be captured in words: He calls Christ a vessel of love, and via the act of drinking illustrates the loving savoring of the bridegroom with an image of nourishing. In general, the narrator of the *Alemannische Tochter Sion* is clearly more reticent than Lamprecht, but in the end emerges to emphasize his struggle for an adequate representation of the *unio*. The text clearly encourages⁷³ the turn to praxeology, to the religious practice of a meditative approach to God, implemented by each individual in the audience, which is particularly based on the gap between the possibilities of literary reenactment and personal, genuine experience. Literature prepares the way for meditative contemplation and, with the personifications, offers visualizations of methods of approach, but at the same time points to extraliterary practice. By the offers it outlines, literature influences actual religious practice; at the same time, the literary project reacts to existing meditative forms. The Daughter Zion texts are clearly intended to sound out the distance or proximity of the Soul to its personified inner life and to account for Caritas's outrageously violent deed as an action of the Soul, but to separate it from the Soul at the same time. In so doing, the personification opens up a space for reflection on how Christ's Passion and the reenactment of the loving Soul can be brought together in literature and art. The aesthetic design of a precisely composed ensemble of personifications, figures, and Christ reflects upon and demonstrates at the same time how the Passion is violently reactivated by Caritas, by way of the Minne-wound opening up for the Soul not only a conceptual reenactment of the event of redemption, but also direct participation in it.

72 *Alemannische Tochter Sion*, verses 578–586.

73 Informative on practices of monastic meditation and visualization of texts is the chapter on the nuns' private readings and devotions in Ehrenscheidtner 2004, pp. 211–237.

Although it is difficult to determine the social context in which the Alemannic version was written, in the later history of Daughter Zion texts there are clear indications of meditation practices in convents – for instance, in the prose version written after 1419 in the Dominican convent Unterlinden. It was combined with an allegory about the human heart as a monastery in a little book intended for the spiritual improvement of the nuns. The *juncfrowen zu Underlinden* (virgins of Unterlinden)⁷⁴ are addressed directly in a postscript, with suggestions for readers and explanations of religious implementation. The author speaks to the individual believer with an exhortation to contemplation:

Nu nim war min kint, was ich dir sage in dieser nachgescriben lere und habe zu got dinem herren einen ganzen inkere. Merke ewen, was gutes er dir teglichen geben wil umb dein andechtiges singen und darzu nach diser zit gebent ist im ewigen leben.⁷⁵

Now listen closely, my child, to what I tell you in this instruction and turn to God in complete devotion. Always keep in mind what good he gives you every day in return for your devotional singing and will give you afterward in eternal life.

The Unterlinden version reaches the goal of the journey quite quickly and then, just when Caritas shoots the arrow, it provides a lengthy description of Christ's reaction and has him quote the appropriate passage from the *Song of Songs*:

Und zehant snelle was sie spannen iren bögen und iren scharphen pfeil darüf legen unerschrockenlich, und nam war des kuniges begirlicheit, als sie mit kreften gesponnet het; und zu dem höhen trön sy iren pfeil schoß und traff das aller gewinte herze sin alzo, daß das ineriste in ime in rechter minne verbundet wart. Do das des obersten keisers sun sach und desselben pfeils enpfande in sinem herzen, mit susser stimme er sine diener frögte: hat ymant angerüt das herze min? Über das het caritas kein benügen und darumb gar behende sy den andern stral üflegt und zilt dem ersten schüße nach und meisterlich sy den ersten pfeil traff und verbundet noch tiffer das herze sin. Aber dise tiffe schüsse der minnestrele mocht der minsame nicht lenger erliden; darumb rufft er us über laut: "wer ist hie mich alzo berüren?" Alzo wart die jungfröwe caritas sichtige und offenbar. Minsamlichen er zu ir do sprach: "Vulnerasti me soror mea, sponsa vulnerasti cor meum", 'min allerliebste swester, du hast gar sere verbundet mich, verbundet hast du das herze min.'⁷⁶

And immediately she was quick to bend her bow and notch her sharp arrow without fear and perceived the king's desire, as she had bent it with all her strength; and she fired her arrow at the high throne and hit his all-beloved heart in such a way that his innermost self was wounded with real love. When the almighty Kaiser's son saw and felt the same arrow in his heart, he asked his servants with a sweet voice: has someone touched my heart? Caritas was dissatisfied with that, and so she quickly notched the second arrow and aimed it after the first shot, and masterfully she hit

74 Unterlindener Tochter Sion, p. 89.

75 Unterlindener Tochter Sion, p. 89.

76 Unterlindener Tochter Sion, p. 84.

the first arrow and wounded his heart even deeper, but the lover could no longer bear these deep shots of the arrows of love; so he cried out over loudly, “Who is here who has touched me so?” And so the virgin Caritas became visible and revealed. Lovingly he spoke to her then: “Vulnerasti me soror mea, sponsa vulnerasti cor meum,” ‘my sister, you have wounded me badly, Bride you have wounded my heart.’

It is remarkable how thoroughly the personified Caritas has adopted the role of loving partner, so that the verse from the *Song of Songs* that is meant for the Bride is clearly spoken to her instead. Meanwhile, the Soul waits at a distance and – as usual in the W-redaction – enters into loving union with Christ via the four drops of blood. While the *Alemannische Tochter Sion* experiments with a greater physical proximity of personification and figure at the moment of the loving union, the Unterlinden version favors a consistent intermediary role for Caritas.

The prose version connects directly to the religious practice of the Unterlinden convent by having the Daughter enter the convent at Christ’s urging, while also establishing a connection to the following treatise about the heart as an allegorical monastery of virtues. Daughter Zion thus becomes a fellow sister of the recipients:

[...] so ist er mit juncfrowen fides, spes, caritas und prudencia ze rat worden, das er sy in ein closter tun welle, welches closter in sinem zirlichen garten liget und ist och gar vaste grunenden und blüenden, genant Unterlinden, darinne vil heide und velde stet und öch schoner linden, die ubertreffenlich gar vast fruchtber sint.⁷⁷

[...] and so he was advised by the virgins Fides, Spes, Caritas, and Prudencia, that he would send them to a convent, which lies in a lovely garden and is also full of greenery and blossoms, and called Unterlinden, in which there is much heathland and fields and also beautiful linden trees full of unsurpassed fruit.

The author is adept at deploying figurative language, and this allegorical density suggests that the Unterlinden nuns understood Daughter Zion’s entry into their convent figuratively and not literally.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the idea of Daughter Zion as an imitation fellow nun whom one can emulate in one’s own spiritual meditations lends the practice of reenactment an additional, local motivation.

All three examples – Lamprecht’s version, the Alemannic version, and the prose version from Unterlinden – have demonstrated how personification becomes a means of reflecting on the *unio* between Daughter Zion and Christ, in other words, between the human soul and God, and to depict it at different points on a scale between proximity

⁷⁷ Unterlindener Tochter Sion, p. 85.

⁷⁸ Even if, as a rule, they are translated into German, the numerous Latin quotations from the Bible also suggest an audience accustomed to working with texts.

and distance. Caritas's act of violence against Christ is the starting point for aesthetic reflection on how the participation of the human soul in the *unio* can be depicted and how it can become an aggressor against Christ without actually wounding him. The three versions show the range of possibilities of aesthetic mediation between transcendence and immanence and open up for contemporary reception attractive perspectives on how to superimpose the suffering of the Passion and salvation in love in a single image. Comparison of the three versions shows that the agency assigned to the figure of the Soul and the personification varies greatly. In their depictions of Caritas's violent act, the three versions clearly experiment with how much distance to put between the personification of Caritas and the loving Soul in order not to project the aggression of the arrow too much onto the Soul, but leave it the responsibility of Caritas. Using the personification, all three versions are working on the theologically and aesthetically appealing question of the possibilities for positivizing negativity and mediating immanence and transcendence.

The potential for aesthetic reflection inherent in the personification of Caritas in the Daughter Zion texts is highlighted when one compares it to an almost identical arrangement which, however, lacks the allegorical accompaniment of the personified virtues. In the illustrated text *Christus und die minnende Seele* (Christ and the Loving Soul), which survives in several versions beginning in the 14th century, the aggression against Christ is committed not by the personified Caritas but by the Bride herself. Probably written by a woman in the second half of the 15th century for Beguine communities on Lake Constance, *Die minnende Seele* (The Loving Soul)⁷⁹ comprises a series of pictures and over 2,000 verses of dialogic instruction and edification with which – likely in meditative practice⁸⁰ – one could by steps reenact the convergence of the soul and Christ. Since the Bride herself shoots the arrow of love at Christ, the corresponding image depicts not a loving approach of the two figures to each other. Instead, the Bride stands at a distance, as is logical for an archer.⁸¹ The picture's caption – “She shoots the arrow of love at him, she wants this as her prize” (*Mit der minne stral schússet sy in / Das wil sy han für*

79 The title *Die minnende Seele* follows the edition of Banz and the article by Rosenfeld 1978 in the *Verfasserlexikon*. This text is not identical to the text with the same title from the Zurich manuscript Cod. Rh. 119, fol. 166^r–169^r, which also is in the mystical tradition of the Bride, but dates from the 14th century.

80 This item of textual and visual evidence is also from a context of meditating visualization in the religious practice of pious women, as testified by an inscription in the Donaueschingen manuscript (fol. 76^v), dated February 2, 1497: Anna Muntprat of Constance donates the book to the Augustinian chapter of canonesses in Inzigkofen bei Sigmaringen, where her sister Veronika lives.

81 Cf. the illustration in the manuscript Karlsruhe, Landesbibl. Cod. Donaueschingen 106 (Fragment in Mainz, Martinus-Bibliothek, Hs. 46), fol. 26^v, cf. also the manuscript Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek Cod. 710, fol. 13^v.

ainen gwin)⁸² – focuses on the Soul’s intentional act and leaves little room for aesthetic reflection since here, in contrast to the Caritas personification of the Daughter Zion texts, there is no clear contradiction to the nature of the acting figure.⁸³ In the accompanying text as well, the action is narrated exclusively via the pattern of the wounding arrow of love:

Sy spricht: ich wil in schießen,
Ob ich sin iena mug genießen.
Cristus sprach: Verwundet ist das hertze min,
Da hastu, lieb, geschossen in,
Daz ich muß tun den willen din.
Daz mag wol werden din gewin⁸⁴

She says: I will shoot him, if I can now enjoy him. Christ said: My heart is wounded. You, Beloved, have shot into it so that I must do your will. You will probably win.

The aggression clearly comes from the Soul, and when she hits Christ with the arrow of love, she wounds him in precise correspondence to the wounds of love she herself suffered in approaching him. This action is logically less unsettling than with the violent Caritas, whose depiction always leaves it uncomfortably vague as to whether the personification’s act of violence does or does not comport with her name.⁸⁵

82 Christus und die minnende Seele, text according to Cod. Donaueschingen 106, fol. 26^v.

83 One could argue that in a purely formal sense, the Soul is also a personification. But it is noteworthy that in the spiritual texts under discussion, the Soul is addressed as the actual person. As the illustrations of the Einsiedler manuscript with the Soul dressed in a habit make clear, she seamlessly represents an unproblematic figure of identification for the audience. Cf. in addition Kohlmeier 2019, especially pp. 221–239, on the presentation of the Soul in the *Flowing Light of the Godhead*.

84 Christus und die minnende Seele, text according to the Einsiedler Hs. 710, fol. 13^v; for clarity, modern punctuation has been added. The text of the Donaueschingen manuscript is quite similar; only the inquit-formulas are missing.

85 The broadside III,52 (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek), a series of pictures, each with four verses and dating from between 1459 and 1468 in Augsburg, also makes the Soul into the aggressor, but nevertheless, with reflection on the pain of love, brings a personification into play that assumes the function of asking forgiveness for the Soul’s behavior toward Christ. Cf. Christus und die minnende Seele, p. 325: *Ich will mein lieb durch schiessen, / Ob ich sein mag geniessen. / Mich hat der meine schmerz / geschossen durch mein hertz* (I intend to shoot my beloved so that I can enjoy him. The pain of love has shot me in the heart).

5. The Active Personification as a Figure of Aesthetic Reflection

The present interdisciplinary study shows that the reflective potential of personification is a phenomenon in more than one medium. The potential of the active personification of Caritas as a figure of aesthetic reflection can be unlocked by the praxeological model of a *Different Aesthetic*, which makes comprehensible the dynamic between artistry and social practice found in our examples. It is not the personification itself, but its unconventional actions that prompt reflection. And in this free space of reflection, aesthetic questions arise, namely: How can one represent salvation and mystical *unio*? And are they even amenable to adequate depiction? What is at stake is to configure in text and image something that surpasses human imagination, and at the same time to keep it in its opaque transcendence through the contradictory action of the personification. Caritas acts as a mediator between Christ and the audience.⁸⁶ At the same time, the interposition of the personification denies them an unmediated approach. It also becomes clear that autological questions of how to depict salvation and the heterological perspective of contemporary devotional practice in religious communities are not opposites but open up a field of artistic experimentation in close interdependence.

We were able to show that the action of the personification initiates a dynamic process that gives rise to complexity as well as a specific aesthetic surplus that prompts a transfer onto the level of reflection. In the case of Caritas, it is the violent act between the personification and the human figure that leads to the recognition of body- and action-oriented reflection on the personification as a figure of visual rhetoric and its inherent possibilities. In both examples, it emerged that it is not the personification per se – an established figure in literature and visual arts since antiquity – that unsettles the audience and leads to a heightened attention. Only through an emphatic contrast to anthropological norms of the human body and social behavior does the personification develop its potential as a meaningful peculiarity and attracter of unsettled attention.

86 Depending on the location of the presentation or the place where a manuscript was used, one can narrow down the audience for many of the examples cited here to a circle of women. However, there were also opportunities for male readers or viewers to identify with the narratives. For example, the narrator in Lamprecht's *Tochter Sion* offers easier access to men by often projecting himself into Zion's position and formulates her experience as a wish for himself. Cf. Lamprecht: *Tochter Syon*, verses 393–399 or 450–452 with reference to the Soul's love madness: *ine ruochte waz man von mir seite, / kund ich in der selben wise toben; / mir wær ir schelten sam ir loben*. (It would not matter to me what people would say if I could in the same way [i.e., as Daughter Zion – S.L./D.W.] rave without sanity. Their censure would mean the same as their praise.) In any case, the usually feminine personification of *anima* separates from her gendered earthly body for her ascent to God, and can thus be a figure of identification for masculine as well as feminine believers.

From the examples analyzed above, three lines of observation arise that are relevant for a personification's formation of actions and contribute to formulating approaches to premodern aesthetics.

(1) *Reification and Metaphor*: Personifications can act in either a symbolic-attributive way or interactively, or both. They can enter into relations with other entities, artificial or human figures, on either the concrete or the metaphorical level, and both levels often overlap in meaningful ways. In our examples, the figures are physically wounded in their loving attachment by the arrows or the dagger of Caritas, but at the same time, love enters the bodies of the wounded. Out of a concrete physical action, metaphoric levels emerge that refer back to the figures' interior lives. The weapons of the Caritas personification open the other figures and make them receptive or vulnerable to the abstract idea embodied by the personification. When the arrow is spatially separated from the personification, as in the Daughter Zion texts, the symbolic reference is ambiguous, especially when, by piercing the Soul, its effect is continued.

(2) *The Turn to the Audience*: Frequently, the actions of personifications are significantly directed toward the audience and initiate further processes. In the representations of the violent Caritas we have analyzed, one can clearly recognize intentions related to real-world practice. They offer possibilities of identification and fulfill wishes, act as guides to spiritual meditation, and give guidelines for examining one's own inner state. This examination aims to answer the questions – central to a religious life – of which virtues are helpful and useful on the path to God and which possibilities of personal reenactment are inherent in the miracle of Passion and Salvation. The dynamics of the personification, displayed in images or described in texts, have a counterpart among the audience, who should cultivate an inner wealth in the apparent outward stillness of meditation and put in motion an animated activity in their own inner life.⁸⁷

(3) *Reference to Anthropological Constants and Their Violation*: In its ability to act, the personification realizes basic anthropological patterns through which autological and heterological overlaps become evident. From those overlaps, figures of aesthetic reflection can emerge. A change in the accepted parameters of human behavior often opens up a reflective space that intentionally violates or ostensibly negates the identity of concept and personification. The personifications are thus not simply mechanical transfers into a random personality but the product of intensive reflection on the semantics of personifications and the conditions that emerge in their representation in interactions with other figures or entities.

In many cases, the actions of a personification and the discursive development of the theme are combined in a way that stimulates further thought. In the visual arts,

87 Cf. on this aspect also the contribution of Annette Gerok-Reiter and Volker Leppin in this volume, pp. 177–226, section 3.

reflection on questions of aesthetic presentation is evident primarily in the personification's corporeality that is exposed to the actions of others. The personification's independent action is always also interaction with other figures, subject to other 'human' constraints. This combination prompts reflection on behavioral norms and their depiction in literature and the visual arts. The fact that the Crucifixion with Virtues and the journey of Daughter Zion to her heavenly bridegroom were continually varied over a long period testifies to the literary and visual productivity unleashed by the violent Caritas in her violation of established semantics. The result is a variety of aesthetic reflection that begins with the action of the personification and repeatedly allows new constellations to emerge.

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Anna Katharina Heiniger, Nils Reiter, Nathalie Wiedmer, Stefanie Gropper, and
Angelika Zirker

Can Aesthetics Be Counted?

Systematic Annotation and Quantitative Analysis of Narrational Comments in the *Sagas of Icelanders*

Abstract

Over the last years, the Digital Humanities (DH) have provided innovative possibilities to pose new and different questions to large text corpuses. The question whether aesthetics can be quantified indicates that a systematic annotation of aesthetic phenomena must be based on *close reading* but may well go beyond the simple markup of lexical elements. So far, the systematic annotation of literary texts has mainly been used for structural phenomena and has hardly been tested for more complex narratological questions. In our contribution, we wish to focus on figures of aesthetic reflection, in this case specific lexical manifestations that are related to narratorial voice and comments. The example of the Icelandic family sagas will show how the narrative voice and its comments in the tales can be used to detect the inherent concept of authorship. The annotation of these comments is the starting point for a quantitative analysis which then allows a qualitative comparison across texts. We will demonstrate how the quantitative analysis supports and supplements the traditional qualitative literary interpretation and how, at the same time, it forces researchers to phrase their questions more precisely and concisely.

Keywords

Digital Humanities, Annotation, Quantitative Analysis, Sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendingasögur*), Narratology

1. Introduction

In recent years, the field of digital humanities has opened up undreamed-of possibilities for examining texts and text corpora in new ways. For scholars of aesthetics, the application of quantitative methods – e.g., systematic annotation – is still a relative novelty. In that context, the question raised in our title takes up the challenge to show that the systematic annotation of figures of aesthetic reflection presupposes a close reading

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(a classic text-based and hermeneutic analytic process) and can thus go beyond an emphasis on individual lexical elements.

While the annotation of corpora is a long-established practice in computational linguistics, in which linguistic phenomena are often the focus and the annotated data serve machine-learning processes such as training and text data, the structured and systematic annotation of literary texts has just begun to gain significance in digital humanities.¹ This structured and systematic annotation of textual evidence (e.g., with reference to figures in drama, the frequency of their mention and compilation of their constellations; or with respect to temporal sequences in narrative texts) has so far concentrated mainly on structural phenomena and has not often been applied to multi-level, narratological problems – much less aesthetic questions. Especially in the case of annotating figures of aesthetic reflection,² this suggests great potential for innovation with regard to the method, making it operational, and the expected results. This means that, despite the fact that the combination of quantitative and / or digital procedures and hermeneutic work is central to digital humanities, there has so far been little scholarship that focuses explicitly on the general methodological challenge entailed.³ Besides the challenges of algorithmic comprehension of texts, in the case of aesthetic artifacts there is extreme dependence on context and a great number of aspects to be considered, which must be formalized in order to apply the methods of digital humanities to evaluate their quantitative characteristics. The systematic annotation and quantitative analysis of figures of aesthetic reflection and the operationalization necessary for their quantification are therefore also promising with regard to the development and refinement of the methods for working with heterogeneous material.

In this chapter, we take as a starting point figures of aesthetic reflection, i.e., configurations in the text under consideration that provide information about its aesthetic self-conception. They are lexically manifest, stand out as a practice, or become oper-

- 1 The field of digital humanities is notoriously hard to define, which explains its self-definition as a “big tent” (the motto of its 2011 conference). The website <http://whatisdigitalhumanities.com> provides a new definition every time the webpage is accessed. The branch of digital humanities relevant to this chapter can be described as the application of formal and / or algorithmic procedures to objects from the humanities with the goal of feeding the resulting data back into humanistic cognitive processes. This supplements but does not replace the manual procedure of *close reading*. Ideally, manual and automatic procedures are integrated (“human in the loop”).
- 2 Cf. on this concept, which is part of the analytic methodology of the SFB 1391, the contribution by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48, especially section 6.1.
- 3 Cf. Meister 1995, who describes a computer program for analyzing a literary text and suggests employing computers to ferret out differences within texts as well as data sets that would then be manually interpreted. He emphasizes the necessity to operationalize as an advantage of digital procedures (p. 269). See also Moretti 2013; Weitin/Gilli/Kunkel 2016; Reiter/Pichler/Kuhn 2020.

ative in the form of concepts. The approach begins with figures of aesthetic reflection that can occur locally or globally, i.e., throughout the entire text: They are identifiable as individual units, e.g., in a single text, but can also have an effect beyond the single artifact.⁴ In the systematic annotation and qualitative analysis of the narrative voice in the anonymous medieval *Sagas of Icelanders* (Old Norse *Íslendingasögur*) that are the subject of this chapter, concepts and formulations that are manifest as self-reflective utterances can be identified and annotated with relative ease. The *Sagas of Icelanders* are methodologically especially suited for this kind of analysis, since in them, narrative comments evince elements of self-reflective thought and thereby of a literary strategy. These elements are realized as figures of aesthetic reflection in the form of verbs or verbal phrases (e.g., *sem áður var sagt*: as was said before). Central to our argument are figures of aesthetic reflection in the form of smaller units that contain a potential for concept formation we cannot assume to be proven. In the anonymous *Sagas of Icelanders*, the manifestations of the narrative voice form figures of aesthetic reflection, which we place at the center of our observations. Thus, for example, the realization of the narrative voice in narratorial comments – both in individual texts and in text comparisons – enables statements about a possible inherent concept of authorship. Our initial focus is on identifying aesthetic reflection and its implementation, followed by quantitative analysis and the operationalization of text-related concepts, which then make possible qualitative comparisons between texts. In brief, we are interested in identifying indications and traces of aesthetic reflection, which in their manifestation within an aesthetic artifact – how they appear as well as their relations to one another – develop an aesthetic potential that can be understood as a literary strategy.

A precondition for the quantitative analysis of narrative comments in the sagas is to operationalize them, i.e., to establish routines that allow us to recognize them when they occur in the texts.⁵ One can apply different methods to do this either manually or automatically. Manual methods of identification in texts are the same as the annotation process in linguistics. Human annotators apply rules defined by annotation guidelines

- 4 In the course of annotation, we found that practices such as linguistic purism and its figures of aesthetic reflection (cf. the contribution by Sarah Dessì Schmid and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 51–86, here pp. 52f. and 67) or concepts such as that of co-creativity (cf. Bauer / Zirker 2019) require different approaches than in the case of manifestations. By manifestations, we mean chiefly working with small, variable units whose aesthetic status is not always manifest as a clear-cut concept but can only be determined in its frequency and obligatory nature, e.g., through analysis of their linguistic environment. On the use of the concepts *practices*, *manifestations*, and *concepts*, cf. Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48, here section 7.2.
- 5 Cf. Pichler / Reiter 2020 for fundamental thoughts on what a critically reflected practice of operationalization can look like in digital humanities. Pichler / Reiter 2021 applies this practice concretely to an interpretation of Heinrich von Kleist's *Erdbeben in Chili* (The Earthquake in Chile).

to identify a certain textual phenomenon or the instance of a concept and – typically with the help of computer-based tools – to flag it explicitly and precisely.⁶ The rules defined by the guidelines can rely on a high level of text comprehension since they have been developed and repeatedly used by humans. At the same time, human attention is limited, and, especially in repetitive tasks, the effects of weariness are evident and can compromise the identifications. There is also the problem that, even with a high degree of text comprehension, complete consensus is often impossible. Despite great efforts to achieve clear operational definitions, experiments in annotating the narratological phenomenon of narrative levels have failed to achieve much agreement.⁷ Since we focus on manual annotation in this chapter, we will not return to the potential and preconditions for automatization until the end of this chapter.

In the following, we will first introduce the corpus of texts and then discuss how we operationalize the narrative comments with the help of annotation guidelines. Finally, we will focus on the annotations of narratorial comments in the *Sagas of Icelanders* as figures of aesthetic reflection and present initial results from the annotations and a comparative analysis. We have two goals: first, to learn more about the strategies used by the narrative voice in these texts to make them more literary, as well as to discover commonalities in their systematic use and deviations between individual texts and text groups. Additionally, this procedure shows how figures of aesthetic reflection in the premodern era can be identified with the help of data-driven methods, which can also enable their further refinement and application to texts beyond the *Sagas of Icelanders*. For this reason, at the end of our chapter we will reflect briefly on interdisciplinary cooperation and on the application of data-driven methods to aesthetic problems.

2. The Corpus of the *Sagas of Icelanders*

The around forty surviving *Sagas of Icelanders* are considered the most important examples of medieval vernacular narrative literature not just in Iceland but in Scandinavia as a whole. They were written anonymously between the 13th and 15th centuries and vary significantly in length. While *Hrafnkels saga* comprises about 9,100 words, *Njáls saga* (the longest) has 100,000 – more than ten times as many.⁸ The structural complexity of the sagas is equally diverse. As a rule, they proceed chronologically but often have several

6 For explicit and precise annotations, individual words and even letters are tagged. The necessity to decide exactly which words to annotate sometimes leads to unfruitful discussions about punctuation and function words. In most cases, it is precisely this necessity for precision that exposes critical cases and contradictory or opposing definitions (or interpretations of definitions).

7 Cf. Gius/Reiter/Willand 2019.

8 Cf. Figures 11.1 and 11.2 in Rowe 2017, pp. 157f.

narrative strands.⁹ Since we know from other sources that many personages as well as quite a few events narrated in the sagas are historical, the scholarly consensus is that at least the sagas' core content must have been passed down orally until they were first written down and that they retain traces of oral narration.

For a long time in the extensive scholarly literature, aspects of aesthetic reflection in the broadest sense came into play only when it was a question of confirming (or denying, under the rubric of fictionality) the sagas' historical accuracy. The realistic style of the sagas' narration, interpreted as the echo of a strong heterological aspect in medieval Icelandic literature,¹⁰ is also reflected in the reception of the sagas in later graphic art.¹¹ Even in very recent scholarship, there are hardly any studies – aside from papers on individual sagas or on individual types of narrative commentaries – that deal with the aesthetics of narration, especially under the aspect of self-reflection.

Although the *Sagas of Icelanders* have hardly anything explicit to say about poetic or poetological questions, brief remarks of the narrative voice as well as narrative techniques – e.g., the organization of content, dramatic structure and staging, as well as the self-representation of the narrative voice – allow us to recognize a consciousness of genre rules as well as the effort to satisfy certain expectations of the audience. Our analysis therefore proceeds from the hypothesis that aesthetic reflection in the *Sagas of Icelanders* is especially apparent where the narrative voice shows evidence of strategies to make the narrative more literary. Of central importance are the narratorial comments: small, reflective, and reflecting units that are easy to recognize (and thus to operationalize) as figures of aesthetic reflection. In agreement with Ranković 2007 and Clover 1982, we assume that the individual sagas arose from a common reservoir of narrative elements from different literary traditions and social practices of literary communication.¹² The goal of our project on narrative self-reflection in the *Sagas of Icelanders* is thus, first, to investigate whether the aesthetic reflections implicit in narrative comments are consolidated in the course of an entire text into a poetological statement on the basis of which one can deduce the narrative self-conception of the sagas. In a further step, we will then ask to what extent the relation between autological and heterological traditions and practices is being negotiated in these comments.

We regard these narratorial comments, which are found in all the *Sagas of Icelanders* in many variations and with different frequency, in the sense of the praxeological

9 On *stranding* or *entrelacement* in the sagas, cf. Clover 1982, especially pp. 61–92.

10 For an understanding of the heterological dimension, cf. the contribution by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48, section 5.2.

11 Cf. Zernack 2017, p. 330.

12 See also Ranković / Ranković 2012.

model¹³ as manifestations of aesthetic reflection that document the productive exchange between literary practice and the extra-literary world of their audience(s). The goal of our investigation is to collect these phenomena – largely neglected by previous scholarship – systematize and contextualize them, as well as evaluate them with regard to narrative self-reflection in the sagas. As a starting point, we choose utterances of the narrative voice that pertain to the act of narration itself. In their individual concrete formulation as well as their frequency, combination, and distribution, these comments vary from saga to saga.

Despite their brevity, the comments reveal how elements of the narrative are selected and organized and thereby steer its reception. An initial manual collection of narrative comments from a few sample texts led us to identify five categories: (1) the intratextual organization of the narrative, (2) the integration of a text into an intertextual structure, (3) referential comments relating especially to the difference between the inner- and extra-textual world, (4) an evaluation of the narrative, and (5) intra- and extra-diegetic references to public opinion as a) the source of the narrative or b) an external source of evaluation. Although some scholars refer to these comments in various ways,¹⁴ they have as yet not been treated systematically.

The analysis of the corpus will show that in the context of an entire saga, the comments are manifestations of aesthetic reflection and reflect authorship with respect both to the texts' inherent aesthetic logic and to the possibilities of communication by, for example, relating events in the saga to the world of the audience. Our assumption is that it will thus be possible to show that the sagas' authors are well aware of the borders between the narrated world of their sagas and the world of the audience.

Our research up to this point has led to the working hypothesis that these narratorial comments serve to distance the narrative voice from the narrated events while at the same time bringing that voice closer to its audience. The comments underscore the achievement of the narrative voice by making visible its act of mediation and hence offer the possibility of aesthetic reflection. We have established that in the sagas there is considerable variation both in the frequency of narratorial comments and in the various categories of comment. Thus, each saga has its own unique individual profile. In order to reach more general conclusions – possibly also with regard to genre – it will be necessary to analyze the entire corpus. In the final analysis, only the collection and evaluation of a large number of examples can clarify the difference between narratorial comments and narration, as well as the varieties of comments and their exact function for the understanding of narration in medieval Iceland.

13 On the praxeological model in this volume, cf. the contribution by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3-48, section 5.2.

14 Thus, e.g., Andersson 1966; Schach 1970; Heinrichs 1976.

In order to better distinguish between the use of narratorial comment unique to each individual saga and a possible genre-specific repertoire, in addition to the traditional qualitative analysis, we will also undertake a comprehensive, data-driven quantitative analysis of the entire corpus under consideration here. We assume that even if all the sagas use the same types of comments, from the amount of data gathered we will be able both to identify an individual profile of narratorial comments for each saga as well as to discover the extent to which the comments constitute reflection on the aesthetic structure of all the sagas.

3. Methodic Compilation of Guidelines for Annotation

We define annotation in the sense of Pagel et al., as “the process of enriching textual data with additional data.” Thus annotation is understood as a method that can be deployed “to support interpretation and develop theories.”¹⁵ The foundation for working with annotations are the guidelines for annotation, which Reiter characterizes in the following way: “Guidelines for annotation should describe a phenomenon or theoretically given concept as generically as possible, but also as precisely as necessary so that human annotators can annotate reliably and intersubjectively.”¹⁶ Working on and with annotation guidelines is an iterative process of trying to apply them and then evaluating the results, so that insufficiencies can be discovered and the guidelines revised, reapplied, and tested in a further iterative process, and so on.

In the beginning, the focus is on formal aspects such as the selection of the tool and the structuring of the annotation categories. The compilation of guidelines for annotation runs through several repeated cycles of individual operations, i.e., following initial work on definition, there is its practical implementation on the database, and the knowledge and experience gained from this process flow into the revision of the guidelines for annotation.

In order to discover a lack of clarity in the guidelines, it is important that the annotators work independently, since otherwise they could influence one another. Only in this way can one identify passages in which several annotation categories are possible; this also provides the opportunity to notice difficulties that arise which are collected and later discussed. In addition, setting down the annotations in writing forces the annotators to assign clear categories and be able to defend them if necessary. Agreement among the annotators on the assignment of categories over an entire text or an entire corpus is centrally important. Various procedures have been developed to calculate this

15 Pagel et al. 2018, p. 31.

16 Reiter 2020, p. 193. The following discussion of establishing annotative guidelines is based on Reiter 2020, pp. 193–198.

inter-annotator agreement. They permit the establishment of a benchmark that must be achieved in the annotations before the guidelines can be characterized as completed.¹⁷ From that point on, all annotations produced with these guidelines can be used for subsequent steps such as statistical evaluation and interpretation.

4. Annotating the Narratorial Comments in the *Sagas of Icelanders*

For the quantitative analysis of narratorial comments in the *Sagas of Icelanders*, we use the CorefAnnotator software.¹⁸ The initial annotation guidelines were based on the five categories mentioned above¹⁹ that were developed as part of the preparation for investigating narrative self-reflection in the corpus. An initial collection and analysis of narratorial comments in the sagas suggested that the comments displaying (self-) reflection on narration have five primary functions, namely: the intratextual organization of the narrative, the creation of intertextual connections, references to extra-textual elements, an evaluation of the narrative, and appeals to public opinion or narrative tradition in order to rate – sometimes ironically – the narrative. But as we began the annotation process, it soon became clear that although these five categories were a good starting point, to be applied productively, they would need to be sharpened, differentiated, and supplemented with additional categories in order to answer the questions of our research. In the case of the Old Norse corpus analyzed here as an example, the guidelines were reworked – i.e., expanded and made more nuanced – five times and have now reached a first stable form with six categories, most with several subcategories.

The development of annotation guidelines for the *Sagas of Icelanders* proved difficult in two ways. First, the sagas we have annotated so far are very heterogeneous, i.e., they display different patterns and frequency of use of the various categories. The narrative voice has neither a consistent stance nor a consistent style within the saga genre and is instead multifaceted and mutable. This makes it necessary to rework the categories

17 Most metrics for inter-annotator agreement calibrate the scored values so that they lie between $-\infty$ and 1. A positive value (> 0) can then be classified as a non-random agreement. Standard values cannot be specified, but congruent values from 0.8 are regarded as good and values between 0.6 and 0.8 as acceptable. Difficult annotative tasks and values below 0.6 should be a cause to further revise the guidelines.

18 Cf. <https://github.com/nilsreiter/CorefAnnotator> (last accessed: October 23, 2024). For part of the annotative work, we also used the program Atlas.ti, which has no influence on methodological implementation or on this presentation of how we developed the annotative guidelines. Atlas.ti has technical possibilities that offer additional options, for example in the processing and annotation of visual data, which can prove helpful for a diachronic study of narratorial comments in various manuscripts that have not yet been edited or digitally prepared (i.e., are OCR-capable).

19 See section 2 above: “The Corpus of the *Sagas of Icelanders*.”

and sometimes introduce new categories with each newly annotated saga. The second difficulty was the frequent ambiguity characteristic of the *Sagas of Icelanders*. The audience – and thus also the annotator – are often left wondering to which level of the narrative a statement is referring and consequently how it is to be interpreted or annotated. Annotating the *Sagas of Icelanders* often demands patient analysis of intricate individual passages and, in complex cases, must be repeated two or more times.

With a method such as annotation that depends on several reiterated steps, the presentation and discussion of that process are as important as the results obtained. We will therefore both introduce the individual categories and their elaborations and follow their ongoing development. The names of individual categories should thus be understood as working titles.²⁰

(1) *Intratextual References*: This category includes all intratextual references by the narrative voice as it makes narrative selections, reminds the audience of earlier events, announces aspects of the story not yet narrated, and tells the audience which figures are either being newly introduced or will play no further role. Examples of this category are frequent phrases such as *sem fyrr var sagt*²¹ (as has already been told), *Nú er at segja frá*²² (now we must tell about), and *ok nefnu vér hana eigi*²³ (but we do not name her). Especially the latter comment shows how the narrative voice steers the saga's reception through its selections.

Intratextual references also include frequently used formulaic phrases. Originally, we foresaw only one subcategory for formulaic phrases, but we soon realized that they needed to be differentiated. Thus we developed formulaic subcategories for the introduction of new figures on the one hand and formulaic expressions of time on the other. Accordingly, in the analyses below, you will find three different subcategories that contain the word “formulaic” in their names.

Often one encounters the formulaic introduction of new figures at the beginning of a chapter, episode, or scene. Usually, the formula is a sentence such as *M[aðr] er nefndr Bárðr Heyangrs-Bjarnarson*²⁴ (a man is named Bárðr Heyangrs-Bjarnarson). The formulaic quality and emphasis upon a new character are distinctive in such sentences. Both at the beginning and the end of such narrative units, formulaic expressions are often preferred. They constitute a narrative frame and end a scene with a kind of interim balance. For example, in the first section of Chapter 3 of *Reykðæla saga*, we read *Nú er at segja frá*

20 In addition to the categories defined by their content, we created a “question-mark entity” as a collection basket for passages that are difficult to classify and for annotations that were controversial.

21 *Laxðæla saga*, p. 71.

22 Here, e.g., in *Reykðæla saga*, p. 157.

23 Here, e.g., in *Laxðæla saga*, p. 48.

24 *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, p. 107.

*ferð þeira Háls ok Vémundar*²⁵ (now we must tell of the journey of Háls and Vémundr), and after some brief action, the section closes with *Ok nú tóku þeir Vémundr Björn á sitt vald*²⁶ (And now Vémundr and Háls took Björn by force).

Another category of intratextual reference are the formulaic transitions between scenes or plot strands. These phrases emphasize how much time has elapsed in the meantime. They are often temporally quite vague and sometimes reminiscent of the fairy-tale formula *Once upon a time*. In the sagas, one encounters phrases such as *Þá var þat á einni nótt*²⁷ (Then one night it was) or *Nú er eigi langt at bíða, áðr en*²⁸ (Now one didn't have to wait long until).

The final intratextual specification is foreshadowing. This subcategory annotates passages in which either the narrative voice or a figure expresses a premonition of what may come to pass, which then usually does so. For example, in *Reykðæla saga* it is stated in direct speech that the figure named Hánefr will cause much harm: *mikit illt mun af Hánef hljótask*²⁹ (much misfortune will be brought about by Hánefr). On the other hand, in *Eiríks saga rauða* the prediction is made in indirect speech: *Hann [...] kvað hennar forlög mikil mundu verða*³⁰ (He foretold a heavy fate for her). In both cases, these predictions come true.

(2) *Intertextual References*: The category of intertextual references with which the *Sagas of Icelanders* establish connections to a larger (and usually Old Norse) literary context remained relatively unchanged in the course of annotation. Primarily, we annotated references to other works that either are immediately quoted in the course of a saga (e.g., individual skaldic verses) or whose titles are mentioned. Thus in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, it is stated that another saga gives a detailed report of the relationship between the giant mountain king Dofri and the future Norwegian king Haraldr Hálfðanarson: *[E]ptir því sem segir <í> sögu Haralds konungs Dofrafóstra*³¹ (According to what is reported in the saga of King Haraldr Dofrafóstri). At first, we also annotated well-known figures who appear in several sagas (e.g., Leifr Eiríksson and Grettir Ásmundarson), but we ultimately decided against doing so since it is nearly impossible to identify all the figures who also play a role in other sagas.

(3) *Referential Connections*: We annotate as referential those comments in which the narrative voice emphasizes the discrepancy between the time in which the saga is sup-

25 *Reykðæla saga*, p. 157.

26 *Reykðæla saga*, p. 158.

27 *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, p. 104.

28 *Reykðæla saga*, p. 157.

29 *Reykðæla saga*, p. 165.

30 *Eiríks saga rauða*, p. 216.

31 *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, p. 104. The peculiarity of this reference is that no saga with this title has been preserved or is mentioned elsewhere.

posed to have happened and the time of narration.³² Apropos this long period of usually several centuries, both sociocultural differences and toponymic changes are repeatedly mentioned and commented upon. With this bridging of the temporal gap, the sagas ensure continuity of cultural tradition as well as their own preservation. For instance, in *Laxdæla saga*, we read the following: *Í þann tíma var þat mikil tízka*³³ (In that time, that was very fashionable).

Moreover, the first rounds of annotation showed that additional specifications within the category of referential connections made sense. For that reason, three new subcategories were added. First were the brief background stories explaining how a figure came to have an epithet,³⁴ often ending with a sentence such as *Af því var hann Sigurður fótur kallaður*³⁵ (That's why he was called Sigurður Foot). The second specification includes place names that have changed over time, cases in which the narrative voice confirms an explicit divergence of interior and exterior worlds, for example, *ok því heitir þat síðan á Arnþrúðarstöðum*³⁶ (and that's why ever since it is called Arnþrúðarstaðir). In the third new subcategory, the narrative voice introduces background information on individual figures or families that would otherwise be inaccessible to the audience. Thus *Reykðæla saga* informs us about a habit of the figure Hánefr (*þat var siðvani Hánefs*;³⁷ That was the habit of Hánefr), and in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* a long family tradition is referred to (*hann tók lends manns rétt, svá sem haft höfðu langfeðgar hans*;³⁸ He held the status of a vassal, as had his forebears before him).

(4) *Ironic Distancing or Narrative Voice*: We initially entitled the fourth main category “ironic distancing” and included statements of the narrative voice in which, with apparent humor, it distances itself from the narration. The most obvious example we have found so far is from *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*: *ef svá skal kalla*³⁹ (if one can call it that). This comment refers to the preceding description of an especially ugly man. The narrative voice here expresses doubt about the accuracy of the term *mann* (person, man), which can be understood as a metapoetic signal of reflection by the narrative voice itself on correct or incorrect diction. At the same time, the phrase expresses the uncertainty of the protagonist Þórðr upon seeing this figure.

32 While the action of most of the *Sagas of Icelanders* claims to take place between c. 870–1050 CE, we must place the narrative voice in the 13th to the 15th centuries. However, this does not jibe with the dating of the corresponding manuscripts, some of which date to the early 19th century.

33 *Laxdæla saga*, p. 145.

34 Countless epithets are mentioned in the sagas. Not all get annotated, but only the ones about which the narrative voice gives a brief account of how they came about. The narrative voice thereby explains an aspect that the audience of its time might otherwise not understand.

35 *Sigurðar saga fóts*, p. 78.

36 *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, p. 97.

37 *Reykðæla saga*, p. 60.

38 *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, p. 4.

39 *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, p. 148.

But it soon became clear that there were only isolated cases of such ironic distancing, and so it had no advantage as a subcategory. We therefore restructured it to include comments in which the narrative voice either intervenes relatively directly in the action or provides aids in understanding what is happening. This is done through explanations or rationales (*Þat þótti vera skaði mikill, því at hann var virðuligr höfðingi*;⁴⁰ This was regarded as a great loss, for he was a noble leader), in evaluations of the action (*ok váru þat miklar gersemar*;⁴¹ and those were important valuables), or – in rare cases – in narrative statements in the first person singular or plural: *Ok vitu vér þó eigi, hvárt honum hefir heldr at bana orðit*⁴² (But we don't know if this was how he died).

(5) *Public Opinion*: Narratorial comments that express public opinion are collected in the fifth category. In this case, too, it became clear from the start that differentiation was necessary. Public opinion is formulated on both the extra- and intradiegetic level; in the latter case, the annotative guidelines call for a distinction between utterances in direct and indirect discourse. Here is an example of extradiegetically expressed opinion from *Eiríks saga rauða*: *Ok er þat sumra manna sagn*⁴³ (And that is what some people say). From *Grænlandinga saga*, here is an example of intradiegetic public opinion in indirect discourse: *Nú var umræða mikil um Vínlandsförf Leifrs*⁴⁴ (Now there was much talk about Leifr's Vinland voyage). Public opinion exercises significant social authority over both the narrative and the narrative voice but is obviously unreliable because disparate in and of itself. Although extradiegetic, the narrative voice thus behaves like a member of the society it is portraying. In its evaluations, it has recourse to public opinion; in each case, however, it chooses which public opinion is worth staging and reporting and is accordingly significant for the audience.

This category, now with three subdivisions, is problematic to the degree that statements of public opinion in the sagas are often ambiguous and, in many instances, it is difficult to distinguish between the intra- and extradiegetic levels. Moreover, the narrative voice likes to hide behind public opinion and references to tradition. In such cases, we usually undertake double annotations. Here is an example from *Reykðæla saga*: *Þótti þat fám mönnum skaði, þó at hann væri drepinn*⁴⁵ (It seemed a loss to only a few people, although he had been killed).

(6) *Superlatives and Hyperbole*: Inspired by the article of Theodore M. Andersson,⁴⁶ we added a sixth category for superlatives and hyperbole. Andersson sees expressions of

40 Stjörnu-Odda draumr, p. 470.

41 Reykðæla saga, p. 184.

42 Reykðæla saga, p. 159.

43 Eiríks saga rauða, p. 210.

44 Grænlandinga saga, p. 254.

45 Reykðæla saga, p. 169.

46 Andersson 1966, p. 7.

this kind as a rhetorical means of emphasizing the information they highlight and thus to direct and also influence the reception of the narrative. Thus in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, we read of a woman of royal blood: *var hon fegrst ok fríðust ok bezt at sér ger um alla hluti*⁴⁷ (she was gorgeous and very pretty and very talented in every way). In the course of the annotation process up to now, this category has not proved completely successful, and it is unclear whether a consistent annotation of all superlatives and hyperbolic expressions will in the end be informative and capable of further elaboration. This question arises especially in view of the tendency of Old Norse – as well as of modern Icelandic – to prefer the superlative to the comparative or the use of intensifying adverbs when describing or comparing things.

In the course of our continuous revision of the annotation guidelines, individual categories became more focused while the spectrum of aspects of meta-reflection in the sagas broadened. The expanded collection of textual passages that resulted allows a better overview of the expressive and compositional tools of the narrative voice. Saga passages relevant to the inquiry into narrative aesthetic self-reflection can be better selected and differentiated in a second step. It is especially the categories with many examples – for instance, the original intratextual references and intratextual formulaic time expressions – have grown considerably and offer a rich stock of diverse expressions of the narrative voice. These intratextual categories, which are so far heavily represented in the annotations (see Fig. 2), are relevant in two ways. First, they account for a large portion of the intratextual text organization and thus make an important contribution to the coherence of the narratives; and second, they are often formulaic expressions that let the audience know what sort of information or undertaking they can expect now.

5. Initial Analyses of the Annotations

In what follows, we present the results of some quantitative analyses we have been able to carry out based on the manual annotations completed so far. This procedure makes it possible to investigate a very large textual corpus systematically and analyze the results both quantitatively and qualitatively. So far we have completely annotated four sagas that are regarded as marginal within the genre of the *Sagas of Icelanders*. Although *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* is often counted as belonging to the circle of *Sagas of Icelanders*, it is formally a *þáttr* – a short prose narrative. In the manuscripts, such texts are usually included as parts of larger saga compendiums.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the texts we examine here illustrate the heterogeneity and range to be expected within the genre. While *Reyk-*

47 *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, p. 476.

48 On the problematic genre of the *þættir*, cf. Ármann Jakobsson 2013.

dæla saga tells of feuds and judicial disputes in northern Iceland, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* recounts the colonization of Iceland, and *Grænlandinga saga* narrates the discovery and settlement of Greenland. In the latter two sagas, paranormal beings often appear, while the theme of Christianization is also repeatedly mentioned. The textual corpus annotated in the initial eleven months of our project is still very small but already confirms two assumptions: first the fact that narratorial comments in each saga display a markedly individual profile, i.e., a unique frequency and distribution. And, second, that some of the annotation categories and subcategories introduced above are present in every profile, which suggests that they are probably compulsory within the genre.⁴⁹

Saga	Number of Sentences	Number of Tokens
<i>Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss</i>	959	14,850
<i>Grænlandinga saga</i>	352	6,720
<i>Reykðæla saga</i>	1,163	25,549
<i>Stjörnu-Odda draumr</i>	225	5,343

Table 1: Basic Characteristics of the Corpus

As is evident from Table 1, the four sagas are extremely different in length. Instead of words, digital humanities and computational linguistics use the term “tokens”, as in the right-hand column. In addition to words, punctuation marks as well as separated affixes also count as tokens. The calculations and graphics below are thus based on the analysis of annotated tokens. Table 1 shows the number of sentences as a comparison.

The different lengths of the sagas make a direct comparison of the absolute numbers of annotations implausible. In the following analyses, the frequencies will be normalized,⁵⁰ so that the direct comparison of quantitative results is ensured. There are several ways to do this, but the easiest is to divide a given frequency by the theoretical maximum, which for annotations would be that every single token was annotated. Thus,

49 In the meantime (October 2024) the annotation guidelines have long been finalized based on the annotation of 24 sagas, including *Sagas of Icelanders* (*Íslendingasögur*), legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) and chivalric sagas (*riddarasögur*). For the sake of scope, the corpus has been reduced to 11 *Sagas of Icelanders* (*Íslendingasögur*). The analysis of these sagas further confirmed the two assumptions: In the family sagas, there is overall a generic distribution of the main categories of narratorial comments, while each saga also has its own individual profile. Cf. Heiniger 2023 and Heiniger (forthcoming).

50 Many cases of quantitative text analysis involve a comparison of multiple texts. This presents a problem since different texts typically are unequal in length. Longer texts have more opportunities than shorter ones to include a textual phenomenon. For that reason, the absolute frequency of the phenomenon is divided by the length of the texts, i.e., normalized on the basis of the texts’ length. This results in values between zero and one that are comparable across texts.

we divide the actual number of annotations by the total number of tokens in a saga, resulting in values between zero and one. Since the theoretical maximum in this case is very far from a practical, realistic maximum (most tokens are, after all, not annotated), some of the normalized values analyzed below are very close to zero.

5.1. Frequency of Annotations

We will now look at the frequency of annotations in Figure 1. Since the frequencies of annotations were normalized using the length of the texts (measured in number of tokens), the difference in the number of annotations is not only the result of the difference in text length.

It is obvious that among the *intratextual references*, formulaic references to characters were annotated especially in *Grænlendinga saga* and *Bárðar saga*, while temporal formulas hardly occur at all. *Foreshadowings* are represented in all the sagas. In the case of *referential connections*, *Reykðæla saga* exhibits many fewer annotations than the other three sagas. It is also noteworthy that references to time and place are unevenly represented in the four sagas. On the other hand, they all display similarities in the occurrence of *public opinion* – the amount of direct and indirect discourse is approximately the same in all the sagas, while references to tradition are more frequent in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* and *Bárðar saga*. References to the *narrative voice* are clearly more frequent in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* and *Reykðæla saga*. The relative frequency of the subcategories “rationale” and “evaluation” seems to be constant, while the subcategory “first person” is less present in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* and *Reykðæla saga*.

This analysis of the four sagas suggests that narratorial comments have an individual profile in each one. This supports the hypothesis with which we began. For reasons of space, in the following analyses we will concentrate on the category of intratextual references. The annotations of the other categories can be analyzed in a similar way.

5.2. Distribution of Annotations in the Text

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of annotations in the category intratextual references across each saga. Each annotation is indicated by a vertical line, while the colors represent the various subcategories.

As expected, the annotations are generally distributed across the entire text, although there are occasionally large gaps. It is also noteworthy that the frequency of annotations varies. *Reykðæla saga* contains far more annotations than the other three. In a further step based on that density of annotation, one can track the beginnings of new large episodes or the beginning and ending of narrative strands. The quantity and distribution of annotations reflect the episodic nature of *Reykðæla saga*, characterized by short, compact individual scenes that follow immediately upon one another and

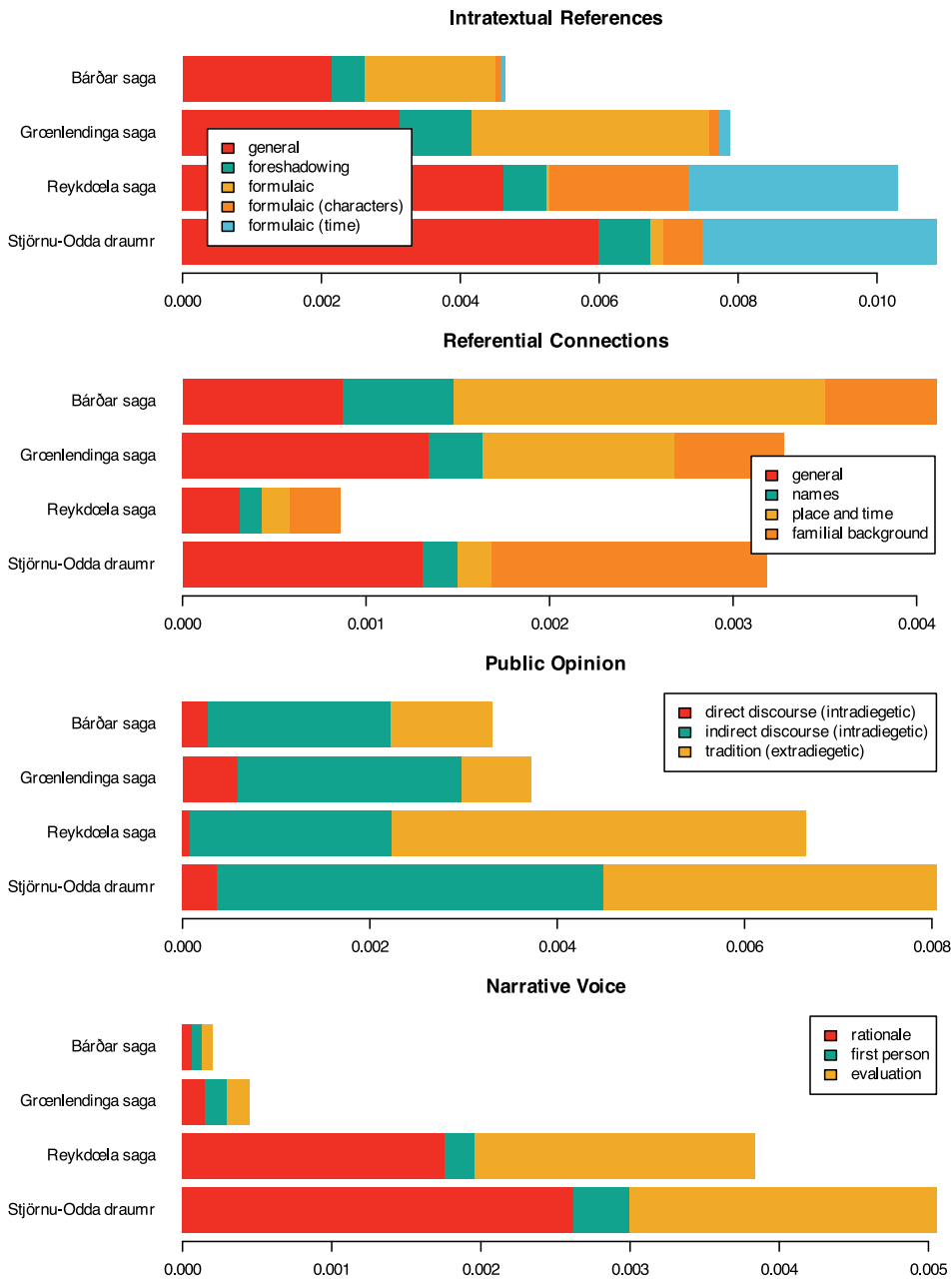


Fig. 1. Number of Annotations per Category with Subcategories. Values were normalized on the basis of text length measured in tokens.

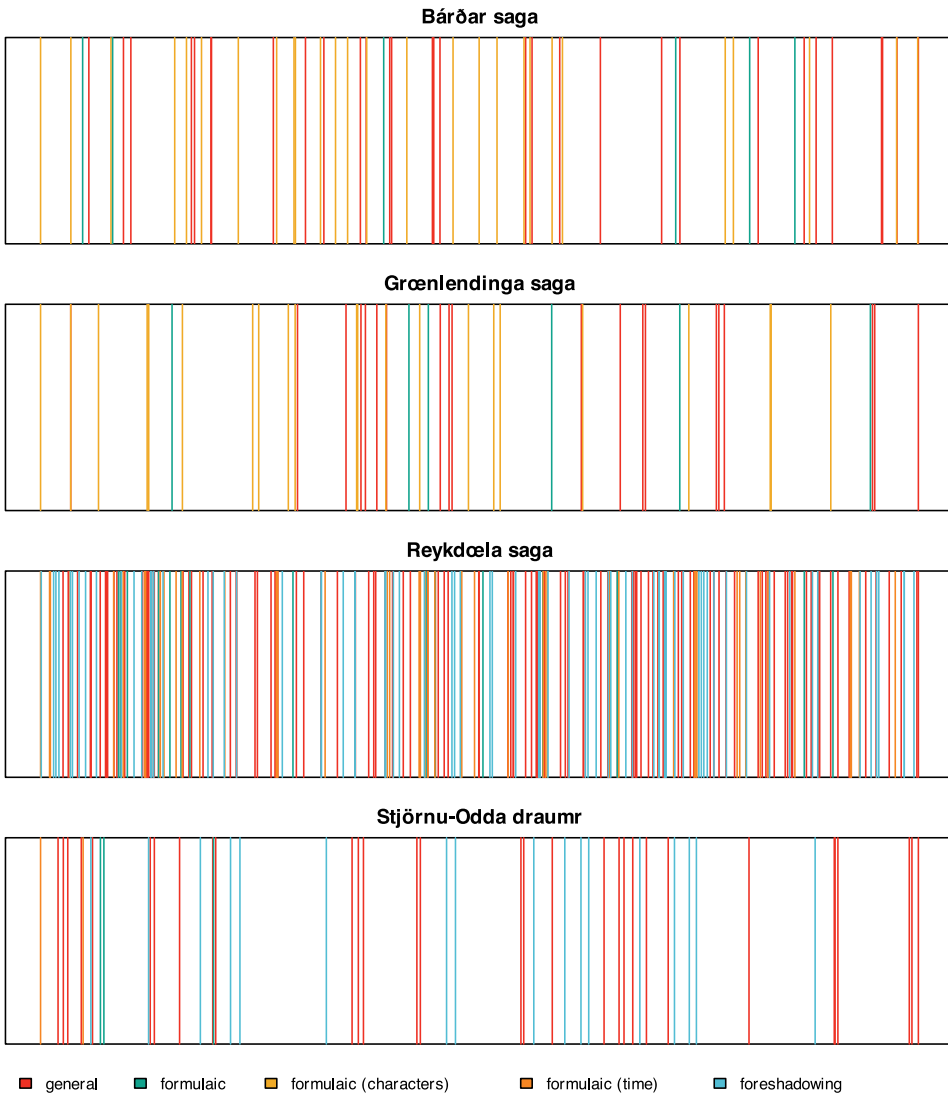


Fig. 2. Graphic Representation of the Distribution of Annotations in the Category “Intratextual References” within the Four Example Sagas of Icelanders.

always require orientation in time and space as well as a conclusion. Moreover, the frequent use of the subcategory of general intratextual connections also suggests that this saga is engaged with the process of narration and especially with divergent narratives of events and the question of interpretational sovereignty. As one can see from Figure 2, the latter is expressed by frequent reference to various publicly circulating opinions.

