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**Looking through Lidless Eyes:
Friedrich, Kleist and the Logic of Sensation**



Fig 1. Caspar David Friedrich, *Der Mönch am Meer*, Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin.

Introduction

In the early nineteenth century the German painter Caspar David Friedrich produced a remarkable picture: *Der Mönch am Meer* (1808-10). *The Monk by the Sea*, which a number of critics have identified as a significant precursor of modernist art, is above all striking for its level of abstraction, and hence for its unprecedented challenge to the pictorial conventions that prevailed in Europe in the early nineteenth century. Friedrich, who had worked intermittently on the canvas in Dresden from 1808, exhibited it at the Berlin Academy in 1810. There, it appeared alongside a slightly anomalous companion piece, *The Abbey in the Oak Wood*, under the rubric 'Two Landscapes' (both of which the Prussian Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm III subsequently purchased). On the occasion of this exhibition, as art historians routinely note, 'it created amazement and confusion' (Vaughan, *German Romantic Painting* 93).

Friedrich's picture boldly refused painting's narrative vocation and radically complicated the optics characteristic of the contemporary aesthetics of the sublime.

The German novelist and dramatist Heinrich von Kleist, in his scintillating comments on the painting at the time it appeared, intuited precisely this. He implicitly recognised that, in *The Monk by the Sea*, Friedrich had transformed the canvas into the locus not so much of signification as sensation. In Kleist's interpretation of the painting's amazing and confusing impact on the spectator, which he promptly published in his article 'Empfindungen vor Friedrichs Seelandschaft' (1810), he devised the disturbing trope of 'lidless eyes' in order to evoke the almost traumatic impact that, as a consequence of its uncompromising development of the Romantic aesthetics of the sublime, it had on the spectator. Friedrich's painting, as Kleist intimates, inscribes the sublime directly onto the body of the spectator, in a gesture of some violence. Confronting the composition, he insists, is like looking at a landscape through eyes that have been stripped of their protective lids. The encounter between Kleist and Friedrich's canvas, I argue in this article, dramatizes the task that Gilles Deleuze ascribes to painting in his fascinating book on Francis Bacon and the 'Logic of Sensation', which is to discover 'the material reality of the body, with its system of lines and colors and its polyvalent organ, the eye' (*Francis Bacon* 55-6).¹

This article uses Friedrich's painting, which in a sustained close reading it interprets along Deleuzian lines, to rethink the aesthetics of the sublime in the early nineteenth century. As its initial reception indicates, *The Monk by the Sea* proved troubling to contemporaries in part because it compelled spectators to confront the sublime both in its material as well as its philosophical or spiritual implications. This composition, in its provocative abstraction, made unprecedented demands on those who stood before it, forcing them to confront their own insignificance in the face of the immensity and totality of the universe. Indeed, it systematically reorganised the relationship between spectator and composition. *The Monk by the Sea*, I claim, enacted a shift from a regime of narration to one of sensation, thus seminaly developing and displacing the ways in which meaning is signified in painting. Friedrich radically abstracts its central figure so that he becomes in effect a non-figurative site of affective intensities. And, in addition, he problematizes the composition's frame, effectively abolishing it, so that the painting opens out onto a spatial and even temporal infinity which presses the sublime to its limits. In general, Friedrich stages painting's resistance to signification, as a means of challenging the spectator's concrete experience of the aesthetic, by reconfiguring it as a site of pure sensation. In Friedrich's hands, the picture becomes a plane of affects as opposed to a medium of narrative meanings. Kleist, fascinatingly, grasped Friedrich's challenge, and contrived the image of lidless eyes in order to evoke, not simply the almost intolerable affective impact of the painting, but the crisis of Enlightenment vision, perhaps even of Reason itself, that this entailed or implied.

In the first substantive section of this article, I outline the break with figurative or representative painting enacted by Friedrich's painting. In the second section, I go on to explore the abstract components of the composition, which I implicitly identify in Deleuzian terms as its 'diagram' or 'field'. Then, in the third section, using Deleuze's language again, I examine the 'Figure' at its centre, comparing it to the protagonist of Friedrich's later, even more famous painting, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818). In the fourth, I reconstruct both Clemens Brentano's and Kleist's reactions to the painting, outlining the latter's remarkable capitulation to its logic of sensation. Finally, in the fifth substantive section, I focus on Kleist's use of the trope of lidless eyes to represent *The Monk by the Sea*'s almost incomprehensible affective impact, pointing to its fascinating implications for our understanding of the sublime in the early nineteenth century. The sublime is an aesthetic that, at its limits, as Friedrich

fearlessly indicated, and as Kleist understood, entails the abolition of illustration, narration, and representation, and hence signals a fundamental crisis in the Enlightenment subject. *The Monk by the Sea*, in my reading of its radical aesthetic, reinscribes the sublime as a zone of sensation rather than signification. The sublime, for Friedrich and for Kleist, is not some spiritual, supra-sensible space beyond signification, but a corporeal, sensible one. Here, then, in the early nineteenth century, is what Deleuze, whose interest lies in Bacon and the later twentieth century, calls a 'new order of painting' (*Francis Bacon* 102).

I. The Figural

The Monk by the Sea depicts a single, solitary individual, perhaps in mourning, perhaps merely lonely and melancholic, who seems to be stranded in a vast, empty littoral space. It appears still to be night, since the sea is stained black; but a luminous, and faintly ominous, first light is leaking palely across the coastal landscape (Friedrich alternately darkened and lightened the misty sky in repeatedly repainting the picture, as if he couldn't fully decide at what time to set the scene).² The isolated individual is the only upright form in an oppressive, almost overwhelming landscape that emphasises his physical, and metaphysical, insignificance. This is the portrait of a man, perhaps even of humanity itself, stranded on a terminal beach; a posthumous man, a post-apocalyptic humanity. As Friedrich later implied in a letter, the painting is an attempt to capture humanity's impermanence, even its ultimate meaninglessness. It challenges the spectator to admit the futility and delusive vanity of comprehending 'the uninvestigable hereafter', he wrote, and 'of deciphering the darkness of the future': 'Your footprints in the bleak, sandy shore may be deep, but a quiet wind wafts across them and your tracks are no more to be seen; foolish man filled with vain presumption' (quoted in Grave 151).

