

Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture

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Preface

Culled from the many excellent papers presented at the national and regional meetings of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and its affiliates, the fifteen essays that make up volume 23 of *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* epitomize the diversity of disciplines, methodologies, and professional affiliations that are contained within the eighteenth-century studies community. Whether creatively reinterpreting a familiar figure or introducing a little known personality or manuscript, the essays are also representative of the themes and issues that currently engage eighteenth-century scholars. Traversing superficially disparate terrains, our fifteen authors venture from the underground world of art criticism to the “little world” of advertising, from American battlefields to Turkish baths, from a fairy-tale court to the sphere of “domestic politics.”

Common to all of the essays is an interest in challenges to eighteenth-century orthodoxies and authorities. Issues of authority, class, and gender intersect in the work of Bohls, Thaddeus, Runte, and Kowaleski-Wallace, while the conflict between class and commerce is explored by Briggs and Dykstal, as well as Kowaleski-Wallace. The dynamic between aesthetic discourse and authority is examined by Fort, Adler, Bohm, Bohls, and Irving. Selig, in turn, analyzes the American Revolutionary War’s implications for military orthodoxy. The debate over the balance between mind and body is pursued by Aubrey, Bohm, Bohls, and Vila. The tension between faith and reason engages Rosa and Parnell. Collectively exploring the paradoxes and contradictions of the eighteenth-century cosmos, our authors’ thoughtful reflections enhance our understanding of the complex, often contentious interplay of various components of this revolutionary “age of reason.”

My thanks to the authors for their splendid cooperation throughout the editorial process. The experience has been most gratifying. I am also deeply indebted to Associate Editor, Syndy Conger, the Editorial Board, and to all of the reviewers for their careful and expeditious evaluations of the many fine essays that were submitted for *SECC*’s consideration. My

very best wishes to outgoing Board members, Larry Lipking and Karl Fink. Working with them has been a distinct pleasure. I would also like to thank my graduate assistants, Mark Karau and Justin Hoffman, for their diligence in preparing the volume for the press and Robert Uphaus of Colleagues Press for his patience and helpful advice. Finally, my thanks to Marquette University for its financial support of this enterprise.

Carla H. Hay
March 1993

*Gottfried August Bürger:
Texts of the Body*

ARND BOHM

If one were tempted to sum up the most profound development in the study of eighteenth-century texts of the last twenty years, a possible response would be “the return of the body.” From various disciplines and for diverse reasons, there is a new awareness of the fact that human existence begins with embodiment and that relations—personal, familial, social, economic or political—begin with our individual physical being.¹ The importance attached to such apparently simple insights would have baffled westerners from earlier eras, and puzzled non-European cultures. Why all the fuss? The answer resides in the complex intertwining of the rise of the middle class in Europe with a puritanizing campaign aimed at covering, disciplining and defining the body. As the recent controversy about the exhibition of Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographs at the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center has underscored, the representation of bodies in a public space can still provoke a confrontation between the interests of politics and those of aesthetics.² Although not the only ground for clashes, the ones involving representation of bodies are especially intense.

One factor in this is that the body is so obviously involved in questions of public and private morality. Another might be that since everyone has a body, all consider themselves competent to speak about the issues. But at a more basic level, it is necessary to recognize that attempts to change

the conditions for representing bodies are always connected with and hence a potential threat to political representation. Politicians perceive quite correctly—no less than artists and writers—that any change in the possibilities under which the human body is displayed, or makes its presence manifest, entails transformations in society and, further down the road, in the political system. It is not surprising then that the eighteenth century, which would conclude with profound changes in the European political system, should have been rife with discourses of the body.

The situation in the German-speaking territories was in some key respects different than that in Britain or France.³ Nowhere was the triumph of the mind (“Geist”) over the body (“Körper”) more secure than in the German states where the middle class was able to assert itself in both directions, against rulers and against the peasants. A basic contradiction between freedom and license resulted from the fact that, by enforcing disciplines of the body upon rulers, the bourgeoisie was able to gain a measure of autonomy. As for the peasantry, they were subjected to increasing control of their bodies—exemplified in the tragic history of the treatment of unwed mothers⁴ under the rubric of “improvement.” The intellectual components of the bourgeois program were the elaboration of extreme philosophical idealism and, in the sphere of literature, the ideal of a “classical” norm for embodied behavior.⁵ The alliance of idealistic philosophy and the norms of the *Klassik* have made it especially difficult to recover any body-related themes for eighteenth-century German literary history. Without a Swift, Fielding, Rousseau or de Sade as obvious gateways whereby it might be recovered for discourse, German literary history continues to occlude the body.⁶

One area where a German discourse on representing the body did emerge was in aesthetics. A founding text for both art history and the German *Klassik*, Winckelmann’s “Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst” (1756) dealt explicitly with the issues posed by representation for the prim German bourgeoisie.⁷ According to Winckelmann, Greek sculpture revealed ideal beauty that could only have come about in an ideal political and social order. The development of beauty and its reproduction in works of art required public spaces where well-formed bodies could be openly displayed. Artists had the opportunity to study anatomy live in the gymnasium: “Die Schule der Künstler war in den Gymnasien, wo die jungen Leute, welche die öffentliche Schamhaftigkeit bedeckte, ganz nackend ihre Leibesübungen trieben.”⁸ The naked bodies were being presented, but they were in themselves also representations of the values and ideals of Greek society. The fact that the body could be seen in all its contours

made the harmonious forms of the artistic representation possible. Conversely, his modern age is unable to represent beautiful bodies not just because artists have no chance to observe them, but because the social conventions occluding the body have already produced deformations in individual bodies. Winckelmann observed that in modern art the artists represented small folds in the skin and that these folds disturbed the sense of ideal form. But the folds were not invented by the modern artists: they were copied from modern bodies marked by “magere Spannungen” and “viele eingefallene Höhlungen” (71). Implicit throughout Winckelmann’s discussion is the argument that the limitations upon representation in his society must result in flaws.