By contrast, in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* we can see an atypical narrative structure for a saga: a frame narrative and two closely related interior stories. Except here, one sees no particular concentration of annotations at the beginning or end of the sagas. This points to an open-ended narration so that in principle, every saga could be continued and supplemented with additional episodes. In what follows, we will take another look at the course of annotation density per chapter.

5.3. Annotation Density per Chapter

The density of annotations in certain categories in individual saga chapters is shown in Figure 3. There is a data point for each chapter and each category, and the data points of a category are then connected by a line. Since the chapters vary in length, the number of annotations was divided by the number of tokens in each chapter. The resulting values are thus comparable.

The density of annotations within the chapters confirms the open-ended, episodic narratives of the sample sagas; every chapter or narrative unit displays its own structure based on the annotations, indicating its own narrative climax. Because of its brevity, *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* is the exception. Its distribution of annotations and thus of narratorial comments suggests a design and structure which, in its distinct symmetry, is atypical of the longer *Sagas of Icelanders*.

With the help of the preceding figures, one can also identify and track the narrative focal points of each saga. The first two peaks in the graph of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* are in chapters three and six and represent first, Bárðr's arrival in Iceland and settlement on the Snæfellsnes peninsula (Chapter 3), and second, the moment of Bárðr's retreat into the mountains after the dramatic and painful – but only apparent – loss of his daughter Helga (Chapter 6). The peaks in the last third of the saga mark the challenge of the revenant Raknarr and the subsequent departure of Bárðr's son Gestr to find and subdue Raknarr.

In *Reykðæla saga*, the peaks in annotation density occurring in Chapters 3, 12 and 13, as well as 20 similarly stand for three central events: the suspicious disappearance of Björn (Chapter 3) that in the end is exposed as a cleverly staged escape attempt; the “sheep's head incident” (Chapters 12 and 13) in which the troublemaker Vémundr induces a man to strike Vémundr's enemy Steingrímur ignominiously with a singed sheep's head; and finally, the return of the man who killed the universally beloved leader Áskell (Chapter 20). All three events are central to the saga's plot, are repeatedly mentioned, and several times lead to further entanglements.

The interpretations of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* and *Reykðæla saga* sketched out on the basis of Figures 2 and 3 suggest that by using quantitative analyses, we can both confirm already existing qualitative and hermeneutic analyses and open the possibility of better understanding the process of narration and therefore also the struc-

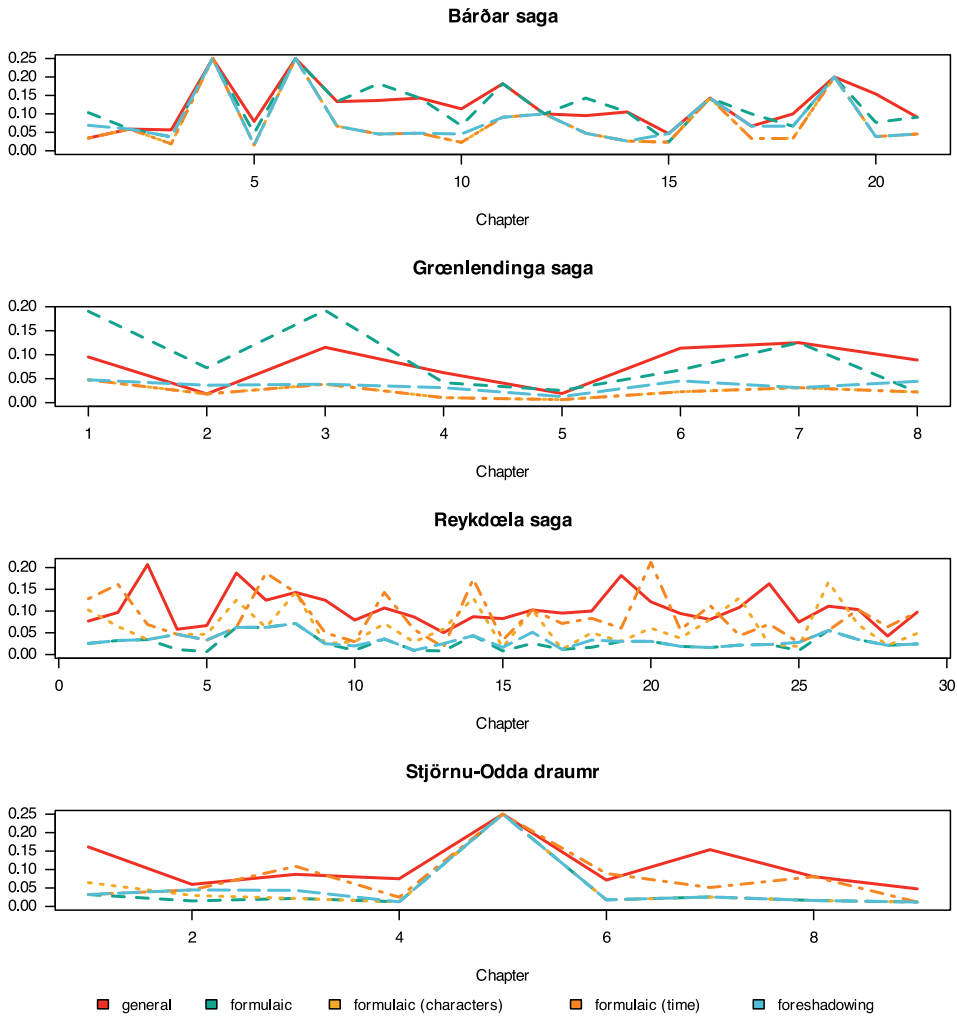


Fig. 3. Annotation Density per Chapter. The number of annotations of intratextual references are visualized per chapter, normalized using the chapter lengths (in tokens).

ture of the sagas. The systematic annotations in many ways also shed fresh light on Old Norse texts. For one thing, an analysis like that in Figure 3 enables an overview of the annotations across several texts. The visualization of the data makes clear the heterogeneity of textual composition both within a genre – in this case, the *Sagas of Icelanders* – and, we assume, across genres. For another, on the level of individual sagas, we can plot the connection between narratorial comments and plot on the basis of the peaks in the graphs. In their function as a design medium, the narratorial comments

accompany the narrative's high points and turning points and thus influence the narrative strands.

The analysis of annotation density using Figure 3 shows how narratorial comments structure the sagas, but it also raises further questions. For instance, it still remains to be seen whether one can distinguish between primary and secondary narrative strands that are tagged with unequal degrees of emphasis. Conversely, we need to consider what the widely oscillating or relatively flat graphs of individual sagas reveal about their narrative style. In the latter case, does this mean that their narrative style is less episodic and more continuous? So far, we can only speculate about why the narrative voice holds back on comment in some passages. To what extent are the comments in some cases linked to content, for instance in individual episodes? Figure 3 shows the annotation density per chapter, but since the density per chapter is presented as a narrative unit, one cannot tell exactly where in the chapter the narratorial comments cluster. It also remains to be seen which annotation categories and thus what kind of narratorial comments accompany and underscore key passages. As Figure 3 makes clear, the lines of the various annotation categories are mostly different from one another, and only rarely do they achieve a relatively orchestrated path as in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*. Thus across the sagas, while there is variability in the distribution of annotations and thus of narratorial comments, this should not be evaluated differently. The variability clearly shows that the narrative voice in each saga follows an individual narrative strategy. One must also keep in mind that, at present, Figure 3 shows only the annotation density of intratextual references. To achieve a comprehensive picture of the distribution of annotations, the other annotation categories must also be assessed. Only then will we know whether key passages are characterized primarily by intratextual comments or whether they are linked to other kinds of narratorial comments. We must not forget that, although the narratorial comments annotated here enable conclusions about the creative procedures of the narrative voice, not all comments are equally self-reflective about the aesthetic structure of the texts. Only when we have addressed these still-open questions can we understand how the narrative voice shapes the text, how the aesthetic structure of both individual sagas and groups of sagas is constituted, and to what extent the narrative voice in its comments reflects on the narrative process.

6. Conclusion

Our starting point was the provocative question of whether one can count aesthetics. We have shown that quantitative methods make it possible to differentiate figures of aesthetic reflection, locate them in the texts, and define more precisely their various forms and functions. The analysis of the narrative voice on the basis of the systematic annotation of a selection from the *Sagas of Icelanders* was able to highlight textual fea-

tures which, although already identified in individual occurrences, were not systematically ascertainable in one or several complete texts. As a precondition for annotating the corpus, a detail-oriented close reading was transferred into a quantitative analysis and made possible comparisons across a group of texts.

The methods of digital humanities create evidence for literary investigations – in our case, of the narrative voice as a figure of aesthetic reflection and its central role in the aesthetic structure of the sagas – about which previous scholarship's linear close readings could only conjecture and make limited comparative and generalizing statements. Thus, quantitative analysis supports and complements qualitative interpretation and, at the same time, through operationalization, invites more precise formulation of what should be investigated using which analytic categories and how those categories are distinguished from one another. In this way, literary studies becomes more precise in the way it interrogates texts without replacing concrete analysis of individual passages. We have been able to show that with the help of visualizations, quantitative methods can reveal textual phenomena whose significance across texts has not been previously recognized. For instance, our results suggest that in the *Sagas of Icelanders*, the distribution of narratorial comments is linked to the course of the action. However, this connection needs further analysis, i.e., continuing work must reapply the results of the quantitative analysis to precise textual analysis.

On the other hand, complex literary investigations – e.g., with regard to the aesthetics of texts – challenge the digital humanities and their quantitative methods to broaden their methodological spectrum beyond statistical analyses and model the interaction of quantitative and qualitative methods. In that regard, the annotation of figures of aesthetic reflection has proved to be a promising procedure to further precisely such a development. Quantitative and qualitative approaches to the analysis of aesthetic artifacts are not incompatible but productively compatible. In this study, we employed a manual operationalizing strategy that has produced interesting results. Its unusual perspective on the corpus of the *Sagas of Icelanders* brings new findings to light.

We would now like to address procedures, briefly mentioned above, that are geared towards computer-supported operationalization and clarify to what extent that method is transferable. The most important difference from an operationalization geared towards manual annotation is that computer programs perceive texts in a different way and in particular have no language comprehension that even comes close to that of human beings. Thus, automated operationalization must begin much further down and especially make use of redundancies.

Well into the 2000s, rule-based systems were used for this kind of operationalization. The rules for any given phenomenon were written by human experts and then processed in computer programs. But even for linguistic phenomena, it turned out that the complexity of the rule system increased without a corresponding increase in the recognition rate. That led to the use mainly of systems based on machine-learning pro-

cedures in which computer programs are no longer prescribed rules but only data from which an algorithm⁵¹ then independently learns rules. The resulting rules are labeled a model.⁵² They are not comparable to human-produced rules since they use their own vocabulary that is usually not transparent to human beings. Depending on the purpose of their application, this can be a serious drawback.

Using the annotations introduced in our chapter, however, it is also possible to train and test a machine-learning procedure that recognizes narratorial comments. If this procedure achieves an acceptable recognition rate, further sagas can be annotated automatically, and even in the cases where – as is to be expected – the results are not perfect, manual correction is clearly faster than purely manual annotation.

When one begins to count aesthetics, that is, aesthetic phenomena, nuanced and sometimes surprising results can be expected – and this method is still in its infancy. Next steps aim to expand the corpus and analyze and compare the results across a larger textual corpus. We also foresee refining our annotative tools and automatic annotation. The work on counting aesthetics will continue.

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- 51 An algorithm is a precise specification of actions to reach a result. Algorithms are abstractions that can be (but do not have to be) converted, for example, into computer programs. The procedure for dividing two whole numbers that we have all learned in elementary school is an example of an algorithm.
- 52 The concepts ‘model’ and ‘modelling’ are frequent in digital humanities and have multiple meanings. For an overview, see Kuhn 2020, pp. 12–14.

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Addressing the Viewer

12th- and 13th-Century Byzantine Wall Paintings

Abstract

This chapter discusses aspects of addressing the viewer in 12th- and early 13th-century wall paintings decorating sacred spaces in Byzantium. We look at reception processes as well as questions of production, appreciating planning, and execution of the paintings as constitutive elements for their reception history. This also concerns the specific architectural conditions, which include spatial separations. Regarding the practice of image design, written and visual sources, such as pattern books, are revealing for studying the relationship between design process and reception history. “Corrections” (*pentimenti*) during the execution of the wall paintings support the argument that the paintings were designed specifically for each space and adapted to its peculiarities. This attests to space-related concepts which take into account the viewers’ subsequent reception of the images.

Image formats and the resulting proximity to or distance from the viewer are also taken into account. The pictures are not subject to a static understanding but are individualized within a certain framework. Ultimately, they are to be understood as products of a complex process of invention. The conditions of reception inherent in the respective image medium clearly gain relevance in the work process. Attention is also paid to the concrete conditions of the perception process, addressing aspects such as carefully planned light choreography. The sophisticated use of lamps, lanterns, and other lighting devices with oil and candles is specifically negotiated in the Typika. Last but not least, liturgical performance and an understanding of time conditioned by the liturgical year are among the phenomena that intensify visual reception. Generally, this chapter aims to look at the concrete and sensory conception of the images and their rhetoric as oriented towards the viewer.

1. Prelude: The Church of St. Panteleimon in Nerezi

The central concern of the following chapter is how 12th- and 13th-century wall paintings in Byzantine churches address the viewer. Processes of planning and execution of the physical environment of the paintings, i.e., their specific architectural circumstances, will play as great a role as the question of an image’s format and the choice of its proximity to or distance from the viewer. Factors constituting the perceptive process, such as the choreography of light and a temporal understanding conditioned by liturgical

* Translated by David B. Dollenmayer. Quotations for which no other translation is cited have also been translated by Dollenmayer.

performance and the liturgical year, are as much a part of the experience as the specific conception of the images and their rhetoric.¹

As the Collaborative Research Center 1391 suggests, we see the autological and the heterological dimensions of artifacts as closely tied together and develop our interpretation from that fact. Above all, we suggest a more thorough integration of the viewer's perspective in the praxeological model, which understands the connection as a dynamic exchange. What follows will hopefully make plausible this conceptual expansion.

As a prerequisite, two at least partially interdependent phenomena must be mentioned:² on the one hand, visual modifications in the bema (chancel), separated from the laity and so invisible and inaccessible; and on the other, the tendencies to address viewers in the naos in modified form by deploying constellations of images, narrative strategies, and alternative models of the images. Such processes of spatial separation occurred gradually. For example, acoustic exclusion began toward the end of the 8th century with silent prayer. In the course of the 11th century, monasteries began to follow the practice of closing the curtains in the intercolumns of the templon during eucharistic prayer to prevent an 'impure' viewing of the Eucharist.³ To compensate for this denial of visibility, icons were also deployed. In the liturgy, during both the Little and the Great Entrance, the clergy established communication between the two spatial entities.⁴ In both rituals, the priest left the sanctuary and entered the naos. The Gifts (bread and wine) were prepared in the northern side room of the bema (prothesis).

1 Given the complexity of the topic, it will be possible to highlight only some aspects here.

2 In addition to St. Panteleimon in Nerezi from 1164, a small number of earlier and later examples are included. The intention is not to make generalized statements. Some parts of the first section on Nerezi refer to Schellewald 2005 and Schellewald 2008b. On the basic separation, cf. Gerstel 1999.

3 Taft 2006; Wybrew 1990, p. 134, quotes a letter of the monk Niketas Stethatos from the Stoudios Monastery in Constantinople (end of the 11th century); cf. Stéthatos, lettre no. VIII, pp. 280–291. The passage in Darrouzès's translation is as follows (p. 283): "[...] comment peut-il être tout à fait permis aux laïques d'approcher de l'autel lorsque les mystères divins s'accomplissent, bien plus, d'y porter un regard non sanctifié et d'avoir une telle liberté pour contempler les redoutables et divins mystères et ce qu'on y accomplit?" ([...] how can the laity be permitted to approach the altar while the divine mysteries are being accomplished, and moreover, to cast an impure gaze on them and have the freedom to contemplate the awe-inspiring, divine mysteries, and what is being performed there?) On p. 285 this question is amplified: "La place des laïques, sache-le, dans l'assemblée des fidèles, lorsque s'accomplit l'anaphore sacrée, est loin de l'autel divin. L'intérieur du sanctuaire est réservé aux prêtres, aux diacres et aux sous-diacres; [...] derrière eux et leur estrade, l'espace est aux laïques [...]." (Know that the laity's place in the congregation of believers whenever the holy anaphora is accomplished is far away from the divine altar. The interior of the sanctuary is reserved for the priests, the deacons, and the subdeacons [...] behind them and their space is the place for the laity; Greek text pp. 282 and 284). Gerstel 1994, p. 203, note 26, also cites passages from this letter.

4 Cf. on the liturgy Schulz 2000; Taft 1994 includes an outline of its development.

In the Great Entrance, the priest took the bread and wine, entered the naos, and then continued through the central door of the templon into the bema. First we will pay attention to the cross-in-square church in Nerezi, dedicated to St. Paneleimon and dated to the year 1164 (Fig. 1).⁵

The paintings in the bema show significant liturgical realism in the form of eight officiating bishops in three-quarter profile, all dressed in ceremonial vestments.⁶ The parchment scrolls they hold are inscribed with excerpts from liturgical texts (Fig. 2).⁷

As in Nerezi, there are other locations where the architecture and the paintings were not developed in a common planning process (see below, section 2.1); this seems to have made certain compromises necessary in the bema's paintings. The zone with the bishops has been made coherent with the height of the templon and the upper epistyle, thus marking the zone of the image as visually privileged with respect to the clergy. However, the side walls are characterized by setbacks so that individual bishops have different amounts of space at their disposal; at the same time, in their spatial presence they are subject to a certain gradation, especially since the second bishop from the west is situated on the part of the wall that leads to the southern parabema. In the previous tradition – e.g., in the Church of St. Sophia in Ohrid from the third quarter of the 11th century – the bishops are in front view, looking straight at the viewer. Because of their orientation toward the east in Nerezi, they are shown in three-quarter profile. Their heads are turned so that we can see their faces almost entirely, but their gaze clearly seems directed inward, or rather onto the texts they hold. They have no contact with the room, thus both reinforcing their mirroring of the officiants at the altar, but also in a direct sense through their texts, opening temporal vistas that reveal the liturgy as infinitely extended beyond its active performance at the altar. But it is above all the scroll texts themselves that make the actual performative context manifest. The painter has chosen an easily legible font size.

The nature of these textual vehicles corresponds to the scrolls actually used in the ritual.⁸ The center of the apse is occupied by the two orthodox church fathers, John Chrysostom and Basil, both authors of fundamental liturgical formulas. Basil's scroll

5 Sinkević 2000; Schellewald 2005; Schellewald 2008a.

6 On the identification of various vestments, cf. Walter 1982, pp. 9–26; Gerstel 1999, pp. 25–32; Sinkević 2000, pp. 35f.

7 It is not entirely clear when this way of presenting the bishops was introduced (see below, pp. 297f.).

8 Gerstel 1999, pp. 32–34. She addresses both the number and scope of these scrolls, points to the mechanism of the scroll in the Church of St. George in Kurbinovo, painted in 1191, and refers to the liturgical scrolls, a number of which survive. Cf. Gerstel 1994 with related literature. As important as her observations are, it must be mentioned that scrolls per se have a similar form and cannot be labeled in general as liturgical. A glance at the parekklesion of the Chrysostom Monastery in Koutsovendis and its figures of prophets with scrolls (see below, p. 338) shows this very clearly. The function of the inscribed parchment scroll is not explicitly defined.



Fig. 1. Nerezi, Panteleimon Church, 1164, view from the west into the eastern part of the naos and the bema.



Fig. 2. Nerezi, Panteleimon Church, 1164, bema, apse, St John Chrysostom and Basil as liturgists.

carries the text spoken silently by the priest during the chanting of the Cherubikon.⁹ Chrysostom's text is the prayer of the Proskomidia.¹⁰ St. Athanasius is positioned behind Basil and holds the beginning of the prayer for the Little Entrance (Fig. 3).¹¹

In the passageway to the southern annex attached to the bema (diaconicon), Athanasius is followed by Gregory of Nyssa holding the prayer of the first antiphon of Basil's liturgy.¹² The last bishop on this side is Nicholas, whose scroll carries the prayer of the second antiphon after Basil's liturgy.¹³ Chrysostom leads the row of bishops on the north side with the prayer of the Proskomedia.¹⁴ Next comes Gregory (John) the Theologian with a passage from a silent prayer the priest says after he has laid the wafers on the altar.¹⁵ Epiphanius of Salamis's scroll bears the beginning of the Trisagion.¹⁶ The last bishop on this side, Gregory Thaumaturgus, holds the words of the prayer for the catechumens before the Anaphora according to St. John.¹⁷ The bishops are oriented toward the Hetoimasia, the throne that awaits the Second Coming of Christ, painted into the axis of the altar above which hovers the dove of the Holy Spirit. The instruments of the Passion are clearly identifiable. The scroll texts are obviously not intended as a continuous sequence but rather refer to individual moments of the liturgical process and

- 9 Babić 1968, p. 375; Liturgies, p. 318,4–74: Οὐδεὶς ἄξιος τῶν συνδεδεμένων ταῖς σαρκικαῖς ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ ἡ(δοναῖς). The inscriptions are partly abbreviated (here completed in parentheses). The hymn sung during the transport of the gifts during the Great Entrance of the liturgy is called the Cherubikon.
- 10 The Proskomedia is the first part of the liturgy, during which, i. a., the gifts are prepared. The texts of all eight bishops, identified in Babić 1968, pp. 375f., indicate that the entire liturgical rite was intended to be included, at least in excerpts. The texts seem to embody the idea of bringing the images and reality into the greatest possible coherence. Fundamentally, the bishops' texts can diverge from one church to another. Cf. Babić / Walter 1976, pp. 269–280.
- 11 Babić 1968, p. 375; Liturgies, p. 312,15–24, here 15–17: Δέσποτα Κ(ύρι)ε ὁ θ(εὸς) ἡμῶν ὁ καταστήσ(ας) ἐν οὐ(ρα)νοῖς τάγματα, καὶ στρατιάς.
- 12 Babić 1968, p. 375; Liturgies, p. 310,16–19: Κ(ύρι)ε ὁ θ(εὸς) ἡμῶν, οὗ τὸ κράτος ἀνείκαστον, καὶ ἡ δόξα ἀκατάληπτος, οὗ τὸ ἔλεος ἀμέτρητον.
- 13 Babić 1968, p. 375; Liturgies, p. 343,16–18: Κ(ύρι)ε, ὁ θ(εὸς) ἡμῶν, σῶσον τὸν λαόν σου καὶ εὐλόγησον τὴν κληρονομίαν σου.
- 14 Babić 1968, p. 375; Liturgies, p. 309,8–11: Ὁ θ(εὸς), ὁ θ(εὸς) ἡμῶν, ὁ τῶν οὐ(ρά)νιον ἄρτον τὴν τροφήν τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου τὸν Κ(ύρι)ον ἡμῶν. Here it is notable that Chrysostom's scroll bears not his own words but those of the Liturgy of St. Basil.
- 15 Babić 1968, p. 376, identifies him as Gregory the Theologian; Sinkević 2000, p. 36, note 55 and fig., corrected this to John the Baptist: Κ(ύρι)ε ὁ θ(εὸς) ὁ πα(ν)τοκράτωρ ὁ μόνο(ς) ἅγιος ὁ δεχόμενος θυσίαν αἰνέσεως (Chrysostomos-Liturgy; Babić 1968, p. 376; Liturgies, p. 319,6–8 quotation, prayer 6–17).
- 16 Liturgy of St. Basil; Babić 1968, p. 376; Liturgies, p. 313,4–5: Ὁ θ(εὸς) ὁ ἅγιος, ὁ ἐν ἁγίος ἀναπαυόμενος.
- 17 Babić 1968, p. 376; Liturgies, p. 315,12–14 (the entire prayer 12–18): Κ(ύρι)ε ὁ θ(εὸς) ἡμῶν, ὁ ἐν ὑψηλοῖς κατοικῶν καὶ τὰ ταπεινὰ ἐφορῶν, ὁ τὴν σ(ωτη)ρίαν.



Fig. 3. Nerezi, Panteleimon Church, 1164, bema, Bishop Athanasius.

together encompass it from its beginning with the Proskomedion to its end. Thanks to their texts, the bishops from the past are integrated into the actions of the present. The moment the liturgical scroll is picked up at the actual altar is the moment the scroll text finds its voice. Essentially, a communicative space arises between image and participants based on the text they share. While the liturgy is intended for active performance, mirrored in the images it gains a timeless presence that finds its actual goal – the end of days – visually present in the image of the Hetoimasia.¹⁸ This articulates the perpetuation of liturgical acts. Like the bishops, the priest officiating at the altar brings an offering to the Trinity. The central image is thus a meeting point and pivot in which the real and the visually simulated action intersect and all temporal levels converge. The historical bishops are, as it were, promoted to co-officiants. The relatively circumscribed dimensions of the room on the one hand and the aspirational level intended by the commissioner on the other may have produced this visual conception, since through their combined influence the liturgical ritual is emphasized.

In the sixth session of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, in which fundamental statements concerning images were promulgated following the first phase of the iconoclastic controversy, Epiphanius declares

[...] there are times when the chanting of readings in the sacred churches falls silent, but depiction in images, with a permanent place in them, expounds and proclaims to us morning, evening and night the truth of the subjects treated.¹⁹

The pictorial conception realized here goes a step further by serving as the marker of an everlasting liturgy. At the same time, the bishops as a group present a model of motion that the actual celebrants follow during the liturgy: it corresponds to the preparation within the prothesis as well as to their movements during both Entrances. For that reason, the concept of mirroring does not entirely correspond to the productive potential of this solution for the images. At the same time, inherent in the selection is a moment of visibility toward the participants standing in the naos whenever the texts

18 This interpretation is supported by the liturgical commentary of the patriarch Germanos, who speaks of the entire sanctuary as having the function of Christ's throne, which he occupies until the Last Judgment. Cf. Gerstel 1999, pp. 38f.

19 Price: The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea, p. 544; Mansi XIII, 361 A: Ἡ γὰρ ἀνάγνωσις ἔσθ' ὅτε καὶ ἐλλείπει ἄδεσθαι ἐν τοῖς σεπτοῖς ναοῖς. ἡ δὲ εἰκονικὴ ἀνατύπωσις ἐσπέρας καὶ πρωῒ καὶ μεσημβρίας, ὡς ἐν αὐτοῖς καθιδρυμένη, διηγεῖται ἡμῖν καὶ ἀγγέλλει τὴν τῶν πραγματευθέντων ἀλήθειαν. Lange 1969, p. 166, inferred from this passage that in light of the powers attributed to the image, this represents a transition into the realm of the individual's personal piety – a sort of transference of what is proclaimed in the liturgy into everyday piety. But such a separation cannot exist, especially since one must see the liturgization of images from various perspectives.

refer to the process of entering into or through the naos. The knowledge of the liturgy, and especially of eucharistic practice, still remains hidden.

The believers are not granted a view of the performance of the liturgy. The clergy are made manifestly aware of their privileged position, while at the same time experiencing a form of self-assurance. Thus, the question of potential forms of compensation for the naos becomes urgent.²⁰

Before we turn our attention to parts of its wall paintings, let us take a brief look at the prehistory of Nerezi. Two monuments indirectly involved in the prehistory of the Church of St. Panteleimon attest to the fact that there was an apparent consciousness of a differentiated method of addressing the viewers: the church in Veljusa, built around 1080, and the parekklesion of the monastery of St. John Chrysostomos in Koutsovendis on Cyprus, whose wall paintings probably date from around 1100.²¹ Even though they have not survived in optimal condition, we can see that besides full-figure, co-officiating bishops, there are others represented in medallions. On the western wall of the parekklesion in Koutsovendis, other bishops are painted but not dressed in liturgical vestments in accordance with their location in a room with a different function.

A brief look at later wall paintings attests to programmatic conceptions suited to their individual locations. While in Nerezi the notion of an offering to the Trinity is accentuated, a few years later in the Church of St. George in Kurbinovo (1191), sacramental realism is more clearly evident: instead of a Hetoimasia, there is the body of Christ, only dressed in a cloth and positioned on a painted altar.²² Above Christ's body,

20 The chartophylax of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, Niketas, also says that the priests in other places cannot be seen by the laity in this moment; Taft 2006, p. 46.

21 In Veljusa, there are only two bishops portrayed in this way, followed by front-facing figures. Babić 1968, p. 382, wondered whether the paintings were not made later than the date in the inscription, so that the conception would be closer in time to the theological discussions of the mystery of the Eucharist. However, the earlier dating is now accepted. But it is also clear that discussions and the conception of the images cannot always be clearly aligned. The paintings in Koutsovendis confirm this assessment: Mango 1990, esp. Fig. 1a, 1b and p. 77; Papacostas/Mango/Grünbart 2007; Parani 2018. Mango 1990, p. 75, also reconstructs at least eight bishops. But there cannot have been a conception identical to the one in Nerezi, since the apse conch is dominated by three larger windows. One cannot identify the goal toward which the bishops move. A reconstruction is also difficult since Mango suggests that the first bishop is Basil, and this identification is also made by Stylianou 1985, p. 458. As an alternative, Mango suggests Gregory of Nyssa. If one accepts the first suggestion, one could conjecture that there were originally not eight bishops present, since Basil is usually placed in the center of the procession. Recent scholarship also accepts the dating of the paintings to c. 1100.

22 Cf. Gerstel 1999, pp. 37f. and 40–44. While the body of Christ in Kurbinovo bears no stigmata, the image of Christ painted around 1300 in the Church of St. John Chrysostom in Geraki bears all the signs of the Passion as well as a stream of blood and water pouring into a chalice from the wound in his side. This painting has clear analogies to the image of Christ that appears in the West in the Mass of St. Gregory.

liturgical devices are arranged: a paten overlaid with an *asteriskos*.²³ The sacramental bread is shown in the middle of the paten. A liturgical cloth is laid over the middle of Christ's body. Thus the gap between the bread of the Eucharist and the body of Christ is visually closed.

If the clergy could continually see fundamental themes reflected in the images of the liturgical space, on the other side of the barrier of the templon, similar content was conveyed by rhetorical means with a different emphasis. In Nerezi, a distinct, complex yet impressive narrative concept is developed, in which liturgical texts are again essential.²⁴

The initial view of the naos is dominated by two images facing each other, one on the south wall of the southern crossarm and the other on the north wall of the northern crossarm: the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the Lamentation of Christ (Figs. 4–6). The largest stretches of wall, circa four meters wide, are reserved for these pictures.²⁵ Their format and choice of subject are striking. The Presentation in the Temple is one of the so-called bipolar scenes that, for example, can be placed on either side of a window to save space. In almost no other program can we verify analogous attention paid to such an event. And: This is the first time the Lamentation was so prominently featured in a monumental program.²⁶

The first picture appears to follow an iconography developed much earlier.²⁷ Two details that depart from it are distinctive. The prophetess Anna initiates the scene with an inviting gesture as well as with a scroll whose text communicates what she is saying: "This infant consolidated heaven and earth."²⁸ With this visually rhetorical, prominent positioning of Anna, Joseph as her pictorial counterpart enters behind Symeon at the right side of the ciborium. It is also intentional that the Christ Child is characterized with a stola (remnants of which were discovered by Sinkević), indicating his priestly function.²⁹ Significant is a gesture that unites mother and child. While the child seeks

23 This is a bracket with two metal buckles diagonal to each other. A cloth is laid over it, and it prevents the cloth from touching the sacrament.

24 Cf. Schellewald 2005 and Schellewald 2008a. References to individual texts are summarized there and will not be repeated here.

25 For this purpose, windows of the outer walls had to be walled up. On the entire program of images, cf. the diagrams in Sinkević 2000, plates 8a und 8b.

26 Only in the cemetery chapel (!) dedicated to Christ in Koutsoventis on Cyprus, which belongs to the nearby Monastery of St. John Chrysostom, does one find an analogous representation, which can possibly date from the beginning of the 12th century. Cf. Stylianos 1985, pp. 463–467. The program is specific to the building's function, or at the least this is suggested by the surviving fragments of a Crucifixion, a Deposition, and an Anastasis.

27 An overview of the iconographic development is offered by Shorr 1946 and Maguire 1980/1981.

28 Sinkević 2000, p. 49, note 138.

29 Sinkević 2000, p. 49, note 139. She considers this element as the decisive modification. However, it seems to me that the original intention of the picture is only revealed in the sum of the variations.



Fig. 4. Nerezi, Panteleimon Church, 1164, naos, south arm of the cross, south wall, Presentation in the Temple.



Fig. 5. Nerezi, Panteleimon Church, 1164, naos, north arm of the cross, north wall, Lamentation of Christ.



Fig. 6. Nerezi, Panteleimon Church, 1164, naos, north arm of the cross, north wall, Lamentation of Christ, detail.

support from his mother, she has an anxious expression. Anna's declaration suggests how the picture is to be read. She gestures toward the child while identifying him through her speech as the ruler of the world. At the Hypapante – the liturgical feast celebrating the Presentation – Christ is also spoken of as the creator of heaven and earth.³⁰ There is as well a more important reference to a contemporary theological dispute on the question of the extent to which Christ as an offering can at the same time be the one to whom – in the trinitarian context – the offering is made in the act of the Eucharist.³¹ In the named councils a sermon on this historical event, attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, was read. It stressed that the child offering himself is at the same time the priest conducting the offering, and beyond that, also the one who accepts the offerings of all in heaven.³² Thus the visual modifications are owed mostly to the current controversy. The doves held by Joseph, although part of the Old Testament rite, can clearly be read in a broad sense as offerings (but of course, not the eucharistic offering). In the internal pictorial constellation of figures, the addressee is Christ himself. The event is narratively dramatized by its confrontation with the Lamentation. The aforementioned pictorial details are principally aimed at drawing attention to the connection between the Presentation and its announcement of the Passion.

As scholarship has long since shown, the images are related antithetically in the sense of ancient rhetoric (*anamnesis* / *prolepsis*).³³ Their elaborate visual language refers to corresponding texts (i. a., sermons and hymns). The translation into another medium succeeds primarily by strategically implemented visual details, above all the intimate physical relation of the Virgin to her son. Here the focus is on the body of Christ: At the Presentation in the Temple, the child clings to his mother, anticipating his later sacrifice; in the Lamentation on the opposite wall (Figs. 5 and 6), it is the mourners who present his dead, martyred body to the viewers. Implicit in the turning of Christ's body is the invitation to the viewers to join in the protagonists' lament. The attention paid to the body is especially evident in comparison to previous depictions, e.g., that in Vat. gr. 1156, fol. 194^v.³⁴ Not only is the latter's smaller format responsible for its more cursory indication of bodily detail; in general Christ's physical presence seems much less decisive. Significant in the Nerezi wall painting is the lower edge of the image, where the Virgin's knee almost touches two instruments of the Passion, the lance and the hyssop branch. In the image from the Vatican, by contrast, a broad stretch of ground extends to the edge of the image. The presence of the dead body of Christ can be read

30 Mercenier 1953, p. 320.

31 On the councils of 1156, 1157, and 1166, at which the donor of Nerezi was present at least once, cf. Babić 1968; Sinkević 2000, pp. 38–40; Schellewald 2005, pp. 956f. and Schellewald 2008a, pp. 50f.

32 Babić 1968, p. 384; cf. PG 140, 165D–168A.

33 Maguire 1981, pp. 9–21 and 101–108; Belting 2000, pp. 150–160.

34 On the miniature: digitalized manuscript in the Vaticana (DIGIVATLIB).

as a form of visualization that functions as compensation for the denial of the eucharistic act.³⁵ On the one hand, the instruments of the Passion recall what transpired at the Crucifixion itself (lance, hyssop branch, nails, the sign from the cross in a basket), on the other, they refer to the preceding Deposition from the Cross (e.g., the tongs), which is depicted to the left, on the west wall of the northern crossarm. The vessel of ointment completes this circle. The disposition of the scenes in this small space motivates the viewers to move. While turning away from and toward the scenes in their own rhythm, viewers are able to combine the temporal difference inherent in the scenes into a momentary simultaneity. With regard to the construction of gazes, the body of Christ, thrust into the foreground at the edge of the painting, is especially striking when compared to the miniature in the lectionary (Vat. gr. 1156), which has much more space between the body and the edge of the picture frame.³⁶

With the basket at its lower edge, one's attention is drawn to the Deposition (Fig. 7). Again, one is confronted by Christ's body. The proximity of the two scenes is underscored by the element of the Virgin's tender affection for her son (Figs. 6 and 7). A further gesture reinforces the impression that the two paintings merge: In the Lamentation, John takes the dead Christ's hand between his own, while in the Deposition, he lays Christ's hand on his cheek. Based on their format and the viewer's intimate proximity to the depicted events, one can hardly escape the images' characteristic emotional charge. Their visual rhetoric provokes an empathetic reaction in the viewer.³⁷

2. Visualization and Visibility in the Naos: Addressing (Integrating) the Viewer

2.1. Planning Processes

The task of the painters' workshop was definitely not simply to transfer a traditional repertoire onto a wall. Instead, depending on spatial constraints and the specified subject matter, it was to configure and accentuate images so that their individually selected arrangements were optimized for the recipients. The concrete challenge was to compensate for the total conception of gradations of visibility as well as for the conscious exclusion of some images from being seen, as briefly described above. Painters

35 The integration of the instruments of the Passion may confirm this reading.

36 In other pictures as well – e.g., of the Deposition – one can discern an analogous conception aimed at a structured gaze. Thus in the Transfiguration, John looks toward the Lamentation. The overall narrative structure in Nerezi aims at an internal interconnectedness as well as an interaction of the viewers.

37 In section 6 below there is further discussion of the aesthetics of Michael Psellos and so-called "living painting" that is frequently associated with Nerezi.



Fig. 7. Nerezi, Panteleimon Church, 1164, naos, north arm of the cross, west side, Deposition of Christ.

presented specific solutions for such compensation, and I would like to explore some examples in churches other than Nerezi.

Unlike mosaics in a sacred space, wall paintings per se are not fundamentally dependent on the architectural form of the picture field. While the materiality of mosaics is optimally deployed on vaults, corbels, spandrels, etc., the latitude for wall paintings is somewhat larger. At the same time, the challenge lies in creating connections between individual images, as in Nerezi. Thus, it seems appropriate to begin with some thoughts on the planning process, in which the medium of (preliminary) drawing plays a role. Our knowledge about this stage is still quite limited, in the first place because of the deficiency of surviving pattern or model books. As a rule, such materials for the work of painters have not been preserved. Restle has assembled the surviving material and argues correctly for a distinction between manuals and model or pattern books.³⁸ While the former – like the best-known example, the painter’s manual from Mount Athos – contain painting techniques, formulas, and ideas for sacred images and also for the decoration of monumental buildings,³⁹ pattern books or individual sheets – at least to the extent that they refer directly or indirectly to the Byzantine area – offer designs for individual figures, scenic compositions, or groups of figures that also depict dynamic moments.⁴⁰ Milne has accurately described the scholarly situation as follows:

38 Restle 1995; Restle 2001; Restle 2005.

39 The Hermeneia of Athos is a very late product. The evidence to be found in various editions reaches back into the 16th century. The painters’ manual of Dionysios of Fournia probably reflects medieval practices, but its various sources and the uncertain time of its creation do not allow a precise dating. The surviving version is a compilation from the 18th century. Restle 2001, p. 284 writes: “At least for now, there are no further clues as to its real age.” On the painters’ manual of Athos, cf. also Restle 1995, cols. 1222–1237. The first historically verifiable date is between 1701 and 1733. Restle rightly points out that such painters’ manuals saw intense usage and for this reason alone hardly survived more than two hundred years. Moreover, information about colors and color combinations would deviate according to available materials. Beginning in the 16th century, we can verify *podlinniki* specifying entire picture cycles.

40 Hutter 1999 published a manuscript containing the second volume of St. John Chrysostom’s commentary on Genesis from Magdalen College in Oxford (Ms no. 3). The margins of individual pages were used for drawings. 129 drawings have survived. Hutter reconstructs 145 of them. In contrast to an earlier publication by Velmans 1972, she identifies this codex as a pattern book. The drawings of three painters reflect both wall paintings and icons; based on their lateral reversal, Hutter assumes that some had an intermediary stage in the form of “cartoons” or tracings. The coloring is probably by a later hand. The drawings display a close connection to paintings on Cyprus and were probably made in the late 12th or early 13th century. The few clues Hutter was able to find call urgently for further research. Cf. also both sides of a sheet in the Cod. Garrett 7, Princeton, University Library, whose original function can also be interpreted as a pattern sheet; Restle 1995, cols. 775f.

For the visual pattern the artist had to go elsewhere, either to actual examples in churches and illuminated manuscripts, or more likely to a private and portable notebook of stock designs. Such sketchbooks existed, we know, in the medieval West. [...] They were not show-books, and no doubt received hard usage.⁴¹

The painter's manual of Dionysios of Fourni probably reflects medieval practices, but since it draws on a large variety of sources, the question of when it originated cannot be answered with certainty.

For her examination of the "pattern book" in Oxford, Hutter at first had the impression that the drawings were partly the result of a survey in a Byzantine church. However, there is no complete annotation of individual scenes or the entire contexts of images, but rather it contains almost entirely excerpts.⁴² Further observations lead to the conclusion that in most cases, icons were the model rather than wall paintings.⁴³ It was iconographic, but also aesthetic, solutions that interested the painters. Winfield quotes a letter of 1413, according to which the painters were very closely oriented to the models: "Their eyes running hither and thither, they do not so much paint with colors as strive to gaze constantly upon a model."⁴⁴

Documents of this sort may have been written partially as a sort of note- or sketch-book. Evidence for such transfer mechanisms can be directly observed on the paintings themselves, but we still lack a comprehensive study.⁴⁵

Examples such as the well-known Wolfenbüttel *Musterbuch* (Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 61.2 Aug. 8 °), which contains pen-and-ink drawings from the 1230s,⁴⁶ could attest to practices that bear neither "western" nor "eastern"

41 Milne 1935–1936, pp. 65f.

42 Hutter 1999, p. 121: "[...] one gets the impression of walking around in a Byzantine church looking high up to dome and apse, then to scenes of the Life of Christ, to temple icons, and along the hierarchy of saints. Yet none of these subjects is complete and some seem to be excerpts taken from a larger context."

43 Hutter 1999, pp. 123f. Individual figures probably come from icon frames. Icons with comprehensive programs of images, like the ones surviving in St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, may also have functioned as models. Thanks to their mobility, they are much better suited for this task than wall paintings.

44 Winfield 1968, p. 83.

45 One example would be Byzantine cycles with the Life of the Virgin in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Based on analogous concepts of the image and occurring over a wide geographic area (Constantinople, Thessalonica, and the paintings originating under the Serbian King Stefan Uroš II Milutin), they document well-proven modifications adapted to the individual location and context. To be sure, in these cases the concept of "model" must be applied flexibly and kept open, so that one does not resort to 19th-century ideas.

46 The literature on the Wolfenbüttel *Musterbuch* is extensive; Restle 2005, cols. 805f. In addition, cf. the essay by Geymonat 2013, who takes earlier studies into account.

connotations. Geymont suggests that it could be identified as a sort of visual traveler's diary.⁴⁷

A sheet preserved in the Augustinermuseum in Freiburg (inv. no. G23/001c) also originally came from a sketchbook.⁴⁸ Scholars have conjectured that the artist was from the upper Rhine region and was especially studying the pictures produced by crusaders in the Holy Land. As with the example in Wolfenbüttel, one can tell from this page alone the direction his study was taking. There have been various suggestions for identifying the two horsemen in the lower half of the sheet.⁴⁹ Their model may have been an icon, as often encountered in the crusader milieu. Restle, however, emphasizes that it will hardly be possible to precisely identify the original template for such a sheet.⁵⁰ A series of further examples for drawing as an observational and preliminary medium have been variously discussed in the literature.⁵¹

In addition, we can learn about preliminary drawing because it sometimes becomes visible on parts of paintings due to their poor state of preservation. Based on the work of Winfield⁵² we can conclude that preliminary drawings may have been occasionally done directly onto a bare wall, but it was more common to have a first layer of plaster as a base. Usually, with the help of the drawings, the outlines of figures and their context were established. For example, they were used to determine proportional relationships. If one takes this phase of the wall painters' work as a starting point, one must concede that during the addition of color there were naturally reworkings and deviations, for example, in the Panagia tou Arakos in Lagoudera, Cyprus.⁵³ Specific aspects of a figure could also be highlighted with gold (chrysography in vestments, nimbuses, etc.) or silver, as is the case with the Theotokos on the south wall of the Panagia tou Arakos.⁵⁴ In this context, Winfield speaks of the special presence of such figures.

47 Geymonat 2013; on p. 284 he writes: "[...] a sketch-book in which to figure out designs and keep track of inventive solutions."

48 Restle 2005, cols. 780–786; Warland 2005 with an extensive bibliography on the Freiburg sheet.

49 They were long thought to be Saints Theodore and George. However, Restle 2005, col. 785, suggested identifying them as Theodore Tiron and Theodore Stratelates.

50 Restle 2005, col. 785.

51 The first comprehensive publication is by Scheller 1995. The Guthlac Roll (London, British Library Harley Roll Y b, c. 1175/1215) has drawings in medallions that are probably preliminary designs for stained-glass windows or a wooden roof. Brown 2008 has researched a series of manuscripts with pictures that could be drafts. They give the interesting impression of being prepared to yield an intended "end product" in a different medium.

52 Winfield 1968 was the first comprehensive study of this topic.

53 Winfield 2003, e.g., pp. 111f.

54 Winfield 2003, pp. 244–249. The reworking makes the original presence of the figure hard to imagine. Winfield had the privilege of being able to observe the small traces in his examination. Christ figures without the opulent application of gold seem to emphasize the Incarnation.

In addition to these remarks about the working practices of the painters, we will briefly reflect on the inventive aspect of their art.⁵⁵ Neither manuals nor pattern books were a reason to produce slavish copies of what already existed; they served the painters only as a starting point. As Barber emphasizes, the Byzantine artist was not the victim of a static, unoriginal, or repetitive tradition.⁵⁶ Following the iconoclastic controversy, there was a first phase that insisted above all that the artist or painter was divinely inspired. But at the latest in a sermon of Emperor Leo VI (886–912), we encounter the concept that the artist's capacities are enhanced by invention. The rhetor insists that his audience concentrate on precisely that richness of invention. Although Barber's conclusions are based on his analysis of this sermon, they apply equally to our context:

He has not gathered his inventions from existing models, but has brought these forth from within himself. This attention to the artist's role is important and it places him at the center of the invention of his work and at the origin of the work of art.⁵⁷

These few short passages will hopefully make clear that, from the autological point of view, workshops in the churches on the one hand had access to their repertoire, while on the other they developed individual solutions in their engagement with the site-specific architecture, the image carrier. From the heterological point of view, however, requirements for the programmatic content were influenced by the wishes of the donors and a complex context that might expand those wishes, as well as by contemporary theological discussions. In the end, however, the central challenge – integrating both points of view – was provided by the concrete situation. In the course of the 12th century, it was to all appearances considered necessary to strengthen a visual conception that would sharpen the attention of the viewers. A few examples must suffice to illustrate this fact. The paintings of the bema and naos were calculated to be seen by their respective audiences. Contents that refer to the invisible eucharistic act in the naos, or that touch on the theme of the Passion, thereby emerge as essential factors.⁵⁸

2.2. Alternative Image Concepts

In our first example, there is a sort of scenic abbreviation: either individual figures are separated from their narrative context or an event is concentrated by using fewer actors. Here too we must pay attention to how the sacred space is integrated. Figures are

55 The following discussion is indebted above all to the essay by Barber 2017.

56 Barber 2017, p. 156.

57 Barber 2017, pp. 166–170 on invention, quote p. 170.

58 The emphasis is on the fact that, in the end, several factors characterize the program of wall paintings. My focus here is thus an excerpt of the entire phenomenon.

so positioned that the space becomes an integral element of their action or communication. In occupying this space, viewers are drawn into the action as if they were on stage. This is the sense in which Lidov structured his model of an *ierotopiia*, in which the icon is to be thought of spatial with regard to the viewer as well as in general to its location.⁵⁹

In the monastery church in Mileševo, a simple domed building with an attached narthex, the Presentation in the Temple is painted on the surfaces of the south- and northwestern pillars of the dome (Figs. 8a and 8b).⁶⁰

Standing beneath the dome, one sees on the left Joseph with his offerings and the Virgin with the Christ Child, and on the right the high priest Symeon stretching out his veiled hands toward the left and accompanied by the prophetess Anna, who holds out to us a scroll with the prophecy of the child as ruler of the world. Between these two groups is the actual space – more precisely, a location on whose axis toward the east stands the altar of the eucharistic offerings behind the templon. The historical event gains additional actualization in the Christ Child, who is not being offered to Symeon – as is conventional – but to the viewers. At the same time, this gesture of direct address constitutes a temporal hinge between past and present.⁶¹ What in this instance is a spatial constellation into which viewers are integrated can at the same time be read as the transformation of an image concept that had been used in a different medium and will indirectly lead us back to Nerezi. In a tetraevangelion with marginal illustrations (Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, theol. gr. 154, fol. 143^r) we find the protagonists distributed on the left and right margins of a text column with Luke 2:28f. The Virgin is in mourning, her head drooping and a hand on her cheek. Symeon bends far forward, his covered hands holding the child over the altar as a metaphorical offering. Christ turns

59 Lidov 2017 with bibliographical information. In his incisive formula (p. 426): “[...] it emerges out of flatness into the sphere of communion with the observing person present in the church as a matter of principle.” He appropriately adapts the concept of the *chora* as it is used for an inscription on the icons of Christ and the Theotokos in the Chora Church in Constantinople (pp. 428–432). In reference to Plato, i.e., he defines it as the “space of the icon.” By being inextricably connected to its prototype, the icon oscillates between “material concreteness and divine ideality” (p. 431).

60 Cf. the sketch of the program in Radojčić 1963, pp. 9 and 11. The sketch is somewhat confusing since it places different spatial levels next to each other. The figures of the representation are each in a pair, alone on a pier. On the program of images, cf. also Hamann-MacLean/Hallensleben 1963, Pl. 12–13; Koshi 1974.

61 In this architecture, the program is governed by a unique but obviously very intentional logic that we cannot further pursue at this point. One comment must suffice: beneath the dome, scenes unfold on four picture fields. The Communion of the Apostles – which would have been appropriate in the apse – here appears on the west side. The scene is staged in such a way that it functions as a mirror to what is taking place behind the templon. Koshi 1974, p. 130, found this placement puzzling. In view of the constellation of the Presentation in the Temple discussed here, this solution gains plausibility, i.e., images in the naos also have the function of referring to the liturgical actions.



Figs. 8a and 8b. Mileševa, Monastery church, 2nd half of the 13th century, naos, Presentation in the Temple.



toward him.⁶² The appearance of Symeon follows directly from the text; not so that of the Virgin, whose image captures various aspects: the empty space in her arms for the child, mourning the loss and anticipatory mourning for the final farewell. The text that bridges the distance functions as a constituent spatial element. The visual focus is on the Virgin's mourning, which we have also seen in Nerezi.

It is hardly an accident that we can verify a similar constellation – with additional content regarding the biblical event – in the church of the Panagia tou Arakos in Lagoudera on Cyprus, completed in 1192.⁶³ In the center of the domed architecture, the north and south walls offered surfaces to be painted.⁶⁴ On the north side, Symeon with Christ on his arm and John the Baptist appear (Fig. 9).⁶⁵ The latter stands at right angles to the iconostasis. Symeon's head is gently bent toward the child, who looks at the viewer. The scroll text held by John the Baptist (John 1:29) is the key to understanding the entire constellation of figures: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."⁶⁶ The figures have their place in the lower zone of the saints, so that they directly confront the beholder. If Symeon were interpreted as functionally the realization of a saint, then the Christ Child would be his attribute. Instead, the concentration on their two persons replaces the narration of the Presentation in the Temple.⁶⁷ In Symeon's arms, Christ is the anticipation of a eucharistic offering, i.e., the one that with John the Baptist is addressed as a lamb. The reference to the Passion in such close proximity to the templon obviously reveals a programmatic intention to visually transport in its historical rootedness the eucharistic event taking place behind the screen. Christ as sacrifice (sacramental lamb) directly confronts the viewer, who is able to connect the constellation of figures to the biblical event. Winfield emphasizes that traces of candles at these locations pay tribute to their special veneration.⁶⁸

The space was a vital component of the integration of the viewers when their gaze moved to the opposite wall. Savage stresses the complexity of this constellation of

62 Maguire 1977, pp. 146f. Maguire identifies the image of the Virgin as a direct text illustration. That is without a doubt so, but this textual passage occurs only on fol. 143^v. Maguire 1980/1981, p. 269, states: "[...] to visualize the more sentimental portrayals of the Presentation which they created in the second half of the twelfth century."

63 On the Panagia tou Arakos Nikolaïdes 1996; Winfield 2003; Schellewald 2008a, pp. 59–63. Here too, the bishops with their scrolls appear in the bema.

64 Here too, notice the breadth of the available surface. The area available to the figures guarantees the attention of the viewers. The Theotokos alone occupies a field with a breadth of 152 cm.

65 Maguire 1980/1981, p. 263, emphasizes that in characterizing the figures, the accent on their differences in age is notable. He also remarks on the connection to homilies (p. 264).

66 Schellewald 2008a, p. 61.

67 In view of the position of the figure, the actual space serves as a metaphorical temple, as in Mileševa.

68 Winfield 2003, p. 192: "Suplicants stuck lighted candles onto the images of their patrons [...]."



Fig. 9. Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos, 1192, naos, north side.

images and also comments on the involvement of the viewer.⁶⁹ The *Theotokos Arakiotissa* (in which the Theotokos is standing before the throne and carrying the child with both her arms in front of her body) is placed again at right angles to the templon (Fig. 10).

In two columns to the left and right of the Virgin and the throne, a long donor's inscription appears in which Leon Authentou expresses his requests in making the donation.⁷⁰ The theme of the Passion inscribed in the image is manifest on various levels: in the mourning implicit in the tilt of the Virgin's head as well as in her expression. Also significant is the position of her hands, which form a liturgical spoon (*labis*)⁷¹ on which rests – according to Pseudo-Methodius⁷² – the sacrificial lamb. Christ appears in the pose of the Emmanuel Anapeson⁷³ who both sleeps and wakes, anticipating the rest of the grave. The eucharistic component is also expressed by the “stola” in which Christ is wrapped.⁷⁴ As in other locations, these indications presumably refer to Christ's priesthood. His crossed bare legs also anticipate the Passion. The view of the child's bare flesh makes his vulnerability palpable. Although this representation is not completely new,⁷⁵ its many additional modifications underline its focus on the Passion. The image is completed by attending angels with the instruments of the Passion. The eyes of the Theotokos gaze at the tools of Christ's suffering to come. The archangel Michael beside the Theotokos underscores the reference to the Passion, since his staff is inscribed with the triple Hagios.⁷⁶ In the lower zone of the domed space, the viewer is prepared for the

69 Savage 2008, p. 101, where he states: “[...] making him [the viewer, B.S.] actively participate in an extended theological message contained within a larger spatial context.”

70 Winfield 2003, pp. 244–249. Kecharitomene, the title of the picture of the Theotokos, may refer to the titular icon of the Kecharitomene Convent in Constantinople, endowed by the Empress Irene Doukaina Komnene from the years 1110–1116. On the convent in Constantinople cf. the Typikon in: Thomas/Hero 2000, pp. 649–724.

71 The connection of the images is again explicit via liturgical texts. Cf. Schellewald 2008a, p. 62.

72 PG 18, 364B.

73 On the image of the Anapeson with its complex implications and incisive connections to liturgical texts: Todić 1994, pp. 158–160; Studer-Karlen 2022.

74 This “stola” is not identical with any known liturgical vestment. There is an analogy in the apse picture in the Church of St. Sophia in Ohrid, where the Christ child is dressed in the same way. Cf. Walter 1982, p. 194, note 144, with references to other scholarship.