Remarkably for a seascape, no boats or other vessels appear in *The Monk by the Sea* (a couple of embattled ships featured during an earlier phase of the composition, but Friedrich painted them out). The principal effect of this is to increase the oppressive sense of emptiness that prevails in the picture. One of Friedrich's contemporary admirers, Marie Helene von Kügelgen, who glimpsed the painting in his studio, complained of this, and added, 'there is not even a sea monster to be seen on the endless ocean' (quoted in Boime 582). The human figure, the only vertical form in a composition completely dominated by horizontal slabs of subtly varied blues, greens and greys, and pale, sandy yellows, seems to waver slightly, with a sort of sinuous instability. Originally, the Monk had been in profile, and the position of his feet still conforms to this pose, a detail that reinforces a sense of torsion. His form thus echoes the undulating dunes on which he is marooned, which Werner Hofmann evocatively characterises as 'immobile waves of sand' (Hofmann 56). It is a desolate scene. 'There is no storm, no sun, no moon and no thunder,' noted von Kügelgen despairingly; 'Yes, even a thunderstorm would be consolation and pleasure, for then one would at least see some kind of movement and life' (quoted in Boime 582).

Most commentators assume that the so-called Monk is based on the artist himself, in part because he is dressed in a monastic habit that recalls the robe Friedrich wears in the *Self-Portrait* (1810) he painted at roughly the same time; in part, no doubt, because of his famous credo to the effect that 'the artist should not only paint what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him' (quoted in Vaughan, 'Landscape' 186). But the temptation to psychologise the painting's

protagonist – perhaps even to anthropomorphise him – should be studiously resisted. It is more productive, I propose, to think of him as a Figure, in the sense outlined by Deleuze in his book on Bacon. There, the philosopher argues fairly schematically that painting has ‘two possible ways of escaping the figurative’. The first of these is ‘toward pure form, through abstraction’. The second is ‘toward the purely figural, through extraction or isolation’ (*Francis Bacon* 2). In relation to Bacon, he is of course particularly interested in the latter alternative, which he designates the ‘figural’ in contradistinction to the ‘figurative’. Deleuze explains that, in a figurative or representational aesthetic, the image is related both to ‘an object that it is supposed to illustrate’ and to other images. It is thus illustrative and narrative. Indeed, in this context, ‘narration is the correlate of illustration’, since ‘a story always slips into, or tends to slip into, the space between two figures in order to animate the illustrated whole’. Isolation, Deleuze concludes, is ‘the simplest means, necessary though not sufficient, to break with representation, to disrupt narration, to escape illustration’ (*Francis Bacon* 2-3). Isolation reorganises the human form according to a figural as opposed to figurative logic.

In focusing on Bacon, Deleuze does not historicise the origins of this crisis of representation (indeed, this is the limitation of his finally rather insular, if brilliantly suggestive, essay on the famous twentieth-century British artist). But it nonetheless seems plausible to identify the early nineteenth century, and the examples of Friedrich and the British painter J.M.W. Turner in particular, both of whom implicitly tested the limits of the representational aesthetic through their boldly symbolic, sublime inscriptions of landscape, as seminal to its inception. In effect, this is the narrative that Robert Rosenblum reconstructed in his tendentious but also revealing revisionist account of the prehistory of abstract expressionism, first outlined in an essay in 1961 and finally published as a monograph, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition*, subtitled ‘Friedrich to Rothko’, in 1975. There, Rosenblum argued that, in removing the boats that had originally featured in *The Monk by the Sea*, and in thus ‘leaving the monk on the brink of an abyss unprecedented in the history of painting’, Friedrich performed an act of ‘artistic courage and personal compulsion’ the formal implications of which would reverberate not simply in Turner’s strikingly elemental pictures but in both Rothko’s abstract canvases and ‘the boundless voids of Barnett Newman’ (*Modern Painting* 13).

Rosenblum’s thesis, a deliberate attempt to displace the dominance of the French in the historiography of modern art, was certainly controversial (see Gage 221-2); but the significance he ascribed to *The Monk by the Sea*, and specifically its daring emptiness, in tracing the supersession of a realist aesthetic by an abstract one, remains persuasive as well as provocative. Certainly, if Friedrich’s ‘haunting confrontation with the void’ in this canvas really did have a decisive, if at times indirect, effect on a number of twentieth-century artists, as Rosenblum claims, then Bacon, whom he at no point cites, can surely be added to this list (*Modern Painting* 172). There is a fairly direct line descending from Friedrich’s Monk, his contorted shape framed in an empty, strangely geometric landscape, through the tortuous forms that are to be found in Munch’s characteristic pictorial spaces, to the convulsively distorted ones in Bacon’s. A painting like Bacon’s *Study of a Figure in a Landscape* (1952), for example, in its basic compositional elements, conforms to a rough template established a century and a half before by Friedrich in *The Monk by the Sea*.

In a sense, Friedrich’s remarkable Romantic painting pursues both of the routes beyond representation that Deleuze outlines in his superbly idiosyncratic account of Bacon – that is, abstraction on the one hand and ‘extraction’ on the other –

because it systematically simplifies the landscape, distilling its components, and, at the same time, mercilessly isolates the human form. In practice, though, this second path out of the realist paradigm acquires a privileged role in the development of a non-illustrative, non-narrative aesthetic, because it necessarily entails a certain process of abstraction itself. For, according to Deleuze, it is only against a more or less geometric background, a more or less diagrammatic disposition of space, that the Figure, as a non-figurative form, can be brought into being. The ‘diagram’ or ‘field’ or ‘graph’, in Deleuze’s idiosyncratic lexicon, in implicit contrast to the traditional notion of the background, is ‘the operative set of asignifying and nonrepresentative lines and zones, line-strokes and color-patches’ that, because it ‘break[s] with figuration’, ‘give[s] us the Figure’ (*Francis Bacon* 101). In thus acquiring a ‘figural’ rather than figurative meaning, the Monk in Friedrich’s painting, like the animal and human shapes in Bacon’s pictures, ‘becomes an Image, an Icon’ (2). His role in the painting is not to motivate or precipitate narration, not to instantiate illustration, but to stimulate rhythm, and above all to activate sensation.

‘Never (except perhaps in the case of Michelangelo) has anyone broken with figuration by elevating the Figure to such prominence,’ Deleuze argues in relation to Bacon; ‘It is the confrontation of the Figure and the field, their solitary wrestling in *shallow depth*, that rips the painting away from all narrative but also from all symbolization’ (xiv). A persuasive case can I think be made for Friedrich breaking with figuration to a comparable degree, seminally, in *The Monk by the Sea*. It frees itself from the regime of representation, and the economy of intellectual and psychological identification that has historically been structural to it. And, as Deleuze formulates it in a different context, it puts ‘the emancipated senses into direct relation with time and thought’ (*Cinema 2* 17). In so doing, Friedrich’s painting radicalises the aesthetics of the sublime, ruthlessly inscribing it on the spectator’s body, and thereby challenges the Enlightenment subject that it presupposes.

