Dissolving Ornament: A Study of Bavarian Rocaille

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To my parents

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Abstract

This research centers on the architecture of eighteenth-century Augsburg rocaille ornamental engravings. The dissertation investigates the significance of rocaille and interprets the meaning of that ornament's fusion with architecture, the reasoning behind the architecture's blending with nature, and the importance of the engravings' theatricality. The analysis focuses on the Bavarian artist Johann Esaias Nilson, whose depictions speak effectively to these concerns. Key overall questions govern the inquiry. If architecture merges with ornament in these artworks, to what extent can that ornament still speak eloquently? How is one to understand an architecture that attempts to take on nature's attributes? What relation does one have with the theatrical spectacles represented?

Rocaille engravings demonstrate the first substantial instance in the western tradition of the dissolution of ornament's integral connection with architecture. The dependence upon rhetoric that ornament had treasured for centuries received its most comprehensive challenge in these works. Compounding this situation was the lack of any architectural treatise to assist in verbalizing rocaille's intentions. As a result, the interpretation of this phenomenon was left to the ensuing Enlightenment which unhesitatingly and meticulously condemned the prior era.

Despite the absence of words, however, rocaille was far from meaningless. It drew from long-standing traditions and paralleled theoretical discourses and writings of the time. Its natural components were awash with symbolic meanings, and its theatrical scenes engaged current theories of stage design. Its ornamental frames allowed for unprecedented interactions between the viewer and the picture. Through its repeated intermingling with elements of architecture, of nature, and of theater, rocaille evinced a continual desire to narrate its own story.

Résumé

Cette recherche considère les gravures ornementales de type rocaille dans l'architecture du dix-huitième siècle d'Augsbourg. Nous y examinons l'importance de la rocaille et interprétons les raisonnements qui sous-tendent le choix du mélange entre architecture, ornementation et nature, ainsi que l'importance de la théâtralisation de ces gravures. Les représentations de l'artiste bavarois Johann Esaias Nilson se prêtent particulièrement bien à une telle analyse. Des questions clés influencent cette enquête. Si dans ces œuvres d'art, architecture et ornement se mélangent, dans quelle mesure l'ornement peut-il continuer de communiquer avec éloquence? Comment peut-on comprendre une architecture qui tente de se rapprocher de la nature et ses attributs? Quelle relation le public peut-il avoir avec le spectacle théâtral représenté?

Les gravures de type rocaille représentent les premiers exemples notables de la séparation entre l'ornementation et l'architecture dans la tradition occidentale. Ces gravures ont mis en doute la dépendance sur la rhétorique que les ornements ont manifestée pendant des siècles. De plus, il n'y avait pas de traité d'architecture pour aider à verbaliser les intentions de la rocaille. Ainsi, l'interprétation de ce phénomène fut confiée au siècle des Lumières, qui, sans hésitation, condamna scrupuleusement l'époque passée.

Toutefois, malgré son absence de mots, la rocaille était loin d'être dénué de sens. En effet, elle s'inspirait de traditions de longue date et faisait écho aux discours théoriques de son époque. Ses composantes naturelles étaient remplies de symboles, et ses scènes théâtrales s'inspiraient de théories de mise en scène de l'époque. Ses cadres ornementaux ont permis de connecter le spectateur avec l'image de manière innovante. En entremêlant des éléments

architecturaux, naturels et théâtraux, la rocaille a fait montre d’un désir profond de raconter sa propre histoire.

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Introduction

This research investigates the architecture represented in eighteenth-century Bavarian rocaille ornamental engravings. The thesis engages three principal areas regarding these engravings: first, the role of rocaille ornament and the meaning of its fusion with architecture; second, an understanding of nature's intermingling with architecture; and third, the theatricality of the works. The writing focuses on the engraver Johann Esaias Nilson, who, along with a few other artists investigated, speaks effectively to the concerns raised in the body of the study. Overall, three key questions will guide the exploration. If the representation of architecture merges with that of ornament, as it does in these engravings, to what extent can that ornament still speak eloquently, given ornament's longstanding association with eloquence in oration? How is one to understand an architecture that deliberately attempts to take on nature's attributes? What relation does the viewer now have with the theatrical spectacle represented?

Within the built environment of the recent past much attention has been given to the blurring of architectural elements with each other and with elements of nature. Floors that become walls that become ceilings becoming gardens are at the height of fashion. Such syntheses, however, albeit done with vastly different aims, were prefigured by ornamental developments in the eighteenth century. Studying the reasons behind and the consequences of these prior ambiguities can help us better understand the communicative significance of ornament in relation to contemporary architecture.

Rocaille engravings provide one with the most substantial basis for studying what eventually came to be called the rococo. Rocaille itself remains the key phenomenon. In contrast to the belief that the rococo represented an elegant and mirthful era of sumptuous

refinement, it may be contended that these rocaille engravings were more indicative of a fundamental tension and of an uneasiness within architecture as a whole. In accordance with that view I would like further to explore the suggestions of Hans Sedlmayr and Hermann Bauer that the rococo contained a destructive beauty.[1] The tenuous frames present in the engravings stood for more than playful period borders. Beyond being merely stylish art endeavors, as they have been described from the outset, rocaille architectural efforts demonstrated changing attitudes toward ornament, nature, and theater.

At rocaille's stated inception, the earliest example of such "morceaux de fantasie" or "morceaux de caprices," as they were called, can be seen in Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier's 1734 *Livre d'Ornemens*. Contemporaneously, Jacques de la Joue's books of cartouches and fantasies continued this new tradition. Later, beginning in 1736, Jean Mondon le fils introduced a series of markedly abstract constructions in his series of books of *formes rocailles*. These and many other French antecedents must accordingly be accounted for when turning to subsequent Bavarian rocaille. As to the nature of this influence, scholarship varies in its interpretations. Many commentators acknowledge French influences, yet describe the works as having been transformed to an unrecognizable degree and as having in Bavaria lost all French national characteristics. Others emphasize the stylistic and noticeably Germanic aspects of the southern German productions. Hermann Bauer in particular speaks to this interaction when he suggests that German rocaille should not be seen simply as a French import, for he interprets pre-1736 work in Bavaria as having "rocaille-like" tendencies.[2]

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[1] See *Encyclopedia of World Art* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), s.v. "Rococo," as well as Sedlmayr's discussion in his *Art in Crisis: The Lost Center* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1957), 197-98.
[2] See Hermann Bauer, *Rocaille: Zur Herkunft und zum Wesen eines Ornament-Motivs* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1962), 39. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

As rocaille creation developed, so too did the associated terminology. It is well known that the word *rococo* remains connected to *rocaille*.[3] *Rocaille* had been utilized for shell-work in grottoes and gardens since the seventeenth century. This way of working or *travail de rocaille* was understood as being equal to the working of the seashell: *travail de coquille*. From its inception this artistic mode was thought to be a remnant of Italian baroque continued in times of French classicism. This is how the ending *–oco* came into use – as an analogy to the Italian word for baroque: *barocco*. Yet while the word *rocaille* had been employed since 1736 to designate that particular kind of ornament, the term *rococo* made its dictionary debut over a century later, in the 1842 supplement to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*. It was there represented as constituting a genre of ornaments, style, and design associated with the reign of Louis XV and that of early Louis XVI:

> Il se dit trivialement Du genre d'ornements, de style et de dessin, qui appartient a l'école du règne de Louis XV et du commencement de Louis XVI. *Le genre rococo a suivi et précedé le pompadour, qui n'est lui-même qu'une nuance du rococo. Le rococo de l'architecte Opdenoord.* ‖ Il se dit, en général, de Tout ce qui est vieux et hors de mode, dans les arts, la littérature, le costume, les manières, etc. *Aimer le rococo. Tomber dans le rococo. Cela est bien rococo.*[4]

The second definition within the entry, which implies a falling out of fashion and a descent into the realm of bad taste, got itself elaborated upon by a plethora of critics. Stendhal, for example, in his 1828 tour book, *A Roman Journal*, describes a visit to the Vatican in which the works of a thousand years of great Roman architects had presented themselves to the author. One individual architect, Bernini, was drawn from the group as a man "who in all fields was the precursor of decadence."[5] Stendhal continues: "May I whisper an aside? Bernini was the father

[3] See again Hans Sedlmayr's and Hermann Bauer's entry in *Encyclopedia of World Art*, s.v. "Rococo." My remarks in this section are indebted to their work.
[4] *Complément du Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1842), 1058.
[5] Stendhal, *A Roman Journal*, ed. and trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Orion Press, 1957), 117.

of the bad taste designated in the studios by the somewhat vulgar name of *rococo*."[6] This equation of the rococo with Bernini and the baroque epitomized the long-standing and still present criticism of the period.

While the word *rocaille* was first used, when speaking of ornamental engravings, to describe the work of Meissonnier, the term's earliest appearance as an artist's description of his own work was in Mondon le fils' *Premier Livre de Formes Rocailles et Cartels Ornés de Figures de Mode*.[7] With the word *rococo* still being more than a century away from lexicographical usage, it was *rocaille* that remained at the heart of people's understandings of the architecture of the time, and thus the term *rocaille* that was to be used in *rococo*'s stead. Hermann Bauer, whose previously mentioned 1955 doctoral thesis remains to this day the primary inquiry into the subject, referred suggestively to rocaille as the "critical form" of the rococo.[8] His acknowledgment of the primacy of rocaille moves the discourse in the right direction: away from the *rococo*.

To pursue that pathway, this research will analyze how ornament, nature, and theater are involved in the Bavarian depictions of rocaille architecture. First among the stated concerns within the works remains the explicit blending of rocaille ornament with architecture. Ornament, once considered to be in the upper echelon of beauty within architecture, was here to take on architecture as its subject matter. At stake was nothing more than the long-standing tradition of ornament's capacity to speak to a populace. Ever since Vitruvius's account of decor, architectural ornament has presupposed a fitting, suited, and appropriate form of respect for

[6] Ibid.
[7] For the former, see the advertisement in *Mercure de France* (March/April 1734), 558. For the latter, see Jean Mondon le fils, *Premier Livre de Formes Rocailles et Cartels Ornés de Figures de Mode* (Paris, 1736).
[8] The thesis was published later in 1962. See Bauer, *Rocaille*, 21.

conventions or principles. In his *De architectura*, Vitruvius could be seen to be setting the stage for an understanding of *ornamenta* as a likeness, and it shared much of the same ground with rhetorical decorum. In the preface to Book Nine of his treatise, Vitruvius speaks of depending, with respect to rhetoric, on Cicero. For Cicero, the ornament of speech was of prime importance in oratory. When Cicero would introduce "the man of perfect eloquence," he directly stated that the orator's function was nothing other than to speak ornately.[9] Man's dignity could even be embellished by his own house, the house becoming a metaphorical ornament to human conduct.[10] By extension, Renaissance theorists such as Leon Battista Alberti were to incorporate these understandings and to interpret the architect's function as being "to build ornately." This tradition of perceiving architectural ornament as having its foundation in rhetoric would extend well into the eighteenth century.

Second among the subjects in the engravings is the confusion of nature with architecture. The conception of nature used here relies on two main understandings of the term prevalent in the eighteenth century: that of a creative and regulative power conceived of as presiding over the material world and that of the phenomena within that world, such as plants and animals, which are neither human nor created by humans. Rocaille engravings honored the richness and variety of such nature and often challenged the categorical boundaries of one element from another. Acanthus leaves, rocks, and shells intermingled with balconies, pillars and archways to such an extent that the identification of any one particular type became problematic. Rather than present a hierarchy of importance of parts, all portions of a depiction clamored equally for the viewer's

[9] "*Disputandi ratio et loquendi dialecticorum sit, oratorum autem dicendi et ornandi*." See Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Brutus; Orator*, trans. G. L. Hendrickson and H. M. Hubbell (London: William Heinemann, 1939), 32.113.
[10] "*Ornanda enim est dignitas domo*." See Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 1.39.139.

attention. Distinctions between *artificialia* and *naturalia* were subverted, presenting a problem for the Aristotelian view that things existed either by nature or by craft, but not by both. For authors Daston and Park it is the significance of the concept of wonder and of the interplay between art and nature that gets emphasized in this period. In reference to the *Wunderkammern* of early modern Europe they ask: "Could art, should art aspire to outdo nature?"[11] Indeed, the visual profusion of natural elements defied close contemplative scrutiny and promoted something more akin to marveling. Was rocaille architecture here attempting to re-create nature in the tradition of the alchemist? Or was nature, with her creative powers, becoming the genius-like author of the works, capable of turning rocaille ornament into stones, water, trees or any other natural entity?

It has been suggested that the stylistic origins of rocaille lie in the grotesque.[12] One must keep in mind, however, that the insistence on hybrids of natural elements in both rocaille and the grotesque marks both realms more deeply than any visual continuity between the two. More significant to my research here is the connection between rocaille and the grotto. As a site of tremendous hybridity of nature and architecture, the grotto had strong historical associations with rocaille. An earlier artist such as Bernard Palissy remains important to understanding this concept of nature and architecture's mutual growth.[13] Central to that French artist's account of his grotto work was the naturalistic quality of the sculpted and enameled animals. They should remain "so close to nature as to be impossible to tell them apart" the author tells us.[14] This delight in the confusion between the natural and the man-made would return in rocaille work.

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[11] See Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 262.
[12] Hermann Bauer, Fiske Kimball, and Ulrich Schütte, for example, clearly enunciate this connection.
[13] The German verb *verwachsen* gets closer to the meaning of this merger than *growing together*.
[14] "… si près du naturel, qu'il est impossible de le racompter…" in Bernard Palissy, *Les Oeuvres de Bernard Palissy*, ed. Anatole France (Paris: Charavay Frères, 1880), 469.

Among the key motifs used in these transformations of rocaille were the seashell and the miraculously begotten pearl within. Peter Hawel has appropriately named the shell with its pearl, along with the acanthus leaf, as the most important ornaments of the rococo.[15] Regarding such adornments one can ask: To what extent is architectural rocaille attempting to approach actual nature?

Third among these topics is the theatrical nature of the engravings. Often mentioned are the associations between rocaille and Italian baroque theater, particularly the theatricality of Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Bernini's sacred theater, which engaged the interplay between reality and theatrical fiction, gets transcended in rocaille engravings through the idea of a "play within a play."[16] Numerous examples of scenes within scenes, related to and yet distinct from each other, are to be found in rocaille. In relation to perspective, a connection can also be established between rocaille and Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena's use of the "scena per angolo" as put forth in his treatise *L'architettura civile* of 1711. As the high central vanishing point of earlier times gave way to several low points occurring off stage, spectators became physically mobile in the search for understanding their connection to the scenes before them. Most relevant to making out that link was the role of the frame in rocaille works. This dissertation will conclude with an interpretation of the nature of those dissolving frames.

[15] See his *Der spätbarocke Kirchenbau und seine theologische Bedeutung: Ein Beitrag zur Ikonologie der christlichen Sakralarchitektur* (Würzburg: Echter, 1987).
[16] See Karsten Harries, *The Bavarian Rococo Church: Between Faith and Aestheticism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 125.

1 *Concerning Rocaille*

Introduction

At the start of the investigation into prime interpretations of rocaille and of rocaille's relation to the rococo and to subsequent criticism there remains the question of the nationality of rocaille. The understanding that rocaille had its origins in France, moved to Germany, and was eventually to be found in countries worldwide is a standard one. As an artistic phenomenon, rocaille emerged in France during the early eighteenth century. In particular, Meissonnier's 1734 *Livre d'Ornemens* was the first work to introduce the rocaille fantasy or caprice engraving (fig. 1). This set of imaginative scenes set the thematic stage for all the rocaille engravings to come. Here architecture, nature, and ornament played off of one another in novel and theatrical ways. The date of the introduction of rocaille into Germany is not as clear, however. While one author suggested that a 1738 François de Cuvilliés publication marked the first entry, this date is problematic, for rocaille had appeared in architecture prior to then.[17] Although most accounts regarding nationality paint a picture of a straightforward stylistic progression, asking about the reasons why a country might import a particular artistic achievement gets one closer to the crux of the matter.

Central to the German development of rocaille was the city of Augsburg, a cultural center of Bavaria in the eighteenth century and the production site of the engravings here being discussed. Home to an extraordinary number of copper engravers and art publishers, the city was at that time in Germany unmatched in its creation of engravings. One native-born artist in

[17] Bauer, *Rocaille*, 39.

particular, Johann Esaias Nilson, remained the most influential of the engravers practicing there. His works constitute the majority of the engravings considered here and speak eloquently to the subject of ornament's dissolution.

These Bavarian engravings, however, although often accompanied by poems, did not grace any literary texts. From the mid-eighteenth century until today people have repeatedly noted that not a single treatise on rocaille is to be found. Books of ornament lacked introductions, art theorists avoided the subject, and discussion of rocaille would ultimately fall into the hands of Enlightenment critics. No formal theory of the genre exists, but many strands of thinking akin to rocaille clearly evidence themselves in theoretical discourses of the time. The birth of the term *aesthetics*, Haller's discovery of sensation via the nerves, the theory of moral sentiments, literary sensibility, and the emotional effect of aesthetic experience and of nature, for example, all contain elements germane to an understanding of rocaille. In addition, particular architectural treatises such as Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena's *L'architettura civile* contained approaches to drawing corresponding to those in rocaille.

In the analysis of rocaille and of the rococo in studies conducted in the two centuries preceding our own, three terms were frequently called upon: *style*, *form*, and *space*. These words, though, were all but absent from discussions contemporaneous to rocaille, and they present particular challenges to our understanding of the period. The somewhat still prevalent notion that the rococo speaks primarily of a pleasurable, graceful, and well powdered world further complicates the investigation. The relation between the terms *rocaille* and *rococo* also contributes to these obstacles. While the former was used in eighteenth-century writings about the engravings discussed in this thesis, the latter came about in the nineteenth century. Interestingly enough, in addition to *rocaille*, other early words and phrases such as *le goût*

moderne, *le goût de ce siècle*, *Felsenwerk*, *Grillenwerk* and *Muschelwerk* actually bring one closer to understanding the works than *rococo* does.

Recurrent in general scholarship concerning the rococo also is the notion that the movement constituted a historical end. Academic comments, discussed later in this chapter, referring to the silence of Bavaria, the last Western ornament, or the acknowledgment of a past sin allow one to see the period as a culmination point. Even the engravings of the time seemed to undo themselves and to become increasingly abstract as the decades strode by. On the heels of this ending were Enlightenment writers who sharply criticised the prior era. Their words met no theoretical resistance and remain what some have mistaken for the truest understanding of rocaille to date. Starting with those of Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein in 1746, the attacks were relentless. Monsters, disease, and evil plagued childish, unreasoned, and tasteless artists who produced an unnatural, disfigured, and foreign ornamental work. The subsequent century both continued this distain for rocaille and yet also provided for new-found moments of admiration. From Victor Hugo's remarks about vegetable fantasies to the Goncourt brothers' intrigue with grace and homophony, the century presented a complex scene worthy of its own compendium. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, and distant as it was from rocaille, the attacks had noticeably diminished in intensity.

National Considerations

Laying claim to or rejecting the possible national characteristics of rocaille preoccupied many a scholar of the eighteenth century. Such debates revolved predominantly around the extent to which rocaille could be considered French or German. Indeed, many a German Enlightenment thinker called for a rejection of what he considered a foreign cultural intrusion. More

contemporary writers, discussed in brief here, have interpreted the question of the nationality of rocaille with varying emphases. While differing in their specific interpretations, the majority of twentieth-century writers on the subject acknowledge that the phenomenon of rocaille began in France and continued in Germany. The specific perceived nature of that continuation varies from author to author. While Liselotte Andersen neutrally states that rocaille ornament reached Germany, Germain Bazin speaks of a transformation of the rococo, Peter Jessen suggests a change of characteristics when crossing borders, and Maria Lanckorońska views the change in terms of adoption. Adolf Feulner, however, questions the assumed national identity of the rococo. He asks if the rococo could stand on its own in old Bavaria or in Germany. Writing several decades after Feulner, Hermann Bauer emphasizes rocaille-like tendencies already present in Germany before the arrival of the Parisian engravings.

In her work *Barock und Rokoko*, Andersen acknowledges rocaille to be the ornament most characteristic of the rococo.[18] She views rococo decoration as having been adopted in southern Germany not only in interior decoration, as in France, but also in the decoration of façades, particularly window cartouches and entrance pediments. Art historian Germain Bazin takes the notion of adoption one step further. For him the German rococo remained the "apotheosis of the Baroque."[19] The main inclination of the rococo, realized in Germany as well as at Versailles, was toward a unification of the arts, their expressions and their aims. Bazin acknowledges French and Italian influences but sees them as being transformed to an unrecognizable state and as losing their national characteristics in Germany.[20] The life cycle

[18] Liselotte Andersen, *Baroque and Rococo Art*, trans. Barbara Berg (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1969).
[19] Germain Bazin, *Baroque and Rococo*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), 7-8.
[20] Michael Yonan would take this argument of transformation one step further and suggest, in a discussion of Bauer's work on rocaille, that the rococo as a French phenomenon would gradually transform into a pan-European condition. See his "The uncomfortable Frenchness of the German Rococo," in *Rococo*

metaphors continue with scholar Peter Jessen in his naming of Paris as "the cradle of that vivacious style."[21] And a specific origin point is never in doubt when critic Jessen refers to Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier as "the true inventor of that shell-work which has impressed itself upon the world as the leitmotiv of the Rococo."[22] For Jessen the rococo form "grew like a natural organism out of a uniform spirit."[23] In its leaving France, the author suggests, that form was to change characteristics, and the pulse of the work was to slow down. By the time this natural phenomenon reached Augsburg, only Nilson, an artist of "dainty fantasies," is considered noteworthy. Author Maria Lanckorońska takes a departure from the previous views when she remarks in her work on eighteenth-century book illustration that German illustrated books of the period should not be seen as a pure imitation of the French *livre à gravures*.[24] Actually, the foreign goods were at first adopted imitatively but very quickly given their own sensibility.

Art historian Adolf Feulner considers the question of the national characteristics of the Bavarian rococo to be paramount. Weaving through a discussion of architecture, sculpture and painting, Feulner investigates the rococo in Bavaria, a cultural phenomenon that he identifies as the high point of an artistic development taking place between 1730 and 1770. He recognizes that the critics of prior eras were quick to see rococo as a foreign intrusion into Germanic lands. Accordingly, his work is overshadowed by three distinct concerns. "Is the art of this area [Old Bavaria] an independent and unified whole, so that it can be removed from the larger context of German art without noticeable defects and can be considered on its own? Is the character of the

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Echo: Art, History and Historiography from Cochin to Coppola, ed. Melissa Lee Hyde and Katie Scott (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2014), 33-51.

[21] Peter Jessen, *Meister des Ornamentstichs: eine Auswahl aus vier Jahrhunderten*, vol. 3, *Das Rokoko im Ornamentstich* (Berlin: Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1922), Introduction.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Maria Lanckorońska, *Die Buchillustration des XVIII. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland, Österreich, und der Schweiz*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1932), 12.

German tribe also to be perceived in the visual arts, and is it still evident in the art of the eighteenth century, a time that lived on imports more than earlier periods and that took the suggestions of foreign art in more extensive quantity to make them its own? Can one describe baroque and rococo art as German and as Bavarian art despite the opinion of the last generation which saw each such art as a foreign body in German culture?"[25]

Yet perhaps the strongest challenge to the simple "birth in France and flowering and demise in Germany" model of understanding rocaille comes from Hermann Bauer. From the very start Bauer challenges art historian Fiske Kimball's definition of the rococo as a French style of decoration. Bauer notes that, although its formal beginnings occurred in France, it culminated in Germany, largely because of its entering the world of ecclesiastical architecture.[26] Widening the theory of the assimilation of French engravings, he points to two major beginnings of the rococo: the French tradition and the Italian illusionistic one. By 1745, Bauer points out, the *forme rocaille* in France had become insignificant. To be sure, ornament of this kind still existed, but not, according to him, in the sense of being able to influence style. At the same time, this genre came to fulfilment in other lands where it would far exceed the importance that it held in France. To this end, Bauer acknowledges a differing approach to rocaille from country to country. In England, he says, it was to mix oriental and gothic motifs and remain largely confined to the arts and crafts. In Italy it merged with a late baroque ornamentation, particularly in ceiling painting. In Germany, however, rocaille came into the power to transform all areas of art. It was there that one could best observe the extremes and also the potential possibilities of the style. Bauer accordingly warns us against understanding German rocaille as being imported solely from France. Attempts to reconstruct the evolution of rocaille in Germany should ideally

[25] Adolf Feulner, *Bayerisches Rokoko* (Munich: K. Wolff, 1923), 3.
[26] Bauer, *Rocaille*, 76.

begin, he argues, by proving that the ornamental style was present before 1736. However, that would be impossible. Instead, the author sees in pre-1736 German work a "rocaille-ähnlich," or "rocaille-like" tendency. He explains: "What one finds are clearly forms that have arisen with a parallel tendency to French ornamental development, or rocaille-like formations of bandwork, but no true rocaille."[27] In 1738 François de Cuvilliés published his first set of ornamental engravings. The author posits that *rocaille* first appeared in Germany with the introduction of this series by that Belgian-born, and French-trained artist and architect who had been residing in Germany.[28] Overall, Bauer sees the crucial act of the German rococo to be the transformation into real decoration of what the French had brought about only on paper. In a key description of how Bauer interprets rocaille presentation in southern Germany, that writer refers to the ceiling work at Amalienburg as "an inverted cartouche," saying that landscape elements emerge from this former cartouche so as to provide "a pictorial atmosphere."[29] As for the genesis of the *forme rocaille* in France, Bauer suggests that the work originated in a restructuring of the tradition of French grotesque ornaments. He notices that little attention has been paid to this structural change, largely due to the intangibility of conventional ornament terminology. According to Bauer, it is around the edges and frames of such grotesque ornaments, such as those of Jean Bérain, where the true scenes of the grotesque lie. Whereas the picture in the middle reproduces or portrays something, the frame-ornament stands as an object unto itself. Rocaille was to confuse this relation between picture and frame. At the forefront of this confusion remains the artist and engraver Johann Esaias Nilson, who is introduced in the following section of this thesis.

[27] Ibid., 39.
[28] This contention was later disputed by Karsten Harries. See Harries, *Bavarian Rococo Church,* 30.
[29] Bauer, *Rocaille,* 40.

If one were to view the rococo as a historical phenomenon which had its origins in Paris and then peregrinated to various countries, it would not be hard to agree with the majority of twentieth-century writers who suggest that this so-called style was born, flourished, and eventually died as it moved from land to land. This general conception, however, simply acknowledges style as an overriding concept and emphasizes the birthplace of such artistic endeavors along with their linear movement through time. Style gets seen as something which flows from country to country, changing here and there, but always remaining indebted to its perceived origin. Deemphasized in that conception is the nature of the dialogue between the traditions present and those interpreted from other lands. Unacknowledged as well is the fact that specific foreign conditions were often absorbed on account of very particular desires. Rocaille work is naturally not exclusive either to France or Germany, and it eventually resonated with developments in lands as disparate as Russia, Portugal, Bohemia, and Peru.[30] While it is true that in some cases the French engravings were copied in other countries, the prints also merged with those existing in the goldsmith trade, with engravings of religious and allegorical figures, and with prints destined for Hispanic lands. In the case of the German states, Parisian rocaille met with an already deeply established engraving industry.

Hermann Bauer's statement that there existed a rocaille-like tradition already present in German lands demands attention. Prints from earlier artists such as Lorenz Stöer, Christoph Jamnitzer, or Rütger Kassmann already suggest a tradition well versed in the fantastical side of ornament. Likewise, the late Renaissance in Germany was already steeped in imaginative ornamental interpretations of the seashell as an artistic element. Kassmann, by way of example,

[30] For current scholarship on the impact of rocaille in South America, for example, see Gauvin A. Bailey, *The Spiritual Rococo: Decor and Divinity from the Salons of Paris to the Missions of Patagonia* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014).

was an early seventeenth-century cabinet maker, engraver, and author of three books whose work held many similarities with rocaille. His third book in particular, *Architectur nach antiquitetischer Lehr und geometrischer Ausstheylung*, which consisted of two written introductory pages followed by a series of copperplate prints of geometries, column orders, and variegated architectural ornamentation, treats ornament in ways strikingly comparable to rocaille.[31] Plate 29, among others, in which scrollwork, conches, animal heads, and contorted faces blended together in a dense display of the fantastical, demonstrated his notable skill (fig. 2). Works such as these, created a century prior to those of Meissonnier, illustrate how German artists of the eighteenth century could have found a deep affinity between the Parisian inventions and their own traditions. Thus, even though German authors of the Age of Reason largely identified rocaille as French in taste, and later writers commonly looked to see the rococo as an imported style, the conversation between what came from within and what existed without carried greater weight.

Augsburg and Johann Esaias Nilson

In the wake of the Thirty Years War (1619-48) and of the Siege of Vienna (1683), architectural and artistic activity flourished in Bavaria. Monasteries and engravings alike were created with unprecedented energy. A sense of Catholic security against internal and external religious threats provided much of the foundation for this surge in creativity. Augsburg, a Free Imperial City since 1276, was a leading center of this cultural resurgence. By 1730, the city housed sixty-one copper engravers and twenty-three art publishers, with engravers being in high demand.

[31] Rütger Kassmann, *Architectur nach antiquitetischer Lehr und geometrischer Ausstheylung* (Cologne: Gerhard Altzenbach, 1630).

In the decades leading up to the time of rocaille work, however, instability had pervaded the Germanic lands. The early seventeenth century had witnessed the murder of Henry IV of France and thus the removal of a central stabilizing figure within Europe. On the whole, the Thirty Years' War took a profound toll on Europe. Its effect upon architecture and its related arts was particularly deep. At that time the German regions consisted of countless sovereign entities or *reichsfrei* territories. Only the largest of those states, including Bavaria, could continue to employ architects. The long-established tradition of guild journeymen wandering from town to town for work waned as the perils of travel and the strife between Catholics and Protestants grew more intense. Stucco-work, however, as a relatively new art, lay outside the regulations of local guilds.[32] This separation of crafts would become very significant to rocaille in the following century. Unlike the established guilds of masonry, sculpture, and painting, the stuccoer remained free to wander in search of work and thus also to avoid local taxes. With respect to rocaille, this placelessness would play an important role not merely in the ornament's dissemination, but also in its symbolic character.

Again, prior to the era of rocaille, political uncertainty reigned. While the Peace of Westphalia may have brought an end to the Thirty Years' War, it did little for the region's stability. The subsequent and fervent architectural activity did not mirror the political situation, for disunity continued to challenge German territories. In the secular realm, competitive desires among bishops and princes to equal the construction activities of Louis XIV set into motion extensive building production. In addition, the ensuing Catholic Restoration held architecture close to the core of its proselytizing agenda. The works of the Italians Borromini and Guarini

[32] It had been revived in direct connection with the discoveries of Roman frescos in Emperor Nero's *Domus Aurea*, or "Golden House."

were in general highly regarded. Due to the shortage of artists needed for reconstruction, many were invited from Italy.

Toward the close of the seventeenth century it came to pass that the Austrian monarchy gained a new foothold in Europe through the defeat of the Sultan's armies, and the end of the 1683 Siege of Vienna, to which German principalities had contributed, brought with it a greater sense of well-being.[33] Later, the 1714 Treaty of Rastatt ended the War of the Spanish Succession and ensured an even greater measure of peace. In consequence, by the start of the eighteenth century the architecture of Germany and Austria, and especially of Bavaria, began to flourish. Hundreds of monasteries, prospering in the wake of these religious wars, were built or reconstructed. Pilgrims, more free to travel from monastery to monastery now, boosted the interest in this revival. In Germany alone, some 230 churches were constructed from 1700 until the French Revolution of 1789-1799. Both churches and rural monasteries were mainly financed by the local inhabitants themselves.

In the realm of ornament prints, more engravings were created in the eighteenth century in Augsburg than in any other German city. In fact, Augsburg's fame in the printing industry had been cemented as early as the seventeenth century, during which time it became the chief city for Europe's engraving trade. Even population centers in France or England could not claim to have published more engravings. The inscription *Augusta Vindelicorum*, in reference to the city's Roman name, graced prints collected well beyond the borders of the German territories in places where ornamental and topographic prints were particularly sought after. In the eighteenth century many such prints got produced in close association with the goldsmith industry, and

[33] Bazin attributes the richness of ornamentation of the subsequent period to a symbolic glorification of Christian triumph. See his *Baroque and Rococo*, 225. At the same time, however, a deep passion for ornamentation has had a long and significant history in German lands.

initially a number of them were created as direct copies of French representations. Later, more religious and allegorical themes were generated in relation to plasterwork and painted decoration. The extensive number of prints produced in the middle of the century would suggest that they were to be exported, predominantly to Catholic colonies. The Hispanic market figured heavily in this dissemination. Yet toward the close of the century these ornamental prints became far fewer in number. Eventually, by the mid-nineteenth century, they would be replaced by trade catalogues, style magazines, design manuals and encyclopedias of historic and modern ornament.

The *livre à gravures*, or book of engravings, in which many rocaille prints were published, was an essential source for the German illustrated book of the period.[34] In Germany the oppressive period of the Thirty Years' War had brought about a general decline of culture, with the care for books being no exception. The illustrated books of the late baroque and rocaille period were mainly a southern German creation, the leading role of which can of course be attributed to Augsburg. Originally, these ornamental prints were created as models for architects and craftsmen. The representations were often difficult to demarcate: shepherds, peasants, lovers, actors, and allegorical figures were placed in a variety of framed cartouches and shell-work and encroached upon one another in a lively manner. Series that dealt with the seasons, the months, the elements, the arts, and the sciences were produced in the hundreds by the well-known publishers Engelbrecht and Hertel, among others.