75 An early representation is the Circumcision in the Menologion of Basil II (Vat. gr. 1613) from circa 1000. Beginning in the 11th century, examples proliferate that clearly emphasize the eucharistic aspect. Aside from the narration, one should mention the fresco icon on the bema antae in the Church of St. Sophia in Ohrid as an early example, in which the child's legs are crossed in an allusion to the Crucifixion. Milković-Peppek 1958, plate LVI; on the iconography: Weyl Carr 2002; Corrie 1996, where one reads on p. 53: “It seems clear that the bare-legged child both in the East and in Tuscany was identified with the child of the Presentation in the Temple and called the crucifixion to mind through a visual evocation of the Lamentation.”

76 Winfield 2003, pp. 250–253.



Fig. 10. Lagoudera, Panagia tou Arakos, 1192, Panagia Arakiotissa.

theme of sacrifice by an unusual conjunction of figures. On the other hand, the fact that a cross with the instruments of the passion appears in the niches of the two parabemata (prothesis and diakonikon) defines this space reserved for the officiants with regard to the reenactment of the Passion in the eucharist. The complex content aims especially at transferring the significance of the historical narration into the liturgic ritual. The child in Symeon's arms is declared to be the future sacrifice; in the arms of the Theotokos it becomes the eucharistic offering. The interlocking content of the figures opens the horizon of a specific temporal understanding in which vastly different time levels collapse into a single time.⁷⁷ Another monument on Cyprus with a naos that focuses, as in Nerezi, on two scenes, here those of the Crucifixion and Anastasis can be adduced, if only because of its size.⁷⁸ The parekklesion of the Monastery of St. John Chrysostom in Koutsovendis, donated by Eumathios Philokales for his *memoria*. Its wall paintings date from c. 1100.⁷⁹

In this small chapel, the workshop painted figures of prophets on the north, south, and east sides of both western piers in the domed space that skillfully capture the gaze of the viewer by their bearing, gestures, and scrolls and lead it, prophet by prophet, toward the two central paintings.⁸⁰ They function as mediators. The content of the texts on their scrolls relates directly to the Crucifixion and Anastasis.⁸¹ The prophet Ezekiel is oriented toward the right, but turns his head in the opposite direction. His eyes drift to the left and encounter the gaze of the viewer. The figure's movement and especially his scroll, running dynamically from upper left to lower right, reinforce the impulse to follow him in the same direction and focus on the Anastasis. The use of costly lapis

77 The complete text of the donor's epigram is in Nikolaïdes 1996, p. 5. Directly comparable to this image concept is a miniature in the Four Gospels of Karahissar (Petropolitanus 105, fol. 114^r). On the dating to the 1180s and the localization in Cyprus, cf. Cutler/Carr 1976, pp. 304–321.

78 Here too, the life-size bishops in the bema are facing toward the middle. The dimensions of both picture surfaces are by far the largest used for scenic pictures in this location. Mango 1990 recorded all the dimensions in his study and reconstructed some in fragmentary condition. On the Crucifixion and Anastasis, pp. 80–84, Fig. 6a.

79 Mango 1990; Papacostas/Mango/Grünbart 2007; Parani 2018. The endowment seems not to be connected to an intention to establish a burial place here (Parani 2018, pp. 7–12). The best color reproductions of all scenes and individual figures discussed here are in Mango.

80 The piers are organized in three picture zones. Above imitation marble stands the front-facing figure of a monk and in each upper zone a prophet facing sideways and striding dynamically.

81 Mango 1990, pp. 85f.; Parani 2018, pp. 24 and 43f. The specific formulation of these figures captures the eye as the other saints are presented front-on. The northwest pier shows Moses with the Septuagint text Deuteronomy 28:66. On the southwest pier, Ezekiel – a mirror image of Moses – holds the text of 37:12–13 (with a small variation) toward the viewer. On the north side of this pier, one sees Isaiah with the text of 26:19. Both texts refer to the raising of the dead.

lazuli pigment lends his figure added presence. In other contexts as well, lapis lazuli is deployed to attract special attention.⁸²

In principle, the casting of prophets in the sacred space with direct reference to one of the scenes from the New Testament is not innovative. The 10th-century wall paintings in the New Tokalı in Cappadocia evince an analogous constellation.⁸³ The prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah point toward the painting of the Crucifixion centrally placed in the apse. In contrast to the solution in Koutsovendis, however, except for his finger pointing toward the Crucifixion, the figure of Ezekiel remains immobile and facing forward. Thus, although the figure has a similar contextual function, it neither addresses nor communicates with the viewer in any comparably direct way.

The intentional differentiation in addressing the viewer is obvious. Unlike in the bema, communication in the naos does not take place by way of identification. The attention of the beholders is consciously guided as they become involved in the rhetoric of the images. They are not officiants, but they become part of the process. The success of these strategies rests on the conception of two differing spatial units. Another significant factor for the viewer is the choreography of light.

3. The Choreography of Light in Sacred Spaces

How we perceive images is partially determined by how they are illuminated. Natural interior light is modified by the number, location, and size of the windows.⁸⁴ A recent study by Potamianos analyzes the form of light shafts in the interior of Byzantine churches, but its particular effect on monumental decoration is not discussed.⁸⁵ Architectural zones of light and shadow naturally play a role in how images are perceived. The images we have been discussing are primarily located in spaces that are well illuminated in the daytime. But one must pay special attention to artificial lighting. According to our sources, the choreography of light depends on several factors. Estimation of its relevance in particular situations can be found, among other places, by studying the Typika, which in the period under discussion often prescribe precisely how light is to

82 The lavish use of this blue pigment prompted Hawkins to remark that it “[...] suggests that no expense was spared”; Mango 1990, p. 94. One can see extravagant use of lapis lazuli in other surviving paintings, for instance, in the dome.

83 Teteriatnikov 2011, pp. 52–55, on the prophets at the Crucifixion.

84 In her authoritative article, Theis 2001, pp. 54–56, points to the developmental tendencies of window size. For instance, in Nerezi, the exterior windows of the crossarms were walled up to benefit the wall painting, thus increasing the relevance of artificial light.

85 Potamianos 2021. He emphasizes that church construction definitely took lighting into account. He had already pursued this idea in several earlier studies and also discusses the transcendental qualities attributed to light.

be managed for various church feasts. Donors were apparently particularly interested in light within sacred spaces.⁸⁶ Of fundamental importance for artificial lighting are the multifarious forms of lamps, as well as what illuminant was used (usually olive oil and candles, which differ in size and weight). Ecclesiarchis and ecclesiarchissa were responsible for how the regulations were followed, but their implementation was conducted by certain lamplighters, as the Typika also prescribe.⁸⁷ Their number was determined by the size of the monastery and its associated churches. For example, the imperial Monastery of the Pantokrator in Constantinople, with its three sacred buildings, is said to have required eight orphans to carry out this function.⁸⁸ Bouras has collected from the sources the various terms for lighting and coordinated them as far as possible with surviving objects.⁸⁹ The fuel was beeswax or, preferably, olive oil.⁹⁰

Fundamentally, we know that the size could vary from just one lamp or candle⁹¹ to the so-called *choroi*, large octagonal or round crown-like chandeliers that dominated the domed space and carried several levels of oil lamps or candle holders (Fig. 11). These magnificent objects were often paid for by donations.⁹²

The mountings for the various sizes of oil lamps were made of bronze or occasionally of silver or gilded silver. The number of glass inserts varied with the occasion. Traces of light fixtures have also survived.⁹³ The Typika contain extensive information about how the lighting of a sacred space for everyday liturgical practice differed from that on high church feasts. In general, the tendency was to be guided by the calendar of feast days, the choice of patronage, and what the donors' wishes were with regard to lighting. Specific places to be lighted are clearly defined: bema, apse and sanctuary, the

86 Thomas/Hero 2000 has provided English translations of the Typika, and our references to the original texts are to that publication. In what follows, we discuss primarily Typika of the 12th and 13th centuries. For the endowments, cf. Klenner 2012; on the light sources (lamps, etc.): Bouras 1982 and Bouras/Parani 2008. On Late Antiquity and especially the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople: Bouras/Parani 2008, pp. 31–36, with bibliographical information. In the Hagia Sophia, traces of the original suspension devices survive.

87 Bouras 1982, p. 482; cf. the passage in the Typikon of the Kecharitomene Monastery in section 20: Thomas/Hero 2000, p. 681; Pantokrator Monastery: Thomas/Hero 2000, section 30, p. 754, cf. also Olcay 2001.

88 Thomas/Hero 2000, p. 754.

89 Bouras 1982, p. 491, with a table of the terms; Theis 2001, pp. 57–63; Klenner 2012, pp. 16–20.

90 Extensive information with details on the production of the lamps and also on the use and proportion of olive oil for this purpose compared to other uses: Klenner 2012, pp. 20–33.

91 For candles, it is not unusual to find notations on their number and weight and the cost of wax. Some monasteries made their own candles; Bouras 1982, p. 482; Klenner 2012, p. 27.

92 In Theis 2001 there is an illustration of a lampstand from the 13th or 14th century in the Archäologische Staatssammlung, Munich. Other objects, e.g., in the monasteries of Markov Manastir and Dečani (see Fig. 11 in this chapter), are partially preserved.

93 Theis 2001, p. 58.



Fig. 11. Dečani, Monastery church, choreography of light.

templon with the icons, the domed space, and above all the icons that refer to the liturgical feast as well as those that are especially venerated. There were individual lamps as well as candelabra equipped with several candle holders. For these, there are other names in the sources.⁹⁴ *Polycandela* refer to a disc- or cross-shaped base with depressions to hold the glass containers for the oil; moreover, there are also surviving hybrid forms with candle holders.⁹⁵

At this point, let us take a selective look at the liturgical instructions in the *Typika*.⁹⁶ The instructions for illuminating the three sacred buildings of the Monastery of the Pankrator have received significant scholarly attention.⁹⁷ They refer to individual feast days⁹⁸ which have been prioritized, as well as everyday lighting of the space during the liturgy. Precise instructions specify not only what is to be accentuated and how to differentiate between spatial compartments (e.g., the conche of the apse, the space around the altar, the templon, the dome), but also the emphasis on particular icons. For the so-called *heroon* (the church in the middle with the tomb), candlelight before immobile icons (i.e., wall mosaics) is specifically mentioned. Tesserae as well as obvious relics discovered on site testify to these material decorations.⁹⁹ The dynamic between the three buildings on feast days is also reflected in their clearly differentiated lighting. A look at the *Typikon* of the Kosmosoteira Monastery, founded by Isaak Komnenos in 1152, confirms how intensely they reflected on the lighting arrangements. One passage states that the lighting serves to make the images seem alive to the viewers. It continues by remarking on the possibility of a lovely tone issuing from the mouth of the figures.¹⁰⁰

94 Bouras 1982, p. 479: *candelai* (synonym: *photagogoi*), *kaniskia* (basket-shaped), *thryallides* and *crateres*.

95 Bouras 1982, p. 480. To learn how richly a monastery could be supplied with illumination of the most varied kind, cf. the list of the monastery of Gregory Pakourianos, Bouras 1982, p. 481.

96 Klenner 2012, pp. 44–57 and p. 64 with a list of the *Typika*, containing instructions for illumination.

97 On the text of the *Typikon*: Thomas/Hero 2000, pp. 737–774; on the illumination of the main church in section 7, pp. 741f.; on Eleousa in section 29, pp. 753f.; on the church dedicated to the Archangel Michael in section 34, p. 756. Bouras 1982, p. 482; Congdon 1996, pp. 169–184; Theis 2001, pp. 61f.; Kotzabassi 2013.

98 For the main church, the Feast of the Transfiguration is most important, followed by Christ's birth, Epiphany, and Exaltation of the Cross. The illumination on feast days such as Pentecost, Palm Sunday, etc., is only half as bright. At the same time, the choreography in the Pantokrator Monastery is distributed among the individual buildings.

99 Thomas/Hero 2000, in section 29, p. 754; on the decoration: Ousterhout 2001; Ousterhout 2010; Spieser 2015 with a reconstruction of the program of pictures.

100 Thomas/Hero 2000, *Typikon* text pp. 798–849, here in section 9, p. 802. Then follows: "For it is a marvel to behold these likenesses in painting, that is, alive and yet unmoving in space, and hence to praise the artist whom the First Creator and Lord endowed with the knowledge of how to paint in a novel fashion. For who would not congratulate him, after having traced the form of these likenesses on to his eye and his heart as though it were living."

The Typikon of Irene Doukaina Komnene for the Monastery of Kecharitomene in Constantinople also reveals how much the choreography of light mattered to the donor.¹⁰¹ Not all Typika have such detailed and precise instructions. However, the general tendency is to pay tribute to the light even only in brief passages. For the monuments discussed here, for which no Typika have survived, one can conclude – specifically in Nerezi, where the donor belonged to the Komnenian Dynasty – that, especially since the beginning of the 12th century, the management of light was as a rule elaborate and differentiated. For Nerezi, there is a detail of the painting that we can use as evidence: on both outer sides of the leading edges of the conche of the apse, two large candleholders with lighted candles are painted one above the other (Fig. 2). To be sure, we cannot reconstruct exactly how well individual rooms were supplied with artificial light. In view of the dimensions of the sacred spaces, the effect was probably not insignificant for the perception of the wall paintings.¹⁰² Light not only guides perception; it can also initiate it. The symbolic dimension of light is repeatedly addressed in the scholarship.¹⁰³ In this chapter, we are constrained to forego further discussion of it. Nevertheless, we may mention Symeon of Thessalonica's assertion in the 14th century that through divine lamps, the sight of saints and their beauty makes our glance clear and holy and we shine with an inner light.¹⁰⁴ It could be relevant for our earlier era as well.

Wall painting does not always play a defined role in regulating the choreography of light. In the Pankrator Monastery, however, special illumination is prescribed for the mosaic wall icons, as mentioned above. Even though this was apparently not the rule, the passage makes clear that monumental paintings were not fundamentally excluded from this practice. Moreover, the interplay between the featured feast-day icons and

101 Thomas/Hero 2000, typikon text pp. 664–717; e.g., on illumination for the Feast of Koimesis in section 59, pp. 696f.; for the Birth of the Mother of God in section 60, p. 697; for daily illumination in section 66, p. 698, it states that after the celebration of the liturgy the lights are extinguished. This seems to apply above all the middle of the sacred space and the templon, for candles burn day and night in the bema and before the icon of the Theotokos Kecharitomene (in section 68, p. 698). It is also a question of niceties when it says that burned-down candles must be removed on high feast days and replaced with new ones. Used candles are reserved for everyday use.

102 Although the illumination of the Hagia Sophia was enormously lavish, as one can see at the latest from the reconstruction of the lamps (cf. Bouras/Parani, Fig. 36), the authors do not think that the huge space was bright (p. 36): “Despite their great numbers, and the brilliance of their precious materials, the lights of Hagia Sophia would not have been able to drive away the darkness of night from that huge, cavernous church.” There is room for doubt about this conclusion.

103 Isar has repeatedly engaged with the concept of chora (most recently in 2021, with bibliographical information), which includes movement as well as light in the sacred space. This topic is without question complex, and a corresponding discussion of this position cannot be undertaken in the context of this chapter.

104 PG 155, 344 quoted in an English translation in Galavaris 1978, p. 72.

the parallel images on the wall must have been considerable.¹⁰⁵ While the small format of the icons enabled proximity to the viewer, because of its format, the proffered scenario remained distanced from the bodies of the believers. On the other hand, the size (see above) of the analogous images on the wall allowed physical proximity in the sense of an identification with or integration of the viewer. Thus the heightened attention promoted by the illuminated feast-day icons influenced the perception of the images in the room. At the same time, however, the modified choreography of light in the sacred space, with the flickering light sources, must have engendered an intensive play of light and shadow. Images in the less illuminated zones remained partly obscured, while others gained presence. Just as the artificial light was not static, the bodily movement of the viewers resulted in a feedback loop with the light sources. The resulting dynamic must have influenced and helped shape the perceptive process. If, for example, one considers the Presentation in the Temple in Mileševa, situated directly beneath the dome, it must still have been quite visible even in evening twilight, since the central area beneath the dome, following the instructions of the Typika, was quite well lit. Even if the effect of light choreography on the wall paintings is clearly less than on the mosaics, there remains the sacred space whose atmosphere changes in the course of the year, and the gaze of the viewer is guided – sometimes more and sometimes less – by the play of light and shadow.¹⁰⁶

4. Communicated Reception or Pure Rhetoric?

Recent scholarship on ekphrasis convincingly argues that in the case of visual images, the rhetorical device can also have the function of enlivening pictures, putting their inherent immobility into a motion that takes the figures in the image as its starting point.¹⁰⁷ According to the orthodox conception of the icon, through contact with its prototype, it is quasi-freed of spatial boundaries, so that the perception of the image can push toward other dimensions.¹⁰⁸ One example will demonstrate the potential of this process: In his ekphrasis of the pictorial decoration of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, written c. 1200, Nicholas Mesarites carried this fictional movement

105 So-called feast icons are, on the one hand, an integral part of the monumental program, but they can also appear as icons on the epistyle of the templon. Moreover, on the appropriate high feasts, they are set up and accentuated by their own lighting.

106 I have already addressed the mosaics and also the use of lapis lazuli; e.g., Schellewald 2012 and Schellewald 2018. For the wall paintings, future tests with digital tools will be needed.

107 I. a., Brubaker 1989; James / Webb 1991; Nelson 2000.

108 On the aspect of transcending the sensual, cf. the contribution by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Volker Leppin in this volume, pp. 177–226, esp. pp. 212 f.

intensely forward. While he provides an extraordinarily clear and precise description of the pictures, as the scholarship repeatedly stresses, his text also offers “an experience that stimulates the senses and makes a profound impression on the audience [...]”¹⁰⁹ He repeatedly addresses his reader directly as a viewer and imagines him as a companion. In section XXV, the rhetor is both emotionally moved and directly involved in the drama.¹¹⁰ This scene of overwhelming emotion is designed to entirely cancel the boundaries between the image, its action, and the viewer. Stylus and quill become veritable partners in crossing the Jordan. They serve as oars in the inkwell of the Black Sea: “[...] and we should steer the ship of our mind into the waves.”¹¹¹ Mesarites does not leave us guessing about the fictionality of his language or idea, when with the appropriate distance he informs us in Section XXX that what we are seeing is not the actual event but something imagined and painted.¹¹²

Meanwhile, Daskas has put forward an interpretation of a particular passage in which Mesarites speaks of a painter,¹¹³ who is described as standing next to Christ’s tomb as a “sleepless keeper.” From a marginal note, Heisenberg identified him as Eulalios.¹¹⁴ Daskas sees this figure of the painter as a sort of hidden self-portrait of Mesarites himself, who served as “keeper” of the imperial treasury. Eulalios is not an actual contemporary painter. He is introduced as a metaphor for the artistic ego and thus for the rhetor himself. If one accepts this interpretation, the rhetor (= viewer) would be imagined in the picture itself. The proximity – or rather, interchangeability – of painter and writer is provided by the concept of γραφή (*graphie*), which encompasses both activities.¹¹⁵ We can add to this context a formula often used in epigrams of a longing that animates the artist. In the end, however, it had already been formulated in the *horos*

109 Zarras 2015, p. 267. There are two English translations of the text: Downey 1957 with the Greek text and Angold 2017 (only the translation).

110 On this passage, cf. the two translations, which definitely diverge from each other: Downey 1957, p. 878, Greek text p. 906; Angold 2015, p. 105; cf. also Baseu-Barabas 1992 on the relation between text and image.

111 Angold 2017, p. 106 quotation.

112 Angold 2017, p. 115; Downey 1957, pp. 884f., Greek. p. 911. “[...] understand clearly, through the agency of the artist’s hand, how there can be waters in the air, in the upper parts of the building”; Downey 1957, p. 879, Greek. p. 907; Angold 2017, p. 106.

113 This passage from Chapter XXVIII, verse 23, has been repeatedly discussed by art historians; Downey 1957, p. 884, Greek p. 910; Angold 2017, p. 114.

114 The artist name Eulalios is mentioned, among other places, in an epigram from the 12th century; Daskas 2016, p. 157.

115 Drpić 2013. Relevant here is also the quotation from an ekphrastic oration by Mesarites for Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203), from which Daskas 2016, p. 163, quotes: “With the hand of a painter, I undertook with greatest zeal to set out as much as possible in an image [...]” Angold 2017, pp. 81f., calls Daskas’s thesis too speculative.

(declaration of faith) of the Second Council of Nicea in 787.¹¹⁶ Desire suggests its proximity to transcendence.¹¹⁷

5. Time – The Presence of the Image

In his recent discussion of the spatial conception of the icon, briefly mentioned above, Lidov also emphasizes its characteristic understanding of time.¹¹⁸ Based on various authors, including Pavel Florenskij, Antonova makes a similar argument.¹¹⁹ For the situation of the image in the sacred space, however, one must first stress its dependence on the liturgical performance that goes hand-in-hand with a definitive concept of time. Two components must be taken into account: the liturgical ritual – in which the entire biography of Christ, including the Passion, is again and again evoked through reenactment – as well as the calendar of feasts in the liturgical year.¹²⁰ More so than in the Latin liturgy, the birth of Christ already constitutes the prelude to the preparation for the Eucharist. The understanding that is the foundation of the liturgy is above all manifest in various commentaries on the liturgy. An example is the widely disseminated *Historia Ecclesiastica* by the patriarch Germanus I, who was involved in the iconoclastic controversy.¹²¹ More relevant is the *Protheoria*, written probably toward the end of the 11th century.¹²² The commemorative aspect of the liturgy as actualization is also reflected in the marginal pictures of liturgical scrolls. Transported into the present of the sacred space through the medium of the image, the process of salvation is emphatically communicated, even beyond the performance. The past is understood as present in both the liturgical ritual and the images. This perception of time depends on ritual repetition that can be concluded only by the Second Coming of Christ, i.e., the end of days, but at the same time it also depends on the concept that the Holy Liturgy is in direct accordance with the Heavenly Liturgy. Based on this presence, the connection between image / icon and viewer is accomplished. If Kemp says that fundamentally, the time to perceive the images “would involve prescribed dimensions, as when an image is used within an orchestrated ritual, as in church liturgy, and a voluntary component,

116 Price: The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea, p. 565 “For it is to the extent that they are constantly seen through depiction in images that those who behold them [the images] are spurred to remember and yearn for their prototypes.”

117 Cf., e.g., Rhoby 2010, IK4, pp. 50–53; IK6, pp. 54f.; Me96, pp. 279–281; Me97, pp. 281f.; Me102, pp. 287–290; in Rhoby there are many more examples associated with this topic.

118 Lidov 2017, p. 425.

119 Antonova 2010.

120 In a previous essay, I have tried to examine the relation between liturgical ceremonial and image: Schellewald 2008b.

121 Bornert 1966, pp. 125–180; Schulz 2000, pp. 155–165; a critical edition of the text Meyendorff 1984.

122 Schellewald 2008b, p. 150; fundamentally Bornert 1966, pp. 181–206.

when viewing is commenced and terminated, according to the viewer's choice [...],"¹²³ then it would be essential in the Byzantine context to emphasize the liturgization of the icon, e.g., the image's feedback loop with the liturgy. The liturgy conditions the viewer to perceive the images. Antonova formulates the understanding of the icon as follows:

The main idea, as I see it, is to propose a conception of the time at the borderline between the two worlds which realizes the transformations from the profane to the sacred, from the visible to the invisible.¹²⁴

Fundamentally, the concept of an event happening at this moment (for example, the Lamentation of Christ in Nerezi) plays a central role in this move into transcendence. The concept of time in our context corresponds closely to that which Kalokyris describes in a quotation from Evangelos D. Theodoron:

Normally in worship, time ceases to exist in the form of the past, present and future, and is changed into a mystical life-experience in which, while eternity is lived in the present, things of the past and of the future and even the eschatological things – that is prehistory and the main stages of the redemptive work of Christ, as well as the salutary gifts extending to the last days which flowed from him – are condensed and experienced mystically as something living and present before our eyes.¹²⁵

A brief look back at the constellation of episcopal figures and the celebrants at the altar in Nerezi again underscores the phenomenon of converging temporal levels. The intensity with which the images address the viewer plays a part in visually conveying this temporal understanding. In the brief conclusion that follows, we will examine the extent to which specific aesthetic principles prevail in the images from the centuries we have chosen.

6. The Aesthetics of Michael Psellos and the Limits of Painting

The writings of Michael Psellos (1018–1078) are repeatedly referred to in discussions of the paintings in Nerezi. The primary focus is on his ekphrasis on the Crucifixion as well as his text on the famous icon of the Theotokos in the Blachernai Church.¹²⁶ His

123 A quotation of Martin Kemp's oral remark in Antonova 2010, p. 10.

124 Antonova 2010, p. 23. She connects this statement to the discussion of reversed perspective in Florenskij and other authors.

125 Antonova 2010, p. 135, quotes this from Kalokyris 1967, p. 359.

126 Belting 1994, pp. 261–296. In the meantime, these texts have been translated into English: Barber / Papaioannou 2017, pp. 290–299 and pp. 300–306.

texts show familiarity with ancient rhetoric and were read by an influential (intellectual) elite. Belting directly connects Psellos's concept of a "living painting" (ἡ ἔμψυχος γραφή / *empsychos graphē*) to the stylistic appearance of contemporary painting (as well as painting of the 12th century) with its obvious focus on the emotionality of the protagonists. Thus the tender gestures of the figures were interpreted in this way.

However, both Cormack and especially Barber portray these direct references as problematic.¹²⁷ Barber's position is based on a critical probe that considers a much larger text corpus.¹²⁸ According to Barber, Psellos is not referring to recently painted icons since he defines art's potential as limited and

[...] the term expresses a particular desire on the part of Psellos for what might be called an authentic presence that is mediated by the painting but that is not the product of the work of art.¹²⁹

Psellos clearly expresses his position:

While this living painting exists as a result of component parts combined most felicitously, the entire living form seems to be beyond this, so that life exists in the image from two sources, from art, which makes a likeness, and from grace, which does not liken to anything else.¹³⁰

The so-called "living painting" is not a principle that, as it were, can be perceived as a stylistic phenomenon: "A 'living painting' thus presents the natural and the supernatural together, linking the human and the divine in the work of art."¹³¹

It requires the direct intervention of an "overseeing mind" that sounds the prototype in the painting. For Psellos, despite all the efforts of the painter, as viewers we remain uncertain that art, based on its own skill, will be able to transcend the limits between visual and intelligible beauty: "The icon may allow us to see an accurately rendered subject, but it will also permit us to know that we cannot grasp the whole in the work of art itself."¹³²

Everything offered on the level of visibility is only the shadow of what we long to see. To be sure, Barber also stresses that the icon of the Virgin in the Blachernai Church, Psellos's example for the relation between the visible form (ἡ μορφή / *morphe*) and the

127 Barber 2006; Barber/Papaianou 2017; the following texts are central to Barber's introduction (pp. 247–265): On perception and perceptibles (pp. 266–269); On beauty and on intelligible beauty (pp. 270–278); selected letters (pp. 348–353).

128 Barber/Papaionnaou 2017.

129 Barber 2006, p. 118.

130 Crucifixion Ekphrasis, Barber/Papaioannou 2017, p. 299.

131 Barber 2006, p. 124.

132 Barber in Barber/Papaioannou 2017, p. 256.

actual form (τὸ εἶδος / *eidōs*), is a special case since it is a miracle-working icon in which the divine itself is manifest.

In the light of this substantial critique, we cannot use Psellos as evidence of a new painting that differs on the visible level. However, the passages in which he discusses the visible clearly reveal parallels to contemporary painting. From my perspective, these parallels are the mimetic elements of painting that produce a proximity between image and viewer, as well as the principles documented above all in Psellos's texts, in which he names emotionality as an integral element of painting.¹³³ Even where a primarily linguistic or textual question is at stake, individual passages show that his rhetoric also derives from images.¹³⁴

Psellos is convinced that earthly beauty is able to ignite the longing for the intelligible beauty in our souls.¹³⁵ Thus, although art is not living in the previously accepted sense, it can serve as a bridge or canal to transcendence. With Psellos, we gain a position that, on the one hand, assumes great potential in the visual, but on the other also determines the limits of the visible and of visibility itself.

Psellos is not very far from contemporary painting, when, for example, he exhausts the levels of the sensuous. As I have said above, there are specific spatial, formal (the format), rhetorical, and temporal structures by means of which the senses are affected. Light choreography has a special role with its lively play of illumination by offering a sort of channel that, in a symbolic way, pushes into a space beyond materiality.

As much as the effect is created by the interplay of autological and heterological aspects, in the examples cited, in its experiential dimension it is also calculated to transcend earthly connection. The goal of the aesthetic experience is thus not to suffice in and of itself but to point beyond itself. Therein lies its special claim.

133 His thoughts on literary conception are to a great extent based on Dionysius of Halicarnassus. But even if his own contribution seems quite insubstantial, his claim to give expression to individual emotions ought to be acknowledged. Thus, in one of these passages he says: "As for us, we do not use the same type of composition when we are disturbed by different emotions. The careful orator must fit what is appropriate to each state of the soul, and neither create a difference in his words for the same emotion nor produce the same order and composition for different 'emotions'." Barber/Papaioannou 2017, p. 73 from the text *Περὶ συνθήκης τῶν τοῦ λόγου μερῶν*.

134 Barber/Papaioannou 2017, p. 217.

135 In light of the Crucifixion ekphrasis, Barber/Papaioannou 2017, p. 291, make clear that by looking at the icon, the viewer is urged to contemplate what it, in fact, is unable to show.

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IV. Concepts and Revisions

Ekphrasis Reshaped

A Different Poetics of Ekphrasis in Hellenistic Poetry, or: A Metapoetics of Aesthetics

Abstract

This chapter is about ekphrastic poetry and its poetology in Hellenistic times, which, according to my thesis, reflects a new aesthetic turn in poetry. The relevant sources are ekphrastic epigrams, which thematize works of art and artifacts. These poetic texts aim to achieve specific aesthetic effects and internal reflections in the perceiving subject. My thesis is that practices can be identified in epigrams that result from philosophical discourses on αἴσθησις / *aisthesis* (sensory perception) and on φαντασία / *phantasia* (imagination). As shown in the first case study, the epigrams about Myron's cow reflect a subject of everyday life that is not beautiful in itself but whose naturalistic representation is considered perfect in art. The poems employ particular practices of (re-)presentation while intentionally breaking the aesthetic illusion. In the second case study, Meleager's ekphrastic epigrams on Praxiteles's statue of Eros, an artfully enacted interaction between poet, artist, and subject becomes apparent. Processing Platonic as well as Stoic ideas, the subjective imagination takes center stage, relying on Eros as a demiurgic, inspiring, and formative force. The old rivalry between poetry and visual art is thus stimulated anew by a contemporary aesthetic discourse, which appears to be inspired by contemporary philosophical concepts.

Keywords

Apate, Ekphrasis, Epigram, Illusion, Phantasia, Poetology, Pseudos

1. Introduction: From Figures of Aesthetic Reflection to Practices

This chapter deals with ekphrastic poetry from the Hellenistic period and its metapoetics, which from this period onwards reflects aesthetic phenomena and criteria.¹ The relevant sources for this project are ekphrastic texts – mainly epigrams – dedicated to works of art and artifacts (e.g., statues, paintings, buildings, artifacts of everyday culture, votive offerings, carpets, funerary monuments). These poetic texts, however,

1 For elegant corrections of my English, I would like to thank my CRC colleague Matthew Chaldekas, as well as David Dollenmayer. The work on this chapter was carried out as part of project C1: “A Different Poetics of Ekphrasis in Hellenistic Poetry” of the Collaborative Research Center 1391 *Different Aesthetics*, project no. 405662736, funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG).

aim less at a detailed description or reproduction of the objects than at special aesthetic effects and reflections in the perceiving subject, such as illusion, recognition, attention, amazement, alienation, evaluation, or the establishment of criteria for judgement. These processes of aesthetic reflection represent a ‘different’ aesthetics in the sense of the Tübingen Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391 by *implicitly* dealing with concepts, techniques, and modes of the aesthetic (visual, acoustic, haptic, etc.). This implicit ekphrastic poetics concerns on the one hand aspects of production (e.g., artist, materials, stylistic criteria, etc.) and on the other aspects of context and pragmatics. In this regard, philosophical discourses on aesthetics and imagination as well as the fabrication of artifacts, the agency of things, and religious or political contexts and practices are particularly relevant. We can identify a nascent rivalry between poetry and fine arts (*paragone*) motivated by a new aesthetics and new techniques developed in the field of the fine arts and also by the new literary and textual culture of the Hellenistic epigram. Further insights on Hellenistic ekphrastic practices can be gained from contemporary philosophical discourses on αἴσθησις / *aisthesis* (i.e., sensual perception in a broad sense) and φαντασία / *phantasia* (imagination), whose interplay can be observed in the ekphrastic poems. It is thus useful to bear in mind the potential relation between concepts, terminology, and figures of thought – especially metapoetic reflections –, in Hellenistic ekphrastic texts and similar discourses, which we know from Plato and Aristotle, from the Stoa, the Epicureans, and from the Hellenistic (Skeptical) period of the Academy.

The guiding questions of project C1 of CRC 1391, “A Different Poetics of Ekphrasis in Hellenistic Poetry” are: to what extent was the rivalry (*paragone*) between ekphrastic poetry and the fine arts in the Hellenistic period conditioned by current discourses on aesthetics, and how did this affect poetic practices and metapoetic codes? Can we identify interactions between the aesthetic self-reflection of the poetic texts and the philosophical conception of sensual perception? What conclusions can be drawn from this for our understanding of Hellenistic aesthetics in general?

My working hypothesis is that especially in the Hellenistic period, i.e., since the end of the 4th century BCE, a new, ‘different’ poetics of ekphrasis emerges that reflects on current philosophical discourses on aesthetics, sensual perception, and emotional and mental realization and imagination (i.e., the heterological dimension). For this chapter, which summarizes our preliminary results, the focus is mainly on the poetic practices, on the (meta-)poetics of illusion, and the poetic display of aesthetic criteria (i.e., the autological dimension), which all appear frequently in Hellenistic ekphrastic poems. Against the background of a postulated specifically Hellenistic ‘culture of viewing’² figures of aesthetic reflection of various kinds (e.g., a viewing expert, a naive layman; being startled by the life-like quality of an artifact; the illusion of seeing or hearing; the

2 For the discussion on the ‘discourse of viewing,’ see Goldhill 1994; Goldhill 2007; Zanker 2004.

imagination's combinative ability) are to be interpreted and evaluated within various contexts (e.g., literary, textual, social, religious, political, spatial).

2. The State of Research on the Concept of Ekphrasis

Let us first take a brief look at the current state of research on ekphrasis in the field of Classics. Since the 1990s – and especially since the 2000s – ekphrasis has been re-evaluated as a rhetorical and aesthetic phenomenon.³ Central to this approach was the novel analysis of aesthetic and poetic ways of seeing as an interaction between viewer and material artifact or between reader and text. In this context, the Hellenistic ekphrastic epigram attracted new attention as a literary genre, especially in the early 2000s, significantly stimulated by the discovery of the so-called “Milan” Posidippus papyrus.⁴ At the same time, the entire body of Hellenistic poetry (roughly 300 BCE–100 CE) was increasingly perceived as the ‘literary modernity’ of antiquity, due to its complex reflection on changes in media, its new modes of composition, and experimental forms.⁵ In the course of the so-called pictorial turn and the associated rise of visual studies as an independent field of research,⁶ the literary ekphrastic discourses of Greco-Roman antiquity have been reassessed, with particular focus on Hellenistic poetry.⁷

Against this background, it is immediately apparent that the poetological preconditions for ekphrasis are different from those previously postulated. For ekphrastic descriptions are not only – or even primarily – an exact description of objects (as in the later *progymnasmata*, for example), but rather a meta-reflection that focuses not on the object under discussion but on the viewing subjects and their perception of an object or a work of art.⁸ As a result, the long-established definition of ekphrasis as a (purely objective) description of art objects,⁹ must be considered obsolete, especially with regard to Hellenistic texts. Similarly, earlier attempts to use ekphrastic texts to gain new insights into ancient art history or the lost ancient works thematized in such texts – which perhaps never existed – must now be regarded as problematic and methodologically too naïve.¹⁰

3 E.g., Heffernan 1993; Goldhill 1994; 2007; Webb 1999; Webb 2009; Elsner 2002a.

4 See Gutzwiller 2002; Zanker 2003; Zanker 2004; Acosta-Hughes/Kosmetatou/Baumbach 2004; Squire 2013b.

5 See, e.g., Männlein-Robert 2007b; Tueller 2008; Luz 2010; Kwapisz 2013.

6 Mitchell 1994.

7 Manakidou 1993; Goldhill/Osborne 1994; Lévy/Pernot 1997; Gutzwiller 2002; Meyer 2005; Prioux 2007; 2008; Otto 2009; Bartsch/Elsner 2007; Marino/Stavru 2013; Squire 2016; Kampakoglou/Novokhatko 2018.

8 Goldhill 1994.

9 Cf. Spitzer 1955.

10 On this see above all Friedländer 1912; Pollitt 1974; Laird 1993; Kansteiner et al.: Der Neue Overbeck.

The famous dictum of the Greek poet Simonides that “painting is a silent poetry, poetry is speaking painting” (transmitted by Plutarch in *De gloria Atheniensium* 346F) anticipates the tension between visual art and poetry that will play such a role in later ekphrastic texts. However, it seems that poetic reflection on this tension, and above all the poetic presentation of this *paragone* between the two arts, fully emerges only in Hellenistic literature.¹¹ As Ruth Webb shows, especially with regard to the Hellenistic texts, ekphrasis is not strictly speaking a “verbal translation of a visual representation,”¹² but rather the consciously constructed subjective effect produced by a description.¹³ Central to this effect is the gaze of the observer, or the “hermeneutics of reading / viewing,” activated by description¹⁴ and not the precise descriptive reproduction of the characteristics of an object. This reading or viewing is therefore never objective or neutral, but always subjective and emotional; in this sense, ekphrasis is only effective if it evokes emotions in the reader or viewer that make the described object appear lifelike and allow it to have an impact that causes reflection.¹⁵ This impact relies on its transmedial properties and its potential to combine and reflect on auditory, written, and visual forms of expression.¹⁶ Such ekphrastic qualities create the impression of liveliness and vividness in the reader or viewer.

The specific, complex ekphrastic phenomenon only briefly sketched here is particularly evident in Hellenistic epigrams that focus on the viewer of an object or the act of viewing it from an aesthetic perspective.¹⁷ This situation often arises from an inner-poetic interaction such as a dialogue between a (sometimes only imaginary) observing subject and a perceived, observed object.¹⁸ Epigrams of this kind are often found in anthologies (such as the famous *Anthologia Graeca*), where they are arranged in series according to specific categories and aesthetic reading practices (a particularly well-studied example is the “Milan” Posidippus papyrus).¹⁹ Here, too, the dramatization of the interpretive vision of an observer or observers comes into focus.

Ekphrasis is not primarily about the perceived object but rather about a primarily visual and, in many cases, also intellectual reflection of the observing subject, who becomes involved in the description itself and thus reflects on herself as an observer by

11 See, e.g., Zanker 1981; Carson 1992; Manieri 1998; Franz 1999; Sprigath 2004; Männlein-Robert 2007b; Barkan 2013.

12 E.g., Heffernan 1993; Mitchell 1994.

13 Webb 1999; 2009.

14 Fowler 1991; Elsner 2002b; Goldhill 2007; Squire 2015.

15 Heffernan 1993; Webb 1997; Webb 2016.

16 Boeder 1996; Elsner 2002b; Männlein-Robert 2007a; Männlein-Robert 2007b; Brassat / Squire 2017.

17 Goldhill 1994; 2007; Lauxtermann 1998; Gutzwiller 1998b; Webb 1999; Gutzwiller 2002; Zanker 2003; Prioux 2008; Tueller 2008.

18 Goldhill 1994; Prioux 2007; cf. Männlein-Robert 2007a.

19 Petrović 2005; Zanker 2003; Elsner 2014.

means of the perception and momentary description of the object.²⁰ This characteristic stands out particularly clearly in Hellenistic figure poems, the so-called *technopaignia*, where the textual body of the poem itself constitutes a visual form.²¹ Such *morphogrammata* are characterized by the fact that the lines of the poem visually depict the shape of an object for the reader, who thus at the same time becomes the observer. Moreover, the dynamic relationship between the poetic text and the visual image it forms is almost always confirmed metapoetically or meta-ekphrastically by aesthetic reflections and correspondingly coded terms, images, and *topoi*. The reader becomes the observer, and vice versa. The poem in turn becomes an image, and the image is a poetic text (a sort of ‘body’). In short, *technopaignia* play with the complex interaction between object and recipient on all aesthetic levels and reflect this metapoetically.²² They are to be seen as representative examples of Hellenistic poetics. But as we will see, there are many Hellenistic epigrams that reflect this same metapoetic ekphrastic discourse more implicitly. Moreover, the hermeneutics of viewing proves to be complex in terms of gender and culture, especially in Hellenistic texts in which even seeing from the perspective of a woman or an ethnic – usually non-Greek – minority is addressed. In such cases, alternative strategies for the production of *ἐνάργεια* (*energeia* / perspicuity) are developed, in which seeing subjects constitute themselves in opposition to a male or Greek perspective (for example, the female art spectators in Theocritus’s *Idyll* 15).²³

With regard to current research on ekphrasis in the broadest sense, there is still no collection of all relevant literary and inscribed poetic ekphrastic texts from the Hellenistic period to the early imperial period (1st century CE). Furthermore, a literary study based on such a text corpus is a considerable desideratum. Such a study could record and analyze contemporary philosophical considerations, theories, and concepts concerning all conceivable acts and modes of sensual perception (*αἴσθησις*), as well as the aesthetic-intellectual phenomenon of imagination or fantasy (*φαντασία*) in a readily available textual inventory, and compare and interpret them with regard to the ekphrastic textual testimonies (and vice versa). Our project is dedicated to this undertaking. Since Plato declared material artifacts to be inferior to non-material, transcendent forms in terms of ontological value and also thought traditional poetry spread an impression of illusion that was dangerous for the soul and its capacity for correct judgment, an important focus will be on Aristotle’s concept of *phantasia* and its relation to *ἐνάργεια* / *energeia*, which he was the first to treat in greater detail and which proved

20 Elsner 2002b; Gutzwiller 2002; Squire 2010; Squire 2013a.

21 Ernst 1991; Luz 2010; Squire 2013b; Kwapisz 2013; Männlein-Robert 2017b.

22 Squire 2013b.

23 Barnard 1991; Skinner 2001; Goldhill 2007.

very influential in the Hellenistic period.²⁴ The use of the term *phantasia* in Hellenistic philosophy shows that in Epicureanism and the Stoa, all reflections on nature or the outside world are postulated to be based on the evidence of perception.²⁵ In this context, *phantasia* is regarded as a necessary link between sensory perception (*aisthesis*) and theoretical knowledge. This is proven not only by the fact that we can experience sensory illusions but also that representations of imperceptible things can be understood as real, verifiable, and ultimately true.²⁶

The goal of this chapter is to show through selected examples how Hellenistic ekphrastic epigrams often reflect philosophical aspects of *aesthesis* and *phantasia*. Again and again, we will also see evidence of a debate with Epicurean positions. In this context, the late Hellenistic philosopher-poets Philodemus and Lucretius are particularly relevant.²⁷ In their texts, the Epicurean theory of *aisthesis* and, above all, visualization is explicitly discussed and negotiated vis-à-vis poetry and its conditions. Within the framework of this project, our aim is to produce a study that will collate the Hellenistic poetological and philosophical reflections on *aisthesis*, *energeia*, and *phantasia* conceptually and culturally, with an immanent Epicurean discourse on ekphrasis. As a first step, this chapter will present some basic observations in order to highlight the modes of interrelation between poetry and art in Hellenistic epigrams in two representative case studies.

3. Cultural and Literary Background of the Hellenistic Ekphrastic Epigram

Let me first present a brief sketch of the cultural and literary background of these epigrams. In the period of Hellenism, beginning in the early 3rd century BCE, in flourishing new cultural metropoleis such as Pergamon and Alexandria, important initiatives were launched to stimulate the contemporary literary scene. Especially in Alexandria, we identify for the first time in ancient Greek culture a systematic process of collecting texts, textualization, and literary criticism. All known and available epic and lyric poems, dramatic compositions, and prose texts of diverse genres were drawn into this process. All these poetic and prose compositions, which until then had mostly circu-

24 Aristot. *Rh.* 1411b22–1412a3; see Watson 1988; Watson 1994; Schofield 1992; Busche 2003; Calboli Montefusco 2005; Papachristou 2013; Sheppard 2014.

25 Long 1971; Zanker 1981; Asmis 1999.

26 See especially on Epicureism: Lee 1978; DeLacy 1989; Scott 1989; Everson 1990; Asmis 1999; on Stoa: Long 1971; Sandbach 1971; Bartsch 2007; Brancacci 2015.

27 For Philodemus: Zanker 1981; Greenberg 1990; Obbink 1995; Sider 1997; Janko / Mangoni: Philodemus; for Lucretius: Pope 1949; Townend 1965; West 1969; Schrijvers 2007.

lated only in oral or tentatively written form and together constitute the corpus of the famous library in Alexandria, became consistent texts and thus literature in a real sense. Against this background of comprehensive textualization, the epigrammatic genre acquires a special role: while other poetic genres are becoming literary or even ‘bookish’,²⁸ the ἐπι-γράμμα (*epi-gramma* / in-scription), as its etymology makes clear, had been fixed in written form all along. During many centuries, it is to be found in close proximity or even as part of a σῆμα (*sema*), a tomb, but also a visible sign. This could be a grave, a grave stele, or an ἀνάθημα (*anathema*), i.e., a dedication or an artifact on which the epigrammatic text was fixed. There it provides information on basic details of the object, like the founder or benefactor, the commissioner, the artist, the occasion, a description, and can even reflect the performance of a ritual.²⁹ In the course of the aforementioned textualization of poems, originally inscribed epigrams were transcribed onto papyrus rolls, and collections of epigrams were gathered into books, creating the first anthologies.³⁰ One special feature of Hellenistic epigrams in later anthologies is their arrangement in series devoted to the same artwork or the same subject of artistic interest.³¹ Their penchant for variations on a theme in accord with the rhetorical principles of *variatio* and *aemulatio* gives these texts a strong intertextual dimension. The very fact that Hellenistic epigrams became pure texts in a book led to their collection into rhetorically highly stylized and thoughtfully composed sequences or series. Even in the case of the epigrams on works of art, the original close relation between the material artifact and text is dissolved – the epigrammatic text in itself now must imaginatively evoke an artifact or picture: the direct viewing of an object is now replaced by the reading of a text. On the other hand, readers are required to reconstruct an often complex context with only the help of carefully placed hints and allusions. They are invited to take part in the so-called *Ergänzungsspiel*³² of companion pieces.³³ At this time, contemporary poets undertake the composition of purely literary epigrams, based on the old models and examples, but also try out new forms and consider new ways of speaking about, perceiving, and observing artifacts. My thesis is that beginning in the 3rd century BCE, there is clear evidence for a change or shift in the relation between poetry and the visual arts as poets start to regard themselves and their poems and poetic skills as superior to visual artists. The Hellenistic epigrammatists were grappling with the question of the relationship between poetry and plastic art. This is true of the Hellenistic ekphrastic

28 Pfeiffer 1968, pp. 102–104; Bing 1988, pp. 10–48.

29 The aspect of ritual and performance is emphasized by Day 2007.

30 For further details and criteria of composition and arrangements, see esp. Gutzwiller 1998b, and for the anthology series, see Squire 2010; Krevans 2007.

31 See Cameron 1993; Gutzwiller 1998b; Lauxtermann 1998.

32 Bing 1995.

33 Kirstein 2002.

epigrams, on which I would like to focus now, namely the epigrams about the bronze cow of Myron and Meleager of Gadara's epigrams on Eros and Praxiteles.

4. First Case Study: Epigrams on Myron's Bronze Sculpture of a Cow

First, I would like to focus on the famous bronze sculpture of a cow by the classical sculptor Myron (5th century BCE).³⁴ The original has not survived, but archaeologists have discovered not only depictions on coins,³⁵ but also full sculptural reproductions, especially from the later imperial period. A fountain figure that can be seen today in the Vatican Museums and was already declared by Visconti to be a copy of the Myronian cow and another fountain figure from Herculaneum or Pompeii were identified by Babelon and others as copies of Myron's famous cow – of course it should be mentioned that archaeologists consider these representations of inferior artistic quality.³⁶ This artifact is mainly known because of two famous sequences of altogether 36 epigrams in book 9 of the *Anthologia Palatina*, where this work of art and its artist are variously celebrated, and also because of Ausonius's *Epigrammata Bobiensia* 10–13 and another epigram on the cow, which appears in the new Posidippus papyrus (P.Mil.Vogl.VIII 309.66 Austin/Bastianini). I would like to focus here on the first sequence of epigrams in the *Anthologia Palatina*, almost all of which come from the Hellenistic period (AP 9.713–737), since they are the earliest written literary documents we have about that work of art.³⁷

4.1. Why Myron's Bronze Sculpture of a Cow?

Why did Hellenistic poets who lived more than 150 years after Myron write so many epigrammatic variations on such an old sculpture, and why did they concentrate on Myron and not, for instance, on the famous Athenian artist Phidias? It is striking how fashionable it was and how often the Hellenistic writers of epigrams were drawn to a work by an artist who lived more than 150 years earlier.³⁸ In fact, Myron is the visual artist most frequently mentioned in the *Anthologia Palatina*.³⁹ There is no literary or archaeological evidence for a reference to or discussion of Myron's cow before these epigrams, which

34 This section is a highly condensed version of chapter IV (Mimesis und Poetik zwischen Aisthesis und Ästhetik / IV.1. Die hellenistischen ekphrastischen Epigramme über Myrons Kuh) of Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 83–103; cf. Männlein-Robert 2007a, esp. pp. 263–269 (sequences of ekphrastic epigrams).

35 Schwarz 1971, pp. 26f.

36 Corso 1994, p. 71–77.

37 For a list with attributions of the epigrams, see Squire 2010, pp. 625f.

38 See also Speyer 1975.

39 So according to Schwarz 1971, pp. 14–27.

begin in the 3rd century BCE. However, their interest in the sculptor proves to have a purpose, especially when one considers the object in its original context: Myron's cow was placed (as a dedication, an *anathema*) on the Acropolis of Athens, i.e., in a sacred area.⁴⁰ It represented a young sacrificial animal that, according to aristocratic, conservative usage, embodied wealth, fertility, and growth. The subject and its placement thus reveal a deliberately old-fashioned, conservative tendency, even at the time of the creation of this dedication, because it was placed next to the altar of the goddess Athena in the Acropolis and, at the same time, was set in an as it were idyllic context, next to the statue of Eirene and other allegorical symbols of peace and prosperity.⁴¹ This indicates that Myron's cow was meant to be part of a coherent ensemble. Because of this idyllic context, archaeologists also assume a temporal relation between the placement and consecration of the cow and the peace of Nikias (421–415 BCE). The consecration of the cow is thus to be seen against a concrete political-religious background (cf. also the epigram of Theodoridas *AP* 9.743 on a consecration gift consisting of 12 bronze cows after a victory of the Thessalians over the Illyrians).⁴² Archeologists have determined that the area where Myron's cow was set up served as an artistic counterbalance to Phidias, who created the most famous Parthenon sculptures, the Athena Parthenos and the Athena Promachos. Phidias's more traditional sculptures in their urban context stood opposite Myron's rural artifact, which signaled a completely different political or cultural dimension.⁴³

Although they had the same teacher, Hageladas, in the Hellenistic period, Phidias and Myron came to represent very different concepts of art.⁴⁴ The very fact that the Hellenistic epigrammatists would concentrate on Myron and his statue of a cow, but not on the Acropolis artifacts of Phidias, may be because for them, Myron represents the ideal of a modern artist and his cow the ideal modern work of art, which they find highly attractive in terms of characteristic Hellenistic aesthetics: no more statues of gods larger than life, but everyday objects; no longer materials like gold and ivory, but bronze; no longer static and rigid deities, but a lifelike, vivid animal, a cow. Myron's skill in imitating or simulating a real animal was a proficiency hitherto ascribed only to divine or mythic artists like Daedalus, Hephaestus, or Prometheus. In Myron's case, we can go so far as to confirm a mythologization or deification of the human artist, as well as increased self-confidence of the artist himself.⁴⁵ Moreover, the very fact that an

40 See Overbeck: *Antike Schriftquellen*, no. 550–591; for the history of tradition and the work of art itself, see in detail Corso 1994, esp. pp. 56, 60f.; on the fate of this bronze, see the commentary by Bastianini/Gallazzi 2001, p. 192; see also Squire 2010, pp. 594–597.

41 Corso 1994.

42 See more detailed Seelbach 1964, pp. 108–113.

43 In greater details, see Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 85–87.

44 For the metapoetic value of Phidias, see Männlein-Robert 2003.

45 For anecdotes on artists enabled to create lifelike artifacts, see Kris/Kurz 1979.

artifact representing a cow is celebrated obviously reflects the contemporary Hellenistic fondness for bucolic subjects that also appears in the literature of the time.

4.2. Aesthetics and Poetics: Illusion and Deceit

What follows is an attempt to show that there is a subtextual aesthetic and poetic discourse in many of the ekphrastic epigrams. For that, however, we must broaden the frame of our study: If we take a closer look at the Hellenistic epigrams, we can see that the statue of Myron's cow is nowhere described in detail; what is described is usually the skillful power of the artist and the effect of illusion that his work of art produces in viewers.⁴⁶ Thus in these texts, the work of art serves mainly as a stimulus to reflect on how one ought to view, consider, and judge the plastic arts. Above all, we find reflection on aesthetics in the literal sense of the word (αἰσθησις / *aisthesis*). Moreover, the spontaneous sensory perception of an observer frequently proves to be wrong, an illusion. Myron's bronze cow is thus a favorite vehicle for contemporary discussion of illusion and illusory effects. This is evident from the striking use of terms like ψεύδος / *pseudos* (lie) and ἀπάτη / *apate* (deceit, fraud). On the other hand, the point of view and the style with which illusion is presented in the epigrams seem to go back to a well-known poetological discussion,⁴⁷ which is now reflected in a work of the plastic arts and thereby discussed and modified in a particular Hellenistic manner. In what follows, we will take a closer look at the phenomenon that I call the *semantics of illusion*.

Since archaic times, poets were supposed to tell the truth and to be teachers of human and divine things because of their close relationship to the Muses. During the period of oral poetry, the poet was to be taken as a custodian of collective memory, yet Hesiod already points out that poets can tell lies as well.⁴⁸ As texts were increasingly written down and literary prose developed, poetry could set aside the obligation to be trustworthy and truthful. From the time of Aristotle, poetry (and for the first time fiction) gained a freedom of its own and was allowed to be artificial in content as well as form. Of course, in archaic poetry, the supposed truth of the poet appears alongside various comments on the ability of poets to lie and deceive, for instance in Hesiod, Solon, Empedocles, Parmenides, Gorgias, and Simonides.⁴⁹ The conundrum exists from

46 See Fuà 1973.

47 More detailed in Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 87–93.

48 Hes. *Th.* 22–35, esp. 27f.: ψεύδεα πολλά (many lies); see Grethlein 2021, p. 21.

49 For Hesiod, see note above; Solon fr. 25 Gent.-Pr. = fr. 29 West: πολλά ψεύδονται ἄιοιδοί (many things the poets lie) [cited in Arist. *Metaph.* 983a3]. See as well Empedocles fr. B 17.26, 23.9 DK; Parmenides fr. B 8.52 DK describes his word order as ἀπατηλόν (deceitful), see Garzya 1987, p. 257; cf. Simonides in Plu. *Aud. poet.* 1.15D (= T92 Poltera): ἀπατᾶν (deceit); Rösler 1980; Garzya 1987, p. 246; Puelma 1989; Molyneux 1992, pp. 133, 144 no. 113; Feeney 1993; see also Squire 2010, pp. 600–608, and more recently, Grethlein 2021.

the beginning: it is also the poet's job to lie. In such poetry, at least until Gorgias (last quarter of the 5th century BCE), one cannot immediately decide whether poetic deception is intentional or not. But it is a well-known sophistic principle that poets are able to imitate anything without restriction, and also that poetry can create the same illusion as rhetoric.⁵⁰ Plato's response is well-known: his criticism of poets and poetry in *Republic* X. He uses Socrates to critique the widely accepted absurdity that a poet, like a painter, is able to imitate anything.⁵¹ What Plato actually is doing here is to argue against the sophist Alcidas, who had described Homer's *Odyssey* as a mirror reflecting human life. It is that very point which Plato wants to ridicule in his famous mirror comparison – that is, a painter can most easily paint everything in the world by running around with a mirror in his hands.⁵² Producing works of art in this way means producing things of inferior value in terms of Plato's ontological and ethical system. Such a work of art – let's say a tree – is the imitation of an imitation (the material tree we can see), which is the imitation of the general and true (immaterial) idea of a tree itself. But what we can see even in Plato's harsh attacks on both poetry and painting is the underlying fact that poetry, like painting, was obviously claiming to be universal and have no restrictions on its themes and contents. Plato defines his own position against contemporary sophistic opinions, especially in terms of *apate*, for instance, against Gorgias of Leontinoi, who regards *apate* as an artfully created illusion, as seen in tragedy.⁵³ What Aristotle actually does in his *Poetics* is to refer to the old discourse we see in Gorgias. *Mimesis* is not, as it is for Plato, standing at a distance from the truth, but standing for a sort of truth in its own right, for fiction and fictionality in broader terms. Since Gorgias, deceit or illusion are positive terms. In his opinion, the best tragedian is the one who deceives best. Also, the reader (audience) must have the ability, and willingness, to be deceived. The famous dictum of Simonides states that “the Thessalians are too stupid to be deceived” (transmitted by Plu. *Aud. poet.* 1.15D);⁵⁴ here, deception appears to be the declared task of the poet, and allowing oneself to be deceived is a crucial ability of the audience. Thus the aesthetic criterion of *willingly accepted illusion* – which is so important for the Hellenistic epigrams about Myron's statue, to which we can now return – can be traced back at least to Aristotle. After having seen what *apate*⁵⁵ and *pseudos* meant in

50 ‘Lying’ as the poet's task is still found, e.g., in Call. *Jov.* 65, see Hose 1996, p. 265, see also Call. *epigr.* 13.4 Pf.