The ties between social order and the conditions for representing bodies were articulated forcefully in Lessing’s *Laokoon, oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766).⁹ Noteworthy is Lessing’s choice of topic in the midst of the Seven Years’ War: how can pain be represented textually and visually? He begins with the straightforward reminder that bodies can be in pain and can communicate the fact via a cry: “Schreien ist der natürliche Ausdruck des körperlichen Schmerzes. Homers verwundete Krieger fallen nicht selten mit Geschrei zu Boden.”¹⁰ Lessing proceeds quickly to the contrast between the authenticity of the classical representation of pain, one that acknowledged the suffering of even heroic bodies, with the modern repression encompassing both texts and bodies: “Ich weiß es, wir feinem Europäer einer klügern Nachwelt wissen über unsern Mund und über unsere Augen besser zu herrschen. Höflichkeit und Anstand verbieten Geschrei und Tränen. Die tätige Tapferkeit des ersten rauhen Weltalters hat sich bei uns in eine leidende verwandelt.” (*Laokoon*, 3: 7)

The regime for the modern body requires a control of expressions of pain, so that a gap opens between what the body knows and what it may announce to others. By contrast, the Greeks were able to show both positive and negative emotions (*Laokoon*, 3: 7–8). Focusing upon pain, Lessing went beyond the conditions for representation as Winckelmann had expounded them, since bodies are not always beautiful and harmonious. Art must be able to represent agony as well. In this regard, the issue of whether Laokoon should have been sculpted nude is decided according to whether the authenticity of the embodied experience is revealed better by so doing. Clothing could have been draped over the forms, but at a price: the secondary, artificial drapery would never be as beautiful as the body itself (*Laokoon*, 3: 35–36). The equating of clothing as a social product and the body as a divine work disclose a logic that, if followed through, would confirm Lessing’s systematic privileging of the rights of the body over those of arbitrary social conventions. The illusions of

social decorum represented by the garments must be stripped away by the sculptor in order to let us see the body in pain.

Two brief concrete examples may conclude this digression by confirming that the questions of representation raised with Winckelmann and Lessing were concerning artists in a real way. One is the so-called “Kostümstreit,” which turned upon the practical matter of whether statues of famous eighteenth-century Germans should have them wearing contemporary or classical costumes.¹¹ Should a statue of Frederick II of Prussia show him in military uniform, stressing his prowess as a modern general, or should he be in a Roman toga, hinting at the greatness of the Roman Empire reborn? Advocating the latter in 1776, Wilhelm Gottlieb Becker referred to the majesty and dignity to be represented by exposing the body.

At about the same time, Johann Heinrich Füssli had returned to Zurich and received a commission to paint “The Oath of the Rütli” (1779–1781) for the town hall.¹² The completed painting shows three men taking the oath, capturing what the late eighteenth century perceived as a key moment in the history of Swiss republicanism. The figures wear imaginary costumes, blending toga-like drapery with peasant shirts and breast-plates. Striking is the contrast to an earlier version, considered by art historians to have been a preliminary study. There, all three figures are naked, except for cloaks draped loosely over their shoulders. It could be argued that the relationship between the two versions is merely the ordinary one between a preliminary study in which the artist was concerned with establishing the details of the human forms and the final painting. But another reading is possible, to the effect that in the “study” Füssli was in fact making a visual allusion to the history of Greek republicanism, in the spirit of Winckelmann. The naked muscular bodies are caught in an act that symbolized a resurrection of political self-representation, establishing the continuity from Greek democracy to the Swiss republics. Ideally, their medieval clothing should have fallen off in that moment. However, it would have been absolutely impossible for Füssli’s bourgeois patrons to accept such a representation of their history and to hang it in the town hall. The public gaze had to be shielded from the reminder of the body’s fundamental role in the making of history.

Against this background, it is possible to reassess the negative reception granted a writer like Gottfried August Bürger (1747–1794) whose open reliance upon sensuality, frequent public allusions to the wants and symptoms of the body, and carnivalization of the body in texts constitute an embarrassment to the classical norms of German literature. More than that, Bürger’s reminders that politics originates in the body place

him within a radical tradition near the German Jacobins and later writers such as Georg Büchner and Bertolt Brecht.

If remembered at all, Bürger is marginalized either as the author of the popular ballad "Leonore"¹³ or as the object of a devastating review of his works by Friedrich Schiller in 1789.¹⁴ Unlike J.M.R. Lenz or Büchner whose sad personal lives have achieved a certain legendary status and with whom he had much in common, Bürger's career is hardly known. His pathetic death in 1794 at the age of 47, pleading with the University of Göttingen for some small financial assistance to stave off hunger, ended a life which serves as an example of the harsh reality of literary professions in the eighteenth century.¹⁵ The surface reasons for Bürger's obscurity are not hard to find. First, there were the negative pronouncements upon him made not only by Schiller, but also by Goethe, typically the kiss of death in German letters. Goethe coldly described Bürger's ultimate failure as true to type: "Es ist traurig anzusehen, wie ein außerordentlicher Mensch sich gar oft mit sich selbst, seinen Umständen, seiner Zeit herumwürgt, ohne auf einen Zweig zu kommen: Trauriges Beispiel Bürger."¹⁶ Then there has been the difficulties posed by the lack of a comprehensive edition of Bürger's works.¹⁷ Finally, it is only recently that it has become theoretically possible to cope with Bürger's work, for his was a voice from below, and German literary historians have not been keen to hear from the underground