The rocaille artist was now granted a novel status. As Jessen remarks: "These artists were no longer men who handled chisel or plane, hammer or weaving-shuttle; they were court architects, court painters, court designers, members of academies, and often enjoyed world-wide

[34] Lanckorońska, *Die Buchillustration*, 13.

reputation for leadership in painting and the liberal arts."[35] Jessen singles out the engraver and collector Gabriel Huquier as the greatest of these "interpreters," an "enthusiastic collector of all manner of designs" who "made thousands of them available to handicraftsmen and connoisseurs."[36] Interpreters such as Huquier did not focus on single plates or scaled reproductions, but on large-size folios. Rather than providing prescriptive architectural designs, his works focused on general representations, in order that "printers, carvers, silversmiths, embroiderers and other craftsmen could readily utilize them for their special purpose."[37] The list of Augsburg goldsmiths active between 1715 and 1765, for example, already included at least 450 names. So significant was Augsburg's role in the production of these artworks that in the eighteenth century it was common to speak of "Augsburg taste" in lieu of rocaille. Yet as the theoretical outlook of the neoclassical era began to scrutinize this mode of production, rocaille quickly became viewed as unmodern.

Just as many a writer has been concerned with rocaille's first appearance, so too has the endeavor of establishing something like an exact year for its demise preoccupied several scholars. Norbert Lieb, e.g., identifies 1765-70 as the period when the phenomenon came to an end.[38] Given that Augsburg was widely associated with the world of rocaille, the wholesale rejection of rocaille artworks by Enlightenment authors hit the city particularly hard.[39] Already around 1750, changing views of German art, and particularly of Augsburg art, were to come into being. What was once simply termed "Augsburg taste" was soon to take on other appellations in the disdainful eyes of classicists. Winckelmann, for example, reproached the city's artists when

[35] Jessen, *Das Rokoko*, Introduction.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Norbert Lieb, "Augsburg im Barock und Rokoko," in *Rokoko* (Augsburg: Schaezlerpalais, with J.P. Himmer KG., 1947), 13.
[39] Ibid., 3.

he referred to the Augsburg "Fratzenmaler" or "grotesque caricature painter" in 1758.[40] Later, bad taste and Augsburg taste obtained a level of synonymy in literary critiques, with "bad Augsburg taste" and "mendicant art" being among many derogatory phrases used in the late eighteenth century to refer to rocaille. In 1780 writer Wilhelm Heinse echoed Winckelmann's views when he spoke of the Augsburg city hall as having "numerous grotesque caricature paintings inside" and of Augsburg houses as "usually horridly decorated, childish, without a purpose, and with pitiful paintings."[41] Overall, Augsburg contributed little to the subsequent neoclassical art of Germany. One author notes how even the late eighteenth-century historian Paul von Stetten the Younger could not help diminish the dwindling fame of Augsburg art.[42]

In its prime, however, the world of Augsburg taste was indebted to the rocaille engraver Johann Esaias Nilson (1721-1788). Born in Augsburg and eventually a member of the Imperial Academy of the city, Nilson grew up in the midst of an artistic environment. His father, the painter Andreas Nilson, was the son of a former corporal in the Augsburg regiment, and his mother, Rosina Barbara, was also a painter and the daughter of a goldsmith. From 1730 to 1738 he attended the evangelical Gymnasium St. Anna, and after this schooling he studied the subjects of geometry, perspective, and architecture with the Augsburg engineer Johann Thomas Kraus. As a young artist, Nilson first worked in the field of miniature painting, and later, under the tutelage of Johann Lorenz Haid, learned to design shell-work and to engrave copper.

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[40] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Briefe*, ed. Walther Rehm and Hans Diepolder (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1952), 1:353. Winckelmann's knowledge of Augsburg came largely from an eight-day stay in October of 1755, when he conversed with prominent scholars and consulted the city's libraries, antiques, and art works. Augsburg, a former Roman provincial capital, was a stopping point on his journey from Dresden to Rome.

[41] Wilhelm Heinse, *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Carl Schüddekopf and Albert Leitzmann (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1909), 7:278.

[42] Bruno Bushart, "Augsburg und die Wende der Deutschen Kunst um 1750," in *Amici, Amico: Festschrift für Werner Gross* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1968), 262.

Nonetheless, little is known about Nilson's early artwork. Nilson was respected for his etchings throughout German-speaking countries in the mid-eighteenth century, essentially as a painter of miniatures, an engraver, a publisher, and an art academy director.[43] Nilson first gets mentioned in historical literature by historian Paul von Stetten the Younger in the 1765 *Explanations of Copper Engraved Ideas from the History of the Imperial City of Augsburg*.[44] The engraver is there portrayed as one of the most important artists of his time, and on the whole his work did indeed enjoy very positive assessments throughout the eighteenth century. Pastor Carl Ludwig Junker, for example, writes: "Few artists have such an unbounded imagination as Nilson."[45] In 1761 Nilson was appointed court painter to the Upper Palatinate (*Pictor aulicus Palatinus*), and for almost twenty years he served as Director of the Reichsstädtischen Kunstakademie and of the Kayserlich Franciscischen Akademie der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste, both in Augsburg. His works have been reinterpreted by other artists in a wide variety of media, and appear on frescoes, porcelain, earthenware, enamel boxes, watch covers, furniture, stoves, wall coverings, and drinking glasses.[46] British printer John Sadler, for example, would copy a Nilson

[43] Marianne Schuster remarks how, during a certain time, Nilson was referred to as the "German Watteau." She disagrees with this assessment given that Watteau's work, unlike Nilson's, was deeply rooted in the world of the baroque. In doing so, she conceptually separates the rococo from the baroque. See her *Johann Esaias Nilson: ein Kupferstecher des süddeutschen Rokoko, 1721-1788* (Munich: Neuer Filser-Verlag, 1936), 19.
[44] Paul von Stetten, *Erläuterungen der in Kupfer gestochenen Vorstellungen, aus der Geschichte der Reichsstadt Augsburg* (Augsburg: Conrad Heinrich Stage, 1765), 245.
[45] See Johann Georg Meusel, *Neue miscellaneen artistischen Inhalts für Künstler und Kunstliebhaber*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer the Younger, 1795), 450.
[46] Gun-Dagmar Helke discusses this in *Johann Esaias Nilson (1721-1788): Augsburger Miniaturmaler, Kupferstecher, Verleger und Kunstakademiedirektor* (Munich: Scaneg, 2005), i.

engraving for a mass produced wall tile (figs. 3 and 4).[47] These positive assessments of Nilson's work would, however, gradually change in the century following.[48]

Throughout the remainder of this thesis Nilson's engravings will serve as examples for the questions being asked. It is in his works that rocaille ornament's capacity to blend with architecture, with nature, and with theater come to the fore more clearly than with any other Augsburg engraver. The challenge to ornament's capacity for communicating with its audience, which capability is vividly present in his works, allows one to reflect on the role of rocaille in the history of architecture. Nilson, who initially might be seen as a marginal historical figure, proves to be central to any discussion of the crisis of western ornament.

Rocaille Theory

While a rocaille theory of architecture from Augsburg or any other city has yet to be uncovered, certain philosophical themes inherent to the cultural period during which German rocaille artworks were created offer direct parallels with the engravings. Developments in aesthetics, sensation, sensibility, and morality figured heavily in the creation of the materials involved. This section introduces several key theoretical strands woven throughout the literary discourse contemporaneous to rocaille.

The encroaching Enlightenment slowly began affecting and altering the strong medieval heritage still resonant in this era, and rocaille works were caught in a period of deep transition.

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[47] The reduction of artistic quality in the imitation has much to do with Sadler's newly developed method of transfer printed tiles. This printing method was achieved by producing a copper engraving or wood block that would be transferred to a tile using paper or a glue bat. The printer had claimed that he could print 1200 tiles within the timeframe of six hours.

[48] Despite the general change in attitude, nineteenth-century authors such as Georg Nagler could still recognize that Nilson was a highly respected artist in his time. See Nagler, *Neues allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Schwarzenberg & Schumann, 1924), 11:344.

Categorizing, contemplating, and critiquing the dark shadows of culture remained a key component of the impending Age of Reason. While the space of geometry began to repress that which fell outside of scientific formulation, the shadowy and phantasmic world was to turn within. The phenomenon we now call the rococo, which refers largely to *rocaille*, provided the eighteenth century with a prime representation of just such an obscure internal world. Inherent to this turn inward was the desire to raise the sensible world to a new level, i.e., to give it its own philosophical category or to give it a home.

Germanic lands in the eighteenth century had not rushed to realize a cultural enlightenment in the manner that their western neighbors had. Unlike the French nation, for example, the German states had not reared a strong bourgeoisie, and they held no political center. The desire for a unified German nation, one on par with its neighbors, would only culminate in the wake of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic campaigns. This concern for unity was already expressed by many, although not all, writers and intellectuals of the Enlightenment.[49] German statesman and man of letters Friedrich Carl von Moser was no exception when saying in 1765 "We are one people, of one name and tongue, under one common head, all equal under our constitution, rights, and obligations…"[50] In these pre-unified German states, however, a medieval tradition resonated deeply in the art world and provided much of the background for rocaille.[51] Rocaille, which had no need for a unified name and tongue, held on to a greater interest in fragmentation. Thus, when the German states eventually turned to the ideas

[49] Goethe, notably, spoke out against such political unity. See Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, vol. 3 (Magdeburg: Heinrichshofen, 1848), 270-73.
[50] Friedrich Carl von Moser, *Von dem Deutschen National-Geist* (1765), 5.
[51] On the "inner relationship" between late Gothic and rococo ecclesiastical architecture, see Karsten Harries, *Die Bayerische Rokokokirche: Das Irrationale und das Sakrale* (Dorfen: Hawel Verlag, 2009), 117-31.

surrounding the *Aufklärung*, rocaille and its medieval connection began receiving sustained criticism.

Along with the desire for unity in the Enlightenment came the concern for the metaphor of light. Continuing an understanding of the eighteenth century as a "siècle des Lumières," one author would suggest that in the case of Germanic territories the truth of tradition provided an obstacle to the truth of reason.[52] Granted, the play between a light-filled reason and a shadow-filled medievalesque tradition pervaded the period. Enlightened man was called upon to account for his own nature, shadows included. As Diderot recalls Lucretius in an epigraph from *De l'interprétation de la nature*: "Now we see out of the dark what is in the light."[53] The so-called "power of darkness" or "intelligibility of the shadow" in the German states' version of change came from a world of refuge and of introversion, a key dual aspect of rocaille art work.[54] The space of geometry repressed certain values, and the having of values turned into a prioritizing of internal artistic areas.

Distinct geometries were never a concern in rocaille engravings, but shadowy zones of intricate ornament frequently were. The human figures represented within an illustration partook of internal activities more often than they looked at the spectator. The progressive autonomy of rocaille ornament from architecture, a theme discussed throughout this thesis, represented a gradual retreat of ornament, a meditative turn within.[55] By the close of the eighteenth century,

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[52] Georges Gusdorf, *Les sciences humaines et la pensée occidentale*, vol. 4, *Les principes de la pensée au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Payot, 1971), 84.
[53] "E tenebris autem quae sunt in luce tuemur." See Titus Lucretius Carus, *De Rerum Natura*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1924), 4.337.
[54] The cited terms are translations of Gusdorf, *Principes de la pensée*, 521.
[55] Along similar lines, art historian Christiane Hertel sees eighteenth-century aesthetic art theory to be largely concerned with "self-reflective perception and sensory experience." A conscious inner withdrawal stands at the heart of the art of this period. Indifferent to the beholder, art works of this era retreat to the soul – a soul not in contradistinction to the body, but one fully incarnate. See Hertel,

the time of Immanuel Kant, this retreat or separation seemed to be more fully accepted in philosophical circles. Kant would famously include ornament in a discussion of what he called "free" beauties: "Designs *à la grecque*, the foliage on borders or on wallpaper, etc., mean nothing on their own; they represent nothing, no object under a determinate concept, and are free beauties. What we call fantasias in music (namely, music without a topic), indeed all music not set to words, may also be included in the same class."[56] Through this notion Kant was to question the role of ornament in architecture, regarding churches in particular. Ornament was lifted out of its role of servitude so as to be recast in a more autonomous light. Ultimately, however, in renouncing the architecture that such ornament once served, the inward turn of rocaille would bring about a distinct challenge to ornament's own foundations. Rocaille would find great difficulty in sustaining itself on its own.

In tandem with a concern for shadows, a deep appreciation of the senses is a hallmark of rocaille.[57] As particularly evident in rocaille's background in grottoes, the interdependence of man and his senses continually gets emphasized.[58] Overall, the eighteenth century involved itself in a wide range of theoretical discussions surrounding the senses—on nervous sensation, on sensibility, on moral sentiments, and the like. In one such discussion the abbot Joseph Lelarge de Lignac suggested the existence of two human experiences, one approaching us from the outside through the senses and the other based on internal feeling. The first was machine-like,

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Pygmalion in Bavaria: The Sculptor Ignaz Günther and Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Art Theory (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 4.

[56] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 76-77.

[57] Norberg-Schulz also recognized this when he suggested that the world of rocaille displayed an empirical concern for sensation and did so through its penchant for sensuous stimuli rather than objective observation. Along similar lines, rococo apartments were designed in accordance with studies of comfortable dwelling, where a desire for intimacy triumphed over other expressions. See his *Late Baroque and Rococo Architecture* (Milan: Electa, 1980), 13.

[58] The grotto heritage will be discussed in Chapter Three.

exhibited a soul reduced to inertia, and presented a spiritless brain. The abbot explained the first experience: "The machine walks alone without the consent of the soul; so the soul is reduced to purely sense its own existence, it is its only idea … it has never been more free from the machine."[59] Noteworthy here is the idea that the soul and the machine are detached from each other and, importantly, lack interaction. The second experience, however, contains an internal and intimate sense cut off from externally received images. Here only a meditative person accustomed to retreating within the self would be capable of such feeling.

Rocaille, an emotion-based, sense-related, and generally introspective entity, shared much with this second experience.[60] The internal sense described by such eighteenth-century philosophers remained an autonomous faculty. It was not the same as the soul, yet was reciprocally engaged with it. French mathematician and philosopher Jean le Rond d'Alembert suggested that this sense even had a physical home – somewhere in the region of the stomach.[61] Strong emotions, contended d'Alembert, almost always affected this region, which he named the "seat of sentiment."[62] At issue with such theories was the desire to provide a prominent status for the realm of the sensible, so as to give it its due. Much as had happened in Alexander Baumgarten's philosophy, the sensible got raised to the level of a science and ostensibly had gotten itself provided with a home.

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[59] Joseph Lelarge de Lignac, *Éléments de métaphysique tirés de l'expérience* (Paris: Chez Desaint & Saillant, 1753), 24-27.
[60] For Lelarge de Lignac's compatriot Rousseau, this other experience was primal and came before any abstract thought. As was clearly narrated in *Émile*: "To exist is to feel; our sensibility comes without question before our intelligence, and we have had feelings before we have had ideas." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 4, *Émile. Éducation. Morale. Botanique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 600. *Émile* was originally published in 1762.
[61] Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, *Essai sur les éléments de philosophie ou sur les principes des connaissances humaines* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1965), 259. D'Alembert's work was written in 1759. The reprint consulted is based on the 1805 edition.
[62] Ibid., 259-60.

Well known for introducing the word "aesthetics" to philosophical discussions, Baumgarten held a deep interest not only in recognizing the sensuous as contributing to knowledge, but also in offering it an intellectual setting. The philosopher continued and tried correcting the work of his predecessors by distinguishing between two forms of apprehension: the distinct and the confused.[63] For Baumgarten, the more focused apprehension becomes, the more distinct it is. The search for distinctness, however, comes at the price of leaving irrelevant conditions out.[64] Sensibility was just such a condition. In a parallel manner, rocaille would be cast aside in the Enlightenment turn to a pure and classical beauty marked by distinctness of contour. Accordingly, Baumgarten's newly termed category *aesthetic* would remain a lower faculty for the philosopher: "Therefore, *things known* are to be known by the superior faculty as the object of logic; *things perceived* [are to be known by the inferior faculty, as the object] of the science of perception, or aesthetic."[65] In this manner Baumgarten adheres to a classical understanding that would leave the sensible behind in the higher stages of the pursuit of pure knowledge. Nonetheless, a tension arises when he attempts to defend the sensible and actually to create a science of it. Baumgarten does not merely view the sensible as being inferior to understanding for its lacking of distinctness. Rather, according to him, the sensible realm should be praised for not having abandoned the concrete particulars of the world. In different and irreconcilable ways, cognition and sensibility provide windows onto reality. The tension between the two, however, remains.

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[63] This debt refers mostly to Descartes, Leibniz, and Wolff.
[64] Yet even where the irrational element is recognized, Ernst Cassirer has pointed out, the eighteenth century wanted "clear and sound knowledge of this limitation." See his *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 276. *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* was originally published in 1932.
[65] Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry*, trans. Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 78. *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* was first published in 1735.

The importance of such an equivalence between the realm of cognition and that of the sensible pervaded the eighteenth century. Desired was a union of philosophy and aesthetic criticism, where judgments of taste could be raised to the level of judgments of the mind. This sense of equivalence could also be viewed in terms of a correlation sought between the content of philosophy and that of art. In a similar manner, Ernst Cassirer has argued that the Enlightenment could be seen as a mutual play between knowledge and artistic intuition. In this interaction, reason and imagination, genius and rule, beauty as a feeling and beauty as a form of knowledge could be tested in relation to one other so as to find their own internal norms.[66] By categorizing, delimiting, and ultimately giving a home to the sensible, early modern European thinkers strove on the whole to give sensibility a perceived scientific credibility and thus to act in accord with the ideals of the *Aufklärung*. In German territories this ideological position mirrored an interest in creating a unified nation from individual states. If the shadowy, fragmented, medieval, and rocaille-filled past were to be accounted for, Enlightenment thinkers thought that this past would be best placed on a platform and subjected to a reasoned light from above, and thus to analysis.[67]

Rocaille ornament was inextricably caught up in the counterpoints mentioned above: between light and shadow, between thought and sensibility, and between the distinct and the confused. Just as these conditions were being opposed to each other in intellectual circles, so too was ornament turning within and detaching itself from its setting. In the Enlightenment move of architecture to become more theoretical, rocaille represented a last outpost. This ornament acted

[66] Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 275-76.
[67] Cassirer would suggest an eighteenth-century association between the sensible and darkness when he stated: "Criticism seeks to penetrate the chiaroscuro of sensation and taste with its ray." *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 276.

as architecture's shadow, and once cut off, its soul would never be at rest. As the light of analysis kept shining equally on all, ornament's authentic presence began diminishing. The remaining chapters of this thesis will explore the manner in which this waning would occur.

Style, Form, and Space

Today we live in the wake of a largely nineteenth-century understanding of the term *rococo*. In general, this prior era took for granted that the rococo represented a *style*, was concerned with *form*, and contained *space*. Thus Heinrich Wölfflin could discern a light and gay style in the rococo, the Goncourt brothers could speak of the "soul of a form" and August Schmarsow could repeatedly reference "spatial structures" in their individual analyses.[68] The majority of twentieth-century art historical authors largely accepted and furthered these interpretations. Therefore the 1989 *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen* could refer to the rococo as an "overloaded architectural style," Germain Bazin could describe cities such as Augsburg as "laboratories of form," and Henry Millon could envision in rococo architecture a "space" that "was unified, subdivided, and diffuse."[69]

Yet to what extent can one call the rococo, or *Rokoko*, a style, a form, or a space? To begin with, one must acknowledge that the word *rococo* was not used in the art historical sense of designating a style until over a century after the beginnings of rocaille. Alternate terms, discussed in subsequent sections, were utilized in the eighteenth century. Not one Enlightenment

[68] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, trans. Kathrin Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), 17; Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *French XVIII Century Painters: Watteau, Boucher, Chardin, La Tour, Greuze, Fragonard*, trans. Robin Ironside (London: Phaidon Press, 1948), 1; August Schmarsow, *Barock und Rokoko: eine kritische Auseinandersetzung über das malerische in der Architektur* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1897), 349, 365, 383.
[69] Wolfgang Pfeifer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1989), 1436; Germain Bazin, *Baroque and Rococo* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), 232; Henry Millon, *Baroque & Rococo Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1961), 11.

critic berated the "rococo." Likewise, an interest in attacking the stylistic, formal, and spatial characteristics of rocaille was fundamentally absent from eighteenth-century writings. A more appropriate manner of understanding the nature of these criticisms would require an intellectual immersion in the terminology of the settecento, an act which would render the word *rococo* anachronistic. This immersion could permit one to overcome these very particular historical judgments.

This section looks at major twentieth-century understandings of the rococo: first as a style, then as a form, and finally as a space. It attempts to assess these views so as to understand the extent of their influence on our knowledge of the time period in question. First came the American art historian Fiske Kimball who championed the idea that the rococo was a French style of decoration.[70] For Kimball, the main realm of the rococo movement was in decoration, specifically so in the ornament of surfaces.

Kimball's writing deals exclusively with France from about 1700 until what is termed "the advent of classicism" towards the end of the eighteenth century.[71] While interior decorative arts are the sole focus of his book, a sustained look at the term *rococo* and its characterization has been woven into the writing as well. The author acknowledges that the word *rococo* can be linked to an artistic movement and that it had ramifications in sculpture, painting, architecture and ornament. However it is to decoration and interior surfaces that Kimball turns in suggesting that these were of primary significance.

Kimball posits that from about 1734 on one can find the word *rocaille*, as a noun and an adjective, acquiring a new sense as a designation of style. This, for the author, marks a departure

[70] See his *The Creation of the Rococo* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1943). Hermann Bauer notably challenges Kimball's definition of the rococo as a French style of decoration. Bauer's 1955 doctoral thesis, published in 1962, was the first comprehensive account of the significance of rocaille.
[71] Kimball, *Rococo*, 3.

from the prior meaning of rockwork and shell-work utilized in grottoes and fountains. Underlining his approach here remains the idea that the rococo, based as it was on rocaille, grew out of a history of ornamental motifs. He views the background for the creation of rococo in France as being the architecture and ornament of the period from Louis XIV to the end of the seventeenth century. Three motifs of ornament, of importance for the future rococo, are singled out: the cartouche, the trophy, and the arabesque. The cartouche, essentially a shield with its field surrounded by a border or frame, highlights the importance of the frame and of the frame's ultimate dissolution in the world of rocaille.[72]

Key passages underscore Kimball's formal and stylistic approach. In one section he remarks upon the arabesque's invasion of the architectural framework: "With the forms suggested by the surface arabesque of Berain, Pierre Lepautre, transposing them, and transforming, in their spirit, the architectural framework itself, had created something new under the sun …"[73] Formal considerations are again emphasized when the author describes the illustration of a shutter for Duc de Mortemart by Meissonnier in 1724.[74] Likewise, speaking of the work of Meissonnier, Kimball remarks that "...from their inner fire, their molten unity of form" they carry "into every part the unequalled verve and energy of the artist."[75] Kimball defends what he sees as a rococo freedom of form when he states that we must lay aside prejudices "seeking vainly to exclude from art all free play of form, whether spatial, plastic, or linear."[76] In sum, rococo architecture is defined as a style which exhibits novel treatments of the

[72] Kimball notes the correspondence between the cartouche and the antique medallion or tablet as well as the cartouche's connection to Italian mannerism. Mannerist-to-rocaille continuities existed on many levels.
[73] Ibid., 109.
[74] Ibid., 155. Here the "central, distorted cartouche-like motif and the terminal scrolls and sprays" are "wholly unsymmetrical" and unknown to pre-1730 interiors.
[75] Ibid., 156.
[76] Ibid., 10.

spatial and plastic forms of buildings. Overall, the writing is steeped in mid-twentieth-century terminology which should ultimately be set aside when reading into rocaille.

Fellow American art historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock shares Kimball's interest in style, yet departs from his predecessor with his concentration on classification. In his work *Rococo Architecture in Southern Germany*, Hitchcock wastes little time in arriving at a description of the rococo as "an idiosyncratic mode of decoration employed by the middle decades of the eighteenth century throughout the civilized world—even to some extent in the Far East and the Americas."[77] Whether it be a general phase of a style or a style of its own, the rococo gets interpreted squarely on stylistic grounds. The rococo of southern Germany, however, remains more than a French import for the author, viz., "distinctly Germanic."[78] Using a top-down or deductive approach, Hitchcock ferrets out the commonalities of major works of significant architects of the region. These universal elements guide his architect-centered analysis and provide what he calls the "essence of German Rococo architecture."[79] Thus he proceeds "step by step from specific monument to specific monument in the *œuvres* of the more significant individual architects and their associates."[80] Throughout, he retains a strong interest in classification and in whether or not buildings can be designated as rococo.[81] Similarly characteristic of his writing remains an interest in the division between structure and decoration. In the rococo he views the tectonic aspects as being sublimated and the all-concealing "skin of

[77] Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Rococo Architecture in Southern Germany* (London: Phaidon, 1968), 1.
[78] Ibid., 5.
[79] Ibid., 13.
[80] Ibid., 17.
[81] S. Lane Faison views Hitchcock's interpretation of the rococo as an "artistic entity," one created by certain individuals, continued by others, and changed or challenged by yet others. See Faison, review of *Rococo Architecture in Southern Germany*, by Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 29, no. 2 (May 1970): 195-99.

stucco" as taking center stage.[82] Although avoiding any discussion of rocaille, he uses the term on occasion and provides the following definition in his glossary: "advanced Rococo decoration after the mid-1730s with much use of shell-forms and recurrent asymmetries."[83] His writing thus continues the insistence on decorative style seen in Kimball through a persistent search for the rococo's boundaries.

Expanding on these interests, art historian Anthony Blunt aims, in his collaborative compilation, to provide a stylistic definition for the terms *baroque* and *rococo*.[84] Primary features and their variations are investigated in various countries throughout Europe and the New World, with masterworks being privileged over more modest or provincial ones. The rococo is flatly defined by the author as a style, one invented in France for private houses, and one which reached its apogee in 1725-40. For Blunt the rococo signals a complete departure from the height of the reign of Louis XIV as well as from the baroque. Visually-speaking, he continues, it is marked by lightness and delicacy and shows a preference for light color schemes, in opposition to the dark and more gilded baroque interiors. While architecture gets subdued, decoration gets pronounced: "Rococo designers eliminate as far as possible the architectural members – columns, pilasters, entablatures – and fuse their decoration into gauze-like patterns over walls and ceilings, which often merge into each other."[85] This decoration, specifically as utilized in rooms decorated for Louis XIV at the end of his rule, was, arguably, where the rococo was born. The author sees this as having developed into the style of Régence before culminating in rococo proper with artists such as Pineau or Meissonnier. When referring implicitly to

[82] Hitchcock, *Rococo Architecture*, 15.
[83] Ibid., 414.
[84] Anthony Blunt, *Baroque & Rococo: Architecture and Decoration* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).
[85] Ibid., 17.

rocaille, the author writes in terms of fantastic ornament, and especially of cartouches, which both reflected the then-current mania for shell-like and watery forms.[86]

Germain Bazin furthers this acceptance of a rococo form, yet distinguishes himself from his contemporaries via his metaphorical interest in music. Rococo architecture gets compared by him to then-contemporary music. The architect is to "symphonically" achieve a rhythmical unity from various forms and ornamentation.[87] He analyses the essence of this musical condition on formal grounds: "The characteristic of Rococo rhythm in ornamentation is its counterpointing of asymmetrical elements, ordered within an architectural framework where the many curves and counter-curves and re-echoing planes render the whole space vibrant."[88] This visual vibrancy, he says, gets further enhanced by lively colors, stucco-work, mirrors, and gilded woodwork. François de Cuvilliés's work at Amalienburg continues the musical metaphor, in that the architect "showed an inexhaustible imagination in the creation of enchanting conceits; the springing of the arabesque never falters, and is for ever starting up again in an endless chain of melodies."[89] Ultimately, this symphonic unity is seen as being analogous to the term *Gesamtkunstwerk.* Bazin further refers to the various German centers of artistic activity as "laboratories of form."[90] Using terms such as "sumptuous," "gorgeous," "elegant," and "fine" to describe the architecture of the Bavarian rococo, he continues a common emotional understanding of the work as a happy, festive, and visually-oriented environment. The unnatural or ungrounded character of the rococo gets emphasized when he speaks sensually, in reference to

[86] Ibid., 139.
[87] Bazin, *Baroque and Rococo,* 232.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 233.
[90] Ibid., 232.

the church at Vierzehnheiligen, of "weightless stucco decorations."[91] Overall, though, Bazin views the rococo largely in terms of musical forms.

Emphasizing spatial components of the rococo more than the previously mentioned writers, art historian Henry Millon builds his argument from the idea that the seventeenth century stressed cohesion, organization and absolutism, i.e., in place of previous political, social and economic alliances that had been fragmented in nature.[92] The rococo period, by way of contrast, began to depart from this avowed assuredness of the baroque era. Millon views this departure as being manifest in spatial terms: "Where Baroque walls, piers, and columns had been massive and forceful, the space focused but divided into parts, and the light variable and dramatic, buildings of the first half of the eighteenth century were, on the contrary, airy and restrained; space was unified, subdivided, and diffuse; and daylight was everywhere abundant and revealing."[93] He initially analyzes the rococo, referred to as "a new attitude towards architectural space and mass," by looking at the Bernardo Vittone's church of Santa Chiara at Bra.[94] The lack of clarity in this church strikes the author as most significant. Exact dimensions fail to be perceptible and pale subtle colors enhance the ambiguous effect. He notices that the geometry becomes increasingly unclear as the building moves upward to culminate in a "complex spatial experience with screening columns, hidden light sources, illusionistic effects, double domes, and unseen but implied spaces."[95] Yet he does not account for why this may be. Overall, one is left with an understanding that the parts of the church are merely not well defined.

[91] Ibid., 237.
[92] Millon, *Baroque & Rococo Architecture*, 11.
[93] Ibid., 11.
[94] Ibid., 13.
[95] Ibid., 12.

Matthaeus Daniel Pöppelman's work, as at the Zwinger in Dresden, demonstrated the emergence in Germany of a key characteristic of the rococo for Millon: "the skeletalization of structure."[96] Johann Dientzenhofer's Cluniac monastery at Banz emphasized longitudinal spatial continuity and thereby "presaged the punctuated but synthesized space of the Rococo."[97] In Balthasar Neumann's Residenz in Würzburg, melting spaces and dissolving light effects occasion a comparison with Piranesi.[98] Neumann's pilgrimage church, Vierzehnheiligen, gets described as both a game and a space that is "cut and punctured, molded and warped, veiled and hidden by columns, piers, galleries, …" and so forth.[99] Lastly, Johann Michael Fischer's parish church at Diessen was driven by the dream of achieving a "diaphanous structure and spatial unity."[100]

In German scholarship, similar concerns come to the fore. Adolf Feulner, for example, touches upon rocaille without delving into a description of the variety inherent to the work.[101] Specifically, the relation between ornamentation and rooms gets remarked upon. With Johann Michael Feichtmayr offered as an example, art historian Feulner analyzes rocaille work using visual terms. The form is seen as abstract and without content, as a pure embodiment of spatial movement bound in a fluid, a soft-to-the-touch and constantly changing plastic mass. Rocaille's main element is for Feulner the curve, and not the planar, two-dimensional C- and S- curves of early rococo ribbon work, but rather three-dimensional and spatial curves that seem to flow back and forth. Importantly, according to the author, the shell-work of the rococo does not get used as surface ornament. Instead, it concentrates itself in particular spots, accentuates the important

[96] Ibid., 46.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 46-47.
[99] Ibid., 47.
[100] Ibid., 48.
[101] Feulner, *Bayerisches Rokoko*, 57-58.

places of the architectural framework, and thus fulfills a broader spatial function by uniting these separate architectural points. While the genesis of this work in French art remains clear, the development of rocaille into a spatial organism and into an abstract embodiment of a spatial conception only took place in German art. In French engravings the rational elements remained stronger, but rocaille's natural foundations got relegated to inventions on paper. In Germany the new form was immediately combined with older elements, such as seventeenth century scrollwork, which latter had already obtained a similar abstract form.

In a parallel manner, writer Ebba Krull analyses the work of rocaille artist Franz Xaver Habermann with attention to stylistic classification.[102] She divides his work into three overriding stylistic categories. The first, garden architecture, concentrates on arbors and fountains. With respect to Habermann's depictions of arbors, Krull notices the manner in which architecture and ornament grow together. She explains how in the engraving *Laubengang mit Statue des Herkules*, the dense shell-work is so overgrown that one can only guess at the architectural form underneath.[103] In one of the *Rocaille-Aufbau* plates, she speaks of architectural form as having been "replaced" by ornament.[104] For Krull ornament thus comes to be the material that forms its subject—a kind of building material. That ornament has the capacity to take possession of architecture and transform it, ultimately replacing the architecture by becoming it. Overall, the impression she retains from these forms is that of a "frothy herbaceous mass."[105] The second group is composed of large portraits of pure rocaille. Searching for architectural space, she finds that space to be not comprehensible, referring to the depictions of this group as "unreal" or

[102] Ebba Krull, *Franz Xaver Habermann (1721-1796): Ein Augsburger Ornamentist des Rokoko* (Augsburg: H. Mühlberger, 1977).
[103] Ibid., 22-23.
[104] Ibid., 23.
[105] Ibid.

"fragmentary."[106] The relative lack of shadows contributes to these purely fantastical and unbounded forms. As it did in the first, the garden group, rocaille has here taken the place of architecture. The plates of the third category once again show large rocaille shapes, but differ from the previous ensemble. She relies on Hermann Bauer's literary description to characterize this series: "An eroded and worn out framework of earth rocaille curls up in cracked ribs with the rocaille remnants appearing like extracts of natural and ruinous phenomena. Each ornamental form (broken strips, C-curves, and so forth) seems to be caused by weathering."[107] Once again, stylistic categorization pervades the analysis.