51 Halliwell 2000.

52 Pl. *R.* X 596d8–e2; see Männlein-Robert 2002, pp. 14–16.

53 See Gorgias B 23 DK (= Plu. *de glor. Ath.* 5.348C), in detail see Garzya 1987, pp. 245 f. and Grethlein 2021, pp. 25 f., 29–31, 34–39, 45 f., 49 f. and *passim*.

54 Cf. Grethlein 2021, pp. 11, 33 and 142.

55 See Männlein-Robert 2007a, p. 266; Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 87–89.

earlier criticism of poetry,⁵⁶ let us concentrate on *pseudos* and consider what it means in the Hellenistic epigrams.

In the epigrams on Myron's cow, 'lie' always means that the statue is confounded with a real or living cow; that viewers, be they human or animal, are deceived, e.g., AP 9.716,⁵⁷ 719, 734, 737 (cf. 739 and 741). In fact, it is an error of the viewer that illuminates the discrepancy between immediate sensory perception and its intellectual reflection, and this error is deliberately caused by the artist himself, so that it is Myron himself who deliberately deceives or it is his art and artistic skill which are described as a lie or fraud; it is in any case an intended and objective fraud. Again, it is the old and well-known theme of the lying poets; the artist can be seen as analogous to the poet. What an artist like Myron does is to lie, for in his perfect works of art, the boundary between nature and art is hardly perceptible. The relation between model and imitation is no longer clear. So *pseudos* means that the artifact 'cow' cannot be distinguished from a real cow at all. After all, art should be seen as almost identical to its natural model.⁵⁸ Above all, we have to realize that in these epigrams, *pseudos* no longer refers to myth and the fantastic, but to completely different, even contrary contents: namely to a secular object of the everyday world. The old discussion about model and imitation is shifted now to things and objects of reality and the sensuous world. It is likely because of his realistic subject that Myron – and not Phidias – is the epigram writers' preferred artist. Besides, the ability to counterfeit reality is exactly the ability of a mythical artist like Hephaestus, Daedalus, and Prometheus.⁵⁹ It is the same with Myron, who we see becoming a mythic figure thanks to these epigrams.

To summarize, if we look at the striking vocabulary of these texts, we can see an old aesthetic and metapoetic discourse reappearing in the Hellenistic epigrams about Myron's statue.⁶⁰ Its specific terms are transferred now to a work of art, so we may be reminded of the famous phrase of the 'parallel' or 'sister arts.'⁶¹ But in what follows, I will try to indicate some characteristically Hellenistic aspects of art theory, poetics, and philosophy that contribute to a tension between the so-called sister arts.

56 See Grethlein 2021 for the ancient references mentioned and a comprehensive interpretation.

57 Surely Anacreon is not the author, see Page 1981, p. 146; Cameron 1993, p. 82, but even so it is Hellenistic (from the Garland of Meleager).

58 Cf. already Arist. *Ph.* II 8.199a15–17: art is imitating nature, see Blumenberg 2020.

59 See Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 17–19 and 24–32.

60 See Puglisi 1985; Meijering 1987; for the metapoetic value of 'lying' in Callimachus and Theocritus, see Männlein-Robert 2007a, pp. 268 f. with notes.

61 Cf. Hagstrum 1958, pp. 3–128.

4.3. Effects of Illusion

In none of the epigrams does the initial illusion, the deception attributed to Myron, remain as such; the illusion created and described is then undermined or subverted. An essential concern of these epigrams is to demonstrate how the illusion as such can be unmasked or even prevented. The described illusion is undermined in the following ways:

(1) By mentioning the artist by name. In almost all epigrams, the explicit naming and identification of the artist, Myron, appears.⁶² This identifies the lifelike cow as an artfully made object. As soon as we know the artist's name, we know it to be an artifact.

(2) By mentioning its material. The extremely frequent (AP 9.716, 717, 727, 728, 735, 736, 737) reference to the bronze from which Myron molded his cow is significant. As soon as it is pointed out that the cow, first described as deceptively genuine, is made of bronze, the illusion is broken. Some of these epigrams explicitly emphasize Myron's artistic treatment of his material (AP 9.716 [choanon], 718, [721], 726, 727, 729, 736 [see also 738–742]). To be sure, the resulting impression that it is an artifact is subsequently challenged by the fact that this effect was not achieved by art (τέχνη / *techne*) but by transformation (e.g., AP 9.716, 717, 736), freezing or fixing the living animal in bronze. The cow is thus an originally living being that has now been fixed in bronze. There is also the frequent remark (AP 9.713, 719, 720, 723, 732.) that the seemingly real cow is trapped or fixed on a stone base (see also AP 9.714). This is another reference not only to the materiality of the work of art but to its placement and display. Apart from the materiality, such a placement, unnatural for a cow, distinguishes the artifact from the real animal.

(3) By mentioning methods of producing the work of art: τέχνη / *techne* (craft, artistic skill), the 'hands' of the artist and the verb πλάττειν / *plattein* (fashion), for instance, identify the cow as a work of art.

(4) By mentioning the incompleteness of the work of art. It is emphasized that Myron's cow is missing organs (AP 9.721, 727, 735) and breath or soul (AP 9.715, 717, 734, 736, 737). Several times the vocal incapacity, or rather, voicelessness, of Myron's cow is thematized (Antipater of Sidon AP 9.724, 728; Adesp. AP 9.727). And yet, Myron's cow sometimes seems to the observer to bellow or moo. This impression is created by the extremely lifelike and realistic design of the cow. Here, however, attention is focused on the typical sound production of a real cow, its bellow, which of course does not occur although it is expected (cf., e.g., the future tense of the verbs in Antipater AP 9.724,

62 He is missing only in Euenus AP 9.717; the following epigr. 718 (Euenus as well) mentions Myron by name again. Obviously Euenus composed multiple such cow epigrams, and this may be the reason why his name is missing in epigr. AP 9.717; see also Antipater of Sidon AP 9.721: this epigram is placed into a series of epigrams by the same author, which may be the reason another naming of Myron was considered to be superfluous; cf. also 721 A, 722, 730.

728).⁶³ This shows a clear limitation of the fine arts. Even though Myron is perfectly able to create a lifelike cow, he is not able to give the material object an essential characteristic of actual life, namely the ability to make sounds with a voice. This is a key criterion for genuine life. On the other hand, in some epigrams of this sequence, Myron's cow seems to appear as a speaker and thus has a voice (see below), which subtly undermines disillusionment about the artist's ability but nevertheless points out for the audience the artificial nature of this artificial product. The frequent evocation of these points implies an obvious limitation of the plastic arts. Therefore, we can observe a disjunction between epigram and artifact because artifacts are deficient and do not deceive the viewer as they are intended to do. In a striking way, plastic art is on the one hand admired because of its artificiality, but on the other is described as deficient. At least in these epigrams on Myron's cow, art does *not* achieve what it aims to achieve: a total illusion.

4.4. The Philosophical Perspective

Now I want to concentrate on the manner of presentation, more exactly: the *perspective* from which the epigrams are delivered. Then I will single out two groups of epigrams:

(a) One in which the cow, the artifact itself, addresses an unspecified audience: AP 9.713, 714, 719, 720, 721, 723, 729–732. In this group we can find the old, oriental epigraphical device of a speaking object.⁶⁴ But as this device had become rare by the middle of the 5th century and survived only in the context of sepulchral cult, the use of a speaking cow in Hellenistic literary epigrams seems to be a conscious archaism.⁶⁵ This can be understood as another implicit means of undermining illusion. For when in the archaic period and later in sepulchral epigrams a speaking object, god, or animal makes the very presence of that god or animal evident, we have to interpret speaking objects in Hellenistic epigrams – such as the speaking cow – as recognizably archaic and therefore obviously artificial. Besides the information about the artist's name, the material he uses, and so on, there are many signs that reveal the cow as a representation. So this phenomenon (a speaking animal) no longer evokes presence but has to be interpreted as a modern Hellenistic device, an obvious hint at artful and artificial 're-presentation.'

(b) Now to the second group of speakers mentioned above, that is the knowing and distanced speaker. As we have seen, the deceit is always based on the sense percep-

63 Squire 2010, pp. 608–612.

64 Cf. Häusle 1979 and esp. Burzachechi 1962 (who describes the speaking objects, animals, things, and so on as an oriental tradition, see p. 48), esp. speaking animals, see pp. 22–25; speaking in first person, see pp. 38–47.

65 Burzachechi 1962, esp. p. 54; against Burzachechi's argument that the artifacts would finally be seen as 'alive', see Raubitschek 1968, pp. 11–16; Häusle 1979, pp. 43–50; Thomas 1992, pp. 63 f.; Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 94 f.

tion – *aesthesis* – of a viewer. But art of this kind cannot so easily be distinguished from nature by pure observation. Instead, a real understanding of an illusionistic work of art can only be reached by going beyond sense perception. A real and deep understanding of a work of art requires an intellectual act, the mind's corrective authority. But what does this mean? It means that in the Hellenistic epigrams on Myron's cow, a new way of looking at artifacts, a new mode of viewing is called for, a mode reflected in the person of the outside speaker / viewer.⁶⁶ If we recognize this aesthetic issue in the epigrams, we can relate it to contemporary philosophical theory on *phantasia*.⁶⁷ For reasons of space, I will only sketch it briefly here. Since Aristotle had given *phantasia* an intermediate position between pure sense perception and pure intellectual capacities, it had become a psychological faculty.⁶⁸ Other philosophical schools, above all Hellenistic ones like the Kepos of Epicurus or the Stoa, were concerned with the topic as well. Especially in Stoic epistemology,⁶⁹ *phantasia* is understood as a result of sense perception but is also validated and accepted through *kataleptike phantasia*, an act of rational judgment. Even if there is no terminological or strictly conceptual influence of Aristotelian or Stoic epistemology on the epigrams about Myron's cow, these philosophical theories and discussion about *phantasia* and the value of *aisthesis* reflect the epistemological discourse about the poetic production of the time, which is intensely concerned with poetic presentation of realistic works of art.⁷⁰ Reflection about optical illusion, which can already be observed in earlier Hellenistic poems, e.g., by the poets Erinna, Theocritus, and Herodas,⁷¹ might be related to an increasing awareness of such new, refined aspects of viewing among the Hellenistic epigrammatists. Thus the epigrams on Myron's cow are closely connected to the discourse on *phantasia* and the critique of sense perception.

The important point is that more than ever before, we find the observer in these epigrams becoming prominent, whose role is to show that the correct judgment of a work of art depends on the viewer. As in the case of Myron's cow, we may find here two modes of viewing. The knowing speaker has the role of rational reception, that is, he speaks from a superior point of view. He always knows the true nature of Myron's cow and unmasks other viewers, like the shepherd or the little calf, who are overwhelmed by artistic illusion. By addressing them directly, his didactic role becomes obvious.⁷² As the one who practices 'correct' viewing, he is superior to the immanent viewers, who rely

66 Cf. Zanker 2004, pp. 72–123, for the viewer's supplementation and integration.

67 Which are for the most part neglected, so Goldhill 1994, p. 207 (but even he doesn't go on in detail), also Gutzwiller 2004b, p. 361. For *phantasia*, see Watson 1994.

68 See Watson 1988, pp. 14–34; Watson 1994, p. 4766; Busche 2003.

69 See Goldhill 1994, pp. 208–210.

70 See Imbert 1979, p. 197 for a similar conclusion.

71 Erinna in AP 6.352 = 3 GP (cf. Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 38–43), Theoc. *idyll.* 15.77–149 (Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 284–300), Herodas 4 (Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 264–279).

72 Männlein-Robert 2007b, pp. 102f.

on their sense perception alone and experience an optical illusion. They practice modes of ‘false’ seeing. Thus we can view the Hellenistic epigrams on Myron’s cow as an extensive reflection on how to view a work of art. It is striking that the speaker in these epigrams lacks both the emotional and erotic involvement (see below) often found in other ekphrastic epigrams in which the viewer is drawn in by the beauty, perfection, or lifelikeness of an artifact. This underscores the point that the speaker has an exceptionally rational point of view, that he enacts the intellectual part, so to speak, in the process of viewing. But this presentation of the illusionary effects of art on others and the speaker’s distance from it makes clear that such a concept and style of poetry is conceivable only in a written medium. It is exactly this aspect of literacy which reflects a distance from immediate sense perception. In summary, the ekphrastic epigrams on Myron’s cow reflexively reproduce contemporary poetological and philosophical thought, as well as the latent competition between poetry and plastic arts, between image and text.

5. Second Case Study: Eros in Poetry and Art between Mind and Soul

Comparable to the epigrams about Myron’s cow are some Hellenistic epigrams by the poet Meleager (end of the 2nd century BCE), which reflect the phenomenon of φαντασία / *phantasia* (imagination) in an erotic context and show the clear emotional involvement of a speaker. While previous scholarship has considered Meleager’s epigrams in general as rather sentimental, unoriginal, and epigonal, more recent studies are now positively re-evaluating this kind of scholarly poetry, whose intrinsic value lies precisely in self-referentially reflecting on its method based on imitation and variation.⁷³ Other studies focusing on the composition of Meleager’s “Garland” and the arrangement of the individual epigrams and epigram sequences have revealed the sophisticated structural principles and extraordinarily reflective composition of the epigrams themselves.⁷⁴ In the context of the 12th book of the *Anthologia*, we find a linear sequence of Meleager’s pederastic epigrams (AP 12.54–97).⁷⁵ One group of them praises not only the beloved but also his birthplace (AP 12.55–62). Within this group there are cross connections between two successive epigrams, which can be recognized by their shared vocabulary.⁷⁶ Of interest for us are the two⁷⁷ epigrams AP 12.56 and 57, which are particularly closely related and even interconnected, and on which I will concentrate

73 For the traditional opinion, see for example Ouvré 1894, pp. 44–53; Radinger 1895, esp. pp. 44–53. For the modern opinion, see first Geffcken 1931; also Garrison 1978, pp. 71–93; Tarán 1979, pp. 71–93; Cox 1988; Guidorizzi 1992, esp. pp. 5–12.

74 After Wifstrand 1926, now mainly Gutzwiller 1997; Gutzwiller 1998b.

75 Extensively discussed by Gutzwiller 1997, p. 190.

76 Gutzwiller 1998b, p. 288.

77 On the so-called *Ergänzungsspiele* and Companion Pieces: see above notes 31 and 32.

here.⁷⁸ This is no mere self-variation but an intertextual diptych composition. Both epigrams deal with a statue of Eros by Praxiteles, most likely the famous Eros of Praxiteles, which was placed in the Eros sanctuary of the Macedonian Thespiiai.⁷⁹ It is probably this very Eros that was the subject of numerous epigrams from Hellenism to late antiquity.⁸⁰

5.1. Meleager's Epigrams on Eros

The two epigrams of Meleager AP 12.56 and 57 assume a statue of the Eros of Praxiteles (presumably that of Thespiiai):

Εἰκόνα μὲν Παρίην ζωογλύφος ἄνυσ' Ἔρωτος
 Πραξιτέλης, Κύπριδος παῖδα τυπωσάμενος·
 νῦν δ' ὁ θεῶν κάλλιστος Ἔρωσ ἔμψυχον ἄγαλμα
 αὐτὸν ἀπεικονίσας ἔπλασε Πραξιτέλῃν,
 ὅφρ' ὁ μὲν ἐν θνατοῖς, ὁ δ' ἐν αἰθέρι φίλτρα βραβεύῃ
 γῆς θ' ἅμα καὶ μακάρων σκηπτροφορῶσι Πόθοι.
 ὀλβίστη Μερόπων ἱερὰ πόλις, ἃ θεόπαιδα
 καινὸν Ἔρωτα νέων θρέψεν ὑφαγεμόνα.⁸¹

Praxiteles the sculptor wrought a statue of Love in Parian marble, fashioning the son of Cypris. But now Love, the fairest of the gods, making his own image, hath moulded Praxiteles, a living statue, so that the one amid mortals and the other in heaven may be the dispenser of love-charms, and a Love may wield the sceptre on earth as among the immortals. Most blessed the holy city of the Meropes [*scil. Cos*], which nurtured a new Love, son of a god, to be the prince of the young men.⁸²

Πραξιτέλης, ὁ πάλαι ζωογλύφος, ἄβρὸν ἄγαλμα
 ἄψυχον, μορφᾶς κωφὸν ἔτευξε τύπον
 πέτρον ἐνειδοφορῶν· ὁ δὲ νῦν ἔμψυχα μαγεύων
 τὸν τριπανοῦργον Ἔρωτ' ἔπλασεν ἐν κραδίᾳ.
 ἦ τάχα τοῦνομ' ἔχει ταῦτὸν μόνον, ἔργα δὲ κρέσσω
 οὐ λίθον, ἀλλὰ φρενῶν πνεῦμα μεταρρυθμίσας.
 Ἰλαος πλάσσοι τὸν ἐμὸν τρόπον, ὄφρα τυπώσας
 ἐντὸς ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ναὸν Ἔρωτος ἔχῃ.⁸³

78 Gutzwiller 2002, p. 107. See also Radinger 1895, p. 40 and Gow / Page: Greek Anthology, vol. 2, p. 664; "Within the sequence there are further connections between poems: 12.57, on a boy who is the namesake of the sculptor Praxiteles, is Meleager's self-variation on 12.56," so Gutzwiller 1998b, p. 288. The commentary by Clack 1992, p. 94 for these two epigrams is not sufficient.

79 Corso 1997/1998, p. 69; also Gutzwiller 2004a, p. 385.

80 Gutzwiller 2003, p. 72 with note 16.

81 AP 12.56. Greek text quoted according to Beckby: *Anthologia Graeca*, p. 40.

82 Trans. Paton: *The Greek Anthology*, p. 309.

83 AP 12.57. Greek text quoted according to Beckby: *Anthologia Graeca*, p. 40.

Praxiteles the sculptor of old time wrought a delicate image, but lifeless, the dumb counterfeit of beauty, endowing the stone with form; but this Praxiteles of to-day, creator of living beings by his magic, hath moulded in my heart Love, the rogue of rogues. Perchance, indeed, his name only is the same, but his works are better, since he hath transformed no stone, but the spirit of the mind. Graciously may he mould my character, that when he has formed it he may have within me a temple of Love, even my soul.⁸⁴

This Eros stands in a purely pederastic context. Remarkable is the use of the *termini technici* of visual arts and ekphrastic poetry, which construct inner images in the discourse on creativity and eroticism.⁸⁵ Meleager's erotic transformation of ekphrastic *topoi*,⁸⁶ produces an analogy between the practical experience of love (Eros) and an artistic competition between the god Eros and the human Praxiteles (Mel. AP 12.56 = GP 110).⁸⁷ At first, we identify the traditional epigrammatic *topos*⁸⁸ that a lover (his name is Praxiteles) is compared to the god Eros because of his attractive and beautiful appearance. He is described as deceptively similar to Eros (see, e.g., AP 12.54, 75–78, 111). Beyond that, however, there is an obvious game with names and a game about the subject-object-relation of artist and artwork. On the one hand, Praxiteles is the creator of Eros, on the other hand, Praxiteles is created by Eros, i.e., by the work of art itself.

Significant is the analogy that the god Eros is staged as a visual and creative artist just like the famous sculptor with the name Praxiteles (see l. 4: ἔπλασεν / *eplasen* [he created]). The motif of Eros as a sculptor is only found in the Hellenistic epigrammatist Dioscorides (end of 3rd century BCE): he shows a purely playful Eros, who molds the attractive body of a young boy (AP 12. 37).⁸⁹ With Meleager, however, Eros is drawn far more seriously⁹⁰ and, as it were, demiurgically: Eros creates what he creates in his own image (see below). However, the superiority of his work becomes clear: the contrast is introduced with *vũv δ'* (l. 3: but now) and, in clear contrast to the art of the sculptor Praxiteles, marks a kind of current, modern art of Eros. As is expressly noted, this is living art, a "living statue of a god" (l. 3: ἔμψυχον ἄγαλμα). Beyond the analogy between the visual artist and the creative god Eros, an implicit further analogy can be identified. The poet who praises his beloved Praxiteles as a second Eros is also inspired by love (i.e., by Eros). On the other hand, it is he who depicts the beloved in his poetry and portrays

84 Trans. Paton: The Greek Anthology, p. 309.

85 Cf. the theory of memory ascribed to Simonides, which makes use of loci or imagines 'inner' images; this is also pointed out by Armisen 1980, p. 24.

86 Gutzwiller 2003, esp. p. 68, 71; already Wifstrand 1926, p. 45, points to Mel. AP 12.56 and 57 for the erotic transformation of elements from epigrams that are actually ekphrastic.

87 But see Gutzwiller 2004a.

88 For more details, see Ludwig 1968, pp. 320–332; Radinger 1895, pp. 24–28.

89 See Tarán 1979, pp. 40–43.

90 Cf. against, e.g., Radinger 1895, pp. 20f., who regards the Eros of Meleager as purely "roguish."

him in the image of Eros, as the incarnation of Eros itself. The poet thus points out that he is the creator – inspired by Eros – of a poetic representation of his Eros-like beloved Praxiteles. In this way, the poet places himself on a par with the god Eros and at the same time competes with the sculptor and his stone image, since he, the poet, also gives life to his representation of the beloved and can portray him as inspired (lit. “full of breath,” cf. l. 3: ἔμψυχον / *empsychon*). It is *his* Praxiteles, living in the medium of poetry, which on earth – specifically in the city of Kos – arouses longing because of its beauty (l. 5, 8).⁹¹ Furthermore, from the speaker’s perspective, Eros can be abstracted as a creative impetus (see below), almost as the inspiration and stimulus of the poet Meleager himself.

In the immediately following epigram AP 12.57, there are numerous points of reference which allow individual aspects, hitherto only hinted at or implicit in 56, to emerge more clearly. Here the aspect of Eros as a creative artist is particularly important. The *agalma* of the sculptor and artist Praxiteles is indeed described as ἀβρός (tender), but this sensually perceivable manifestation of Eros seems to be deficient in every respect: The statue is inanimate,⁹² mute, it gives only an outer shape, it is made of stone (l. 2 f.). This is contrasted with a contrary image of Eros (l. 2–8) that is purely internal (l. 4: ἐν καρδίᾳ [in the heart]; l. 8: ἐντὸς ἐμὴν ψυχὴν [in the soul]), animated (cf. l. 3: it belongs to the ἔμψυχα [the animated]), and is not made of stone but made “better” (l. 5 f.). Moreover, this Eros can fundamentally change the state of the soul. By Eros here is meant not only the abstract urge of love but, as the following verses make clear, at the same time the inspirational power of love. In the third distich the speaker appears as a directly involved person (see the accumulation of possessives in l. 7 f.). The person in love in Praxiteles is recognizable as the poet himself, who presents himself as the powerless medium of the magician Eros, who has already become creatively active in his soul (l. 4: ἔπλασεν [he created], which echoes the same word in line 4 of the previous poem, where Eros is the creator). The poet articulates the desire (l. 7 f.) for a shaping of his soul, in which his sense, his Eros-centeredness is to be expressed accordingly.⁹³ This means,

91 The assumption of such complexity can be confirmed if we examine the last distich. Praise is given to Kos, where the beautiful beloved Praxiteles, the incarnation of Eros, grew up. Gutzwiller 2003, p. 85, emphasizes the literary echoes which suggest an intended interconnection within his epigrams. In one of his self-epitaphs (AP 7.418.3, also Gutzwiller 2003, p. 85), Meleager speaks of the fact that he himself lived on Kos in old age, which is where Zeus grew up (see also Gutzwiller 1998a, pp. 83 f.) It is implied here that Ptolemy Philadelphus was born and raised in Kos. The archeget of learned poetry, Philotas of Kos, is also closely connected with Kos in Hellenistic poetry, so that Meleager also seems to allude to this tradition (but possibly also in a provocative way).

92 Cf., however, Robert 1992, p. 394 with note 60, who erroneously declares the Eros statue of Praxiteles as ἔμψυχον.

93 For the expression, see First Corinthians 3:16, also Wifstrand 1926, p. 72. The soul as temple of Eros moreover lets Meleager’s erotic image enter into sharp competition with the erotic image of the artist Praxiteles, which was placed in a concrete temple in Thespiai.

of course, that Eros as a working principle is already active in the poet's soul, and the absence of a subject for the verb πλάσσοι (may he mould) in the final couplet allows the reader to imagine Eros as the artist who molds the speaker (and his perception of Praxiteles).

When examined on its own, the second epigram presents contrasting images of Eros, which are both products of a Praxiteles: the 'old sculptor' Praxiteles and the 'present' beloved. In order to understand this, however, a reader must supplement the text. The name of the work of art created by the sculptor Praxiteles is not mentioned (l. 1–3), then the name of the artist who creates the different Eros is missing (l. 3). This is therefore a supplementary game.⁹⁴ At first it seems that, also due to the explicit reference in l. 5 (ἦ τάχα τοῦνομ' ἔχει ταῦτόν μόνον [indeed, his name only is the same]), an allusion is made to the identity of names of the sculptor Praxiteles with the lover Praxiteles, who was already mentioned in the previous epigram 56. But in this epigram, a reversal now takes place in that the beloved Praxiteles, previously (in 56) the creature of Eros, is now himself called the creator of Eros. Furthermore, an equally animated (lit: ensouled) Eros (cf. AP 12.56.3) is presented as a counter-image to the stone image of Eros. The play from 12.36 with the relationship between artistic creator and work of art, between subject and object of representation, gains a further dimension. The beloved Praxiteles was created by Eros in his own image. Now he creates an Eros in the soul of the speaker, which in turn inspires the speaker to create the poem which depicts this very act of creation: the creation of art initiated by Eros is thus self-referential.

5.2. Philosophical Implications

As we have seen, the Hellenistic variations on the bronze cow of Myron reflect the discussion of the relationship between sensual and mental perception. They also reflect the discussion of the role of the *phantasia* in contemporary philosophical schools. Against this background, the mimetic relation of a work of art to the imitated model as well as the role of the artist become themes. A similar reflection seems to underlie the epigrams of Meleager, which go beyond varying established *topoi* of love epigrams.⁹⁵ In these epigrams, Meleager represents inner, mental, or spiritual images, or 'images in the heart.' With his references to the internalization⁹⁶ of images and to artistic creation

94 On this term, see Bing 1995.

95 More detailed, e.g., on the *topos* of the eyes, through which the inner love fire burns, see Ludwig 1968, p. 316 and *passim*.

96 Garrison 1978, p. 81, also speaks of a striking and for the first time in epigram "internalization of erotic experience," without reference to the philosophical implications (interpretation seems to be purely immanent). Further see – with regard to modern literature – on the phenomena discussed here, Mitchell 1984.

within the soul, which *a priori* is superior to and more durable than material images – and which proves the creativity of the poet to be superior to that of the visual artist – Meleager⁹⁷ offers an extraordinarily innovative anticipation of concepts of phantasy and poetic creativity, in contrast to the conventional conception represented in Cicero's *Orator* (8–10), Quintilian, and Longinus.⁹⁸ Thus already, Meleager localizes the image of Eros in the soul – generated by an abstract godlike Eros – and presents this alone as an appropriate and living archetype. Although we see here an understanding of art and poetry still concentrated on the principle of *mimesis* in the interior of the soul, the conception and impact of such 'inner' images in traditional love epigrams seem particularly remarkable. Not least, the figuration of Eros as the exclusive inspirational stimulus for poetic creation reveals a way of dealing with the theme of phantasy negotiated in contemporary philosophy – only a few decades before Cicero.⁹⁹ Meleager's conception of *phantasia* is based, as far as can be identified, on an idiosyncratic, eclectic combination of Stoic and Platonic elements. The perception of Eros here is not based on a sensuous visual experience (*aisthesis*), which would correspond to the Aristotelian and, above all, the Stoic precondition for *phantasia*, but on a purely emotional, spiritual perception that becomes concrete in the soul and serves as a model for concrete artistic imitation and representation. This is reminiscent of the concept from Plato's Dialogue *Timaios*, where the divine demiurge who creates the world produces everything without a concrete and sensuous model, but only according to the purely noetic model of transcendental ideas and needs the world soul as a mediating instance for the implementation and realization of these ideas in the world of things.¹⁰⁰ Admittedly, Meleager's localization of this creative event in a purely emotional soul space and, moreover, in the soul of the poet, appears to be a reversal and poetic inversion of the original Platonic concept. Eros is a personified abstraction or allegory;¹⁰¹ he seems to be an allegory of a completely irrational emotion¹⁰² that takes over the conventional role of the muse as a divine and inspirational power. In a different vein, Meleager's work is reminiscent of the Stoic concept of *phantasia*, according to which an impression' (τύπωσις / *typosis*) of sensual perception (αἴσθησις / *aistesis*) left in the soul, which has been approved by the author-

97 In general on the innovative character of Meleager's seal, Garrison 1978, esp. p. 77.

98 See in more detail, with reference to Phidias and the classical concept of art, Männlein-Robert 2003.

99 Therefore, further literary, epigrammatic evidence for the reflection of the *phantasia* problem should also be taken into account for somewhat later early imperial poets such as Rufinus (AP 5.27.1f.) and Makedonios Hypatikos (AP 5.235.1–3:) and Damocharis (AP 16.310.1–4).

100 Brisson 1998, pp. 29–54 and 71–106.

101 On the ancient, very broadly conceived concept of allegory, see Shapiro 1986, esp. pp. 4–6.

102 This aspect is also underlined by Guidorizzi 1992, p. 12. Cf. also X. *Mem.* 3.10.6–8, where Socrates discusses with the sculptor Kleiton the question of how to give a statue the expression of emotion (*pathe*).

ity of the mental hegemonic power (ἡγεμονικόν / *hegemonikon*), becomes a model for artistic concretization.

To sum up, in the erotic epigrams discussed above, Meleager reflects on the discourse of *phantasia*, which was particularly intense during the Hellenistic period. Meleager makes use of ekphrastic terminology to contrast the image evoked in the soul's interior with that of the artist Praxiteles. He thus highlights the competition between his own poetic creativity and that of the visual artist. Meleager's epigrams on Eros thus should be considered within the context of the Hellenistic discourse on the ekphrasis of works of art, since they process contemporary discussions of model and imitation, of creativity and the components of phantasy within the soul.

6. Preliminary Results and Perspectives

As an important element of the different poetics of ekphrasis we postulate in the Hellenistic period, we identify a new aesthetic turn in poetics, which emerges implicitly from the texts. The ekphrastic epigrams on Myron's cow reflect on a subject of the everyday world. Although not beautiful in itself, its lifelike representation in art is considered to be perfect. These ekphrastic poems engage in special practices of (re-)presentation while at the same time breaking the aesthetic illusion. Here the interplay of model and imitation goes far beyond the relation between poem and artifact, since we are confronted with many sequential epigrams on the same artifact and theme. Therefore, new dimensions of implicit poetics, poetical techniques and practices, as well as heterological aspects drawn from contemporary philosophical discourse, must be taken into account. The Hellenistic ekphrastic epigrams of Meleager on Praxiteles's statue of Eros are apparently focused on a beautiful subject and its beautiful (re-) presentation, but we identify a skillfully staged, complex interaction between the poet, the artist, and the subject. Here the subjective imagination of Eros comes into focus, which is based on Eros as a demiurgical and inspiring power – a concept known mainly from Plato's philosophy. Implicit (meta-)poetic techniques in the ekphrastic poems deal with new aesthetic criteria, aesthetic effects, emotions, and mental representations of aesthetic phenomena, which had been discussed philosophically since Plato and Aristotle but are refined and transformed in later discussions of individual and subjective epistemological concepts in the Stoa, in the Epicurean School, and the Hellenistic Academy. Thus basically the old rivalry between poetry and the fine arts (*paragone*) that we identified in the Hellenistic ekphrastic poems is to be seen as newly stimulated by a contemporary aesthetic discourse, itself obviously inspired by contemporary philosophical concepts.

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Parapictoriality

Parameters of a Praxeological Aesthetics in Antiquity

Abstract

Aesthetic concepts, as well as theories of sight and perception in ‘classical’ antiquity, are currently undergoing a renaissance. The focus lies not on the greater aesthetic models proposed by Plato or Aristotle but rather on concepts which can only be detected in traces or found in works of art as implicitly inscribed instructions for how to view or experience them. A critical analysis of recent research on the subject will aim to define the conditions under which antique aesthetic concepts can be reconstructed. This will take into account the physical interaction and tactile engagement with artifacts and art, as well as the spatial and sensory experience of the materiality and substance of art, as the parameters for aesthetic experiences within the context of lived and ritualized practices.

Keywords

Viewer Involvement, Pictorial Acts, Immersive Art Experience, Kinetics of Sight, Parapictoriality, Peripatetic Gaze, Praxeological Aesthetics, Visual Metalepsis

For several years, a renaissance has been underway in aesthetic concepts as well as theories of sight and perception in ‘classical’ Greek and Roman antiquity. It is no surprise that attention is no longer on the theories of Plato and Aristotle, theories that gained canonic status as fundamental texts of philosophical aesthetics in later European tradition. Current interest has shifted to concepts that played a rather subordinate role in those theories, most of them appearing not as consistently formulated ideas but surviving only in traces (e.g., in the fragments of the pre-Socratics) or implicitly deducible from literary texts such as the Homeric epics, Attic tragedies, or ekphrastic prose from imperial Rome.¹ But it is not the goal of this new interest in ancient aesthetics to ferret out or evaluate previously neglected sources. On the contrary, the search is rather for texts that will demonstrate alternatives to traditions of aesthetic thought established

* Translated by David B. Dollenmayer. Quotations for which no other translation is cited have also been translated by Dollenmayer.

1 Above all, the recent path-breaking essay by Porter 2010.

since antiquity. Above all, the focus on the seemingly obvious development of an ideal of the beautiful, which at least since Hegel has been at the center of most aesthetic theories, is now under challenge, especially with reference to ancient predecessors. In place of Plato and Aristotle as the founding fathers of modern idealistic aesthetics, concepts are to be identified that point to alternative paths of aesthetic reflection and thus also open our eyes to an alternative genealogy of modern aesthetics.² A recent suggestion that has attracted attention in this direction will make clear symptomatically what perspectives – but also what difficulties – come into view for the understanding of ancient aesthetic concepts.

In a series of essays followed by a monograph based on them, the classicist Jonas Grethlein has sharply criticized several theories of aesthetics and visual studies that, in his opinion, dominate current discussion. He argues that by privileging elitist and intellectualist discourses of autonomy, they lose sight of what he considers the actual goal of aesthetic reflection in antiquity, namely “aesthetic experience.”³ Grethlein singles out Hegel – and in his wake the entire idealistic and Marxist tradition down to Adorno and analytic philosophy – as the primary culprit in this development, but also the ‘linguistic turn,’ post-structuralism, and all semiotic theories of art and media.⁴ According to Grethlein, their method has always been to see art primarily as a series of signs and a carrier of meaning at the expense of the sensuous, materially tangible quality of works of art, in which one can, after all, discern the actual object of any aesthetics. In opposition to the “anemia” of this philosophical school⁵ that in the end reduces art to a system of visual representation, Grethlein offers the phenomenological tradition of philosophy and literary theory from Husserl and Heidegger to Karl-Heinz Bohrer, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Dieter Mersch, and Martin Seel. Surprisingly missing from this list of forebears is Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, the founder of modern aesthetics, who

- 2 In this effort, my chapter is closely aligned with the work of the Collaborative Research Center 1391 *Different Aesthetics*; cf. the contribution by Annette Gerok-Reiter und Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48, esp. section 4.1. It is symptomatic that the concept of aesthetics or some comparable concept that would describe a philosophical field conceptualizing a specific object of such an aesthetic – e.g., the beautiful – did not exist in classical antiquity. See Porter 2010, pp. 25f.
- 3 Grethlein 2015a; Grethlein 2015b; Grethlein 2016; Grethlein 2017. After the publication of this monograph, these further essays appeared: Grethlein 2018 (a text that had already appeared in similar form in Grethlein 2017); Grethlein 2020, in which he states that previous scholarship has ignored Plato’s outline of an aesthetic theory based on the concept of mimesis in the *Politeia*, apparently unaware that this had already been stated in Gebauer/Wulf 1995; cf. also: Wulf 2005; Gebauer/Wulf: 1998; building on their work on mimesis in antiquity: Stähli 2010, esp. pp. 62–65 on Plato’s *Politeia*.
- 4 Grethlein 2015a, pp. 309f.; Grethlein 2017, pp. 3–7 and 155–158. On the possibility of a ‘different’ definition of the concepts ‘aesthetics’ / ‘aesthetic’ and ‘art’ or ‘work of art,’ cf. the chapter by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48.
- 5 Grethlein 2015a, p. 309.

puts sensuous experience at the center of his aesthetics – although he does consider the senses organs of cognition, perhaps making him also suspect of intellectualism in Grethlein’s view.⁶

The paradigm shift that Grethlein offers is first and foremost a fundamental turn toward the materiality of artworks themselves. Instead of reconstructing ancient aesthetic theories, the reconstruction and analysis of the aesthetic, sensory experience of artworks should be the central concern. The starting point for an examination of ancient aesthetics should not be the cultural or social discourse that produces and controls both art and aesthetic theory, but instead the immediacy of sensory experience of the artwork’s materiality. It is no accident that Grethlein takes up Gumbrecht’s suggestion to make the fundamental experience of “presence” (man’s exposure to the spatial and haptic world of things) the basis of a theory of aesthetic – i.e., literally sensuous – experience of the material world. According to Gumbrecht, works of art as well as natural events are apprehended by human senses by their sheer “emergence,” by overwhelming the observer. They require no interpretive act of the mind.⁷ Although images are conceded to possess an “existentialist dimension” (by no means a new observation), for both Grethlein and Gumbrecht it remains uncertain what that consists of.⁸

Like Gumbrecht’s concept of presence, Grethlein’s aesthetics of sensory experience is explicitly opposed to any hermeneutical, semiological, or other interpretation aimed at understanding artworks by uncovering and interpreting their meaning and their cultural significance. This radical denial of ancient artworks’ interpretability, however, does not just remove them a priori from our modern understanding (which one could accept if necessary), it also precludes the possibility that already in antiquity, these works had need of a contemporary interpretive context in order to be understood, indeed, that such a context – or discourse of aesthetic judgment and interpretation of art – ever existed. This leaves open the question of how such aesthetic experiences, as historically or culturally specific perceptive experiences of historically and culturally equally specific material artifacts, can be reconstructed if the cultural discourse that frames and interprets these experiences is dismissed. At this point, Grethlein puts his

6 Baumgarten: *Aesthetica*.

7 On Gumbrecht’s concept of “presence,” see Gumbrecht 2004; Gumbrecht 2012; Gumbrecht 2014. The concept of the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391 is fundamentally different: since every artifact is understood to be situationally integrated in dynamic negotiations between autological and heterological dimensions, this integration must be acknowledged interpretively and also intellectually for an adequate understanding that goes beyond the obligatory sensory impression.

8 “Materiality”: Grethlein 2017, pp. 151–190; “existentialist dimension”: Grethlein 2017, p. 151. That images in antiquity have an ‘existential’ dimension – although in quite a different sense – has been asserted above all by the classical archeologists of the so-called Vernant School in Paris since the 1980s. Cf. Universität Lausanne 1984; Schnapp 1987; Schnapp 1988.

money on theories of cognition of visual perception that attempt to define the difference between the perception of works of art and all other visual events as a cognitive capacity to differentiate, as well as on theories of art that make this difference the basis of understanding the perception of images. Primary among the proponents of this direction is Richard Wollheim, whose well-known formula for the perception of images – “seeing-in” – is modified by Grethlein as “seeing as-if.”⁹ According to Grethlein, this “seeing as-if” enables “immersive experiences” through and with images, which Grethlein in the end sees as the core of his aesthetic theory: an immersion in the images, very similar to Gumbrecht’s experience of “presence,” but with the constant consciousness of the images’ fictional character.¹⁰

Thus, in the end, Grethlein’s argument reduces the perception of images to a cognitive problem – the processing of sensory impressions in visual perception. The fact that visual media – pictures, artifacts, architecture, etc. – always presuppose specific cultural and historical knowledge that guides their legibility, visibility, spatiality, and suitability as an object one can move, use, or look at – in sum, their status as an event within the material world – escapes him. The interpretations of images that Grethlein himself presents as examples are neither adequate to make his approach plausible nor convincing as a new, alternative aesthetics: they are all conventional iconographic readings of vase paintings, quite traditional hermeneutics of images that trace the theme, content, and meaning of a picture. And what Grethlein offers as examples of immersive experiences are the long-since familiar and extensively researched vases with eyes that as containers seem to look at the viewer (section 3 below), or inscriptions on vases that enter into a ‘dialogue’ and ‘communicate’ verbally with viewers¹¹ – surely objects that stimulate visual, physical, and sensory experiences that go far beyond the ‘reading’ and interpretation of narrative images but have long since been extensively described and studied as elements of a complex arrangement of social, performative, haptic, aesthetic, and other sensory experiences within a ritualized commensality. They can hardly claim to provide new insights as a previously unknown or even undervalued form of “aesthetic experience.” To describe such experiences as “immersive” in the first place is hardly appropriate; that concept is well known to have been coined to describe a literal immersion of the whole body in a virtual-reality environment that the senses can hardly recognize

9 Grethlein 2017, pp. 158–190. On Wollheim’s “seeing-in,” see Wollheim 1980, pp. 137–151. On the critique of Grethlein’s approach, see esp. Junker 2020. As Junker correctly observes, Grethlein’s own analyses of images (mostly on Greek vases) are based on exactly the same hermeneutical methods successfully employed for decades by classical archeology – the most appropriate discipline for interpreting vase paintings, not art history, as Grethlein mistakenly asserts.

10 On the immersive nature of aesthetic experience, see Grethlein 2017, pp. 18–29.

11 On the interpretation of vase paintings as catalysts of “immersive experiences,” see Grethlein 2017, pp. 192–248; On inscriptions on vases that address the observer, see most recently (and overlooked by Grethlein) Stähli 2014, with many references to more extensive literature.

as fiction – thus an almost perfect simulation of reality. No matter how virtuoso the creation of the drinking vessels at a symposium, there can be no question that they induced such an experience. On the other hand, immersive experiences are an established and thoroughly analyzed phenomenon of other artworks that Grethlein does not take into account, namely, sculptures and, above all, Hellenistic and Roman statuary groups that, through their formal design, spatial arrangement, positioning, and precisely deployed features to guide the gaze, aim to involve the viewer and facilitate immersive experiences. We will return to them later.

As correct as Grethlein's emphasis on the sensory experience of art in antiquity is, his project fails because he has no plausible model to explain the aesthetic, sensory perception of art's materiality as *art* beyond the observation of man's basal cognitive ability to understand visual events and process them with his organs of sight. Thus it is not surprising that Grethlein's own analyses of images do not go beyond the parameters, established in the 1980s, of a semiotically influenced 'reading' of images, primarily vase paintings. Still, Grethlein's insistence on the sensuousness of aesthetic experience correctly draws attention to a deficit: in most surveys of and reference works on philosophy, the existence of an aesthetics in antiquity is either outright denied (with a reference to Kristeller's famous dictum that there was no aesthetic theory before Baumgarten¹²) or the discussion of ancient aesthetic concepts is restricted to theories of mimesis.

But the fact is that such an aesthetic discourse that puts sensory experience foremost can be shown to have existed in antiquity, even if it can be only partially reconstructed. The deficit that Grethlein wants to correct is only apparent. As we will show below, exactly what Grethlein demands has long since been presented in the literature.¹³ Thus, in 2010, the classical scholar James I. Porter published "The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece," a monumental monograph aimed at solving the same deficit that Grethlein pillories. He writes that the discussion of aesthetics in Greece was idealized and formalized by Plato and Aristotle, thereby suppressing older traditions of aesthetic, sensory experience of materiality and replacing them with aesthetic theories of the beautiful, ultimately providing the foundation for the later European tradition of philosophical aesthetics.¹⁴ What also needs to be taken into account, however, is an aesthetics of "sensualism," the "sensuous experience of art," and the "aesthetic materialism" of art – exactly what Grethlein also strives to do. In his meticulous and thorough analysis of literary and philosophical sources, Porter documents the impressive variety of widely differing forms of aesthetic experience, the engagement with form,

12 Kristeller 1951, esp. pp. 496f.

13 As Junker 2020 emphatically points out.

14 Porter 2010. Surprisingly, Grethlein seems not to be aware of this publication. It would have saved him some ink.

design, and materiality of artistic objects, and not only the contemplation of artworks in a narrow sense, but of every kind of sensory experience of materiality, appearance, surface texture, and color of artifacts, including, for example, the materiality of writing and inscriptions, but also aesthetic stimulation through musical experiences of listening and singing, including the performative, communal choral singing so important in Greek antiquity.

Porter – as well as Grethlein – has rightly distanced himself from traditional aesthetics as a theory of the perception and knowledge of the beautiful and replaced it with a reconstruction of ancient approaches to a theory of sensory experience. But like Grethlein more recently, Porter also fails to relate the impressive number of written sources he cites to surviving ancient artworks (or artifacts) in order to show clearly how they *as artworks* were bound up with the cultural and social processes of their use and perception and how, in interaction with their users and by means of their materiality, surface texture, artistic form, color, situation in space, visibility, and use developed, asserted, and, as objects, controlled their aesthetic effect themselves. One does not have to go so far as to promote artworks to independently acting agents of their own effect in order to clarify an obvious, long-since acknowledged point: artworks and other artifacts are designed and created so that they not only guide their own aesthetic reception but also include the viewer as an active participant in the development of this aesthetic effect.¹⁵

Neither Porter nor Grethlein succeeds in conceptually deriving their arguments for a ‘different’ aesthetic from the visual and other sensory experiences of ancient viewers and then to collate these experiences with forms – observable on the artwork or other artifacts – that guide viewers, direct their gaze, and evoke their sensibility for color, visual effects, or tactile stimuli, thus analyzing them as events of a genuinely aesthetic experiential environment. This could have been easily done and would hardly have failed on account of insufficient preparation. For it is not the case that this kind of study of objects is a completely neglected area of classical studies, as Porter claims at the beginning of his book and Grethlein also wants us to believe. On the contrary, since the gradual growth in research of ancient sculpture in the 18th century and the beginning of systematic study of Greek vase painting in the nineteenth, methodological

15 On artworks and objects as agents, see Gell 1998; various perspectives on the discussion initiated by Gell on the ‘power of things’ can be found in Osborne / Tanner 2007; Hahn 2015; on Bredekamp’s theory of the *Bildakt*, see footnote 53 below. Just as one cannot ascribe to works of art the ability to act, the long-since recognized and often researched fact that monuments, artworks, and other artifacts can take on new meaning and be ‘read’ differently in changing historical, social, and cultural contexts must not lead us to ascribe object biographies to them as if these changing ideas about their meaning necessarily inscribe themselves in these objects and remain always available. On object biographies, see the critical arguments against this biological metaphor that inscribes in artifacts the inappropriate idea of a biographical narrative in Hahn 2015.

approaches and a set of analytical concepts were developed that allow us to analyze sculptures and mythological vase paintings, but also wall paintings, architecture, and other artistic object of daily use, in their respective social, cultural, spatial, and perceptual contexts and successfully identify various forms of tactile, visual, or multisensory experiences – e.g., religious rituals, celebrations, theater performances, athletic contests, arena spectacles, and triumphal processions, as well as social situations like the symposium – and apprehend them descriptively and analytically as events of visual perception. Seeing cannot be reduced to the conditions of the visual perceptive apparatus – merely a representation of reality created by the physiological and optical processes of the visual mechanism – as Grethlein would have us believe. Instead, it takes place under particular perceptive, communicative, or interactive conditions; it is a form of perception of reality guided by specific historical, social, and cultural patterns of knowledge and interpretation.¹⁶ By no means are the conditions that determine our visual experiences nebulous and difficult to comprehend. They are fundamental cultural habits, learning processes building up an apparatus of interpretive routines, recollections, and experiences that allow the visual center in the brain to translate our visual (and other sensory) impressions into cognitively understandable visual information and interpretation of the world of experience. These interpretive tools are always culturally and socially transmitted and historically specific; although individually experienced, they are always socially acquired. We always share the cultural interpretive patterns with which we process visual impressions with a social group of individuals with similar or related cultural habits.

1. The Praxeology of Visual Perception

Instead of studying artistic images as visual representations of the real world, how would an aesthetics look whose central concern was to analyze the sensory experience of art's materiality and the interaction between the viewer and the 'thingness' of artworks and artifacts? Building on poststructuralist approaches, Sophia Prinz a decade

16 For some time now, research on the sense of vision, the perception of art, the viewer's management of the gaze, and artworks themselves, as well as on the optical and cognitive conditions of human sight, has been enjoying a certain boom; I offer only a selection of essays that have dominated the discussion on seeing in classical antiquity: Elsner 2007; Courtray 2013; Giuman 2013; Squire 2016; Neer 2019. Available ancient sources have been clearly collected and annotated by Moser von Filseck 1996, a publication that deserved a better reception. Publications on visual communication between humans and the gods (or their images) now constitute their own subgenre, see the fundamental Scheer 2000; cf. also Platt 2011. Not useful, since written without knowledge of Scheer 2000, is Grand-Clément 2017.

ago showed the way with the outline of an aesthetics of materiality.¹⁷ Like Grethlein, Prinz also rejects cultural-semiotic analyses that understand visual media, artworks, and artifacts as mere vehicles for signs or representations onto which cultural meanings – such as lifestyles or cultural practices – are inscribed, the decoding of whose significance is the primary task of interpretation.¹⁸ What Prinz proposes is a “praxeology” of visual perception with a sociological and action-theoretical approach which assumes that humans acquire, store, apply, and pass on cultural knowledge – “the socio-cultural conditions of their existence” – not only through cognitive verbal and visual communication but also store – “incorporate” – it as physical knowledge in their actions, movements, and body language. They then reproduce, performatively enact, and communicate the resulting “internalized systems of rules.” Prinz calls this incorporated knowledge an “unconscious [...] *informal* logic” of action, a “knowledge of praxis” that is non-cognitively, spontaneously, and intuitively acquired and implemented. As “patterns and codes of praxis” it is again implemented and displayed in physical actions; thus, it achieves precisely what Bourdieu calls the physical “habitus.”¹⁹ The body is not just a surface onto which a cultural code of physical forms of expression is inscribed, but is itself the producer of such cultural schemata.

As Prinz writes, the model of an “incorporated knowledge” is quite compatible with discourse-theoretical approaches; incorporated knowledge is cultural and social knowledge acquired and stored by non-discursive practices and reproduced in practical action. Thus Prinz can point to Michel Foucault, who understands discourse as an “implicit knowledge” that allows humans to understand and interpret the world and can appear as practical, non-cognitive, ‘incorporated’ knowledge.²⁰ Even though Prinz correctly stresses that Foucault can be read ambivalently here, with the notion of the *dispositive*, he offers a concept to transfer the praxeological approach to a plausible scenario for a praxeological aesthetics. In Prinz’s reading of Foucault, dispositives can be understood as spatial regularities and materialities – objectified topologies – in which subjects react to the contingency of spatial and material events with discursive practices, subjectify the dispositive by their “schemata of perception” and their physical practices, and compose it as an order constitutive of knowledge and perception. Thus artworks – and generally, all forms of visual media or artifacts – are more than mere representations that can be interpreted for the cultural discourse condensed within

17 Prinz 2014, esp. pp. 32–35, 41–116, and 283–327; with similar arguments Reckwitz 2003, to whom Prinz refers; cf. also Reckwitz 2017, chapter 1.1 on “Aesthetic Practices.” For an overview of praxeological approaches in visual studies and theories, see Seja 2009.

18 Prinz 2014, pp. 20–31.

19 Prinz 2014, pp. 33–35; on ‘habitus’, see Pierre Bourdieu 1990, pp. 52–65; cf. Krais / Gebauer 2002.

20 Prinz 2014, pp. 41–166 (the chapter “*Foucaults Analyse visueller Ordnungen*” – Foucault’s analysis of visual regulations); cf. Foucault 1972, pp. 192 f.

them; in the perception of subjects, through their gaze, they become elements of dispositives in which humans both cognitively and intuitively, sensuously and physically react to and interact with these material objects. Thus Prinz can read dispositives in Foucault's sense as spaces in which we react physically to the materiality of things, perceive objects as a sort of material actants, as an environment that brings demands for action to our attention. In response, our physical and sensory reactions establish discursive practices – a practical incorporated knowledge. Within a dispositive, spatial orders of things and viewers' forms of perception determine each other; the material world and ordering of artifacts shapes the visual experience and thereby participates in the creation of knowledge. Prinz interprets the material world of things – including images and artworks – as active, “image-producing media.”²¹ Foucault's dispositives are thus directly related to a concept I have for several years tentatively been calling *parapictoriality*. It means the ensemble of practices, discourses, and cultural knowledge by which images or artworks are constituted and become recognizable and ‘readable’ as such.²²

Unlike Grethlein's rather vague plea for an aesthetics of artifacts' materiality or Gumbrecht's existentialist wonder at the presence of things, Prinz's praxeology of seeing offers a plausible theoretical model that understands aesthetic perception not just as a purely cognitive visual experience or decoding of an image discourse, but also as the result of physical interaction, an aesthetic experience guided by non-cognitive, incorporated knowledge. Prinz's suggestion, building on Foucault and Bourdieu, assumes that cultural and social knowledge is not just cognitive knowledge but can also be physically acquired – incorporated – as practical, discursive knowledge. Human beings see and understand the external world and, through sensory perception incorporate ways of behavior, i.e., cognitively and physically acquired knowledge of the forms of expression and action, a knowledge of physical reactions and methods of presentation, and deploy them both intuitively and spontaneously in their physical behavior and reproduce them expressively in their body language. The actions of these agents, as Prinz perceptively remarks, have more significance than they themselves are aware of²³ – they are not fully conscious of the practices they acquire and incorporate, as though effortlessly acquiring discursive knowledge.

In what follows, I will use three examples to show how a praxeology of aesthetic experience and perception for artworks from Greek and Roman antiquity could be developed. I have chosen examples that presuppose three different dispositives of the perception and experience of art, require three different levels of artistic expectation from their viewers, and represent three different genres of artistic works that require various forms of use and manipulation. They also come from different epochs. Moreover, they

21 Prinz 2014, pp. 26–30.

22 See Stähli 2022a.

23 Prinz 2014, p. 294.

are by no means eccentric examples that represent only special cases but instead exemplify well-known works whose analysis could easily be applied to many similar cases. As an introduction before my first example, I present an artwork from a more recent era as contrast to my ancient examples, but by no means should one assume that a praxeological aesthetics is intended only for the perception of the art of classical antiquity and cannot on principle be applied to more recent – or, in fact, more ancient – epochs.

2. Where is Diotima? Visual Metalepsis

The concept of metalepsis, coined by Gérard Genette, identifies an artistic technique common both in antiquity and modern times that shatters an image's mimetic illusion, unmask the presentation as a representation, and lets viewers know that they are dealing with an object whose represented reality they are supposed to see through, thus clearly stressing the artificial, artistic character of art as an artifact created by human hands – in Grethlein's words, as an instrument that emphasizes the materiality of art and identifies that as the object of an aesthetic experience. By way of introduction, I shall begin with an illustrative example of Genette's concept of metalepsis in a painting. Despite its self-evident acceptance in literary studies, metalepsis has attracted hardly any attention from art historians, much less from classical archeologists. In a second step, I will show how precisely the concept of visual metalepsis offers a convenient entry into praxeological aesthetics, an aesthetics that – compared to hermeneutic or semiotic readings of visual media – foregrounds intuitive, emotional, and physical interaction with objects, artifacts, and artworks.

As used by Genette, metalepsis is a – if not *the* – key concept in a complex narratological theory that its author has revised several times and gradually expanded, resulting in steadily increasing conceptual differentiation and ramification.²⁴ From an art-theoretical or aesthetic standpoint, however, one can distill a relatively manageable definition that ignores the various narrative perspectives of narratological analysis²⁵ –

24 Genette mentions “*métalepse*” in Genette 1972, pp. 243–246 (English trans. Genette 1982; pp. 106, 115), and again in Genette 1983 (English trans. Genette 1988), then in a paper for a conference devoted solely to the concept of metalepsis: Genette 2005; and finally in a monograph with a revised and expanded version of the latter, Genette 2004. The literature on his concept of metalepsis is already vast; useful and critical analyses that open up narratological perspectives on the concept are Fludernik 2003 and Hanebeck 2017.