Ironically, Bürger had very much wanted to be known as a spokesman for the people. It was in relation to the "Volk" that he had introduced himself in the 1789 collection of his poems: "In dem Sinne, wie ich ein Volksdichter, oder lieber ein populärer Dichter zu sein wünsche, ist Homer, wegen der spiegelhellen Durchsichtigkeit und Temperatur seines Gesangstromes, der größte Volksdichter aller Völker und Zeiten, sind es, mehr oder weniger, alle großen Dichter, auch die unsrigen, und gerade in ihren allgemein geliebtesten und unsterblichen Versen, unendlich mehr als ich gewesen."¹⁸ (*Gedichte*, I:8-9)

By positing himself as a "popular poet," Bürger helped to provoke the negative response from Schiller who disputed the validity of Bürger's claim to the title. Bürger admittedly had not helped his case through the introduction to his collection, which was intended as something of an advertisement. He was quite aware of the influence of criticism and of the supremacy of the ideals of the Weimar Classicists. He was also well-versed in dissembling, after years of trying to adapt to the public demands of bourgeois conventionality. Nothing could be more typical of this dissembling than the "confession" in which Bürger stated that he was speaking too much about himself: "Es thut mir leid, daß ich hier so viel von mir selbst reden muß, welches, wie ich wohl weiß, nicht fein läßt. Ich

bin mir indessen bewußt, daß ich von mir selbst so unbefangen und gleichgültig, als von einem fremden Manne rede." (*Gedichte*, 1: 9) Yes, Bürger was speaking of himself "as if he were speaking of a stranger," precisely because in the effort to establish his public persona, he could not reveal much about Bürger the person.

Bürger's aesthetic was not based upon the sublime, but upon an aesthetics localized in the lived body, whence it might manifest itself as the beautiful, the ordinary, the grotesque or even the ugly. Furthermore, the bodies which now appeared in the texts were those of the "Volk" as common people, those who were neither aristocrats nor members of the middle classes, but lived at the bottom and on the margins of eighteenth-century society. In the extended discussion of the contribution which Bürger made to German literature by re-invigorating the ballad as a genre, this dimension has generally been overlooked. Yet it is important. Bürger's insertion of the embodied experience of marginalized members of society represented a politics and poetics of transgression. In Bürger it is possible to observe the dissolution of the bond between the subjected bourgeois body and literary textualization.

The three elements which repeatedly returned Bürger to the lived body as the locus of production, both of texts and of history, were poverty, sickness, and sexuality. There can be no doubt that a man who, until his death, was continually struggling to make ends meet, to be able to buy food and keep a roof over his head, was aware of corporeal existence most directly. The body could not be kept at a distance by theorizing or idealizing under such dire conditions. Illness, exacerbated by poor diet and overwork, was also a constant in Bürger's life, as his letters frequently testify. For example, he wrote to his publisher Dieterich on March 5, 1781:

Stelle dir den Jammer vor! Alle von Iten Januar 1748 an begangene Sünden meines Madensacks brachen in einem ganz infamen Geschwür gerade über der Pulsader meiner rechten Hand hervor. In kurzem waren meine Hand und Arm so dick, wie mein Lende, und ich konte die Hand nicht so viel rühren, um nur einen Buchstaben zu machen. Vorige Woche war die ärgste Marter Woche meines Lebens, das Geschwür ist endlich aufgegangen und bald wird der Schade wieder heil seyn.¹⁹

From a psychoanalytic/psychosomatic perspective, the imagery with which Bürger describes his illness and the recovery is revealing. Like a fleshly text, one limb has swollen with the memory of the sins of the entire body, thereby blocking any writing, any confessional re-textualization. The opening of the boil in turn enables him to write again, so that the body publishes, as it were, its agonized history. Numerous

equally graphic passages about the state of the physical body could be quoted from the letters, indicating Bürger's ongoing concern with his physical being. What is striking is Bürger's continued effort to give voice to the body, including genital and scatological aspects, in written texts. The semi-public forum of the letters allowed more freedom than the published literary works, yet Bürger also made some extraordinary efforts at the integration of body and text.

In the poetry intended for publication, Bürger could hardly express the pains and needs of the body explicitly or directly. The body's actual history could in most cases only be made public through allegories and discrete allusions. In the process of textualizing what the body knew, Bürger often could not speak in the first person, for the market constituted by eighteenth-century middle class readers would not have paid for the reports of the life of a nobody. Just tolerable for the conventionalized taste was a poem such as "Zum Spatz," which picked up on the topos of the caged bird as metonym for the constrained poet. Worth noting in this text are the contorted stance of the speaker and the intensity of the inscribed violence. How power moves with social roles is indicated by the shifting voices. Initially, it is difficult to decide whether the speaker is foe or friend:

Ich sein Despot und Er mein Sklav!
Bei seinem Spatzvolk!