II. The Field

The abstract form of *The Monk by the Sea* is immediately startling. Perhaps as much as the upper four fifths of the painting is covered by the sky, which both bears down oppressively on the sea and sand, in a great block of lightly graded colour, and at the same time invokes a feeling of immense, expansive power. The sea and the sand are horizontal bands – the former dark, the latter light in tone – which the sky threatens to push right out of the bottom of the picture frame but for the resistance of the sandy promontory.

Rosenblum once usefully, if a little misleadingly, compared Friedrich’s *Monk by the Sea* to Turner’s *Evening Star* (1830) (misleadingly because, as both its boat and the tenderly realized human figure and his dog suggest, Turner’s painting has an intimacy of scale, in spite of its vast expanse of sky, that is entirely alien to Friedrich’s). Rosenblum’s argument was that, in both these paintings, in a manner that anticipates the absolutist approach of Rothko’s abstract aesthetic almost a hundred and fifty years later, Friedrich and Turner situate the spectator ‘on the threshold of those shapeless infinities discussed by the aestheticians of the Sublime’ (‘Abstract Sublime’ 353). In this context, he cited Kant’s celebrated distinction between the beautiful and the sublime from the *Critique of Pure Judgment* (1790): ‘the Beautiful in nature is connected with the form of the object, which consists in having boundaries, the Sublime is to be found in a formless object, so far as in it, or by

occasion of it, *boundlessness* is represented' (*Modern Painting* 351; see Kant 75). This is a useful point of reference, not because it provides evidence of a kind of reductive or subtractive logic that in the end defines the formal experiments of the twentieth century, but because it situates Friedrich in relation to contemporaneous aesthetics. It is to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century attempts to grapple with the limits of representation that critics should look in seeking to interpret *The Monk by the Sea*.³

For example, William Hazlitt's characterization of Turner's canvases as 'pictures of the elements of air, earth, and water,' which appears in his essay 'On Imitation' (1816), seems equally fitting for Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea*:

The artist delights to go back to the first chaos of the world, or to that state of things when the waters were separated from the dry land, and light from darkness, but as yet no living thing nor tree bearing fruit was seen upon the face of the earth. All is 'without form and void.'
Some one said of his landscapes that they were *pictures of nothing, and very like* (76).⁴

A picture of nothing... What is visually almost overwhelming for the spectator of *The Monk by the Sea*, as Rosenblum's reference to Kant implies, is precisely the fact that there is neither a stable frame to this canvas nor any conventional organization of perspective. Foreground, middle-ground and background, which all assume the form of distinctly ambiguous, abstract terrains rather than stable or easily identifiable topologies, slide into one another in ways that radically unsettle the viewer.

What is this mysterious pictorial space, which is comprised of accretions of paint that, paradoxically, empty out the composition? 'Without form and void,' in Hazlitt's terms, it is nonetheless the site of a certain amount of impasto. It is thus at the same time both a presence and an absence, something both material and immaterial. Perhaps, then, it is comparable to the anamorphic patches of paint that Slavoj Žižek has recently pointed to in the paintings of Munch and Van Gogh (*Disparities* 198). Both these late nineteenth-century painters, after all, as Rosenblum is surely right to emphasise, revived distinctively abstract, symbolic motifs that are central to Friedrich's Romantic aesthetic; above all, that of the isolated figure who, sometimes in the shape of an oddly alienated couple, stands before the landscape 'in a tense, internal dialogue with nature' (*Modern Painting* 107).⁵ The 'massiveness' of the non-referential patches of paint scrutinised by Žižek 'pertains neither to the direct materiality of the colour stains nor to the materiality of the depicted objects'; it belongs instead to some 'intermediate spectral domain', which he identifies as one of 'spiritual corporality' (*Disparities* 198, 204). This formulation offers a fine characterization of the non-representational dimension of *The Monk by the Sea*. In Deleuzian terms, as we will discover, it constitutes the arena of sensation.⁶

Friedrich's experimental sketch of this intermediate spectral domain, which is somewhere between painterly sign and painted referent, is in the first instance a provocative refusal of perspective. The viewer's eye sails freely into the middle-ground, on the assumption that the painting will be structured according to an orthogonal logic; but, as in some Sargasso Sea, it quickly finds itself adrift among the thicker paint above the horizon, because there is no current in the composition silently steering it to some specific point. 'Though drawn upwards, the eye is left to wander aimlessly, trapped in the flat field of sky,' comments Andrea Meyertholen in her account of the mysterious canvas. 'Given the large scale of the painting and its narrow foreground,' she adds, 'a general impression of interminable emptiness and limitlessness emerges, rendering the vacant space the focal point of the painting, as if the gapping void were an object in and of itself' (407).⁷ The effect of this refusal of

perspective, and this visual emphasis on a kind of vacuity at the centre of the canvas, is deeply disorienting for the viewer. It plunges her into the landscape, or seascape or skyscape, as if she is looking at merely one section of a panorama that, disconcerting in its sheer emptiness, stretches right round behind her – an impression that is reinforced by the curve of the promontory.

In this respect, *The Monk by the Sea* is a little like Turner's celebrated *Snow Storm – Steam Boat Off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842), though it should be added that, in Friedrich's painting, the threat of the elements is implicit rather than explicit, and the composition is, at least superficially, static rather than dynamic. Both paintings initiate a rotating motion, albeit at different rates, that disorientates the spectator. Certainly, *The Monk by the Sea* does not merely create a sense of formlessness in its object; as Kleist will intuitively understand, it creates a sense of boundlessness in its subject, in the spectator, too. That is the point of my emphasis on the panoramic quality of the painting. It is as if the viewer has circumvented her gaze 360 degrees through the landscape, not in order confidently to exercise telescopic control of its concrete, more or less conventional features, but in an almost hopeless attempt to identify the sole detail that, because of its scale and anthropomorphic shape, might offer to humanize its inassimilable elemental forms. Having located the Monk, the spectator desperately fixes her gaze on him, even as he threatens to disappear into the seascape like someone receding almost imperceptibly into a void.