Writing in the same decade as Krull, the 1970s, and briefly making comments related to form and space, architectural historian Christian Norberg-Schulz defines the rococo in terms of how it freely exploits plastic and spatial form.[108] In this sense he sees the rococo as conquering and expanding on a classical Vitruvian tradition. He implies that whereas the rococo turns inward the baroque stresses outward extension. Here an increased interest in conditions of comfort and intimacy defines the rococo.

In her work five years prior to that of Norberg-Schulz, Liselotte Andersen keeps formal and stylistic concerns even more at the center of her approach while promoting rocaille to the status of a determinant of form.[109] She classifies rocaille as the ornament most characteristic of the rococo, one that started its journey in France and later arrived in Bavaria via the engraving world. In her depiction rocaille is composed of "half-naturalistic, half-abstract shell and plant forms" and "bold C- and S-curves." [110] She views ornament as no longer serving as an

[106] Ibid., 24.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Norberg-Schulz, *Late Baroque and Rococo Architecture*, 46-50.
[109] Andersen, *Baroque and Rococo Art*, 206.
[110] Ibid.

appendage, but as determining the "form of an object" itself. A few examples hint at her approach. The hunting lodge of Amalienburg (1734-39) is portrayed as having a French style of interior decoration and as displaying naturalistic plant and animal forms. The Residenz Theater in Munich (1751-53) is cited as representing the "unreal fantasy world of theater," where the "new style could attain its greatest beauty."[111] Overall the Bavarian-Swabian rococo consisted of a "light, festive style, assuming ever new and fantastic forms," which had "penetrated into the world of the rural parish churches and pilgrimage churches and there had its most exquisite flowering."[112] Andersen remarks on the importance of ornamentation, given that an entire era was named after an "ornamental motif," i.e. rocaille.[113] Rocaille is thus largely interpreted as a formal device by Andersen as well.

Lastly for this discussion, and in the most significant encyclopedic entry on the rococo in any language during the last century, Hans Sedlmayr and Hermann Bauer take a clear stance when defining their use of the terms *rococo* and *rocaille*.[114] They quickly differentiate the rococo style from the baroque, all the while admitting continuities between the two, and continue by separating the style in question from the neoclassical tradition to follow it. Although at ease using the term "style," they recognize the great difficulty of viewing the rococo through a stylistic lens. As they have noted, "Rococo as a stylistic entity is difficult to grasp with the conventional art-historical tools. […] Rococo is not a mere ornamental style but a style capable of suffusing all spheres of art. […] The basic features of rococo can hardly be grasped through a

[111] Ibid., 208.
[112] Ibid., 210.
[113] Ibid., 233.
[114] Sedlmayr and Bauer, *Encyclopedia of World Art*.

comparison of forms and their change," and they challenge art historian Fiske Kimball's approach for its having created such unsustainable boundaries.[115]

The literary precursors to the twentieth-century judgments discussed above can be found in the Enlightenment critiques which formed the first scholarly attempts to understand the phenomenon of rocaille. Although one can occasionally find terms such as *style* or *form* within such eighteenth-century criticism, the interest was not in finding fault with rocaille on such grounds. Rather, those writings had other concerns such as the importance of taste, of beauty, and of an adherence to the real and natural world. The impetus to stylize, formalize, and spatialize the so-called rococo should be understood as the result of a very particular mode of analysis. Such a superficial perspective of rocaille neither existed at the time nor was of interest to its creators. The overall capacity to understand the rococo on such grounds is more relevant to a study of the twentieth century than to an inquiry into rocaille. Contemporary readers should accordingly interpret eighteenth-century rocaille in its own milieu, following a manner of research that Herder would likewise have advocated.

In addition to these stylistic understandings of the rococo are overall modern conceptions of its time as an era of mirth, exuberance, sensuousness, and refinement. After all, was the movement not that elegant style replete with late baroque pastels, fluttering putti, sumptuous ornament, and sensuous salt dispensers? Countless historical reviews cloak the period in such terms. Speaking of rocaille ornamental works, for example, Peter Jessen states that they "embodied the latent desires of that happy and free society—the effervescent charm, the play of wit, the joy in nature, the boundless extravagance—in short, the spirit of the age."[116] For the writer Maria Lanckorońska the spirit of the century remains just as much reflected in book

[115] Ibid., 268-69.
[116] Jessen, *Das Rokoko*, Introduction.

illustration as it does in literature.[117] That spirit gets characterized as "exuberant, playful, and graceful," and as one that is "less spirit than esprit, less intense than graceful, less wise than learned, and less mature than rich."[118] Along similar lines, she characterizes book illustration under Louis XV as reflecting "the playful eroticism and courtly intrigue, the overflowing moods, and the refined but carelessly over-powdered spirit of the Rococo."[119]

Is there nothing more in rocaille then, in an emotional sense, than a playful and witty grace all too ready to turn spirit into esprit? A momentary turn to a French engraver can help answer this question.

Delicieux jardins, agréable verdure,
Beaux parterres que Flore enrichit de ses dons,
D'un livre ingénieux souvent sur vos gazons
Ou se plaît à goûter l'amusante lecture.

Plus vif dans mes plaisirs, pour moy j'aime bien mieux
Accompagner Philis, et lire dans ses yeux
Qu'au fond de vos bosquets un solitaire azile,
A nos tendres ardeurs deviendrait fort utile.

Poem from Jean Mondon le fils, *Le Tems-de L'Aprés-Dinée* (*Les Heures du Jour*), ca.1738

An initial glance at a rocaille architectural engraving or associated poem by Jean Mondon le fils and one might envision a world of leisure, delicacy, and endless garden promenades (fig. 5). In these depictions dawn rendezvous, midday joys, and after-dinner pleasures give way to evening charms. From Mondon's series *Les Heures du Jour* the reader learns that in the early morning, love captures hunters that were themselves in search of some game. By the afternoon, fine wine and food give way to the meal of love. After the repast, entertaining outdoor readings parallel

[117] Lanckorońska, *Die Buchillustration*, 12.
[118] Ibid. The German adjective "überschäumend," with its connotations of "frothing over," is more potent than my English translation of "exuberant."
[119] Ibid.

the reading of a lover's eyes. By nightfall, dance and music make the night seem more beautiful than the day. Here the liberty to conceal one's face with a mask permits the revelation of one's heart.

Having examined Mondon's series of the four times of day, one museum curator has suggested that the works primarily illustrate a gallant and elite life and that they demonstrate the move away from emblems of allegories to *gravures de mode*.[120] She is right to stress the role of fashionable dress and behavior on the works, as the depictions do differ even from those of Mondon's immediate predecessors. Yet the symbolical and metaphorical significance of the architectural settings within such ornamental engravings had not yet disappeared and can still give one fundamental clues to the meaning of the pieces. More significant than the representation of carefree promenades is the vividly present abstract fragmentation of Mondon's work. In the engravings of Paris-based contemporaries Meissonnier and de la Joue, one dreams along with the artists and imagines inhabiting the fantastical settings provided. With Mondon, however, the architectural fragments depicted overtake the remnants of a narrative and become the main subject of the picture.

Thus, contrary to the general assumption that the rococo represented a carefree and joyous era of lavish elegance, architectural rocaille engravings such as those by Mondon remained at the intellectual heart of the period and were more indicative of an underlying tension, a deep unease. In that regard the brief suggestions of Hans Sedlmayr and Hermann Bauer that the rococo held within it a destructive beauty should be taken seriously. In the entry for the word *rococo* in the 1966 *Encyclopedia of World Art*, the authors proclaim the following:

[120] Charissa Bremer-David, "About Time: the Hours of the Day in Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *Paris: Life and Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Charissa Bremer-David (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011), 27.

> Rococo art obtains its beauty from the transitory. The everlasting dialectic interplay within the classes of art and changeability and tension as principles are the esthetic values of the rococo. A beauty of a kind that until then had been unknown in Western art was thus made possible, but a beauty of this kind was destructive to art itself. [121]

The raw abstraction present in many rocaille works indelibly haunts the amorous scenes depicted and allows us to envision an underlying tension in the rococo, one described by Sedlmayr as a "cooling in the vital warmth of architecture."[122] This abstraction, very familiar to contemporary eyes, suggests a dissolution of architecture into natural forms and into the decorative world of rocaille. In the majority of rocaille works the ornamental picture frame blends into the scene depicted. This new unity came about partly as a result of ornament's practical mediation between painting and architecture, a desire first developed by the Catholic churches and which was suitably answered by rocaille. Ornament, accordingly, melded into architecture, nature and various objects at will. These dissolving frames, however, symbolized more than dainty and playful borders. Beyond being merely bizarre, as they have repeatedly been described, rocaille frames catalyzed a changing understanding of ornament. The architectural settings within such works can no longer be left behind as mere elegant rococo scenery. The following chapters aim to suggest what these pieces of architecture might signify.

Rocaille and *Rococo*

As mentioned before, not a single Enlightenment writer denounced the "rococo" as a style. While this thesis will continue to use the word *rococo*, it will be done in reference, explicit or otherwise, to other authors who define their work using this term. More at the heart of the era, as I have suggested, remains the term *rocaille*. This term did not stand alone, however, and was

[121] See Sedlmayr and Bauer, *Encyclopedia of World Art*, 269.
[122] See his discussion in *Art in Crisis*, 197-98.

often used in reference to other words. French eighteenth-century authors often referred to *le goût moderne* or *le genre pittoresque,* which latter term was also not far removed from rocaille. On German soil, the terms *Felsenwerk, Grillenwerk,* and *Muschelwerk* stood at the forefront of descriptions. These terms, introduced in a later section of this chapter, provided the literary critics and lexicographers of the eighteenth century with their subject matter. Rocaille stands out as the apex of these terms in offering an understanding of the significance of the era. Yet the nuances of all the aesthetic terminology used in the eighteenth century afford one the best opportunity towards comprehensively perceiving the phenomenon under investigation.

This section reviews more modern understandings of the terms *rocaille* and *rococo* and acts as an introduction to a discussion of rocaille which last will take place in more detail in subsequent chapters. Central to most of the twentieth-century interpretations of rocaille is the term's relation to nature. These accounts may recognize general affinities between rocaille and nature, or may analyze particular natural phenomena such as shells and acanthus leaves, or may discuss the metaphorical associations of those natural elements, as in the relation between the shell and Venus.

In terms of etymology, scholars Sedlmayr and Bauer rightly perceived a disparity between a mid-twentieth century understanding of the word *rococo* and an eighteenth-century one.[123] Although they sensed that the 1900s' meaning stressed a precise phase of eighteenth-century art, they noted the term's origins as a word of ridicule during the age of classicism. Only in the nineteenth century, when the word *style* became an art-historical device, did the rococo emerge as a stylistic notion. Key to an understanding of what the term *rococo* represented is the

[123] Sedlmayr and Bauer, *Encyclopedia of World Art,* 231.

fact that its proponents neither wrote theories to elucidate it nor gave it a name. The most distinctive definitions and delineations came from those opposed to it.

Mid-twentieth-century French writers preferred to employ the name of Louis XV in lieu of *rococo*. This French national reluctance to use the term can still be felt to this day. Initially, *rococo* was coined in contempt—a derivative of *rocaille* on the analogy of *barocco*. Although its first appearance in dictionary form was at the French Academy in 1842, it had been used earlier, notably by Stendhal in 1828 and Hugo in 1839. Even deep into the mid-twentieth century, during the era of Kimball and Hitchcock, the word *rococo* conjured connotations of a diminutive and depraved art form. Contemporaries of rocaille, however, frequently referred to their work as "modern," as has been done in artistic periods throughout history.[124]

Beyond *le goût moderne, le goût du siècle* was among the other primary French terms used during the time of rocaille.[125] This notion is curiously linked to an idea of asymmetry when Jacques-François Blondel speaks of a modern design in which: "one part is symmetrical and the other is in the taste of the times."[126] These early linguistic renditions of an asymmetrical phase were linked directly to another term: *le genre pittoresque*. However, it was within the titles of various compositions of this early period that the word *rocaille* emerged as designating a manner of working. Jean Mondon le fils' 1736 *Premier Livre de formes Cartels et Rocailles Ornés de Figures de Modes* is an early example. Prior meanings, as illustrated by the abbot Bouillet,

[124] Germain Brice's 1706 description of a 1704 remodeled house exhibiting *le goût moderne* serves as an early example. See his *Description Nouvelle de la Ville de Paris*, vol. 1 (Paris: Nicolas le Gras, 1706), 384.
[125] See, for example, Jacques-François Blondel, *De la distribution des maisons de plaisance*, vol. 2 (Paris: Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1738), 95.
[126] Ibid., 149. "Le goût du temps" is the exact phrase used. Kimball, however, does not turn to asymmetry in attempting to define the rococo, for he notices that this characterization did not persist through the years.

concentrated on the idea of rockwork and shell-work crafted in grottoes and fountains.[127] Thus by 1772, at the end of rocaille's European existence, one can find Blondel looking back over what were then the past few decades to indicate: "It has been several years now in which it seems that our century is that of the Rocailles."[128] Indeed, the notion of rocaille as describing an entire period was common in the eighteenth century.

For Blunt, ornament's relation to nature stands at the forefront of his interpretation of rocaille. While avoiding any detailed definition of the term itself, he indirectly suggests how he interprets the word. At one point he alludes to it as a type of ornament composed of an "ambiguous shelly substance."[129] Elsewhere he sees it as blending asymmetrical shell-like French ornament of the 1730s with the tradition of cartouches.[130] He refers to rocaille as lacking chasteness and lucidity and as a metaphor for nature.[131] Throughout his writing the comments remain clearly concerned with the visual aspects of rocaille.

Norberg-Schulz echoes Blunt's connection of rocaille to natural phenomena, but generally lays more emphasis on eighteenth-century philosophy. In a passing acknowledgment of the term *rocaille*, he initially defines it as a "caprice of nature."[132] He stresses the impermanent and decaying aspects of the form and this understanding leads him to interpret the rococo as an ending. Grounding his views in relation to philosophy, he suggests that rocaille

[127] Auguste Bouillet, "Contribution à l'histoire de l'art des rocailleurs," *Réunion des Sociétés des Beaux-Arts des Départements* 17 (1893): 322-36.
[128] Jacques-François Blondel, *Cours d'architecture*, vol. 3 (Paris: Chez la Veuve Desaint, 1772), lviii.
[129] Blunt, *Baroque & Rococo*, 175.
[130] Ibid., 176.
[131] Ibid., 285.
[132] Norberg-Schulz, *Late Baroque and Rococo Architecture*, 13.

could be likened to the philosophical writings of Leibniz, where a synthesis of *esprit de système* and *esprit systématique* comes into being.[133]

For Adolf Feulner, as for Bauer, the heart of the rococo lies in its shell-work, in rocaille, the etymological source of its name. The origin of this element goes back considerably. According to the Feulner, France had taken it from the Italian baroque. Meissonnier had introduced the *style rocaille* as the leading mode of decoration, although this introduction was for a short time only. Feulner views the period between 1725 and 1740 as a detachment from a direction that ultimately returned to Classicism. In southern Germany, shell-work entered into individual motifs around 1730. According to Feulner, from 1735 on, rocaille became a kind of universal world medium, transforming all aspects of arts and crafts until around 1770, when it began to mix with elements of early classicism. During that central period it was taken up by various schools – Wessobrunn, Augsburg, Munich – where each group worked the material to individual tastes. Here rocaille got interspersed with intuitive and irrational elements of a German nature and intertwined with figurative and naturalistic motifs. Eventually, for Feulner, rocaille broke up into individual elements which were replaced by the antique ornament of early classicism. Key to Feulner's approach is the understanding of rocaille as both a unique event separated from a general trend and as an end unto itself.

Sedlmayr also views shell-work as a basis for understanding rocaille, but now in a more symbolic fashion. The central figure of the *style rocaille* for the author is Venus, who reputedly holds many of the same attributes, including the seashell, as the Virgin Mary. Sedlmayr links Venus with rocaille and sees the prime elements of rocaille ornamentation to have been emerging

[133] The choice of Leibniz in connection to rocaille is intriguing. Norberg-Schulz is attempting to see rocaille as a meeting point between the seventeenth-century baroque and neoclassicism.

from her aquatic characteristics.[134] Agreeing with Sedlmayr on the primacy of rocaille, Peter Hawel in his study of the theological meaning of late baroque churches, places the shell and associated rocaille, along with the acanthus leaf, as the most important ornaments of the rococo.[135] He interprets a strong genetic connection between the shell and rocaille. Liselotte Andersen, in contrast to Hawel, sees rocaille on primarily formal grounds. For her, rocaille itself determines the form of the object it portrays. Additionally, she notes an organic character in how German rocaille "developed into forms that simulate a strange, dilapidated, and decaying world."[136]

Thus the specific understandings of rocaille itself vary greatly in post-Enlightenment writing. From a stylish ending, to a visual phenomenon, to a formal device, to a discontinuity, to the crux of the rococo, each interpretation must be weighed carefully against the background in which rocaille was set. To simply stress, for example, rocaille's natural foundations and to call it a caprice of nature is to overlook the reasons for rocaille's interest in the natural. The desire to become more natural would ultimately impede ornament's intrinsic capabilities. As discussed in Chapter Three, rocaille would indeed turn to nature, but now at the expense of architecture.

Bavaria's Silence

The predominant consensus among modern scholars is that the rococo, and particularly the Bavarian rococo, ended a historical development. From considering it as the last phase of the baroque to an era having little in common with the subsequent neoclassical world to representing

[134] Hans Sedlmayr, "The Synthesis of the Arts in Rococo," in *The Age of Rococo: Art and Culture of the Eighteenth Century* (Munich: Hermann Rinn, 1958), 26.
[135] Hawel, *Der spätbarocke Kirchenbau*, 324-30.
[136] Andersen, *Baroque and Rococo Art*, 237.

the end of ornament in the western tradition, authors generally view the rococo as having had little to offer its successors.

The rococo is ordinarily interpreted as an ending to the baroque, with it being French by birth but Italian by disposition.[137] Millon agrees with the notion of the rococo as an ending, stating that it "was the last great attempt to achieve a complete synthesis of painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and pageantry."[138] In order to explain this synthesis, he investigates a few key architectural moments in Germany, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Along similar lines, and to close his argument in *Baroque and Rococo*, Bazin speaks of an abrupt demise to the rococo. He views the transition between the rococo and neo-classicism as being all but nonexistent. Rather than finding continuities he states that a tendency was reversed, as evidenced for him in the work of David Gilly and C.G. Langhans. Hitchcock in his art historical approach, contrastingly, separates the rococo from prior movements. He feels that eighteenth-century architecture is chiefly a rococo creation rather than a mere final phase of two centuries of baroque art. This detachment of the rococo from the baroque is nowhere more clearly evidenced than in the architecture of the brothers Asam. For Adolf Feulner, on the other hand, the rococo represents not just a closing of an artistic culture, but of Bavarian culture itself. By the 1770s rocaille production in Bavaria in the field of architecture had come to a sudden halt. Feulner correctly notes that individual elements of a Bavarian character remained in the time of early classicism. Indigenous buildings of artistic significance, though, were no longer being created. Accordingly, he views the rococo as an overall ending. As soon as the intelligibility and

[137] Nonetheless, a contrary account places Italy as the ultimate source of the rococo. This account was to conflate the rococo with the entirety of the late baroque and to suggest that since the time of Innocent II, Italy had created and developed the refined art of the rococo. See Marcel Reymond, "L'Architecture Italienne du XVII^{e} Siècle," in André Michel, *Histoire de l'Art*, vol. 6 (Paris: A. Colin, 1921), 7-72.
[138] Millon, *Baroque & Rococo Architecture*, 40.

comprehensibility of what he terms the "character values" (*die Gemütswerte*) of the visual arts withdrew themselves, Old Bavaria presumably became silent.[139] On a similar note of closure, Norberg-Schulz gives one the impression that the rococo stands both as the final synthesis of a tradition and as that tradition's disintegration itself. Later works, understood as part of a neoclassical revival, could not claim to be part of a synthetic and organic whole for the author, given that they "did not sufficiently take the psychological need for a meaningful environment into consideration."[140] With respect to rocaille in particular, he states: "Rather than illustrating nature's grand design, however, it [rocaille] expresses its transitory and perishable aspects, thereby defining the Rococo as the end of a development rather than a new beginning."[141] Thus for the majority of authors the rococo remains the culmination of a European tradition.

Pinpointing an exact year for the end of rocaille remains of little importance, as observers such as Hermann Bauer and Karsten Harries have illustrated. Although no longer a major artistic movement by the late 1700s, rocaille continued well into the following century, especially in the realm of folk art. Augsburg eventually began to distance itself from its supposed "bad Augsburg taste" by the end of the eighteenth century. Johann Nilson would remain a key figure in this distancing, for he ultimately came to renouncing rocaille, the manner in which he had worked his whole life. One engraving of his in particular takes on this very theme of renunciation. In the work, later termed *Absage an die Rocaille*, a man stands next to a classical urn which in turn is flanked by two sculpted sphinxes (fig. 6). He looks at the viewer while tearing up a rocaille drawing. Bauer was to call this depiction a "public acknowledgement of sin" in which the academic professor turned his back on his life's work.[142]

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[139] Feulner, *Bayerisches Rokoko*, 68.
[140] Norberg-Schulz, *Late Baroque and Rococo Architecture*, 52.
[141] Ibid., 13.
[142] Bauer, *Rocaille*, 63.

Ultimately, Bauer declares rocaille to be the last original Western ornament. He notes that one of the foundational conditions of modern art is its absence of ornament, where that ornament has stepped beyond its boundaries to become a pictorial object. Relying on his fondness for oppositional statements, Bauer famously identifies rocaille as the "critical form" of the rococo, but not a constantly recurring formal principle.[143] Ultimately, Bauer's rocaille represents a play with transience. With the engravings of Crusius, the history of rocaille comes to an end. No further development was possible, Bauer suggests. Simultaneous to this ending, the themes of landscape painting as developed in the movement of Romanticism were to be born. Bauer unhesitatingly sees in the English garden of the 1777 Petit Trianon, for example, a monumental earth-rocaille. As with the work of Crusius, this shifting of rocaille into becoming overwhelmingly preoccupied with nature signals its demise. This development will be considered more fully in Chapter Three.

If rocaille did represent an ending, as has been declared by these authors, then the neoclassical disapproval of it has to be taken seriously, given that school of criticism's capacity to distance itself successfully from the preceding era. Lacking any body of philosophical writing and even a word to name it, the artistic world which we today have learned to call the rococo was left theoretically helpless in the face of its critics. To be noted again remains the significant lack of a rocaille theory of architecture. Plentiful books of ornament were created in the mid-1700s, yet none were prefaced with an account of what rocaille stood for. Contemporaries held little back in their pronouncements on the movement, and rocaille was accordingly left intellectually stranded with the "last original Western ornament" having no literature with which to defend itself. This lack of theory could indeed have contributed to the continued attacks it received,

[143] Ibid., 21.

even into the nineteenth century, inasmuch as the ornamentation work had to be judged by standards other than its own. As attacks built upon attacks, original intentionality became less apparent. Rocaille's dissolution was thus exacerbated by its inability to communicate through words.

Eighteenth-Century Critiques

German criticism of rocaille, starting in 1746 with that of Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein, occurred at the height of the ornament's creation. The writings drew heavily from simultaneous discussions about beauty and taste in the art world. Specific buildings were derided, individual authors got ridiculed, and even towns were condemned. Attacks were often couched in strongly worded terms, with reference to evil, error, plague and disease not being uncommon. Several main points, discussed in this section, were repeatedly invoked. Rocaille's perceived lack of reason spawned commentary on the absence of form, of order, of principles, of a unified whole, and of symmetry. The unnatural, bizarre, and thus unreal and improbable characteristics of rocaille provided another target. Also commented upon was the lack of taste and of beauty in rocaille, due in part to its reportedly childish, untrained and spoiled nature, as well as to its non-Vitruvian character. Remarks on disorderly imaginations and diseased minds paralleled those regarding freedom of the hand. The theatrical quality of rocaille was chidden on the same grounds as that of the baroque. Finally French fashion served as a recurring object of derision.

The understanding of rocaille ornament as inessential was made evident in many contemporaneous studies of the art of antiquity, notably those of Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Johann Gottfried Herder, studies which stressed ornament's desired inseparability from the ornament bearer. In Herder's case, this connection had much to do with his significant role in

defending the senses on epistemological grounds. Conceptualization, for Herder, was inextricably linked with sensation, where sensation acted as the source of one's concepts. Beauty, in turn, according to Herder, originated in visual experience—in that which was pleasing in relation to the senses—and it extended to account for all pleasurable effects on the soul. Ornament, understood historically as the most beautiful revelation of architecture, could thus be seen as intimately affecting the senses and, eventually, the soul. Even deep into the eighteenth century, philosophers could acknowledge the importance of ornament as an intensification of beauty. To remove ornament from the architecture which benefited from ornament's sensuously-perceived beauty would thus, according to the thinking of the time, be to deny architecture its capacity to be understood sensuously. Herder notes just such a phenomenon in his regarding Medusa's snakes as ornaments to the beauty of her countenance:

> A beautiful Medusa without snakes would no longer be recognizable, would no longer be Medusa—she would merely be a beautiful face; for this reason, and not because of some appetite for snakes, the artist was obliged to use this attribute. And why not? If he conceals the snakes in her hair, they can serve as an ornament; and are they ugly? Terrible, but not ugly; but this terribleness, if toned down and contrasted with a beautiful countenance, is agreeable; it raises in us the idea of the extraordinary, of the power of the goddess Minerva; it is therefore required as a character trait and fit for a multifaceted impression: it exalts beauty.[144]

Without the subdued ornamental snakes, Medusa's beauty would lack dignity and nobility. She would remain but a beautiful face without character and without the capacity to communicate her stature to us. The critique of such unsubdued and characterless ornament would parallel Herder's condemnation of the rococo. In speaking of the belletrists and beaux artistes of his

[144] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. Gregory Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 85.

generation, Herder reiterated the primal Enlightenment distinction between imagination and understanding.

> The frivolous has triumphed over the weighty, the imagination has usurped the understanding; and the more external stimuli and inducements there are to promote these excrescences of the human mind and of belles lettres, the more they flourish, choking what is dry and serious with their exuberant growth.[145]

The pronouncement of rococo work as a disease of the mind further distances the rococo from reason. Herder's turn to Cicero underscores a belief that eloquence, and by extension ornamented speech, emerges from an elevated mind which in turn serves to ornament man: "Ut hominis decus ingenium, sic ingenii ipsius eloquentia."[146]

When attacking the world of belles lettres, Herder relies heavily on culinary metaphors. The meal of the rococo, for the philosopher, simply nourishes neither body nor soul.

> What is more, all that glitters is not gold, and not everything is beautiful that appears so to an inexperienced youth or a pampered woman. The fashionable literature of our age is often a garden filled with apples of Sodom: outwardly beautiful, but inwardly full of dust and ashes. A youth who greedily devours the so-called beautiful, with no regard for what it is and how it appears in print, surely does not eat healthily; both good and bad are thrown together in his meal, and most of it is sweet and sumptuous. Taste is corrupted, the soul left uncertain or spoiled. The realm of his knowledge, as narrow as his times, cannot enjoy better fruits than those which the age yields, and he cannot prepare more wholesome sauces.[147]

Herder thus accuses his times of being concerned with appearances and of lacking inner significance. Witty prattling and critiquing overtake reasoning. The subjects that such thinking

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[145] Ibid., 335-36. Comments such as this one actually partook of what Herder understood as excessiveness in the works of rococo authors. The novelist Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon was a particularly favorite target of his.
[146] Ibid., 335. "As genius is a man's brightest ornament, so it is eloquence that illuminates genius itself." Translation by Hannis Taylor, *Cicero: A Sketch of His Life and Works*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1918), 471.
[147] Herder, *Aesthetics*, 336.

plays with are described in terms of pollution and wantonness.[148] Portraying the literary aesthete in painterly terms, Herder states: "What is lacking here is man who desires and seeks both dignity in his office and sharply defined contours in his thinking, for whom the superficially gaudy colors of the belles lettres are nothing but rouge and powder or a fool's coat."[149] Not surprisingly, the precision of both mental and drawn contours were to be a hallmark of the neoclassical approach to art.

Bavarian ornament criticism itself came about during the beginning of the most prolific years of rocaille ornamentation. Augsburg and Nurnberg were centers of the production and distribution of most of this ornament. The denunciations were generally widespread in their targets, commenting on the "bad Augsburg taste" of ornamental engravings, of the ornament itself, and of rocaille architecture. One can ascertain that within German architectural theory of the eighteenth century, only negative commentary regarding rocaille existed. Certain adjectives got repeated in the objections to rocaille: "unidirectional," "fictional," "fantastic," and "arbitrary," for example. The overall literary attacks, however, were on the whole rather monotonous and repetitive. Their approach often resonated with the discussions about taste in the arts prevalent at the time.[150]

The word *rocaille*, it would appear, first emerged in Germany in the early 1740s. One can find it, for example, in Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Grosses vollständiges Universal Lexicon*. It is there defined simply as "grotto work," with the reader thereafter quickly being ushered over to the definition for the term *grotto*.[151] That second definition pronounces the existence of both

[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid., 337.
[150] For a general discussion of eighteenth-century German ornament criticism, see Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau, *Die deutsche Ornamentkritik im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1983).
[151] Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal Lexicon* (Halle, 1732-50), 32:95.

natural and artificial grottoes and emphasizes the pleasurable experience of going into such caves. The entry begins with "Grotto, crypt, which is either sunk into the ground in a totally dark chamber or is an artificial cave built in a pleasure-garden that allows one to draw in cool air and refresh oneself."[152] A few years later Johann Friedrich Penther offered a more confident description of rocaille. "Rocaille", he said, "is a composite work of all kinds of stones, is similar to a growing rock, and is used in grottoes and hermitages."[153] The tenor of these understandings continued deep into the eighteenth century in France as well. Thus Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* could refer to *rocaille* as a "rustic architectural composition that imitates natural rocks and is made of found stones, sea shells, and petrified objects of various colors, as one can see in grottoes, basins, and fountains…"[154] Such definitions still held sway at the close of the century, as in Christian Ludolph Reinhold's 1786 entry regarding "Rocaille, a composite work of shells, small rough pebbles, pieces of glass and small artificial trees, which is represented in the arrangement of grottoes, fountains and other country objects."[155] While the word *rocaille* clearly derives from the French term *roc*, or rock, the German use of the term was compatible with several other words: *Muschelwerk*, *Muschellaub*, *Muschellaubwerk*, and *Felswerk*, in particular. The use of these terms, emphasizing natural shells, leaves, and rocks, could apply to the decorative encrustations in artificial grottoes as well as to architectural ornament itself.

With such definitions, the relationship between rocaille and the grotto is hardly difficult to discern. Ulrich Schütte has suggested that at the heart of rocaille lies a "grotesque

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[152] Ibid., 11:1094.
[153] Johann Friedrich Penther, *Ausführliche Anleitung zur Bürgerlichen Bau-Kunst* (Augsburg, 1744-48), 1:133.
[154] *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Neufchastel: Samuel Faulche, 1765), s.v. "rocaille." The word gets categorized here as a component of hydraulic architecture.
[155] Christian Ludolph Reinhold, *Die Zeichen- und Mahlerschule oder systematische Anleitung zu den Zeichen-, Mahler-, Kupferstecher-, Bildhauer- und anderen Verwandten Künsten* (Münster: Perrenon, 1786), 331.

structure."[156] He rightly points out how what we refer to today as *style rocaille* would have been termed *französischer grotesker Geschmack*, or French grotesque taste, in eighteenth-century German writing. Other common synonymous phrases at the time were *französisches Muschelwerk*, or French shell-work, and *französischer Geschmack*, or French taste. While the French origins of this work were repeatedly referred to in treatises, the German reception of it got remarked upon as well. Nowadays, for Schütte, who wishes to see strong continuities between the grotesque and rocaille, the "grotesque structure" of rocaille results from contrasting and base elements as well as from its form.

Johann Penther, mentioned above, has given one of the earliest substantial definitions of rocaille. In the section where he outlines the architectural column orders, Penther initially refers to rocaille by using the French term *colonne de rocaille*.[157] This kind of column, which the author describes as a grotto-column, is composed of all kinds of petrified things, as well as of sea shells, glass, and ore. Later, the word *rocaille* gets described as being like a "growing rock."[158] This early definition acknowledges the birthplace of rocaille in the grotto and the hermitage, yet also shows an understanding of rocaille's potential for change. The word does not signify a whole but rather points to an amalgamation of disparate parts. This composite nature would become one of the main complaints of later neoclassical critics.