Later, the speaker shifts vantage points from that of the sparrow to that of the ruler, underscoring the moment of power in the relationship (*Gedichte*, 1: 225). Are humanity or servility responsible for the bird's freedom? Given that the bird represents the situation of a writer, when the speaker is also a writer, matters become complicated. The poem does not remain on the level of idealized relationships, but instead foregrounds the implications of arbitrary despotism for the writer as a human being. The verbalized threat depicts the violence that might be done to the body of the bird, or the speaker-writer:

Hör er nun,
Was all mit ihm ich könnte thun.
Ihn zupfen, rupfen, halsumdrehn—
Da wird nicht Hund noch Hahn nach krähn,
Zerschlagen ihn mit einem Hieb,
Und das mit Recht, Er Galgendieb.

(*Gedichte*, 1: 225)

These images have been projected by the body as its anxiety about the government which reigns by using force, torture, and the threat of force.

We recognize in the cavalier mistreatment of the helpless bird the disciplining of the body meted out by eighteenth-century rulers against writers such as Schubart who did not strike the proper note.²⁰ Bürger dare not say, perhaps could not bring to the level of words, that he felt the rule of society and law working him over thusly.

Not only formal political institutions operated as constraints upon the body and upon texts. Comportment of the body was also regulated by the imposition of courtly style upon posture. The allegorical poem "Mamselle La Regle" identifies the regulation of the literary text with a social discipline of the body. The personified "rule of style" links the postures of the text and of the body. Both are subject to the control of convention:

'Fein gerade!
Hübsch Füßchen aus, und einwärts hübsch die Wade!
Den Rücken schlank! Fein Hals und Kopf empor!
Zurück die Schulter! Bauch ein! Brust hervor!
(*Gedichte*, 1: 226)

The German-speaking reader will hear in these instructions overtones of the military as well as of the schools, for both were also institutions by which the absolutist state inscribed correct mental and physical attitudes upon subjects.²¹ A parallel passage displaying the similar conjunction of forces actually at work is found in act 1, scene 4 of Lenz's *Der Hofmeister* (1774) where the Major is beating posture into his son.²² The Major reads the son's slouch as a text of disobedience: therefore the body must be corrected according to the edicts of authority.

Although an interaction between texts and bodies was possible, there could be no dialogue between the government and the subject about the latter's position. Instructions about whether to speak or be silent, whether to stand straight or kneel came from one direction – above. Only in the guise of fiction could the subject respond, challenging authority by reminding its spokesmen of their own embodiedness, their carnality and mortality. Bürger's poem "Frau Schnips" is a witty example of this tactic. The dead woman responds at the entrance to heaven to charges that her sins of the flesh should preclude her being admitted. Citing the Bible in rebuttal, she points out that every kind of sin has already been recorded in Scripture. Although they might now be angelic, the denizens of heaven were once beings in human bodies. The consequences of embodiedness began with Adam:

Ei, zupfte sich Herr Erdenkloß
Doch nur an eigner Nase!
Denn was man ist, das ist man bloß

Von seinem Apfelfraße.
(*Gedichte*, 1: 182)

The label “clod of earth” is less rude than it is etymologically correct, for Adam’s name refers back to his creation from the dust and underscores his material existence. Since the Fall, no one has been able to avoid being born on earth or managed to evade the body. The poem dismantles the illusion of transcendental existence. One after another, biblical figures are confronted with the argument that while she may be no better than those who have already been saved, Frau Schnips has been no worse. Even a king such as Solomon had something to confess:

Sieb’n hunder Weiber auf der Streu,
Und extra noch darneben
Drei hundert— —Andre! Meiner Treu!
Das war ein züchtig Leben!
(*Gedichte*, 1: 184)

Of course, she wins in the end. Despite its allegorical framework and the fact that Bürger had in the main taken the story from the English ballad “The wanton wife of Bath,” he had great difficulty in getting it published because of the threat of censorship. Goeckingk, the editor of the *Musen Almanach*, found it unsuitable for polite mixed company.²³ Beyond the taint of blasphemy, the poem offended against the social order which regulated matters of sex and sensuality. Even Bürger’s appended apology in which he reminded readers that the messages were already in the Bible did not mollify readers such as Goethe or Schiller.

Two other short texts manifest a similar projection from the body through the imagination against those in power. “Der Bauer an seinen Fürsten,” one of the most astounding political poems in German from the eighteenth century, develops its arguments on the basis of the body’s rebellion.²⁴ As in “Frau Schnips,” the rhetorical strategy is to remind those in power that on the plane of embodiment they are no better than other human beings:

Wer bist du Fürst, daß in mein Fleisch
Dein Freund, dein Jagdhund, ungebläut
Darf Klau’ und Rachen haun?
(*Gedichte*, 1: 55-56)

The poem is a more acute version of “Frau Schnips.” Now the speaker is alive and the opponent is an eighteenth-century European ruler. The strategy of the argument again draws upon Scripture by reminding the nobleman that everyone was born to labor after the Fall, earning bread with the body’s sweat: “Mein, mein ist Fleiß und Brot!” (*Gedichte*, 1:

55–56) The despotic state, where many work and a few play, is seen as a violation of the divine economy. Not idealized principles of liberty or the desire to participate in a heroic, scripted history lead to revolt; only the “too much!” of an exhausted, tortured body leads to this articulation of self-awareness.²⁵

What is striking is the fact that the peasant here gives voice to his own feelings, disrupting the prevalent social illusion that only the upper classes could have emotions worth knowing. Bürger has assigned to the peasant the role of advocate for embodied passions and interests.²⁶ The laboring body has become aware of its subjectivity and is now able to articulate the sentiments which are grounded in physical experience. Again, the stance of the speaker is worth noting: a peasant known only through the title speaks directly to the Prince, without using the shielding honorific “Sie.” The “Du” is not the companionable “Du” of a Goethe addressing Duke Karl August as social or intellectual equal, but is an accusatory definition of the Other whose presence excludes and yet establishes the Self. The renaming of the Prince as Tyrant is the moment when the speaking Self translates the body’s knowledge of hunger, weariness and fear into the language of the body politic.