In Deleuze's terms, the 'field' or 'material structure' in which the Monk is isolated 'envelops and imprisons the Figure' (*Francis Bacon* 14). It is possible to speculate that, if the relationship between the dual tones in which he is painted were inverted, this painting's Figure would be assimilated comprehensively to the abstract forms that encircle him. As Friedrich organized the composition, the Monk's pale head, which is the colour of the sands, is contrasted with the sea behind it, and his dark lower body, which is the colour of the sea, is contrasted with the sands; so he just about stands out against the background. If these relations were to be reversed, he would become almost invisible. But, even in its painted form, his dark upper body seems to dissolve into the dark sea that lies implacably behind it. The picture's dark tones are deliberately redoubled here. Consequently, it is as if his torso is being sucked into a void at the point in the composition where the beach protrudes into the sea. The subtle torsion of his tensile body underlines the sense that it is resistant, albeit scarcely resistant, not only to the wind but to the gravitational force of this mysterious black hole. Perhaps this human form is, ultimately, like a kind of tear in the fabric of the picture, one which offers a forbidden glimpse into some more profound, more fundamental realm of nothingness that lies behind the painterly approximations of it that cover the canvas.

In the form of the Monk, to use Deleuze's language again, the Figure 'wants to pass through a vanishing point in the contour in order to dissipate into the material structure' (*Francis Bacon* 17-18). Deleuze – who in his collaborative work with Guattari implicitly associates the process of dissipation or disappearance with Kleist – characterises it in terms of 'becoming zero' (*What is Philosophy?* 169). The abstraction described by Friedrich's composition, which situates at its centre a Figure who seems to be passing into a state beyond symbolic meaning, is itself a form of becoming zero. Here is the sublime as the site of the virtual obliteration of the early nineteenth-century subject, who is violently dissolved into the abstract forms of landscape.

III. The Figure

The protagonist of *The Monk by the Sea*, as I have indicated, stands on a lonely promontory of land against a rough strip of dark sea that lies brooding beneath an immense sky. He is at once embedded inside the landscape and oddly absent from it. In this sense, he is like those characters described by Deleuze and Guattari, and exemplified above all by Melville's Captain Ahab, who 'have passed into the landscape and are themselves part of the compound of sensations' (*What is Philosophy?* 169).

Friedrich's Monk is situated in the ambiguous, cryptic space of the near distance, at the neutral point at which the centripetal force of three elements meets. This is the domain of the Deleuzian diagram or field, as I have insisted, an abstract field from which the Monk emerges as a Figure like an acrobat appearing on a trapeze apparatus.⁸ 'The diagram is indeed a chaos, a catastrophe, but it is also a germ of order or rhythm,' Deleuze writes; 'It is a violent chaos in relation to the figurative givens, but it is a germ of rhythm in relation to the new order of painting' (*Francis Bacon* 102). Friedrich's painting, with its diagrammatic use of space, is for contemporaneous spectators such as von Kügelgen a chaos and a catastrophe. But, as Kleist implicitly recognised, the relationship between diagram and Figure instituted, or anticipated, a painterly regime at once emancipative and, for the viewer, peculiarly disempowering. The disposition of abstract space in Friedrich's composition entails, in effect, 'the collapse of visual coordinates' (102). But the Figure salvages both rhythm and sensation from the 'chaos-germ' that is the diagram (102).

How? As a Figure, the Monk frustrates the spectator's initial impulse to impose a narrative on its superficially anthropomorphic form. Instead of functioning as an agent of figuration, he functions as an instrument of sensation. 'Every Figure,' as Deleuze insists, citing Bacon, 'is already an "accumulated" or "coagulated" sensation, as in a limestone figure' (37). The Monk, isolated from the logic of illustration, narration and representation, concentrates and transmits the abstract force of the three elements like a conductor or probe inserted in the sand, and he is in this respect the 'sensible form related to a sensation'. As such, and in contrast to abstract form, which 'is addressed to the head, and acts through the intermediary of the brain', this Figure 'acts immediately upon the nervous system' (34). In the terms of Peter Hallward's explication of Deleuze, it 'coheres only as a vector for the intense sensations that tear through it and reshape it at will' (112).

Apart from the Monk, the only signs of life apparent in this desolate landscape are a scattering of seagulls, which are indifferent to his presence, and the rough, sparse grass that protrudes from the sand on which he stands. Like the grass in some of Bacon's paintings, as Deleuze characterizes it, these concrete details function as '*asignifying traits* that are devoid of any illustrative or narrative function' (5). They are what Deleuze calls 'traits of sensation' (100). And so, in a sense, is the Monk's head. It might be said that, seen from behind, according to the pictorial conventions of the *Rückenfigur*, the Monk has no face.⁹ This is not merely because his face is invisible; it is because, instead of assuming the signifying form of a face, his head is an integral and irreducible part of his body. As Deleuze argues, 'the face is a structured, spatial organization that conceals the head, whereas the head is dependent upon the body, even if it is the point of the body, its culmination' (20). The face has a complicated semiotics that is specific to its form, as the history of portraiture amply testifies. The face, that is, is inextricably caught up in the web of representation, of illustration and narration. The head, on the other hand, escapes this logic of

signification. In this respect, it too is in effect an 'assignifying trait'. But it is not an abstract form, because it is the dominant feature of the Figure. 'It is not that the head lacks spirit,' as Deleuze underlines; 'it is a spirit in bodily form, a corporeal and vital breath, an animal spirit' (20). The head is instead, in terms of the composition, a patch or zone of sensation; a force of creative intensity that pulses and vibrates but does not signify.

In the insignificance of its solitary figure – the 'Wanderer on the Sea Shore', as the painter Carl Gustav Carus named him – the painting represents a revealing contrast with Friedrich's later picture *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog. The Monk by the Sea*, in Norbert Wolf's formulation, 'represents an exemplary embodiment of tragic existentialism' (34); *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* depicts an epic existentialism. In the second of these paintings, a quintessentially Romantic protagonist, individualistic and heroic, overlooks the mountains like some imperial adventurer. This Wanderer, silhouetted in black against the mist, at the apex of the pyramidal form at the centre of the composition, is sharply distinct from the landscape that unfurls before him. He also has a face, implicitly, even if it cannot be seen because the spectator stands behind him. The faceless Monk, by comparison, is dominated by the landscape. Indeed, he is both diminished and decentred; and he is deformed. He is also immobile, a wanderer who no longer has the individual will to wander. Like one of Bacon's Figures, in Deleuze's beautiful formulation, he is 'frozen in the middle of a strange stroll' (40). In short, he is a nomad, one 'who does not move': the monad as nomad. In contrast to the migrant, according to Deleuze and Guattari, 'the nomad is one who does not depart, does not want to depart, who clings to the smooth space left by the receding forest, where the steppe or the desert advances...' (*A Thousand Plateaus* 420). Friedrich's Monk, at once separate from the inhuman landscape and inseparable from it, does not depart.