One such critic, J. F. Reiffenstein, was first to introduce the criticism of rocaille to a German audience. As with many subsequent analysts, he urges artists to pursue a faithful

[156] Ulrich Schütte, *Ordnung und Verzierung: Untersuchungen zur deutschsprachigen Architekturtheorie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Braunschweig: F. Vieweg, 1986), 143.
[157] Penther, *Ausführliche Anleitung*, 1:39.
[158] Ibid., 1:133.

agreement with nature.[159] In his essay "Notes on the Newfound Ornaments in the Works of Painters and Sculptors" he initially notices what he terms a "completely new and unusual taste" in ornament.[160] He then condemns what he calls an "arbitrary and random assembly of the natural with the unnatural," and later reproaches "wild and unnatural forms" as well as "improbable and often impossible compounds."[161] "The whimsical bends and joggles of the ornament" eventually conspire to render the ornament looking "like a whimsical bent shell."[162] Attacking the skill of the artists, he sees this ornamental work as being predominantly produced by ill-trained masters, indicating that these "bad masters" not only lack technical skill but also harbor unfettered unreality.[163]

> These shell-like uses, which are fitted together and attached with some strips, then get adorned with equipment from the realm of nature and art. Reeds, trees, snakes, dragons, small children and angels, lances, spears, swords, morning stars, fire mortars, and all other kinds of small and large artillery, get put on paper in that place where they are in the inventor's imagination....[164]

In the year following Reiffenstein's initial critical remarks Johann Georg Fünck published his essay on taste in classical and what were then modern times.[165] The title of the essay, as well as its contents, reflects a concern for the perceived decline in taste in then-modern architecture. He initially speaks of an "illogical deviation and confusion of order" and refers to the new ornamentation as evil, unnatural, and formless.[166] He then critiques "the illogicalness of

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[159] Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein, "Anmerkungen über die neuerfundenen Zierrathen in den Werken der Maler und Bildhauer," *Neuer Büchersaal der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste* 2, no. 5 (1746): 400.
[160] Ibid., 401.
[161] Ibid., 401-02.
[162] Ibid., 404-05.
[163] Ibid., 403.
[164] Ibid., 405.
[165] Johann Georg Fünck, "Betrachtungen über den wahren Geschmack der Alten in der Baukunst, und über desselben Verfall in neuern Zeiten," *Neuer Büchersaal der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste* 4, no. 5 (1747): 411-28.
[166] Ibid., 418-20.

the torn grill and shell-work."[167] Were one to try to represent rocaille in perspective, Fünck claims, not the slightest beauty would be observable. To Fünck's mind beauty grows out of a reputation for durability and strength. Describing what he sees as French taste, the author attacks the "reckless inventions of our neighbors" with their "wild and unnatural constructions."[168] He furthermore notices the absence of a philosophical stance for rocaille when he speaks of a "missing theory."[169]

Although the German Enlightenment authors were the most adamant eighteenth-century critics of rocaille, there were also foreign pronouncements on the subject being made. Marc-Antoine Laugier, for example, singled out the capriciousness of ornamentation when he attacked the mad imaginations of the rocaille artists of his day. His interpretation of and disdain for rocaille contours mimicked Herder's call for sharply defined mental borders.

> Our artists have, for some time, given into a strangeness that has been very fashionable. All the contours of their ornaments have been capriciously disfigured. This singularity did not fail to succeed in a nation as fickle and as thoughtless as our own. Had it prevailed longer, we were about to add to the fantastic imaginations of the arabesque. Fortunately, we are making our way back, and this dangerous epidemic is at its conclusion.[170]

The end of the 1750s, however, witnessed one of the most sustained and yet humorous reprimands of rocaille. Friedrich August Krubsacius began his *Thoughts on the Origin, Growth, and Decay of Ornaments in the Fine Arts: Architecture, Wood Carving, Painting, and Copper Engraving*, written in 1759, with a discovery of some criticism of rococo ornament with which

[167] Ibid., 419.
[168] Ibid., 421.
[169] Ibid., 418-19.
[170] Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Essai sur l'architecture* (Paris: Chez Duchesne, 1753), 119-20.

he would agree.[171] He had in a new book on the liberal and fine arts come upon some disapproving comments about the newfound ornaments in the works of painters and sculptors. In this discovered work, the author speaks of the exaggerated and unnatural works of new builders and engravers, particularly in Nurnberg and Augsburg, all of which provoked Krubsacius into considering the matter and making his own investigation.

The "extravagant arts" must be held in check, writes Krubsacius, as he calls immediately upon Vitruvius for support.[172] Although it did not last, the "asymmetrical taste" was present in all the arts of the time. Using a phrase that would be repeated by subsequent critics, Krubsacius suggests that the new ornaments "make up a ridiculous whole."[173] The architects Gabriel, Beaufranc, Soufflot, Carpentier, and Blondel get singled out for positioning themselves against "this destructive evil."[174] Overall, Germany had ostensibly been infected by these strange ornaments and in particular by the "new corrupted taste of French ornament…"[175] The infection had been so prevalent, according to the critic, that ornament itself had perished: "And so, under the name of free and daring drawing, we have destroyed ornament,…"[176] In several passages Krubsacius refers to rocaille ornament as displaying a lack of order, even as exhibiting the greatest of disorder. This disarray is not only a product of the subject matter, but also of the representation itself, or of "the wretched copperplate engravings."[177] Rules are called for as being needed to guard against such exaggerations. In addition to the need for rules, nature must

[171] Friedrich August Krubsacius, *Gedanken von dem Ursprunge, Wachsthume und Verfalle der Verzierungen in den schönen Künsten, d. i. Der Bau- Schnitz- Maler- und Kupferstecherkunst* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1759).
[172] Ibid., 5.
[173] Ibid., 7.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid., 8-9.
[176] Ibid., 12.
[177] Ibid., 32.

remain the ultimate teacher for Krubsacius, for she provides the very first architectural ornaments, namely flowers and fruit.

Krubsacius is notably concerned with the origins of ornament in early mankind's dwellings and suggests that architecture, sculpture, painting, drawing, and, consequently, ornament have steadily declined since the time of the Greeks. During the era of original dwelling, he contends, mankind had first adorned his body with such ornaments, and then later his hut. This latter mode of architectural adornment took on many forms, from entwining tree trunks or columns to throwing seeds on the floor, and to hanging natural ornaments over doors and window openings. Significantly, Krubsacius believed that this transition from body to architecture was motivated by love. How jubilant indeed would the shepherd be as he hung up a garland from his beloved shepherdess…?

With reference to rocaille, Krubsacius alludes to the non-uniform nature of the ornament when he refers to an "irregular shell."[178] He then asks "Is it thus necessary to decorate something with loud fantasies and with things that are either not to be found in the world or are not befitting?"[179] Krubsacius here objects to what he terms the "mishmash" of rocaille. After lampooning rocaille artists for not being able to explain their own creations, he takes the liberty of commenting on the commissioned engraving printed in his own work, which he refers to as the "enclosed rubbish" (fig. 7).[180] Expounding on this particular satirical cartouche, he mocks the bizarre combinations inherent in rocaille engravings and identifies the drawn elements as follows:

a) From reeds and straw
b) Bones

[178] Ibid., 31.
[179] Ibid., 35.
[180] Ibid., 35-36.

c) Shards
d) Chips
e) Feather dusters
f) Withered flowers
g) Broken shells
h) Rags
i) Feathers
k) Shavings
l) Cut locks of hair
m) Stones
n) Fish scales
o) Fish bones
p) Tails
q) Birch twigs, full of new stylish dragons, snakes, and other vermin

Throughout his humorous account the author implies the desire for a certain spatial order, in particular when he mockingly regrets that this engraving was not warped enough. He requests the abolishing of such "ludicrous and irregular ornamentation" and urges his compatriots to stop imitating the French.[181] According to him, heavy things must be represented below, light things above, and nature must always rule in a relaxed manner. In his concluding pronouncement, Krubsacius declares that "All artists and craftsmen should not employ anything as decoration other than that which is in accordance with nature and with objects, …"[182] Reason and nature must thus guide an artist's endeavors.

Roughly five years after Krubsacius's writing, Joseph von Petrasch's commentary continues along similar lines.[183] For Petrasch, reason provides the rules that are needed in *die freien Künste*. Such reason reveals itself in nature, in truth, and in good taste.[184] At odds with good or natural taste for this author is arbitrary taste. Petrasch contrasts the two when he says that: "Natural or arbitrary taste, which is one of our five well-known senses, consists of touch

[181] Ibid., 37.
[182] Ibid., 40.
[183] Joseph von Petrasch, "Versuch von der Erfindung in den freyen Künsten," in *Gedoppelte Probe einer neuen Zeitung* (Augsburg, 1764).
[184] Ibid., 5-6.

and operates through palpation."[185] As it does for many of his contemporaries, the need for ground rules (*Grundregeln*) stands out in Petrasch's commentary.[186] Taste should not be arbitrary (*willkührlich*), but based on true reason.[187]

Referring disparagingly to the birthplace of rocaille, Petrasch remarks that the "depravity of our reckless neighbors," has, as far as ornamentation is concerned, brought about a world of "ridiculous follies," not dissimilar to those of the Goths.[188] Again, as with other authors, he highlights the improbability of rocaille works, using the adjectives "ridiculous," "reckless," and "tasteless" to describe the then-current high fashion in ornament. Even the supernatural gets invoked when Petrasch refers to the "curse that a magician must have placed upon our people," such that reason is handed over and the tasteless becomes a guiding principle.[189]

"Does one imitate reason," the author further queries, "when one places seashells on a church, on an armory, on a civic palace, or on a saint's or hero's column of honor?"[190] Referring to the recent erection of a Holy Trinity Column in a capital city, Petrasch feels ashamed of "both the evil taste and the incompetence of the inventor, artist, and admirer." He thus calls upon his countrymen to act and to set right the "good taste of Germany."[191] This is an imminent need, he asserts, for "corruption and illness of taste" have taken the upper hand. Follies swarm about hither and thither arbitrarily and shells get laden with unusual spikes, peacock feathers, bats, and butterfly wings. The author joins the mainstream criticism of the works as being unnatural when he states that they "have nothing in common with nature."[192] In the end, Petrasch speaks in

[185] Ibid., 83.
[186] Ibid., 93.
[187] Ibid., 94.
[188] Ibid., 95.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid., 96.
[192] Ibid., 97.

medical terms when he calls for a cure for the disease. Good taste would then be grounded in reason, and in reason's rules, as it was with the Greeks and the Romans. Reason and nature should clearly unite, the author ultimately argues, so as to judge what is before them.

By the year 1770, the condemnations took on a highly visible political dimension. That year was to witness a decree calling for an end to rocaille ornament by the final Wittelsbach elector of Bavaria, Max III Joseph. He there mandated that "pure and regular architecture be maintained and the often absurd and ridiculous ornamentation be cut away so that altars, pulpits, and portraits display an appropriate and noble simplicity for the worship of the sanctuary."[193] Furthermore, it was suggested that rocaille should come to an end as it was simply no longer affordable. This pronouncement demonstrated a significant reversal of the ruler's thinking, inasmuch as he had only twenty years before commissioned the Cuvilliés-Theater in Munich.

The world of literature continued to repeat these concerns. The very same year, Franz Christoph von Scheyb summoned a diatribe against plague-infested and monster-laden cities.[194] The author began by bemoaning "the flight of symmetry, equal-sidedness, and regularity" within the ornamentation of his century.[195] Above all, the dissimilarity of one side from another in ornament irked him. He urged young painters not to become slaves to fashion, where the foreign, the new, and the strange predominated. For von Scheyb the turn to such ornamentation represented more than a formal change. It resided in the emotions of the artist. The stubbornness, particularly of youthful artists taking pleasure in drawing without instruction, got emphasized repeatedly. Speaking in language closely paralleling that of Krubsacius, von Scheyb

[193] Frank Büttner, "Das Ende des Rokoko in Bayern: Überlegungen zu den geistesgeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen des Stilwandels," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft* 51 (1997 [1999]): 125-50.
[194] Franz Christoph von Scheyb, *Köremons . . . Natur und Kunst in Gemälden, Bildhauereyen, Gebäuden und Kupferstichen, zum Unterricht der Schüler und Vergnügen der Kenner* (Leipzig, 1770).
[195] Ibid., 451.

suggested that the new ornaments "make up a ridiculous whole."[196] Unequal-sided taste had prevailed and so-called "new monsters" roamed freely.[197] Whole cities had become infected with strange ornaments and nothing had stood in the way of all this excess and error. Such evil would have to be countered with the good taste that could be found in ancient Greek and Roman architecture.[198] Man would have been better off had he decorated his house as shepherds do: with birds, flowers, and ribbons. Instead, nature, art, reason, order, regularity, and thorough diligence had taken flight.[199] Von Scheyb maintained that such ornamental work was the product of untrained and careless, typically younger, artists who produced a monster, a headstrong creature that had finally even crept into architecture, with the result that man could hardly save himself from this plague.[200]

In the following decade, that of 1780, Nilson's friend Hieronymus Andreas Mertens wrote against rocaille by urging the reader to understand the sense or feeling of truth and beauty in art.[201] This sense would allow one to understand right from wrong and to appreciate the time-tested beauty of the ancients. Mertens would decry works that seemed to have a stomach ache or to want to dance the minuet and argued instead for images that reflected seriously on the soul.[202] The importance of serious reflection extended into the required behavior of the artist, which had to be governed by fixed and unchangeable rules.[203] Taste, for Mertens, remains "the effect of an

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[196] Ibid., 452.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Echoing the concern that architecture, and in particular ornament, should be grounded in the ancient world was Lukas Voch. See his *Etwas von Bauzierrathen nach Modern-Antikengeschmack* (Augsburg: In der Joseph Wolffischen Buchhandlung, 1783), 9-10.
[199] Scheyb, *Köremons*, 456.
[200] Ibid., 455.
[201] Hieronymus Andreas Mertens, *Vorlesungen über die zeichnenden Künste, für die Zöglinge der Kunstakademien* (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1783).
[202] Ibid., 36-37.
[203] Ibid., 33.

inner sense, as well as the feeling of truth and virtue, or as otherwise termed, conscience."[204] This feeling, when applied to works of art, distinguishes truth from falsehood, right from wrong, and virtue from vice, he argues. Underpinning this feeling would thus be the importance of moral conduct.

Apparently slighting the rococo, Mertens states that "taste is nothing other than the ability to perceive beauty in art without laborious preconceived conclusions, and to loathe the forced and unnatural."[205] That feeling of beauty, he remarks, requires more than the ability to perceive beauty in nature. He believes that the sensing of beauty in art is a condition that is awakened by the imagination and that comes as the result of a deliberate choice. Looking at his cultural surroundings, Mertens notes a "destructive taste" in the art of his time and calls his century a spoiled and dallying one.[206] He laments that the painters and engravers of his time are caught up in a love of ornamental frills. He calls for the monstrous, and for reprehensible and detrimental taste, to be on its way. Important to Mertens is the fact that thinking should reign supreme in questions of great taste. Such was the case in the days of "Raphael and his venerable brothers," readers are told.[207] There, as Mertens' wishes it were in his time, great taste was truly a capacity of the soul. Rocaille gets further alluded to when he speaks of the "foolish ornamental work of natural and fictitious shells."[208] By not traveling the well-worn path of beauty in antiquity, Mertens tells his readers, one will walk between thorns and thistles, or *zwischen Dornen und Hecken*.[209] This metaphorical contention directly echoes the Biblical passage in Genesis which

[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid., 35.
[206] Ibid., 36.
[207] Ibid., 37.
[208] Ibid., 39.
[209] Ibid., 40.

describes the nature of Adams' future after the Fall.[210] The connection here between the perceived errors of the rocaille artist and those of Adam is worth emphasizing. Absent in paradise, thorns and thistles were part of God's answer to Adam for his disobedience. The earth was made profane and man was to eat by means of the inhospitable land, toiling in sweat until returning to the dust from which he was born. Likewise, one can surmise that the rocaille artist, in being disobedient to the call of the ancients and in eating from the tree of fashion after heeding the voice of the French, would similarly be cursed.

Shortly after Mertens's pronouncements, author Christian Ludwig Stieglitz went and attacked rocaille ornament while writing nostalgically about Greek, Roman, and to some extent, Renaissance order.[211] Pining for antiquity, Stieglitz urged the reader of "Essay on Taste in Architecture" to return to the essential works of classical times. The author viewed contemporary ornament as being "overloaded with flowers, arabesques, fields, rosettes," and as falling short of "propriety and simplicity."[212] "Pure and great taste" is hard to be found in the architecture of Stieglitz's surroundings, he said.[213] Specifically, he attacked the "lack of purity and propriety," the "error," and the "evil" discerned within rocaille ornament.[214]

As with most eighteenth-century German critics of rocaille, the culture of the Middle Ages gets paralleled with that of rocaille. Stieglitz feels that art and knowledge took a turn for the worse in both periods. Speaking of the high Gothic period, he perceives that each builder demonstrated the "games of his imagination," while only providing "bizarre and grotesque ideas

[210] See Gen. 3:18.
[211] Christian Ludwig Stieglitz, "Versuch über den Geschmack in der Baukunst," *Neue Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freyen Künste* 35, no. 2 (1788): 180-216.
[212] Ibid., 179.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid., 179-80.

and fancies."[215] Through his choice of wording, Stieglitz here emphasizes the importance of the individuality of the creations. Personal imagination would appear to take precedence over communal creation. Thus, the "wonderful takes the place of the sublime, confusion and disorder expel simplicity and regularity, and long, slender, and stiff shapes displace beautiful proportions."[216] Stieglitz feels that a sense of order was luckily restored in the fifteenth century.

Echoing Vitruvius, Stieglitz suggests that a building could never obtain the requisite good taste without order, eurythmy, symmetry, variety, and good proportions.[217] He emphasizes that the three main desirable qualities of ornament are economy, propriety, and firmness.[218] Given his reliance on Vitruvius, this should come as no surprise. For Stieglitz, ornament should not be without meaning or intention. As propounded in his subsequent work, *Encyclopedia of Civil Architecture*, ornaments are to be seen as essential parts of a building, and they serve to make that edifice pleasant and give it splendor and richness.[219] Echoing Renaissance theorists, he advocates that these ornaments be in harmony with the character and purpose of the whole building. Ornaments, he suggests, should have good proportions, symmetry, and a beautiful shape. In addition, they should be symmetrically placed on a building. Switching to a critical mode, the author singles out the French goldsmith Meissonnier as the inventor of "tasteless and thoughtless ornaments."[220] "Bizarre compositions of foliage, herbs, shells, animals, and other things" cause Stieglitz to search for beauty within the tangle of these asymmetrical things.[221] He believes that proportions have been neglected and have thus caused small ornaments to be

[215] Ibid., 191.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid., 198.
[218] Ibid., 202.
[219] Christian Ludwig Stieglitz, *Encyklopädie der bürglichen Baukunst* (Leipzig: Caspar Fritsch, 1792-98), 5:354.
[220] Ibid., 5:357.
[221] Ibid.

overlooked and large ornaments to hide what is beneath. Knowledge alone of the rules advocated by Stieglitz will not bring forth beautiful ornament, for taste and a feeling for the beautiful are ultimately required. Like many a compatriot architectural theorist, he urges the artist reader to study the ornament of good Greek and Roman buildings to acquire this feeling.[222] Ornament, he believes, should not demonstrate an arbitrary imagination. Rather, the artist should stay clear of current fashion, which becomes obsolete quickly, and instead choose ornaments that have hundreds of years of reputation. According to Stieglitz, ornamentation from Greek and Roman buildings, items of the golden age of art, will provide the right sense of taste.[223]

Contemporaneous with Stieglitz, Johann Dominicus Fiorillo penned his *On the Grotesque* within a year of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*.[224] Although Fiorillo's work deals specifically with the grotesque, he clearly sees rocaille as emerging from this tradition especially when he critiques the new fashions in ornament. His writing is marked by a sharp humor, a call for boundaries, and a belief in true nature. As he knows the critique of the grotesque to have had a long tradition, he calls upon a personified Vitruvius to couch his words in a historical continuum. Yet in a departure from most of his contemporaries, Fiorillo ultimately acknowledges that there could be a beauty to the grotesque.

The author repeatedly turns to the fantastical nature of the grotesque, suggesting that it was born of a "childish taste."[225] Architecture allies itself with the grotesque and thus gets assessed on similar grounds. Speaking of the grotesque tradition out of which rocaille arises, Fiorillo begins his account by turning to Vitruvius's scorning of painted monstrosities. The

[222] Ibid., 5:358.
[223] Ibid., 5:356.
[224] Johann Dominicus Fiorillo, *Über die Groteske* (Göttingen: Rosenbusch, 1791).
[225] Ibid., 15.

Roman architect had critiqued certain frescos on the basis that they presented things that "do not exist, cannot exit, and have never existed."[226] By recalling these comments on the lack of reality, whether past, present, or future, Fiorillo connects his writings to the Enlightenment discourse on rocaille. On one occasion he summons Vitruvius's satire regarding "candlesticks, which carry images of small buildings from whose gables delicate curled stems grow forth, and attached to which absurd seated figures are placed."[227] Elsewhere, he repeats Vitruvius's denunciation of flowers on stems that reveal figures with half human and half animal busts. Vitruvius had claimed that the works were not only unreal but also illogical. "How can a reed stem support a roof?" or "how can busts grow out of the roots and stems of flowers?" Vitruvius continued.[228]

Moving beyond Vitruvius, Fiorillo furthers the critique of grotesque ornament on the grounds that it is unnatural: "Are sphinxes, satyrs, tritons, centaurs, hermae, and chimeras ideas of true nature?" he questions.[229] Had these grotesques not been contrary to nature and not passed beyond the limits of reality, however, they could have escaped the author's censure. Such was not the case, and so this author continues by speaking of "mutilated figures of men and animals woven into the foliage."[230] In this instance, the idea of nature's visual intermixing with elements outside of its realm gets emphasized. Such a mélange was to be a hallmark of rocaille, and it remains at the core of Chapter Three within this thesis. Fiorillo's terms such as "overloaded taste" suggest the stepping beyond of boundaries.[231] Commentary like this connects him directly

[226] Ibid., 3. See also Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Morgan (New York: Dover, 1960), 211.
[227] Fiorillo, *Groteske*, 3.
[228] Ibid, 3-4.
[229] Ibid., 6.
[230] Ibid., 7-8.
[231] Ibid.

to a neoclassical approach to art, in which limits, contours, and borders were essential elements. The hybridity of grotesque work was present both in the figures of the artwork and in the mind of the artist. Products of a "disorderly imagination" were now no longer restricted to the realm of ornament, Fiorillo claims, but encroached upon the established rules of "pure architecture" as well.[232] As such grotesque manners had their origins in Roman architecture, he points the reader in the direction of a "complaining Vitruvius."[233] The lack of even the slightest symmetry also draws Fiorillo's attention.

Fiorillo feels that, in addition to the notions of the childish artist and of the incorrect artwork, a new ineptness has come into being in his time. The current fashion, he suggests, has brought along with it the persona of the incompetent judge, an arbiter who overlooks the truly beautiful in the arts. Yet outright censure of grotesque ornament is not Fiorillo's final goal. He puts his own critique of such ornaments in perspective when he ultimately declares that "one cannot deny them beauty and utility."[234]

Writing a year after Fiorillo's essay, Franz Cancrin stressed the French origins of fashionable ornament in his *Fundamental Doctrines of Civil Architecture* by comparing rocaille to French headdresses of the day.[235] Cancrin's literal connection of rocaille to fashionable dress represents a notable attempt both to signify the foreignness of the ornament and to emphasize its short-lived character. He suggested that the curly foliage and shell-work only existed in the mind and he called this decorative work "spoiled."[236] The assumption that rocaille was born of thought and, one can easily infer, of unguided thought, suggests that the ornament remains an

[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid., 15.
[235] Franz Ludwig von Cancrin, *Grundlehren der Bürgerlichen Baukunst* (Gotha, 1792).
[236] Ibid., 302.

interior condition. Cancrin thus smoothly connects to the common Enlightenment objection of the unnatural quality of rocaille works. The reader should understand that the leaf and shell-work are not born of nature, do not exist within nature, and now are a product of the inventive faculty. Cancrin criticizes by means of a pedagogical metaphor, in which the spoiled child, implicitly lacking proper instruction in civil architecture, becomes the source of such mental works. This immaturity might not have bothered Cancrin were it not for the fact that he defines the ornamental in building as "nothing more than a higher degree of beauty."[237] In doing so, he connects to a long trajectory in western architectural theory which views ornament as the highest calling for an architect driven by beauty.

Alberti is no exception inasmuch as he would once call ornament a form of auxiliary brightness and improvement to beauty.[238] One can thus interpret the rocaille artist as operating in a lower realm and as using the workings of the mind, yet not the reasoned mind. For Cancrin, the rocaille engraver has clearly stepped outside of a tradition and has forgone the traditional pursuit of beauty. Importantly, Cancrin further describes beauty as an "accidental, but, in the eyes of people, almost necessary perfection of a building."[239] Once again one can infer that the hapless rocaille artist stands apart from this world. True perfection in architecture must remain accidental, for only God could willingly provide such. Perfection, however, remains necessary in the quest for beauty, lest one fall into a realm such as that of the rocaille artist.

German Enlightenment critiques of rocaille were all only disparaging. Authors frequently sought to connect rocaille's "ridiculous follies" to the Gothic era and to oppose them to the classical world with its Vitruvian-based ground rules. Turning to antiquity, such criticism

[237] Ibid., 295.
[238] Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 156.
[239] Cancrin, *Grundlehren*, 269.

extolled the value and virtue of proper ornament in the rhetorical tradition. In concert with Herder and Winckelmann, writers stressed the need for ornament's inseparability from its bearer. The feast of ornament was to nourish both body and soul. Rocaille, for a multitude of reasons, was seen as failing in its rhetorical duties and as doing little to sustain the spectator. Artists were reproved as childish, ill-trained, and too eager to turn to foreign fashions. Artistic centers and cities were perceived as catalysts of bad taste and of beggarly art. The work itself was viewed as irrational, unnatural, overly theatrical, and ultimately immoral, and the language used in these criticisms tended to be more passionate and emotional in nature than calm and reflective. The repetition of negative commentary from author to author was on the whole quite pervasive. As rocaille had no words of rebuttal, such argumentation met little resistance.

Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Critiques

The nineteenth century remains paramount to an understanding of rocaille, given that this time period attempted to reformulate the general understanding of the prior age through the introduction of one word: *rococo*. While this word existed before its lexicographical debut in 1842, it had not yet acquired a sense of stylistic categorization. Several authors, highlights of whose writings are discussed here, remained central to the advancement of the new terminology and mode of thinking.

The word *rococo*, often used disparagingly, continued to gain momentum in the early nineteenth century. Stendhal's 1829 use of the term in *Promenades dans Rome* and Victor Hugo's comments on the architecture of Nancy and Lisbon provide examples from France. Stendhal memorably equated the rococo with Bernini, whom he called the "father of bad

taste."[240] This connection was significant in furthering the belief that the rococo was a decadent and vulgar phenomenon. Hugo had likewise spoken of the unattractive and lugubrious qualities of the period. Writing in a letter from 1839, he analyzed the cathedral at Nancy:

> The towers of the cathedral look like Pompadour peppermills … The architecture of the eighteenth century, when it is lavish, atones for its bad taste. Its fantasy vegetates and flourishes on the tops of buildings in flowering bushes so extravagant and dense that all anger vanishes and one has but to join along. […] The lower part of Pompadour buildings is bare, morose, and dismal. The rococo has hideous feet.[241]

Yet the writer did not lambast the rococo in every instance. He spoke fondly, for example, of the rococo plaza of the Hôtel-de-Ville in the same city, using adjectives such as "noble," "elegant," and "intelligent."[242] When he switched over to the city of Lisbon, however, his witty critique returned: "…it seems that the sun has acted on this stone vegetation as if it were regular vegetation. One would say that sap had circulated in the granite; causing it to swell, … slinging fantastic branches of arabesques that swell up towards the sky."[243] Elsewhere, speaking in reference to the church of Saint-Jean in Liège, Hugo decries the building's eighteenth-century reconstruction. "Unashamedly leaning against this façade is the cupola, or rather the hump, of an abominable rococo church whose door opens on a disfigured, grating, bleached, and sad ogival cloister full of tall grass."[244]

Meanwhile, the term *rococo* made its first appearance in a French dictionary. It was not in the 1835 dictionary of the French Academy, but in the 1842 supplement that the first definition was offered.[245] The word here became cemented in its relation to the period of Louis

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[240] Stendhal, *Roman Journal*, 117.
[241] Victor Hugo, *Oeuvres complètes de Victor Hugo*, vol. 20, *Le Rhin II* (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1884), 180-81.
[242] Ibid., 180.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Victor Hugo, *Oeuvres complètes de Victor Hugo*, vol. 19, *Le Rhin I* (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1884), 403.
[245] *Complément du Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 1058.

XV and Madame de Pompadour, the latter in 1860 being called by the Goncourt brothers a patron of rocaille and the godmother and queen of the rococo. The examples for the second definition are particularly noteworthy. One can love the rococo and one can find something quite rococo. Yet one can also fall into the rococo. Here, from the very first lexicographical instance of the word, the rococo is understood as a trap or a pitfall and not as something that one would aspire to.

In art historical scholarship, German writers were the first to elaborate on the connection between rococo and Louis XV. [246] An early example of this is in Georg Nagler's *Künstler-Lexikon* of 1840. Jacob Burckhardt's use of the term in conjunction with the baroque remains more well-known, however. Burckhardt famously posited the idea that the rococo was a historically recurring phenomenon, one which signaled the demise of a style. Thus the baroque joined with Greek, Roman, Gothic and other eras, each culminating in a rococo phase. This notion parallels the French Academy's understanding of the rococo as a condition one could fall into. As Burckhardt puts it, "Rococo, when one accepts the word, always arises when the real meaning of the forms has been forgotten and the forms themselves are continually and erroneously used for their effect. Consequently, there exists a Roman, a Gothic, and so forth, rococo."[247] The desire to account for a rising and falling of artistic movements was most

[246] Although the German scholars who had done much to establish the rococo-Louis XV connection did not infer negative associations in their work, everyday speech still occasionally retained innuendos of ridicule. French writers of the period typically shied away from such terminology. In England, the word is believed to have arisen by 1836, as in a literary journal usage which refers to the rococo as one of two new French "slang phrases." Here the term is applied to "every thing which bears the stamp of the taste, principles, or feelings of time past." See *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 13 (January-June 1836): 214. While the pejorative sense still remained in general British parlance in the early twentieth century, art historians retained a more reserved use of the term.

[247] Jacob Burckhardt, "Über die vorgotischen Kirchen am Niederrhein," in *Niederrheinisches Jahrbuch für Geschichte, Kunst und Poesie*, ed. Laurenz Lersch (Bonn: Henry und Cohen, 1843), 1:192.

evidently put forward by Burkhardt's protégés Wölfflin and Schmarsow.[248] Beyond the realm of art, later philosophers such as Oswald Spengler would also think along similar lines of cultural high points and low points.[249]

From the outset of his 1888 work, *Renaissance und Barock*, Heinrich Wölfflin made clear his understanding of the baroque and rococo periods as representing a disintegration of the Renaissance.[250] The formed becomes formless, rules get relaxed, and a strict style gives way to a free and painterly one. In particular, the view of the rococo as a light and playful version of the baroque is evident when the author remarks that "The early baroque style is heavy, massive, restrained and solemn. This pressure then gradually begins to lift and the style becomes lighter and gayer; it concludes with the playful dissolution of all structural elements which we call *rococo*."[251]

As the Goncourt brothers were also to do, Wölfflin heavily stressed the motion within the art works, noting that "The light skipping movement of rococo is quite alien to Roman baroque, which is ponderous and massive."[252] Overall, stylistic concerns remained of great importance to Wölfflin, who even insinuated that his main role was as a "historian of style."[253] August Schmarsow, another art historian and disciple of Burckhardt's, continued the stylistic inquiry into the rococo. In particular, he displayed a pervasive interest in the spatial aspects of rococo architecture, as when he spoke of "spatial structure," "spatial forms," or "spatial perception."[254]

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[248] Kimball would later insinuate that this desire did harm to such artistic works by attempting to force a formal agenda on them with a "vicious intellectualism." Kimball, *Rococo*, 6.
[249] See his *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Munich: Beck, 1922-23).
[250] Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, 15-17.
[251] Ibid., 17.
[252] Ibid., 36.
[253] Ibid., 17.
[254] Schmarsow, *Barock und Rokoko*, 349, 365, 383.

In addition to art historical scholarship, German dictionaries did much to promote the understanding of the rococo as a style. Georg Nagler's dictionary of artists, under an entry for Meissonnier, spoke, for example, of a "rococo style" and of "fantastical, senseless figures."[255] This modern fashion was for Nagler the product of the first Western artist to search for true beauty by disregarding symmetry.

Yet to suggest that all nineteenth-century accounts of the rococo were unfavorable would be to overlook the ambivalence of the period. Conceptually, the 1800s both continued to ridicule the rococo, and yet in particular instances the period developed a new-found admiration towards it. In certain circles the nineteenth century was laboring hard to recast the rococo as a pulsating, agitated and mobile style of art. At the forefront of this pre-Impressionistic attitude in art history were the Goncourt brothers, who were providing the most ebullient literature in defense of rocaille, and by their time, of the rococo. Moving away from the rococo's initial connections to *rocaille* and its associated metaphors of grotto and garden shell-work, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt sought a more formal understanding of the dynamic and physical movement discovered in the artwork. Their aesthetic notions did much to define positive ways of thinking about the rococo, even up to current times. While prior understandings of the era, though still latent then, stressed the connection between a genre of ornamentation and the reign of Louis XV, certain nineteenth-century art historical accounts rewrote the rococo through lenses inspired by changes in their period.

Although not involved in defining or taking a stance on the terms *rococo* and *rocaille*, the Goncourt brothers ushered in a singular and striking account of the period through their literary descriptions of the works of Watteau, Boucher, Chardin, La Tour, Greuze, and Fragonard.[256]

[255] Nagler, *Künstler-Lexikon*, 10:54-55.
[256] Goncourt, *French XVIII Century Painters*.

Their analysis of Watteau, for example, is remarkable, could never have been achieved a century before, and provides a language of criticism that still haunts art historical descriptions of the rococo to this day. In the brothers' account, the eighteenth-century painter gets presented as a visionary and a magically-inspired genius-poet. The products of his imagination are likened to those of Francesco Colonna's Poliphilo. A key to his fantastic vision remains the ingredient of grace.