25 I do not mean to say it would make no sense to transfer Genette's narrative perspectives onto visual images. Thus, although most pictures do not distinguish between a first-person narrative (i.e., an extradiegetic narrative in which the narrator appears as an explicit “I”) and a third-person narrative (i.e., a heterodiegetic narrative in which the narrator does not appear), there are pictures that do this, e.g., artists' self-portraits. For the argument I am making here, however, this is irrelevant. Essays on the subject can be found in Pier/Schaeffer 2005; for the discussion

except for the one that is important here: In classical rhetoric as well as in Genette's narratology, metalepsis identifies a transgression in narrative perspective, a change in the narrative voice, or a change of location from the level of narration (the 'diegetic' level in Genette) to a standpoint outside the narrative – as the voice of a commentator or interpreter of the story who often merges with the voice or position of the author and thus breaks through the diegetic narrative strand. But not always: Dorrit Cohn has drawn attention to the fact that in addition to this classic form of metalepsis – which Cohn defines as “*métalepse extérieure*” – there is also a less common form she calls “*internal metalepsis*” (“*métalepse intérieure*”), in which a person who is part of the diegesis unexpectedly addresses the reader directly, thus momentarily falling out of their role in the narrative.²⁶ However rare this form of metalepsis may be in written narrative, it corresponds to a frequent visual metalepsis common to all epochs of art history: the eyes of a figure in a painting looking directly out at the viewer.²⁷ Cohn gave this special form of internal metalepsis the epithet “*mise-en-abyme*,” a wonderful expression that unfortunately has had an unparalleled career in art-historical and classical archeological literature in English; it inflates every random form of *trompe-l'œil* effect or questioning and ironizing of the conventions of visual representation, no matter how common, into an apocalyptic plunge into a chasm of visual mirage.

What does a visual metalepsis look like? As an introduction, I have chosen a familiar 18th-century painting whose special metaleptic quality has apparently never been recognized before (Fig. 1).²⁸ The second version of Anselm Feuerbach's *Symposium*, or *Gastmahl des Platon*, a painting of monumental dimensions, now hangs in the stairwell

of the figure of artistic metalepsis in antiquity, see Eisen/Möllendorff 2013. Genette himself had hardly anything to say about metalepsis in pictures, but see Genette 2004, pp. 79–81 on Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, where he follows Michel Foucault's interpretation closely). His attention was more attracted to film (Genette 2004, pp. 58–78) – not by accident, film being narratologically the most fruitful visual medium. Visual art, however, remained in the end foreign to Genette. His own outline of an aesthetics follows a comparatively conventional path: Genette 2010 (English trans. Genette 1997b).

- 26 Cohn 2005; “*métalepse extérieure*”: Cohn 2005, pp. 122–125; “*métalepse intérieure*”: Cohn 2005, pp. 125–130; in the English translation: Cohn 2012 (“*exterior metalepsis*,” pp. 106–108; “*interior metalepsis*,” pp. 106–111).
- 27 The literature on this subject is immense; still fundamental for the art-theoretical mastery of the theme are the analyses of Stoichita 1999, esp. pp. 265–351; a rich compendium of examples of metalepsis in visual art of the modern period is presented by Giusti 2009, esp. pp. 219–239; for antiquity, see esp. Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, as well as more recently Stähli 2021, esp. pp. 133–146 with references to further studies.
- 28 Figs. 1 and 2: Anselm Feuerbach (1829–1880): *Das Gastmahl (nach Plato) (The Symposium [after Plato])*, second version, 1871–1873/1874, oil on canvas, 400 × 750 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie A I 279. See Keisch 1992, with further references; and esp. Muthmann 1951, pp. 97–112.



Fig. 1. Anselm Feuerbach (1829–1880): Das Gastmahl (nach Plato) (The Symposium [after Plato]), second version, 1871–1873/1874. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie A I 279.

of the Alte Nationalgalerie on the Museum Island in Berlin. The picture's theme is the banquet from Plato's famous dialogue, a banquet organized some time earlier by Agathon. The events of the Symposium, having in the meantime become legendary, are reported by a pupil of Socrates named Apollodoros, who for his part had heard them from a certain Aristodemos long after the Symposium occurred. Thus, what we have is not an eyewitness account but a narrative handed along through several stages. During the banquet, the participants make speeches about Eros; Socrates is the last speaker, and his speech in its turn is a report of what was once told him by the – obviously invented – seer Diotima (Plato, *Symposium*, 201d–212c).

Feuerbach's painting shows the moment after Socrates has finished speaking and the drunken Alcibiades enters from the left, accompanied by an extremely affable entourage. At approximately the same height as Socrates (who sits on the right in the background, turned away from the new arrivals), in the farthest forward spatial plane, a painted vase stands on the ground (Fig. 2). Its form is similar to that of ancient vases, but its painted surface depicts a woman seated in a landscape – more reminiscent of a motif from contemporary classicistic paintings than of Greek painted vases.

A piece of fabric, dropped apparently carelessly on the vase, reveals itself on closer inspection to be extremely artistically draped; its folds part like curtains from the bulge of the vase, revealing the sitting woman as if on a stage. The rest of the cloth falls to the floor of Agathon's banquet hall and from there over the richly decorated frame of Feuer-



Fig. 2. Anselm Feuerbach (1829–1880): Das Gastmahl (nach Plato) (The Symposium [after Plato]), second version, 1871–1873/1874. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie A I 279, Detail.

bach's painting; a frame which for its part, through this precise effect, proves to be only painted, a *trompe-l'œil*. The cloth transgresses the painted, illusionistic picture space where it originates to enter the world of the viewer – a classic *metalepsis*, a transgression of the visual narration and the mimetic illusion of the painting that underscores the artificiality and perfection of the artistic object's artistically formed materiality as well as – through the double deception of the *trompe-l'œil* frame – the quality of the deceptive artistic intention. It seems evident to me that with the cloth's double gesture of veiling and unveiling, Feuerbach also gives us a hidden clue as to the identity of the female figure sitting in the middle of this *metaleptic* theater: she must be Diotima, the person who did not participate in Agathon's symposium but nevertheless was its central figure, since she alone knew the true nature of Eros – a truth Socrates imparted to the Symposium's participants which then, beginning with Aristodemos, leads through several nested narratives to Plato's text and on to today's reader – comparable

to the step-by-step revelation of *trompe-l'œil* levels that the tossed-aside piece of cloth crosses and reveals, beginning with the 'picture-in-the-picture' of the seated woman who sits at the spring of knowledge of the true nature not only of Eros, but also of the deceptive intention of art.²⁹

However, the visual metalepsis in Feuerbach's *Gastmahl des Platon* – the transgression of the mimetic illusion – remains a purely picture-internal effect that does not involve viewers, does not intrude into their world, nor engages them physically. It is purely a game of optical deception aimed at the sense of sight and plays with the cultural expectations of artistic representation within a social and spatial context – that of a museum – in which one must reckon with such effects.

3. Eye Vases and Metaleptic Effects in the Symposium

Visual metalepses like the one in Feuerbach's *Gastmahl des Platon* that transgresses the picture frame and calls into question – or even negates – the illusion of a coherent, autonomous pictorial space with its own reality are quite frequent in ancient art.³⁰ I will confine myself to examples that show with particular clarity how these forms of optical transgression of the pictorial space are connected to social practices and rituals and are thereby also reacting to cultural expectations and attitudes that frame the 'consumption' of these images and objects and make the visual metalepses a central element of the same socio-cultural experiences. The effect of the metaleptic images cannot be imaged without the dispositive in which the images – and the vases on which they appear – are seen; nor is the reading of these images separable from

29 The motif of the vase painting of a seated woman is not in the older version of the painting in Karlsruhe. It must have been a second thought of the artist that adds another semantic layer in the Berlin version, an additional mystification of the pictorial object, and a self-assured reference to the artist's virtuoso mastery of deception. If I am not mistaken, the interpretation of the seated woman as Diotima has not occurred in the literature; Keisch 1992, pp. 31f. interprets her, with reference to Keisch 1992, pp. 81f., Cat. No. 84, as Ariadne. But the fact that this motif of a seated woman dressed in an ancient style repeatedly occurs in similar form in Feuerbach's work, both as Ariadne or Iphigenia, shows clearly that the motif cannot be identified with one particular figure. On the painted frame as a *trompe-l'œil* effect and its function as proof of artistic mastery, the fundamental work is still Stoichita 1999, pp. 53–99.

30 Metalepsis in visual media from classical antiquity has so far been hardly studied or – it seems to me – not understood correctly; thus, the vase paintings that Lorenz 2007 examines are not cases of visual metalepsis, i. e., of the transgression of the diegetic narration by a change to a metaleptic narrative perspective. Instead, they belong in a category of images that occur on the same vehicle and interact with one another through various visual narrative perspectives, so that various interpretative perspectives become open. In the same way, the Pergamon frieze seems to me to also lack metaleptic elements; see section 4 below. Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux 1995 has analyzed many metaleptic effects without using the concept; cf. also Stähli 2021.

the performance of the vessels' users, who by handling them increase the effect of the metalepses and make it an element of their physical performance. The Attic vase paintings presented below make demands on their viewers quite different from those of Anselm Feuerbach's museum piece; they challenge not only viewers' visual habits and 'reading competence' for understanding the picture's theme, iconography, and illusionistic methods of presentation, but stimulate them to interact physically with the images, to incorporate them as it were and make them into an element of their own body language.

The advantage of the vase paintings from Athens analyzed here is that their social context and use within it are relatively well-known.³¹ These are images that circulated within a fairly exclusive social context and served the self-dramatization of a privileged group – a group that is, however, difficult to identify more precisely (Fig. 3).³² The symposium was a social ritual that could be used by various circles as an expression of their elite self-consciousness. Within a closed framework accessible only to men, the symposium celebrated ritualized behaviors and manners that showed off specifically elitist and typically male qualities. But important was not just the perfect performance of poses and gestures that demonstrated confident mastery of etiquette; in the discourse of the symposium, precisely as shown in the vase paintings, what was most important was to manifest the physical ability to enjoy pleasure, an ecstatic and at the same time controlled development of physical competencies in the enjoyment of food and wine, song, music and dance, and not least in the satisfaction of the body's sexual needs with *heterae* and boys. The enactment of the body in the pictures can plausibly be linked to the physical discourses, practices, and forms of interaction and self-presentation that played a role in the context of the social group that consumed these images during their drinking session. The pleasures of the symposium were indeed primarily of a physical nature. They are realized as a lavish intercourse with one's bodily needs and presuppose the mastery of specific physical techniques and practices: a knowledge of how to recline elegantly on the *klinē* ("eating couch"), the cultivated position during intercourse with

31 In what follows after Stähli 2009, pp. 17–34, here pp. 18f. The literature to the Greek symposium is vast; fundamental on pictures of symposiums on vases is Lissarrague 1990; Vierneisel/Kaeser 1990; on eye vases at symposiums from the present perspective of praxeology and visual metalepsis, see further above all Martens 1992, pp. 284–359; Frontisi-Ducroux 1995; Steinhart 1995; Hedreen 2007; Rivière-Adonon 2011, pp. 245–277; a catalogue of eye vases is in Rivière-Adonon 2008, an unpublished doctoral thesis from the Université de Montpellier III Paul Valéry, of which I have a copy. Cf. further in general on the social function of the Attic symposium above all Murray 1990; Catoni 2010 (English trans. forthcoming 2026); Wecowski 2014; Filser 2017, pp. 127–277.

32 Fig. 3: Attic red-figure cup by the painter Duris (c. 480 BCE). London, British Museum, E 49; BA 205096. – In what follows, the abbreviation "BA" and an individual number identify the vase in question in the online catalogue of the Beazley Archive, Oxford, which offers a continuously updated bibliography and photos of all the objects: www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/carc/pottery.



Fig. 3. Attic red-figure cup by the painter Duris (c. 480 BCE). London, British Museum, E 49.

a boy or a hetaera, the stylish pose while vomiting, and not least the deft, effective manipulation of the drinking vessels that make the pictures speak. All of these arts of the body, the conventionalized stock of poses, movements, and gestures, become in the dispositive of the symposium elements of a symbolic presentation of masculinity that are also a sign of belonging to a social elite.

Most of the vessels we will be discussing were in fact used as drinking cups at symposia or gesture fictively toward such usage. The symposium itself is one of the more frequent themes of these pictures, which thereby become for the participants a mirror of their own behavior. There is a strong connection between the symposium and the vase paintings vis-à-vis their reception, which is fundamental to understanding them. The communication and interaction shared by the participants was symbolically charged with significance through contemplation of the pictures, a significance that in turn influenced their actions and self-conception. The practices of self-dramatization and the reading of the images that was integrated into these practices meshed and produced a specific performance. The participants communicated with and *through* the images: by using the drinking vessels, they quasi made themselves actors of the representations on the vessels.

Metaleptic effects in visual media often go hand-in-hand with a highly stylized performance that facilitates – or even makes possible in the first place – the reading of metaleptic graphic elements. One must pick up and turn a vase in order to see the entire picture that runs around its body and drink from it in order to uncover the picture hidden in its interior. Or one must turn it in such a way that one's drinking companions can see the pictures on the vessel's underside. Such performative situations are self-ref-



Fig. 4. Attic black-figure *stamnos* by the “Michigan-Painter” (c. 500 BCE).
Los Angeles, County Museum, Inv. No. 50.8.2, Side A.

erentially depicted on the vases themselves (Fig. 4).³³ A *stamnos* by the Michigan-Painter, now in Los Angeles, shows symposium participants in a *kōmos*, the ritual dance after communal drinking that could wend its way out of the house and into the street. They deploy their drinking vessels as a medium for self-metamorphosis. One man holds his cup against the back of his head, transforming himself into a double-headed vase, so to speak (Fig. 5). The backward ‘face’ that he holds by the ‘nose’ of the cup’s footing is turned toward the dancing woman who follows him. Another dancer on the same vessel holds a so-called eye vessel, the same form of drinking cup as the one the previous dancer holds toward the woman, but with a special decoration (Fig. 6) – large eyes that seem to be watching one’s fellow drinkers as soon as one raises it to his lips to drink, with the result that the longer one drinks from it and tips the vessel more and more, one’s own face gradually disappears behind it.

33 Figs. 4–6: Attic black-figure *stamnos* of the “Michigan-Painter” (c. 500 BCE). Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum Inv. No. 50.8.2; BA 301903.



Fig. 5. Attic black-figure *stamnos* by the “Michigan-Painter” (c. 500 BCE). Los Angeles, County Museum, Inv. No. 50.8.2, Side B, Detail.



Fig. 6. Attic black-figure *stamnos* by the “Michigan-Painter” (c. 500 BCE). Los Angeles, County Museum, Inv. No. 50.8.2, Side B, Detail.

These eye cups are especially numerous among symposium drinking vessels and apparently were meant as a visual demonstration of a participant’s increasing inebriation through the Dionysian transformation of his features, under the influence of the god of wine, into drunken, staring eyes.

Just a few strokes to represent the mouth and nose transform the eyes into a complete face that the drinker can bring to life while drinking by raising and moving the cup



Fig. 7. Chalcidian black-figure cup by a painter from the “Group of the Phineus-Painter” (c. 540/520 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 96.18.65.

(Fig. 7).³⁴ Occasionally even ears were included and frame the face; a strongly stylized bud-like and probably vegetable element stands for the nose, and the foot of the cup – turned toward one’s companions across the table while drinking – seems to resemble an open mouth (Fig. 8).³⁵ From the participant’s point of view, it is doubtless a performative act; through the act of drinking from the cup, the drinker makes himself the implement that effects his inebriation. But of course, the eye cups also function, without their performative manipulation by the participants, simply as ‘seeing’ objects capable of communicating through gazes, of gazing themselves, as if participating in the symposium as independent observers. But they produce their especially sophisticated effects above all when one grasps them as metamorphic apparatuses, instruments that dissolve the difference between images that represent something – i.e., offer something to the eyes – and images that gaze themselves.

The metaleptic effect is especially obvious in cups that replace the nose and sometimes also the ears with mythological or other figures that interact with each other between or around the eyes, as if these eyes did not exist. Athena appears as a nose (Fig. 9),³⁶ hoplites fight as noses, warships that could pass as ears set sail (Fig. 10).³⁷

34 Fig. 7: Chalcidian black-figure cup by a painter from the “group of the Phineus-Painter” (c. 540/520 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 96.18.65.

35 Fig. 8: Attic black-figure eye cup (c. 520/510 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 96.18.50; BA 13328.

36 Fig. 9: Attic black-figure eye cup of the “Nikosthenes-Painter” (c. 540 BCE). Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Inv. No. 1970.99; BA 1167.

37 Fig. 10: Attic black-figure, Chalcidian eye cup (c. 520 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 56.171.36. BA 302630.



Fig. 8. Attic black-figure eye cup (c. 520/510 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 96.18.50.



Fig. 9. Attic black-figure eye cup by the "Nikosthenes-Painter" (c. 530 BCE). Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Inv. No. 1970.99.

Often it is the figure or only the face of Dionysus, the wine god himself, or a satyr that sits as a nose between the eyes and from there gazes at the viewer.³⁸ But sometimes it is

38 Figure of Dionysus or on the opposite side a satyr face between the eyes: Attic black-figure amphora by the "Antimenes-Painter" (c. 530/520 BCE). Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, 8518; Inv. No. BA 320150.



Fig. 10. Attic black-figure Chalcidian eye cup (c. 520 BCE).
New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 56.171.36.

a painted drinking vessel that specifically refers to Dionysus.³⁹ This uncoupling or toggling of individual pictorial elements from their diegetic function in a visual narrative and instead giving them a metaleptic function that suspends or comments ironically on the illusion of a consistent narrative appears frequently on eye cups and other vessels that include the motif of eyes – far more frequently than on any other genre of drinking vessel. Merely with their gaze, the seeing eyes of the vessels seem able to dissolve into thin air the mimetic and illusionistic consistency of visual narratives and transform them into free-floating visual signifiers that interact with one another. Thus, two warriors in a battle scene that wraps around a cup hide from their opponents ‘behind’ the cup’s eyes (Fig. 11),⁴⁰ a youth sitting between the eyes as a nose handles branches that transform into eyebrows,⁴¹ another youth as a nose juggles the eyebrows between which he sits (Fig. 12),⁴² and the eyes become the stylized avian bodies of two sirens gazing at each other (Fig. 13).⁴³

39 *Kantharos* between the eyes: Chalcidian black-figure eye cup (c. 540/530 BCE). Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. No. F 144.

40 Fig. 11: Attic black-figure cup of the “Nikosthenes-Painter” (c. 540/530 BCE). Pacific Palisades, J. Paul Getty Museum, Inv. No. 86.AE.169; BA 14600.

41 Attic black-figure mastoid cup (c. 500 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 41.162.173; BA 13406.

42 Fig. 12: Attic black-figure amphora by the “Nikosthenes-Painter” (c. 520 BCE). Pacific Palisades, J. Paul Getty Museum, Inv. No. 68.AE.19; BA 340404.

43 Fig. 13: Attic black-figure hydria by the “AD-Painter” (c. 500 BCE). London, British Museum, Inv. No. B 342; BA 301821.



Fig. 11. Attic black-figure cup by the “Nikosthenes-Painter” (c. 540/530 BCE). Pacific Palisades, J. Paul Getty Museum, Inv. No. 86.AE.169.

Like the staring eyes, original plastic applications can also lead to surprising visual effects and unusual tactile experiences while handling a drinking vessel. Such effects are always related directly to the enjoyment of wine and the sensory delusions of inebriation (Fig. 14).⁴⁴ The ambiguity of images and the plastic design and décor of the drinking cups are the rule here; the phallus in place of the foot of this cup could also be read as the jutting nose between the cup’s ear-like handles and below the painted eyes.⁴⁵ There are boundless variations in the deceptive metaleptic play. A nude female participant lifts a drinking cup with a phallic foot to her mouth (Fig. 15) on a cup that, if manipulated in the same way she handles hers, would present to the watching drinkers not only the image of the female drinker but also the ‘open mouth’ of the cup’s foot – certainly an appropriate addition to the woman’s cup along with its appropriate obscene associations that are definitely typical of the pictorial repertoire of the symposium.⁴⁶ No wonder, then, that the phallus too can become the nose between a cup’s eyes.⁴⁷ Often

44 Fig. 14: Attic black-figure cup by the “Andokides-Painter” (c. 530/520 BCE). Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. No. 1974.344; BA 396.

45 In a similar case, the plastic phallus in place of the foot of a comparable cup points as literally as possible to one of the two image fields that show couples copulating on a *klinē* between the cup’s eyes. Attic black-figure eye cup (c. 520 BCE). Berlin, Antikensammlung, Inv. No. F 2052; BA 14936.

46 Fig. 15: Attic red-figure palmette eye cup (c. 510 BCE). New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 56.171.61; BA 200402.

47 Attic red-figure cup of Olto (c. 520/510 BCE). Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. No. 08.31d; BA 200261.



Fig. 12. Attic black-figure amphora by the "Nikosthenes-Painter" (c. 520 BCE).
Pacific Palisades, J. Paul Getty Museum, Inv. No. 68.AE.19.



Fig. 13. Attic black-figure hydria by the “AD-Painter” (c. 500 BCE).
London, British Museum, Inv. No. B 342.



Fig. 14. Attic black-figure cup by the “Andokides-Painter” (c. 530/520 BCE).
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. No. 1974.344; BA 396.



Fig. 15. Attic red-figure palmette eye cup (c. 510 BCE).
New York, Metropolitan Museum, Inv. No. 56.171.61.

a vessel’s plastic attachments – like the phallus feet on the two cups just mentioned – can play an active role thanks to the participants’ manipulation of the vessels and even contemplate themselves during the use to which these objects are put. A female head on the handle of a jug at first seems to look at the viewer who picks it up. Then, as the user tips the jug to fill a cup, she declines her face toward the liquid as though wanting to drink it – or look at her own reflection.⁴⁸ Finally, a metaleptic structure can duplicate

48 Corinthian black-figure olpe by the “Tydeus-Painter” (c. 560/550 BCE). St. Louis (MO), Washington University Gallery of Art, Inv. No. 3267. Moon 1979, pp. 44f., Nr. 28.

itself; for example, a picture of a chest painted on a box – i.e., a picture within a picture, a miniaturized chest – gazes with metaleptic eyes at the viewer.⁴⁹

Finally, a jug now in Berkeley represents a pinnacle of visual metalepsis. On the presentation side (Fig. 16),⁵⁰ we find the familiar eyes with which the vessel gazes at the viewer. Behind them is a typically Dionysian scene: Dionysus in ecstatic motion, flanked by two satyrs bent under the weight of the huge wineskins they carry on their backs. And paradoxically, these wineskins are coextensive with the olpe's staring eyes – even the characteristic cuff-like openings of the pigskin containers have a precise equivalent in the eyes' tear ducts. It is simply impossible to decide which of the two visual narratives is an ironic commentary on the other. Are the satyrs carrying the olpe's gazing eyes out of the picture like wineskins, or are the wineskins metamorphosing into eyes with which the vessel can look out of the picture, thanks to a magical Dionysian transformation? The important thing is that both visual narratives, intertwined in a hybrid manner, are metaleptically interrelated. They call each other's narrative consistency into question and cast doubt on each other's status as a graphic representation. At the same time, the materiality of the object itself on which the depictions are located is both negated (the olpe appears to be only a vehicle for the picture) and strongly emphasized; it is a seeing subject that communicates with the viewer. The reverse side of the jug (Fig. 17) condenses the metaleptic arrangement – as complex as it is paradoxical – into a succinct motif that often appears on vases but hardly ever with such precision; it is a visual commentary on the picture on the obverse side, realized using extremely reduced artistic means, showing nothing less than a single eye with which the olpe returns the gaze of the viewer. The hybridity of a vessel could not be more simply reflected; it is both a material jug handed around by the symposium's participants and the vehicle of an image that also functions independently as a seeing entity that watches the participants. Without a doubt, this vessel would have pleased Genette.⁵¹

The connection between metaleptic visual strategies and a praxeology of aesthetic experience should be obvious. Handling the drinking vessels is part of reading the images. Through their shape and metaleptic effects, the vessels provide the participants with scripts of physical behavior, guide their gestures and optical perception, and promote habits of movement when using the objects that are themselves basic to the

49 Attic red-figure box (5th century BCE). Athens, Agora Museum, Inv. No. P 23897; BA 21736.

50 Fig. 16 and 17: Attic black-figure olpe by the "Painter of the Jena Kaineus" (c. 550/530 BCE). Berkeley, Museum, Inv. No. 8.3379; BA 320471.

51 In recent times there have been several references to comparable artistic utensils and objects that paradoxically oscillate back and forth between their utilitarian form, their material design as useful objects, and their function as a vehicle for images, carrier of a visual representation; I will mention only Roman bronze or clay oil lamps with human or animal figures as attachments that gaze into the flame, are illuminated by it, and seem to be set into motion by its flickering or keep it alive by blowing on it. On these objects, see Bielfeldt 2014a, pp. 195–238; Bielfeldt 2014b.



Fig. 16. Attic black-figure olpe by the
 “Painter of the Jena Kaineus” (c. 550/530 BCE).
 Berkeley, Museum,
 Inv. No. 8.3379; BA 320471.

perception of the images and their narrative. Visual effects such as staring vases that communicate with the participants or – functioning as masks – transform them and direct their performance; vases as masks, deployed as mediators of subjective physical experiences and of the transformation into another person; and pictures of symposiums that promote self-reflection, serve as models of behavior, and provide the participants with examples of roles are all part of a praxeology of acquiring and practicing schemes of behavior and physical movement, initiated and guided by images as well as by the body language of the participants themselves. In the end, the dispositive of the symposium is the paradigmatic scenario of the physical acquisition and rehearsal of Bourdieu’s habitus.

With the symposium’s highly ritualized and stylized forms of incorporating practical knowledge described above, one could call it a dispositive in Foucault’s sense. But in this



Fig. 17. Attic black-figure olpe by the “Painter of the Jena Kaineus” (c. 550/530 BCE). Berkeley, Museum, Inv. No. 8.3379; BA 320471.

context, I suggest instead referring to its *parapictoriality*, a somewhat narrower concept that more clearly emphasizes the point of view under discussion here: the praxeological framework of aesthetic experience through interaction with images, artworks, and other objects.⁵² This term carries forward thoughts I developed on the concept of a

52 On parapictoriality, see the extensive discussion in Stähli 2022a, including its derivation from Genette’s concept of a paratext: Genette 1997a. For about ten years I have used the concept of parapictoriality in teaching to provide students with a handy concept that makes plain and allows them to define the contextual, discursive, and praxeological framework for every form of perception of – and interaction with – images (or art). At a 2017 congress in Edinburgh, I took the congress’s theme, the change of visual media in antiquity (e.g., from vases to architectural friezes), as an opportunity to identify parapictoriality as the factor that steers the translation and adaptation of images from one medium to another, even before all iconographical, typological, motivic, stylistic, or other adaptations.

Bildakt.⁵³ Parapictoriality comprises and defines the totality of forms of practices and discursive knowledge, the interaction and communication of subjects, their ritualized gestural and physical forms of expression and behavior, but also the spatial and material preconditions as well as the temporal conditions under which a social event like the symposium takes place and is integrated with objects in a way that enables aesthetic experience. Of central importance is that artworks (or more generally all things or events that become objects of aesthetic enjoyment) are only perceivable as art (or more precisely as objects of aesthetic experience) under the precondition of a parapictorial situation, because only then does a ‘context of agreement’ exist that makes them perceivable as pictures and enables a meaningful attitude toward them as pictures. To exaggerate: outside the parapictorial situation, a painted vase is merely a storage vessel or a cinerary urn and only becomes an image under specifically parapictorial conditions.

4. The Viewer as Dionysus: The Immersive Experience of Sculpture

Not every violation of a picture’s space or frame is metaleptic. Not long ago it was suggested that the reliefs along the staircase stringer of the Pergamon Altar in Berlin could be interpreted as an intentional metalepsis (Fig. 18).⁵⁴ There is general agreement that on the southern stringer of the northern *Risalit*, at the point where the broad stairway leading up to the altar’s courtyard reaches the height of the frieze and from there on seems to sever the frieze’s narrative continuum, one of the giant figures appears to be climbing the stairs on his knees, as if he were himself taking part in the ritual offering. This is a well-known phenomenon that has become a standard part of introductory courses in archeology as well as guided tours of the museum. Whether this justifies calling it an example of metalepsis – an extension of the frieze’s figures into our reality and an interrogation of the consistency of its diegetic narrative and illusion-

53 Stähli 2002 (cf. also Seja 2009, pp. 114–119), following Assmann 1985; cf. Bräunlein 2004. On the origin of the *Bildakt* concept in language-theoretical philosophy, see Seja 2009, pp. 68–112. – Bredekamp 2010 develops a quite different concept of the *Bildakt* that is hardly compatible with my pragmatic thoughts on images. To the accusations first, that his notion of the *Bildakt* is merely a revitalization of the obsolete concept of ‘pictorial magic,’ and second, that it provides no theory at all but only examples, Bredekamp responded with a new edition under a different title: Bredekamp 2015. In this book the concept of the *Bildakt* survives only in its title, probably to ensure his interpretive prerogative to the concept, and in a new foreword written for this edition, pp. 9–19, the author not only responds to the accusations but also compares himself to Wölfflin, who was at first unrecognized but later celebrated by his contemporaries. The English translation (Bredekamp 2021) renders the title as *Image Acts*.

54 Lorenz 2013, pp. 119–147. Fig. 18: Pergamon Altar, west stair stringer: giant (probably shortly after 165 BCE). Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Pergamonmuseum.



Fig. 18. Pergamon Altar, west stair stringer: giant (probably shortly after 165 BCE). Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Pergamonmuseum.

istic image space – is another matter. With their physical volumes, the frieze's figures move consistently, at every point in the frieze, within a clearly circumscribed 'spatial layer,' defined by the tectonic frame of the altar's architecture, and that is also where the giant kneeling on the step moves. At no point does he leave the precisely defined intrapictorial space and really enter our world, but remains part of 'his' pictorial space. He behaves just like the boy in Borrell del Caso's painting *Escaping Criticism*, who seems to be jumping out of the frame into our world⁵⁵ – but this is a purely illusionistic effect. In the case of the Pergamon Altar, it also seems to be the case that the giant is not climbing the stairway, but that the frame – the skirting – at this point unfolds into steps, and the giant does nothing but kneel on the floor just like all the frieze's other figures stand, sink down on, or grow out of the floor of the skirting.⁵⁶ With realistic effects typical

55 Pere Borrell del Caso (1835–1910): *Escaping Criticism*, 1874, 76 × 63 cm, oil on canvas, Madrid, Banco de España. See Giusti 2009, pp. 232–233, further references, and Fig. p. 33.

56 Here I follow Kähler's masterfully precise analysis of the relationship between architectural frame and the space of the frieze, unequalled in its clarity: Kähler 1948, pp. 85–95.

for the time, the frieze's lost painting will have heightened the difference between the picture space in which the gigantomachy takes place and the architecture of the altar. Strictly speaking, what we have is an illusionistic device achieved by purely intrapictorial plastic means, not a visual metalepsis that bursts the pictorial reality, unmasks it as an illusion, and suggests the artificiality of art or – as Grethlein might say – underscores art's materiality.

The example seems symptomatic to me. It shows that not every artistic effect, certainly not every illusionistic effect, amounts to the blurring of the border between the artwork and its viewers in order to make them complicit in a mimetic deception. This is all the more true for the immersive experience of sculpture, especially free-standing statuary, a long-recognized and well-researched phenomenon.⁵⁷ Immersive experiences of art go beyond illusionistic and *trompe-l'œil* effects; they are produced by artworks or artifacts that involve viewers, suggestively pull them in with artistic means – above all, the deployment of realism and intrapictorial elements that guide the gaze –, give them the illusion of being themselves part of the image's action, participate actively in what is happening, and become accomplices in the visual narrative. It is especially instructive to look at sculptures that, through their characteristic spatiality, three-dimensional volumes, and size, create physical presence in space. They shape the space that surrounds them and deploy it for aesthetic effect by defining ways to approach them, places from which to observe them, and directions of movement, thereby guiding viewers' gaze, frequently with the goal of creating the illusion of the real presence of a living being and suggesting its authentic life. They use their spatial presence to pretend they are alive and to enable immersive experiences for the viewer, an entrance into the image's narrative, and if possible, an immersion in the imaginary world of the statues.

Especially instructive in this regard is the statue of the sleeping Ariadne in the Vatican Museum, one of the most famous sculptures of classical antiquity, which has been displayed in various places in the Vatican since the 16th century and always in spectacular surroundings (Fig. 19).⁵⁸ It is a Roman copy from the 2nd century CE after a Hellenistic original from the 2nd century BCE. Like other Roman copies of the same original, the statue in the Vatican was improperly positioned on its base in modern times, namely, it is tipped up too vertically. One has to imagine the Hellenistic original lying back more, not facing the viewer, i.e., less 'posed' and in a more clearly resting position that strengthens the impression of a woman asleep and unaware of being

57 On the discussion of immersive experience of sculpture, see Kunze 2002; cf. also Stähli 2022b.

58 Cf. on the following Stähli 2001; published thereafter: Wolf 2002, who does not deal with the points of view discussed here, as well as Zanker 2010, pp. 111–118. Fig. 19: Statue of the sleeping Ariadne, Roman copy of a Hellenistic original from the 2nd century BCE. Rome, Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, Galleria delle statue 11, Inv. No. 548.



Fig. 19. Statue of the sleeping Ariadne, Roman copy of a Hellenistic original from the 2nd century BCE. Rome, Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, Galleria delle statue 11, Inv. No. 548.

viewed (Fig. 20).⁵⁹ Calculated effects in the arrangement of her garment (modelled with unusual virtuosity) guide the gaze toward parts of the drapery that have accidentally shifted during sleep, exposing her body; cascades of cloth draped with equal subtlety obscure the view of – for example – her right breast and invite viewers to step closer and see what they have missed from farther away. Through intentional markers and optical effects, the viewer is led toward the statue and invited to view it from up close; carefully placed folds lead the gaze deeper, or parts of the body at first difficult to see in the shadows of the folds stimulate erotic curiosity and encourage the viewer to enter the pictorial space occupied by the prone figure and put himself into the position of the person we would actually expect here but who happens to be absent, namely, Dionysus. According to the mythological narrative in which we find Ariadne asleep and her beauty unintentionally but all the more effectively on display, the god who discovers the

59 Fig. 20: Francesco Primaticcio (1504–1570): cast of the statue of the sleeping Ariadne in the Vatican (1543), Schloss Fontainebleau; after a cast in the Museum für Abgüsse klassischer Bildwerke München.



Fig. 20. Francesco Primaticcio (1504–1570): cast of the statue of the sleeping Ariadne in the Vatican (1543), Schloss Fontainebleau; after a cast in the Museum für Abgüsse klassischer Bildwerke München.

sleeping Ariadne on Naxos cannot be absent, and in all known iconographic versions of the discovery of Ariadne, Dionysus is in fact a standard part of the composition. In all surviving Roman copies of this statue, however, he is conspicuously absent. In his place, the statue invites the viewer to take the role of Dionysus, to desire Ariadne in place of the absent god and fill the empty space he senses through his knowledge of the mythological narrative to fill the empty space in the visual narrative. The viewer becomes part of the action, enters the reality of the myth. The lost, realistic painting of Ariadne's figure – for instance, with the transparent drapery to be expected on female figures since the Hellenistic era⁶⁰ – will have made even clearer the illusion of a living figure and heightened the attractiveness of the sleeper. The viewer will have naturally interpreted Ariadne's monumental size as a sign of her mythological, if not divine, status.

The experience of seeing the statue of Ariadne of course presupposes specific cultural knowledge of her myth and, above all, the iconographic tradition of presenting this myth in an artwork. This knowledge makes the viewers conscious of the absence of the god Dionysus, a blank space in the visual narrative, and allows them to imagine their way into the picture instead of Dionysus. They are invited and almost seduced by the material design of the statue, the composition of the reclining figure, the realistic arrangement of her body, her almost tangible drapery – all intentionally created optical tags like the ap-

60 Cf., for example, the suggested recovery of the ancient polychromy of the statue of a woman in robes, known as the *Kleine Herkulanerin*: Brinkmann / Koch-Brinkmann 2020, pp. 214f.

parently accidental revelation of parts of her body that make them step closer and draw them into the action and make them accomplices of the narrative. Cultural knowledge leads to practical action elicited by the materiality of the environment – the sculpture, its placement, and spatial arrangement – and as it were sets them in motion, guides their perception of the image, and forms and defines their experience as aesthetic and also as erotic desire. Immersive aesthetic experiences often demand that viewers move, change position, walk around an object, adopt various perspectives, and compare distanced and proximal views. One must approach a sculpture so closely that one can see ‘into’ it, grasp the complexity of its spatial order, and even understand its surface texture and be able to discover subtle details, to surrender oneself to its illusionistic charms, allow oneself to be drawn in and immersed in the work. The viewer’s involvement is not just presupposed and conceptually calculated in its aesthetic effect but actively compelled by intentionally deployed promises to set in motion visual and – as in the statue of Ariadne – erotic stimuli. The viewer becomes the accomplice of the artist, *actively* participates in the unfolding of the work’s aesthetic effect and also in the unfolding of its semantics; the viewers’ understanding of the pictorial action only now becomes fully obvious through their movement and active participation and immersion in the sculptural arrangement.

5. The Kinetics of Seeing: The Peripatetic Gaze

Immersive aesthetic experiences like viewing the statue of the sleeping Ariadne presume a large measure of emotional, physical, sensory, and intellectual engagement on the part of the viewer, often including an active, purposeful sensuous attention. However, there are artworks that privilege forms of aesthetic perception that require no – or very little – conscious attention. One could say they are perceived *en passant*, disinterestedly, casually, calmly, without presuming a contemplative or engaged gaze but only the aimless gaze of the flaneur. This is art intended to be perceived casually. It more likely supports social behavior than forces itself on the viewer. For some time, I have been trying to elucidate such experiences, which assume a certain kinetics of viewing, through the example of the ‘peripatetic gaze,’ an unexcitable, wandering, almost uninterested form of perception, the ancient equivalent of the gaze of Walter Benjamin’s flaneur, but which – as also in Benjamin’s case – obeys a precisely defined ensemble of social expectations and ritualized ways of moving and interacting and thus generates equally precisely defined aesthetic experiences.⁶¹

61 ‘Peripatetic gaze’: an expression that surprisingly has not caught on although it describes very precisely a particular form of visual perception, namely, a gaze that follows a wandering but nevertheless precisely calculated path prescribed by the pictures themselves. I first used the concept in a 2006 lecture in Basel and then in the following years in several repetitions of this lecture in Germany, Switzerland, and the U.S., but it seems not to have been more widely adopted.

I choose an example that one might expect to require especially attentive and educated viewers who would inspect every detail of a picture, compare their reading of the image with their literary expertise, and construct relationships between visual information and their own previous knowledge. The work in question is a cycle of pictures in a Roman house that depicts the well-known myth of the fall of Troy. Such pictures with mythological themes are quite frequent in Roman residential dwellings; especially in rooms intended to display prestige, they are the dominant means of expressive interior decoration.⁶² In the Roman imperial era, a fixed convention for them emerged: mythological images were placed in the center of the walls in order to attract attention and essentially created the room's ambient impression. But there was a different type of domestic mythic images that was characteristic of the late republican period, the 1st century BCE, before individual mythological pictures became fashionable at the beginning of the Augustan era. These were friezes that narrated an extensive mythic action in a continuous succession of scenes running along a section of wall. And unlike the mythological pictures mentioned above, they refer to a text – as a rule, a Greek epic – which they retell and knowledge of which they presuppose.⁶³

Most important, they require to be read in a different way, with attention not to individual scenes and the fields of significance they conjure up but to the successive reenactment of the mythic action from one picture to the next – a causal narrative connection whose significance is revealed only in the knowledge of all the scenes. The longest frieze of this kind ever unearthed, created around 40–30 BCE, was found in a luxurious house in Pompeii, the *Casa del Criptoportico* (Fig. 21).⁶⁴ The homeowner's need for lavish display of his wealth was manifest in the subterranean cryptoporticus complex, that gives the house its modern sobriquet. As a cool retreat from the summer heat, the cryptoporticus – a system of subterranean ambulatories with adjoining common rooms – was a typical part of the architectural inventory for the cultivation of elevated leisure in luxurious villas; the homeowner adopted the architectural style from the Roman *villeggiatura* along with the lifestyle it represented. He equipped the subterranean realm constructed beneath the garden in front of his house with a lounge or dining room – an *oecus* – as well as a multi-room bathing wing, both accessible from the *ambu-*

62 On mythological pictures in Roman dwellings, their spatial distribution and effect, and their various forms of being perceived, see the fundamental work in Lorenz 2008; on the social rituals and kinds of movement in Roman dwellings, see esp. Dickmann 1999.

63 On the continuous picture friezes of the so-called Second Style in Roman homes of the late Republic, see Scagliarini Corláita 1997, pp. 119–123.

64 On the *Casa del Criptoportico* and the frieze of the *Iliad*: Spinazzola 1953, pp. 435–593; Bragantini / De Vos / Parise Badoni 1990 (I. Bragantini on the house); Aurigemma 1953 (on the *Iliad* frieze in the cryptoporticus). Fig. 21: Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), condition around 40/30 BCE.



Fig. 21. Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), condition around 40/30 BCE.

latio (Fig. 22).⁶⁵ The cryptoporticus received its only light from window shafts sunk from the garden above at an angle; one can imagine that the garden vegetation diminished the light even more, casting subdued illumination into the cool *ambulatio*.

The master of the house could receive his guests for private conversations in the *ambulatio*, invite them to bathe as a group, and later enjoy a festive meal in the *oecus*. The flexibility of use afforded by the cryptoporticus was suited to a multiplicity of social connections and the differing status of the guests. It allowed a variable number of rooms to be visited and different options for what occurred in them. This principle is reflected

65 Fig. 22: Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), north wing of the *ambulatio*, late second Pompeii style (ca. 40/30 BCE).



Fig. 22. Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), north wing of the *ambulatio*, late second Pompeii style (ca. 40/30 BCE).

in the variety of decoration in the cryptoporticus's rooms. The most elaborate decorations are in some of the relatively smaller rooms of the bathing wing; their walls are painted with complicated architectural prospects that recede into the distance like staggered stage scenery – by far the most sophisticated type of contemporary wall painting. For the adjoining *oecus*, a somewhat simpler decoration was chosen that was typical for banqueting rooms (Fig. 23):⁶⁶ an illusionistic colonnade that transformed the space into a ballroom and behind it, a shear wall hung with garlands. The space above the shear wall appears to be open to the outside, but the view is interrupted by small panel paintings with fold-back doors that sit atop the wall.

Only slightly less ornate are the decorations of the cryptoporticus itself (Fig. 24).⁶⁷ At first glance, its gallery of herms, satyrs, and maenads resembles that in the *oecus*.

66 Fig. 23: Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the north wall of the *oecus*: panel painting with doors folded back above the shear wall.

67 Fig. 24: Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the south wall of the north wing of the *ambulatio*.



Fig. 23. Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the north wall of the oecus: panel painting with doors folded back above the shear wall.

However, the plasticity of the painted architecture is visibly reduced, and most important, the wall behind the herms is painted as a closed surface, not a shear wall allowing a view of the outside above it. Instead, in the corresponding location there is the frieze of figures mentioned above. This is the most detailed and complete transfer of an identifiable literary text into a visual medium that has survived from classical antiquity to today. Its theme is the narrative of the Trojan War and the destruction of Troy. The mythical action follows not some random version of the story but precisely identifiable literary sources. In a total length of 57 or 58 meters, approximately 80 to 90 individual scenes are depicted. About nine-tenths of them show episodes from the Homeric *Iliad*, while the rest are taken from the *Aethiopis* of Arctinus – a sort of continuation of the *Iliad* – and scenes of the capture and destruction of Troy not treated in the *Iliad*. The textual sources for all of these additional scenes have not survived.



Fig. 24. Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the south wall of the north wing of the *ambulatio*.

The frieze has a clearly defined beginning (Fig. 25)⁶⁸ from which the action unrolls in successive paintings. Beginning in the west wing, it runs along the outer walls of the cryptoporticus across the north wing and into the east wing, where it turns and continues along the inner walls back across the north wing and into the west wing, on whose southern short side it ends. The viewer's gaze is not focused on individual pictures and their interpretation, but on successive recognition of the whole story and merely summary perception of individual episodes while walking past the wall. This 'distracted' perception corresponded to the peripatetic rhythm of the social ritual acted out in the *ambulatio*: the ceremonies of welcoming and accompanying guests, or strolling up and

68 Fig. 25: Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the west wall of the west wing of the *ambulatio*: The plague in the Achaean camp.



Fig. 25. Pompeii, Casa del Criptoportico (I 6. 2. 4), section of the west wall of the west wing of the *ambulatio*: The plague in the Achaean camp.

down in intimate conversation with business associates or magistrates. The sequential order of the images supported this dynamic, or possibly even guided its direction by the narrative order of the cycle. This was a kind of perception not intended to demand a careful exegesis of each individual picture but to be a rather casual appreciation in which an occasional look at the pictures confirmed what one remembers of the epic content, the Trojan War. As mentioned above, I call this relaxed, rambling, distracted, inattentive, careless, and even indolent perception the ‘peripatetic gaze.’ It is a wandering gaze that allows itself to be carried along by occasional glances at the progress of the visual narrative, legible without any great hermeneutic effort, a gaze that does not expand knowledge of the frieze or the epic it presents but rather promotes the forward progress of the viewer – that sets him in motion, as it were. Of course, this presupposes cultural knowledge, but that knowledge serves the kinetics of the viewer, not an interpretation of the images.

The wall decorations of the *oecus*, on the other hand, tell a very different story (Fig. 23). The *pinakes* placed between the herms attract attention to their individual

depictions and force a *pause* in the viewer's movement in harmony with the *static* behavior of the banqueters. But the imposing character of the frieze in the cryptoporticus was aimed at an experience of space stimulated by the peripatetic mode of movement and perception. The architectural illusion created by the colonnade of a monumental, palatial space was meant to impress and make palpable the reputation and *auctoritas* of the house's owner. Strolling through the *ambulatio* was like walking in a Greek temple or palace, or at least in a Roman villa that aspired to be one.

In both cases, spatial experience and routines of movement that accompany the rituals of social representation are motivated and guided by two different arrangements of wall decoration for the cryptoporticus and the *oecus*, above all by the decidedly different narrative structure of the most important decorative elements, namely, the *Iliad* frieze and the *pinakes*, that require different modes of contemplation and differing levels of visual attention: a rather static, contemplative mode of reading that leaves time to unravel the not easily interpreted and quite ambiguous *pinakes* and also probably motivated conversation at table; and in contrast, the peripatetic mode of perception for the *Iliad* frieze that is satisfied with occasional checks to confirm that the frieze continues to tell the story of the fall of Troy. To be sure, it also occasionally invited viewers to stop, look more closely at a single picture, perhaps pass judgment on its artistic execution, or decipher the inscription to see whether it matched their own identification of the scene. Primarily, however, it motivated the viewer to keep going and reach the conclusion of the frieze: Aeneas's flight from Troy.

6. Summary

Can the project of reconstructing an ancient aesthetics of sensory experience, as exemplified by the two pioneering studies by James Porter and Jonas Grethlein discussed above – but also by a series on the senses in classical antiquity edited by Mark Bradley and Shane Butler⁶⁹ – become the starting point for an alternative to modern theories of aesthetics? Is it capable of founding a new aesthetics that leads away from a classical theory of the beautiful, foregrounds alternative forms of aesthetic experience, and establishes a theory of sensory experience?

In the current discussion of ancient art, Grethlein is the leading critic of the supposed dominance of hermeneutical and semiotic interpretive approaches, maintaining that they should be replaced by an aesthetics of sensory attention to materiality and tangibility. But Grethlein ends up being theoretically vague with regard to images and artistry, and as his analysis of ancient examples shows, he cannot do without the very

69 See Squire 2016, as well as the volumes by Bradley 2014; Butler / Purves 2014; Purves 2017; Rudolph 2017; Butler / Nooter 2018.

hermeneutical approach to images that he would like to exorcise. By contrast, I prioritize a praxeological model of images and art that relies on Sophia Prinz's analyses and ultimately the work of Bourdieu and Foucault. This model works primarily with the phenomenon of the incorporation of discourses and thus supplements a semiotic or hermeneutical reading of visual narratives with first, a non-cognitive, visual, sensuous, and aesthetic dimension of experience accomplished by physical performance, action, and interaction with objects; and second, with the concept of the dispositive (or parapictoriality, my preferred term) that constitutes the spatial, social, and cultural contextual frame (or horizon) in which praxeological aesthetic experiences are enabled and take place. The advantage of the praxeological approach lies above all in this concept of a parapictorial dispositive that defines and controls the cultural codes that guide the social practices as well as the unconscious practices of incorporation, thereby making available a scenario that situates praxeological aesthetic experiences in their specific historical, social, cultural, and spatial context and does not rob them of this context – as does Grethlein's "seeing-in," for him a fundamental and ahistorical cognitive condition of visual perception.

Another advantage of the model of a praxeological aesthetics developed here is that it was developed using the interpretation of ancient artifacts within the cultural context of their use and their aesthetic consumption itself, with attention to their material shape and their design for the specific conventions of their use (including their decoration with images), and not by applying a presumed aesthetic theory that precedes the reading of these artifacts and guides their aesthetic perception. The examples discussed above can be regarded as paradigmatic cases of the flexible concept of aesthetics that is the aim of the CRC *Different Aesthetics*, a new calibration of what aesthetic experience means, which makes the objects themselves as well as the ritualized daily practices and situations of their use the elements and showplaces of the development of aesthetic perceptions. It is precisely the strangeness of premodern aesthetic experiences and their integration into performative practices of interaction with objects in specific, culturally and socially defined spaces or dispositives that open up opportunities for the new, alternative aesthetics envisioned by the CRC *Different Aesthetics*.

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The Art of Illusion and the Aesthetics of Reality

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the object, material, and metaphor of glass and glassmaking in the second part of the *Roman de la Rose* by Jean de Meun. It argues that in the later Middle Ages, the emerging material of glass becomes a means to reflect on epistemic, aesthetic and imaginative processes and their impact on artistic practices. Material knowledge, craftsmanship, and artistic skills intertwine with discursive knowledge (sciences, rhetoric, philosophy, theology, literature) and reflect a fundamental turn in understanding and shaping the social and epistemic relevance of art (*ars*). In its specific ability to entangle production with reception, material with form, craftsmanship with imagination, knowledge with science, and subject with society, glass becomes a central tool of human reflection. What had been a primarily symbolic and artistic material in the earlier medieval period becomes an essential *materia*, an instrument of scientific technologies, and a fascinating artifact in a time of radical change in philosophical, theological, and scientist thinking as well as in social settings.

Keywords

Materiality, Technology, Optics, Recognition Theory, Perception Theory, Imagination, Perspective, Reality, Glass, Craftsmanship, *artes*

The thesis of the following chapter is that in 13th-century Europe, interconnections between the knowledge of optics, discussions of cognitive theory and epistemology, and the development of artisanal technique enabled the appearance of a new aesthetics largely freed of transcendental connections.¹ In this interaction, one can see not only how modes of perception changed both in theory and practice and new artifacts shaped reflection on the perceiving subjects and their relationship to society, but also how scientific, philosophical, and theological discourses were reflected in such artifacts, thereby allowing their function to be newly negotiated. In what follows, the relevance of

* Translated by David B. Dollenmayer. Quotations for which no other translation is cited have also been translated by Dollenmayer.

1 On the parameters for a premodern aesthetics, cf. the contribution by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48.

the interaction between heterological and autological dimensions – in the sense of the theory envisaged as a different aesthetics – will become clear. Central to my study will be the *Roman de la Rose*, the courtly allegory begun circa 1240 by Guillaume de Lorris, and especially its continuation by Jean de Meun at the end of the 13th century. Challengingly allegorical, full of allusions to contemporary scientific discourse, and characterized by lush, descriptive language, the text itself is an example of this new understanding of art. Especially interesting is the way Jean de Meun takes up the production, fashioning, and use of glass as a means of treating the theme of art (*ars*) as theory, practice, and technique.² But Jean de Meun's text also stands on the cusp of a new conception of human cognitive and imaginative capability. In opposition to the idea that an intellectually concretizing perception of natural objects – which can be only vaguely grasped by the senses – is impossible without divine intervention, some thinkers in the second half of the 13th century began to maintain that such a perception is an immanent capability of the human intellect.³ The comprehending perception of the world, as well as the possibility of understanding and representing it, becomes the task of sensuous perception and intellection as part of human creatureliness.

My observation of an interaction between materiality, technique, and conceptualization of perceptive processes as the foundation of a specific aesthetics incorporates the central concept of the figure of aesthetic reflection of the Collaborative Research Center *Different Aesthetics* (CRC 1391), while also drawing on my earlier scholarship on astonishment as an epistemic concept and aesthetic attitude, as well as on illusion before 1800.⁴

1. Preliminary Note: *wân* and *wirkelîcheit* (illusion and reality)

The Middle High German word *wân* (hope, opinion, imagination, supposition) denotes an event that is realized in the mode of wishing and thus on the one hand connected to a subject (I), and on the other hand is enacted between an insecure present and an

2 Jean de Meun also chose a craft that was undergoing swift development in the second half of the 13th century.

3 E.g., Duns Scotus. Cf. Owens 1982, pp. 454f.

4 The research on astonishment can be found in two inter-philological and interdisciplinary Sinergia projects I directed, funded by the Swiss National Foundation: “Ästhetik und Poetik des Staunens” (Aesthetics and Poetics of Astonishment, 2014–2017) and “The Power of Wonder. The Instrumentalization of Admiration, Astonishment and Surprise in Discourses of Knowledge, Power and Art” (2018–2022). Cf. with a focus on the premodern era, i.a., Gess/Schnyder 2017; Schnyder/Gess 2019; Schnyder 2013; Schnyder 2020. On recent research on illusion before 1800, cf. Nowakowski/Schnyder 2021, and therein, Schnyder 2021.

uncertain future, between doubt and hope.⁵ Depending on the sensuous perception of the subject and on temporal and spatial conditions, *wân* is a deficient splinter of knowledge, an aspect or part of a never completely graspable whole. Thus, as knowledge, it is different than an actuality and a truth.⁶

The following discussion is an attempt to comprehend – with the concept of *wân*, the instrument of the mirror, and the phenomenon of the dream as mode, medium, and condition – a specifically premodern understanding of the perception and depiction of the world, an understanding to which the function and conception of aesthetic and artisanal representation are closely related. At stake is an aesthetics – in the sense of a practice of perception and presentation – based on a Christian understanding of the Creation, but instead of focusing on immanent transcendence,⁷ it focuses on the effect in the here-and-now on life in time and space and its artisanal apprehension and reflection, intellectually conceived and technically realized. This aesthetics will disclose not only the variability, doubtfulness, and evanescence of perception – and thus of the perceived – but also its diversity, colorfulness, flexibility, and changeability.

There is no truth to be found in this perception of the world, but also no reality in the sense of facticity. Instead, it is being at the mercy of an operation of time and matter, a mutability in body and space, which can be felt in the cognitive process. The process itself becomes a mirror of what *wirkelicheit* denotes in Middle High German. It refers not to a facticity but is to be understood as a realization (*Verwirklichung*) that contains within itself the process of operation (*Wirken*) and “as relational concept of process [...] aims at the transition between two different modes of being, from ‘possible being’ (*mügelicheit*) to realization (Latin *actualitas*; Greek *energeia*).”⁸ The attention of this art of perception and presentation is not focused on transcendence but on “the things that are enclosed beneath the heavens,” to borrow the definition of *natura*’s sphere of activity in Jean de Meun’s continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*: *Nature, qui pensait des choses / Qui sont desouz le ciel encloses*.⁹ Or in other words, what is comprised and tied together by the golden

5 On *wân* cf. Götz 1957, pp. 164–172. The ambiguity of the concept is emphasized by, i.a., Köbele 2009, p. 298. On the other hand, especially in older scholarship, it is often reduced to deceit with a negative connotation, e.g., in Ruttmann 1964. Cf. on the concept and its poetological potential Schnyder 2021 as well as the chapters in Nowakowski / Schnyder 2021.

6 On the perspectivism and subjectivity of *wân* as knowledge, already discernable in Old High German, cf. Götz 1957, pp. 136–138.

7 This perspective is offered in the contributions by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Volker Leppin, pp. 177–226, as well as by Barbara Schellewald, pp. 289–332, in this volume.

8 Köbele 2021. This is the principle that in philosophical and theological discourse is called, according to one’s perspective, *actualitas* or *natura naturans*. The word *wirkelicheit*, which occurs in the later Middle Ages (i.a., in Eckhart), should be understood as a translation of *actualitas*. Cf. Köbele 2021, pp. 32f. and footnotes 5 and 7.

9 Guillaume de Lorris / Jean de Meun: *Rosenroman*, V. 15893f., cited in what follows with the abbreviation RR; English quotations are from the translation by Charles Dahlberg, unless stated otherwise.

chain of the elements (RR 16,786f.).¹⁰ And with that, we have already arrived at the text that is the basis of my analysis.

2. True Art (*art veritable*)

In the second half of the 13th century, Jean de Meun casts Nature allegorically as a great female artificer and – like all great artists and writers before him – is defeated by the topos (RR 16199–16209).¹¹ Art is on its knees before this indescribable Nature and begs her to be its teacher and show it how she creates (*euvre*, RR 16019–16030).¹² For although art can ape nature like a monkey, all its efforts – whether in painting, drawing, smithing, sculpting, coloring in abundance, in metal, wood, wax, or other material, in paintings or frescoes – cannot measure up to nature in her generating power that holds creation together (RR 16031–16064). Not even in comparisons, the instrument par excellence of visualization (*evidentia*) and comprehension, can she be grasped by humans (RR 16245–16248).

The reason for this categorical difference and absolute otherness of Nature and her works is exactly what is inherent in the concept of *wirkelicheit*: an immanent character of process, a dynamic and creative force for change and metamorphosis of the basic material (*matire prumeraine*, RR 16062–16072) as well as of its form (*fourme*, RR 16078). Only where a knowledge of hidden qualities and powers is present – in the “true art” (*art veritable*, RR 16084) of alchemy – can human art approach Nature and at least discover her marvels (*merveilles*, RR 16086).