The short prose text “Der Maulwurf und der Gärtner” is a remarkable political fable. The conflict is between a mole, who has been digging up the flowers, and an infuriated gardener who threatens to kill the animal. The mole is an archetypal representative of “those who are below.”²⁷ In this instance, the harmless creature tries to defend itself by pointing to its usefulness in the economic sphere:

‘Gnade!’ flehte der Maulwurf, ‘da ich dir doch sonst nicht unnütz bin.
Ich vertilge die Regenmaden und manches Ungeziefer, das seine
Pflanzungen verwüestet.’ (*Gedichte*, 1: 240)

The gardener refuses to listen and replies with brute force:

‘Hole dich der Henker,’ versetzte der Gärtner, ‘wenn du Tugend mit
Untugend aufwiegst!’ und schlug ihn ohne weitem Prozeß tot.
(*Gedichte*, 1: 240)

So much, then for the possibility of a discourse of reason between those from below and those who wield power and control the economic order. The mole, whose mere effort to stay alive has disturbed the calm surface of things, is dispatched without further ado. Like the caged sparrow or the peasant, the mole represents what could happen in the eighteenth century to those who refused to let themselves be blended into the background as part of “the natural order.” By speaking, by giving voice to

their sufferings, these beings insisted upon the difference between bodies with consciousness and mute objects.

Given that the fable of the mole represented accurately the realities of the distribution of power in eighteenth-century German society, the question that remains is why Bürger failed to conform. Why did he not keep silent? Goethe was correct in his cynical diagnosis of Bürger's lapses when he wrote to him suggesting that Bürger was inherently disposed to dissatisfaction with bourgeois society.²⁸ If good behavior and polite silence had simply been a question of acceding to external social pressure, then perhaps Bürger might have been able to conform. The roots of his resistance, however, were inextricably bound up with the sexual dimension of physical being. The texts in which Bürger deliberately spoke of topics such as male and female anatomy, intercourse or sexual desire have earned him enduring opprobrium. Little is gained by labeling such elements of Bürger's work "pornographic" or "obscene." They were evidently intended by him as subversions of the controls imposed by genre and censorship that excluded physical being from textualization. In one of the few articles dealing with Bürger from this perspective, Alfons Höger has shown how Bürger subverted the traditions of the "Anacreontic" love-lyric, which had been imitated from the French courtly tradition, by inserting a body-based sensuality into chaste texts.²⁹

In many of his published love lyrics, Bürger veered towards an explicit physical dimension. In "Stutzertändelei," the exchange between Cupid and the woman leads towards a suggestive conclusion. Cupid is to transform himself into a fly and explore the hidden recesses of the female body:

Dort gleite durch die Falte,
Im zarten Musselin,
Bis zu dem tiefen Spalte
Des warmen Busens hin.

(*Gedichte*, 1: 28)

Slightly more risqué was "Collin und Juliette," in which the prohibition against speaking openly about sexual matters becomes the point of the wit. The teasing refrain "Ich wag es nicht zu sagen,/ Und etwas andres noch/ Wer wird nach allem fragen?" (*Gedichte*, 2: 163) has increasingly explicit connotations as it mocks the pretenses of bowdlerized pastoral poetry. Here Bürger went too far; the poem was not published in Germany until 1905.

In other texts, Bürger mocked the polite discourse of ideal bodies. One, a parodistic parallel to "Das Mädchen, das ich meine" enumerated parts of the male anatomy in gross detail:

Wer hat die Arsback ausgestöpft,
 Die sich so prall' anfühlt und klopft? –
 Der große Satler hats gethan,
 Der Pferdelden polstern kan;
 Der hat die Arsback ausgestöpft,
 Die sich so prall' anfühlt und klopft.

(*Gedichte*, 2: 248)

Editors who might hope to ban the text from Bürger's works are hindered by the fact that he sent a copy to Dieterich, so that the authorship is clear.³⁰ Whether he also wrote "An die Feinde des Priaps" is more circumstantial, but nonetheless convincing. Apparently it was his contribution to a small competition with Johann Heinrich Voß, who provided "An Priap" and Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg, who offered "Wahl meiner künftigen Gattin und ihre Eigenschaften." All three texts are patently obscene in the sense that they challenge the normative aesthetic of the period. Bürger's ode to the penis is a ribald exercise in saying the unspeakable. The disembodied figures of classical mythology are satirically shown draped in bodies whose grotesqueness undermines their function in the German Klassik:

Charon, beim Überfahren,
 Fuchst alles rauch von Haaren,
 Schont auch die Votzen nicht;
 Pluto fuchst Proserpinen,
 Und Luchse fuchst Luchsinnen,
 Warum denn Menschen nicht?³¹

Given the idealized aesthetics of eighteenth-century Germany, such bawdy texts could only circulate in manuscript. Only the regulated vision of the male, bodied as empowered and noble, might be displayed publicly. The guise of polite display, however, did permit at least a utopian projection of an unabashed body to be shown and sustained, even if the foundations of physical being had to remain veiled. The possibility, however circumspectly uttered and carefully guarded, that one day he too might incorporate such an ideal was one source of Bürger's defiance. Although Bürger's vision of the emancipated male body may strike us today as itself repressive of other bodies, its revolutionary impact for the eighteenth century should not be denied. The radical implications of developing the body in public would return, elaborately, in the gymnastics movement in the German states of the early nineteenth century.³²

Bürger neither politically nor personally achieved in his lifetime the ideal of a body able to move and desire freely. The discrepancy between the powerlessness and immobility of a political subject and the aspirations of the lived body to be free and to move, to eat and drink, and to

satisfy sexual desire, perforce led to crises, of which the French Revolution was not the least. What is clear is that Bürger saw the progress of political history as a combination of republican ideology with the materiality of embodied experience.