> Watteau renewed the quality of grace…. And it is not simply that Watteau brought this grace to life, delivered it from quiescence and immobility, bestowed upon it an agitation, a quivering, but it seems also, in his art, that it is a grace which pulsates in accordance with a rhythm, that its balanced progress is a dance drawn onwards by some homophony.[257]

This grace is interpreted as transcending that of the ancients. While classical painters are presented as having a very bounded and material version of grace, the Goncourt brothers suggest that Watteau's understanding of the same phenomenon is subtly undefinable: "the grace of Watteau is grace itself."[258] Insinuating that classical artists remained limited to physical beauty, the brothers speak of charm and of souls of form in labeling Watteau's handling of the physical body. As might be expected, the authors discern such grace to be self-evident in Watteau's women, particularly in his reposing women. Here indiscrete high heels, receding breasts, and playfully slender fingers get mixed with the painter's tonal intensity and painterly luster to provide an ambiance more atmospheric than real.

Of specific interest is the attitude displayed toward the setting, it being referred to as a "stage."[259] The deliberate connection to theater becomes further underlined in the footnote reference to the architect Jean-Jérome Servandoni, whose theatrical décors are referred to in

[257] Ibid., 1-2.
[258] Ibid., 1.
[259] Ibid., 2.

terms of their magical touch. This theatrical stage not only frames the activities of the painted actors, but also provides a setting for Watteau's mental activities themselves. War in particular gets lifted from a world of bloodshed and loss of life and translated explicitly into opera. Canon shots act as an interlude in between scenarios of flirtation. Town fashions take center stage in the so-called "theatre of death."[260] This theatrical turn away from the real to the imaginary couldn't be more plainly put than when the brothers proclaim "But what is the use of an imagery derived from the spectacle of the world where the inventive faculty is strong enough to create its own world, its own poetry?"[261] Present too is the notion of a time outside of time, of a dream in which time is caught sleeping. Watteau, presented as a divine painter, continues in a long-standing western tradition of artists seeing themselves as second Gods. This deification gets transposed onto the subject matter as well, wherein women become goddesses and the earth a paradise.

In a rare use of the term *rocaille*, the Goncourt brothers continue a discussion of the idea of Watteau as a tailor: "With what grace these skirts have been gathered up, how delightful the rocaille of the folds and the narrow bodices, tantalizing sheaths of silk, a fastness, nevertheless, that yields fugitive glimpses of the youthful bosom!"[262] Here the folds of a skirt become the setting for rocaille work in a clearly metaphorical departure from that term's original connotations (fig. 8).

Not only the imagery, but the people, too, seem to take a departure from the everyday, a leave from reality. Leisure, recreation, and aimless promenades characterize the brothers' descriptions of the figures. The characters' vision and intellect become imprecise and mimic the

[260] Ibid., 5.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid., 4.

clouds painted above more than anything tangible at hand. The connection between the activities of the persons and dreams gets invoked as well. The figures let their personal moods sway the course of action. Their gestures are more akin to ballet movements than to everyday actions.

The sense of a theatrical departure from real life continues in discussions of nature. The brothers' attitude towards nature is strikingly at odds with earlier understandings of rocaille and of the rococo. Nature presented in the paintings remains one indifferent to the people present. Furthermore, it appears to be lacking the qualities of life: "The tides are dead; the woods are silent. From the grassy earth to the heavens, beating the breathless air with their butterfly wings, a swarm of cupids flies, flutters, dances, frolics,…"[263]

In sum, the nineteenth century was more varied in its stance on rocaille than the previous century. On the one hand, descriptions of "vegetating fantasies" and "Pompadour peppermills" continued the humorous tenor of the early attacks made by Enlightenment authors. On the other hand, the perception of a graceful, sensual, and mobile art form removed from reality brought a new viewpoint to the critics' table. In both cases, however, rocaille fell into the folds of a powerful formal agenda, one which has shaped our understanding of the work to the current day.

Closer to now, and thereby obviously more distanced from the mid-1700s, came the twentieth century—a time span which did not exude a strong desire to chastise or to applaud the world of rocaille. Further advancements toward comprehending rocaille as a style were then at their most prolific, yet one generally cannot sense an emotional connection to the work under analysis.

[263] Ibid., 7.

When comparing the word *rococo* in the latest version of the French Academy's dictionary to the original entry, one notices a change of emphasis. In the 1935 work, rococo is defined as:

> un genre d'architecture, d'ameublement, à la mode au dix-huitième siècle, et qui est caractérisé par la profusion des ornements contournés et des rocailles. *Le genre rococo*. *Le style rococo*. *Une pendule rococo.* Il se dit figurément et familièrement de Tout ce qui est suranné, passé de mode. *C'est bien rococo*. Il s'emploie aussi substantivement. *Le rococo*.[264]

Here the connection to the reign of Louis XV has been removed and the forced qualities of the ornament take center stage. Also emphasized again is the word's use as an adjective signifying something old-fashioned. Developments in such lexicographical definitions give a good initial grasp of the continuities and changes in the general understanding of the terms now used. The provocative 1909 *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of rococo captures the extremity of twentieth century criticism: "Having the characteristics of Louis Quatorze or Louis Quinze workmanship, such as conventional shell- and scrollwork and meaningless decoration, excessively or tastelessly florid or ornate." Remarkably, in 1989 the *OED* was still circulating this description among other definitions of the rococo.

A recent German dictionary, the *Deutsches Universalwörterbuch*, similarly emphasizes the formal and stylistic qualities of the term along with the emotional aspects of artwork.[265] The rococo was created "according to the commonly used shell-work in the design of the time" and was distinguishable "… by delicate, lively forms and a worldly, merry or sentimental attitude of a characteristic style of eighteenth-century European art (including poetry and music) preceded by the Baroque."[266] Contemporary German etymological dictionaries likewise tend to stress the

[264] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, vol. 2 (Paris: Hachette, 1935), 536.
[265] *Deutsches Universalwörterbuch* (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 2003), s.v. "Rococo."
[266] Ibid., 1321.

excessive and stylistic character of the rococo when using phrases such as the "overloaded architectural style of the eighteenth century" or the "overloaded style of the era of Louis XIV and Louis XV."[267]

Of the twentieth-century academic definitions of the word *rococo*, however, the 1909 *Oxford English Dictionary* entry crowns them all in inappropriateness. The *OED*'s view that rococo decoration could be considered meaningless represents a profound departure from rocaille's origins. Since the age of the Greeks, ornament has provided the occasion for architecture to present the significance of the world around it in its most beautiful manner. This possibility was still at play in rocaille ornament, despite the increasing challenges to it. The next chapter, on ornament, will implicitly develop a rejection of the idea that rococo decoration could be considered meaningless.

Conclusion

Many an author has devoted significant attention to the national characteristics of rocaille. The most prevalent belief asserts that rocaille was born in France, flowered in Germany, and then made its way to a host of other countries and continents. From "adaptation," to "transformation," to "adoption," the nature of rocaille's travels gets discussed differently from writer to writer. Less pronounced and yet significant to this international resonance is the conversation between host and guest. Germany, for example, which was already well steeped in a tradition of fantastical ornament related to seashells, surely saw kindred elements in French rocaille.

[267] Wolfgang Pfeifer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1989), 3:1436; Elmar Seebold, *Kluge: Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 770.

In essence the merger of these two traditions was an artistic one, and the theoretical milieu of the early-to-mid-eighteenth century was noticeably devoid of any prose written in defense of rocaille. Subsequent writers in the Enlightenment quickly took advantage of a missing theory, utilizing abundant words lambasting rocaille. Without any scholarship to counter the attacks, the critiques became a common way by which to view and perceive the phenomenon. To lack a written theory, however, is not tantamount to lacking an implied theory. Many elements of rocaille thinking can be found in the discourses of the time. Even direct associations, as manifest in the world of treatises on theater, can be made.

Beyond the lack of specific supporting literature, another challenge to uncovering a more authentic notion of rocaille remains in the terminology employed in subsequent reviews of the material. While multiple recent accounts see in rocaille a stylistic, a formal, or a spatial set of circumstances, these modes of analysis were foreign to the earlier period. Foreign too was the term *rococo*, which attempted to supersede a host of eighteenth-century words that had been used previously. The connotations and denotations of the words from rocaille's own time offer a richer approach to the material than later terms and methodologies. Furthermore, the view of rocaille architecture as presenting elegant, mirthful, or superfluous scenery adds difficulty to the task of unveiling rocaille.

As if interpreting one of nature's own creations, discussion of rocaille's discontinuance parallels the interest in its beginnings. Exact dates of its demise have been offered, and its abrupt termination has been acknowledged. Nilson would even engrave a portrait of himself tearing up a rocaille drawing. If this history came to a swift halt regarding the production of engravings, it met an even more sudden finale in the world of theory. Unable to defend itself theoretically, rocaille's dissolution remained uncontested.

Readers of Enlightenment literature on rocaille were summoned, often via emotional pleas, to renounce evil, avoid the rocaille demon or plague, free oneself of foreign influence, and recognize errors in taste. In order for them possibly to do so, those readers being enlightened were provided with passages from Vitruvius, Cicero, and other classical authors who could uphold a reportedly more true, reasoned, and natural beauty. These denunciations took a more decisive and political turn when the elector of Bavaria himself mandated the end of rocaille production. Later, throughout the nineteenth century, the criticism grew, and yet it was also countered in consequence of a series of supportive reviews. By the twentieth century the desire to view the rococo through specific ideological lenses had become well established.

The following three chapters will investigate the role of architecture in rocaille engravings. Such architecture's interactions with depictions of ornament, nature, and theater will be scrutinized. In particular, the ornamental frame will turn out to have played a central role in this inquiry, and the work of Johann Esaias Nilson of Augsburg will provide the primary examples of the conditions to be discussed.

2 *Ornament and Architecture*

Introduction

A discussion of the significance of ornament's grounding in literary rhetoric lies at the heart of Chapter Two. Here the writing scrutinizes the architectural underpinnings of ornamentation in relation to rocaille by means of returning to select writings of Cicero, Quintilian, and other classical authors of rhetoric. The actual words used by these writers in speaking about ornament are of special concern. Thereafter the chapter turns to Albertian ornament and to the relation between ornament and appropriateness—a connection which comes under question in rocaille. The study then discusses the pertinence of Albertian perspective and emphasizes that method's relation to Cartesian method. Subsequently, the inquiry explores the picture frames which were all too significant to Alberti's perspectival manner of drawing and which in rocaille no longer seem to hold. Finally, this study addresses the challenges present in rocaille's precarious re-interpretation of the meaning of ornament, a change happening at a time when the understanding from antiquity of rhetoric as a master-discipline gave way to other interests.

At the core of Enlightenment critiques of rocaille was a perceived irrationality. Attacks concentrated primarily on the absence of reason—an absence which had reputedly contributed to a deficiency of form, order, principles, symmetry, and the like. Herder suggested, regarding rocaille, that critiquing and babbling had overtaken such reasoning.[268] Reiffenstein lamented the whimsical twists and turns of architectural ornament, and von Scheyb felt saddened by

[268] Johann Gottfried Herder, "On the Influence of the Belles Lettres on the Higher Sciences," in *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. Gregory Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 336.

ornament's departure from symmetry and regularity.[269] Condemnations of rocaille ornament such as these had embedded within them an aversion to the rocaille frame. The Enlightenment call for sharply defined borders, were they mental or ornamental, mirrored its request for the distinct and non-violated frame. This demand for a return to rational borders was furthermore present in the attacks on rocaille's relation to nature and to theater; those two aspects will be investigated separately in subsequent chapters.

Of principal concern here is the dilemma of the merger of architecture with ornament in rocaille. An engraving such as Nilson's *Façon Moderne d'une Porte de Jardin* (fig. 9) epitomizes this novel blending of ornament and its bearer. In this depiction, a man and a woman converse at the threshold of a rocaille gateway which is partially open to a perspectival garden scene beyond. As the piers framing the gate rise up, they meet a characteristic rocaille ornamental display in the area of the archway. In this upper zone it is difficult for the viewer to distinguish between where the architecture has left off and where the ornament has begun. The two realms have merged, with their individual identities having dissolved. To what extent, one might ask, can the ornament presented still speak eloquently, given that it now attempts to serve architecture less than to become it? Ornament, once considered the most sacred vehicle through which the built world could reveal its aspirations, had turned in the eighteenth century toward conversing increasingly more with itself than with the public that it had historically engaged. The tradition of western ornament's ability to speak to an audience was to receive the greatest challenge in its lengthy history ever.

[269] Reiffenstein, "Anmerkungen," 404-05; Scheyb, *Köremons*, 451.

Architectural Ornament and Ancient Rhetoric

Introduction

In order to understand the novelty of ornament's melding with architecture, this study here commences with a more careful look at the English word *ornament* and the Latin *ornamentum*. It goes on to suggest that a contemporary understanding of ornament must be kept at bay when looking back at either the ancient world or the eighteenth century. Thereupon it turns to investigate various central writers on rhetoric in antiquity, looking specifically at their understanding of ornament. Aristotle, along with the anonymous author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, as well as Cicero, Vitruvius, Quintilian and Tacitus form the core of this investigation. Propriety, which Aristotle suggested was to be obtained largely via the emotions and which figured heavily throughout the tradition of ornament, begins this discussion. Next, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*'s conception of a swollen style gets taken into consideration, for it had distinct resonances in eighteenth-century discussions of ornament. Cicero's work, which offered the greatest wealth of possible interpretations of ornament to subsequent generations and which would receive a multitude of challenges in the world of rocaille, subsequently gets examined, then Vitruvius is considered. Although in his treatise he placed more weight on *decorum* than on *ornatus*, Vitruvius would unfailingly come to the rescue of Enlightenment critic after critic. Later, Quintilian, who would echo Aristotle in his concern for the moral underpinnings of ornament, is studied. Tacitus' concern of a perceived decline in eloquence in his period, which would resurface many centuries later, completes the exploration.

In terms of language, while a contemporary understanding of the English words *decoration* and *ornament* often permits a good deal of interchangeability, their Latin root words, *dec-* and *orna-*, were certainly more distinct from each other. *Decorum*, of the family of *dec-*

words, spoke more to the classical mind of that which was seemly, suitable, fit, or proper. Thus Cicero, in *Orator*, could assert that "In an oration, as in life, nothing is harder than to determine what is appropriate. The Greeks called it *πρέπον*; let us call it *decorum* or "propriety."[270] A significant cognate to *decorum* was the adjective *dignus*, which likewise suggested something suitable, becoming, or proper. A secondary, yet less extensive understanding of the term *decorum* as something decorated, adorned, elegant, or beautiful also existed. This second meaning did not represent the sense of the term that Cicero was primarily advancing, but was commonly used by poets and historians such as Horace and Tacitus.[271] *Ornamentum*, of the family of *orna*- words, certainly shared an understanding of propriety and suitability with *decorum*, but it also held other key connotations, discussed below. Given that rocaille works were most often created in books of ornament, and that they were predominantly described by authors in the 1700s as *ornaments* in English, *les ornements* in French, and *die Ornamente* in German, this section will follow the terms back mainly via the *orna*- root.

The English word *ornament* emerges via Middle English, from the Old French *ornement*, from the Latin *ornamentum*, and from *ornare* – to adorn. As a noun, the word is first known to appear in English in the thirteenth century. However, etymologists trace its beginnings as a verb to a much later date—generally to the 17th century. One of the earliest architectural examples in verb form comes from Alexander Pope's 1720 translation of the Iliad: "The divisions, projections, or angles of a roof are left to be ornamented at the discretion of the painter, with foliage, architecture, grotesque, or what he pleases."[272] That this new verbal form of ornament

[270] Cicero, *Orator*, 21.70.
[271] "O Venus, queen of Cnidus and Paphos, abandon your beloved Cyprus and come across to the pretty shrine of Glycera, who summons you with clouds of incense." Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, ed. and trans. Niall Rudd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1.30.3.
[272] Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Alexander Pope, vol. 5 (London: W. Hunter, 1720), 117.

should occur at exactly the same time as the production of rocaille is striking. Once embedded within architecture, ornament had always allowed its setting the prospect of speaking with eloquence and distinction. This speech came from within and could never have been applied at the discretion of any artist, as in the case of Pope's painter. In the early eighteenth century, however, the possibility of ornamenting an architectural construction *from without* arose for the first time.[273]

The primary Proto-Indo-European root of ornament, namely *ar*-, is considered to have a number of definitions. Various etymologists from the last two hundred years have suggested possible meanings behind this root. For Franz Bopp (1830) *ar*- suggested "to go, to move"; for Max Müller (1862) "to plough"; for Hermann Güntert (1924) "to fit"; for Paul Thieme (1938) "to give, allot, share"; for E. Laroche (1957) "to fit"; for Georges Dumézil (1958) "to share"; for H. W. Bailey (1959) "to beget"; and for Emile Benveniste (1969) "to fit."[274] Although an understanding of these roots may contain a high degree of speculation, the fact that none of the possible meanings relate to autonomy or self-sufficiency should be noted. Here in these terms is a world of proper joining and of a fitting and uniting cultivation. Significantly, the same root *ar*- forms the Latin *ordo*, from which the English words *order* and *coordination* and the German word *Ordnung* arrive. The importance of order in the classical comprehension of *ornamentum* cannot be overlooked.

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[273] The increasing independence of ornament from its philosophical and physical integration with architecture paralleled a growing dismissal of rhetoric. Already in 1637, in his *Discourse de la méthode*, Descartes had banished rhetoric as an art concerned with probabilities rather than with self-evident knowledge. Later, in the world of eighteenth-century rhetoric, the dissolution of decorum became equally pronounced. As Robert Hariman notes: "…by repudiating rhetoric and constructing a pure aesthetic, the Enlightenment severed essential connections between discursive artistry and action. Decorum became merely a compendium of manners."[273] *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), s.v. "decorum."

[274] See Oswald Szemerényi. *Studies in the Kinship Terminology of the Indo-European Languages with Special Reference to Indian, Iranian, Greek, and Latin* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 125-49.

Equally vital to such a sense of order, however, was *κόσμος*, or *kosmos*, the Greek forerunner from which Latin words related to *ornamentum* had conceptually drawn. *Kosmos* spoke of order, propriety, good behavior, ornament, world-order, and government. In addition, *kosmos* brought to the foreground an existing beauty, ordered as it was, as in the specific sense of ornamenting women.[275] In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Pandora, having been fashioned by Hephaestus into a "beautiful, lovely form of a maiden"[276] was being bedecked on the orders of Zeus with cloth, gold and flowers: "and Pallas Athena fitted the whole ornamentation to her body."[277] Here the term *kosmos*, translated as *ornamentation*, clearly comes after the description of Pandora as being beautiful and lovely, i.e., beauty was already inherent to her. When considering ornament, one must keep in mind that *kosmos* referred to anything but an applied decoration, and it emphasized the relationship between particulars and the whole. *Orna-* words would consequently draw from this sense of a deep and significant ordering, whether it was of the world, of a government, or of behavior. Cicero could thus use *ornatus* in a manner akin to *kosmos* when he remarked "…when one world contains the marvellously ordered beauty (*ornatus*) that we see." [278] Likewise in *De natura deorum* he would proclaim the need to "secure for the world . . . consummate beauty and embellishment of every kind (*eximia pulchritudo sit atque omnis ornatus*)."[279] Cicero drew from the term's political sense as well: "because it [the

[275] "When she had decked her body with all adornment, she went out from her chamber …" Homer, *Iliad*, trans. A. T. Murray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 2.14.187.
[276] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, ed. and trans. Glenn W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 63.
[277] Ibid., 76.
[278] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Academica*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 2.40.125.
[279] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 2.22.58.

Athenian State] had no definite distinctions in rank, could not maintain its fair renown (*ornatum*)."[280]

Although a perception of architectural ornament as something which contrasts with function and with structure may currently be prevalent, such was not the case in classical times.[281] If anything, the *orna-* terms were marked by their necessity to that which they ornamented. The noun *ornamentum* in particular retained various shades of meanings. Primary to those meanings was the connotation of equipment or accoutrement. Thus Plautus could write the phrase "Without her decorations, but with all her fixtures and fittings," "sine ornamentis, cum intestinis omnibus," i.e. that she was naked.[282] In antiquity the connection between ornament and clothing was essential. An ancient and commonly held view of rhetoric was that it differed from dialectic in that the latter displayed things in a naked state while the former did so in a clothed fashion—clothed with ornament. Writing in the 1950s, Walter Ong would suggest that this was still the viewpoint of the layman, and even of the child: "Indeed, the idea that rhetoric adds ornament to speech which is originally or natively "plain" would seem to be the common one of the man in the street and quite assimilable by children."[283] The nakedness of dialect, like that of people, would require such *ornamentum* to proceed with daily living. In addition to conceptions of equipment and accoutrement, a second sense of the term in antiquity

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[280] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Re Publica*, trans. Clinton Keyes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 1.28.43.

[281] Wolfgang Müller recognized this when he stated "In classical antiquity, great weight was given to ornament, which was conceived of as much more than mere extraneous addition." *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, s.v. "style." Neither was it the case throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Rosemond Tuve has demonstrated that the Renaissance and, more specifically, Elizabethan conception of ornament did not necessarily refer to an applied decorative condition as the English term now primarily does. Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), 76.

[282] Titus Maccius Plautus, *Plautus*, vol. 4, *Pseudolus*, ed. and trans. Wolfgang de Melo (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 343.

[283] Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 277.

related more to ornamental equipment or to marks of honor. In this case, a militaristic sensibility would have been intended. When Suetonius referred to Julius Caesar as having "bestowed the emblems of consular rank on ten ex-praetors," "decem praetoriis viris consularia ornamenta tribuit," a sense of title or rank would have been present.[284] The emperors would have distributed such ornaments to distinguished men, such as triumphant generals, and these ornaments would have been considered as distinctions and as sources of pride.[285] Furthermore, in the world of rhetoric, *ornamentum* would have implied a kind of literary grace. This inference would allow Cicero to decry its absence: "A similar style of writing has been adopted by many who, without any rhetorical ornament, have left behind them bare records of dates, personalities, places and events."[286]

With the term *ornamentum* there could also exist the understanding of something added or of something that would give luster or distinction to the recipient. The recipient could be a person, an actor, an age, a country, a speech, a city, a building, or even an animal. One could not, however, assume that this addition would have been considered superfluous or that the recipient was lacking in something. On the contrary, the ornament generally called forth a condition or quality already present in the person to whom the honor was bestowed. Thus if a nation received an award for its loyalty, this honor was to confer glory upon the region which

[284] Suetonius, *Suetonius*, trans. J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 1.1.76.
[285] This connection to triumphal honors would lead historian Brian Campbell to define this particular aspect of *ornamenta* as "the decorations, costume, and status of a specific senatorial rank, quaestorian, praetorian, or consular,…" *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), s.v. "ornamenta." For a discussion of the nature and granting of triumphal *ornamenta* in Imperial Rome, see Richard Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 362-63, 366-70.
[286] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham (London: William Heinemann, 1942), 2.12.53.

already merited such a distinction through its actions.[287] "She [Sicily] was the first of all to receive the title of province, the first such jewel in our imperial crown.[…] No other nation has equaled her in loyal goodwill towards us…"[288] Likewise if an actor equipped himself with a costume, his role in the play dictated that action. Or if a horse required a harness, this accoutrement was necessitated by the work to be done.

In addition, one must also account for those more minor instances in which ornament did seem to speak of something inessential or unrequired. "Such a prince, protected by his own good deeds, needs no bodyguard; the arms he wears are for adornment only."[289] In cases such as this one, the term does not seem significantly to refer back to the individual involved. Nonetheless, the most prevalent sense of the term *ornamentum*, as a required adornment, necessitated an interaction between the ornament and its bearer. Thus, to use an architectural example, Vitruvius could say "There they placed statues of their captives in barbaric dress (*ornatu*) – punishing their pride with deserved insults – to support the roof…"[290] The ornamenting of the statues as captives in barbaric clothing spoke directly of the bravery and victory of the Spartans while it simultaneously aimed to rouse and prepare the citizens for the defense of liberty.

Going beyond *decorum*, *ornamentum* and its cognates thus largely called upon connotations of equipment, honor, military distinction, grace, and luster. *Ornamentum* had its synonyms: "praise" (*laus*), "honor" (*honos* or *honor*) and "light" (*lumen*) were tightly associated

[287] Just as we might today think of ornament as something to be fastened on to an unsuspecting surface, so too does our modern understanding of honor or praise imply such an action from the outside. In classical times the reverse was true, where an object might emanate honor or praise from within.
[288] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The Verrine Orations*, trans. L. H. G. Greenwood (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 2.2.2.11.
[289] Seneca, *Moral Essays*, vol. 1, *De Clementia*, trans. John W. Basore (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 1.13.5.
[290] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, trans. Frank Granger (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955-56), 1.1.6.8.

with *ornamentum* in Cicero's and Quintilian's writings. In addition, the importance in antiquity of the continuous and sonorous quality of ornament should be mentioned as *ornamentum* and *oratio perpetua* (continued and unbroken discourse) were closely related literary concepts.[291]

Future architects, from the Renaissance onward, explicitly looked back to classical rhetoric for an understanding of ornament. The alignment of architecture's highest aspirations, via ornament, with the tradition of oration, did not arise spontaneously out of nowhere. Classical authors had used terms such as *kosmos* or *ornamentum* to relate specifically to built conditions as well. Even Socrates had emphasized the underlying connection between speech and craft-related arts, saying

> Well now, the good man who speaks for the best surely will not say what he says at random but with some purpose in view, just as all other craftsmen do not each choose and apply materials to their work at random, but with the view that each of their productions should have a certain form. Look, for example, if you will, at painters, builders, shipwrights, and all other craftsmen – any of them you choose – and see how each one disposes each element he contributes in a fixed order, and compels one to fit and harmonize with the other until he has combined the whole into something well ordered and regulated.[292]

Yet it was in the Renaissance when the association between architecture and oratory became a highly articulated condition. By far the most studied of oratorical authors during that time was Cicero. Although his use of *orna-* words was primarily done in reference to rhetoric, on occasion he utilized the terms in an architectural sense. Speaking of a lamp-stand fashioned of precious stones, Cicero writes "…and it was so large that it was easy to see it had been made not to furnish any human dwelling but to adorn the most magnificent temple."[293] Cicero did not stand alone in this regard. Various other authors, including Vitruvius, had demonstrated the

[291] Ong, *Decay of Dialogue*, 278.
[292] Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. W. D. Woodhead, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New York: Bollingen, 1961), 503d-504a.
[293] Cicero, *Verrine Orations*, 2.4.65.

architectural potential of the term. Thus, in a chapter in *De architectura* on the planning of theaters, for example, Vitruvius remarks "The scenery itself is so arranged that the middle doors are figured (*ornatus*) like a royal palace."[294] Even though Vitruvius, as explained later on, concerned himself largely with *decorum*, overall these classical authors seldom spoke of ornament in a strictly architectural sense. The major emphasis of the *orna-* terms was firmly in the realm of rhetoric. And it was to this emphasis that architects in the 1400s and beyond would consistently turn time and again.

The remainder of this section will concentrate on key classical authors' conceptions of ornament. Select works by Aristotle, Cicero and others will be investigated in relation to the transformations in ornament taking place in the eighteenth century. Implicitly or explicitly, rocaille ornament would either mirror the sentiments of specific Greek and Roman authors or, more often, directly challenge them.

Aristotle

Famed Roman educators of rhetoric, notably Cicero and Quintilian, had leaned heavily on Aristotelian doctrine for their understanding of ornament in speech. Not only did Cicero, for one, repeatedly comment that he followed Aristotle's writings, but his own work clearly demonstrated a strong inheritance of ideas. For Aristotle, rhetoric and poetics had counted as productive rather than practical disciplines. Rhetoric was productive insofar as it aimed at persuasion in public speaking, and sought the arguments, diction, language, metaphor, appeals to emotion, and so forth, that were most likely to persuade different types of audiences.[295] As

[294] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, 5.6.8.
[295] On the significance of Aristotelian rhetoric as being indispensable to human existence, see Heidegger's 1924 lectures, *Grundbegriffe der Aristotelischen Philosophie*. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of*

Aristotle initially states in *Rhetoric*: "Rhetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever."[296] This beginning statement must be kept in mind for the entire tradition of ornament, for one can continually question who and how ornament is trying to persuade. Later in *Rhetoric*, Aristotle suggests that there are three kinds of proofs furnished through a speech: "The first depends upon the moral character of the speaker, the second upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind, the third upon the speech itself, insofar as it proves or seems to prove."[297] Thus the speech exhibits personal character, the audience has a certain disposition, and the persuasive capacity of the oration remains important.

Fundamental to the idea of a good speech is its propriety, which Aristotle speaks of as a category of *lexis*. It is not until the final section of *Rhetoric* that he introduces this concept of *lexis*, or diction or style. In that part, one can see that in addition to what an ornament might say remains the manner in which it could be said. Good *lexis*, for the philosopher, is clear and appropriate. Indeed, classical propriety, which found a disguised resurgence in eighteenth-century character theory, often referred to the appropriateness of embellishments in relation to the embellished. As Aristotle notes in reference to rhetoric, significant topics should not be dealt with in a casual manner and ornamentation should not embellish the ordinary at will.

> Propriety of style will be obtained by the expression of emotion and character, and by proportion to the subject matter.[298] Style is proportionate to the subject matter when neither weighty matters

Aristotelian Philosophy, trans. Robert Metcalf and Mark Tanzer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

[296] Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, trans. J. H. Freese (London: William Heinemann, 1926), 15.

[297] Ibid., 17.

[298] E. M. Cope has noted how Aristotle's conception of propriety is fundamentally a question of emotions. "In the *πάθη* [*pathē*, or moral affections] propriety manifests itself in the due adaptation of your language to the emotion that you intend to express in your "appeals to the feelings" of the audience." E. M. Cope, *An Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric* (London: Macmillan, 1867), 298.

> are treated offhand, nor trifling matters with dignity, and no embellishment is attached to an ordinary word; otherwise there is an appearance of comedy,….[299]

This would suggest that ornament needs to be in harmony with the subject-matter, and that a dignified situation calls for a dignified response, for example. The virtue of good *lexis* lies in a mean between excesses, where any ornament should be appropriate to the subject it is attempting to speak of.

Rocaille architecture builds upon and yet challenges the significance of appropriate persuasion as it is outlined in Aristotle's works. Still connected to the tradition of ornament-as-speech, rocaille asks one, in part, to continue to believe in the architecture presented. Clearly emotive, and invested in character, the ornamentation remains highly verbal in nature. Johann Esaias Nilson's engraving *Neues Caffeehaus* (fig. 2), e.g., demonstrates a typical rocaille ambivalence toward the persuasive role of ornament.[300] In this work a modest coffee house sits in the center of a landscape with three people, there being ample vegetation and various architectural fragments to either side. In defiance of perspectival convention, the artist allows the frame of the picture to dissolve into the ground of the scene represented. The frame melds into the earth on the bottom of the picture and into the vegetation on the sides. Due to this arrangement, the onlooker is encouraged to conceptually enter the illustration and there wander directly into the coffee house or its surroundings. This physical manner of persuasion, no stranger to baroque or rococo architecture, would suggest that the ornament at play, the frame in this case, is being utilized as a rhetorical device. The situation, however, is not so forthright.

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[299] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 377.

[300] For an in-depth discussion of the emancipatory character of ornament in this engraving, see Karsten Harries, *The Broken Frame: Three Lectures* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 76-79.

Several artistic decisions defy the picture's ability to persuade the onlooker productively. For one, the quasi-earthen and vegetal picture frame climbs the façade of the depicted coffee house which itself is enshrouded in vegetation, much like a ruin. As a result, the frame, refusing to be left behind, follows the viewer into the scene and directly attempts to convert the coffee house into a ruin, i.e., to make the architecture uninhabitable. For another, a small flag atop the main building is playfully placed in front of the frame rather than behind it as custom would call for. Acts such as these thus limit the possibility of one's true participation in the vista provided. The spectator's initial invitation to enter the representation and to be persuaded by it is met by a swift dismissal. The ornamental frame, in its attempt to overtake the architecture beyond, now becomes the primary subject. The frame's speech is no longer clear and appropriate, however, as Aristotle would have demanded of it; his warning that ornamentation not embellish the ordinary at will has here largely been cast aside.

Rhetorica Ad Herennium

Some two hundred years after Aristotle wrote, the anonymous author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* introduced a system of oratory that remained influential well into the eighteenth century. More practical in nature than Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the work concisely formalized Greek writings on oratory into a lecture-like treatise, giving them a new Roman guise. Book Four, with which this section is concerned, provides the oldest Latin inquiry into rhetorical style, the oldest known division of style into three categories, and fair room for the idea of ornament.

For the writer of *Rhetorica*, there had existed three kinds of style in oratory: the Grand, the Middle, and the Simple. While the Simple mode was described in terms of everyday speech and the Middle type as an in-between style, the Grand manner was defined by its ornateness.

The author writes: "The Grand type consists of a smooth and ornate arrangement of impressive words."[301] A discourse would belong to the Grand style if the most ornate words suitable to a given idea were spoken, were they literal or figurative, if the thoughts elicited were impressive, and if the figures of thought and of diction were to display grandeur.[302] The words the author uses to describe ornament most commonly occur in the *exorno-* form.[303] This latter verb, translated most often in terms of *figures,* carries a sense of equipping, yet also of beautifying and of ennobling. Here, in the grand manner of oration, the employment of solemn or majestic figures of thought or of speech remains a key component.