Furthermore, partly assimilated to the abstract forms of the elements, the Monk is dis-organised by them; as Deleuze might put it, echoing Nietzsche, he is a body without organs: "'formed in one piece," without limbs, with neither voice nor sex' (*The Logic of Sense* 9). Friedrich's protagonist is the site of intersection of different forces, different sensations. 'The Figure is the body without organs,' Deleuze writes in the book on Bacon; 'the body without organs is flesh and nerve; a wave flows through it and traces levels upon it; a sensation is produced when the wave encounters the forces acting on the body' (45). Framed in terms of a diagram rather than a painterly background, he is no longer figurative. So, if *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* is an 'allegory of orientation', in Michael Fried's terms, then *Monk by the Sea* is instead an allegory of disorientation, and of disorganisation (126).¹⁰ The Monk embodies a tragic existentialism – the tragedy, as it might be summarised, of becoming zero – not because the painting celebrates his embattled individuality but because it identifies him, at an ontological rather than psychological level, as the site of a battle between being and non-being. It is then also an allegory of dissolution, of deontologisation.

'The Figure,' Deleuze writes, 'is dissipated by realizing the prophecy: you will no longer be anything but sand, grass, dust or a drop of water...' (*Francis Bacon* 31). It is simply a field or focal point of intensities. As Deleuze and Guattari phrase it in *A Thousand Plateaus*, he is 'that glacial reality where the alluvions, sedimentations, coagulations, foldings, and recoilings that compose an organism – and also a signification and a subject – occur' (176). Here is painting not as a figurative site of meaning but an abstract site of affect. The subject that Friedrich's painting posits in

the form of the Monk is merely a vector of intense sensations. This aesthetic logic constitutes a fundamental challenge to the rational Enlightenment subject.

IV. The Spectator

But what does all this have to do with ‘lidless eyes’? Fascinatingly, as I have hinted, this is the rhetorical figure through which Heinrich von Kleist grappled with the sublime optics of *The Monk by the Sea* in his brief but richly pungent and imaginative report on the painting. For he argues that the painting’s deformation of the body, which is the striking result of what I have been identifying as Friedrich’s configuration of diagram or field and Figure, shapes not simply the composition’s protagonist but its spectator too. Revealingly, Deleuze and Guattari once characterised Kleist as ‘the author who most wrote with affects, using them like stones or weapons’ (*What is Philosophy?* 169). In his highly rhetorical account of *The Monk by the Sea*, Kleist’s affects impinge directly, even violently, on the viewer.

Kleist’s piece, ‘Feelings before Friedrich’s Seascape,’ written for the journal he edited, the *Berlin Abendblätter*, in 1810, is remarkable both for the intensity of its tone and the dream-like clarity of its insight. It boldly abridged and redrafted Brentano’s playful satirical account of the picture’s reception at the Berlin Academy, entitled ‘In Front of a Friedrich Seascape with Capuchin Monk’; and, in so doing, it succeeded in clumsily alienating Brentano, probably the periodical’s most celebrated contributor. Brentano’s draft had started by suggesting that the most elegant way of coming to terms with the ‘strange feeling’ aroused by the painting, which evidently troubled as much as it intrigued him, was to record the dialogue between ‘various observers’ filing past it. In the confusion he feels before the provocative barrenness of the painting, and in the face of its refusal of the modish consolations of melancholy, he thus ‘abdicates his role as critic and hands over to the public’, as William Vaughan puts it (‘Landscape’ 187). Accordingly, Brentano’s piece takes the form of a stylized transcript of the genteel but flirtatious conversations between several fashionable gallery-goers; including, most prominently, Brentano’s friend the Romantic novelist and poet Ludwig Achim von Arnim, who contributed a number of important insights to the piece.

In its finally published form, Kleist’s piece reads in contrast like a prose poem. The insertion of the word ‘feelings’ in his revised title signals his crucial innovation of course. But it doesn’t fully communicate the emotional contortions that shape his response to *The Monk by the Sea*, a response that is at once ecstatic and tortured. Brentano, instinctively perceptive, is fascinated by the painting’s refusal of his attempt ‘to succumb to the landscape’, as Johannes Grave formulates it; he admires but can’t fully explain the fact that the painting confronts him, indeed blocks him, with its ‘materiality and artificiality’ (159). Kleist, for his part, confesses that his ‘own feelings about this wonderful picture are too confused’, principally because of the extreme formal challenges it poses to the spectator, which pivot on its complicated and disconcerting recomposition of pictorial space (208). But, in fact, he manages to articulate them in a language as eloquent as it is violent. ‘A magnificent thing it is,’ he begins, ‘in infinite solitude by the sea, under a sullen sky, to gaze off into a boundless watery waste...’ (208). Supplementing Brentano’s comparatively circumspect judgment of the painting with a positively rhapsodic one, Kleist identifies so closely with the Monk, as a spectator, that he inserts himself deep inside its landscape and becomes almost an actor in its elemental drama. ‘As a spectator,’ in Deleuze’s terms,

Kleist 'experience[s] the sensation only by entering the painting, by reaching the unity of the sensing and the sensed' (*Francis Bacon* 35). But at the same time, because the Monk is a Figure, a body without organs, something bereft of the characteristics that might encourage psychological identification, the writer is fundamentally alienated from him.