The economy linking the body of the state with human bodies was most boldly discussed by Bürger in an essay on “Die Republik England,” which appeared anonymously in the spring of 1793 in the Berlin *Politische Annalen*. The anonymity was prudent, given the political tensions at the time. The reference to the English Revolution was, as Wolfgang Friedrich has noted, a common device used by Germans for talking about their own political situation in the 1790s.³³ The essay displays Bürger’s conviction that history had to be analyzed in material terms, based on the body as well as on ideology. He focused upon events in Ireland even though they were not central to the English Revolution, for there extremes of violence had paved the way to Revolution. Aware of the possible objections against the description of such matters, he underscored the importance of negative examples for the cause of the Enlightenment generally.³⁴ The suffering caused by the text will serve as a warning, “die Guten zu warnen, und die Bösen wo möglich zu schrecken” (*Werke*, 4: 20). Having forewarned readers, Bürger presents a tableau of all the terror that could be unleashed in the eighteenth century against the frail body. Great depths of anger and anguish must have been distilled by him into this passage. It can stand beside the opening of Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* for the shock it delivers in foregrounding the physical dimension of history, as the following longer quotation conveys:

Einige wurden am ganzen Leibe zerfleischt an Tuchrahmhaken aufgehänget; Einige mit Stricken um den Hals über Stock und Stein, durch Morast und Pfützen zu Tode geschleift; Einige bei den Armen aufgehänget, und alsdann zerschnitten und zerfetzt, um zu sehen, wie viele Wunden ein Engländer ertragen könnte. Manche wurden lebendig aufgeschnitten, so daß die Eingeweide auf ihre Füße herab rollten. Alle diese Grausamkeiten wurden an Kindern von jedem Alter verübt, und manche Schwängern erfuhren ein gleiches Schicksal. (*Werke*, 4: 21)

As the catalog of horrors unfolds, a revulsion takes hold against any abstract ideology which could have driven such deeds. Bürger stresses that it is matter as such which was the target of religious fanaticism: horses and livestock were also tortured and killed. The dreaded enemy of the idea was the body. Once Bürger chronicles this slaughter, all the subsequent events of the Civil War could be explained. Not least, the execution of the King seems to be only mild, almost clinical retribution: “Sein unglückliches Haupt fiel am 30. Januar, 1649, unter dem Beile des obersten Volksgerichtes” (*Werke*, 4: 4). The understatement is striking,

especially in light of the execution of Louis XVI in 1793. Regicide is presented as at worst a small crime when contrasted with the immense suffering undergone by so many victims of despotism. The economy of the text reflects the distribution of poetic justice. Readers hardly twitch at the report of the King's death, but are moved by the fate of the otherwise nameless people.³⁵ The monarch's demise comes at the beginning of the essay, demonstrating that the narration of history will continue without him and that in the republic the bodies of the commoners will become central.

To what extent was Bürger aware of the political ramifications of a body-centered discourse? While much of what he wrote was a primary response to his own situation, emanating from the consciousness of the weak outsider, confined to the lower rungs of the social ladder, he also reflected upon the production of history by bodies and texts. It would be a mistake to misread as a betrayal of the body his exhortation that students at German universities should study rhetoric: "Wenn wir Slaven sind, so sind wir's wahrlich nicht durch jene Stein-, Eisen-, Blei- und Fleischmassen der Tyrannen, denen wir nicht ähnliche Massen entgegen zu stellen haben; sondern darum sind wir's weil wir die kraftthat- und siegreichsten Künste des Geistes, die Künste, zu reden und zu schreiben, vernachlässigen. Die Körper herrschen nicht über die Geister; sondern die Geister herrschen über die Körper. Und was sind die Evolutionen der Körper gegen die Evolutionen der Geister?" (*Werke*, 3: 405–6)

Without context, this could be construed as yet another affirmation of hopeful idealism. But against the background of Bürger's voicing of the body, the important point is that a disembodied rhetoric is empty. Writing and speaking in public presupposes that citizens would already be employing their organs in the interests of emancipation. Bürger was saying no more than that the instruments available to the state—the arms and tools of the body politic—could not prevail against subjects who had learned to move about freely.