True art, then, is not apish imitation or inadequate metaphor or ekphrasis but an informed engagement (*Qui sagement en ouverrait*, RR 16085) with objects (*singulieres pieces*, RR 16088). When an object is subjected to sensuous treatment (*sensibles euvres*, RR 16089), it is capable of mutating its appearance (*guises*, RR 16090) so much that it changes its physical characteristics (*complexions*, RR 16091) by various adaptations

The *Roman de la Rose*, was begun c. 1230 by Guillaume de Lorris (who composed more than 4,000 verses) and completed c. forty years later by the c. 18,000 verses of Jean de Meun.

- 10 On the source of this image (*In somnium Scipionis* by Macrobius) and its wider tradition, cf. Morton 2018, p. 53, footnote 70.
- 11 On the interesting list of unsuccessful predecessors – exclusively philosophers, mathematicians, and astronomers, and thus connoisseurs of nature’s laws, cf. Morton 2018, p. 49. Thus the description of nature is an art of abstraction, which in the allegory helpfully makes Nature visible without being able to describe her. The narrator is in the situation of art that, with the best will in the world, cannot depict nature. The topos of indescribability becomes an epistemological concept but also an aesthetic one.
- 12 On the proximity of *descriptio* and *pictura* (and also *imago* and even *figura*) cf. Carruthers 2013, pp. 140f., footnote 14.

(*diverses digestions*, RR 16092), to the point where these *changes* (RR 16093) make it into a completely different thing (*espies estranges*, RR 16094).¹³

Glassmaking is adduced as an example of this art. Master glassmakers (*Qui de veirrerie sont maistre*, RR 16098) convert ferns into ash and glass (*font [...] naistre*, RR 16097), something completely different. For “neither is the glass fern, nor does the fern remain glass” (*Si n’est pas li veirres fouchiere, / Ne fouchiere ne rest pas veirres*, RR 16100f). Here, “by means of a simple process of purification” (*Par depuracion legiere*, RR 16099), artisanal skill and knowledge alienate a thing (*piece*) from its original identity (*espiece*) and assign it as a new thing to another identity.¹⁴ The instrumentalization of a natural process by these practices is emphasized by comparison of this artificially induced transformation with hail, whose cause only “those who understand can know” (*quenoissierres de la cause*, RR 16106f.). Thus mastery consists not so much in imitation of individual objects (*singulieres pieces*, RR 16088) as in the imitation and adaptation of a naturally occurring process by which things (*espices*) can be changed or individual objects alienated (*estrangiees*) from their identities (RR 16096–16112).¹⁵ It is crucial that in the process, no fragmentation or new, artificial combination of existing things take place. Instead, naturally occurring processes (*digestions*, RR 16092) are set in motion, through which things change themselves. This art imitates Nature not as its object of representation but in the creative process.

But the text notes that this is something the Sophists will never be able to achieve, no matter how hard they try (RR 16145f.). This disparaging comment, inserted into a description of alchemical procedures, is a surprise. Its allusion to Alain de Lille’s *Anticlaudianus*, however, is a further argument for the proximity of ‘true art’ to nature, as presented here. For Alain describes the walls of the Palace of Nature thus:

O nova picturae miracula, transit ad esse
Quod nihil esse potest! picturaque simia veri,
Arte nova ludens, in res umbracula rerum
Vertit, et in verum mendacia singula mutat.
Sic logicae vires artis subtiliter huius
Argumenta premunt, logicae sophismata vincunt.

- 13 On this idea, cf. also Albertus Magnus: *Mineralia*, in: *Opera omnia* I. 3 tr. 1 c. 9 (Ed. Par. t. 5 p. 71b): “And this is because, of all the operations of alchemy, the best is that which begins in the same way as nature” (*Propter quod omnium operationum alchimicorum melior est illa quae procedit ex iisdem ex quibus procedit natura*). Albertus Magnus: *Ausgewählte Texte*, pp. 88f., Albertus Magnus: *Minerals*, p. 179. But whoever changes only the appearance without transforming the material is a fraud. *Ibid.*
- 14 Just as, in what one might call alchemy’s central concern, those who have the knowledge can purify and recombine metals so that precious metals and even gemstones are produced (RR 16113–16144).
- 15 The proximity of glassmaking to alchemical practices and their reflection in (rare) treatises on the subject is also mentioned in Haynes 1959, p. 47.

Oh painting with your new wonders! What can have no real existence comes into being and painting, aping reality and diverting itself with a strange art, turns the shadows of things into things and changes every lie to truth. Thus this art's power subtly checks logic's arguments and triumphs over logic's sophisms.¹⁶

Painting as the imitator of truth trumps the arguments and sophisms of logic by making things out of the silhouettes of things and transforming individual parts that fool the senses into truth. Painting, which according to myth arose from skiagraphy (shadow drawing), thus becomes the "new art" of concretization and, at the same time, of the verification of individual things.¹⁷ And thus it trumps the arguments of the Sophists, to which it responds with functioning – i.e., also realizing – activity,¹⁸ against which the arguments of the Sophists, evoking superficial connections and new constellations, are helpless and not part of *wirkelîcheit*. Thus, by way of the intertextual reference, Jean de Meun draws a parallel between glass production and the objectifying and coloring, and thereby truth-producing, paintings on the walls of the Palace of Nature.¹⁹

3. Dense Bodies and Reflections

In Jean de Meun's continuation, Nature has control over the elements as well as everything enclosed by her 'golden chain'.²⁰ And everything must follow her rules (RR 16785–16788), as do the sky and the planets – radiant, clear, and pure (*Cleres e reluisanz e netes*, RR 16834). The moon, which to the human eye seems to be a slightly dirty exception to

- 16 Alanus ab Insulis: Anticlaudianus, I, 4, 122–127. PL 210, 491 A–B; trans. Sheridan, p. 49. Cf. Morton 2018, p. 45.
- 17 Thus the 'ape of nature' would have the same position as Jean de Meun's 'priest' Genius (cf. below, section 4). One can speak of a sort of *trompe l'œil* without the deceit taking place in the human eye. On the significance of shadows in *trompe l'œil* theory, cf. Robert 1998, pp. 20–27, which also contains further information on the myth of the origin of painting in skiagraphy as described by Pliny among others.
- 18 Thus painting is contrasted to rhetoric, whose influence is less powerful than art, which makes visible 'real' worlds in which color, line, wall, etc. mutate into new things, something the constellation-art of sophistry cannot accomplish.
- 19 Morton reads this passage as a reference to Aristotle's *De sophisticis elenchis*, where the Sophists are compared to fool's gold in contrast to the true gold of philosophical argument. As 'good alchemy,' glassmaking becomes a practice that is hard to classify and frees itself from the dichotomy of good and evil. Morton 2018, pp. 46–48. In Jean de Meun, in relation to the example of glassmaking, alchemy is not introduced as a false art (in contrast to the production of gold and gemstones, which is kept in the subjunctive in the realm of the possible). It seems to me that what is at stake here is not only a contrast between philosophy and sophistry, but between art and sophistry.
- 20 On the tradition of this image and the direct source for Jean de Meun, cf. Morton 2018, p. 53, footnote 70.

this luminous order, serves to explain why the shine does not indicate transparency and clarity but is instead an effect of opacity. For the moon – partly transparent (*clere*) – only reflects light from the locations that are dense (*espesse*, RR 16842). Correspondingly, it only shines at those locations, while the others appear dark. The paradox of this perception is underscored by the misleadingly placed rhymes, since the density of the lunar substance rhymes with the lusterlessness, while the shining of the other locations is paired with transparency – ahead of the explanation that then resolves the paradox:

D'une part luist, d'autre part cesse
 Pour ce qu'ele est clere e espesse
 Si li fait sa lueur perir
 Ce que ne peut pas referir
 La clere part de sa sustance
 Les rais que li solauz i lance,
 Ainz s'en passent par mi tout outre;
 Mais l'espesse lueur demoutre,
 Qui bien peut aus rais contrestreter
 Pour sa lumiere conquerer.
 (RR 16842–16850)

[It appears] shining in one part and ceasing to shine in another, because it is both clear and opaque [dense]. Thus what makes its light fail is the fact that the clear part of its substance cannot reflect the rays that the sun throws out toward it; instead they pass on through and beyond. But the opaque [dense] part, which can resist the rays well and overcome its light, shows the light.²¹

To explain the phenomenon of the bright and dark locations in the moon, glass is again adduced. Transparent glass, when it contains nothing opaque within or behind it, does not show the figures (*figures*, 16859), “since the eye-beams cannot encounter there anything that may retain them, by which the form (*fourme*) might come back (*reviegne*) to the eyes”²² (RR 16860–16862). However, as soon as one places lead or something else opaque behind it, the form will immediately return (*la fourme retournerait*, RR 16866), and the same with a bright object that can reflect light, so that the glass by itself or via something else will be opaque (RR 16,855–16,870). Important here is prevented or absent transparency as a condition of light reflection and thus the production of an image – more precisely, as a condition of light reflection, by means of which form becomes perceptible and, as a

21 RR, trans. Dahlberg, p. 283.

22 RR, trans. Dahlberg, p. 283. On this idea of the mechanics of seeing, in which the sight ray carries the image of an object back to the seer as a sort of copy, cf. Schleusener-Eichholz 1985, p. 53, footnotes 164 and 165, as well as pp. 69f. On the connection between sight ray and transmitted light from the object in Roger Bacon, in the tradition of Al-Hazen, cf. Schleusener-Eichholz 1985, pp. 71–75.

consequence, figures can show themselves. Thus the moon is an example of the density of an object necessary for its form to be perceived via the reflected light.

Conversely, the rainbow is adduced as an example of an object whose *figure* – caused by the sun – and colors can only be understood by deep knowledge of optics (RR 18023–18043). Via the conceptual definition, the allegorical depiction of the phenomenon as a wild hunt of the clouds who hold in their hands various bows is yoked to the idea of a painting sun:

Qui sont apelez ars celestres,
 Don nus ne set, s'il n'est bons maistres
 Pour tenir des regarz escolle,
 Coment li solauz les piole,
 Quantes couleurs il ont ne queles,
 Ne pour quei tant ne pour quei teles,
 Ne la cause de leur figure.
 (RR 18023–18029)

These are called celestial bows [rainbows], and no man, unless he is a master good enough to teach optics, knows how the sun varies their colors, how many or what colors they have, nor why there are so many and these particular ones, nor the cause of their shape.²³

The word *ars* in the name of the phenomenon connects the figure of the bow to art, and the celestial bow (*ars celestre*) is also celestial art. Correspondingly, the masters of optics are also connoisseurs of this art of sun-painting. And it is also they from whom one can learn the strengths of mirrors (*les forces des miroers*, RR 18045) and their marvelous powers (*merveilleus poers*, RR 18046).²⁴ They can make the smallest and most distant things appear large and near²⁵ and shrink and make distant the largest and nearest things (RR 18153–18162), or simply reflect what one sees in the mirror accurately and truthfully (*par veritez*; RR 18163–18166). While burning glasses, when properly aligned, ignite what looks into them (RR 18167–18172), with the correct sequence and application of various mirrors, the masters of mirror art can duplicate, distort, or reverse images (RR 18173–18180). Or for those who look into a mirror, they cause very lifelike phantoms (*fantosmes*, RR 18181)²⁶ to appear between the eye and the mirror, which one

23 RR, trans. Dahlberg, p. 300.

24 On the tenets of optics invoked here, cf. Akbari 2004.

25 Various optical phenomena of reflection are included under the rubric of the mirror (*miroer*), including lenses. These passages depend heavily on Roger Bacon. Cf. Morton 2018, pp. 152f.

26 On the meaning of *fantosme* here, cf. Morton 2018, p. 153. He points out that in the passage on optics quoted here, Bacon is not speaking of *phantasma*, but at the beginning of *De multiplicatione speciorum*, in the context of a list of synonyms, of concepts for 'sensuously perceivable image.' Morton 2018, p. 153, footnote 37.

can see playing (*joer*, RR 18185) there because of the difference in the angle of viewing. For in passing through the middle (*li meiens*, RR 18188) – the space between eye and mirror – the form reverses and duplicates itself according to the various rays reflecting in the intermediate space (RR 18194). Thus that space deceives (*deceit*, RR 18196) observers²⁷ (RR 18181–18196): “In short, mirrors, if they have no impediments, make many miracles appear” (*Briement, mirail, s’il n’ont ostacles, / Font apareir trop de miracles*, RR 18207f.).²⁸ These ‘miracles’ are part of an art of mirrors whose masters not only know the laws of optics and the rules of perception, but with that are also experts in Nature’s own art of representation (the colors painted by the sun).

For the reflection through which the form of something first becomes perceptible, dense material – corporeality – is necessary. On the other hand, the art of controlling the intervening space (and thus also the world of concrete figures) is dependent on knowledge, technique, and skill. This difference is the point in the examples of the moon and the rainbow: on the one hand, artless light reflections of a creaturely thing and thereby, fundamental production of form; on the other artful, (artificial) products of diverse, changeable, and mobile figures.

4. Collections of Figures

At least according to Jean de Meun and his role models,²⁹ creative Nature has a helper: Genius. A sort of sacerdotal bookkeeper of nature,³⁰ Genius registers in his book (*livre*) all transitory things (*choses corrompables*, RR 16282), just as Nature has delivered them to him (*livre*, RR 16279–16284). The fact that Genius’s book and Nature’s production of things overlap in a homophonic rhyme (*livre* – *livre*) despite their semantic and grammatical difference raises in the text the unsettlingly invisible difference between *wirkelicheit* and materiality.³¹ Genius’s book contains nothing but what Nature supplies: material, transitory things that can be apprehended by the senses (phantasms).³²

27 The reflective effects between form and eye allow various figures to arise. Cf. Bacon: *Perspectiva*, III, 1, 4 (pp. 270–275).

28 RR, trans. Dahlberg, p. 302.

29 Cf. Knowlton 1920; Morton 2015.

30 Morton 2018, p. 55, calls Genius Nature’s ‘*alter ego*’ (my emphasis), which does not seem quite right to me, given his administrative and communicative functions.

31 This also refers to Avicenna’s concept of *natura communis*: “The nature of each being, *natura communis*, is neither individual nor universal, and this nature is contained in each individual being in its pure state, without any individuation.” Kuksewicz 1982, p. 626. The things recorded in Genius’s book – between things supplied by Nature and the figures that Genius utters – are precisely in this state between the individual and the universal.

32 On the concept of ‘phantasms’ and the task of the active intellect to abstract from them recognizable forms, cf. Mahoney 1982, i.a. p. 604. Cf. also above, footnote 26.

But the Genius-priest not only writes down all the things of Nature in his book; in his mass, which is anything but ‘new,’ he again and again recalls them (*recordait*, RR 16280) as representable figures (*figures representables*, RR 16281). In this ritual promulgation, individual things fit into an overarching order and the abstraction of a general idea.³³ Thus the corporeal things Nature constantly produces in order to preserve the species receive from Genius their identity as *figures*. This identity contains the basic form (*fourmes*, RR 16792)³⁴ they received from Nature at the behest of God, but as a perceivable figure is also a means of knowledge (RR 16272–16284). Genius, whom Nature addresses as “god and master of places” (*Qui des leus estes deus e maistres*, RR 16286), integrates the things produced by Nature into topoi (*loci communes*) in order to put them fully to work (*Trestouz en euvre les metez*, RR 16288) according to their properties (*proprietez*, RR 16287).³⁵ That is, he realizes the figures according to the *modi essendi*, their accidental idiosyncrasies, as they were under intense discussion in Paris in the second half of the 13th century.³⁶ Thus, Genius is also importantly cast as a wise rhetor in whose speeches natural things receive not just their figure but also their validity and efficacy.³⁷

33 At stake is the ability of humans to infer the universal from the individual phenomenon. While many thinkers of the time could not imagine this process without divine help, Duns Scotus considered it a capability immanent to the intellect. Cf. Owens 1982, pp. 454f. Duns Scotus’s concept of intellect and its activities corresponds almost exactly to the structure of what is portrayed here. Cf. Kuksewicz 1982, pp. 626–628. “Since the quiddity (neutral nature) existing in particular things is not particularized, there is no need to free it from individual conditions, and no abstraction effected by the active intellect is necessary. The presence of the nature in the phantasma joined to the illumination of the potential intellect by the agent effects the intelligible species. The agent intellect is therefore the real cause of the species, but the phantasma collaborates in this act, determining its content.” Kuksewicz 1982, p. 627. Also, Williams 2019, p. 246, defines ‘intellect’ in Duns Scotus in Genius’s sense.

34 Here *fourme* can be understood, following Duns Scotus, as the necessary formal distinction of every natural thing, independent of the individualized entity. “This way of regarding the specific nature as common in reality to the singulars was a remarkable innovation with Duns Scotus. It did not involve a plurality of forms, for the common nature pervades the forms themselves as well as the matter and the composite; nor did it make possible the real existence of a non-individuated nature.” Owens 1982, p. 456. On the fundamental separation of natural and rational powers in Duns Scotus, cf. also Williams 2019, i.a. pp. 245f.

35 On this conflation of logic and philosophy of language in Paris in the second half of the 13th century, cf. Schulthess/Imbach 1996, pp. 220f. On the importance of expression and the voice for the attribution of significance, i.e., the human practice of speech, cf. in reference to i.a. Petrus Hispanus (d. 1277): De Rijk 1982, p. 169. Interesting and probably crucial for the passage is the fact that in his epistemology, Duns Scotus defines general forms as “*opinio communis*,” as pure truth. Owens 1982, p. 457.

36 Cf. Pinborg 1982, pp. 262f.

37 The processes of natural creation presented here and their realization by Genius can also be read against the backdrop of questions being discussed in Paris in the second half of the 13th century

However, this work of Genius that makes transitory natural things intelligible, perceivable, and representable is neglected by Art, which is on its knees before Natura, seeking to learn the secret of her creative productivity (RR 16027).

Art has no interest in the memorizing, repetitive promulgation, directed toward the *opinio communis*, by means of which what is individual fits into what is universal and can be recognized only in the universal. Yet for the imitation of natural activities and the imitative production of true forms (*fourmes veraies*, RR 16015, 16018), Art lacks precisely knowledge and understanding (*Povre de science e de force*, RR 16023 / *Mais tant est ses sens nuz e linges / qu'el ne peut faire choses vives*, RR 16032 f.). Moreover, contrary to Genius's book, Art has only a pattern book, a poor imitation of an imitation (RR 16017). Consequently, the figures (RR 16038) that Art wants to represent – however beautifully and artfully they may be depicted (RR 16056, 16061) – cannot live on their own (RR 16063 f.).

By contrast, the art of the mirror-masters, which rests on knowledge, technique, and craft, can produce with the *fantomes* (RR 18181) a kind of figure that is completely alive (*Touz vis*, RR 18184). Their art does not imitate nature, but it can manipulate the perceptible and representable figures by deceiving the perception of those looking into the mirror and thus create their own reality of metamorphosing, reproducing, inverting figures – the world of human art. In this way, both in its production and its use, glass becomes the epitome of a new art. On the one hand, it imitates natural processes in the practical technical knowledge with which it produces its material. On the other, with its theoretical knowledge and artistic craftsmanship at manipulating the field of perception, it can visualize moving figures.

Natura supplies her creations for Genius's book so that, promulgated as figures, they become perceivable and also active – in topical realization, relevant to practice. For their part, the glass and mirror artists bring things into the mirrors so that through the reflecting light they become visible as *images* (RR 18254) and active as *fantomes* between the eye and the mirror.³⁸ In this process, the subjective perspective of the kind of perception of mirror images and their figures of reflection plays an important role. They come correspondingly close to the images of the imagination. And so Nature – who names all these mirror reflections – also counts vision, optical deceit, sleepwalking, madness, exaggerated study causing melancholy, overwrought sanctimoniousness, and dreams among these mirror phenomena (RR 18247–18286). All together she calls them deceit and falsehood (*trufle e mençonge*, RR 18363), like the case of a dreamer who thinks he sees

concerning the relationship of essence and existence (*essentia* and *existentia*) as well as the closely related question of potentiality and actuality. Cf. Wippel 1982, pp. 396–410.

38 The question of localizing these images – a discussion of the time – as well as lengthy explanations of the causes of misleading reflections and other optical illusions are explicitly omitted in the text.

spiritual things as present (*Qui veit, ce cuide, en leur presences / Les esperitueus sustances*, RR 18365 f.).³⁹

Even though the misleading images of the imagination are generated differently from the phantasms of mirror reflections (RR 18351–18353), both have in common that they deceive and are also figures of self-deception. For if enough knowledge were present, one would know about mirror art and would not be fooled by its distortions. Equally true is that if enough *ratio* were in play, one would not be seduced by affect-led longings and fantasy images, nor think they were genuine (RR 18355 f., 18362).⁴⁰

5. *wân*: hope, opinion, desire, and will

The reaction of the observer to such phantasms is wonder and amazement.⁴¹ That can clearly be seen in the story of Pygmalion, who is seized by an overwhelming, shocked amazement at his own work – the statue of a beautiful young woman – because she is as beautiful as if she were alive: *Touz s'esbaïst en sei meïsme / Pygmalions quant la regarde* (RR 20836 f., 'He was astonished within himself, Pygmalion, when he looked at her', trans. Dollenmayer). This amazement opens a space in which not just Amor can lay his snares (RR 20838–20840), but where Pygmalion can also reflect on this terrible and unnatural love (RR 20862 f.). In a monologue, he compares himself to other lovers with absurd desires: among them Narcissus, who fell in love with his own *figure* (RR 20878)⁴² in a clear fountain, had a worse time of it than he, since Pygmalion can touch his beloved. But all the unanswered lovers in the world had it better, since at least they could still hope (RR 20889–20897).⁴³

As Pygmalion's emotional state is in constant change (RR 20933–20936), he transforms his statue by constantly dressing her in new clothes and tortures himself, the deceived (*li deceüz*, RR 21067), with foolish thoughts. But even when Venus brings the statue to life, Pygmalion – who perceives it with all his senses and feels it move (RR 21131–21139) – still cannot know for sure whether it is a lie or the truth (*Ne set se*

39 On imaginative power as a newly composing potency, which in Avicenna is called *virtus imaginativa*, in contrast to the idea of a reservoir of images from which *phantasia* or *imaginatio* can draw, cf. Teuber 2002, p. 32, footnote 29.

40 On the remarkable recurrence of the concept of *deceit* in this section, cf. Morton 2018, p. 154.

41 The powers of the mirror are repeatedly called 'wonderful' (*merveilleus poers*, 18,046) or one sees 'wonders' in them (RR 18208).

42 Characteristic is here the concept of the *figure*. In the first part of the novel by Guillaume de Lorris, Narcissus sees his face in detail: *Si vit en l'eve clere e nete / Son vis, son nes e sa bouchete* ('Then he saw in the clear, pure water his face, his nose, and his mouth', RR 1483 f., trans. Dollenmayer).

43 Interesting here are the thematic differences in media evident in the concepts *figure* for mirror image and *image* for the statue (RR 20826, 20851, 21068), which are subordinate to ideas of hope (*esperance*, RR 20896) as a part of the phantasms that are the theme of mirror art.

c'est mençonge ou veir, RR 21140), whether he is under a spell (RR 21143) or is dreaming (RR 21145), whether a *fantosme* (RR 21149) or the devil (*anemis*, RR 21149) has brought his statue (*image*) to life (RR 23149f.).⁴⁴

Pygmalion's amazement in Jean de Meun's continuation repeats Narcissus's amazement in Guillaume de Lorris's first part of the novel. When the thirsty Narcissus sees his face reflected in the water, he freezes in amazement (*E cil maintenant s'esbaï*, RR 1485). His shadow deceives him (*ses ombres [si] le traï*, RR 1486) so that he thinks he sees the shape (*figure*, RR 1487) of a beautiful boy and falls so deeply in love that when he learns that his beloved is unattainable, he goes mad and dies.⁴⁵

The first-person narrator recalls this story when he comes to the spring of Narcissus and therefore hesitates before gazing into the spring himself. It is filled with clear, running water, has a bed of bright, silvery sand, is fed in its depths by two tributary streams, and is bordered by grass eternally green. There are two crystals on the bottom (RR 1523–1538), on which a hundred colors appear (*parent*, RR 1546) when the sun shines on them. Thanks to the power (*force*, RR 1550) of these stones and their miraculous character (*merveilleus*, RR 1549), the entire environment becomes visible (*i pert*, RR 1552) to the person who gazes into the water.⁴⁶ Just as a mirror reflects everything that is in front of it, the crystals reflect everything unchanged and without deceit (*senz decevoir*, RR 1560), according to the text. And yet, the narrator is deceived by his gaze into the mirror spring (*Cil miroers m'a deceü*, RR 1609). For the pleasant sight of the crystals that show him a hundred thousand things (RR 1605f.) becomes a trap when the powers of this mirror (*force [iert] e [sa] vertuz*, RR 1611) lead him to focus his gaze on the rose bushes, and he is overcome with desire (*grant envie*, RR 1619).⁴⁷ For whoever sees himself in this dangerous (*perilleus*, RR 1571) mirroring spring is seized by a new frenzy (*novele rage*, RR 1583) for which there is no cure; it is the pure will to love (*d'amer volenté pure*, RR 1586). Here, the observer is not fooled by the phantasm of mirror reflections but by an influ-

44 All this takes place in a space of expectation of wonders (RR 21075, 21129, 21149, 21160).

45 It is interesting that in this passage by Guillaume de Lorris, the space of astonishment becomes only a space of desire without Narcissus reflecting on his own foolishness as Pygmalion does.

46 Whoever hears that thinks it is something miraculous (*merveille*, 1541). There is a remarkable difference from the astonished listener to the story of Pygmalion. If there, it is something terrible; here, it is something wonderful.

47 The theme here is seeing from a perspective that detaches the gaze from harmonious indifference and guides it toward a specific goal. In this context, it would be an endangering seeing, if not a perhaps already deceived gaze – in contrast to an indifferent seeing that is not affectively judgmental. On what lies behind such considerations, cf. Carruthers's chapter on "Polyfocal Perspective" in: Carruthers 2013, pp. 151–164. What is crucial, then, is also the *intentio* that breaks through this indifference, as the power of specifying the object and focusing the subject (willpower). Cf. Carruthers 2013, pp. 167–172.

ence that coerces his willpower. This is what distinguishes the reflections in the spring from the mirroring effects discussed above in the continuation of the novel.

While the image in the natural mirrors of the spring and the crystals is as if painted (*Con s'ele iert es cristaus portraite*, RR 1570) on the surface of the mirror, Jean de Meun's perceptible reflections occur between mirror image and eye, so that the deceit lies not in the affective gaze of the observer but in the space of perception, which determines their appearance. Here, it is not natural objects that reflect things but lenses produced by 'true art' and instrumentalized by those who know the rules of optics and by skillful (artistic) craftsmen. At the same time, in these reflections epistemology and the theory of perception are coupled with art and technology.⁴⁸ Sensuous perception is freed from facticity, and reality's world of figures (in the sense of a constantly renewing actuality) makes possible an independent world of ideas and phantasms, enabled by the intellect and the imagination, as well as by technical and artistic manipulations of perception.

6. The Aesthetics of Reality

While the art of glassmaking consists in imitating and – just shy of heretical, magical manipulations – instrumentalizing natural processes, the art of those who know how to use the reflecting glass consists in producing new figures by changing the reflective space. However, "new" means reproduced, distorted, or inverted in perspective. The figures this mirror art reflects into the sensuously perceptible world belong – from the perspective of Nature – with the image of desire engendered in the astonished eyes of lovers and also with a dream image or a vision evoked by the emotions (RR 18247–18286).⁴⁹ Both mirror figures and the figures of imagination are deceitful and fraudulent, but not in a religious, moral, or ethical sense, but epistemically and aesthetically. The production of figures of imagination is viewed as independent of divine influence; the production of mirror figures, independent of the natural production of 'forms'.⁵⁰ In these arts, the connection to 'form' for which Natura is responsible is not foremost,

48 Only the face of reason, "the daughter of God, the sovereign father" (*Fille Deu le souverain pere*, RR 5816), in which the lover should reflect himself (which he does not do), is not integrated into this vitreous world by Jean de Meun: *Regard ci quele fourme a, / E te mire en mon cler visage* ("See here His form, and see yourself in my clear face," RR 5818). On the technique of producing glass and mirrors, cf. i.a. Baltrušaitis 1996; Jaritz 2002; Weiß 1966; Miller 1998.

49 Cf. above, footnote 25.

50 On the separation of imaginative power from divine influence (illumination) in the epistemology and theory of imagination in the late Middle Ages, cf. above, footnote 31. On developments in this direction in Paris at the end of the 13th century, cf. Kuksewicz 1982, esp. pp. 626–628, where in reference to Duns Scotus the author writes: "And the intellect as a whole became the sole cause of the act of cognition. The separation of the material from the spiritual was once more deep and unbridged." Kuksewicz 1982, p. 628.

but rather the aesthetic realization of the 'figures' arising and depicted in intellectual actualization.

Thanks to the sunlight penetrating into its depths (*E la clarté aval descent*, RR 1545) and independent of the condition of the space, the spring of Narcissus, created by Nature, reflects without distortion what appears (as if painted) on the surface of the crystals. The learned master of mirrors, on the other hand, influences with his vitreous instruments the space of perception so that the mirror image transforms into deceitful figures. In these fantastic figures, the sensuous world is perceivable as the space of mutable, moving pictures, and only in these figurations can it be communicated. It is this sensuous human thinking – an integral part of man's corporeality guided by knowledge, determined by his position, and limited by temporality – that apprehends itself in *wân* as hope, desire, opinion (*opinio*), and intention (*intentio*), and in which a specific aesthetics of figures and colors appears as artistic effects of light reflexes and techniques of material transformation. In the process, light images separate from their object and become a play of figures in the subjective space of perception. The mirror world of Guillaume de Lorris, engendered by sunlight on the crystals and appearing there as detailed, miniature painting, becomes a constantly self-realizing, mutable, and unstable world of light reflections as figures of subjective perception and imagination.

What glitters here is the ephemeral, decaying world of things engendered by the interplay of matter that reflects light and radiates species (color, taste, composition), the modifying space of perception, and perception from a subjective perspective.⁵¹ Glass, whose production and processing attracted new interest in the second half of the 13th century,⁵² is the epitome of a newly blossoming art form at the time and in the context of an aesthetics of temporality that makes the space between perceiving subject and object into a theater of reflected figures (*fantosmes*, RR 18181, or *fantasie*, RR 18267), whether they come from the imagination or the mirror arts. For they are all marvelous phenomena and a marvelous seeing (*visions merveilleuses*, RR 18263), wonderful and wild (*merveilleuses e fieres*, RR 18288), thanks to the wonderful powers (*merveilleus poers*, RR 18046) of the mirror that enable 'true art.'

In Jean de Meun's continuation, the *Roman de la Rose* becomes a systematic presentation of the powers of human imagination and its effect in the transitory – and thereby visible, palpable and thus representable – world. The continuation manifests

51 This also refers to the (Aristotelian) idea, authorized by Grosseteste and Bacon, that objects can be perceived by our organs of sense thanks to the species emanating from them, which include i.a. color, taste, and composition. Cf. Morton 2018, p. 153.

52 In France in the second half of the 13th century, the first glass producers, glassworks, and studios are documented, as well as the more general use of drinking glasses. Cf. Foy 1988, pp. 63f., 103–105, 109, 220. On the spread of drinking glasses as well as a new technology of glass production in this era, cf. Foy 1988, pp. 220f. Weiß 1966, p. 91, points out that toward the end of the 13th century, glass production became less and less dependent on the monasteries.

an aesthetics of reality – the world of things forever renewing itself, in motion, changing, and variable – that leads to an art of hoping, imagining, subjective seeing, and visionary or imaginative communicating.⁵³ The essence of this art is not mimesis, but knowledge of natural processes of change (*wirklichkeit*) and their technical exploitation on the one hand, and on the other, knowledge of the rules of their theoretical deception of sensuous perception and the bravura play of figures in the space of performance and perception.

It is clear that in this aesthetics, the point is not an idea of truth or transcendence of the temporal world. Instead, it is an art of reflection through which functionality, transformation, perspectivity, and subjectivity are on display. Thus this aesthetics is also different from the religious idea of the world as a mirror in which one seeks God with one's senses.⁵⁴ For the optical knowledge of the time opens up a space between the physical – and thus also the natural – world and the human eye, a space for the play of figures dependent on physical conditions and perceptual perspectives. No longer is it a miraculous crystal (RR 1549) onto which the sun paints the world, but mirrors that enable the 'wonders' and 'marvelous apparitions' (RR 18208, 18263).⁵⁵

Both in its fabrication and its everyday and scientific uses, glass can be understood as a figure of reflection for an aesthetics that is different to the extent that it frames the knowledge of perceptive, imaginative, and cognitive processes as the precondition for thinking about the arts and artistic products, thus locating them in a this-worldly communicative space. In other words, the idea of divine transcendence – whose concentrated radiance is reflected in temporal presence – is shattered on the glass of the late Middle Ages. Shattered too is the claim of modern aesthetics to an authenticity that confirms its truth.

53 It is interesting that Nature interrupts her confession to the Genius-priest with three digressions. The first is devoted to free will, the second to optics, and the third to dreams. These are the aspects here brought into play with reference to perspectivizing perception. In this context, more research is needed on free will in particular.

54 However, Bonaventura's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* is impressive evidence that in spiritual practice, the idea of the world as a mirror in which one seeks God with the senses was still present. Cf. also Teuber 2002, pp. 20–24. Cf. also the essay by Largier 2007, i.a. p. 53. He shows for processes of religious reading and reception a new, aestheticizing conception of sensuous experience, through which a "denaturing" takes place via processes of medialization.

55 The theme here is a decisive difference to religious art and its aesthetics. For not only is glass hardly present before the 16th century except in windows, but the costliness of the material is also emphasized. Gold, silver, crystal ... And reflection is not the theme, but the blinding radiance as a sign of God's radiance. Cf. i.a. Suger: *De administratione* 33, pp. 64f., ll. 9–31. See also the thematic of light in the contributions by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Volker Leppin, pp. 177–226, as well as by Barbara Schellewald in this volume, pp. 289–332, esp. section 3.

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Aesthetics, Canon, Critique

Transalpine Creative Appropriation and Cultural Hybridity as a Challenge to Archeology and Art History

Abstract

By focusing on creative appropriation and cultural hybridity in premodern Northern art, this interdisciplinary chapter offers a critical reflection on the development of the canon in the history of research in art and classical archeology. Taking the praxeological model of the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) 1391 *Different Aesthetics* as a starting point, we will explore how selected works of Roman architecture and early modern painting demonstrate their cultural synthesis, firmly anchored in the social structure of their place of origin, as well as how they negotiate this synthesis by genuinely artistic means.

Keywords

Creative Appropriation, Cultural Hybridity, Canon, Art History, Classical Archaeology, Northern Art

1. Introduction

In 1998, the sociologist Alois Hahn pointed out trenchantly, “The self-referentiality of the canon is the reason for its *longue durée*.”¹ He argued that the establishment of the canon, supported by powerful forces, as well as the continuing enforcement of its purity, were always based on censorship.² If one regards cultural canons as “symbols of identity,”³ the reciprocal relationship between canon formation and national – or nationalistic – ambi-

* Translated by David B. Dollenmayer. Quotations for which no other translation is cited have also been translated by Dollenmayer. The work on this chapter was carried out as part of projects C2 “Creative Appropriation: A ‘Different’ Aesthetics in Pre-modern Architecture and the Arts North of the Alps” (first funding phase) and C2 “Aesthetics – Canon – Criticism: Northern Alpine Art in Archaeological and Art Historical Research” (second funding phase) of the Collaborative Research Center 1391 *Different Aesthetics*, project no. 405662736, funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG).

1 Hahn 1998, p. 460.

2 Cf. Hahn 1998, p. 460.

3 Hahn 1998, p. 59.

tions is especially apparent in the modern era.⁴ From the perspective of cultural history, historic consolidations in which the establishment of aesthetic norms and traditions played a decisive role can be understood as the vehicles of difficult identity formation because the various forms of (self-)definition did not arise without a multi-layered construction and systematic exclusion of the “foreign” as negative antithesis.⁵

In this context, the point of departure for the present interdisciplinary reflections is the observation that in both classical archeology and art history, numerous ancient and early modern artworks from north of the Alps with culturally hybrid design were in the past considered deficient, and this had far-reaching consequences. Against the backdrop of the history of these two academic disciplines and their respective processes of canon formation, such normative judgments can be described as the result of the influential idea of stylistic purity and unity, the mindset of 19th-century colonialism, and the closely related anachronistic concept of a culturally superior art that foreigners misunderstand and therefore receive and copy with a great diminution of quality. A multidisciplinary revision of such evaluative patterns – which are still current and influential in today’s scholarship – will enable more up-to-date approaches to the study of cultural transfer and especially to postcolonial cultural theory, which, among other things, focuses on the transformational dynamics occurring in the course of intercultural contact.⁶ We understand the concepts of hybridization and hybridity to mean, on the one hand, certain forms of cultural transfer that release creative potential, and on the other, a process of continuous negotiation of ethical, linguistic, religious, political – and ultimately, we argue – also aesthetic questions.⁷ Together with the problem of canon formation, Homi K. Bhabha has emphasized the centrality of the connection between cultural praxis and authority as well as hybridization:

The entire culture is constructed around negotiations and conflicts. In all cultural practices there is the attempt – sometimes good and sometimes bad – to establish authority. Even in the case of

4 Cf. Hahn 1998, p. 463.

5 Cf. Hahn 1998, p. 461–465.

6 Depending on the traditions of different subject areas, various humanistic disciplines approach the transfer processes occurring through cultural contact with such concepts as “translations” (Burke/Hsia 2007; Bachmann-Medick 2012; Bachmann-Medick 2014; Hofmann/Stockhammer 2017), “adaption / adaptation” (Weber 2012; Hutcheon 2013), “(cultural) appropriation” (Hahn 2011; Schreiber 2013; Samida/Eggert/Hahn 2014), “hybridization” (Bhabha 2000 [1994]; Bhabha 2016). Other related terms are, e.g., “transcription” (Jäger 2004, p. 2–5; Jäger 2010; Ullrich 2015) and “crossmapping” (Bronfen 2002; Bronfen 2018). Cf., in addition, Lachmann 2000; Boehm 2007.

7 On various forms of productive (trans-)cultural transfer processes, cf. above all Espagne/Werner 1985; Espagne/Werner 1987; Kortländer 1995; Bronfen/Marius 1997; Burke 2009 [2000]; Bhabha 2004 [1994]; Lüsebrink 2001; Middell 2001; Celestini/Mitterbauer 2011; Ette/Wirth 2014; Bhabha 2016.

a classic work such as a painting by Brueghel or a composition by Beethoven, it is a question of establishing cultural authority.⁸

The specific acceptance or rejection of such imposed cultural authority contains the possibility of its modification. “Thereby, the symbols of authority are hybridized and something new emerges. For me, hybridization means not just mixing, but strategic and selective appropriation of meanings, making room for human agency.”⁹ Parts of such a scholarly conception of “cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed”¹⁰ can be connected to the findings of research into cultural transfer such as those developed since the mid-1980s by scholars in literature and cultural studies.¹¹ They define cultural transfer fundamentally as a dynamic, intra- or inter-cultural process of creative imitation, appropriation, or translation, driven by various actors in a spatial, temporal, and social field, a process that is decisively determined and correspondingly directed by the recipients.¹²

Given a basic concept of one’s own culture and society and their needs, there is necessarily a selective perception and deliberate adaptation of the ‘other’.¹³ In view of this understanding of historical processes of transfer and exchange, material goods and artistic practices play a central role as forms of cultural communication.¹⁴ In recent years, the humanities – including cultural studies and especially object studies in the context of Material Culture Studies and so-called Biography of Objects – have turned their attention in this direction.¹⁵

The scholarship adduced above and its methodology serve as the foundation for the following discussion. As case studies, we will analyze selected monuments of transalpine ancient architecture as well as the controversial term ‘Romanism’ for the reception of Italian art by early modern Netherlandish painters. Our focus is on artworks that exhibit a cultural synthesis anchored in the social structure of the location of origin and negotiate significance in various ways through genuinely artistic means. It is precisely this inner creative logic, corresponding to the multilayered nature of transalpine

8 Homi K. Bhabha in a radio interview on November 9, 2007 on ORF (Austrian Broadcasting Corporation), quoted in Babka/Posselt 2016, p. 13. As the English original is unpublished, the quotation has been retranslated.

9 Quoted from Babka/Posselt 2016, p. 13.

10 Bhabha 2004 [1994], p. 4.

11 On the development of research on cultural transfer with various approaches and differing conceptions of culture, cf. Middell 2001; Kokorz/Mitterbauer 2004; Keller 2011; Schmale 2012; Wendland 2012; Middell 2016.

12 Cf. Burke 2009 [2000]; Lüsebrink 2001; Keller 2011; Mitterbauer 2011; Middell 2016.

13 Cf. Middell 2016.

14 Cf. especially Marx 2007; Kramer/Baumgarten 2009; North 2010; Kern 2013; De Giorgi/Hoffmann/Suthor 2013; Rosen 2015.

15 Cf. i.a. Boschung/Kreuz/Kienlin 2015; Göttler/Mochizuki 2017; Gleixner/Lopes 2021.

processes of appropriation, that led widely influential older scholarship in both disciplines – based on a uni-directional narrative of cultural influence – to evaluate such buildings and pictures to be analyzed not only as failed appropriations of Italian art but also to problematize them as supposedly foreign elements in an indigenous artistic practice. For that reason, the initial focus of the present chapter will be on the dynamics and tendencies specific to archeology and art history – scholarship, primarily in German, since the end of the 18th century and especially around 1900 – that led to such normative judgments as well as the resulting consolidation of the canon. Against that backdrop, we will examine selected surviving fragments of antique buildings north of the Alps as well as an eminent work of 16th-century Antwerp painting and argue for the dissolution of the polarizing model “Italy vs. northern Europe” and for a reevaluation of various strategies of adaptation and complex negotiation of artistic practices. In this context, we will regard reworkings and reconfigurations of traditional models as conscious conceptual advancements. We will also understand programmatic debates *with* and divergence *from* the cultural authority (in Bhabhas’s sense) of Italian works as proof of aesthetic independence and the reflexive potential of art created north of the Alps. The change in perspective we are proposing is based on the praxeological model of CRC 1391, *Different Aesthetics*.¹⁶ In a special way, that model allows us to appreciate, explore systematically, and locate in specific social and historic contexts the forms and functions as well as the intrinsic epistemic value of the aesthetics inscribed in transalpine artistic monuments and artifacts.

2. Classicism and Romanization: Transalpine Roman Architecture

In the wake of the Gallic War and the military campaigns under Augustus, within two generations the region west and south of the Rhine as well as the Alpine foothills became a part of the Imperium Romanum. With the subsequent conquest of large portions of today’s Baden-Wuerttemberg and Hesse (up to and even across the Danube), the northwestern provinces acquired a shape that remained intact well into the 3rd century CE.¹⁷ The geography of the area north of the Alps under Roman rule is ruggedly divided by uplands and several rivers, and at the time of the Roman conquest was populated by groups of ‘Celtic’ and ‘Germanic’ speakers¹⁸ already in extensive contact with the Mediterranean world.¹⁹ In the ‘Celtic’ regions, there is evidence of central settlements, some of considerable size. The so-called *oppida* were usually built on elevated terrain and surrounded by rivers so that they could be more easily defend-

16 Cf. the chapter by Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 3–48.

17 Wolters 1990; Hüssen 2000; Kemkes 2005; Strobel 2009; Wolters 2015; Wolters 2020.

18 Archäologisches Landesmuseum 2012 (Celts); Uelsberg/Wemhoff 2020 (Teutons).

19 See most recently Gebhard/Gleirscher/Marzatico 2011; Sievers 2020.

ed.²⁰ As extensively described by Julius Caesar, they were often surrounded by an enclosing wall of wood and stone (*murus gallicus*)²¹ and some had an orthogonal street layout.²² Beyond that, however, only in exceptional cases²³ did they feature extensive stone structures. Instead, these settlements contained predominately wooden buildings.²⁴

That changed abruptly under Roman rule. From the Augustan period onwards, new cities north of the Alps were founded and old settlements rebuilt. In contrast to many *oppida*, they were situated on level ground.²⁵ In antiquity, towns like Trier, Mainz, Cologne, and Augsburg reached populations of tens of thousands and possessed sophisticated infrastructure and monumental buildings. Tombs, aqueducts, and luxurious villas were built on their outskirts, along the roads that connected them, and in the countryside. An essential foundation for all these changes was provided by the use of stone and concrete (*opus caementicium*) in the realization of large, resilient structures. This building technology had been the established practice in the central Mediterranean region since the late 2nd century BCE. Its use in the northwestern provinces started in the time of Augustus. The new buildings in concrete and stone adopted visible elements of Mediterranean architectural types such as podium temples, basilicas, and thermae with Corinthian columns and richly decorated entablatures. We will argue, however, that the transalpine monuments were not mere architectural copies. Rather, one can often discern programmatic differences from Mediterranean concepts in their floorplans or decoration. These adaptations were due to differing functions and societal constraints but were also intended to display a distinctive aesthetics.

2.1. The Path to Canonical Marginalization and the Postcolonial Comeback

In many places, the ruins of buildings and infrastructure of transalpine Roman towns still dotted the landscape of the High Middle Ages and were more strongly anchored in popular consciousness than other aspects of antiquity.²⁶ Especially in the Middle Ages, but also in the early modern period, the ancient remains – sometimes reinterpreted – were held up as symbols of historical and present urban pride.²⁷ But beginning in the

20 Fichtl 2000; Pion 2010, pp. 35–46; Sievers 2015, pp. 3–6. For England: Pitts 2010; Champion 2016.

21 Caesar: Gallic War 7,23.

22 Fernández-Götz 2020.

23 E.g., Bibracte (France), see Dhennequin/Guillaumet/Szabò 2008, esp. pp. 22–66.

24 Elbert 2018; Karlsen 2020; Schuster 2020.

25 Metzler 1995; Woolf 2000; Lafon 2006, pp. 67–79; Morscheiser-Niebergall 2009, pp. 115–131; Gros/Torelli 2007, pp. 271–321 and 337–368; Thiel 2014; Pellegrino 2020. On the initial survival of the *oppida* in the early empire: Colin/Buchsenschutz/Fichtl 1995.

26 Clemens 2003.

27 I.a., Petry 1984; De la Bédoyère 2001, pp. 228f.; Wagner 2001; Clemens 2003; Clemens 2009, pp. 315–320; Schnapp 2011, pp. 104f.; Heising 2015, p. 3. For a reinterpretation of the so-called

late 15th century, the increasingly analytic examination of ancient architecture betrays an ambivalent relationship to the buildings of the former northwestern provinces. On the one hand, spurred on by the rediscovery of ancient written sources – especially Tacitus's *Germania*²⁸ and the medieval reception of the *Tabula Peutingeriana*²⁹ – the material Roman legacy north of the Alps excited great interest.³⁰ Since the 16th century, in addition to the establishment of antiquity collections that focused on individual artifacts,³¹ this led to first excavations of transalpine Roman architecture³² and its occasional pictorial representation in prints.³³ On the other hand, from the beginning of the early modern period there was an emphasis on a difference in quality – already noted by Vitruvius³⁴ – between Mediterranean architecture in glistening marble and the architecture of the northwestern provinces.³⁵ For example, the rules of proportion that Vitruvius elevated to canonical status were hardly to be found in the North. By the end of the 18th century at the latest, Roman architecture north of the Alps was completely overshadowed by Mediterranean buildings. There were many reasons for this. For the sake of clarity, the following considerations will mostly focus on two particularly effective factors: the classicistic currents in the development of classical archeology toward the end of the 18th century and the 19th-century ideals of the educated middle class with their strong emphasis on Greek antiquity and decidedly imperialistic and nationalistic perspectives on the objects of scholarship.

An intensive discussion of the historical and aesthetic value of ancient art and architecture had begun in the 1750s. It had its origin in the first exact measurements and descriptions of Greek architecture in the publications of Julien-David Le Roy (1724–1803) in 1758 as well as the publications on Athenian and Attic antiquities by James Stuart (1713–

Igel column as the monument of a Constantine (Christian) family: Clemens 2003; Wiegartz 2004, pp. 127–132; Clemens 2009, pp. 321–324.

28 On the current scholarship and reception history of Tacitus's *Germania*: Pohl 2000, pp. 59–65; Schnapp 2011, pp. 129–132.

29 Most recently: Rathmann 2016.

30 Especially since it enabled the identification of various ruined cities. See for Germany the works of Sigismund Meisterlin (Schnapp 2011, pp. 125–128), subsequently, for England William Camden (Schnapp 2011, pp. 154–157; Hingley 2016).

31 Ott 2002; Schnapp 2011, pp. 185–195.

32 E.g., in Basel (Hufschmid/Pfäffli 2015) or in Mandeure (Jeannin 2012, p. 20).

33 See, for example, the chapters in Boschung/Schäfer 2019.

34 Vitruvius: *On Architecture*, 2,1,4.

35 The interest in Roman architecture in the Renaissance was concentrated on the city of Rome: Schnapp 2011, pp. 136–146. Many architects – e.g., Antoine Desgodetz (Kruft 2013, pp. 153–155) and Heinrich Schickard (Kruft 2013, p. 192) – travelled from the former northwest provinces to Rome in order to pursue their studies. Also, when faux ancient ruins were installed in landscape gardens, for a long time they were almost exclusively modeled on well-known Italian examples: Rieche 2004, p. 233.

1788) and Nicholas Revett (1720–1804) beginning in 1762.³⁶ The debate was particularly fueled by a question that had already been raised in 17th-century France: Which was historically and aesthetically superior, Greek or Roman architecture?³⁷ Despite fierce opposition from Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778), most international scholars gave the palm to Greek art and architecture.³⁸ The most prominent contributions to this argument came from Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768): *Gedancken über die Nachahmung der Griech. Werke in der Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst* (Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture) of 1755 and *Anmerkungen über die Baukunst der Alten* (Notes on the Architecture of the Ancients) of 1762.³⁹ Scholars like Winckelmann established a classicizing tradition according to which the art of the Romans was understood as a decline from the cultural peak of Greece. Only a few years earlier, Stuart and Revett had explained their intention to publish Attic antiquities as follows:

Rome, who borrowed her Arts and frequently her Artificers from Greece, has by means of Serlio, Palladio, Santo Bartoli, and other ingenious men, preserved the memory of the most excellent Sculptures, and magnificent Edifices which once adorned her [...]. But Athens, the mother of Elegance and Politeness, whose magnificence scarce yielded to that of Rome, and who for the beauties of a correct style must be allowed to surpass her, as much as an original excels a copy, has been almost entirely neglected. So that unless exact copies of them be speedily made, all her beauteous Fabricks, her Temples, her Theatres, her Palaces will drop into oblivion.⁴⁰

While Greek architecture was declared to be aesthetically outstanding, Roman architecture was praised primarily for what the elder Pliny already regarded as its progressive technical achievements – e.g., its focus on infrastructure and utility.⁴¹ Even within Roman architecture, distinctions were made; for example, the buildings of Rome and central Italy were regarded as superior and more worthy of study than the monuments of the northwestern provinces. Moreover, certain social practices established and confirmed the influential canon of the buildings of central Italy and the city of Rome. Since the early modern period, the Grand Tour featured these monuments and paid hardly any attention to transalpine buildings. Through engravings – and since the 1760s also cork models⁴² – these value judgments became inscribed in northern European cultural memory. It is well known that such tendencies were rooted in late 18th-century

36 Le Roy 1758 (see Krufft 2013, pp. 236f.); Stuart / Revett 1762–1816 (see Krufft 2013, pp. 237f.).

37 For a summary: Baumgartner 2006.

38 On Piranesi: Wilton-Ely 1972; Krufft 2013, pp. 224–228. Many dissenting opinions in Krufft 2013, pp. 331–396.

39 On painting and sculpture: Winckelmann 2002, pp. 562–584. On architecture: Winckelmann 1762.

40 Stuart / Revett 1751, introduction; Watkin 2006.

41 Pliny: *Natural History*, xxxvi, 122–124.

42 Helmberger / Kockel 1993; Kockel 1996, pp. 14f.

Enlightenment thought and developed an enormous political potential, perpetuated in the 19th century by the ideals of middle-class education.

Moreover, since the end of the 19th century, scholars with colonialist attitudes have viewed the Romans as bringers of a culture only partly understood in the North. This point of view impeded an unprejudiced examination of ancient transalpine architecture. The successors of Theodor Mommsen and Francis John Haverfield regarded the buildings of the northwestern provinces in general as provincial efforts to adopt, unfiltered, Roman forms and metropolitan ways of life.⁴³ They considered such buildings as deficient adaptations by a marginal population unable to construct monuments with intellectual aspirations and a distinct aesthetics.⁴⁴ In this model, the coming of Rome has positive connotations. The term ‘Romanization’ was introduced to describe this importation of culture.⁴⁵ By contrast, many modern nation-states found the ‘Celts’ or the ‘Teutons’ more appropriate for the establishment of legitimizing narratives than the Romans.⁴⁶ This meant that the numerous handbooks of ancient Roman architecture published around the beginning of the 20th century hardly mention transalpine structures.⁴⁷ If they were treated at all, they were not conceded any aesthetic intention. In the case of the rusticated masonry of the Porta Nigra in Trier, for instance, Alfred von Domaszewski recognized a certain “picturesque” quality but also asserted that this impression was “unintentional,” the accidental result of carelessness, since the builders “nowhere took the trouble to smooth out the ashlar.”⁴⁸ Not long thereafter, in a chapter entitled “Characteristics of Roman Architecture” in the second edition of his “Baukunst der Römer” (Architecture of the Romans, 1905), Josef Durm formulated the idea, typical for his time, of a unidirectional history of influence from the Romans to the provinces, with the words, “As far as the Romans bore their arms, they brought their art as well! [...] everywhere we find the same architecture.”⁴⁹

While somewhat in the 18th-century tradition of a Greek versus Roman antithesis, the transalpine Roman buildings were conceded at least technical mastery, the developments described above led to a lasting aesthetic disparagement of Roman architecture north of the Alps and its sculptural features, which were categorically denied any

43 See Mommsen 1992, pp. 304–340.

44 Haverfield 1979 [1923], pp. 14f.; Mommsen 1992, p. 303.

45 For a summary: Rothe 2005, pp. 1–5; Langner 2020, pp. 13–17.

46 King 2001; Reddé 2006, pp. 65–79 (for France); Struck 2001, pp. 101, 106f.; Bender / Fischer / von Kaenel 2000, pp. 312–321; Focke-Museum 2013 (for Germany).

47 See Anderson / Phené Spiers 1905, pp. 280–285; Noack 1910; Robertson 1929; Monuments north of the Alps are treated somewhat more extensively in Borrmann 1904, pp. 257–260 and Durm 1905 [1885], pp. 440, 742–745).

48 Domaszewski after Durm 1905 [1885], p. 440. Cf. for current evaluations of such embossing: Grawehr 2017.

49 Durm 1905 [1885], p. 176.

creativity whatsoever.⁵⁰ Such basically unsubstantiated views continue to inform value judgments up to the present. For example, Helmut Schoppa wrote in 1957, “in general, when judging the sculpture from the parts of the Empire north of the Alps, one must not forget the cultural gradient that characterizes the separation between Rome and the Rhine.”⁵¹ He traces these differences in quality partly back to the Celtic-Germanic population, but also believes that the Roman legionnaires shared responsibility for what he saw as a lack of cultural development: “From an economic point of view, we can assume a modest prosperity in the Limes region, but from a cultural perspective, nothing that rises above the horizon of the average soldier.”⁵² Even when such dogmatic statements are revisited in more recent publications, the image of a story of unidirectional influence remains unchallenged. Patrick Schollmeyer, for example, spends only one page of his 2008 introduction to Roman temples on the buildings of the northwestern provinces and detects “a strong dependence on [unspecified] Roman architectural designs.”⁵³ Symptomatic of this view, with its implicit value judgments, is the title of the 2014 exhibition in Trier and Stuttgart, “Ein Traum von Rom: Stadtleben im römischen Deutschland” (Dreaming of Rome: Urban Life in Roman Germany).⁵⁴

Nevertheless, beginning in the 1990s with the critical reappraisal of colonialism, there has been a tendency to reevaluate the Roman provinces and examine the various inhabitants of the Roman Empire and their different socio-cultural practices.⁵⁵ Driving this change was the application of the theories of cultural contacts cited at the beginning of our discussion⁵⁶ that allow us to abandon polarizing approaches such as “metropolitan Rome vs. the provinces,” “Romans vs. indigenous peoples,” “upper classes vs. subjects,” and “high art vs. everyday objects,” and in their place emphasize the cultural independence of various cities and regions as well as the plural identities of their inhabitants.⁵⁷

50 In the 1930s and 1940s, there were scattered attempts to rehabilitate Roman architecture and sculpture north of the Alps, but they had different motivations and, from today’s vantage point, are mostly untenable: esp. Schoppa 1930. Blümel 1955 [1940], p. 80, however, sees in the sculptures of the northwestern provinces connections to archaic Greek art: “They are not very different in their main lines from early Greek sculptures [...], but the comparison with archaic sculptures from Greece cannot be maintained as far as clarity and harmony of form are concerned.”

51 Schoppa 1957, p. 34.

52 Schoppa 1957, p. 30.

53 Schollmeyer 2008, p. 148.

54 Reuter/Ewigleben 2014.

55 E.g., Millett 1990; Webster/Cooper 1996; Mattingly 1997; Woolf 1998; Mattingly 2002; Terrenato 2005; Mattingly 2014; Versluys 2014; Revell 2014.

56 E.g., syncretism, pidginization, creolization, hybridization, globalization, glocalization, networking, and many others: Schreiber 2013; Hahn 2014, pp. 99–107; Versluys 2014; Hofmann/Stockhammer 2017.