Kleist's incandescent exercise in ekphrasis first abandons the dramatic device Brentano had used to frame his sketch; then, in the sheer intensity of its self-consciously subjective response to the painting, effectively scorches off most of its incidental details. In spite of the brutal cuts he made, however, Kleist's version did retain several of Brentano's more imaginative formulations. Many of the observers' remarks in Brentano's version probably provide more insight into the upper-class milieu of Berlin in the early nineteenth century than they do into the enigmatic painting itself, but others prove insightful in their own right. These include the apparently casual, conversational allusion to the monk as 'the lonely centre in the lonely circle'; and the reference a little later to the sea lying 'before him like the Apocalypse'. It also includes the evocative opinion voiced by the 'Lady' whom Brentano had purportedly recorded, to the effect that, in the painting, 'it is as though the sea were thinking Young's *Night Thoughts*' (209).¹¹

In echoing the second and third of these phrases, in particular, Kleist discreetly but significantly modified their meaning: 'The picture with its two or three mysterious objects lies before one like the Apocalypse, as though it were thinking Young's *Night Thoughts*...' (208). Symptomatically, in Kleist's version, it is not the sea that thinks but the picture. The painting, Kleist implies, possesses something like a consciousness. Throughout his paragraph on Friedrich's painting, he therefore relates to it as a sort of subject in its own right – three-dimensional, dynamic, and rhythmic; in short, a site of sensation. In his attempt to grasp its enigmatic logic, Kleist effectively opens up an inter-subjective space between the picture and the spectator: 'that which I should have found within the picture I found instead between the picture and myself' (208). But the relationship between picture and spectator is asymmetrical. It is not equal so much as hierarchical; and it is premised not on transparent communication, which is the claim made by realist painting and the illusory representation of depth that historically it had instituted, so much as on the attempt to generate incomprehension. As Philip Miller puts it, 'Kleist accepts this debarment as the true power of the artist, this transposition of the center of consciousness from the illusory, *within* the picture, to the space *between* the picture and the viewer' (207).

For what Kleist finds in the space between his own person and the painting is, as he puts it, 'an appeal from my heart to the picture and a rejection by the picture' (208). Shockingly, the picture seems to be as indifferent to its spectator as the immeasurable landscape it invokes. Kleist is conscious that, in seeking to understand the painting, he has asked it a mistaken question. It therefore responds by refusing the terms on which he has approached it. It is for this reason that, in an effort to immerse himself in the composition, to become indigenious to its strange logic, its logic of sensation as opposed to representation, that he identifies so strongly with its singular protagonist: 'And so I myself became the Capuchin monk, the picture became the dune' (208). Perhaps Kleist was predisposed to identify with the Monk as a Figure, as a sort of abstract, non-anthropomorphic subject; for if he was the author who most writes with affects, according to Deleuze and Guattari, then his 'texts' are nonetheless 'opposed in every way to the classical or romantic book constituted by the interiority of a substance or subject' (*A Thousand Plateaus* 10). His dramas and short stories,

full of ‘voids and failures’, frustrate the reader’s expectation both that a central character and a conventional generic frame should clearly emerge: ‘No form develops, no subject forms’ (*A Thousand Plateaus* 296).¹² *The Monk by the Sea* is already Kleistian, so to speak, in so far as it too is comprised of voids and it too forestalls or impedes the development of an identifiable form, an identifiable subject.

But, in spite of the assimilation of Kleist to Friedrich’s landscape, as he reports it in his reaction to the painting, the spaces that the composition depicts remain cryptic, elusive, and fugitive. ‘That across which I should have looked with longing,’ he adds, ‘the sea, was absent completely’ (208). This redoubles the sense of desolation at the core of the painting. In so far as his complicated syntax can be decoded, Kleist seems to find himself in a position analogous to that of the monk described in Brentano’s sketch – ‘the lonely centre in the lonely circle’. But in this isolated position, stranded in the space ‘between the picture and myself’, he occupies the domain of sensation. This pre-cognitive domain is the opposite of the ‘sensational’, as Deleuze insists: ‘it is Being-in-the-World, as the phenomenologists say: at one and the same time I *become* the sensation and something *happens* through the sensation, one through the other, one in the other.’ ‘As a spectator,’ he concludes, ‘I experience the sensation only by entering the painting, by reaching the unity of the sensing and the sensed’ (*Francis Bacon* 34-5).

Kleist, in his reception of Friedrich’s painting, reaches this unity of the sensing and the sensed, implicitly pitching the idea of the fixed, stable spectator inherited from the Renaissance, with its precise rules of perspective, into crisis. The rational Enlightenment subject – effortlessly in control of space, like the Wanderer above the Sea of Fog – dissipates or implodes in the boundless composition that marks Friedrich’s radical reinscription of the sublime.

V. Kleist’s Friedrich-Krise

It is at this point, groping for a metaphor that might communicate his conviction that Friedrich has ‘opened a new path in the field of his art’, a path that in its implications for the spectator is almost unthinkable, that Kleist deploys the trope of lidless eyes:

The picture with its two or three mysterious objects lies before one like the Apocalypse, as though it were thinking Young’s *Night Thoughts*, and since in its uniformity and boundlessness it has no foreground but the frame, the viewer feels as though his eyelids had been cut off [als ob Einem die Augenlider weggeschnitten wären]. (208)

The arbitrary geometries of the painting’s frame, which might be extended almost infinitely in horizontal, vertical and of course orthogonal directions, combined with the shocking levels of abstraction achieved by Friedrich, almost completely abolish the comforting conventions of perspective. There is no foreground, as Kleist insists, other than the frame itself. (If the skin-coloured bar of sand itself looks not entirely unlike a lower eyelid, albeit a calloused one, it is surely a lower eyelid that has been half-mortified because of its exposure to the elements.) This leaves the viewer in an unprecedented state of perspectival disorientation. It is as if, floating in the painting’s fathomless space, she is forced to cling to the lower edge of the frame like a drowning man grasping a broken spar. In her monograph on Kleist, Hilda Meldrum Brown points out that nineteenth-century artists’ illusionistic attempts to simulate reality, especially in the popular contemporary form of the Panorama-Schau, had long been ‘anathema to him’ (87). Now, she continues, ‘he was confronted by a

picture which, at a much higher level than the panorama, seemed to be trying to annex some of that “reality”, and ‘his sheer consternation and panic at the implications is evident’ (87). Kleist, it might be said, cannot bear too much reality. It is for this reason that, looking at *The Monk by the Sea*, he comments that, ‘were such a painting made with its own chalk and water, foxes and wolves, I believe, would be set howling by it...’ (208).

The painting induces more than consternation and panic though. For Kleist indicates that the optical shock that his encounter with Friedrich’s picture has induced is uncomfortably close to an experience of physical pain: ‘The viewer feels as though his eyelids had been cut off...’ Kleist’s description of his own response to the composition – which is comparable to the numerous images of biting, cutting and mutilating in his dramas and stories – is expressive because it transmits to his readers the somatic impact it has had on him. Silke-Maria Weineck is surely right to emphasize that the effect of Kleist’s image on his readers, in its uncompromising physicality, is to coerce in turn a bodily response from them. ‘Who can read that phrase and not blink?’ she asks (67). If the viewer feels as though her eyelids have been cut off, then so too, momentarily, does the reader. The reader’s involuntary reaction, like the putative viewer’s, is to blink, to foreclose the pain evoked by this vision; perhaps even to close her eyes, as Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner did, and keep them closed, because ‘the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky’ lie on them ‘like a load’ (173).