NOTES

- 1 Nothing approximating a complete list of relevant works is possible in a footnote. Major points of triangulation are provided by Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979); Dorinda Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class and Political Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989); Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking*

- ing of the World (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); and John O'Neill, *Five Bodies: The Human Shape of Modern Society* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985). On the medical discourse, see François Duchesneau, *La physiologie des lumières: empirisme, modèles et théories* (The Hague/ Boston/ London: Nijhoff, 1982).
- 2 From the perspective of a participant, see the account by Dennis Barrie, "The Scene of the Crime," *Art Journal* 50 (1991): 29-32.
 - 3 The German discussion, primarily in connection with the eighteenth century, may be charted via Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Theatre and the Civilizing Process: An Approach to the History of Acting," in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, ed. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 19-36; Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, "'Mens Sana' und 'Körperloses Spiel'/'Sinnloses Treten' und 'In Corpore Sano'," *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 92 (December 1984): 262-78; Utz Jaeggle, "Im Schatten des Körpers: Vorüberlegungen zu einer Volkskunde der Körperlichkeit," *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 76 (1980): 169-88; Wolfgang Kemp, "Die Beredsamkeit des Leibes: Körpersprache als künstlerisches und gesellschaftliches Problem der bürgerlichen Emanzipation," *Städte-Jahrbuch NF* 5 (1975): 111-34; and Gert Mattenklott, "Körperpolitik oder das Schwinden der Sinne," in *"Postmoderne" oder Der Kampf um die Zukunft: Die Kontroverse in Wissenschaft, Kunst und Gesellschaft*, ed. Peter Kemper (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1988), 231-52.
 - 4 On unwed mothers and infanticide as a theme in German literature of the time, see Hamilton Beck, "Of Two Minds About the Death Penalty: Hippel's Account of a Case of Infanticide," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 18 (1988): 123-40 and Helga Stipa Madland, "Infanticide as Fiction: Goethe's *Urfaust* and Schiller's 'Kindsmörderin' as Models," *The German Quarterly* 62 (1989): 27-38. For a socio-historical perspective, see David Sabeau, "Unehe-lichkeit: Ein Aspekt sozialer Reproduktion kleinbäuerlicher Produzenten: Zu einer Analyse dörflicher Quellen um 1800," in *Klassen und Kultur: Sozialanthropologische Perspektiven in der Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Robert M. Berdahl et. al. (Frankfurt a. M.: Syndikat, 1982), 54-76. An overview of the theory of practical Enlightenment by the state is provided in Marc Raeff's *The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change through Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600-1800* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1983), 43-179.
 - 5 On the background to the German concept of "Klassik," see Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand, eds., *Die Klassik-Legende* (Frankfurt a. M.: Athenäum, 1971), and in particular Max L. Baeumer's essay "Der Begriff 'klassisch' bei Goethe und Schiller," 17-49.
 - 6 A major critique of the absence of the body in idealist German philosophy has been made by Peter Sloterdijk, *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1983).
 - 7 My analysis here has been stimulated by, but does not exhaust, the study of

- Winkelmann's reception in France by Alex Potts, "Beautiful Bodies and Dying Heroes: Images of Ideal Manhood in the French Revolution," *History Workshop*, 30 (Autumn 1990): 1–21.
- 8 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, "Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst," in his *Kleine Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Hermann Uhde-Bernays (Leipzig: Insel, 1925), 1:66.
- 9 I am presuming upon the analysis of David E. Wellbery's *Lessing's 'Laocoon': Semiotics and Aesthetics in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), without suggesting that he would be in agreement with the direction of my argument.
- 10 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "Laocoon," *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Wolfgang Stammer (München: Carl Hanser, [1950]), 3:7. Citations will appear hereafter in the text.
- 11 Jutta von Simson, "Wie man die Helden anzog: Ein Beitrag zum 'Kostümstreit' im späten 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft* 43 (1989): 47–63.
- 12 I rely for the facts about the paintings upon Frederick N. Bohrer, "Public virtue and private terror: A two-sided oil sketch by Henry Fuseli," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 53 (1990): 89–106. Bohrer is not responsible for my political reading.
- 13 See the reclamation of Bürger for the canon by Gert Ueding, "Von der unheilbaren Liebe als Stimulans der Poesie: Der Dichter Gottfried August Bürger," in his *Die anderen Klassiker: Literarische Porträts aus zwei Jahrhunderten* (München: C. H. Beck, 1986), 13–34; and Lore Kaim-Kloock, *Gottfried August Bürger: Zum Problem der Volkstümlichkeit in der Lyrik* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1963), 170–205. "Lenore" also had a considerable reception in England, as documented by Evelyn B. Jolles, *G. A. Bürgers Ballade "Lenore" in England* (Regensburg: Verlag Hans Carl, 1974).
- 14 Because the basic assumption is that Schiller must have been correct in his interpretation of Bürger, commentaries on the controversy tend to side with Schiller. See, for example, Walter Hinderer, "Schiller und Bürger: Die ästhetische Kontroverse als Paradigma," *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts* (1986): 130–54, and Helmut Koopmann, "Der Dichter als Kunstrichter: Zu Schillers Rezensionstrategie," *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 20 (1976): 243–44. Rather more open to Bürger's position is Jürgen Bolten, *Friedrich Schiller: Poesie, Reflexion und gesellschaftliche Selbstdeutung* (München: Fink, 1985), 195–201.
- 15 On Bürger's life, see Günter Häntzschel, *Gottfried August Bürger* (München: C. H. Beck, 1988); Gerhard Kluge, "Gottfried August Bürger," in *Deutsche Dichter des 18. Jahrhunderts: Ihr Leben und Werk*, ed. Benno von Wiese (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1977), 594–618; and Wm. A. Little, *Gottfried August Bürger* (New York: Twayne, 1974).
- 16 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden*, ed. Erich Trunz, vol. 12: *Schriften zur Kunst*, ed. Erich Trunz with Herbert von Einem (München: DTV, 1982), 531.