57 E.g., Revell 2009; Gardner 2013; Langner 2020.

This approach offers new possibilities for understanding transalpine Roman architecture. No longer must we evaluate it (only) against the backdrop of the buildings of the capital. Instead, it becomes clear that the buildings north of the Alps are not direct copies. They reveal programmatic differences from Mediterranean architectural concepts that can be understood as distinctive developments addressing, among other things, the particular functions they serve⁵⁸ or different semantic systems.⁵⁹ But they also represent a distinctive aesthetics barely recognized or investigated in previous scholarship.⁶⁰ In what follows, we intend to approach that aesthetics by means of two guiding questions: In what ways does transalpine Roman architecture distinguish itself from architecture in Italy? Who commissioned its construction, and what political, religious, and societal functions did it fulfill in its concrete socio-cultural context?

2.2. Funerary Architecture in the Early Empire and its Social Context: Selected Monuments in Mainz

In the following pages, we will only be able to scratch the surface of the copious archaeological material that is available to address the questions we have raised. Instead of providing comprehensive answers, we will highlight the independent aesthetic accomplishments of transalpine monuments by examining selected funerary monuments in the provincial capital *Mogontiacum* (Mainz) in the north of the province of Germania Superior. In the course of building a military base on a plateau opposite the mouth of the Main River in the penultimate decade BCE, the permanent deployment of two legions there by 17 CE at the latest, as well as the establishment of an additional military camp in Mainz-Weisenau, the town soon grew into one of the largest conurbations north of the Alps (Fig. 1).⁶¹ As the central hub for troop movements in the North of the Empire, the once sparsely populated region⁶² now contained up to 30,000 soldiers.⁶³ On the basis of numerous surviving funerary inscriptions, we know that many of these soldiers came from northern Italy and the south of France. But there is also evidence for units of various mother tongues from regions of modern Spain, England, the Balkans, Turkey, and the Near East. With the arrival of the military, civilian settlements arose before the legionnaires' compound in Mainz-Weisenau, as well as farther downstream. Veterans, artisans, tradespeople, and freedpeople had lodgings there, brought their families (and

58 E.g., Hesberg 2009; Hufschmid 2016; Lipps 2017.

59 Cf. the essays by Hesberg 1995; Hesberg 2003.

60 Yet there is an ancient positive evaluation of the aesthetics of Roman architecture along the Moselle; see Ausonius's *Mosella*.

61 On the legionnaires' camp, see Burger-Völlmecke 2020, esp. pp. 184–207. On the camp in Mainz-Weisenau, see most recently Boppert/Ertel 2019, pp. 5f.

62 On the late Latène Period findings, see Hornung 2016, p. 211; Burger-Völlmecke 2020, p. 183.

63 Strobel 1991; Boppert 1992a, pp. 29–34.

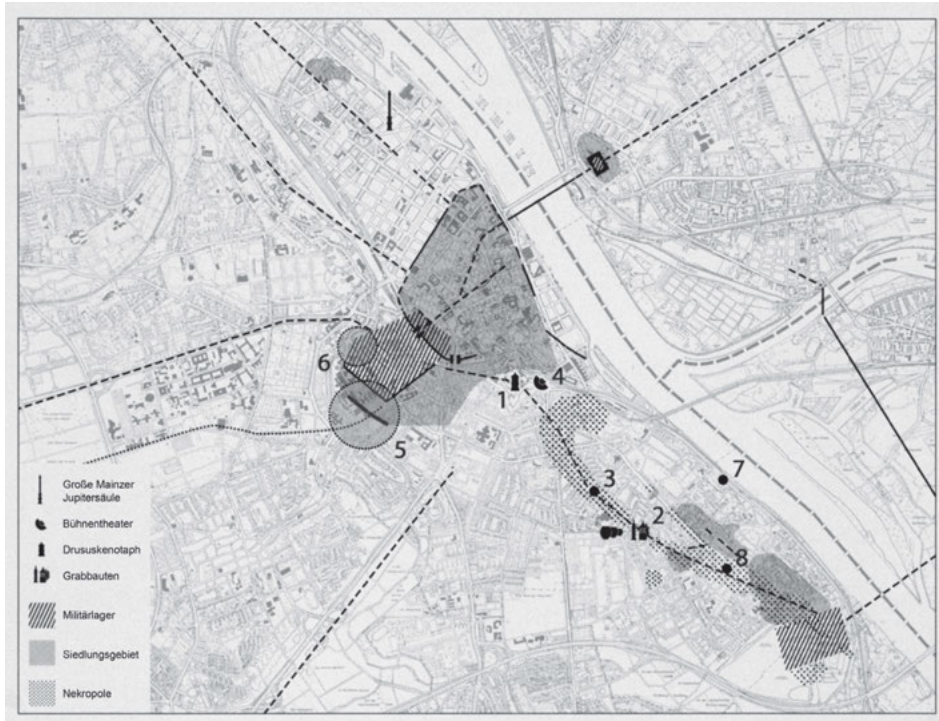


Fig. 1. Mainz in the Roman era. Numbers indicate the location of the monuments under discussion.

No. 1: The so-called Drusus Monument (Fig. 2–3), No. 2: Weisenau avenue of tombs (Figs. 4, 15),

No. 3: Funerary monument of the Cassii (Fig. 6), No. 4: Corbel geison (Fig. 9), No. 5: Grave stele of the soldier Cn. Musius (Fig. 11), No. 6: Grave stele of the soldier Rufus (Fig. 12), No. 7: Grave stele of Blussus (Fig. 13), No. 8: The so-called Weisenau Gardener (Fig. 14); nach Boppert/Ertel 2015b, p. 80

Fig. 1a, revised by Elisa Schuster.

sometimes slaves) with them or founded new ones, and looked to profit from the new commercial center. Moreover, countless members of the indigenous transalpine population came to Mainz, so that we can conservatively assume a population numbering in the high five figures in the early imperial era, a polyglot population from all corners of the Greco-Roman world.⁶⁴ The logistical and social challenges of dealing with such explosive growth must have been enormous. Construction was not the least of those challenges. It was dependent on architects and artisans as well as on numerous raw materials and the necessary infrastructure, which in many places had still to be set up.

64 For a thorough treatment of the social structure of Roman Mainz, see Kronemayer 1983; Strobel 1991, pp. 47 f.; Schipp 2013, pp. 75–116.

For several reasons we can characterize the tombs analyzed below, most of them comparatively monumental structures, as exemplary: (1) They document the practice – widespread in the Roman world and adopted north of the Alps since the Augustan period – of erecting large-scale stone tombs at considerable expense in order to preserve for posterity the memory of the deceased. Unlike our modern cemeteries, the ancient necropoleis were extended out along busy rivers or highways and were designed for the greatest possible visibility.⁶⁵ (2) The remains of Roman tombs in Mainz, although only preserved in fragments, are comparatively numerous and present a rich spectrum of design possibilities. Moreover, the so-called *Weisenauer Gräberstraße*, an unusually well preserved and extensively excavated avenue of tombs and published in 2019, documents the city's funeral architecture in an exemplary way. (3) Inscriptions and reliefs on the tombs allow us to draw extremely detailed conclusions about their builders and the ways in which their works helped them or their patrons to present and socially locate themselves in the context of a multicultural community still in the process of constituting and defining itself.

On a general level, the images and texts on the tombs should not be understood as direct visualizations of the lives of the deceased. Rather, they are clearly idealized and thus are caught up in a delicate polarity. On the one hand, they are subject to certain constraints imposed by social conventions, but on the other hand, they possess creative potential peculiar to their materials, capable of oscillating between documentation and fiction. Thus the tombs were erected not just for the dead but also for the collective of the living who conceived, built, and visited these monuments.

The praxeological approach of the CRC 1391, with its explicit inclusion of the heterological dimension, brings into focus the heterogeneous structure of the population in early imperial Mainz. This automatically reveals the inadequacies of the purely binary model of Italic versus Central European architecture. The first monumental tomb erected under Roman rule is a perfect example of this shift. This cenotaph (a funerary monument not containing the remains of the deceased), often mentioned in ancient sources, honors Nero Claudius Drusus, the younger of Caesar Augustus's two stepsons.⁶⁶ Drusus had led wars of conquest from Mainz into Germania on the right bank of the Rhine and supposedly had reached the Elbe. According to Livy, he fell from his horse during the return in the late summer of 9 BCE, broke his thighbone, and, as a result of the injury, died thirty days later in a provisional summer encampment.⁶⁷ Upon hearing of the accident, his brother Tiberius is said to have ridden from Italy day and night until he reached him, only to see Drusus die a few days later. Tiberius then accompanied the

65 For a general treatment of burial customs in the western Imperium Romanum: Schrumpf 2006.

66 See, i.a., Panter 2007, pp. 18–25.

67 Livy: History, 142.

body back to the headquarters in Mainz.⁶⁸ There the army immediately began to erect a tumulus in which to bury its beloved general, but on the orders of Augustus had to surrender his body to be put to rest, befitting his status, in the family mausoleum in Rome. As compensation, Augustus ordered the tumulus prepared as a cenotaph. It must have been either completed or near completion before Augustus's death in 14 CE, since Augustus had it engraved (*insculpsisse*) with an elogium he had written himself.⁶⁹ Thus the monument was the product of a collaborative effort between soldiers of various origins and the Roman emperor. The construction brought together existing knowhow within the army⁷⁰ that was probably supplemented by the expertise of technical personnel from the entourage of the emperor, expressly dispatched from the South.⁷¹ Moreover, the anniversary of Drusus's death was to be commemorated from then on in Mainz with great festivities, to which the army was to contribute *decursiones*, and delegations from circa sixty tribal communities of Gauls and Teutons from the left bank of the Rhine were to add *supplicationes*.⁷² Thus, members of nearly all local and transregional groups of the population were involved in the ritualized staging and reception of the monument. The logistics necessary for this task, especially the quarrying and transport of newly developed raw materials,⁷³ must have given an impulse to further building in the region.⁷⁴ At the latest by the next generation, in 19 CE, a second transregional 'authors' collective' appeared in Mainz at the behest of the Senate in Rome to erect an honorific arch not far from Drusus's cenotaph for his son Germanicus, who also had died young.⁷⁵

Early on, scholars identified a monumental core of Roman concrete, today located within the Mainz citadel and dubbed the *Drususstein*, as part either of the tumulus erected for Drusus after 9 BCE or of its later renovation as a cenotaph (Fig. 1, no. 1).⁷⁶ Even though this identification is not completely verifiable due to the lack of an inscription,⁷⁷ the sheer size of this structure, which rises to over 21 meters, as well as its location to the southeast of the legionnaires' compound in a privileged position over-

68 For a summary of the incident: John 2006, pp. 102–106.

69 Suetonius: *Lives*, 1,5.

70 For more information on the activities of Mainz legions, see: Stribny 1987, p. 8; Frenz 1991.

71 Cf. the partly analogous course of raising the better-preserved cenotaph for the grandson of Augustus Gaius Caesar in Limyra in Turkey: Ganzert 1984.

72 Tab. Siar. 29–32; Lebek 1989, pp. 48. 51–54 and 67–72; Herz 2001, pp. 103–112; Spickermann 2003, pp. 85–91; Spickermann 2006, p. 169; Panter 2007, pp. 15–25; Blänsdorf 2020, pp. 94–99.

73 On the quarries of the so-called Drusus Monument: Panter 2007, pp. 83–85. On the better-researched beginnings of the ancient quarry somewhat further north on the Rhine: Schaaff 2010, pp. 265–272.

74 With some differences in evaluating details: Scholz 2012, p. 43; Hornung 2014, pp. 52–158.

75 Tacitus: *Annals*, 2,83,2; CIL VI 31199.

76 On its reception and the history of earlier scholarship: Frenz 1985, pp. 395–397; Pelgen 2003.

77 Cf. the resultant skepticism of Andrikopoulou-Strack 1986, p. 26f.; Gans 1997; Haupt 2010. As arguments against identifying the block of Roman cement as the cenotaph for Drusus, the use of



Fig. 2. The so-called Drusus Monument in 2022.

looking the mouth of the Main, bespeak its outstanding importance and the power of the Roman imperium (Fig. 2).⁷⁸ In the absence of excavations in undisturbed strata or scientific analyses (e.g., of remnants of wood in the Roman concrete), at present only a typological classification of its structure can be carried out. The monument, partly buried underground today, with its cubical base supporting a cylindrical superstructure, corresponds to designs known from Rome and its environs. They were popular from the later first century BCE up to the early empire, particularly in the reign of Augustus.⁷⁹ But the monument's present-day appearance is deceiving. Originally the exterior of the

the term *tumulus* in the ancient written sources as well as the use of different kinds of stone and of previously worked ashlar are adduced. See in response Scholz 2012, pp. 42f. notes 150 and 152.

78 I.a. Hesberg 1992, p. 107; Spickermann 2006, pp. 168–171; Panter 2007; Scholz 2012, pp. 42f.; Hornung 2014, pp. 59–62; Witteyer 2014, pp. 76–78; Ertel 2015, p. 2; Blänsdorf 2020, pp. 94–99; Schäfer 2021, pp. 292–295.

79 Hesberg 1992, pp. 121–159; Gans 1997, p. 22; Schwarz 2002; Panter 2007, pp. 97–99; Scholz 2012, p. 43.

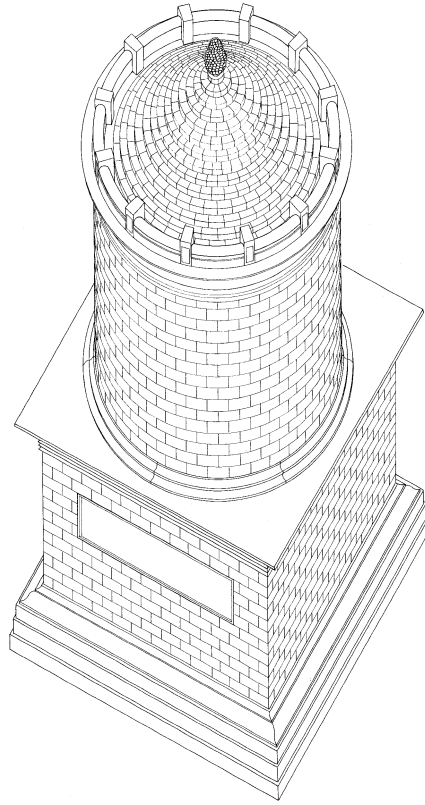


Fig. 3. The so-called Drusus Monument. Suggested reconstruction by Hans Georg Frenz.

so-called Drusus Monument was faced in large ashlars and decorated with architectural orders, but a visualization must remain hypothetical in the absence of any surviving material (Fig. 3).⁸⁰

For the architectural concept of both the Mainz *tumulus* (known to us only through texts but probably surrounded by a wooden or stone enclosure)⁸¹ and the so-called *Drususstein*, there are comparable structures in Rome itself and its immediate environs, but strikingly, the transalpine monuments are not their direct copies. On the contrary, especially the *Drususstein*, which can be examined archeologically, has a distinct design with imperial aspirations for whose dimensions and construction there is no comparison even far beyond Mainz.

Between 1982 and 1992, the 250-meter-long avenue of tombs – which later also reached the *Drususstein* along a ridge that connected the legionnaires' compound with an auxiliary camp in Weisenau – was excavated (Fig. 1, no. 2). It provides an impression

80 On the reconstructions: Frenz 1985; Panter 2007, esp. p. 92.

81 Cf. Berke 2013.

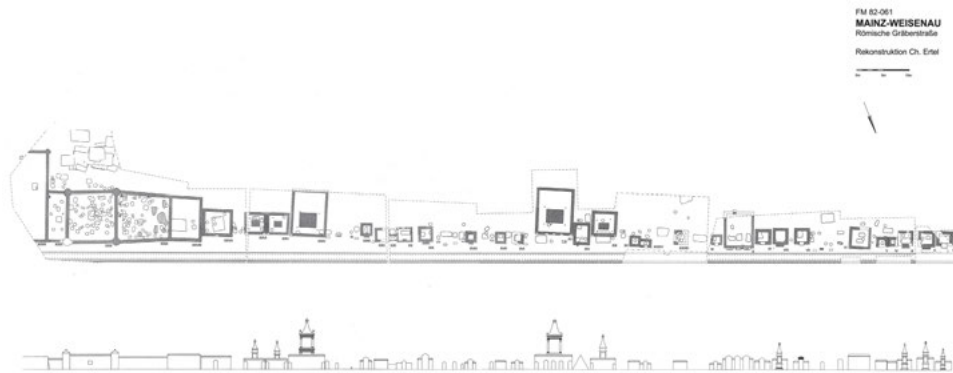


Fig. 4. Floorplan and conjectural elevation of the necropolis in Mainz-Weisenau.

of the rather conventional repertoire of early imperial tombs typical for the region and includes over thirty funerary precincts, side-by-side, and numerous burials (Fig. 4).⁸² Already in late antiquity, the tombs were being used as quarries for new buildings and were dismantled down to their foundations. Nevertheless, 321 small architectural fragments, broken off and discarded during demolition, were recovered by the recent excavations.⁸³ Most of them were made from Jura limestone quarried in Lorraine.⁸⁴ On the basis of where they were unearthed and whether their dimensions were compatible, the fragments were divided into groups and attributed to individual tombs.⁸⁵ Circular tombs were the exception.⁸⁶ An analysis identified three tombs as mausolea or multi-story aedicules,⁸⁷ especially large monuments⁸⁸ that have been reconstructed with a closed ground floor, an open second floor ornamented with statues, and a pyramidal tile roof. With eighty fragments, the best-preserved tomb precinct, number XXIV, covers an area of 7.3×9.1 meters. Within its enclosure stood a two-story tomb with a footprint of 3.4×2.9 meters that may have been roughly ten meters high (Fig. 5). While the closed ground floor was framed by two Corinthian pilasters and probably bore inscriptions, the second story had an aedicule framed by two Corinthian columns and topped by a

82 Witteyer/Fasold 1995; Witteyer 2000, pp. 319–343.

83 Boppert/Ertel 2019, pp. 22–24.

84 Stribrny 1987; Boppert/Ertel 2015a, p. 49 with note 1. Boppert/Ertel 2019, pp. 24f. On limestone from Lorraine most recently: Giljohann/Wenzel 2015, pp. 19–22.

85 Boppert/Ertel 2019, pp. 25 f.

86 Boppert/Ertel 2019, pp. 128–131.

87 Gabelmann 1979, pp. 7f.; Andrikopoulou-Strack 1986, pp. 9–36; Hesberg 1992, p. 121; Scholz 2012, II, p. 91, no. 572.

88 Boppert/Ertel 2015b; Boppert/Ertel 2019, pp. 69–85, no. XV; pp. 87–104, no. XXIV; pp. 113–127, no. XXXV.

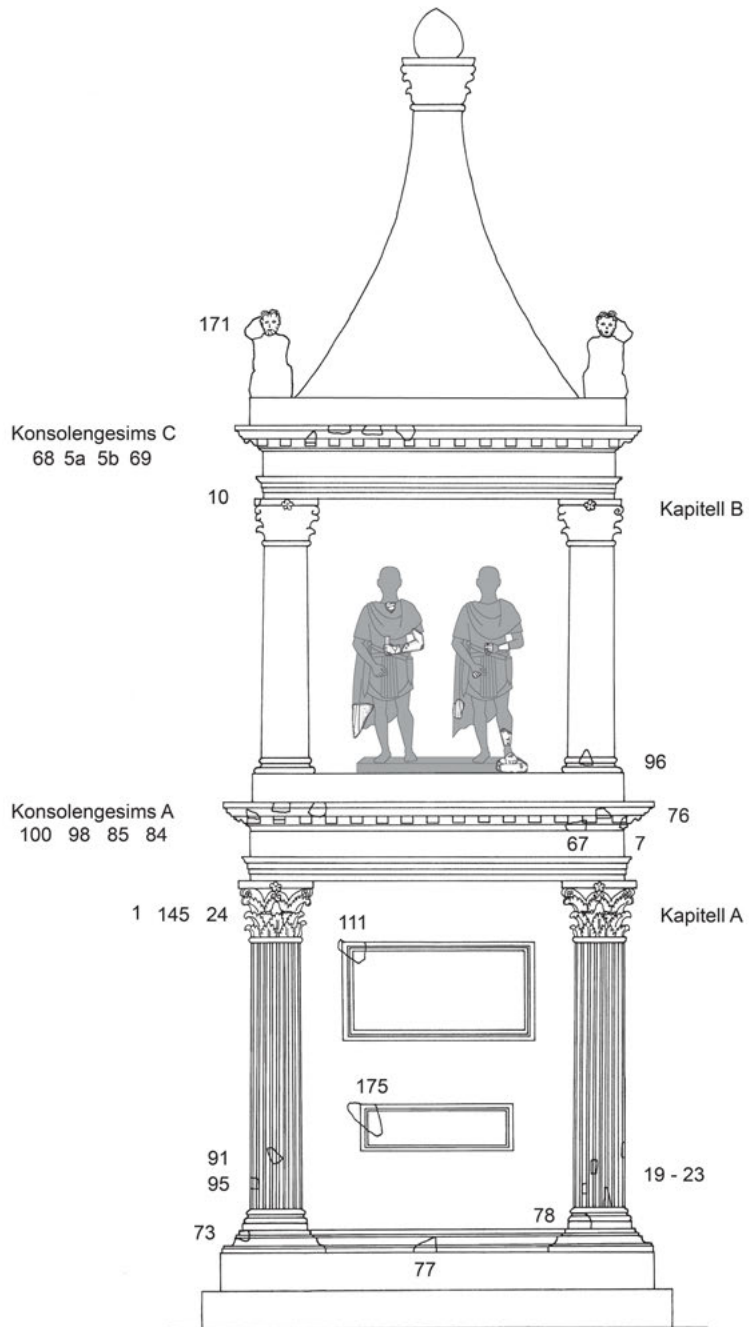


Fig. 5. Conjectural reconstruction of the tomb precinct No. XXIV in the necropolis of Mainz-Weisenau.



Fig. 6. Tombs of the Cassii.

pyramidal roof decorated with four tritons as acroteria. The aedicule probably housed statues of the tomb's occupants, who, based on the modest remains of the tomb, may have been soldiers. The finds from the tomb precinct, and especially the architectural fragments, allow us to date tomb precinct no. XXIV to the early imperial period.⁸⁹ Mausolea of similar design are reported in many Roman towns in Italy and southern France and date from the late last century BCE to the early first century CE. Especially well-preserved examples have been discovered in Pompeii and Sarsina.⁹⁰

In the absence of an inscription, the occupants of tomb precinct no. XXIV remain unknown, but a large-format inscription, discovered in 1974 on Oberer Laubenheimer Weg in Mainz-Weisenau (Fig. 1, no. 3), can serve as an example of the type of person who would have ordered the construction of a comparable tomb (Fig. 6). Even before the excavation of the avenue of tombs in Weisenau, the four limestone blocks of this monument, also quarried in Lorraine, had been conjecturally associated with a two-story, large-format tomb and dated to the first half of the first century CE. The inscription names two brothers, Marcus and Caius Cassius, originally from Milan, who both served in the Fourteenth Legion.⁹¹ They had contracted for a type of tomb familiar to them from Italy and being built in Mainz since the early 1st century CE, but constructed from locally available resources. Examining the surviving architectural fragments of tomb precinct no. XXIV in detail, one notices a particular preference for additional ornamental details that are not to be found in this concentration on comparable buildings in the South and, in general, should be regarded as characteristic of Roman architecture north of the Alps.⁹² This becomes clear, i. a., from the fragments of Corinthian capitals from tomb precinct no. XXIV: the sculptors added an additional blossom to the volutes while

89 Boppert/Ertel 2019, pp. 87–104 suggest an even more precise dating in the years 20–40 CE.

90 Kockel 1983 as well as contributions in Hesberg/Zanker 1987.

91 Boppert 1992 a, pp. 163–165, no. 55.

92 Cf. Walter 1984, pp. 337–364.

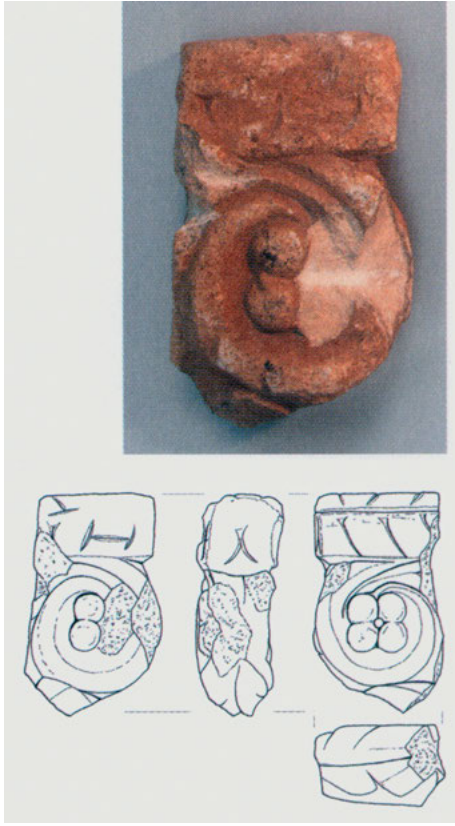


Fig. 7. Fragment of a capital from the necropolis in Mainz-Weisenau.



Fig. 8. Fragment of a capital from the necropolis in Mainz-Weisenau.

the abacus attracts particular attention with parallel-running channels.⁹³ One can see a similar love of detail and a predilection for rich ornamentation in the Corinthian capitals of the tomb in precinct no. XV (Fig. 7) and in the unusually extensive segmentation filling the volute of a capital (Fig. 8).⁹⁴

A cornice with modillions, found a few hundred meters to the west of and downhill from the *Drususstein* in the subsequently erected Roman theater, provides an even deeper insight into such processes than the small architectural fragments discussed above (Fig. 1, no. 4). The stone block is of high-quality Jura limestone and was probably also quarried on the upper Moselle in Lorraine (Fig. 9). It was discovered in 2002 during excavations in the apex of the theater's orchestra, in a context of secondary use and

⁹³ Boppert/Ertel 2019, pp. 91f.

⁹⁴ Boppert/Ertel 2019, p. 70.



Fig. 9. Corbel geison found in the Mainz theater.

upside-down, perhaps serving as the foundation for an altar. Projecting segments of the cornice that had been broken off onsite were collected. During a subsequent restoration, they were discovered to fit perfectly with the cornice and were reattached. Christine Ertel hypothesized that the cornice block, 29.5 centimeters high and part of a *ressaut entablature*, was part of the *scaenae frons* of a conjectural early theater, but in light of its dimensions, it could also have been only repurposed here and belonged originally to a tomb or other building.⁹⁵

An upside-down leaf-and-dart kymation (*Scherenkymation*) leads to the modillions. The modillions are underpinned by serrated acanthus leaves, and on their fronts, finely striated cockleshells alternate with hanging acanthus leaves and blossoms. Most of the panels between the modillions are decorated with offensive and defensive weapons, which can be associated with gladiatorial combat. One panel shows a sacrificial procession with a *victimarius* and a bull; on another we see the winged goddess Victoria, dressed in a peplos and holding a wreath. On the upper side of the intermediate panels is an egg-and-dart motif that runs around and ties together the individual modillions. Each of the surviving coffers is decorated with a different blossom. On the far right, a theater mask is depicted. The upper part of the cornice above the modillions is adorned with an astragal and a row of acanthus leaves interspersed with finely stippled poppy seed capsules.⁹⁶

When interpreting the cornice, we must also keep in mind that ancient architectural elements were often covered with a white primer and then painted. In the present case, traces of whiteish-yellow plaster where the modillions meet the intermediate panels as well as faint traces of red on Victoria's wreath provide evidence of the geison's original color.⁹⁷ Judging by similar traces on other surviving architectural elements from the region, paint was used to give reliefs clearer contours and, when needed, to

⁹⁵ Ertel 2015, p. 21.

⁹⁶ For an extensive description and interpretation of the cornice, see Ertel/Boppert 2014, pp. 80f.; Boppert/Ertel 2015a; Boppert/Ertel 2019, pp. 9f.

⁹⁷ Boppert/Ertel 2015a, pp. 20 and 56.

add ornamental designs, objects, or figures to otherwise empty and uncarved sections.⁹⁸ Sculptural details we have trouble identifying today may thus have been more quickly and clearly identifiable in antiquity, and many architectural nuances may indeed have relied on painting to be effective. The choice of color was, as a rule (but not necessarily always), determined by how the depicted object looked in reality.⁹⁹ Like quarried stone, the ingredients necessary for making paint north of the Alps in the Augustan period had to be locally extracted or imported from the Mediterranean region.¹⁰⁰

In the context of our discussion, the cornice from the theater is especially relevant for two reasons. First, as typological and stylistic comparisons show, it was created in the early imperial era. The syntax, motifs, and execution of the ornamentation find their closest parallels in the Augustan period, especially in its early years.¹⁰¹ Second, we can identify significant differences between this cornice and Italian pieces sculpted at approximately the same time. The decorations of the Mainz cornice are much denser and more varied. Besides richly faceted modillions which in Italy were usually not decorated, the metopes between the modillions have elaborate and varied decorations. While these parts of similar cornices were hardly ever decorated in Italy, the Mainz cornice features numerous and varied scenes. With their depictions of weapons, sacrificial offerings, and Victoria, the goddess of victory, they recall central themes of Roman visual arts and refer programmatically and emphatically to the empire and the quality of its leaders.¹⁰²

Let us return to the Weisenau necropolis and the smaller tomb precincts that are much more numerous than the large-format structures discussed so far. On their front side, these precincts often had a stele – i.e., a tall, oblong stone reminiscent of contemporary European gravestones – with a Latin inscription and sometimes a relief (Fig. 10). We can deduce the existence of such stelae at the Weisenau site from the remaining so-called beddings into which the stelae were set, but only a few fragments of the stones themselves survive.¹⁰³ In past centuries, however, numerous stelae were found in other Mainz necropoleis as well as in the city walls, and although their exact findspots were hardly ever documented, the objects can nonetheless give us an impression of the stelae missing from the avenue of tombs in Weisenau. Their inscriptions are more likely to provide information about the tombs' occupants than the remaining fragments of the

98 Cf. also early observations on the monuments from Neumagen in Grenier 1904; Massow 1932, pp. 274–279, plates 65–68; Delferrière/Edme 2020.

99 Lipps 2020; Lipps/Berthold 2021.

100 On the importation of paint: Höpken/Mucha 2016 with a critique in Thomas 2016, p. 400.

101 However, the historical context makes an origin before the establishment of the legionnaires' camp in the second decade BCE unlikely: Ertel 2015, pp. 30–32. Cf. also: Frenz 1992, Cat. 24–27; Hesberg 2002, pp. 31 f.

102 Boppert/Ertel 2015b.

103 Boppert/Ertel 2019, Cat. 56. 86. 179. 193.



Fig. 10. Conjectural visualization of the tomb precinct No. VII in the necropolis of Mainz-Weisenau.

larger-format structures. Moreover, the inscriptions often mentioned the military units the deceased served in, allowing us to date their presence in Mainz, and their haircuts typical of the early imperial era allow for a quite accurate date in the Julian and early Claudian period.¹⁰⁴ As case studies, we will compare three grave stelae: one of a legionnaire from Italy, one of a trooper from an auxiliary unit who grew up in the Alpine region, and one of a civilian – probably a local – with a Celtic name.

The legionnaire, Cn. Musius from Veleia in northern Italy, is presented in full figure with his weapons. Both the inscription and a standard in his right hand identify him as an *aquilifer* of the Fourteenth Legion, an especially prestigious post (Fig. 11). Additional honorary badges and medals, unmentioned in the inscription, appear on his breastplate. In addition to Musius's name, home town, troop affiliation, and rank, the inscription tells us that his gravestone was erected by his brother. The stone was found early in 1831 on the slope of the Zahlbach Valley, in sight of the legion's camp, whose location is today occupied by Mainz's main cemetery (Fig. 1, no. 5).¹⁰⁵

At another location in the northwest, right outside the legionnaires' compound, one would have found in the early imperial period the stele of the auxiliary Rufus, from the tribe of the Helvetii (Fig. 1, no. 6). The sumptuous design presents the deceased as a (victorious) cavalryman (Fig. 12). Rufus exhibits his equestrian skills by keeping a tight rein on his rearing horse in an impressive demonstration of his value to the Roman army.¹⁰⁶

104 Boppert 1992a; Boppert 1992b.

105 Boppert 1992a, pp. 87–90, no. 1; Töpfer 2011, p. 360, Cat. SD 18.

106 Boppert 1992a, no. 27; Scholz 2013; Ardeleanu 2021, pp. 219–223, no. 1. On the site, see Burger-Völlmecke 2020, p. 200.



Fig. 11. Grave stele of the soldier Cn. Musius in Mainz (Inv. No. S 182, today in Landesmuseum Mainz).



Fig. 12. Grave stele of the soldier Rufus in Mainz (today in the REM Mannheim).

The third stele was reportedly discovered in 1848, “on the hillside directly above the house at Wormserstrasse 15” in Weisenau. Both sides are inscribed with an almost identical text, but each with its own separate relief (Fig 1, no. 7).¹⁰⁷ On the more elaborately carved side, which had been facing the Rhine, a man the inscription identifies as Blussus sits next to his wife Menimane (Fig. 13, no. 1). Judging by the names, they are indigenous to the area, and they wear demonstrably local attire. Over his tunic, the seventy-five-year-old boatman Blussus wears a hooded coat typical for the region and holds a bulging moneybag. His wife Menimane wears an undergarment which, unlike his tunic, is long-sleeved and tightly fitted, and a belted outer garment of coarser material. She is also

107 On the localization: Esser 1972, p. 218, note 30.



Fig. 13.1 and 13.2. Grave stele of Blussus in Mainz (Inv. No. S 146, today in Landesmuseum Mainz).

lavishly adorned with jewelry. Between the two of them stands a smaller figure, identified by scholars as either their son Primus, who had commissioned the stone, or their slave Satto, whom only the side facing the Rhine describes as being buried here.¹⁰⁸ The reverse side depicts a ship beneath garlands and blossoms (Fig. 13, no. 2), representing Blussus's occupation and the reason for the economic success obvious from his elegant attire and his moneybag.¹⁰⁹

The basic idea of erecting grave stelae may have originated in northern Italy, where many such monuments are preserved from the late last century BCE and especially from the Augustan period.¹¹⁰ However, the stelae described above display striking differences from their Italian counterparts in their imagery. Musius, who came from Veleia, chose

108 On the discussion, see, i. a., Böhme-Schönberger 2003, p. 285, note 2.

109 On the Blussus Stone, i. a., Boppert 1992b, pp. 53–59, no. 2 with an extensive bibliography. Since then: Frenz 1992, p. 12, note 122; Boppert 1992/1993; Jacobi 1996, pp. 169–175; Böhme-Schönberger 2003; Hesberg 2004, pp. 254f.; Böhme-Schönberger 2009; Rothe 2012, pp. 236–239; Mander 2013, p. 254, no. 447; Boppert/Ertel 2019, p. 12; Riemer 2019, pp. 34f.; Lipps 2021, pp. 242–245.

110 See Pflug 1989; Pflug 2019.

a stele showing an armed full figure in an aedicula, structurally comparable to that of Minucius Lorarius, a centurion from Padua,¹¹¹ and suggesting a direct or indirect transfer of imagery between Italy and Mainz.¹¹² Nevertheless, upright full figures were rare in Italy, but frequent north of the Alps. Moreover, a closer look at the Musius Stone also reveals differences in detail, for example, additional framing with rounded, almost three-dimensional columns; there is nothing comparable in Italy.¹¹³

If the Musius Stone is probably an example of creative appropriation of already existing imagery, the case of the gravestone of the Helvetian trooper Rufus is different. Although images of mounted combat had been familiar in the Mediterranean world for centuries, there are none to be found on Italian stelae. Instead, they occur for the first time in Mainz and can thus be described as an innovative conjunction of pictorial invention and the stele as its medium of representation.¹¹⁴ This pictorial design, presumably originating or substantially refined along the Rhine (and perhaps through contact with the Danube region), eventually itself became a model for comparable later monuments from Britannia.¹¹⁵ This type of imagery seems to have been used especially for auxiliary mounted troops, who hailed not from Italy but from quite different regions of the Roman Empire and often did not speak Latin as their mother tongue. They obviously favored images to express their importance for society. On the other hand, indigenous inhabitants like Blussus and Menimane, who had profited from the new prosperity of the region, entered the game of self-representation on a stele in their own way, by creating an innovative image that emphasized their wealth and professional success.¹¹⁶ Thus the distinctive achievement of the Roman grave stelae from Mainz lies in their creative appropriation and innovation of various motifs that lead to an impressive multiplicity of individual solutions.

In addition to monumental mausolea and simple, fenced-in grave precincts fronted by stelae, another kind of grave monument has been postulated for the avenue of tombs in Weisenau. It represents not just an enrichment through additional ornamentation or a new pictorial invention using a traditional medium, but an ingenious amalgamation of various models that can be regarded as a completely new type of structure. Walburg Boppert and Christine Ertel drew attention to grave precincts containing unearthed monuments smaller than the mausolea but larger than the usual stele beddings would

111 On the Minucius stele: Padova, Museo Civico; Franzoni 1987, pp. 46–48, no. 26; Pflug 1989, pp. 81, 231f., no. 191.

112 On the considerable mobility of stone masons in particular during the imperial period: Ruffing 2006, pp. 137–141; Sieler 2013, pp. 81–83; Lipps 2017, p. 15, note 36.

113 But there is an example Pannonian *Savaria*: Balla et al. 1971, Cat. 103, 110, 116, 118.

114 Boppert 1992a, pp. 57–62; Boppert 2003, pp. 273f. and 281–284.

115 Andrikopoulou-Strack 1986, pp. 97f.; Mattern 1989, pp. 711–714; Stewart 2010, paragraphs 30f.

116 Boppert 2003; Hesberg 2004; Hesberg 2018. On the grave stelae in *Carnuntum*, which originated a few decades later, see Kremer 2021.

accommodate.¹¹⁷ The two authors propose that these were pillar grave monuments, the best-preserved example of which was dubbed the *Weisenauer Gärtner* (Weisenau Gardener) in the scholarly literature (Fig. 14).

It too is made of Lorraine limestone and was reconstructed from several ancient fragments that belonged together. They were found in 1926 and 1955 in today's Erich-Ollenhauer-Strasse in Mainz-Weisenau (Fig. 1, no. 8). Originally circa five meters high, the monument has an oblong footprint and suggests how the structure in Precinct I of the Weisenau tomb avenue might have looked. The Weisenau Gardener consisted of a lost plinth framed on its lower side by a profile and on its upper side by a molding; based on comparable monuments, it would have borne an inscription with the name of the deceased. Above that rose the principal story, framed by half scalloped and half spiral columns, with a frontal relief. On the left is a standing female figure; on the right, a male figure sits on a stool with turned legs. The man wears sandals, a tunic, and a *paenula*. He also sports a scarf and a ring on his finger. His hair is cut short, and in his left hand he holds a flower, hence his name in the scholarly literature. The woman standing next to him wears closed shoes, a *tunica*, and a *palla*. Short strands of her hair are parted in the middle, and at the back of her head there is a pigtail bow contained in a net. Costly jewelry adorns her neck, her wrist, and her fingers. The main story ends in another molding, above which is a block, reconstructed in modern times, capped by a scalloped, pyramidal roof crowned by a sphinx.¹¹⁸ The figures' hairstyles suggest that the Weisenau Gardener dates to the second third of the 1st century CE.¹¹⁹ Even in the absence of further information about the Weisenau Gardener due to the lack of an inscription, we can roughly reconstruct the historical context for it and the Blussus Stone (Fig. 13). The people commissioning these monuments were probably indigenous. Since the other gravestones of this group depict civilians exclusively, mostly shown in local apparel, the commissioner for the Weisenau Gardener was probably also from the region and perhaps of Celtic extraction.¹²⁰ But unlike the wife on the Blussus Stone, the woman with the Weisenau Gardner wears typically "Roman" apparel.

In fact, there are no models in either Italy or southern France for the pillar shape of this monument. Instead, its design skillfully combines various existing styles and designs, such as the mausoleum and funerary monuments, with a niche and can be interpreted as a monumental stele in the shape of a house.¹²¹ This type of grave, first

117 Boppert/Ertel 2019, pp. 57–60, no. I; p. 67, no. XIII.

118 Boppert 1992b, pp. 50–53.

119 Boppert 1992b, p. 53.

120 Boppert 2003, p. 276 with further notes.

121 With assessments that differ in detail, see, i.a., Kähler 1934, pp. 145f.; Gabelmann 1987, pp. 291–293; Boppert 2003, p. 281; Willer 2005, pp. 7f.; Scholz 2012, pp. 161–163.



Fig. 14. The so-called *Weisenauer Gärtner*.

appearing in Mainz, continued to evolve, became enormously popular, and ultimately spread to large parts of northern Europe, from England to the Danube region.¹²²

Even this cursory look at a few case studies demonstrates how ill-suited a purely binary concept of *Italic versus* northern European architecture is for a deeper understanding of Roman monumental architecture in light of the enormous mobility in the Imperium Romanum. The Drusus Monument was commissioned by the emperor himself, while other funerary memorials in Mainz were ordered by soldiers from all over the ancient world: probably Roman soldiers from Italy paid for the mausoleum in tomb precinct XXIV, the tomb of the Cassius brothers, and the grave stele for Musius; the Helvetian auxiliary trooper Rufus for the stele of a cavalryman; and indigenous Celts for the Blussus Stone and probably also for the Weisenau Gardener. The monuments were produced partly by soldiers of various origins as well as by imported stonecutters. In the case of the early grave stelae, the sculptors seem to have come from northern Italy, while judging from later inscriptions in Mainz and nearby Gross-Gerau, also from southern Gaul or Greece.¹²³ Among other materials, they used high-quality limestone from the lower Moselle, but also many other stones, woods, paint, metals, etc., which, beginning in the Augustan period, had to be locally sourced and / or imported. Here we have merely highlighted the variety and mobility of participants from different backgrounds, all cooperating in the erection of large-format funerary architecture in Roman Mainz. This summary could be almost endlessly expanded and thus, *per se*, defies the formation of a homogenizing and evaluative canon based on cultural background or artistic quality.¹²⁴

Upon closer examination, the architectural monuments built in the multicultural settlement Mainz since the Augustan period prove not to be copies of Mediterranean originals but must be understood as original creations in their own right, some of which make virtuoso use of various influences. While the typology of the Drusus Monument is closely related to similar structures in Rome and central Italy, the mausolea in Mainz are distinguished from those in Italy and southern France by a particular multiplicity of ornamentation, as we have seen on the cornice block from the theater. Some grave stelae adopted images from northern Italy and transformed their details, while others generated completely new pictorial inventions for new social groups such as auxiliary troopers or indigenous civilians. These new images, in their turn, were adopted and

122 Scholz 2012, map 8.

123 Thus, to judge from their names, Samus and Severus – the makers of the great Mainz Column of Jupiter from the Neronian era immortalized in its inscription – came from Italy or southern France (Bauchhenß 1984, p. 32; Kakoschke 2002, p. 489), but the sculptor Xysticus came from the Greek eastern provinces (Kakoschke 2002, pp. 290 f.).

124 Cf. Noelke 2006.

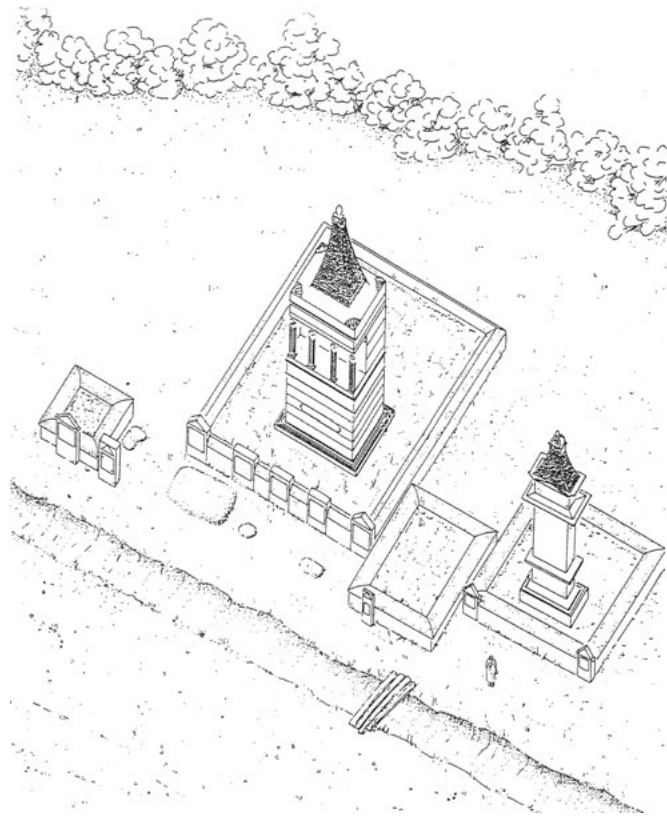


Fig. 15. Partial reconstruction of the Roman avenue of tombs from Mainz-Weisenau to the legionnaires' camp.

reinterpreted in other locations. In the case of the Weisenau Gardener, we can recognize a type of structure that amalgamates a variety of influences from other funerary monuments into a completely new creation, a creation that would go on to influence the style of tombs from Britannia to the Black Sea. The original polychromy of the monuments, of which only traces remain, must have given them a further distinctive appearance.

From this perspective, the Mainz grave monuments appear to be not aesthetically deficient, but in a literal sense different from those in Italy – different and, in a sense, richer in their syntax of discretionary ornamentation. The monuments of the Weisenau necropolis testify to generic formal multiplicity in a single location, and the few surviving inscriptions suggest that a broad spectrum of social groups – including soldiers from Italy, freedpeople, and ‘Celts’ – were buried side-by-side (Fig. 15).¹²⁵ The result is a multi-layered picture that encompasses economic prosperity, locally available materials, transregional commercial connections, and the availability of skilled workers and

125 Boppert/Ertel 2019, pp. 18f., 24 and 39.

craftspeople – a picture in which the needs of the town’s various groups, arising from its specific social constellation, also find expression. Comparative studies of recent years have shown that at least some of the necropoleis of various cities and regions of the Imperium Romanum differ markedly in the types of monuments they included.¹²⁶ This locally specific configuration of graves reflects, constructs, and consolidates the various social, economic, and political circumstances against the backdrop of local traditions.¹²⁷ Thus a single type of funerary structure, stele, or portrait can be preferred in one city by freedmen, in another by the middle strata, and in another even by the local elite.¹²⁸ In this sense, to borrow a phrase from Helmuth Berking and Martina Löw, we may speak of a Roman town having its own inherent aesthetic logic.¹²⁹ In what follows, we will show that such systems of inherent aesthetic logic, closely bound up with a hybrid culture, can also be characteristic of other pre-modern artistic genres north of the Alps, using selected works of 16th-century Netherlandish painting.

3. ‘Romanism’ Revised: Cultural Hybridity and the Canon of 16th-Century Netherlandish Art¹³⁰

When the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp was closed between 2009 and 2022 for extensive renovations, several of its paintings were exhibited in the Cathedral of Our Lady under the title “RE·UN·IE: van Quinten Metsijs tot Peter Paul Rubens.”¹³¹ The show was promoted as a reunion of the masterpieces and their return to the sacred space for which they were created in the early modern period.¹³² This narrative reveals in a paradigmatic way the limits of the classic art historical canon. For upon enter-

126 Cf. the analogous findings with respect to grave goods: Witteyer 2000.

127 Cf. for Aquileia, Mainz, and Nîmes Hope 2001, for northern Italy Pflug 1989, p. 97; Pflug 2019, p. 268, Fig. 3, for Spain and Italy Hesberg 2018; Kobusch 2019 as well as the typologic maps of distribution in Scholz 2012.

128 See, e.g., Nowak 2017 on Irpinia; Bauchhenß 1978, pp. 8, 22–25, no. 2f. on the more civilian-inclined Bonn, where veterans wore togas instead of military uniforms as in Mainz, and Pflug 2019, p. 276, on northern Italy.

129 Berking/Löw 2008.

130 The discussion below originated in a workshop conducted in collaboration with Stefan Grohé entitled “Romanism Revised: Indigenous Pictorial Intelligence and the Canon of Netherlandish Painting in the Sixteenth Century,” offered during the 2011 international conference of the working group Niederländische Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte e.V. (ANKK) in Frankfurt am Main. Thanks goes to Laura Di Carlo and especially Mariam Hammami for their continuous availability for discussion and practical support.

131 Cf. Fabri/Van Hout 2009.

132 Cf. Huvenne/Van Remoortere 2009 and the subtitle of the 2009 exhibition: “Masterpieces from the Royal Museum Reunited in the Cathedral.”

ing the cathedral, visitors found themselves confronted with several altarpieces that are not counted among the major works of European or Netherlandish painting in the minds of the international public, and the judgment of large numbers of art historians still focused on Italian art and art theory. Some examples are Bernard van Orley's exceptional altar retable of the *Last Judgment and the Seven Acts of Mercy*, completed in 1524–1525; Frans Floris's extravagant *Fall of the Rebel Angels* of 1554 (Fig. 16); and Maerten de Vos's metapictorial panel *St. Luke Painting the Madonna* of 1602, which served as the central segment of the triptych of the Guild of St. Luke, a collaboration of Otto van Veen and Ambrosius Francken.¹³³ These and numerous other paintings commissioned by prestige-conscious municipal organizations and donated to the cathedral established the European reputation of the Antwerp church as the 'Temple of Art' of the Habsburg Netherlands. On many levels, they contributed to the identity of the city and were important vehicles of the fashioning of a cultural identity in the cosmopolitan port city.¹³⁴ Yet despite their enormous historical relevance, these pictures and their creators have been sidelined by art historians in their construction of the development of Netherlandish painting. According to a long research tradition, that development began with the revolutionary work of Jan van Eyck, continued with Hieronymus Bosch's subversive and the elder Pieter Bruegel's supposedly down-to-earth art, and reached its apogee in the expansive œuvres of Peter Paul Rubens and Rembrandt van Rijn. The survival of this teleological construct is reflected in numerous surveys of art history, and it is responsible for the marginalization of other genres such as architecture and sculpture.¹³⁵ The main problem is the persistent notion¹³⁶ that compared to the abovementioned 'geniuses of painting,' Netherlandish art between the 15th and 17th centuries, with few exceptions, has little of importance to offer.

We intend to trace the origins of this assessment, peculiar to the art historical discipline in the 19th century, as well as its consequences, which informed especially

133 On the retable painted by Bernard van Orley, cf. i.a. Farmer 1981, pp. 9, 20 and 148–155; Ainsworth 2006, pp. 109–112; Hendrikman 2009. On Frans Floris's *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, i.a., Van de Velde 1975, pp. 209–213; Vervaeke 1976, pp. 207f.; Woollett 2004, pp. 26–49 and 57–59; Wouk 2018, pp. 1–27 as well as on Maerten de Vos's panel, i.a., Vervaeke 1976, pp. 231f.; Zweite 1980, pp. 234–236 and no. 103, pp. 318f.; Kraut 1986, pp. 111–121; Freedberg 1988, pp. 211f.; Peeters 2005; Andratschke 2006, pp. 185–196; Grieten 2009; Rosenblatt 2015, pp. 16–72.

134 Cf. Huvenne / Van Remoortere, p. 9. On the religious as well as social functions of the charitable work of various Antwerp guilds and fraternities, cf. Van den Nieuwenhuizen 2009; De Munck 2009 and the further literature listed therein.

135 On the current status of the still relatively sparse scholarship on Netherlandish sculpture and architecture, cf., i.a., Schmidt 1994; Ottenheim 2007; De Jonge 2008, pp. 266–268; Lipińska 2015, pp. 9–13; Kavalier 2017.

136 For attempts at a scholarly revision of this notion, see esp. Michalsky 2000, and the exhibit "Extravagant! A Forgotten Chapter of Antwerp Painting 1500–1530" with its accompanying catalogue (Lohse Belkin / Van Hout 2005) as well as Weissert 2011; Harnack 2018.



Fig. 16. Frans Floris: Fall of the Rebel Angels, 1554, oil on wood, 308 × 220 cm, Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Inv. No. 112.

the reception of 16th-century Antwerp painting. We will argue that the term ‘Romanism,’ which to different degrees subsumed diverse pictorial concepts in the generation between Bosch, Bruegel, and Rubens, was the result of an urgent and at times even desperate need for a clear, systematic historical and stylistic classification of works characterized by programmatic stylistic plurality and a nationalistically motivated need for a definition of heterogeneous compositions influenced by cultural diversity resulting from historical dynamics. In view of 16th-century Netherlandish art’s experimental search for adequate pictorial concepts,¹³⁷ the first section below will address the history of the influential but unsuccessful attempt at a methodical disciplining of aesthetic phenomena and its consequences for the history of scholarship. The second section will analyze the conceptual hybridity and socio-cultural function of Frans Floris’s *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, commissioned by the Fencers’ Guild and painted in 1554, a work that was continually at the center of the ‘Romanism’ debate.

3.1. Art in Quarantine, or How Netherlandish Painting Was Put on Sick Leave

In the introduction to his 1912 doctoral dissertation on 16th-century Netherlandish painting in Italy, Godefridus Joannes Hoogewerff described ‘Romanism’ as an epidemic.¹³⁸ The source of infection was the Renaissance, and the course of the disease, a clash of cultures. The transalpine artists who traveled by preference to Rome for their studies had grasped the external form but not the essential character of Italian art.¹³⁹ The aesthetically dubious result of this inadequate transfer, according to Hoogewerff, created an art difficult to access that was so far from canonical that just finding a methodological approach was an all but impossible challenge.¹⁴⁰ In this context, Romanism functions less as a scholarly term than as a diagnosis. Moreover, its impact at the time derived from its identification and systematic association with innovative forms of artistic expression described by the no less problematic term ‘Mannerism.’¹⁴¹

137 Cf., i. a., Müller 1999; Lohse Belkin / Van Hout 2005; Silver 2006; Pawlak 2011; 2016; 2020; Jonckheere 2012; Bass 2016; Wouk 2018.

138 Hoogewerff 1912, pp. 6 f.

139 Hoogewerff 1912, pp. 6 f.

140 Hoogewerff 1912, pp. 4–7.

141 Cf. Hoogewerff 1912, p. 9; Friedländer 1916, pp. 83–88; Friedländer 1921; Friedländer 1922; Antal 1966 [1928]; Cavalli-Björkman 1985. On the problematic concept of Mannerism and its history, see esp. Ackerman 1961; Białostocki 1966; Bredekamp 2000; Schmalzriedt et al. 2001; Greber / Menke 2003; Pfisterer 2011; Huss / Wehr 2014; Aurenhammer 2016 with in each case their list of further literature.

Given the research history of the time, Hoogewerff's diagnosis (made in Rome itself, of all places) is hardly surprising.¹⁴² Already in 1842, Jacob Burckhardt in "Die Kunstwerke der belgischen Städte" (The Works of Art of the Belgian Cities) had clearly expressed his obviously deeply felt rejection of the Antwerp painters in general and Frans Floris in particular:

Now they borrowed from the Roman-Florentine school of the time its pathos without its content, and Antwerp became from then on the seat of a school that founded one of the most off-putting epochs of art, although it was praised to the heavens by contemporaries. The real founder of this school is Franz de Vriendt, called Floris, 1511–1570 [...] a pupil of Lambert Lombard and later of the Roman school. From him, to be sure, he acquired only the externals – and even that inadequately – while the inner content is completely absent, no matter how pretentiously he places his figures.¹⁴³

"Off-putting," "inadequate," "pretentious" – to this list of negative attributes Jacob Burckhardt applied to individual Netherlandish painters; forty years later, a further component was added from the national consciousness, undeniably based on Burckhardt's notion of an art free of "foreign influences" and therefore reflecting the "folk character" of its country of origin.¹⁴⁴ Soon thereafter, an increasing critique of the Romanists' hybrid art can be found in the writings of Alfred Michiels (1845–1848) and Joost Jozef Diricksens (1855).¹⁴⁵ With that critique in mind and based on the *Collegium Romanorum apud Antuerpienses* founded in Antwerp in 1572,¹⁴⁶ Frans Jozef van den Branden consistently employs the term 'Romanists' – probably coined by Michiels in 1868¹⁴⁷ – and associates it from the very beginning of its scholarly use with the reproach of an "unpatriotic" attitude:¹⁴⁸

It even reached the point that the Antwerpers who had visited the Eternal City strove to distinguish themselves from others by forming a sort of caste. They were partially successful. In 1572 they founded the 'Brotherhood of Romanists' [...]. This unpatriotic [*onvaderlandsche*] association placed itself under the protection of Saints Peter and Paul [...].¹⁴⁹

142 Cf. Hoogewerff 1912, p. VIII. and also Hoogewerff 1935. For the history of scholarly evaluation of 16th-century Netherlandish art, cf. the overview in Weissert 2011, pp. 19–26.

143 Burckhardt 1842, p. 74.

144 Cf. Burckhardt 1842, p. 40.

145 Cf. Michiels 1845–1848, here, e.g., the remarks on Frans Floris's *Fall of the Rebel Angels* (vol. 3, 1846, p. 315); Diricksens 1855, p. 107, here, e.g., the demand, based on the assessment of Floris and other artists who had traveled to Italy, "Kunstenaer, blyf dus oorspronkelyk, [...] blyf vlaemsch!"

146 The appellation was taken from a document of circa 1600 that lists the name of the guild members; cf. Dilis 1922, p. 426.