But, as Kleist’s use of the trope of lidless eyes implies, the impact of this experience before *The Monk by the Sea* is not merely optical; it is existential, even ontological. The painting transmits a sense of intense vulnerability to the viewer. In apparently arbitrarily framing the landscape that he depicts, Friedrich dramatically undermines the viewer’s spontaneous faith in framing, *tout court*, as a means of controlling space. The viewer’s experience is comparable to that of someone who, since they have no eyelids – or, more accurately, since their eyelids have been violently ‘cut off’ – is incapable of regulating their relationship to the world.¹³ Terminally exposed to an excess of light, the viewer is rendered blind. The Enlightenment subject, pushed to the limits, collapses into darkness. Moreover, if the lidless spectator’s incapacity to regulate or process the world applies to space, it also applies to time. The subject with no eyelids, condemned to a permanent condition of sightless sight, is implicitly insomniac; and is therefore abandoned to a temporal as well as spatial form of boundlessness; a non-narrative temporality as well as a non-illustrative space.

Above all, *The Monk by the Sea* has no narrative framework. The boundlessness to which Kant referred in the writings on the sublime, as dramatised by Friedrich in the Monk, who is anchorless and adrift in space, the Figure coagulating against the diagram that brings him into being and at the same time denies him life, is a crisis for illustration, for narration, and for representation. In *The Monk by the Sea*, to cite Deleuze once more, ‘the violence of sensation is opposed to the violence of the represented’ (*Francis Bacon* 39). In contrast to *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, the sublime is thus inscribed above all in the form of the composition, in the empty space on the canvas, and between the spectator and the canvas, as opposed to its content. In a double sense, in *The Monk by the Sea*, nothing is happening; that is, in addition to there being no narrative content, a kind of nothingness is materialized on the canvas. Nothing happens – in an active, positive sense – to the viewer. Emptiness directly and dramatically imposes itself on the spectator, whose eyes are prised open so wide it is as if they have been stripped of their protective lids.

In the absence of eyelids, one cannot temporarily seal oneself off from the world either by momentarily blinking it out of existence or temporarily obliterating it in sleep. In its spatial and temporal dimensions, the cosmos impinges with intolerable aggressiveness on the individual whose eyelids have been amputated. The eye, in this situation, is like a mollusc that has been stripped of its protective shell by a predator. In one of his sonnets Rilke used the image of an anemone he had seen in Rome – one that had opened itself so wide in the day that it was unable to close again at night – as a metaphor for the poet: ‘A being with no shell, open to pain, / Tormented by light, shaken by every sound’ (quoted in Blanchot 153; see Rilke 214-17). Unable to close his lids, Kleist’s all-seeing subject cannot protect itself against a world that, in its formlessness and its framelessness, has become a void. He is exposed, entirely unprotected, to a domain that is defined by pure sensation. He is open to pain and tormented by light.

In this sense, perhaps our understanding of Kleist’s famous ‘Kant-Krise’, the epistemological and existential crisis supposedly induced in him by reading Kant or Fichte in 1801, an epiphany that dramatically undermined his formerly rigid faith in Enlightenment reason, needs to be supplemented with a sense of what might be called his ‘Friedrich-Krise’ in 1810. His description of the former, like the glimpse he offers of the latter, turns on an optical metaphor. In a letter to his fiancée, Wilhelmine von Zenge, he explained his Kant-Krise in terms of the subject’s inability to ascertain whether his vision of the world corresponds with the noumenal realm, the Kantian ‘Ding an sich’, or merely the phenomenal one:

If people all had green lenses instead of eyes they would be bound to think that the things they see through them *are* green – and they would never be able to decide whether the eye shows them things as they are or whether it isn’t adding something to them belonging not to them but to the eye. It is the same with our minds. We cannot decide whether what we call truth is truly truth or whether it only seems so to us. (*Selected Writings* 421)

It is impossible to ascertain, according to this position, whether our knowledge of the world pertains to fact or mere fiction, is objective or merely subjective. Kleist concluded therefore that ‘no truth is discoverable here on earth’, and found himself ‘wounded deep in [his] innermost life’ by this conviction (421).

In the case of the Friedrich-Krise, in contradistinction, it is Kleist’s acute inability to insulate himself from the overwhelming and intrusive presence of the world that creates the problem, although this too results in a collapse of Enlightenment faith in reason. Too much light, paradoxically, precipitates an immanent crisis for the Enlightenment. He is excessively, rather than insufficiently, and deceptively, exposed to the world. The Friedrich-Krise, then, is a traumatic encounter with the sublime as a zone of pure affect. In terms of his optical metaphor, Kleist is stripped not only of his green lenses, which had ensured that he could not decide ‘whether what we call truth is truly truth or whether it only seems so to us’, but of his protective lids. And this entails both a liberating moment of comprehension and a horrifying moment of trauma: Enlightenment as trauma... For it means that, in confronting the truth, he cannot screen himself from the crisis of representation, and of Reason itself, that is structural to the sublime as an encounter with sensation.

Kleist’s interpretation of Friedrich’s painting in terms of the experience of looking at a landscape with lidless eyes represents a subtle and sophisticated but also decisive inflection of the aesthetics of the sublime (the etymological origin of the word ‘decisive’, in Latin *de* (‘off’) and *caedere* (‘cut’), might be recalled in this context). The post-Enlightenment subject implicitly posited by Kleist is radically

vulnerable and unstable because, like the Monk abandoned to the elements in Friedrich's canvas, he has nothing to which he might cling for security and a sense of individual identity. The 'post-Enlightenment Kleist', as one critic has insisted, was distinct from his Romantic contemporaries because he had renounced two doctrines to which, like Friedrich, they adhered – 'the power of the individual to determine his own direction, and the link with God' (Reeves 285-6). For Kleist, both the universe and the individual who inhabits it are thus voided of meaning. He attempted to limn the implications of this in his prose; for example, in his portrait of Michael Kohlhass in the novella of that name, which he published between 1808 and 1810, at precisely the time that Friedrich produced his picture. In the course of his inhuman pursuit of justice, Kohlhass becomes what Terry Eagleton, in a fine Lacanian interpretation of the narrative, categorises as a figure 'driven beyond the symbolic order' because he is harnessed to the primal meaninglessness of the Real (73). But Kleist also encountered something like an objective correlative of this voiding of meaning in *The Monk by the Sea*.