Later in the work, a faulty variety of style which in fact represents the Grand style taken to an extreme gets mentioned. This "swollen style" calls upon the metaphor of the body, where an inflation of language is compared to a physical swelling.[304] In this situation, the speaker has been misled by the appearance of grandeur and remains unable to perceive the speech's tumidity. Here one can notice the connection between ornament and decorum. Even the most ornate of speeches has its proper limits. Dignity, coming from the idea behind the speech rather than from the words themselves, gets achieved through ornament: "To confer distinction upon style is to render it ornate, embellishing it by variety."[305] Desired then in the *Rhetorica* is an appropriate intensity of ornateness in speech. Overall, the faculties of rhetoric and their attributes are

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[301] "Gravis est quae constat ex verborum gravium levi et ornata constructione." *Ad C. Herennium De Ratione Dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium)*, trans. Harry Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 4.11.6.
[302] Ibid., 4.11.13.
[303] A general note must be made with regard to the Loeb editions of ancient texts on oratory. The understanding of ornament in these English translations tends to emphasize the decorative and embellishing nature of the *orna-* related words. To a Roman ear, however, the terms would have held stronger connotations of equipment and of necessity. Likewise, the word *genus*, as utilized in the three varieties of oratory, is most often translated as *style*. This interpretation tends to flatten the original sense of the word which depended heavily upon its connotations of class, family, descent, and tribal group.
[304] *Rhetorica*, 4.15.
[305] "Dignitas est quae reddit ornatam orationem varietate distinguens." Ibid., 4.18.30.

summarized when the author declares that if "we follow these principles, our Invention will be keen and prompt, our Arrangement clear and orderly, our Delivery impressive and graceful, our Memory sure and lasting, our Style brilliant and charming."[306]

From the Enlightenment on, critics of rocaille were to utilize similar terminology to the *Rhetorica*'s description of the inflated kind of oratory. They maintained that swollen language, distended bodies, and disfigured architecture all beckoned a return to natural health. Actually, limits of appropriateness had been trespassed in both periods. Victor Hugo, for example, was not alone when he used vegetal and bodily metaphors such as that of swelling sap-infused granite to describe rocaille architecture.[307] Earlier, Laugier had isolated the contours of rocaille ornament as being capriciously disfigured.[308] In Germany, Krubsacius had spoken in terms of an "infection" of French taste in ornament.[309] Shortly afterward, Petrasch requested a cure for the disease of the illness of taste in ornament.[310] Winckelmann would argue in 1762 that a building without ornament—preferably simple ornament—was akin to poor health.[311] Indeed such allusions to bodily distortions and sickness were widespread in the eighteenth century and beyond. Although Enlightenment critics did not to my knowledge directly refer to the *Rhetorica*, their call for acknowledging the proper corporeal limits of ornamentation brings to mind the Roman text. The idea of ornament as a body whose health and proportions should be maintained

[306] "Quae si sequimur, acute et cito reperiemus, distincte et ordinate disponemus, graviter et venuste pronuntiabimus, firme et perpetue meminerimus, ornate et suaviter eloquemur." Ibid., 4.69.32. "Brilliant" here is the translation for the *orna*- derived word.
[307] Hugo, *Oeuvres complètes*, 20:180.
[308] Laugier, *Essai sur l'architecture*, 119-20.
[309] Krubsacius, *Gedanken*, 8-9.
[310] Petrasch, "Versuch," 96-97.
[311] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Anmerkungen über die Baukunst der Alten* (Leipzig: Johann Gottfried Dyck, 1762), 50.

is strikingly similar in the accounts from both periods. Just as a speech must conserve its natural well-being, so too, argued the rocaille censor, must architecture.

Cicero

Only a few decades after the *Rhetorica,* Roman orator and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero introduced the first extensive philosophical corpus written in the Latin language. In his three main works on oratory investigated here—*De Oratore*, *Orator*, and to a lesser extent *De Officiis*—he continued the *Rhetorica*'s understanding of speech as being composed of three styles while himself instigating a new comprehensive desire to unite the disciplines of philosophy and rhetoric. His early work on oratory, *De Oratore* (55 BC), addressed to his brother, explored the role of rhetoric and philosophy in public life. Most of the debate in this dialogue revolved around education, where he compared Roman and Greek methodologies.

In Book One of *De Oratore*, Cicero describes the necessary components of good oration. Oration is not an isolated field, the author suggests, inasmuch as both knowledge of very many matters and the ability to harness a distinctive style are necessary. The significance of the audience's emotions comes to the fore in particular when Cicero comments that "… because it is in calming or kindling the feelings of the audience that the full power and science of oratory are to be brought into play."[312] A speech must contain evident humor and wittiness and be of a culture suited to a gentleman. The orator should be ready and terse in being able to shun attacks and deliver his own, should speak with a certain charm and urbanity, and should be well-

[312] "…quod omnis vis ratioque dicendi in eorum, qui audiunt, mentibus, aut sedandis, aut excitandis expromenda est." Cicero, *De Oratore,* 1.5.17.

acquainted with all history. His delivery "…needs to be controlled by bodily carriage, gesture, play of features and changing intonation of voice" and he should display a profound memory.[313]

For Cicero, the speaker must fully comprehend that matter about which he speaks. Yet while a memorable subject would give a speaker great merit, Cicero asserts that this alone could not assure the orator of success. A certain combination of thinker and speaker is required, one could say, as when Cicero states: "It follows that, if the famous natural philosopher Democritus spoke with elegance [*ornate*], as he is reported and appears to me to have spoken, those notable subjects of his discourse belonged to the natural philosopher, but his actual elegance [*ornatus*] of diction must be put down to the orator."[314] This combination of intelligent thought and elegant oration is evident throughout *De Oratore*. Attacking Socrates in *De Oratore* III, the dialogue's protagonist, Crassus, desires to return to an understanding of wisdom present in Greek thought before the time of Socrates, a wisdom which embraced both thought and ornate speaking. *Ornatus* embodies that wisdom.[315] Crassus maintains that Socrates "separated the science of wise thinking from that of elegant speaking, though in reality they are closely linked together;…"[316]

Put in other terms, Cicero's ideal speaker must be clear and distinct on the one hand and attentive to rhythm on the other. Ornament provides such rhythm. Cicero offers a clear

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[313] "…quae motu corporis, quae gestu, quae vultu, quae vocis conformatione ac varietate moderanda est." Ibid.
[314] Ibid., 1.11.49.
[315] For Raymond DiLorenzo *ornatus* here means "much more than the techniques of ornamentation" and expresses something deeper about the nature of wisdom itself. See his "The Critique of Socrates in Cicero's *De Oratore*: *Ornatus* and the Nature of Wisdom," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 11, no. 4 (Fall 1978): 251-52. Here, the connection between the Latin *ornatus* and the Greek *kosmos* becomes crucial. That link between the terms reappears in Per Fjelstad's definition as well. For Fjelstad, Cicero's use of the term *ornatus* refers to "a quality that joins the ideas of cosmic order, physical beauty, and earthly power." See his "Restraint and Emotion in Cicero's *De Oratore*," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 36, no. 1 (2003): 39.
[316] "…sapienterque sentiendi et ornate dicendi scientiam re cohaerentes disputationibus suis separavit." Cicero, *De Oratore*, 3.16.60.

definition of *ornatus*, seeing it as a main component of graceful elocution: "Who then is the man who gives people a thrill? whom do they stare at in amazement when he speaks? who is interrupted by applause? who is thought to be so to say a god among men? It is those whose speeches are clear, explicit and full, perspicuous in matter and in language, and who in the actual delivery achieve a sort of rhythm and cadence—that is, those whose style is what I call artistic [*ornate*]."[317]

Along with dignity, common sense must also work in tandem with the thoughtful topic: "For this is the essential concern of the orator, as I have often said before, —a style that is dignified and graceful [*oratio gravis, et ornata*] and in conformity with the general modes of thought and judgement."[318] In this manner, the orator has much in common with the poet. Cicero acknowledges this kinship, especially with regard to ornament. The use of ornament in speech permits the poet and the orator to be allies, even counterparts.[319] Ornament does not get utilized at will and throughout a speech, but in particular locations: "…in order to embellish it [oratory] with flowers of language and gems of thought, it is not necessary for this ornamentation to be spread evenly over the entire speech, but it must be so distributed that there may be brilliant jewels placed at various points as a sort of decoration."[320] Overall one acquires the sense that

[317] "In quo igitur homines exhorrescunt? quem stupefacti dicentem intuentur? in quo exclamant? quem deum, ut ita dicam, inter homines putant? Qui distincte, qui explicate, qui abundanter, qui illuminate et rebus et verbis dicunt, et in ipsa oratione quasi quemdam numerum versumque conficiunt—id est quod dico ornate." Ibid., 3.14.53. On more than one occasion Cicero would refer to the power, divine or otherwise, of oratory. See also 1.8.30.
[318] Ibid., 1.12.54.
[319] Ibid., 1.16.70.
[320] "Ut porro conspersa sit quasi verborum sententiarumque floribus, id non debet esse fusum aequabiliter per omnem orationem sed ita distinctum ut sint quasi in ornatu disposita quaedam insignia et lumina." Ibid., 3.25.96.

ornament must engage one and satisfy one, as if one were listening to an enrapturing oration.[321] Ornament, like elegant speech, one concludes, must win our admiration and convince us as well.

Fundamental to Cicero's sense of ornament, especially in terms of its later reception by architects, is the concept of eloquence of speech. In *De Oratore*, Cicero distinguishes his overall view of eloquence from that of his brother Quintus. While Quintus held that an inborn talent and practice gave rise to eloquence, Cicero maintained that only through the careful training of well-educated citizens could such eloquence occur. Unlike other and more prominent arts, oratory remains more open for Cicero, given that it concerns itself with customs and everyday speech. The gravest of errors in his opinion would be to depart from "the language of everyday life," and thereby depart from the community's understanding of language's usage.[322] Communal and common sense underscore his understanding of a good speech.

Cicero's conception of the position of ornament within discourse is evident enough. He refers directly to *ornatus* as "the highest distinction of eloquence."[323] That an ornate speech should address more than the particulars of the debate remains clear in this text. Architectural ornament, like its oral predecessor, tells of more than the particular building which it engages. Ornament must present larger meanings. Cicero informs us that the most eloquent orations are able to "turn aside from the particular matter in dispute to engage in an explanation of the meaning of the general issue."[324] Like ornament itself, the ornate speech remains tied to its subject, yet is not bound to it.

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[321] With respect to audience reception of ornateness, Cicero explains that listeners gain the most pleasure from metaphorical expressions than from any other ones. The participant's discovery of new relationships between familiar terms is at the heart of this enthusiasm. Ibid., 3.38.155-59.
[322] Ibid., 1.3.12.
[323] Ibid., 3.26.104.
[324] "Ornatissimae sunt igitur orationes eae quae latissime vagantur et a singulari controversia se ad universi generis vim explicandam conferunt et convertunt…" Ibid., 3.30.120.

Eloquence, however, does not operate in isolation.[325] *Sapienta*, or wisdom, and *eloquentia* merge for Cicero when the philosopher performs publicly and persuasively. Yet while the orator's education should certainly include philosophy, it is with the poet that the orator has most in common.[326] When Crassus offers a final discussion regarding the principles of ornate eloquence, the examples are almost all from poetry. With respect to ornamentation as well, the poet is all but the orator's equal:

> The truth is that the poet is a very near kinsman of the orator, rather more heavily fettered as regards rhythm, but with ampler freedom in his choice of words, while in the use of many sorts or ornament he is his ally and almost his counterpart; in one respect at all events something like identity exists, since he sets no boundaries or limits to his claims, such as would prevent him from ranging whither he will with the same freedom and licence as the other.[327]

Despite the emphasis on education and training in *De Oratore*, the ability to speak eloquently ultimately transcends formal study. How will *ornatus*, the so-called "crowning glory of eloquence," come to the learned orator? It will ultimately come of its own accord, Cicero informs us.[328]

For students of oratory, Cicero observes, the demands are great. Knowledge of numerous subjects must be grasped. A distinctive style should be developed through both choice of words and their arrangement. The speaker's delivery must be accounted for and strength of memory must be cultivated. Cicero insists that the faculty of memory be responsible for the orator's ideas and phrases. Human emotions should be mastered, because great oratory's true home is not in

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[325] In addition to eloquence, one must recognize the importance of the body in understanding the word *ornatus*. In one particular passage Cicero differentiates between intrinsic *ornatus* and applied ornament. Proper health is evenly spread throughout a body whereas applied ornament is carefully distributed. Ibid., 3.25.96.
[326] "proxima cognatio cum oratoribus," or "next of kin to orators." Ibid., 3.7.27.
[327] Ibid., 1.16.70-71.
[328] Ibid., 3.31.124-25. As M. L. Clarke summarizes Cicero's argument: "If the matter is honourable, the words in which it is expressed will have a natural splendour." See his *Rhetoric at Rome: A Historical Survey* (London: Cohen & West, 1953), 60.

the orator but in the emotions of the listener—in the playing upon the feelings of the audience, or *affectus*. The duty of a speaker is thus to be able to persuade and convince. The proof of the speech, one could infer, lies in the sentiments of the listener.

These emotions provide a key to understanding Cicero's rhetorical devices. Regarding *affectus*, Cicero repeatedly asserts that he follows in the Aristotelian tradition.[329] Well acquainted with Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, he consistently gives the orator three principle responsibilities in *De Oratore*: *docere*, or to instruct, *conciliare*, or to persuade, and *permovere*, or to appeal to the emotions. This latter arousal of the emotions becomes ornament's most powerful tool, and Cicero stresses that an orator should never lose control of the audience's feelings.[330] The ornamentalist thus could be said to have as his prime task the creation of specific emotions.[331]

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Barely a decade after writing *De Oratore*, Cicero further elaborated on the nature of spoken ornament in *Orator* (46 BC). This work, written in defense of his own oratorical career, took the form of a letter addressed to Marcus Junius Brutus, a contemporaneous politician and orator. While a variety of traditional topics were touched upon, the main portion of the treatise dealt with *elocutio*, or diction.

[329] Cicero, *De Oratore*, 2.36.152; 2.38.160.
[330] Ibid., 2.77.310-12.
[331] Fjelstad would stress the "emotionally transformative" aspect of *ornatus*, the author viewing the orator's role as one responsive to the audience and simultaneously able to display emotions relevant to the speech. See his "Restraint and Emotion," 40.

In *Orator*, Cicero famously tells the reader that the speaker, in preparation for an oration, must be cognizant of three things: what to say, what order to say it in, and in what manner and style to say it in.[332] The first aims to prove, the second to please, and the third to sway. Corresponding to these three functions there exist three styles: plain, middle, and vigorous. The plain style allows for proof, the middle style for pleasure, and the vigorous style for persuasion. Yet it is not as if the plain or middle style is to forgo ornamentation, as all three are ornamented. The masterful orator should be able to understand and integrate these styles according to the circumstances, or, as appropriate. Nothing, the reader is reminded, is harder to determine than what is appropriate in a speech.

As it was in prior treatises from Aristotle onward, the orator here needs to be conscious of propriety, not only with regard to thought but also with respect to language. Cicero calls for distinctions to be made in speech that are based on conditions in life, ranking, position, age, place, time, and audience.[333] A certain non-universality arises when the speech considers its relation to the listener to be of prime concern. "The universal rule, in oratory as in life," Cicero would proclaim "is to consider propriety. This depends on the subject under discussion, and on the character of both the speaker and the audience."[334]

Concerning the three styles, Cicero begins with a discussion of the "Attic" orator, the one who is restrained and plain in speech. This style he compares to human appearance: "Just as some women are said to be handsomer when unadorned – this very lack of ornament becomes them – so this plain style gives pleasure even when unembellished.…"[335] In this style, even

[332] "…quid dicat et quo quidque loco et quo modo, …" Cicero, *Orator*, 13.43.
[333] Ibid., 21.71.
[334] "…semperque in omni parte orationis ut vitae quid deceat est considerandum; quod et in re de qua agitur positum est et in personis et eorum qui dicunt et eorum qui audiunt." Ibid., 21.71.
[335] Ibid., 23.78.

curling irons are rejected, Cicero goes on to say. The recollection of ornament as an adornment of women which would make visible an existing beauty is evident here once again. But this previous statement by Cicero should not lead the reader to think of the Attic manner of diction as ornament-less. On the contrary, Cicero notes that a good number of ornaments are well suited to this very kind of oration, just not richly figurative ones.[336] In the second and middle style, pleasure and charm weigh more heavily than in the first. All the ornaments are permissible to this type of speech—a speech which should contain a healthy dose of charm.[337] A speaker of the third and vigorous style demonstrates the highest level of strength in oratory skills. Cicero elicits the metaphor of a roaring stream to argue how magnificence, opulence, stateliness, and ornateness combine to give this orator the greatest power of the three.[338]

The reader finally learns, however, that to be truly eloquent in speech, the orator needs a combination of all three styles. One chooses the manner of speech according to the appropriateness of the situation. The eloquent speaker thus can "discuss commonplace matters simply, lofty subjects impressively, and topics ranging between in a tempered style."[339] When discussing the "man of perfect eloquence," Cicero reminds the reader that the orator's ultimate function is to speak ornately.[340] In bestowing ornament upon a speech, and in recollection of the story of Zeno, founder of the Stoic school, Cicero's orator is requested to relax the clenched fist of the logician and honor eloquence with an open hand.

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[336] Ibid., 25.84.
[337] Ibid., 27.92.
[338] Ibid., 28.97.
[339] Ibid., 29.100.
[340] Ibid., 32.113.

Two years after writing *Orator*, Cicero dedicated his treatise *De Officiis*, or *On Moral Duties*, to his son Marcus. As his last literary work, this practical treatise was composed under significant duress and political instability. Nevertheless, Cicero considered it his crowning achievement and used the discussion to reflect upon principles of moral duty and rules of personal conduct.

Although not a direct treatise on ornament, the work should be seen in connection to the previous writings of Cicero discussed here. Given that propriety manifested itself through morality in ancient rhetoric, a closer look at the moral duties of a speaker should be taken. As it did with Aristotle, the moral character of the speaker provided one of the three main proofs exhibited in a speech. The moral decision of what was appropriate he considered to be the central and most difficult to determine aspect of any oration. This emphasis on the moral nature of the orator would also reappear in the works of Quintilian.

In Book One of *De Officiis* the reader encounters a discussion revolving around the confrontation with moral goodness. Much as it does for Cicero in a conversation, moral truth should rise from one of four virtuous situations. When describing these components of that which is morally right, he maintains that

> ...it is concerned either (1) with the full perception and intelligent development of the true; or (2) with the conservation of organized society, with rendering to every man his due, and with the faithful discharge of obligations assumed; or (3) with the greatness and strength of a noble and invincible spirit; or (4) with the orderliness and moderation of everything that is said and done, wherein consist temperance and self-control.[341]

[341] Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.5.15.

Accordingly, a moral condition develops the true, conserves society, exhibits a noble spirit, or demonstrates temperance. Although Cicero maintains that the four are intertwined, each one gives birth to specific moral duties.

The parallel with Cicero's discussions on ornament should be noted. Through ornament one should be able to converse with a building. A building presents a certain degree of propriety and order, and so does the onlooker in return. Temperance, in terms of not making an unjust acquisition of wealth, also remains important, for excess of comfort leads us away from justice. The exhibition of wealthy ornament so as to exert power and influence, for example, should be held in abeyance.[342]

Beyond his touching upon the search for truth, Cicero also discusses a division of moral rectitude which directly affects any understanding of ornament: "That is the one in which we find considerateness and self-control, which give, as it were, a sort of polish to life; it embraces also temperance, complete subjection of all the passions, and moderation in all things. Under this head is further included what, in Latin, may be called *decorum* (propriety); for in Greek it is called *πρέπον*."[343] This propriety, as it is most commonly translated in English, remains bound up in the condition of being morally right, of which condition it is a sub-category. Cicero views propriety and morality as essential to each other and as inseparable.[344] Propriety itself is of a self-evident kind, Cicero tells the reader, as no abstract reasoning is required to see it. Just as

[342] As Cicero states: "Fine establishments and the comforts of life in elegance and abundance also afford pleasure, and the desire to secure it gives rise to the insatiable thirst for wealth." Ibid., 1.8.25. Developing this argument, Cicero suggests that people have to stand apart from over self-involvement so as to avoid becoming "traitors to social life." Ibid., 1.9.29.
[343] Ibid., 1.27.93. Classicist Walter Miller notes that *decorum*, Cicero's translation of *πρέπον*, suggests "an appreciation of the fitness of things, propriety in inward feeling or outward appearance, in speech, behavior, dress, etc." and that it is as difficult to translate *πρέπον* into Latin as it is *decorum* into English.
[344] Ibid., 1.27.93.

you need good health as a prerequisite for beauty, so too do you need virtue before you can obtain propriety.[345]

Returning to his account of beauty more closely, Cicero states in *De Officiis* that beauty is of two orders, male dignity and female loveliness.[346] With respect to dignity, he commends plain, unaffected manners, and states that the dignity of one's manner comes about as a result of a good complexion, which in turn arises from physical exercise. One should strive for a balance as concerns one's appearance—neither excessive in finery nor overly untidy. Personal clothing, regarding which the golden mean must be followed, falls under a similar category.[347] The appearance and apparel of a person and, by our extension, ornament of a building, should seek such poise.

This composure finds itself tied up with the concept of propriety, defined now by Cicero as consistency in living one's life.[348] Discourse becomes important in terms of providing a path to acquire propriety, and can be divided into two areas: the first one being oratory, and the second, conversation.[349] This would suggest that ornament too would have a dual function – one of speaking and one of conversing. The first function would be formal and for assemblies of people, that is, speaking to the general public, while the second would be informal, or among friends, as in a dinner conversation. Built upon propriety, ornament personified would need to know how to speak to a populace as well as to an onlooker. An ornament has to decipher when it is addressing a general assembly and when it is in conversation with a friend, and thus needs to

[345] "As comeliness and beauty of person are inseparable from the notion of health, so this propriety of which we are speaking, while in fact completely blended with virtue, is mentally and theoretically distinguishable from it." Ibid., 1.27.95.
[346] "Cum autem pulchritudinis duo genera sint, quorum in altero venustas sit, in altero dignitas, venustatem muliebrem ducere debemus, dignitatem virilem." Ibid., 1.36.130.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid., 1.31.111.
[349] Ibid., 1.37.132.

respect its audience. Good ornament should know what the subject matter of the conversation is – a serious matter should be treated with seriousness and an amusing matter with wit.

Moderation is also urged regarding the propriety of speech. Cicero advocates that one avoid displays of passion such as anger, inordinate desire, indolence, or indifference. Reason is employed to control the emotions.[350] Interpreting Cicero through architectural means, one can view ornament as a similarly tempered condition, one not showing rampant mental passions and one courteous and considerate of the other. Ornament must have manners, and therefore it must be born of a just mind rather than an angered one. Offensive speech must be avoided. Correct ornament, then, would maintain its dignity and repress its anger. This would suggest that the mood or morals of the ornamentalist might also be taken into account. Cicero further comments on the bad taste inherent in talking about oneself. Ornament should thus not refer to itself in solipsistic fashion. Accordingly, Cicero praises integration in public life over self-seeking interest, as when he refers to the Roman statesman Lucius Mummius, saying that the latter "preferred to adorn [*ornare*] Italy rather than his own house. And yet by the adornment of Italy his own house was, as it seems to me, still more splendidly adorned [*ornatior*]."[351] Where one's speech takes places remains of equally great rhetorical concern. Cicero explains how important both place and circumstance are to speech—a particular comment made during a meeting of official business might seem inappropriate in that setting, whereas during a particular athletic game it would not.

In sum, *De Oratore*, *Orator*, and *De Officiis* together provide the prime basis for understanding Cicero's view of ornament. Enlightenment authors frequently invoked these writings, among others, when denouncing rocaille ornamentation. Herder, for one, quoted the

[350] Ibid., 1.38.136.
[351] Ibid., 2.22.76.

Roman author so as to profess a belief that eloquence, and by extension, ornamented speech, should be born of a reasoned mind: "for as reason is the glory of man, so the lamp of reason is eloquence."[352] *De Oratore* had initially stressed the importance of eloquence in oration as well as of philosophy and rhetoric in education and of the emotions in the audience.

Later, in his work *Orator*, Cicero laid great emphasis on Aristotelian propriety. The character of the subject, of the speaker, and of the audience would need to be understood and exhibited by the orator. The man of perfect eloquence could call upon a range of ornamental manners according to the situation presented. As in *Orator*, the treatise *De Officiis* further developed the notion of propriety, with an emphasis now on an underlying moral rectitude which supported such propriety. Stressing the importance of everyday social life, Cicero spoke of morality as giving a kind of polish to one's actions. Overall, that propriety should be infused with a concern for balance and moderation, the author would argue.

These concerns were directly challenged by eighteenth-century ornament, as evidenced in rocaille's consistent merging with architecture. As rocaille played with the clarity of its elements and with the emotions of its beholders, the demands of eloquence came under great strain. Enlightenment criticism of rocaille would recognize this challenge and would point back to the need for a greater emphasis on clarity of thought, and with it, clarity of ornament.

By the eighteenth century, a confusion of ornamental manners would be the delight of many a rocaille engraver. In rocaille works, commonplace scenes were often rendered in a heavily ornate fashion. Lofty matters were shied away from and subjects such as historical

[352] "Ut hominis decus ingenium, sic ingenii ipsius eloquentia." See Herder, *Aesthetics*, 335. Translation is from Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Brutus*, trans. G. L. Hendrickson (London: William Heinemann, 1939), 15.59.

sagas, military conquests, or Scriptural passages grew scarce.[353] The Enlightenment could thus easily point to the inappropriateness of rocaille ornament, especially given that the three functions and three styles of proper oration described in *Orator* had, in rocaille, neither been adhered to nor kept distinct from each other.

Likewise, the perceived immorality of rocaille found its way into several Enlightenment condemnations.[354] Mertens, in particular, hoped to persuade the rocaille artist to cultivate an "inner sense," one which could separate moral excellence from vice.[355] The emphasis on moderation, the golden mean, balance, and poise that Cicero often returned to in *De Officiis* would re-emerge at the very heart of eighteenth-century criticism of rocaille.

Vitruvius

In between Cicero and Quintilian's writings on ornament, Roman author and architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio penned western antiquity's only known treatise on architecture. Recalling Greek sources, *De architectura libri decem* was dedicated to the Emperor Augustus and concerned itself with *decorum* moreso than with *ornamentum*. Nonetheless, both terms, linked as they were, can provide an understanding of Vitruvius' position on ornament.

In Book One of his treatise, Vitruvius divides the concept of *Venustas*, or "whatever is added to buildings for the sake of ornament or decoration" into six fundamental situations: Ordinatio, Dispositio, Eurythmia, Symmetria, Decor, and Distributio. Importantly, the category

[353] Discussions of the relevance of such allegorical scenes in art were prevalent in the period. While Winckelmann touted the study of allegory and Goethe held high regard for the related but separate concept of the symbol, Lessing argued against the allegorical in art. For a twentieth-century interpretation of some of these interactions, see Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977).
[354] Eighteenth-century moral philosophy enjoyed a significant interchange with artistic traditions in Germany where moral lessons were often based on a person's emotional response to works of art.
[355] Mertens, *Vorlesungen*, 33.

of Decor distinguishes itself from the other categories inasmuch as it both alludes to the behavior of the architect as well as to his or her makings. The Latin word *decor*, varyingly translated as "decor" or "propriety" in English, remains understood in architectural terms as something akin to the proper appearance of a building. Vitruvius indicates that decor is

> . . . composed, in accordance with precedent, of approved details. It obeys convention, which in Greek is called *thematismos*, or custom or nature. Convention is obeyed when buildings are put up in the open and hypethral to Jupiter of the Lightning, to Heaven, the Sun, the Moon; for of these gods, both the appearance and effect we see present in the open, the world of light. To Minerva, Mars and Hercules, Doric temples will be built; for to these gods, because of their might, buildings ought to be erected without embellishments. Temples designed in the Corinthian style will seem to have details suited to Venus, Flora, Proserpine, Fountains, Nymphs; for to these goddesses, on account of their gentleness, works constructed with slighter proportions and adorned with flowers, foliage, spirals and volutes will seem to gain in a just decor. To Juno, Diana and Father Bacchus, and the other gods who are of the same likeness, if Ionic temples are erected, account will be taken of their middle quality; because the determinate character of their temples will avoid the severe manner of the Doric and the softer manner of the Corinthian.[356]

Presupposing decor, then, is a respect for convention or principles – a fitting, suited, appropriate (*apta* / *prōprietas*) form of respect. A building dedicated to the moon receives her light aptly. A building honoring Mars acknowledges his vigor through its lack of embellishments. Facing the Heavens, Venus, or Bacchus, a temple acknowledges the particulars of the conversation it will engage in and, through decor, could be said to welcome its guest through its ornamental manners. Architecture can then be thought of in terms of manners. Just as one engages another person when standing in front of them, a building could be understood along similar lines. Does an edifice not indeed speak, tempered by its manners?

In *De architectura*, Vitruvius could only vaguely be seen to be setting the stage for an understanding of ornament as its own architectural category. In Book Four, Chapter Two, he accounts for the orders by describing their origins and prescribing their proper use. *Ornamenta*,

[356] See Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, 1.2.5.

defined as *imago*, comes to be understood as a likeness where, for example, triglyphs stand for beam ends and dentils for rafter ends. In that the triglyphs were described as panels or boards fastened to the ends of the beams, a conception of an applied veil could arise, as it certainly did in Renaissance thinking. Do these boards (*tabellas*) merely hide an ugly cut piece of wood or do they imitate it? Although Vitruvius acknowledges the importance of not offending the eyes in this concealment, if this were the only preoccupation, a plain plank would suffice. The plank should thus be envisioned in terms of ornamental manners. It does not receive the beam end indifferently, but rather acknowledges the conversation inherent in the meeting of the two elements.

Subsequent to this discussion, Vitruvius suggests a separation between building and ornament. However this notion is not consistent, for in Book Two he remarks that the ornamental orders are engaged in the building itself. By the time of the Renaissance, theoreticians would interpret his comments as suggestive of an ornamental façade. Alberti in particular would assert that the column was "the principal ornament without any doubt."[357]

Beyond the partial implication of ornament existing as a separate concern, Vitruvius, in the preface to Book Nine, speaks of a reliance on three classical authors: Cicero, with respect to rhetoric, Lucretius, regarding the origin of things, and Varro, concerning the Latin language. His conceptual connection to Cicero has been pointed out by other scholars and appears to be particularly revealing in regard to the concept of decor.[358] Vitruvian decor shares much of the same theoretical grounding with rhetorical decorum. In suggesting a theoretical dependence on

[357] Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 183.
[358] See Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Rome's Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 145-46; Alina Payne, "Reclining Bodies: Figural Ornament in Renaissance Architecture," in *Sixteenth-Century Italian Art*, ed. Michael Cole (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 218-39.

the literary arts, Vitruvius opens up the question of ornament to a much richer and complex discussion around the word *ornatus*.

Vitruvius insists upon grounding decor through that which precedes any architectural concerns. According to him work rich in decor must be composed in accordance with that which came before it, and it must obey convention (*statio*), which he reminds the reader was in Greek called *thematismos*, or custom (*consuetudo*) or nature (*natura*). In this sense, decor can never be isolated as its own category, since it is bound to its own nature as given by the customs of a culture. It is ultimately incorrect to interpret the Vitruvian sense of decor as suggestive of a self-contained category. Vitruvian decor drew from the ground that to which it had always already belonged.

In *De Architectura*, there are almost forty instances of *orna-* words. While most of these occurrences relate directly to architectural conditions, a few notable exceptions transpire. These other descriptions are vital to Vitruvius' conception of ornament and give one a greater understanding of the nature of the use of each term in its architectural sense. For example, in the very first usage of an *orna-* term, Vitruvius refers to the science of the architect as being dependent upon various disciplines and various apprenticeships common to the other arts.[359] Architecture thus comes to be ornamented (*ornata*) by these parallel disciplines and trainings. Shortly after, in a discussion on the training of architects, men who are equipped (*ornati*) in full armor acquire influence and attain their goals.[360] Here, the military connotations of ornament as equipment can clearly be seen. In other cases the architect must have a deep understanding of history so as to design ornaments (*ornamenta*) that can be explained to inquirers.[361] Ornament is

[359] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, 1.1.1.2.
[360] Ibid., 1.1.2.6.
[361] Ibid., 1.1.5.1.

in these examples far from self-sufficient, because it draws from the public's understanding of prior architecture. In a subsequent passage, *ornatus* is presented as the ornamentation of a matron. Despite a town's having been captured and its men killed, the women were not allowed to set aside their ornaments (*ornatus*).[362] The essentiality of ornament, even in times of duress, thereby gets emphasized here. In a related passage, ornament is interpreted as clothing. With reference to caryatids, as mentioned before, Vitruvius states that statues of captives in boorish dress (*ornatu*) were made to support a roof. [363] The association here between the clothing of the body and that of architecture is at its peak in the treatise. The statues of the prisoners require a certain dress in order to inform the onlooker of their savagery. Similarly, Vitruvius indicates, so does a column require its order so as to be comprehensible. Yet perhaps the most fertile example occurs when Vitruvius refers to nature as ornamenting, or equipping, human beings with perception.

> When, therefore, these matters were so first ordained and Nature had not only equipped (*ornavisset*) the human races with perceptions like other animals, but also had armed their minds with ideas and purposes, and had put the other animals under their power,…[364]

Humans warrant such ornament through their actions and achieve distinction over the animals as a result. Likewise, the more straightforward examples of architectural ornament in the treatise can be understood in terms of a warranted distinction. Ornament is called for by architecture's own nature, never applied, and it returns the favor by intensifying the beauty of that which it serves.

[362] Ibid., 1.1.5.13.
[363] Ibid., 1.1.6.8.
[364] Ibid., 2.1.6.10.

Thus while discussions of *ornatus* in Vitruvius are relegated to specific uses of the word and its cognates, more theoretical weight is placed by the author on *decor* and *decorum*. His overt dependence upon the rhetorical literary tradition of his day suggests that the debates on *decorum* and *ornatus* of his time could hold a key to interpreting his understanding of architectural ornament. In the rocaille period, however, the interest in Vitruvian-inspired architectural decorum would gradually wane. The older concern for following convention and for using approved architectural elements would be noticeably challenged. To which gods were rocaille engravings dedicated? Armed with Vitruvian passages, Enlightenment critics were quick to notice the lack of fit regarding the subject, of suitability, and of appropriateness in rocaille. The conversation architecture might offer would gradually change from one of dialogue to one of monologue. Untempered by her manners, a rocaille edifice was less interested in welcoming the participant than in acting introspectively.