147 Michiels 1868, pp. 358f.

148 Van den Branden 1883, p. 227.

149 Van den Branden 1883, p. 227. Translation cited according to Weissert 2011, p. 23.

Although the term ‘Romanist’ had from its inception a pejorative connotation and was not entirely accurate in reference to the history of Netherlandish painting (Otto van Veen, the first Flemish artist in the so-called Guild of Romanists, was not accepted until 1597),¹⁵⁰ it had great currency in the scholarly literature for three decades, despite scattered critical objections.¹⁵¹ Based on and legitimized by the sources, it had the apparent advantage of bringing under a common heading the 16th-century Netherlandish artists who went to Italy to study.¹⁵² It is a stylistic concept which, unlike almost all the others in the discipline, was and remains etymologically tainted with the notion of one-sided influence.¹⁵³ Despite the increasing scholarly interest in Netherlandish art, the result of this classification was the grouping of several generations of painters and their differing works under a single concept that for almost a century would prove resistant to criticism. Supported by nationalistic tendencies in art history around the turn of the 20th century, ‘Romanism’ was not simply a negative stylistic label, but since the mid-19th century served as a discursive vehicle for advancing the construction of two great artistic poles: the Italian and the Nordic schools.¹⁵⁴ With a vocabulary centered on rubrics such as ‘the folk,’ ‘essence,’ and ‘character,’ a canon of Netherlandish painting was consolidated in which, increasingly, there was no foreseeable room for the so-called travelers to Rome and their search for new forms of visual expression.¹⁵⁵ As a result, their art, informed as it was by cultural synthesis, was constantly accused of lacking in patriotism because, according to the critics, it displayed no ‘national’ characteristics such as fidelity to nature, realism, and naturalness combined with technical perfection.¹⁵⁶ With these criteria, not only aesthetic quality but also cultural-historical signifi-

150 Cf. Dilis 1922, pp. 420 und 455.

151 Cf. i.a. Preibisz 1911; Dvořák 1924; Lindeman 1928. As one of only a few, Emile Dilis in his 1922 essay “La Confrérie des Romanistes” polemicized against the use of the term for a group of artists with the formal argument that artists constituted only a tiny fraction of the *confratres*, as proven by the membership lists of the Romanists’ Guild. Cf. Dilis 1922, esp. pp. 419–421 and 450–475.

152 Cf. Weissert 2011, p. 23.

153 This is decidedly manifest in the titles of numerous essays. Cf., i.a., Aschenheim 1909; Krönig 1936.

154 The scholarly construction of such a dichotomy can already be seen in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s “Über Kunst und Althertum in den Rhein und Mayn Gegenden” (Goethe 1816; On Art and Antiquity in the Rhine and Main Regions) and subsequently, i.a., in Franz Kugler’s “Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei in Deutschland, den Niederlanden, Spanien, Frankreich und England” (Kugler 1837; English translation Kugler 1854, “Handbook of Painting. The German, Flemish, Dutch, Spanish and French Schools”), Gustav Friedrich Waagen’s “Handbuch der deutschen und niederländischen Malerschulen” (Waagen 1862; Manual of the German and Netherlandish Schools of Painting), and Max Rooses’s “Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool” (Rooses 1879; History of the Antwerp School of Painting) as well as in the volumes on the “Grands Peintres” by Téodor de Wyzewa and Xavier Perreau (esp. Wyzewa 1890a; Wyzewa 1890b).

155 Cf. Weissert 2011, p. 21; Carpreau 2013, pp. 17 f.

156 Cf. Burckhardt 1842, p. 40; Waagen 1862, 1st section, pp. 68 f.; Rooses 1879, pp. 5 f.

cance were to be measured from now on. The art of the ‘Romanists’ thus seemed to represent a substantial contradiction to the exemplary contrast – the “struggle”¹⁵⁷ between Northern European and Italian art – that Burckhardt regarded as a basic law of historical epochs.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, it was especially the significant stylistic plurality of many Romanists and their unconventional appropriation of traditional motifs that ran counter to the notion of an autonomous aesthetics of the artistic genius, whose unique *maniera* and matchless creative power informed the linear developmental model.¹⁵⁹ The more the lone individual artist became the focus of scholarship and his uniqueness was celebrated in art historical monographs, the stronger became the criticism of the supposed collective of ‘Romanists,’ although their paintings could not have been more diverse.¹⁶⁰

These scholarly tendencies appear paradigmatically not only in the work of Max Rooses, who in 1879 characterized ‘Romanism’ as an “immeasurable disaster” and the “suicide”¹⁶¹ of Netherlandish art. They also inform the writings of probably the most influential critic, Max Jacob Friedländer. In several studies, Friedländer grappled with the history of Netherlandish painting.¹⁶² As early as 1916, he characterized the reception of ancient and contemporary Italian art in the Netherlands as a symptom of instability and exhaustion and described the 16th century as a “critical transition.”¹⁶³ Friedländer too programmatically employed the metaphors of illness that had been developed in the 19th century, as when he defined the “manner” of the Antwerp painters in 1921 as follows:

I understand manner to be a self-conscious arranging in contrast to healthy, organic, and original creating. The manner that spreads like an epidemic attacks especially weakened bodies. Lack of resistance and inner emptiness are the prerequisites for haphazard and formulaic expression.¹⁶⁴

He detected such weakened bodies in negative examples such as Jan Gossaert, Bernard van Orley, Maarten van Heemskerck, and especially Frans Floris, who were for Friedländer as earlier for Rooses hardly more than “slavish followers of foreign masters.”¹⁶⁵ In 1922, Friedländer published his “Die niederländische Romanisten” (The Netherlandish Romanists), which supplemented his earlier theses with a periodization of ‘Romanism’ that he introduces with reference to the phenomenon of cultural hybridity:

157 Burckhardt 1842, p. 56.

158 Burckhardt 1842, p. 56. Cf. Weissert 2011, p. 21.

159 On the pluralism of styles in 16th-century Netherlandish painting, cf. Mensger 2008.

160 Cf., i.a., Antal 1966 [1928], pp. 82f.; Locher 2001, p. 196.

161 Rooses 1879, p. 136. Translation cited according to Rooses 1881, p. 90.

162 Cf., i.a., Friedländer 1916; Friedländer 1921; Friedländer 1922; Friedländer 1924–1937.

163 Friedländer 1916, p. 88.

164 Friedländer 1921, p. 3.

165 Rooses 1879, p. 136. Translation cited according to Rooses 1881, p. 90.

Between 1500 and 1550, Netherlandish painting usurped the achievements of the South. Compared to the traditional indigenous mode, the foreign mode was felt to be superior, greater, and more beautiful. Artists learned the universal cultural language and forgot their mother tongue. Whether this process appears to be an amalgamation or a malady, one can observe its several phases.¹⁶⁶

This periodization, which he repeated and slightly modified several years later in his magnum opus “Die Altniederländische Malerei” (Old Netherlandish Painting, 1924–1937),¹⁶⁷ is relevant to the extent that Friedländer analyzes the engagement with Italian art in the categories “incorporation,” “rejection,” and “processing.”¹⁶⁸ His method, applied with the nitpicking discrimination of a connoisseur, would prove to be enormously influential. In chronological and genealogical order, Friedländer systematically diagnoses when and to what extent Netherlandish artists such as Joos van Cleve, Bernard van Orley, and Maarten van Heemskerck adopted motifs and stylistic modi explicitly borrowed from Leonardo, Raphael, or Michelangelo and then pronounces his aesthetic verdicts. The result of this scholarly method is the reduction of complex strategies of reception and assimilation to unidirectional influences. Already in 1922, this process was producing dogmatic results whose echoes can still be found in the literature. In Gossaert, the main representative of the first phase, “the Netherlandish element remained resistant”¹⁶⁹ to the epidemic until his reception of Italian art exposed the “contradiction [...] between talent and tendency.”¹⁷⁰ In the second phase, with Bernard van Orley, Friedländer blamed a strong orientation to Raphael for the decline of traditional painting techniques. In the next phase, artists like Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Lambert Lombard had made panel painting into such a “degenerate genre” that “one hesitates to ascribe such poor paintings to such celebrated masters.”¹⁷¹ Maarten van Heemskerck, the most influential artist of the fourth phase, had the “ambition to become the Michelangelo of the North,” but “his work is stuck in gesture, noise, and unjustified pretension.”¹⁷² For the last phase, Friedländer’s verdict on his favorite target, Frans Floris, is as cynical as it is devastating: The painter, representative of the third generation of “Travelers to Rome,” was “the typical eclectic artist” and therefore “neither offensive nor tasteless, but completely insipid.”¹⁷³

166 Friedländer 1922, p. 3. Cf. the chapter by Sarah Dessì Schmid and Jörg Robert in this volume, pp. 51–86.

167 Friedländer 1924–1937.

168 Friedländer 1924–1937, vol. 13, 1936, p. 9.

169 Friedländer 1922, pp. 3f.

170 Friedländer 1922, p. 4.

171 Friedländer 1922, p. 7.

172 Friedländer 1922, p. 8.

173 Friedländer 1922, p. 9.

In the course of his systematic critique and despite his profound knowledge of the sources, Friedländer felt that the ‘Romanists’ did not deserve the high regard in which their contemporaries held them, and he inveighed against it.¹⁷⁴ In the tradition of Jacob Burckhardt, not only the painters of the 16th century but also their public were blamed for their bad taste.¹⁷⁵ How else could one explain the historical fact that it was precisely the ‘Romanists’ who had a monopoly on prestigious ecclesiastical and communal commissions and also painted for numerous private customers?¹⁷⁶ The esteem in which their art, so vehemently rejected by Burckhardt and Friedländer, was held well into the 18th century can be reconstructed both from its continuing to be displayed in prominent locations throughout the city and from the prices it fetched when sold.¹⁷⁷ Thus, it was not merely strongly rooted in Netherlandish society of the early modern period; it was its central cultural product and, as such, less *deviating from* than *establishing* the norm. At this point, the historical complexity of the Antwerp art market comes into view, with its various political, confessional, and societal interests and parties.¹⁷⁸ As emerges from contemporary sources,¹⁷⁹ the market’s internal socioeconomic dynamic – together with competition among artists – consisted of the fact that besides the ‘Romanists,’ there were other successful artists whose visual concepts did not focus at all on a display of

174 See a similar polemic in, i.a., Burger 1925, p. 137.

175 Cf., e.g., Friedländer 1922, pp. 6 and 8, as well as Burger 1925, p. 137.

176 Cf. as an example the various patrons who ordered works from Frans Floris. See Wouk 2018. For example, most of the paintings in the important art collection of the Antwerp merchant and financial official Nicolaes Jonghelinck were Floris’s, followed significantly by those of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Cf. Kaschek 2012, pp. 49–54. Additional evidence is provided by the many commissions for painters such as Ambrosius Francken, Michiel Coxcie, Maerten de Vos, and Otto van Veen for the redecoration of churches in Antwerp and surroundings following the conquest of the city by Alessandro Farnese in 1585, cf. the relevant catalogue texts in Fabri / Van Hout 2009; Peeters 2008, pp. 99–107, with an overview of patrons and prices. Cf. also Vervaet 1976; Woollett 2004.

177 The prices can be extrapolated from the catalogues that note the selling prices for the works of individual artists. See, for example, for the 18th century Hoet: Catalogus; Terwesten 1770. At the same time, this data proves that, compared to other 16th-century painters, above-average prices were paid for van Orley’s and especially Coxcie’s paintings up to about 1850. Cf. Carpreau 2013, pp. 14 f.

178 On the Antwerp art market in the socio-cultural context of the metropole, cf., i.a., Vermeylen 2003; Silver 2006, pp. 16–25; Vermeylen 2012.

179 Thus the painter and poet Lucas d’Heere composed a poetic smear with the title *Invectieve, an eenen Quidam Schilder* [...] which appeared in print in 1565 and defended the works of his teacher Frans Floris against what were apparently earlier attacks by an anonymous artist (possibly Pieter Bruegel the Elder). In the context, the author emphasizes the differing aesthetic norms of “Floris and his kind” on the one hand and his critical artistic opponent on the other, whose journey to Rome has left no traces in his works. The complete text of the *Invectieve* as well as an English translation are reprinted in Wouk 2018, pp. 543–545. On the text and its connections to contemporary aesthetic theory, cf. i.a. Freedberg 1989, pp. 62 f.; Kaschek 2012, pp. 55–69; Wouk 2018, pp. 369–371.

cultural hybridity based on the appropriation of Italian art. Following the traditional forms and motifs of the Old Netherlandish school, the latter artists created works that several more recent scholars, using Pieter Bruegel the Elder as an example, have described as dealing both critically and subversively with the canonical authority of Italy and its specific reception by the ‘Romanists.’¹⁸⁰

Tellingly, for Friedländer the elder Bruegel represents the first of three ways leading out of the supposed “dead end”¹⁸¹ of Netherlandish art. It consists of a “blindness for the ideals of the Renaissance and a devotion to the indigenous essence,”¹⁸² materialized in the person and work of a Bruegel whom the 19th century idealized as the embodiment of the national character, the only artist whom Friedländer sees as immune to “disease.”¹⁸³ The second way out was the “filling in of the all too large and empty form” of the ‘Romanists’ by the “observation of what is individual,”¹⁸⁴ by which he means portrait painting as the traditional genre of painters north of the Alps.¹⁸⁵ And the third way out – “accessible only to a genius”¹⁸⁶ – was based on a longer sojourn in the South that would allow first absolute mastery and then the surmounting of Italian art, a feat the author saw accomplished in the work of Peter Paul Rubens.¹⁸⁷ Especially the dichotomy foreign / Italian versus indigenous / Netherlandish – whether coupled with or separate from the concept of ‘Romanism’ – proved to be so influential that it was continuously invoked in one form or another. When Carl Gustaf Stridbeck in 1956 sees Bruegel’s superiority to the ‘Romanists’ in the fact that the master combined form and content in convincing visual concepts,¹⁸⁸ if nothing else, it is a modified version of a sentence of Friedländer’s, who held that Rubens, after supposedly renouncing the “dubious Antwerp tradition”¹⁸⁹ of collaborative authorship, had restored the “unity of invention and execution”¹⁹⁰ after an era of artistic decline.

From Jacob Burckhardt’s writings to the publications of van den Branden, Rooses, and Hoogewerff, to Friedländer’s widely influential surveys, the older scholarship so stubbornly discounted most 16th-century Netherlandish artists as the producers of a ‘different’ aesthetics, pejoratively evaluated as the opposite of indigenous practice, that

180 Cf. Müller 1999, pp. 87–89; Kaschek 2012, pp. 94–97; Buskirk / Kaschek 2013.

181 Friedländer 1922, p. 9.

182 Friedländer 1922, p. 9.

183 Friedländer 1921, p. 3.

184 Friedländer 1922, p. 9.

185 Cf. Friedländer 1922, p. 9.

186 Friedländer 1922, p. 9.

187 Friedländer 1922, pp. 9f.

188 Stridbeck 1956, pp. 266–289.

189 Friedländer 1922, p. 10.

190 Friedländer 1922, p. 10.

with a few exceptions,¹⁹¹ art historians for decades could find no adequate approach to their conceptually idiosyncratic art. But in the 1960s, a series of monographs began to focus again on Netherlandish painting, and especially its relationship to humanism.¹⁹² A few subsequent exhibitions and monographs undertook a revaluation of ‘Romanism.’ The work of Jan Gossaert, active in the first half of the 15th century, had already been intensely analyzed, and he was the first to attract renewed interest. Only more recently have prominent representatives of the next generation, such as Heemskerck and Floris, experienced more scholarly attention after almost fifty years of neglect.¹⁹³ With respect to style as a vehicle of meaning, the scholarship concentrated above all on the contemporaneous use of diverse modes of depiction and, as a result, partially revised the idea of a supposed superiority and unchallenged authority of Italian art.¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, even some more recent praiseworthy efforts to rediscover and rehabilitate the ‘Romanists’ such as “Joos van Cleve: Leonardo des Nordens” (2011) or “Michiel Coxcie: De Vlaamse Rafaël” (2013)¹⁹⁵ consciously or unconsciously reveal in their titles echoes of the 19th century’s hierarchy of artistic landscapes.¹⁹⁶ This hierarchy remains today structurally linked to the continuation of the old scholarly narrative of the backwardness of Netherlandish compared to Italian art, the normative confusion of the ‘Romanists’ and their consequent deficient imitative practice, as well as their violation of the canon.¹⁹⁷

191 Cf. i.a. Preibisz 1911; Dvořák 1924; Lindeman 1928; Zuntz 1929.

192 Cf. i.a. Dacos 1964; Pauwels / Hoetink / Herzog 1965; Van de Velde 1975; Veldman 1977; Zweite 1980. Cf. also the attempt at a systematic revision of the scholarly assessment of the ‘Romanists’ by Dacos 1980.

193 Cf. i.a. Denhaene 1990; DeLiedekerke 1995; Dacos 1999; Mensger 2002; Jones 2011; Peeters 2013; Bass 2016; Wouk 2018; Bartsch 2019; DiFuria 2019; Bücken / De Meüter 2019.

194 Cf. i.a. Mensger 2002; Hoppe / Müller / Nußbaum 2008, therein esp. Mensger 2008; Bass 2016.

195 Van den Brink 2011; Jonckheere 2013a.

196 Diricksens 1855, p. 42, already stresses the derisive undertone in the epithet “Flemish Raphael” for Coxcie, which the poet deserved because of his deviation from indigenous art.

197 Thus, we find in a 2016 essay by Eckhard Leuschner under the title “Romanism” the following remarks on the “processing of influences from Italian art by painters and graphic artists north of the Alps, and especially in the Netherlands”: “Unlike their feel for the ancient art they had studied in the original, in plaster casts, or in drawings, artists from the first third of the 16th century such as Jan Gossart and Pieter Coecke van Aelst had little sense for the stylistic idiosyncrasies of what we today call the Italian High Renaissance; above all, however, they did not acknowledge the normative role of that art. [...] Possibly in the short term, not even the arrival of Raphael’s cartoons – previously considered the initial impulse for the ‘high, ideal style’ in Netherlandish art – altered very much about their not very precisely imitative practice, which also evinced no clear preferences for certain canonical predecessors.” And even if later he argues convincingly in the case of various examples “that in Netherlandish painting, especially in Antwerp, both contemporaneous with and following Coxcie, a feeling developed for the originality of artistic adaptation in dealing with ‘foreign’ models,” the consequences of a decades-long assumption of a monocausal process of reception are clear in this essay; Leuschner 2016, pp. 57f.

Although that canon refers back to the early modern valence of visual authorities, its scholarly authority and dogmatic application were a product of scholarship around 1900. The persistence of this narrative is clearly seen at the methodological level, not only in the striking separation of the aspects of formal analysis, cultural history, and social history when analyzing paintings. It can also be felt at a granular level in the continuing attempt to identify as precisely as possible Italian models for the Netherlandish works, although newer scholarship – such as Edward H. Wouk’s remarkable monograph on Floris – documents that the majority of ‘Romanists’ in fact neither worked with direct visual quotations nor confined themselves to Italy in their reception of other art.¹⁹⁸ On the contrary, their form of creative appropriation displays a strong conceptual effort – both specifically and programmatically (e.g., with regard to theme or the context in which it would be displayed – to make use of selected traditions from north or south of the Alps as well as contemporary modes of presentation and combine them in a constant, emulative gesture with one’s own pictorial invention into an organic whole.¹⁹⁹

In view of the preceding discussion, ‘Romanism’ is a prime example for Ernst Gombrich’s trenchant thesis that “you can never get more out of your classification than you put into it.”²⁰⁰ Beginning in the second half of the 19th century, art historians had so overloaded the concept semantically and distorted its history that its increasing deconstruction by later scholarship seems a logical consequence. But systematic critical reflection on the concept and its history has not occurred – a reflection of the kind initiated particularly by Tanja Michalsky and Caecilie Weissert, who point out that its consequence is “an inappropriate constriction of historical processes” that reinforces the notion of two contrasting currents in 16th-century painting and prevents a differentiated view.²⁰¹ Even though at some point art historians tacitly almost – but not completely – stopped using the concept of ‘Romanism,’ the intellectual habits, methodological approaches, and terminology it engendered did not disappear.²⁰² Ilja Veldman, one of the most prominent scholars of Netherlandish art, wrote the entry on “Romanism” for the “Grove

198 Cf. i.a. Mensger 2008; Ramakers 2011; Jonckheere 2013b (although he still uses the concept of Romanism, cf. p. 67); Bass 2016; Wouk 2018; DiFuria 2019; Weissert 2020.

199 Van Orley’s *Last Judgment* is a good example of this phenomenon. In a supplement to the long-held assumption that it was influenced by Raphael’s *Disputa*, recent scholarship has discovered a deliberate exploitation of the traditional transalpine depiction of the Parousia. Cf. Hendrikman 2009.

200 Gombrich 1966, p. 88: “The normative connotations of our stylistic terms cannot simply be converted into morphological ones – for you can never get more out of your classification than you put into it.” Cf., proceeding from the problematic of the concept of Mannerism, Ackerman 1961, vol. 1, p. XXII.

201 Michalsky 2000, p. 30.

202 Thus, for example, Dacos 1980 (although she prefers the term “peintres italianisants”) and even Ainsworth 2006.

Dictionary of Art” (1996, online in 2003),²⁰³ which illustrates two central aspects of the problem. First, the concept ‘Romanism,’ so lastingly damaged by its own proponents, is evidently still resistant to oblivion. Second, a glance at Veldman’s bibliographic information immediately reveals why: Of the seven listed items, only two were published after 1935, since the works of Hoogewerff and Friedländer are still justly regarded as standard works despite the necessary criticism. The rejection of the ‘Romanists,’ peculiar to art history and in need of revision, was the result of far-reaching reductionism. Intent on establishing an evolutionary artistic model and an associated national canon, art historians forced the pictorial inventions of transalpine artists, developed at a time of historic upheaval, into the normative straightjacket of a linear history of style and a predetermined epochal narrative, despite their striking aesthetic heterogeneity.

But if we take seriously the same aesthetic heterogeneity as a historical phenomenon and investigate it in detail, the cultural-historical potential of 16th-century Netherlandish art in general and the so-called Romanists in particular emerges more clearly. Recent scholarship has shown that against a backdrop of increasing political, religious, and economic tension, Netherlandish art of all genres became the epistemically flexible mediator and catalyst of various, often competing ideas and discourses.²⁰⁴ At the same time, the search for innovative visual concepts – manifest, among other things, in the creative appropriation of Italian art – made that art into a complex and, through the dynamic of its socio-cultural surroundings, constantly changing experimental field for artistic practice in the early modern era, resistant to any teleological, normative interpretation. As surprising as it may sound, this assertion is supported by a careful reading of Friedländer: “even the most gifted only succeeds by continuously experimenting, if the thread of development has once been broken.”²⁰⁵ This quote from Nietzsche is the epigraph to Friedländer’s 1921 work, thereby making clear not only what constitutes the essence of early modern Netherlandish art, namely, experimentation,²⁰⁶ but also the basic reason for his scholarly condemnation of the Antwerp painters, among whom he regarded the “thread of artistic development” as severed. In the end, Friedländer himself was more than conscious that “almost all the characteristics that are considered evidence of disintegration and unraveling [...] can just as easily be interpreted as the stirrings of a new creative will.”²⁰⁷

It is exactly this substantial experimentation, this production – under contextual constraints – of unconventional artistic solutions in their various formal and concep-

203 Veldman 1996.

204 Cf. i.a. Müller 1999; Pawlak 2011; Jonckheere 2012; Kaschek 2012; Wouk 2018; DiFuria 2019.

205 Quoted from Friedländer 1921, p. 3. The translated quote is from Nietzsche’s *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (Human, All Too Human; Nietzsche 1924, p. 200).

206 Cf. i.a. Jonckheere 2012; Jonckheere 2020.

207 Friedländer 1916, p. 87.

tual manifestations that we can discern as a systematic constant in the Netherlandish art of the 16th century. The precondition for this assertion is not only to free ourselves from ossified conceptual methodology in favor of methodological pluralism that does justice to the inherent logic of the work of art itself, but also – especially in the case of the so-called ‘Romanists’ – to develop a new perspective on the forms of transalpine artistic exchange that will enable an approach to the complexity of the works and their socio-cultural relevance.

3.2. Aesthetic Extravagance and Conceptual Hybridity in the Service of Collective Distinction: Franz Floris’s *Fall of the Rebel Angels*

Franz Floris’s *Fall of the Rebel Angels* (Fig. 16) was originally the central panel of the altarpiece donated to the Antwerp cathedral by the Fencers’ Guild (*Schermergilde*). It is without a doubt one of European painting’s most spectacular artistic variations²⁰⁸ on the cosmic battle described in Revelations 12:1–12.²⁰⁹ Painted in 1554 and including in its background allusions to the motifs of the Woman of the Apocalypse (Fig. 17) and the Elevation of the Child (Fig. 18), the panel presents the central, sacred event as a violent plunge that has emerged from the depths of space and is taking place directly before the

208 Cf. Vandamme 1988, p. 138, no. 112. Scholars conjecture that the commission was motivated by the great admiration Floris enjoyed because of his participation in the design of the *Blijde Inkomst* for Emperor Charles V and his son Philipp II of Spain into Antwerp in 1549. Cf. Van de Velde 2009, p. 99; Woollett 2016, p. 92; Wouk 2018, p. 158.

209 “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three-score days. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” King James Version.



Fig. 17. Frans Floris: Fall of the Rebel Angels (Detail), 1554, oil on wood, 308 × 220 cm, Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Inv. No. 112.

eyes of viewers, threatening to burst from its aesthetic boundaries into their reality. As the reptilian, seven-headed beast and its monstrous retinue fall, mercilessly pursued by the Archangel Michael and his heavenly comrades-in-arms, they morph into a chaotically writhing, abject mass of grotesque bodies whose individuality is programmatically coded as animalistic. In an unprecedented way, Floris's picture solidifies the theologically motivated impression of the repulsiveness of the fallen angels, with the help of the fascinated revulsion unleashed by the almost haptically tangible, hybrid, close-up corporality of their life-sized, falling bodies. The purposeful combination of animalistic and anthropomorphic forms, the bizarre transitions from man to beast and beast to man, urgently convey the moral message of the work: The evil of those fallen away from God is embodied in boundless abnormality, whose effect is amplified not only by the violent confrontation but especially by the subversive melding of the abnormal with the well-proportioned orderliness of creation reflected in the essence of identity of the angels.²¹⁰

This creative quality of what was at the time the largest painted panel in the cathedral, located in the religious center of town, and against the background of escalating

210 Cf. Schaible 1970, p. 61.

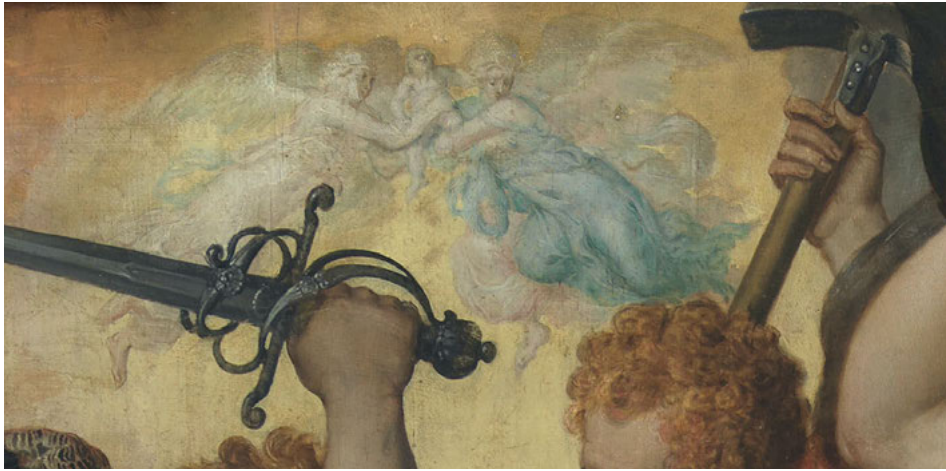


Fig. 18. Frans Floris: Fall of the Rebel Angels (Detail), 1554, oil on wood, 308 × 220 cm, Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Inv. No. 112.

confessional, political, and economic conflicts, constituted its epistemological function as a visual vehicle of discourse and identity.²¹¹ Installed at the southwest crossing pier to the right of the main altar, the triptych occupied one of the cathedral's most prominent locations and was not just a visual testimony to the high social status of the Fencers' Guild within the municipal collective,²¹² but with its theme of eschatological combat served the *Schermers* to self-locate within the history of salvation.²¹³ The members of the Fencers' Guild had defensive as well as ceremonial obligations to fulfill and found both in St. Michael, their patron saint, and in the angels he leads, all of whom wield 16th-century weapons against the protean forces of evil, powerful figures with whom to identify.²¹⁴ In the context of its time, the religious scope of this symbolic equation of the angels fighting as *milites Christiani* and *defensores fidei* and the militia-guild whose captain (and possibly other members as well) was depicted on one of the side-wings,²¹⁵

211 Cf. Woollett 2004, pp. 23–49.

212 Cf. Woollett 2004, pp. 28–31.

213 Cf. Woollett 2004, pp. 47–49.

214 The tasks of the Fencers' Guild comprised taking part in the municipal *Ommegangen* as well as the protection of important municipal buildings in times of crisis. Cf. Woollett 2004, pp. 1–22; Van de Velde 2009, p. 102; Woollett 2016, p. 90.

215 Already in 1604, van Mander mentions one of the images destroyed during the iconoclasm of 1566: "In one of the shutters he had painted the chairman of the swordsmen's guild, with a broad sword in hand, and a dark cloud which brought about a subtle shadow in the composition." Van Mander: *Schilder-Boeck*, p. 222. Cf. Van de Velde 1975, pp. 211 f.; Van de Velde 2009, p. 102. This passage was repeatedly associated with the study of a head now in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Kassel

was spectacularly underlined by Floris's visual idea: the altar mensa below the panel represented the place where the panopticon of bizarre physicality and the apocalyptic battle temporarily come to an end, before the vanquished dragon unleashes his fury first at the Woman of the Apocalypse and then at the witnesses to the true faith (Apocalypse 12:13–17).²¹⁶

Especially during the performance of liturgical ritual, the *Fall of the Rebel Angels* exercised its capacity as a multilayered, artifactual hinge between the world and the hereafter, between promise and fulfillment, and made not just the cathedral itself but also Antwerp into the scene of – and the Fencers' Guild into actors in – an eschatological event. In the course of numerous performative acts that circulated in this sacred space, the painting was constantly embedded in a complex cultural network and reaffirmed the importance of its commissioners among some forty other brotherhoods, craft guilds, and five other marksmen's organizations with their own altars, as well as to the municipal authorities.²¹⁷ An example is the famous *Ommegangen*, the annual processions on Trinity Sunday and the Feast of the Assumption that began and ended at the cathedral, in which the Fencers' Guild, uniformed and armed, traditionally participated.²¹⁸ In these processions, the *Fall of the Rebel Angels* constituted a semantic unity not only with the other artworks in the church,²¹⁹ but also with the festival wagons of the *Ommegangen* rolling through town and displaying religious themes: the Annunciation, the Visitation of Mary, the Birth of Christ, the Adoration of the Shepherds and the Magi, the Circumcision, and the Seven Sorrows of Mary.²²⁰ There was an especially close

(Inv. no. GK 1038), cf. Van de Velde 1975, pp. 208f., no. 61; Van de Velde 2009, p. 102; Wouk 2018, p. 15.

- 216 “And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” King James Version.

217 Cf. De Rynck 2005, p. 25; Woollett 2016, p. 95.

218 On the course of the procession, cf. De Burbure 1878; Joukes 1990; Cartwright 1996; Peters 2005, pp. 92–100; Thøfner 2007, pp. 46–51 and 59–71.

219 There were thematic connections, especially to van Orley's *Last Judgment and the Seven Acts of Mercy* as well as Frans Floris's *Assumption of Mary*, painted for the high altar in 1564 and destroyed during the iconoclasm of 1566.

220 The traditional wagons are listed in the 1564 description of the festivities: De Laet 1564, quoted from Peters 2005, pp. 399–403. All the surviving props and costumes are listed in an inventory of 1571. Cf. Thijs 2001, p. 43; Peters 2005, pp. 92f.; Thøfner 2007, pp. 59–71.

connection between Floris's panel and the wagon displaying the Last Judgment with the help of elaborate fireworks, the culminating event of the celebrations. Appealing to several senses, the conception of this wagon and its accompanying costumed personnel was to give the populace of the multicultural commercial metropolis not just an artificial preview of the Apocalypse, but to cast them, here and now, in the role of a humanity subject to the Last Judgment.²²¹ Both within and outside of this ceremonial dispositive – which in addition to the many interior spaces, pictures, musical works, and speeches also encompassed various participating confraternities – the Fencers' Guild, oscillating between Antwerp's present and the eschatological future, established itself by means of Floris's painting as a municipal corporation relevant to the town's salvation.

While the artistic extravagance of the *Fall of the Rebel Angels* was always the main reason for its rejection by an older scholarship focused on stylistic criticism,²²² in view of the sociocultural background described above, this extravagance can be evaluated as the figure of aesthetic reflection of the unique social position the guild aimed to achieve. The triptych was designed to attain for the guild a permanent place in the city's collective memory. The turbulent history of the painting as well as its prominent place in Karel van Mander's *Schilder-Boeck* of 1604, the first written record of a theory of art in the Netherlands,²²³ attest in different ways to the success of this strategy of persistence.

There is almost a scholarly consensus that the side panels of the altar retable were destroyed in the Calvinist iconoclastic riot of August 20, 1566, leaving the central panel essentially intact.²²⁴ There was repeated speculation in the literature about why the iconoclasts spared the picture. Besides practical considerations (as, for example, that it was removed beforehand to protect it), its iconographic distinctiveness was adduced; perhaps it was spared in view of the fact that the assumption of the Child in the upper left background made it possible to forgo depicting God the Father (Fig. 18).²²⁵ On the other hand, hardly any thought has been given to the social status and military duties of the Fencers' Guild within the municipal community, as outlined above. Even in a purely material consideration of the altarpiece as property, its destruction could possibly have been a risk with incalculable consequences. In 1567, barely a year after the riot, the

221 Cf. Thøfner 2007, pp. 68 and 233; Pawlak/Rüth 2020, pp. 459–463.

222 Cf., e.g., Michiels 1845–1848, vol. 3, 1846, p. 315; Van den Branden 1883, p. 183; Friedländer 1924–1937, vol. 13, 1936, pp. 62f.

223 Cf. Van Mander: *Schilder-Boeck*, p. 222. Cf. Melion 1991.

224 Van de Velde 1975, p. 210; Freedberg 1992, p. 55; Van de Velde 2009, p. 99. The recent restauration of the painting suggests that the middle panel was hardly damaged by the iconoclasts. Cf. URL: kmska.be/nl/elke-restauratie-zijn-inzichten-en-geheimen (last accessed: October 31, 2024).

225 This iconographic blank space was either a conscious artistic decision in view of the increasing Protestant criticism and the Calvinist rejection of portrayals of God the Father, or it is the result of a possible later reworking of the panel. The latter could be confirmed only by an extensive technical examination of the painting. Cf. Pawlak 2011, pp. 212f.

altar of the Fencers' Guild was ceremoniously reconsecrated in the cathedral,²²⁶ but it is unclear whether Floris's *Fall* returned to the cathedral for a short time or if it was already replaced, following a controversy, by a triptych by Maerten de Vos.²²⁷ In any case, in 1581, the year in which the Calvinist Antwerp city council initiated a second iconoclasm (the so-called *Stille Beeldenstorm*) and the cathedral was temporarily closed, an inventory locates both works of art in the treasury of the Fencers.²²⁸ After the Habsburg governor Alessandro Farnese, Duke of Parma, captured Antwerp on August 15, 1585 (Feast of the Assumption) and reinstated Catholicism, it was tellingly not the 'more modern' painting by de Vos that was returned to the cathedral,²²⁹ but Floris's *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, whose iconography could now be read in harmony with the Catholic reformation and its visual propaganda in the center of Antwerp as a victory over the Protestant heresy.²³⁰ The Fencers' success at positioning their panel within a confessional discourse was evident during the festive entry (*Blijde Inkomst*) of Ernest of Austria, the new Habsburg governor of the Netherlands, on June 14, 1594, into the city on the Scheldt.²³¹ One can read in a festival book about that performative occasion, published in 1595, that in the course of the *Ignes Triumphales* (Fig. 19) – the pyrotechnic display on the town hall square – a small stage was set up in front of the Fencers' guild house (Fig. 20),²³² on which stood two members of the *Schermers*, armed with halberds, holding the imperial coat of arms of the Habsburgs, and flanking a picture of the Archangel Michael fighting the dragon in a creative borrowing from their own altar retable in its original condition before the side panels were destroyed in the iconoclasm.²³³ Complementing this scene, with which the Fencers' Guild once again asserted their social standing with a multimedia staging of theological content, were both the statue of the Woman of the Apocalypse on the crescent moon in the central niche of the town hall's façade and a sculpture of the seven-headed dragon at the foot of the masts holding the exploding pyrotechnics.²³⁴

The reinstallation in the cathedral in 1585, where the painting remained in its privileged position until 1794,²³⁵ and its repeated incorporation into a communal site of

226 Cf. Woollett 2004, p. 57; Van de Velde 2009, p. 101.

227 Cf. Van de Velde 1975, p. 210; Woollett 2004, pp. 57–59; Van de Velde 2009, p. 99; Freedberg 1988, pp. 199f.

228 Cf. Woollett 2004, p. 59; Van de Velde 2009, p. 101.

229 Cf. Van de Velde 1975, p. 211; Van de Velde 2009, p. 101.

230 Cf. Woollett 2016, p. 91.

231 Cf. on the entry into the city: Raband 2018.

232 Cf. Thøfner 2007, p. 189.

233 Van Mander mentions one of these presentations in 1604, see note 214 above.

234 Cf. Thøfner 2007, p. 189.

235 During the renovation of the guild's altar that took place after 1650, the panel was moved to a portico altar and flanked by life-size marble statues of Gideon and Joshua, the Old Testament liberators of the Israelites and religious warriors, by Artus Quellinus the Younger and Hubertus van den Eynde and his son Norbertus. There the picture remained until 1794, when it was carried off



Fig. 19. Pieter van der Borcht: *Ignes Triumphales*, in: Joannes Bochiuss: *Descriptio publicae gratulationis, spectaculorum et ludorum, in adventu Sereniss. Principis Ernesti Archiducis Austriae*, Ex Officina Plantiniana, Antwerpen: Officina Plantiniana, 1595, etching, 328 × 445 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Inv. No. BI-1953-0546B-34.

negotiation after the violent clashes at the beginning of the Eighty Years' War document the enormous collective esteem for religious history not only as an aesthetic fixed point of urban identity and the recent history of the city but also as an extraordinary artistic accomplishment.

to the Musée Central des Arts in Paris in the wake of the French Revolution. In 1815 it was returned to Antwerp along with 26 other works, including Rubens's *Elevation of the Cross* and his *Lamentation of Christ*, painted as an epitaph for Jan Michielsens and Maria Maes. On the history of the altar, cf. Van de Velde 1975, p. 210; Freedberg 1988, pp. 200 f.; Woollett 2004, pp. 57–59; Van de Velde 2009, pp. 99–101; Wouk 2018, p. 15 with note 55. Since then, the panel (Inv. no. 112) and eight other works by Frans Floris – among them the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, painted in 1568 on commission for the altar of the Gardeners' Guild (*hoveniersambacht*) and hung above the cathedral's high altar from 1585 until 1625 – are preserved in the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten.



Fig. 20. Pieter van der Borch: *Ignes Triumphales* (Detail), in: Joannes Bochijs: *Descriptio publicae gratulationis, spectaculorum et ludorum, in adventu Sereniss. Principis Ernesti Archiducis Austriae*, Ex Officina Plantiniana, Antwerpen: Officina Plantiniana, 1595, etching, 328 × 445 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Inv. No. BI-1953-0546B-34.

Fifty years after Floris painted his altarpiece, the writer, poet, graphic artist, and painter Karel van Mander celebrated its artistry in his *Schilder-Boeck*:

He [Frans Floris] always had large, important works to make or in hand for altarpieces and other large commissions. Among other things well worth putting forward as the most important is the altarpiece for the swordsmen or St Michael, in Antwerp in the Onze Lieve Vrouwe Church, with the *Fall of Lucifer*. This is a remarkably designed, art-full and well-painted piece, to make all artists and comprehenders of art dumbfounded and be filled with admiration. Here you see an unusual tumbling and falling about of various naked evil spirits, in which an excellent study of musculature, tendons and muscles is employed with great attentiveness and insight. The dragon with seven heads appears in it as well, whose heads are very poisonous and terrifying to look upon.²³⁶

It is not difficult to recognize in this emphatic praise of the panel's artistry what a sensation it caused among Floris's contemporaries. Van Mander's description is remarkable in several regards. For one thing, it stands in direct contradiction to the art historical evaluation of Floris's work in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when it was regarded as the prime example of failed imitation of Italian art – and here especially of Michelange-

236 Quoted from: Van Mander: *Schilder-Boeck*, p. 222.

lo's *Last Judgment* – in the paintings of the 'Romanists.'²³⁷ It is telling that van Mander's passage on the *Fall of the Rebel Angels* makes no mention of Floris's reception of famous predecessors, although at the beginning of his biographical note on the painter, there is a lengthy section devoted to Floris's journey to Rome and his intensive study of ancient and Italian art while there.²³⁸ Instead, the Haarlem humanist van Mander focuses on compositional coherence, pictorial innovation, accomplished technique, the anatomical correctness of the figures as well as their powerful emotive effect, and not least on the persuasive power of the painting, resulting from the sum of these elements, in the act of aesthetic reception. For another, at the beginning of the passage quoted above, van Mander emphasizes not only Floris's extensive activity as a painter of many large-format paintings and altarpieces in order to underline his contemporary prestige, but also explicitly names the altarpiece's commissioners and its location in the Antwerp cathedral, clearly illustrating the reciprocal relationship between the art work's inherent aesthetic logic (its autological dimension) and its rootedness in sociocultural practice (its heterological dimension). This is relevant to the extent that, with their concepts of an autonomous aesthetics, art historians at the turn of the 20th century mostly regarded *Fall of the Rebel Angels* purely as a museum artifact and paid insufficient attention to its historic function and to the history of the altar retable that was inextricably intertwined with that function.

And finally, from a theological perspective, van Mander's identification of the work as a "St. Michael's Panel" depicting the fall of Lucifer draws attention to the first of three levels of conceptual hybridity inherent in the picture. The art theoretician's identification of the theme indicates that inherent in Floris's altarpiece is a tendency in Netherlandish painting since the 15th century at the latest to subsume Lucifer's primeval fall

237 Thus, Burckhardt wrote in his text of 1842 often mentioned above (p. 74): "We can easily believe that the artist needed entire portfolios full of studies for this disgusting painting, but it is all the worse for his reputation that he chose to imitate precisely the ugliest things from Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, which are there only for contrast." This accusation of aesthetic *lèse majesté* was directly related to the concept of stylistic purity, whose violation Floris was also repeatedly accused of, and so emphatically that van den Branden 1883, p. 183, saw precisely in *Fall of the Rebel Angels* that "rampzalige Italiaansche invloed" that "in Frans Floris het grootste gedeelte van zijn aangeboren talent gedood heeft." Cf. Friedländer 1924–1937, vol. 13, 1936, pp. 62f.

238 In that regard, he also emphasizes Giorgio Vasari's positive assessment of Floris as an "excellent" painter and the envy of many Italian colleagues who, like the influential Florentine art theoretician himself, unfortunately were familiar with the works of the Netherlander only from copper engravings. For had they "seen Frans' subtle, competent brushstrokes and the effective handling of color" they would have "preserved his praise in more noteworthy remembrance," but their critique is influenced by "envy towards foreigners." In this passage, one sees both condemnation of nationalistic artistic resentment and regret that those sentiments cannot be dispelled by seeing the original works in the socio-cultural context for which they were created. Van Mander: *Schilder-Boeck*, p. 214.

with the Apocalypse's fall of the beast in a single iconographic formula through which the coming of evil into the world at the beginning of Creation would be typologically and conceptually conflated with its final Apocalyptic punishment.²³⁹ And indeed, in the left background of the raging, chaotic struggle with the Apocalyptic Dragon in the foreground, there is another, spatially separated scene of a fall (Fig. 17) whose protagonist is highlighted by his immense size and remarkable corporeality.²⁴⁰ The horns on his head are a sign of his ongoing metamorphosis from an anthropomorphic body to a hybrid monster and lead to the conclusion that he is to be interpreted as Lucifer and the entire scene as the primeval Fall of the Rebel Angels.²⁴¹ The positioning of the fallen Archangel above the seven-headed dragon that embodies mortal sin and threatens the Woman of the Apocalypse in the background emphasizes not only the identity of essence of the two figures. It refers at the same time to the polymorphism of evil in the history of salvation and the constant need to combat it. Revelation 12:9 explicitly thematizes this polymorphism in the context of St. Michael's battle against the Beast²⁴² and Floris's altarpiece visualizes it in an unprecedented way.

The fallen angels whom van Mander calls "evil spirits" and whose equally repulsive and menacing bodies resemble conglomerations of humans, animals, and monsters are a manifestation of another level of the picture's conceptual hybridity. Each of these strangely artificial beings, whose very description strains the limits of ecphrasis, is so unique in its physical properties that it seems a perversion of both the God-given order of Creation in general and the anthropological difference between man and beast in particular – a difference that has been at the center of natural philosophic discourse since ancient times.²⁴³ At the same time, their ontological status gives us insight into Frans Floris's distinct interest in the natural science of his time as manifest in encyclopedic works that combine illustrations and text, e.g., Conrad Gessner's *Historiae Animalium* of 1551. In Antwerp's humanistic circles – well versed in natural science – works combining zoologic facts and the early modern fascination with the abnormal and monstrous functioned as a crystallization point for the arts and served to advance knowledge, in large part thanks to the contemporary significance of Antwerp as a European center of printed books.²⁴⁴ Against this background, the painter's invention of individual creatures from parts of the human body as well as parts of actual animals of various species

239 Cf. Pawlak 2011, pp. 29–46.

240 Cf. Pawlak 2011, pp. 45 f.

241 On the pictorial tradition, cf. i.a. Wirth 1967; Holl 1968; Schaible 1970; Juntunen/Pawlak 2007; Pawlak 2011, pp. 29–46.

242 "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." King James Version.

243 Wild 2006, p. 1.

244 Cf. i.a. Fischel 2009; Enenkel/Smith 2014; Opitz/Leu 2019.

and classes – among them reptiles, fish, and insects, as well as goats, predatory cats, wild boars, elephants, and raptors – with their individual characteristics is a second-order act of creation based on an intensive study of nature. It is a celebration of the power of artistic imagination, a complex process of fragmentation and reconfiguration of the divine creation. It not only documents Floris's erudition as a scientifically informed *pictor doctus* but also evokes the trope of the artist as a second *deus artifex*, which is crucial in early modern art theory.²⁴⁵ The determined imitation of nature in the composite bodies amplifies the calculated emotional effect of the religious image to the extent that they not only represent monstrous aberrations of cosmological constants through which the orderly structure of creation is all the more manifest, but also – by virtue of their degree of realism – convincingly convey the brilliantly staged invasion of the bitterly struggling damned into the viewer's sphere. Far beyond their discursive significance for 16th-century theology and natural science, however, the hybrid creatures are also and above all else, as Edward H. Wouk expressed it in 2018, “a visible metaphor for the hybridity of his work,”²⁴⁶ with which “Frans Floris challenged what it meant to be a Netherlandish artist.”²⁴⁷

In the case of the *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, the aesthetic imagination's construction of reality in the service of the collective prestige of the Fencers' Guild is based, on the one hand, on competition with nature as God's work, a rivalry regarded since ancient times as the motivating force of artistic creation.²⁴⁸ On the other hand, one can also trace it back to the programmatic engagement with both selected ancient works of art and with contemporary mimetic modes south and north of the Alps, with the goal of an *aemulatio* that would not only appropriate them creatively but amalgamate them into a new, “polyglot” art form in its specific materiality and mediality.²⁴⁹ With an eye to the painter's reception of Italian art, older art-historical scholarship almost always one-sidedly criticized this third level of the altar piece's conceptual hybridity, which is intimately related to the art-theoretical implications of the panel. As a result, even well past the middle of the 20th century, the altarpiece was considered to be a deficient imitation. One barely noticed exception is Dora Zuntz's 1929 dissertation, which largely shares the older methodological approach but not its scholarly dismissal of the picture.²⁵⁰ In one of the very first analyses of the *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, Zuntz painstakingly teases out possible models for the work and recognizes in most of the angelic figures as well as the falling monster gripping a torch in the middle of the panel references to the

245 Cf. Klein 2017, pp. 263–266; Wouk 2018, p. 496.

246 Wouk 2018, p. 5.

247 Wouk 2018, p. 3.

248 Cf. i.a. Flasch 1965; Laufhütte 2000; Moritz 2010.

249 Wouk 2018, p. 5.

250 Zuntz 1929, pp. 15f.

works of Michelangelo and Tintoretto. On the other hand, she identifies Dürer's prints as the source of the Apocalyptic Beast and declares that "the phantastic design of the demons themselves" is a "Netherlandish property, the evidence of a talent such as we find in Bosch and his followers up to Floris's contemporary Mandyn."²⁵¹ In a remarkable conclusion to her study, she summarizes the uniqueness of Floris's reception of earlier, diverse genres and media:

As is so often the case, one cannot attribute any direct copying to Floris. He builds his compositions out of the most diverse elements, so that only pictures that share a similar goal [...] can be adduced as comparisons.²⁵²

Floris's deliberate "reconfiguration of Michelangelo's bodily forms,"²⁵³ combined with a genuinely transalpine interest in the visual appearance of the demonic, was not just the visual expression of the cultural hybridity rejected by late 19th- and early 20th-century art historians. It was at the same time the vehicle of an artistic theory implicit in the work, aimed at competing with the associated but not directly quoted predecessors and surpassing them with its own *inventio*. This conceptual and creative quality was the basis for the painter's contemporary fame and lofty reputation, repeatedly emphasized by critics from Giorgio Vasari, Dominicus Lampsonius, Lucas d'Heere, and Lodovico Guicciardini to the aforementioned van Mander and Filippo Baldinucci.²⁵⁴

With an internally homogeneous pictorial invention that used the challenging motif of the Fall as an archetype of divine punishment in order to present the *difficoltà*, *varietà*, *grazia*, and especially *terribilità* repeatedly demanded by contemporary writers on painting, Floris – at the time undoubtedly the most successful painter in Antwerp – made an artistic statement that fulfilled the aesthetic expectations of his public in the multicultural metropolis:

Yet as *Fall of the Rebel Angels* makes abundantly clear, 'Italy' only accounts for part of what made Floris's art so new and attractive to his public. Far from a copy of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, Floris's altarpiece is a statement of individuality, an articulation of his singular mode of creation grounded in a deep knowledge of both Italian and northern art and artistic practice.²⁵⁵

The resulting novelty of pictorial invention – which itself became a productive challenge for other artists, as the paintings of the *Fall of the Rebel Angels* by Pieter Bruegel

251 Zuntz 1929, p. 15.

252 Zuntz 1929, p. 16. Cf. Van de Velde 1975, p. 211.

253 Zuntz 1929, p. 15.

254 Wouk offers an overview of written mentions of Floris and his works in the 16th and 17th centuries: Wouk 2018, pp. 537–551.

255 Wouk 2018, p. 4f.



Fig. 21. Frans Floris: Fall of the Rebel Angels (Detail), 1554, oil on wood, 308 × 220 cm, Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Inv. No. 112.

the Elder (1562) and Peter Paul Rubens (1621–1622) testify²⁵⁶ – is a telling early modern example for the relevance of modern art theory’s revocation of the polarity of indigenous vs. foreign as well as the revision of the assumption of hermetically sealed cultures with an eternally dualistic relationship of the self to the other.²⁵⁷

In this context, the painter’s signature – “FF IV ET F 1554” (Fig. 21) – engraved on a rock in the right foreground toward which the arm of the monster, lying on its back in the lower center of the painting and staring at the viewer, gestures – seems paradigmatic. Above the bow and arrow the monster clutches hovers an insect (a bee? a bumblebee?). In view of the picture’s conception as a transcultural amalgam, this bee also invokes an art-theoretical dimension: corresponding to the learned discussion, carried on since antiquity, of the principle of creative *imitatio*, the creature can be interpreted as a visual metaphor, equating the creative appropriation of predecessors with

256 Cf. Juntunen/Pawlak 2007; Pawlak 2011, pp. 25–85. Cf. Willibald Sauerländer’s 2014, p. 46, negative critique of Floris’s picture compared to Rubens’s.

257 Cf. Bhabha 2004 [1994]; Wouk 2018, p. 5.

the natural processes of nutrition, digestion, and incorporation.²⁵⁸ In its conspicuous size and placement, the motif points to a causal nexus of imitation and production and, in the context of the whole picture, functions as a symbol of Floris's artistic practice and its reflection.²⁵⁹ Together with the signature just below it, it testifies in the cathedral to the self-confidence of the artist, who with the unusual formulation *Frans Floris invenit et fecit*²⁶⁰ celebrates his accomplishment as both creative originator and sole executor of the picture. Moreover, with this signature, he strove to inscribe himself decisively into the collective memory of the city, just as the Fencers' Guild claimed their own place in Antwerp's sociotope with the help of his extravagant altarpiece and its constant performative activation.

The radical unconventionality – or unconventional radicality – of this intertwining search for aesthetic self-positioning is perhaps the clearest reflection of the independence of 16th-century Netherlandish painting and its societal relevance – an artistic independence that for decades, art historians basically trivialized in the eyes of the profession with the concept of Romanism, its normative assumptions, and the resulting influence on the canon, while ignoring the concrete historical context in which that independence was created and functioned. And they did it so successfully that it is apparently still necessary to explain, not just to the general public, why it is a good idea to display the paintings of van Orley, Floris, and de Vos in their original location in the Antwerp Cathedral alongside the works of Rubens.

4. Conclusion: Aesthetic Canon under the Microscope of Pre-Modern Cultural Practice

Focusing on the phenomena of creative appropriation and cultural hybridity in pre-modern transalpine art, our investigation of the history of archeological and art historical scholarship makes clear – despite differences in detail – in an exemplary way the continuing cultural-historical function of the canon as a “mint of identity.”²⁶¹ As Jürgen Straub was able to demonstrate in 2004, these constructions of identity are never based on establishing empirical facts. Instead, “when they discover differences between what is indigenous and what is other or foreign,” they operate “with perception and attribu-

258 Cf. i. a. Gombrich 1963, p. 32; Irle 1997.

259 Cf. Wouk 2018, pp. 26f.

260 Following the last “F,” a red “A” was added at an unknown date, so that the verb would be read as *faciebat*. Cf. URL: kmska.be/nl/elke-restauratie-zijn-inzichten-en-geheimen (last accessed: October 31, 2024).

261 Assmann 1998, p. 59.

tion, projection and manipulation.”²⁶² As documented by our analysis of selected scholarly literature and methodologies from the end of the 18th to the early 20th century, an aesthetic canon oriented toward exclusion and the establishment of norms, and which repeatedly tried programmatically to identify the ‘foreign’ element in what was ‘indigenous,’ always was and still is simultaneously a process and a result. Thus the examples of antique monuments north of the Alps and of so-called Romanism in early modern Netherlandish painting clearly demonstrate how the consolidation of the canon among German archeologists and art historians around 1900 resulted in their targeted assertion that conceptually hybrid works of art either ignored or violated its standards. In both disciplines, the influential ideas of stylistic purity and national character as well as the hierarchical evaluation of artistic landscapes and the attendant assumption of a unidirectional history of influence determined not only the persistent pejorative estimation of artworks distinguished by their achievement of a cultural synthesis. They also marginalized (and continue to marginalize) a normative diversity, which, in the case of the artworks examined above, constituted in their concrete topographic, political, religious, and societal context the actual norm of their day.

Critical reflection on these structural similarities in the history of scholarship in both classical archeology and art history was in each case the point of departure for an examination of monuments and paintings whose inherent aesthetic logic combines diverse forms of creative appropriation in the course of transalpine cultural transfer with an experimental search for innovation. The adaptations or new configurations of traditional models in materials and media, but also in motifs and design, are evidence of remarkable reflexive potential and were in both cases decidedly oriented to the objects’ function within the social practice of their time and the specifics of how they were displayed. In the way these artworks memorialize distinctions between individual and collective in their respective fields of public display, they function both as the material expression of the dynamics of artistic negotiation and as the central vehicle of societal discourse. And precisely this paradigmatic inscription *in* and undisputed significance for the cultural memory of their places of origin, the important role these artworks – rejected by previous scholarship – played in identity formation, definitely calls into question the identity-forming authority of an archeological or art historical canon based on ideas of aesthetic autonomy. However, as Quentin Bell wrote to Ernst H. Gombrich in 1975, not without irony, “canon is a fact of intellectual life. As you say, one cannot start from scratch. One is bound to inherit some kind of body of opinion, and this must provide one’s starting point even when one is going to dispute its validity.”²⁶³

262 Straub 2004, p. 280.

263 Gombrich/Bell 1976, p. 407.

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Figures and Charts

Annette Gerok-Reiter and Jörg Robert

Different Aesthetics – Premodern Acts and Artifacts

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Purism – Discourses and Practices of Language Purity

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Silke Leopold

Tafelmusik – Music and Banqueting in the Premodern Era

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Lorenz Adamer and Thomas Schipperges

Spa Music as a Space of Reflection for a *Different Aesthetics*

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Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger

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Sandra Linden and Daniela Wagner

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Anna Katharina Heiniger, Nils Reiter, Nathalie Wiedmer, Stefanie Gropper, and Angelika Zirker
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Narrational Comments in the *Sagas of Icelanders*

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Adrian Stähli

Parapictoriality. Parameters of a Praxeological Aesthetics in Antiquity

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Johannes Lipps and Anna Pawlak

Aesthetics, Canon, Critique. Transalpine Creative Appropriation and Cultural Hybridity as a Challenge to Archeology and Art History

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