Conclusion

Kleist stares at Friedrich's painting as if it represents something like nothing. A picture of nothing and very like, in Hazlitt's formulation... The lidless eyes he imagines gaze on the world as if it is a void. During a discussion of the Deity in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke had argued that 'to be struck with his power', as distinct from his other attributes, 'it is only necessary that we should open our eyes' (56). For in so doing, he said, 'we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before him' (56). In the aesthetics of lidlessness outlined by Kleist, the state that Burke identifies as 'divine horror' becomes a permanent condition (56). It also becomes, implicitly, and in spite of Friedrich's Protestant piousness, a godless one.¹⁴ It is as if, for this subject, the archetypal disposition of the individual encountering a sublime force in Nature, which is a wide-eyed aspect of wonder and terror, surely unsustainable for more than a few moments, has been petrified for perpetuity.

Or, to put it slightly differently, the lidless condition invoked by Kleist freezes the ecstatic eyes characteristic of the subject who confronts the sublime and renders them catatonic. 'Catatonic freezes,' as Deleuze and Guattari rightly note, are a frequent feature of Kleist's dramas and stories (*A Thousand Plateaus* 295).¹⁵ His reaction to Friedrich's painting is the ultimate iteration of this trope. Deleuze and Guattari summarise the meaning of catatonia in terms of the statement, 'This affect is too strong for me' (*A Thousand Plateaus* 393). Kleist's account of his sensations, before *The Monk by the Sea* is an admission that, as in their definition of catatonia, 'the Self is now nothing more than a character whose actions and emotions are desubjectified, perhaps even to the point of death' (393). The affect generated by the painting is too strong for him.

Kleist's fascinating description of the aesthetic impact of Friedrich's canvas, which initiates a new order of painting in the early nineteenth century, provides an emblematic image of the extinction of sight that lies on the far side of Enlightenment vision. If you want a picture of this post-Enlightenment sublime, to paraphrase George Orwell, imagine a pair of eyes clenched open – forever.

Notes

¹ Bacon himself admired Deleuze's writing on him deeply: 'It's as if this guy was watching over my shoulder while I was painting!' – see Dosse 448. I am extremely grateful to the anonymous referee of an earlier draft of this essay for their constructive criticisms of it.

² The publisher Karl Friedrich Frommann, who saw the painting in Friedrich's studio, insisted that at that point it was a night scene, lightened by both a crescent moon and the morning star; and Helmut Börsch-Supan has noted that the picture surface confirms this: 'the present pale tones were painted over a much darker blue which is still visible in the sky area at the upper edge and on the horizon' – see Börsch-Supan 82.

³ Vaughan, in his account of Romantic irony, has for his part claimed that *The Monk by the Sea* is 'the expression of more contemporary [i.e. early nineteenth-century] concerns' in so far as 'it emphasizes that the picture, despite its visionary aspirations, i[s] nevertheless no more than a picture' ('Landscape' 187).

⁴ The phrase 'without form and void' is from Genesis 1: 2.

⁵ Vaughan points to the continuities between Friedrich and Munch, who lived in Berlin in the early 1890s, at the very time when interest in the Romantic painter was being revived as a result of the Norwegian art historian Andreas Aubert's research. In this connection, he cites Munch's remark, suggestive of just this domain of 'spiritual corporality' I have invoked, that 'nature is not only what is visible to the eye – it also shows the inner images of the soul – the images on the reverse side of the eyes'. This statement recalls Friedrich's famous advice to a painter to 'close your bodily eye so that you may see your picture first with the spiritual eye' (*German Romantic Painting*, 68, 239; *Friedrich*, 318).

⁶ The reference in this paragraph to Žižek's suggestive comments on Munch and Van Gogh as, in effect, an abstract site of affective intensities, which has a good deal in common with Deleuze's concept of the virtual, should not of course obscure the difference, in a broader context, between the former's philosophical precepts and those of the latter. For Žižek's Lacanian critique of Deleuze, whose 'transcendental empiricism' he resists, not least because of its official anti-Hegelianism, which he claims conceals an unofficial affinity with Hegelianism, see *Organs Without Bodies*; and, more recently as well as far more briefly, *Disparities* 327-8. See, too, for a useful summary assessment, Sinnerbrink, 'Nomadology or Ideology?', 62-87.

⁷ See also Schmied: 'Often there is no middleground [in Friedrich's paintings], and the eye, when it leaves the familiar foreground, is directly confronted with an immeasurable depth into which it has no sense of being able to penetrate' (31).

⁸ Here, I adapt and so displace Deleuze's description of Bacon's animal humans or human animals whose 'bones are like a trapeze apparatus (the carcass) upon which the flesh is the acrobat' (23).

⁹ On Friedrich's *Rückenfiguren*, see Fried 11-49.

¹⁰ It is noticeable that Fried doesn't refer to *Monk by the Sea* in his reading of Friedrich.

¹¹ The Escort's intriguing rejoinder to the Lady, which was disregarded by Kleist, suggests that the sea was also thinking of '[Louis-Sébastien] Mercier's *Bonnet de Nuit* and [Gotthilf Heinrich von] Schubert's *Glimpses of Nature's Night-Side*'. This dialogue thus communicates with impressive economy the cultural hinterland that

shadows Friedrich's seascape. In the cosmopolitan context sketched by the Lady and her Escort, 'Monk by the Sea' represents a characteristic late Romantic meditation on the night, at least in so far as the night is concentrated or distilled in the strip of ominous, stormy water between the sand and the sky. Its mood is consistent with the poems of Novalis as well as the plays and short stories of Kleist himself.

¹² Kleist, who is often paired with Artaud and Kafka, plays a persistent and important role in *A Thousand Plateaus*: 'Many things in modern art come from Kleist. Goethe and Hegel are old men next to Kleist' (393).

¹³ It seems possible to speculate that Kleist derived the traumatic image of lidless eyes in part from the public lectures that his acquaintance Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert delivered, in Dresden during the winter of 1807-08, on 'Die Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft' ('The Dark Side of the Natural Sciences'), for in the thirteenth of these, Schubert discussed hypnotic and somnambulistic states in detail. For this and related contexts, see Huff 31-70.

¹⁴ Huff characterizes Kleist's 'violent misreading' of *The Monk by the Sea* in terms of 'his distortion of its content from a depiction of deep religiosity to a veritable manifesto of agnosticism' (123).

¹⁵ Deleuze and Guattari do not offer specific examples; but see, for instance, the eponymous Amazonian's fit in Scene 9 of Kleist's *Penthesilia* 63-4.

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