While a few passages of *De Architectura* might tempt one to pronounce the origins of a schism between ornament and building in architectural theory, Vitruvius' insistence upon the background behind decor calls such thinking into question. Convention, custom, and nature would conspire to bind decor into a tradition which would not permit decor's self-sufficiency. As we know the Roman writer would have it, Doric temples were built for Minerva, Mars, and Hercules and not for Juno, Diana and Bacchus. However, as the ornamental frame of rocaille engravings came to merge indiscriminately with all varieties of architecture, the ornament began to lose its footing. Irrespective of the pictorial narrative, the deity involved, or the will of the architecture, rocaille ornament would arbitrarily engage with a multitude of situations at its disposal.

It was Vitruvius more than any other author from antiquity who most frequently resurfaced in eighteenth-century critiques of rocaille. His writings appealed to authors on a variety of grounds. For Krubsacius, Vitruvius clearly provided proof that the "extravagant arts" must be suppressed.[365] Von Scheyb saw in rocaille a departure from Vitruvian symmetry, and Penther spoke against an absence of Vitruvian reason.[366] Stieglitz lashed out at rocaille taste as lacking the required Vitruvian interest in order, eurythmy, symmetry, and the like.[367] Yet it was Vitruvius' commentary on the Roman grotesque that produced the most frequent appeals to authority. In a chapter on wall painting, Vitruvius had written

> Instead of columns there rise up stalks; instead of gables, striped panels with curled leaves and volutes […] For how can a reed actually sustain a roof, or a candelabrum the ornaments of a gable? […] For who of you can have above your roof tiles, buildings with columns and elaborate gables? For the latter stand upon floors, not above roof tiles.[368]

Quoting this exact passage and writing of the "complaints of Vitruvius," Fiorillo would condemn the grotesque ornament of rocaille.[369] More dramatic yet, Winckelmann would suggest that rocaille ornamentation had taken an even greater turn for the worse than the Roman ornamentation recipient of Vitruvius' ire.[370]

[365] Krubsacius, *Gedanken*, 5.
[366] Scheyb, *Köremons*, 451; Penther, *Ausführliche Anleitung*, 39.
[367] Stieglitz, "Versuch über den Geschmack," 198.
[368] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, 7.5.3-5.
[369] Fiorillo, *Groteske*, 8-9.
[370] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, trans. Elfriede Heyer and Roger C. Norton (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1987), 65.

Quintilian

Quintilian, famed Roman teacher, lawyer, and writer of rhetoric, completed his major twelve volume work, *Institutio Oratoria*, in 95 A.D. Although clearly building upon Cicero's writings, he stressed the humane aspects of the Roman rhetorical tradition more than his predecessor. Quintilian's work went beyond an understanding of persuasion as the lone goal of oratory and emphasized the importance of the moral character of the orator. Eloquence alone would not suffice in the quest for ideal speech. Rather, a person's own goodness would be the best form of ornament.

Key to a classical understanding of *ornatus* is that it did not represent an excess. This concept can be read very clearly in Quintilian's account of the importance in making a long narration appear short: "By 'just what is necessary' I mean not the bare minimum necessary to convey our meaning; for our brevity must not be devoid of elegance, without which it would be merely uncouth: pleasure beguiles the attention, and that which delights us ever seems less long, just as a picturesque and easy journey tires us less for all its length than a difficult short cut through an arid waste."[371] The simultaneous demands of brevity and of embellishment characterize Quintilian's writings, where an adorned narration must not be seen in opposition to a succinct one. The now modern conception of the decorative as something capable of being applied to a separate functional framework was simply not possible in antiquity.[372]

[371] Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. H. E. Butler (London: W. Heinemann, 1921-22), 4.2.46.

[372] Likewise, Robert Griffin understood that classical ornaments in speech had to be organically related rather than simply applied: "Concern for the organic relationship and metamorphosis of poetic ornaments and for naming them implies that the rhetorician's skill lies in combining constructs for a varied poetic affect that one can roughly identify, not just in ornamenting verse at random or in having static embellishments." Robert Griffin, *Coronation of the Poet: Joachim Du Bellay's Debt to the Trivium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 49.

Quintillian remarks that *ornatus* is the most wanted of virtues because it does not desire to be understood, but instead serves the appropriateness of the oration. Intellectual perspicuity (*perspicuitas*) may be the first of the rhetorical virtues, but *ornatus* here takes the upper hand. What is of importance for ornament is the idea that the speech's expression cannot fully be grasped. The ornament-as-speech does not present an autonomous whole which is neatly crafted and which refers only to itself. Such ornament demands that we engage with that which it presents rather than with itself.

For Quintillian, *ornatus* serves the fitting togetherness (*aptum*) of the speech. *Ornatus* could be said to produce a sympathetic reaction from the listener, both with the speaker and the theme of the speech. This sympathy is realized by an emotional link between speaker and listener. Quintilian suggests that an audience favors embellished speeches and that these speeches are listened to with eager concentration. [373] In particular, he suggests that an audience remains more likely to believe the speaker under such circumstances and to be swept away by such an oration.

In antiquity, ornate speech partook in the larger category of *narratio*. In relation to speech as a whole, *narratio* serves as *ornatus*' foundation. Quintilian defines *narratio*, or the *statement of facts*, as follows: "The *statement of facts* consists in the persuasive exposition of that which either has been done, or is supposed to have been done, or, to quote the definition given by Apollodorus, is a speech instructing the audience as to the nature of the case in dispute."[374] It is important to understand that this "statement of facts" is for Quintilian not neutral. It stands

[373] "For when our audience find it a pleasure to listen, their attention and their readiness to believe what they hear are both alike increased, while they are generally filled with delight, and sometimes even transported by admiration." Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 8.3.5.
[374] Ibid., 4.2.31. Quintilian later argued that it was this statement of facts, more than any other part of a speech, that merited adornment. Ibid., 4.2.116.

either in the listener's favor or against him. Governed by lucidity, brevity, and plausibility, the *narratio* should give the impression of absolute truth. On the one hand it should not be farfetched, Quintilian argues, and on the other it should refrain from the unusual. By not being farfetched, it remains true to its location. By not being unusual, it does not pretend to be anything other than what it is. By extension, one can see how the verbal components of architecture should not mask any truth of a building behind, but reveal that truth. Thus if we follow Quintilian's definition, the content to be persuaded of must exist in the past. Ornate architecture, governed by the laws of ornate speech and in turn *narratio*, is thus not a neutral element. It does not present its charms for their own sake but rather speaks, attempts to persuade, and looks to the past for its foundations.

Significantly, for Quintilian, *narratio* depended upon language. According to him, the language used must achieve a happy mean, or, "just what is necessary."[375] Brevity may be a virtue, he says, provided that it gets combined with eloquence. As mentioned before, Quintilian compares the delight of a long but picturesque journey to the difficulty of traveling through a short but arid wasteland.[376]

That architectural ornament also pursued this happy mean cannot be overstated. Part architecture, part sculpture, and part emblem, ornament had long negotiated with its neighbors without ever becoming one of them. This crucial intercommunicative role began to wane in the era of rocaille. Waning as well was the credibility of ornament. Attacks on the unbelievability of rocaille were frequent. Unsurprisingly, credibility (*narratio verisimilis*, *probabilis*) was a hallmark of a good speech in classical times. To achieve such believability, a speech would not

[375] Ibid., 4.2.46.
[376] Ibid.

relay anything adverse to nature. This virtue kept as its goal the convincing persuasion of the truth of any content.

Not far from any classical discussion of the nature of ornate speech is a literary argument regarding the role of emotions. As Cicero had said, the winning over of the audience divides itself into three levels in classical rhetoric: *docere*, *delectare* (*conciliare*), and *movere* (*permovere*), with the first aiming to please the intellect, the latter two being directed towards the emotions. Therein, *delectare* aims for a two-fold sympathy: with the speaker's topic and with the speaker himself. This charming or conciliatory manner must use gentleness in its approach, with metaphors frequently being called upon. *Movere*, however, utilizes greater force in its play with the emotions. The calm waters of *delectare* here become gushing rapids: "But he whose eloquence is like to some great torrent that rolls down rocks and "disdains a bridge" and carves out its own banks for itself, will sweep the judge from his feet, struggle as he may, and force him to go whither he bears him."[377] Here the audience is shocked, flows from one emotion to another, and gets moved into siding with the speaker. Overall, although these three basic forms exist, many gradations in between are also present.

In general, a very important part of classical ornateness of speech is the freedom to utilize digressions. Although optional, this handling of the theme must have some bearing on the subject of concern while it diverts from the logical succession of parts of the speech. Quintilian suggests that when a speaker uses a digression, he give the impression of having been swept aside by a particular emotion.[378] Thus not only does the orator wish to call upon the emotions of the audience, but also to demonstrate how his own emotions can control the course of his speech. In this circumstance, emotion gets to speak to emotion. Of the various types and lengths of

[377] Ibid., 12.10.61.
[378] Ibid., 4.2.104.

formal digressions, one stands out, namely, the emotional digression. This expression finds itself at the end of the narration and, according to Quintilian, is either cheerful or angry in nature.

Quintilian's writing calls attention to several aspects of ornament which came to a tipping point in the eighteenth century. Significantly, there exists a discernable tension between clarity and ornament in the author's work when he urges the orator not to allow himself to deviate from the virtue of clarity and succumb to that of obscurity. Helping to ease this tension, it can be perceived, was decorum, what one author would call "the guardian of moderation and common sense" or "the genial keeper of the peace."[379] Neoclassical critics of rocaille would suggest that just such a deviation had occurred in the mid-1700s.

Conceptually, Quintilian continues a classical understanding of ornament as having military connotations. It is no accident that he speaks of ornament as an effective weapon.[380] Significant as well for him is the fact that this ornament should appeal to the common folk, not just the scholar. Similarly, one can understand how ornament in architecture need not have a manual to explain its inner significance, but like a good conversation, should engage whomever is partaking of it.

With respect to the model orator, Quintilian adhered closely to Cicero's ideals, in particular to that of an *orator perfectus*. From the beginning to the end of the *Institutes*, he stressed the active role of the art of oration as Cicero had likewise done. In the preface to that work, Quintilian emphasized the public duty of a citizen-orator.[381] In the final section, he

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[379] *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age*, 1st ed. (New York: Garland, 1996), s.v. "decorum."
[380] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 8.3.2.
[381] "For I will not admit that the principles of upright and honourable living should, as some have held, be regarded as the peculiar concern of philosophy. The man who can really play his part as a citizen and is capable of meeting the demands both of public and private business, the man who can guide a state by his counsels, give it a firm basis by his legislation and purge its vices by his decisions as a judge is assuredly no other than the orator of our quest." Ibid., 1.Pr.10.

summed up the duties of the ideal orator: to defend the innocent, repress crime, defend the truth, direct the counsels of the senate, and to guide the people from error to better things.[382] As the twelve volumes represented a full program of lifelong education, the instructional nature of an orator's task could not be overlooked. Ornamented speech, as the highest form of oration, thus had as its prime goal the guidance of a populace (… *popularis error ad meliora ducendus*).[383] As a great mentor would do, ornament, too, should strive to form better persons. After spending many a word describing the nature of ornamented speech, Quintilian ultimately reveals that the good person's own nature would provide its own ornament to any speech, saying "And even though his imagination lacks artifice to lend it charm, its own nature will be ornament enough, for if honour dictate the words, we shall find eloquence there as well."[384]

Overall, the term *ornament* generally held positive connotations throughout antiquity. As George Kennedy notes: "To the Roman ear the word 'ornament' suggests distinction and excellence, the possession of resources ready for any challenge; it is a vital and useful quality which Quintilian says contributes first of all to the fame of the orator: 'in other aspects of rhetoric the orator is seeking to gain the approval of the learned; in this he seeks popular praise; he fights not only with showy, but even with flashing arms.'"[385] This ornamental quality, Kennedy suggests, acts as an aid to the orator's practical aims in that it draws the listener in and renders them captive to the speaker. At the heart of ornament, one can infer, is emotion. Just as ornament is to style for Quintilian, so is emotion to proof, suggests Kennedy.[386]

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[382] Ibid., 12.1.26-28.
[383] Ibid., 12.1.27.
[384] Ibid., 12.1.30.
[385] George Kennedy, *Quintilian* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), 81. The internal quote is from the *Institutio Oratoria,* 8.3.2.
[386] Kennedy, *Quintilian,* 81.

Clearly, Quintilian did not describe ornamentation as a superfluous decorative element. Time and time again, the Roman writer objected to what Kennedy later called "the soft decadence of style."[387] Importantly, Quintilian divided ornamentation into two stages, the first dealing with the choice of expression and the second with the means of that expression. In the first category, he said, a speaker might desire an oration of a certain length, mood, or tone, for example. In the second section, the orator could utilize elements such as metaphor, word placement, or figures to achieve the expression needed.[388] The appropriateness of particular expressions thus has methods or devices to carry them out. For Quintilian, ornament transcended comprehension and called upon lucidity, vividness, and polish as means to achieving a great speech. He noted that "the ornate is something that goes beyond what is merely lucid and acceptable. It consists firstly in forming a clear conception of what we wish to say, secondly in giving this adequate expression, and thirdly in lending it additional brilliance, a process which may correctly be termed embellishment."[389]

A variety of these aspects of Quintilian's thought were implicitly called into question in the era of rocaille. Actually, Quintilian's belief that the ornamental should not be conceived of in opposition to the brief or to the essential is significant. This division arrives historically in the wake of rocaille and positions itself in stark contrast to writings on ornament in antiquity. For Quintilian, great ornament could not be understood solely through logical language or through judgment. Ornament transcended logic, for *ornatus* did not have clear and distinct

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[387] Ibid.
[388] Much discussion is given to the use of metaphor as a trope which is used for the sake of ornament. Quintilian defines metaphor as the conversion of a noun or verb "from the place to which it properly belongs to another where there is either no *literal* term or the *transferred* is better than the *literal*." Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 8.6.5. This exchange of related words has the stirring up of feelings and the presentation of a vivid meaning as its goal.
[389] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 8.3.61.

decipherability as its aim. Later, in an Enlightenment world keen on marginalizing the indistinct, ornament's inability to be understood intellectually would come under attack. Thus Herder could reiterate the widespread criticism that, with the rococo, the imagination had overtaken understanding.[390] Yet this inability to be clearly understood was arguably *ornatus*' greatest power, or, as one writer understood it, the "most sought-after virtue."[391] With rocaille, however, the first steps toward the cultural marginalization of ornament were taken.

Quintilian stressed the emotional link between speaker and audience. Ornament in antiquity served this connection by conditioning the appropriateness of the speech. Pleasure, delight, and even admiration could contribute to the emotions of the listener. Later, rocaille ornament would play with this sympathy between architecture and audience. The ornament would invite the spectators to partake in the narrative depicted only to deny them full participation through the use of the broken frame. In Nilson's *Neues Caffeehaus* the representation of the earth melds into the ornamental frame and invites us to conceptually enter the scene (fig. 10). Yet the spatial ambiguities of frame, façade, and foreground, intermingled as they are, do not allow for one's full participation. Ornament's communicative role would begin to break down.

Finally, the concern for the moral underpinnings of good speech remains one of Quintilian's strongest contributions to rhetoric. According to him, good speeches emerge from good people. An orator could not hope to guide an audience if he had not learned to guide himself. Like a great teacher, ornament could strive to better its listeners and viewers.

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[390] Herder, *Aesthetics*, 335-36.
[391] Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study*, ed. David E. Orton and R. Dean Anderson, trans. Matthew T. Bliss, Annemiek Jansen, and David E. Orton (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 242-43.

By the eighteenth century, rocaille works would initiate the downfall of this guidance. Instruction would give way to an art which was largely self-absorbed and interested in the mechanisms of its own playfulness. A concern for honorable living, the backbone of Quintilian's orator, would be overtaken by an interest in artifice. Although society had been warned since antiquity about the detrimental nature of mute embellishments, this counsel would begin to fall on deaf ears from the eighteenth century on.

Tacitus

Although Cicero and Quintilian's writings on ornament in oratory certainly formed the core of the subject, other literature did delve into the topic as well. Tacitus's *Dialogus de oratoribus*, which consistently recalls Cicero, was one work on rhetoric which partially concerned itself with the theme of ornamented speech. The sense that Roman writers of the early Empire were living in an age of cultural decline was reflected in the writings of the period themselves, which publications returned to their so-called primitive beginnings of the third and second centuries B.C.[392] This deterioration of the classical tradition, present in the literature of Tacitus's era, grew out of what one historian has called a "loss of intellectual confidence and a retreat into exploitation of irrationality" in the culture of the time.[393] A significant work of this nostalgic period was the *Dialogus*.

The dialogue's main concern is announced at the very beginning: why has oratory diminished in eloquence? Tacitus calls upon Roman youth to dedicate themselves to the practice

[392] Michael Winterbottom has suggested that great oratory takes place in turbulent periods. Thus the decay of speaking in the time of Tacitus remained rooted in the peace of the time. See his introduction in Cornelius Tacitus, *Tacitus*, trans. M. Hutton and W. Peterson, vol. 1, *Agricola; Germania; Dialogus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 225-26.
[393] Gordon Williams, *Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 153.

of law and the profession of oratory so as to gain honor and distinction in their families.[394] To deserve the name "orator," the individual should have the "ability to speak on any and every topic with grace and distinction of style, in a manner fitted to win conviction, appropriately to the dignity of his subject-matter, suitably to the case in hand, and with resulting gratification to his audience."[395] These central themes of beauty and ornateness harken back to Cicero's writings. Ultimately, Tacitus indicates, the orator-to-be will never have the capacity to render a topic with fullness, variety, and ornamentation if he does not base his work in a study of human nature.[396] While the majority of Tacitus's remarks on ornament deal with ornamented speech, he does additionally call the reader's attention to the necessity for breadth of culture as a telling ornament in and of itself.[397]

The pronouncement by Tacitus that graceful and dignified ornamentation had declined in the oratory of his time uncannily mirrors the critiques of Vitruvius regarding the grotesque, and it foreshadows by more than a millennium the denunciations of rocaille during the Enlightenment. A nostalgic return to richness of ideas, suitability of style, and studiousness of human nature was called for in both the Roman and the later time periods. The question of rocaille ornament's ability to be eloquent came under significant scrutiny in the eighteenth century. A key text in this inquiry was the 1630 translation of the *Dialogus* by Louis Giry under the telling title *Des causes de la corruption de l'éloquence* (On the Causes of the Corruption of Eloquence).[398] In the wake of this translation, the eighteenth century would continue a keen interest in the redefinition of eloquence.

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[394] Tacitus, *Tacitus*, 8.4.5.
[395] Ibid., 30.5.6.
[396] Ibid., 31.2.5.
[397] Ibid.
[398] Tacitus, *Des causes de la corruption de l'éloquence*, trans. Louis Giry (Paris: 1630).

Conclusion

To be emphasized in any study of classical ornament is the importance of attempting to let then-current understandings of ornamentation shine through. The contrary approach, resorting to modern ideational divisions of a hapless ornament's being applied to an unwitting architecture could only result in a continued bathos. In antiquity, the possibility of ornamenting architecture by way of an action from the outside was simply not possible. While the Latin predecessors of the English word *ornament* shared common ground with the term *decorum*, they also departed significantly from it.

Essential to that departure was the connection between *ornamentum* and *kosmos*, where the sense of order—a world order, a governmental order, or a behavioral order—was crucial. The necessity of ornament, as sensed in antiquity, contrasts starkly with modern concepts of ornament as a meaningless addition.[399] Ornament in classical times was as indispensable as one's clothes were for participation in the public realm. Not only was ornament marked by its necessity, but it also reflected a beauty or honor already acknowledged to exist in the recipient. It thus brought that internal order, recalling *kosmos*, to a higher level of communal awareness.

Speaking at the outset of ornament's trajectory in literature, Aristotle had emphasized the significance of propriety in communication, paving the way for an entire writing tradition. Propriety would be marked deeply by emotion, whether it be related to the moral fabric of the speaker, the intended emotion of the speech, or the concern for the audience's feelings. By Roman times, and in the anonymous work *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, the division of oratory into three styles—Grand, Middle, and Simple—would first come about. The centrality of grand and

[399] As Richard Brilliant notes: "With the Romans, ornament and meaning ran the same race." See his "Als das Ornament noch mehr war als Zierde und Dekoration" in Isabelle Frank and Freia Hartung, eds., *Die Rhetorik des Ornaments* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2001), 32.

impressive figures of speech would permeate this treatise. Cicero later carried on Aristotle's conversation, developing the significance of the moral righteousness of ornament. Cicero would uphold appropriately ornate speech as the ultimate goal of the orator, where eloquence of tongue and the emotions of the listeners were of paramount relevance. Vitruvius would then elicit earlier concepts of propriety and utilize them in an architectural sense. An encounter with architecture was to be seen in much the same light as a conversation with another person. One's manners in this dialogue, naturally respectful of convention and principles, would need to be thoroughly attended to. Subsequently, Quintilian would take a step further by emphasizing the moral character of the orator. Good speeches could only come from good people, he maintained, and the orator would certainly fall short if only equipped with eloquence. By the turn of the first century, Tacitus would return to the question of eloquence and inquire after its apparent diminishment. An orator's own depth of cultural insight would become a central ornament in its own right.

In the eighteenth century, adversaries of rocaille selectively revisited classical dialogues dealing with rhetorical ornament. Whether it were the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*'s discussion of swollen ornament, Vitruvius' words on propriety, or Tacitus' lamentation of a decline in eloquence, a multitude of classical writings would be revived, sometimes explicitly and sometimes not, in the Enlightenment criticism of rocaille.

Alberti's Interpretation of Ornament

This section on Italian author Leon Battista Alberti's interpretation of ornament begins by investigating his connection to Cicero. Regarding phenomena such as ornament's relation to beauty, the connection between usefulness and pulchritude, and the function of the man of

perfect eloquence, Alberti clearly wishes to conjure up a conversation with his predecessor. He emphasizes the face of a building and holds that the main ornament of a building is the column. In rocaille ornament, one may observe, the column would become a favorite zone for playful versions of the orders. For Alberti, however, the orders receive notable attention, with the overall building itself being described as a body. As with the human body, he asserts, architecture needs its dress so as to take part in public activities. The perceived inappropriateness of rocaille ornament's public dress would, incidentally, be a recurring concern of Enlightenment authors. Finally, there is the matter of the separation between the theoretical outlining of ornamented architecture and the actual making of it.

One must acknowledge that Alberti's definition of ornament is, on the whole, less than clear and distinct. Multiple understandings with potentially contradictory results are possible. Nonetheless, his understanding of architectural ornament via the revived tradition of classical rhetoric would be the single most influential theory for the remainder of western ornament's trajectory. Among all ancient authors it was Cicero to whom Renaissance polymath Alberti turned for the most sustained dialogue. Whether he spoke of ideas on the moral obligation of ornament, on the question of appropriateness, or on the appreciation of beauty, Alberti depended greatly on Ciceronian theory. Of parallel importance, but to a lesser extent with respect to ornament, was Vitruvius. For Vitruvius, *decorum*, linked as it was to *ornamentum*, received much attention. For Alberti, though, ornament would be more central to his theoretical project. On the whole, Alberti's conception of ornament had little to do with any notion of decoration; instead, it retained greater affiliations with his interpretation of beauty.

Initially defining beauty (*pulchritudo*) and *ornamenta* together, Alberti declares:

> Now I come to a matter with which we have promised to deal all along: every kind of beauty and ornament consists of it; or, to put it more clearly, it springs from every rule of beauty. This is an

> extremely difficult inquiry; for whatever that one entity is, which is either extracted or drawn from the number and nature of all the parts, or imparted to each by sure and constant method, or handled in such a manner as to tie and bond several elements into a single bundle or body, according to a true and consistent agreement and sympathy—and something of this kind is exactly what we seek—then surely that entity must share some part of the force and juice, as it were, of all the elements of which it is composed or blended; for otherwise their discord and differences would cause conflict and disunity.[400]

Thus the force and spirit of the parts, in concert with each other, provide an overall beauty. This internal soul would, for Alberti, be innate to beauty. Ornament, likewise, would share this same intrinsic quality. With Vitruvius, one recalls, ornament related more heavily to its aptness in particular situations. With Alberti a greater sense, although tentative, of ornament's detachment from built order arose. As he put it, "…ornament may be defined as a form of auxiliary light and complement to beauty. From this it follows, I believe, that beauty is some inherent property, to be found suffused all through the body of that which may be called beautiful; whereas ornament, rather than being inherent, has the character of something attached or additional."[401]

Such a statement should not give one reason to rush to the conclusion that ornament is an inferior or applied condition. Veronica Biermann thus rightly questions the reading of Alberti against the backdrop of ornament debates of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a period during which the belief in a detached ornament was rife. Such more modern readings would invite an understanding of Alberti's notion of ornament as the starting point of a linear historical development.[402] The conception of a decorative ornament distinct from a real structure was no Renaissance discovery. Alberti's reliance on decorum, coming as it did from the rhetorical tradition, could not allow for that division. He desired to demonstrate the intrinsic morality of

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[400] Alberti, *Art of Building*, 301.
[401] Ibid., 156.
[402] Veronica Biermann, *Ornamentum: Studien zum Traktat "De re aedificatoria" des Leon Battista Alberti* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1997), 132.

buildings through decorum: "The greatest glory in the art of building is to have a good sense of what is appropriate."[403] In declaring that temples built in honor of male gods should exhibit *dignitas*, while those venerating female deities should pronounce *venustas*, Alberti echoes Vitruvius in the ancient writer's suggestion that virile and delicate deities should be accorded Doric and Ionic orders respectively.

When discussing beauty, Alberti explicitly speaks to Cicero, who stated in *De Officiis* that "there are two orders of beauty: in the one, loveliness (*venustas*) predominates; in the other dignity (*dignitas*)."[404] For Cicero, man's dignity could be embellished by his house (*ornanda enim est dignitas domo*), the house becoming a metaphorical ornament to human conduct. Alberti appears to play off this remark when he too uses the word *officium*: "we decorate our property as much to distinguish family and country as for any personal display (and who would deny this to be the responsibility of a good citizen (*boni viri officium*)?)."[405] Decoration of building and decoration of homeland and kinfolk here stand side by side. Although the connotations of *officium* had changed by the time of the Renaissance, with its predominantly Christian values, Alberti is attempting to see ornament through the lens of moral duty, as he interpreted ancient architecture to have been doing when he stated that the ancients recognized that different buildings should have different forms because they noticed how they differed from each other in their purpose and function. Underpinning this sense of moral obligation, the feeling that one ought to do something, remained the principle of decorum.

Both Alberti and Cicero directly took on this notion. Cicero conceived of *decorum* as fundamental to a moral understanding in "that it is inseparable from moral goodness; for what is

[403] Alberti, *Art of Building*, 315.
[404] Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.36.130.
[405] Alberti, *Art of Building*, 292.

proper is morally right, and what is morally right is proper."[406] In classical culture, *decorum* traveled between many of the literary arts, such as rhetoric and poetry, but was perhaps given greater conceptual status through the writings of Alberti. In terms of language, Alberti leaned on the verb *deceo* in numerous places.

As for the role of eloquent ornament in Alberti's writings, in Book Six of *De re aedificatoria*, the author tells us how qualities of grace (*gratia*) and attractiveness (*amenitas*) are to be elicited in architecture. According to him, these two characteristics emanate from an appreciation of beauty and ornament, but this appreciation could be said to find itself at odds with something like the use of a building. Here too, Cicero appears to be kept in mind, given that he described the main goal of a house to be its usefulness and that its visual impression remained of secondary concern. Alberti worked along similar lines; even the structure of his writing parallels this in how usefulness is dealt with in the first books and ornament in the last ones: *usus* and *pulchritudo/ornamentum* are given separate treatments. He states at the opening of Book Six that he has finished giving attention to those two aspects of architecture that speak to usefulness and strength, (*ad usum apta*) and (*ad perpetuitatem firmissima*), and that what remains is to see how grace and attractiveness might be called forth. The last chapter of this second section deals with restoration. This would appear to hint at the idea that we do not yet find ourselves in a world of applied ornament. If a chapter on restoration is included in a section on beauty and ornament, it could be as if in giving renewed life to elderly buildings we were bringing an intrinsic beauty to the foreground.

It has been noted that when Alberti lays out the canonic orders in fuller detail in the second part of his treatise, that, rather than referring to them as "the Doric, the Ionic" and so on,

[406] Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.27.94.

he speaks of them as the workings of the Dorians, the Ionians and the Corinthians.[407] Such a privileging of the maker over the object signifies a kind of verbalization of the noun. The canon as canon is cast aside to emphasize the evolving nature of a cultural construction. A canon needs no attentiveness to its age in that it remains timeless, and a treatise concerned with such a matter gives priority to the body of the making of a people.

The architectural moment which Alberti states to be of prime significance in terms of relating to the past is the face of the building. The appearance, and thus the ornament, of the face carries referential meanings, he says, and motions to a continuing tradition of a people. His noteworthy connection between ornament and history supports his view that the face of a people, and thus of an architecture, allows for and provides a suitable place for a conversation with the past. Accordingly, rather than speak of a Doric canon, one could speak of the Dorian family, whereby the internal dialogue between Alberti's *Della famiglia* and his architectural writing would become paramount. In the former treatise he outlined the family in terms of a social, political, economic and moral core to a culture, noting that the workings of a family allow those of a society to go forward.

In his writings Alberti chooses to portray an architectural *ornatus* type as had been done in ancient times with rhetoric. He links the two traditions when using terminology such as *concinnitas, collocatio,* and *numerus*, inasmuch as they mimic the same terms used by Cicero, who spoke of the *ornatus* of speech. Although one might be inclined to see Albertian ornament as a sort of inferior part of architecture, when one looks more closely at the rhetorical tradition that he allies himself with, a different emphasis emerges. In treatises on rhetoric the selection and choreographing of ornament was of the highest artistic merit. As Cicero introduces "the man

[407] Alina Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance: Architectural Invention, Ornament, and Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 72.

of perfect eloquence" he states that "the orator's function is to speak ornately."[408] By extension we can see that the architect's function is thereby also to build ornately. Alberti elaborates:

> For within the form and figure of a building there resides some natural excellence and perfection that excites the mind and is immediately recognized by it. I myself believe that form, dignity, grace and other such qualities depend on it, and as soon as anything is removed or altered, these qualities are themselves weakened and perish. […] For every body consists entirely of parts that are fixed and individual; if these are removed, enlarged, reduced, or transferred somewhere inappropriate, the very composition will be spoiled that gives the body its seemly appearance. From this we may conclude, without my pursuing such questions any longer, that the three principal components of that whole theory into which we inquire are number [*numerus*], what we may call outline [*finitio*], and position [*collocatio*]. But arising from the composition and connection of these three is a further quality in which beauty shines full face: our term for this is *concinnitas*; which we say is nourished with every grace and splendor [*decor*]. It is the task and aims of *concinnitas* to compose parts that are quite separate from each other by their nature, according to some precise rule, so that they correspond to one another in appearance.[409]

From this we can interpret *decor* as a kind of food for beauty. Recalling Vitruvius's understanding of decor, Alberti further comments:

> We have already noted the importance of the application of ornament in the art of building. It is quite clear that each building does not require the same ornament. With sacred works, especially public ones, every art and industry must be employed to render them as ornate as possible: sacred works must be furnished for gods, secular ones only for man. The latter, being the less dignified, should concede to the former, yet still be ennobled with their own details of ornament.[410]

According to Alberti's conceptualization, ornament therefore has a hierarchy of importance. Sacred ornament signifies more than secular ornament. The environs and participants of any architecture inform that architecture as much as they do in a speech, and a good building, like a good speech, must be attentive to its reception.

Unlike Vitruvius, who separated the ornaments from the columns and spoke of the former as inhabiting the region above the latter, Alberti tells us that the principal ornament in all

[408] Cicero, *Orator*, 32.113.
[409] Alberti, *Art of Building*, 302.
[410] Ibid., 244.

architecture lies in the column. In consequence, throughout its connecting the individual column parts from base to cornice, the entire *columnatio* becomes the *ornamenta*. Not only is this a departure from Vitruvius in terms of its scope, but also in terms of the role of imitation. Whereas Vitruvius speaks of a mimicking of wooden construction in the ornamental make-up of marble temples, Alberti makes no such reference.

The paragon of beauty for Alberti was to be the handsome Athenian youth. His body, produced by nature herself, was not to be judged beautiful as a matter of opinion, but as an immediate and secret sensation emanating from the mind. Architecture was to be conceived along similar lines: "For within the form and figure of a building there resides some natural excellence and perfection that excites the mind and is immediately recognized by it."[411] Along with majesty and gracefulness, beauty situated itself in the particulars of any agreeable edifice. Correspondingly implied is a consonance between the mind of the onlooker at judging the work and the inherent figure within the object being looked at.

Alberti speaks of ornament as a manner of adorning a building. When referring to the ancients, he acknowledges that their works were principally done as imitations of nature. When describing the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders, he adds that "following Nature's own example, they also invented three different ways of ornamenting a house, their names taken from the nations who favored one above the others, or even invented each."[412] His terminology very often refers in particular to the difference between the naked and the dressed body. In Book Nine, Chapter Eight, he speaks of how no person would wish to see a public building "naked of ornament."[413] Later in the same passage he indicates a procedural division in the act of building,

[411] Ibid., 302.
[412] Ibid., 303.
[413] Ibid., 312.

wherein the raising of the body should precede that of the dress, i.e., "The work ought to be constructed naked, and clothed later; let the ornament come last."[414] A further comment addressing the separation between the two reads "I would have the ornament that you apply be, for the most part, the work of many hands…" and "…set them up in an unusual and dignified place."[415] Buildings are or are not in want of ornament, he notes, ornament which is affixed and applied, and which dresses a structure behind. Furthermore, care must be taken so as not to apply ornament in error, as might happen in the case of a worthy temple receiving a painted façade. Appropriate ornament, it should be mentioned, need not be invented for a particular edifice, but can be procured, especially in the case of highly-regarded ancient statuary.