- 17 The gap was only partially filled with the appearance of the *Sämtliche Werke* (München: Hanser, 1987), edited by Günter and Hiltrud Häntzschel.
- 18 Johann Gottfried Bürger, *Bürgers Gedichte in zwei Teilen*, ed. Ernst Consensus (Berlin and Leipzig: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong & Co., [1914]), 1: 8–9. References to this edition will be made parenthetically as *Gedichte*, with volume and page numbers.
- 19 Gottfried August Bürger, *Mein Scharmantes Geldmännchen: Gottfried August Bürgers Briefwechsel mit seinem Verleger Dieterich*, ed. Ulrich Joost (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag, 1988), 78.
- 20 Duke Carl Eugen of Württemberg had Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart (1739–1791) arrested in 1777 because of his political writings. After 377 days of solitary confinement, Schubart remained in prison without trial until 1778.
- 21 For an introduction to this complex topic, see Georges Vigarello, “The Upward Training of the Body from the Age of Chivalry to Courtly Chivalry,” in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michel Feher with Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi (New York: Zone, 1989), 2: 149–96; Bernd Jürgen Warncken, “Bürgerliche Emanzipation und aufrechter Gang: Zur Geschichte eines Haltungsideals,” *Das Argument* 179 (1990): 39–52; and Henning Eichberg, “Geometrie als barocke Verhaltensnorm: Fortifikation und Exerzitien,” *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 4 (1977): 17–50.
- 22 “Lippel! ich bitt Dich um tausend Gottes willen, den Kopf grad. Den Kopf in die Höhe, Junge! *richtet ihn* Tausend Sakkerment den Kopf aus den Schultern! oder ich zerbrech Dir Dein Rückenbein in tausendmillionen Stücken. . . . Ich will dich zu Tode hauen—*giebt ihm eine Ohrfeige* Schon wieder wie ein Fragezeichen? Er läßt sich nicht sagen.” Jacob Michael Reinhold Lenz, *Gesammelte Werke in vier Bänden*, ed. Richard Daunicht (München: Fink, 1967), 1: 46.
- 23 “Frau Schnips ist schlechterdings keine Gesellschaft für die Herren und Dämchen welche den Almanach lesen. . . . Ohn alles Bedenken aber laßt es in das Museum einrücken, denn dieses wird doch mehrenteils nur von Männern gelesen.” *Gedichte*, 2: 310.
- 24 Häntzschel, *Gottfried August Bürger*, 70–73; Little, *Gottfried August Bürger*, 72.
- 25 For the background to this process, see Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn: Geschichtliche Organisation der Arbeitsvermögen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Zweitausendeins, 1981).
- 26 On the passions and the interests, see Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); and Winfried Schulze, “Vom Gemeinnutz zum Eigennutz: Über den Normenwandel in der ständischen Gesellschaft der frühen Neuzeit,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 243 (1986): 591–626.
- 27 Karlheinz Stierle, “Der Maulwurf im Bildfeld,” in *Bewegung und Stillstand in Metaphern und Mythen: Fallstudien zum Verhältnis von elementarem Wissen und Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jürgen Link and Wulf Wülfing (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 121–41.

- 28 “Die Unzufriedenheit mit Ihrem Zustande, die Sie mir zu erkennen geben, scheint mir so sehr aus dem Verhältnis Ihres Innersten, Ihrer Talente, Begriffe und Wünsche, zu dem Zustande unserer bürgerlichen Verfassung, zu liegen, daß ich nicht glaube, es werde Sie die Veränderung des Ortes, außer einem geringen Mehr oder Weniger, jemals befriedigen können. . . . Tüchtige Kinder dieser eingeschränkten Erde, denen im Schweiß ihres Angesichts ihr Brot schmecken kann, sind allein gebaut, sich darin leidlich zu befinden, und nach ihren Fähigkeit und Tugenden das Gute und Ordentliche zu wirken.” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Werke*, Sophien-Ausgabe, Part 4: *Briefe*, vol. 5: *Weimar, 7. November 1780–30. Juni 1782* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1889), letter of February 2, 1782.
- 29 Alfons Höger, “‘Und etwas anders noch . . .’: Galanterie und Sinnlichkeit in den Gedichten G. A. Bürgers,” *Text und Kontext* 9 (1981): 250–70.
- 30 Bürger, *Mein Scharmanthes Geldmännchen*, 73, letter of July 20, 1780.
- 31 *Dein Leib ist mein Gedicht: Deutsche erotische Lyrik aus fünf Jahrhunderten*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Berné Münchené Wien: Rütten + Loening, 1970), 131.
- 32 Some of the later developments are sketched by Henning Eichberg, “Race-Track and Labyrinth: The Space of Physical Culture in Berlin,” *Journal of Sport History* 17 (1990): 245–60.
- 33 Wolfgang Friedrich, “Zu Gottfried August Bürgers Aufsatz ‘Die Republik England,’” *Weimarer Beiträge* 2 (1956): 220.
- 34 Gottfried August Bürger, *Sämtliche Werke* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1844); 4: 19–20, “Allein ein würdiger und großer Zweck gebeut ihr [der Geschichte], diesen allgemeinen zu flachen Umriß jener Mordscenen noch mit einigen Pinselstrichen zu erheben. Das Ungeheuer, welches solche Unthaten in Irland, wie inso vielen andern Ländern des Erdbodens gebar, ist heute noch keinesweges gänzlich vernichtet, sondern von der Fackel der Vernunft nur in das Dunkel seiner Höhle zurück gescheucht.” Quotations from this edition will be cited parenthetically as *Werke* with volume and page numbers.
- 35 A point missed by Little, *Gottfried August Bürger*, who saw in the essay “a bizarre and grotesque quality” and noted that “The trial and execution of Charles I are barely accorded a word . . . although the author lingers for eight pages over the atrocities committed at the massacre of the English colonists.” (204–5).