Alberti declares that the entire ornamental and architectural scheme must be understood well in advance of any building activity. Gone here is the medieval notion of a building which finds its expression through its making. As Alberti put it, "using scale models, reexamine every part of your proposal two, three, four, seven—up to ten times, taking breaks in between, until from the very roots to the uppermost tile there is nothing, concealed or open, large or small, for which you have not thought out, resolved, and determined, thoroughly and at length, the most handsome and effective position, order, and number."[416]

Overall, Alberti's stance on ornament is far from conclusive. Certain passages lead the reader to believe that he is a champion of ornament's distinction from architecture, while others reiterate the inseparability of the two. Rocaille's vacillation between a connection to its architectural setting and a separation from it adds to Alberti's inconclusiveness regarding ornament's precise role. Notable in his writings on architecture is the close association between

[414] Ibid.
[415] Ibid.
[416] Ibid., 313.

beauty and ornament. Ornament, he reports, whether of a human being or of an architecture, allows the latent beauty of the world to be experienced more fully. In ornamenting a house, for example, one ornaments more than just the architecture—one adorns one's own heritage. By way of the house, then, the good man can become appropriately adorned. With respect to these ideas of beauty and of morality, Alberti is in constant dialogue with Cicero. Ornament and moral duty stand out as inseparable concepts for both writers.[417]

Cicero's belief that the orator's highest function was to speak ornately would parallel Alberti's view that an architect's prime concern was to build ornately. Above all, for Alberti, the column would remain the principal ornament of any architecture. Again, like a handsome Athenian youth, the column would be appropriately dressed in order to partake of public life.

Enlightenment authors would be fond of criticizing rocaille depictions of column orders as lacking precisely this attention to appropriateness of public dress. The column or pier, given its direct symbolic connections to nature, and as especially manifest in the capital, would often be a site of significant ornamental freedom in rocaille works.

Gottfried Göz's engraving of just such a column serves as an example (fig. 11). Here, a pier-like structure is awash with acanthus leaves, shells, and grotto-esque elements. Volutes blend seamlessly into freely articulated parts of nature. An all-but-naked caryatid, symbolic of the indifference to Alberti's call for appropriate ornamental dress, bears the burden of the structure while tiptoeing on a mass of rocaille vegetation. In this engraving Alberti's principal architectural ornament has clearly taken flight, and adherence to the workings of the Corinthians remains a distant concern. More pressing is the use of architecture as a pretext for the playful

[417] Biermann expands on this connection when she interprets Alberti's sense of *ornamentum* as the connecting element between the moral-substantive and the formal-aesthetic level of architecture. Biermann, *Ornamentum*, 210.

presentation of ornament. In this instance rocaille merges with its architectural setting so as to overcome it. Such a desire for freedom, however, comes at the price of ornament itself.

Alberti's Perspectival Frame

An essential condition of rocaille was the recurring inability of the frame to successfully surround that which it should contain. When Fünck was to claim in 1747 that a rocaille work drawn in perspective would hold no beauty, he clearly wanted to draw from a tradition stemming from Alberti onward, of perspective's desired relation to beauty. In its search for the essential beauty of divinity, the perspectival method as outlined by Alberti depended wholly upon the frame for its meaning. The novel importance of separating an object from a subject through vision demanded the construction of such a frame for this distancing. The most crucial and earliest piece of literature regarding the importance of perspectival frames was Alberti's work *On Painting* of 1435-36, an item the contents of which would receive animated challenges in the work of rocaille artists.

On Painting had provided a literary distillation of developments into artificial perspective, or *perspectiva artificialis*, by teaching young painters how to produce convincing depictions of what appears to the eye by means of using mathematical means and a stationary viewpoint.[418] Although Brunelleschi first laid out this perspectival system, it was Alberti who wrote it down and made it more widely understood. Karsten Harries has called our attention to the anticipation of Cartesian method in Albertian perspective in that both required a loss of

[418] Renaissance *perspectiva artificialis* was a manner of drawing based on a single stationary eye's being placed at the origin of a linear cone of vision.

transcendence.[419] While for Alberti the ease of construction of perspective is crucial, for Descartes, the ease of understanding the picture before one is. Alberti would guarantee that we could master illusion by placing a frame between ourselves and that world. Likewise, Descartes would wish for our unfettered mind to render us masters and possessors of nature. Yet one must also recognize the significant differences between the two writers. Albertian perspective still ultimately sought to align human perception and understanding with God's vision.[420] According to Alberti, one could seek the divine through painting. For Descartes, painting hardly provided for such an opportunity.

Born in Genova in 1404, Alberti had been exiled along with his family from their native Florence since the beginning of the fifteenth century. He initially studied at Padua from 1415 to 1418 and later in Bologna. Eventually, in 1428, Pope Martin V revoked exile of Alberti's family and Alberti subsequently entered the papal court in 1431, there taking holy orders. The year 1434 marked his entrance into Rome, where he saw himself in a city of giants, a city unsurpassed since ancient times. Vowing to imbue Florence with the same majesty as Rome, he invested heavily in the culture of his family's home town. Beyond his architecture, Alberti was known for the intense diversity of his interests in writing: from the maintenance of a happy family, to horse training techniques, to comic narration of the life of the Greek god of satire, to games of mathematics.

His work *On Painting*, first published in Latin in 1435 and later in Italian, provided an early modern manual for painters. In particular, *On Painting* could be said to have helped

[419] Karsten Harries, "Alberti and the Age of the World Picture" (lecture, Yale University, New Haven, CT, February 4, 2003). This section is indebted to this lecture as well as to Harries' "On the Power and Poverty of Perspective" (lecture, Yale University, New Haven, CT, January 21, 2003).
[420] See Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louise Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 20-21, 30-31.

inaugurate an understanding of our world as a picture. As mentioned above, one could accordingly see Alberti as an important predecessor of Descartes. Albertian perspective affirms that a picture is something produced by, having its center in, and receiving its measure from a subject—bound by a frame. While his perspectival construction is based upon the distance from the viewer to the picture plane, it also receives its main measuring criteria from that viewer. The painter, standing in for the eventual viewer, needs to stop moving, blinking, and breathing to grant the singular eye an optimal degree of fixity.[421] A mechanical eye might indeed be preferable, given the tendency of human beings to twitch. With Alberti, a stationary viewpoint being unavoidable, the particular position of a viewer takes on much significance. Of additional importance and also needed is a flat globe; the centric line of Albertian perspective was inevitably a straight one.

At stake for Alberti was the use of mathematics as a tool for the art of painting and for the mastery of illusion. He declares "I will take first from the mathematicians those things with which my subject is concerned."[422] In general he stresses the importance of calling himself a painter, and yet a painter who draws from scholastic mathematics. Since mathematicians "measure with their minds alone the forms of things separated from all matter," Alberti proposes a different mode of measuring, one which requires a more sensate wisdom.[423] The visual realm takes center stage, inasmuch as Alberti's painter involves himself only with representing that which can be seen—seen through geometry and under the light of God.

[421] The combination of a framed view and a single viewpoint leads one easily to connect Albertian perspective with theaters that privileged the royal box, and with it, the royal eye. This topic will be saved for Chapter Four.
[422] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 43.
[423] Ibid.

Book One of Alberti's treatise states that a key initial component of this construction method is the plane. Planes, for that author, remain the home of all drawn figures, and they know nothing of depth. Nature gets described as a world of architecture-like planes, where the earth gets seen in terms of floor tiles and vertical elements serving as walls. The prime plane, however, remains the picture plane. This plane becomes the first act of the painter and is realized by inscribing a quadrangle of right angles onto a drawing surface. The result, metaphorically, is that of an open window. All perspectival painting thus begins with a frame.

Next, Alberti deals with the human body. According to him, the size of a depicted human figure is determined as is pleasing to the painter, and this figure gets divided into three equal parts, called *braccia*. The base line of the frame is then divided into segments composed of these *braccia*. Thus the circumscribing line of the frame immediately receives a human measure when the baseline of that frame is divided into parts. It is largely due to this act that one can speak of humans as giving their measure to perspective. The *braccio* itself was a commonplace unit of measurement in Renaissance markets representing an arm's length of fabric.

Following this measuring act, a centric point is located and straight lines connecting the centric point to the base line divisions are drawn. This centric point acts as yet another moment in which the perspective relates to the human viewer, given that the point gets placed at eye level and thus enhances the illusion that the spectator is also a participant. Here Alberti refutes previous understandings of perspective as false constructions. Instead, he proposes another manner of creating transverse lines "I take a small space in which I draw a straight line and this I divide into parts similar to those in which I divided the base line of the quadrangle. Then, placing a point at a height equal to the height of the centric point from the base line, I draw lines

from this point to each division scribed on the first line."[424] Just as arbitrary as the decision to size figures within the painting is the determination of the distance between the picture plane and the viewing eye. Once determined, that distance remains forever fixed. As he states, "Then I establish, as I wish, the distance from the eye to the picture."[425] Subsequently, Alberti tells the painter to draw "as the mathematicians say, a perpendicular cutting whatever lines it finds….The intersection of this perpendicular line with the others gives me the succession of the transverse quantities."[426]

When one uses Alberti's technique, measurements of the human body get transformed into the ground of the space depicted; e.g., the corporeal *braccia* become the painting's pavement. Human figures provide a natural measure to an unnatural perspectival construction. It is no accident that Alberti has called our attention to Protagoras's saying that man is the mode and measure of all things.

Of noteworthy importance in relation to subsequent treatises on perspective drawing is Alberti's placement of the centric line. This line, passing as it does through the centric point, establishes a principal limit. Human beings, provided they are standing on equally level ground, have their heads placed on the centric line and their bodies below it. Human action is thus something the viewer looks down upon. Certainly this concept would resonate with the significance of the privileged vantage point, as demonstrated by the royal theater box. Accordingly, Alberti could suggest that the painter who had mastered his perspectival technique could be considered a god among men. One can see how this relation between the viewer and human action will change in Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena's writings on perspective in theater.

[424] Ibid., 57.
[425] Ibid.
[426] Ibid.

In Book Two of his treatise, Alberti rearticulates his discussion of the picture plane through the guise of what he calls a veil. Here he discusses how painting is based on three elements: circumscription, composition, and reception of light. In order to practice good circumscription, or the drawing of the outline, the veil provides the painter with the most useful of aids. He elaborates: "It is a thin veil, finely woven, dyed whatever colour pleases you and with larger threads [marking out] as many parallels as you prefer. This veil I place between the eye and the thing seen, so the visual pyramid penetrates through the thinness of the veil."[427] Thin, but yet very present, the veil freezes the constantly changing appearance of things. Its unchanging nature is of prime importance to Alberti, for whom the experience of seeing should demonstrate constancy. His words are "Therefore the veil will be, as I said, very useful to you, since it is always the same thing in the process of seeing."[428] Located at the intersection between subject and object, Alberti's veil attempts to put all objects in their place.

On more than one occasion Alberti mentions how nature herself demonstrates the lessons that he wishes to give. Thinking analogically, he follows nature to outline the planes of a building, detects in nature the rules of foreshortening, and watches how nature reveals the lines, lights, and shades of her flat planes. That nature is ultimately an orthogonal construction remains clear to Alberti. For this author, circles are composed of angles, and the beautiful grace inherent in bodies is fundamentally a question of composition of planes. Nature thus gets seen as a "marvellous artificer of things" whose work it is to compose these planes.[429]

Concluding Book Two, Alberti turns to a discussion of *istoria*, a condition he finds deserving of ornament of the most exquisite variety.[430] This passage occurs in a discussion on

[427] Ibid., 68-69.
[428] Ibid., 69.
[429] Ibid., 72.
[430] *Istoria* as a term manifested connotations of history as well as of narrative.

the use of gold in painting.[431] Alberti rejects gold, one of the great metaphorical devices of medieval art—and an element defiant of perspectival depth.[432] "There are some who use much gold in their *istoria*. They think it gives majesty. I do not praise it. Even though one should paint Virgil's Dido, whose quiver was of gold, her golden hair knotted with gold, and her purple robe girdled with pure gold, the reins of the horse and everything of gold, I should not wish gold to be used, for there is more admiration and praise for the painter who imitates the rays of gold with colours."[433]

One can understand this rejection, given that gold challenges the metaphor of the window and of the frame as outlining an actual scene beyond it. Gold would take us past the here and the now and would destroy the illusion that Alberti's painter cherishes. That painter, using a sensate wisdom, can see neither gilded skies, nor grounds, nor halos. In returning to the author's commentary on the use of the veil, one can note how he repeatedly emphasizes the thinness of that veil. While the artificiality of the mediating screen is acknowledged, transparency is desired. Gold, however, emphasizes the thickness or materiality of the veil. It takes the scene out of the time we live in so as to point to an eternal time. Gold's vertical continuity between material picture below and divine reality above would be usurped by Alberti's horizontal continuity between observer and event observed.[434] Recall again how one is to look straight on at the heads of people depicted in a painting and then, after that, down at the actions they perform.

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[431] Ibid., 85.
[432] The light of God, once represented via the use of gold, had not disappeared for Alberti, but was now present in the world and manifest through geometry.
[433] Ibid.
[434] This insistence on horizontal head-to-head contact is reiterated in Alberti's choice of the head as the basis of human measure. This is a conscious departure from Vitruvius's use of the foot as such a measure.

Despite his general censure of the use of gold in painting, however, there is a notable exception made here regarding ornamentation. Given that ornament serves an *istoria* properly developed, the use of gold in ornaments joined to the painting is deemed acceptable.[435] The examples that Alberti gives are those of curved ornaments. "I say, I would not censure the other curved ornaments joined to the painting such as columns, carved bases, capitals and frontispieces even if they were of the most pure and massy gold. Even more, a well perfected *istoria* deserves ornaments of the most precious gems."[436] For Alberti, nature's works and bodies, no matter how curvaceous, are graceful due to their being composed of angles and planes. Thus his examples of ornaments, "columns, carved bases, capitals, and frontispieces," curved as they are, are removed from the painter's fundamental mode of working and can consequently evade disapproval.[437]

Doubtlessly, Alberti would have criticized rocaille engravings on similar grounds. Much as is the case with the use of gold, these engravings challenge the function of the frame and give weight to the presence of the picture plane itself. Additionally, the rocaille tendency to blur the distinction between the framing elements and the representations within them would disrupt the clarity of the pictorial illusion. A lack of concern for *istoria* and her ornaments is also prevalent throughout rocaille depictions.[438] The narratives of rocaille scenes retain a much more tenuous relation to the engravings than previous narratives once did. Although not an eighteenth-century

[435] Ibid.
[436] Ibid.
[437] Ibid.
[438] Significantly, Alberti believed that an emotional connection between the beholder and the subject could exist. "The *istoria* will move the soul of the beholder when each man painted there clearly shows the movements of his own soul. It happens in nature that nothing more than herself is found capable of things like herself; we weep with the weeping, laugh with the laughing, and grieve with the grieving." Ibid., 77.

invention, this departure of a picture from an integral narrative reaches new heights in rocaille, for the picture's story itself is often threatened to be overtaken by the intruding frame.

With rocaille works, the solitary eye required of perspective does not look through Alberti's veil but at it. It hesitates at the picture plane and is not led to believe in a world beyond. It thus satisfies itself with the engraved surface and understands that true inhabitation of the scene before it is impossible. The frame's interplay with the architecture depicted denies any momentary faith in the illusion presented. Although human figures are placed within the majority of these works, those persons are at times fictitious since the space they purportedly exist in is physically impossible and rife with visual paradox.

One last aspect of Alberti's theory of perspective warrants discussion vis-à-vis rocaille. In tandem with the importance of the veil and of the abolishment of gold was, for Alberti, the significance of the mirror. Although remarked upon in a peripheral manner, the subject of the mirror remains a central aspect of his conception of the painter's outlook. First, in a discussion of the function of eyes, Alberti acknowledges the relation of the eye to a mirror, saying "Nor is this the place to discuss whether vision, as it is called, resides at the juncture of the inner nerve or whether images are formed on the surface of the eye as on a living mirror."[439] Second, he advocates the use of mirrors in judgments of beauty in painting: "I do not know why painted things have so much grace in the mirror. It is marvellous how every weakness in a painting is so manifestly deformed in the mirror. Therefore things taken from nature are corrected with a mirror.[440] I have here truly recounted things which I have learned from nature."[441] Third, and

[439] Ibid., 47.
[440] The mirror here ensuring the geometrical properties of the scene viewed.
[441] Ibid., 83.

perhaps most weightily, as we shall see forthwith, he attributes the invention of painting to the mythical figure of Narcissus.

The metaphorical connection of the eye to the mirror is more than accidental. In its reflecting the world this eye is not subject to human error. It sees through human frailty, corrects "things taken from nature," and in doing so becomes more divine. It is a privileged eye, one incorporeal in its essence. The story of Narcissus, as told by Ovid, confirms this disembodiment. Narcissus, having spurned the loving advances of Echo and of Ameinias, embraces his own reflection only to end up not enjoying what he loves, yearning for his demise and getting transformed into the flower that bears his name. At its beginning, this fable provides the occasion for the protagonist to encounter a pool of untroubled water. This echoes Alberti's plane of transparent glass clearly enough. "There was a clear spring, like silver, with its unsullied waters, which neither shepherds, nor she-goats feeding on the mountains, nor any other cattle, had touched; which neither bird nor wild beast had disturbed, nor bough falling from a tree."[442] Unembraced, much like Echo's unrequited love, the waters remain at a distance from their pursuer. They capture Narcissus's visual attention, returning his love only to his eye. Perspective painting likewise receives its appearance from the positioning of the human subject in the world—and yet only gives a mono-sensory image back in return.

In the fable of Narcissus the water's seduction represents an unmanifested love. "There was grass around it [the spring], which the neighbouring water nourished, and a wood, that suffered the stream to become warm with no *rays of the* sun."[443] The warmth of the sun, and thus historically of love, remains absent. Narcissus is drawn to the location out of bodily need: his thirst. Yet this desire is quickly supplanted by a non-bodily thirst, for "while he was

[442] Ovid, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. Henry T. Riley (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1919), 103.
[443] Ibid.

endeavouring to quench his thirst, another thirst grew *upon him*. While he is drinking, being attracted with the reflection of his own form, seen *in the water*, he falls in love with a thing that has no substance; *and* he thinks that to be a body, which is *but* a shadow."[444] The incorporeal nature of this love is directly evident.

Alberti's perceptions and those of rocaille stood in sharp contrast. Alberti repeatedly remarked to his readers on the ease of construction of his method, but rocaille, often displaying dramatically curved minutia engraved on hard copper plates, represents anything but a facile method. Whereas Alberti's method necessitates a frame between ourselves and a world beyond, rocaille works made that mediating condition a subject of play. For Alberti, the earth's depiction as an assembly of floor tiles remained a core component of perspectival depiction. In rocaille works, on the other hand, such a tangible and clearly demarcated ground plane was either absent or reduced to a minimum. Whereas Alberti provided a picture plane, or open window, for the viewer to imagine a scene beyond, rocaille negated the invitation of the open window by altering the window's own capacity to reveal. Again, while Alberti spoke highly of *istoria*, such weighty narrative was not a hallmark of rocaille. For Alberti, the veil gave visual substance, however transparent, to the notion of the picture plane. Precisely that transparency would be abolished with rocaille.

A rocaille work such as Johann Wolfgang Baumgartner's *The Cellar* (fig. 12) would certainly challenge the role of Alberti's perspectival frame on a variety of levels. Baumgartner calls into question the idea that the viewer should impart a measure to the subject depicted. Furthermore, the need for a set distance from the picture plane gets rendered mute in rocaille, in which momentary stasis does not lead to greater revelation or greater understanding of the

[444] Ibid., 104.

whole. In *The Cellar*, then, the frame consciously disrupts itself and blends together with the architecture and the pictorial elements it attempts to contain. At first we might believe that inside this room there are two individuals savoring libations. Yet the frame, which borders this scene, merges at the top with an architectural pier that rests behind the lone characters. This ambiguity makes the reality of the room and that of the two figures a definite improbability.

In Baumgartner's engraving the play between the picture as an entity and the picture as a representation would give the veil a thickness undesired by Alberti. A similar thickness was also very present in the use of gold in painting. Alberti knew this and thus did not hesitate in shunning gilded surfaces. Rocaille works, by way of contrast, partook of one of the most gilded ornamental eras in the western tradition. Lastly, Alberti's mirror-eye, like Narcissus' pool, did not embrace the world it beheld. The surface of the rocaille waters, however, had clearly been stirred.

A different version of a picture frame can be seen in Nilson's *Das Kartenspielen* (fig. 13), where the erosion of Alberti's perspectival boundaries has taken full hold. In this engraving, a group of card players enjoy an outdoor table game in a semi-bucolic setting with village scenes in the background. The characters are situated on an Albertian and perspectivally constructed tile patio whose centric point rests in the center of a rocaille ornament behind the figures. Following the tradition of western painting, the ornament thus holds the most cherished position inside the depiction itself. At the base of the picture plane one finds a rocaille frame mixing freely with vegetal forms that are not in conversation with the tiles just beyond. As the frame turns up the sides of the picture the ornament blends together with architectural and sculptural elements. The frame ends, however, half-way up the sides, and it imparts to the sky the tall task of completing the picture's boundary. Central to the meaning of this "half-frame" is the fact that

one of the six card players has left the sunny terrace and retreated into the shadows of the foreground ornament to read a letter. Symbolically, this individual has directly brought the representational story into the foreground and thereby raised the significance of that frame to the height of the narrative beyond. Although still largely in darkness, the incomplete frame, along with its counterpart behind the card players, has here taken center stage.

Conclusion

Underlying the visual blending of architecture and ornament in rocaille are noticeable challenges to ornament's capacity for speech. Ornament's growing independence from its integration with architecture would mirror a gradual dismissal of rhetoric by the time of the eighteenth century.[445] Ever since Alberti's sustained literary conversation with classical writers on oratory, the knowledgeable post-Renaissance architect has looked to ancient rhetoric for an understanding of ornament. This study does not trace the significant evolution of that understanding, but, for the sake of brevity, only points to its beginnings in the work of Alberti. Early on, Aristotle had laid a cornerstone by stressing the importance of propriety in speech. Later, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* cautioned readers about developing ornateness to an extreme. Echoes of these earlier authors resonated in Cicero, who expanded on the moral aspect of speech, a condition which gives propriety its power. Thereafter, Vitruvius first architecturalized these concepts of propriety and put special weight on the manner necessary for such dialogue to take place. Following this, Quintilian returned to the question of morality, with renewed interest in the moral nature of the

[445] As Karsten Harries notes: "The curtailment of the rhetorical tradition and the death of ornament in the eighteenth century belong together." See his "Maske und Schleier – Betrachtungen zur Oberflächlichkeit des Ornaments," in Isabelle Frank and Freia Hartung, eds., *Die Rhetorik des Ornaments* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2001), 115.

orator himself. During the same epoch, Tacitus investigated the perceived demise of eloquence in public speech.

General warnings by classical writers on oratory regarding clarity, appropriateness, timidity, emotionality and so forth would find distinct resonances with Enlightenment literature on rocaille. Rocaille works would frequently challenge primary tenets of antique rhetoric such as the deep concern for narrative, the emotional dialogue between ornament and audience, or the moral instruction of a viewer. Recalling these debates from antiquity, but now expressing them in an architectural language, Alberti would suggest that the architect's highest calling was knowing how to build ornately. Ornament, which was interwoven with his understanding of beauty and morality, should imitate nature, show concern for its audience, and provide a site for conversation with one's past. His prime example of ornament, the column, would be a frequent representational element through which rocaille engravings would depart from his method of perspectival drawing. That method, however, was never advocated for architectural representation, occurring as it did in a treatise on painting. A carefully framed window between the viewer and the world beyond lay at the core of this mode of representation. Precisely that frame, along with its call for a stationary subject, a simple construction method, and a transparent picture plane, would come under attack in rocaille.

In its role as the most crucial ornament of the rococo, rocaille initially urges one to believe in the architecture which one has come to experience. In renouncing its ornamental premise and in mixing freely with architecture, however, rocaille starts to lose its persuasive capacities. Its significance as the prime metaphorical link between the arts loosens: Aristotle's interconnectedness of painting and poetry cannot hold. More and more this ornament mediates

not between the participant and the built world, but between itself and the architecture it once served.

That ornament should wish to persuade the viewer should not be taken for granted. Could one not envision an architecture which had no claims on a spectator and simply presented us with a self-sufficient beauty? In such a case, we would not need to listen to architecture, speak to it as a living thing, or display any emotions toward it. Its presence and our presence would coexist without dialogue. These rocaille ornaments represent the first main threshold toward such a speechless world. That the vast majority of books of ornament of this period contain no words should come as no surprise. Lessing's imploring of a division between painting and poetry would ring true in the world of rocaille as it did in the philosophy of art, but yet the existence of ekphrastic poems cannot be denied.[446]

Although not the first author to do so, Lessing had famously taken a departure from the conventional understanding, leading up to the middle of the eighteenth century, that painting and poetry were subject to the same rules. It had been widely acknowledged in prior times that the two arts differed in the mode and manner of their manifestation, but that they shared fundamentals of purpose and content. Antiquity had concurred. When kept in dialogue with each other, the sister arts compensated for each other's deficiencies. When separated however, as Lessing was to do in 1766, the muteness of painting and the verbosity of poetry unhinged themselves from their subjects and were exaggerated. The visual arts, and one should include architecture, lost their capacity for speech through such an act. Ornament, now having less use

[446] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und Poesie. Mit beyläufigen Erläuterungen verschiedener Punkte der alten Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Christian Friedrich Voss, 1766).

for its deep historical affinity with poetry, and consequently for Horace's simile *ut pictura poesis* (as is painting, so is poetry), was significantly altered.[447]

At first glance one might imagine the rhetorical aptitude of ornament to be superficial, a concealment of the honesty and truthfulness of direct communication. Such was the common argument against rocaille of the German Enlightenment. Aristotle, however, would not have agreed. Given that a typical public audience may be unable to follow exact proofs, may be distracted by irrelevant factors, and may be subject to doubt, the persuasiveness of the speaker, for Aristotle, takes the upper hand over knowledge. By extension, an ornamental scheme can be as erudite as its creators are capable of, but without the ability to persuade its audience, it remains lacking. Following Aristotle again, one would ask of any ornament that it follow three principles—that it display the character of the owner, that it take into consideration the emotional state of the beholder, and that it provide a sound argument (*logos*).[448]

For centuries the frame of mind of an architectural participant remained of central concern to the built world. Ornament would be called upon to elicit emotions, be they love, empathy, pride, surprise, tenderness, or the like. Better ornamentation could make one a better person. The moral character of the building's patron or owner could be felt through a decorative scheme, and the participant could not remain unaffected. This interest in eliciting a certain disposition of the onlooker is naturally best achieved in architecture that is well-tempered. Although many a work is unsuccessful in attempting to prove an underlying morality, the

[447] Horace, *Q. Horatii Flacci epistola ad Pisones, de arte poetica. The art of poetry: an epistle to the Pisos*, trans. George Colman (London: T. Cadell, 1783).
[448] In an architectural sense, one should understand that the term *character* refers to the owner rather than the architect. Given the contemporary assumption that the architect has something to say or that he must express himself, it might be challenging to see the owner's character as being most important. The understanding of the architect as scholar of emotions rather than expresser of them might be difficult to comprehend.

attempt or desire to speak is what remains most important. If ornament, as agent of persuasion, were to make one believe in the architecture which it was embedded in, any fusing by such ornament into that architecture would compromise the credibility of the argument. No praise of the rococo on account of its practicality, virtuousness, or good will is to be found. Rather, it was precisely a doubt of the mental and artistic capabilities of rocaille artists that flooded Enlightenment critiques.

As dictated by tradition, ornament's success should ultimately depend upon the emotional disposition of the audience. Certain exact emotions would be called upon where the persuasion at stake would occur by means of the spectators. Any beauty of ornament would thus not be an independent condition, but rather tied to the joy, sorrow, love or hatred—the emotions—of the perceiver. That particular participant might merely listen to and perceive what the ornament is communicating or, instead, might judge that condition. In either case, any ornament will end in its audience.

3 *Nature and Architecture*

Introduction

The interest in blending architecture with nature consumed Augsburg rocaille engravers thoroughly. In Nilson's *Spring*, for example, the ground and its vegetation intertwine with a cellar entrance, a balustrade, and a free-standing pier (fig. 14). Where one element leaves off and another begins is difficult to decipher. Architecture takes on certain characteristics of nature, while nature in turn receives the appearance of architecture. A disbelief in architecture's capacity to provide authentic dwelling contributed to this intermingling, as did the development of the artificial ruin which demonstrated a similar lack of confidence in the power of architecture to permit such dwelling. Rocaille's background in the artificial grotto further enhanced this fusion. As natural elements merged with architectural ones, a belief that nature should be scrutinized categorically would give way to an expression of nature's infinite richness and wondrous variety.[449]

This chapter commences with an investigation into the Biblical suspicion of architecture as eventually manifest in rocaille engravings. The writing presents the beginnings of a general doubt in architecture's ability truly to edify mankind. The absence of dwellings in Paradise, Cain's building of the first city, and metaphors persistently critical of architecture form the main body of this section. Subsequently, the text explores the continuity of such thinking in Nativity paintings. The chapter moves on to an understanding of the relationship of rocaille to

[449] Rocaille nature was not always converting into architecture, however. On occasion it was presented for its own sake, but always in an inventive rather than descriptive manner. See Meissonnier's *Livre de Legumes* (Paris: Chez Huquier) as an example of invented medleys of vegetables.

architectural ruins and to examine the widespread eighteenth-century fixation upon representing architecture in a state of decay. The following section discusses the avowed beginnings of rocaille in the garden grotto. Here in the garden the part-natural and part-architectural character of the grotto expressly gets extended into rocaille work. Lastly, the chapter turns to the prevalent symbols of the shell and the acanthus leaf. The sacred and secular connotations of these natural elements play a central part in rocaille's conceptual and visual make-up.

Enlightenment authors spared little in their literary assaults on the blending of nature and architecture in rocaille. At stake here was the very premise of what architecture stood for vis-à-vis the natural world. The condemnations that were made centered on the lack of rocaille architecture's ability to control nature. Reiffenstein targeted the willful yet indiscriminate merger of the natural with the unnatural. Mertens singled out the imprudent combinations of natural and fictional shells. For Cancrin, rocaille's use of the shell and the leaf was not born of true nature, but supposedly of an untrained inventive faculty.[450] While Enlightenment critics consistently objected to the unnatural quality of rocaille and of rocaille architecture, their more rational view of nature remained at odds with earlier conceptions of a miraculous natural world.[451]

Biblical Cities

In the rocaille desire to blend nature with architecture lies a strong suspicion and even subversion of the built environment. From denying architecture the capacity to distinguish itself from the natural world to allowing the built world to fall into a state of ruin, rocaille work places the

[450] Reiffenstein, "Anmerkungen," 401-02; Mertens, *Vorlesungen*, 39; Cancrin, *Grundlehren*, 302.
[451] Despite this fact, the Enlightenment would continue to marvel at nature itself as a wonder, e.g., Roger Schabol's commentary on nature as holding secrets, oracles, and treasures. Cf. his *La Pratique du Jardinage* (Paris, 1770), 5.

insufficiency of human construction at the forefront of its concerns. The overall disbelief in architecture draws from a long tradition, and, especially in the case of rocaille, from Scriptural writings related to Paradise.[452]

This part of the investigation deals with the rocaille suspicion of architecture paralleling the one emanating from the Bible. The section starts by looking at the ramifications of Cain's being the architect of the first Scriptural city. In the choice between two brothers, the farmer is selected over the shepherd to found the first city and to become the first architect. An indirect association between tilling the earth and making architecture arises from this choice. Later in the inquiry, metaphors of the city in the wake of Cain's construction of the city of Enoch are discussed. Apart from the account of the holy mountain Zion's representing the city, the majority of descriptions are disapproving. Tyre, Samaria, Dibon, and eventually Jerusalem itself are evoked in association with mankind's fallen nature. This distrustful attitude continues in the Christian art world, especially in Nativity scenes. There the significance of architecture as a ruin can distinctly be seen.

From its very beginnings onward, the Bible vacillates in its attitude toward the city. The city as a heavenly creation sits alongside the city as a product of the devil. A certain suspicion of architecture in the Bible derives largely from the idea that one's true home is not here on earth, not here in this less-than-Edenic world, but beyond. Cain, the agrarian son of Adam and Eve, the brother of sheep-herding Abel, is mentioned in the Bible as having built the first city. These associations of the city with Cain the fratricide and not with Abel the shepherd are worth noting.

[452] This desire paralleled a strong eighteenth-century intellectual interest in locating the actual site of Paradise. Challenges to the understanding that the original garden was to be found in the Ancient Near East were numerous. While Voltaire agreed with Jean Bailly, who argued for India as the actual site of all creation, George-Louis Leclerc placed the location close to the Caspian Sea, Herder proposed Kashmir, and Kant suggested Tibet.

To begin with, the city gets identified as being something cursed by the earth. Inasmuch as the earth will no longer relinquish its strength to Cain, he must turn to taking up the life of a vagabond. As God informs Cain in Genesis, "When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."[453] That the building of a city would be linked to being driven from the nurturing soil would seem, at first glance, unusual. After all, is the city not that which grants a sense of rootedness and of stability? One should recall Genesis. Very intentional in the Bible was the fact that there was no architecture in paradise – indeed, there was no need for architecture.[454] Only upon expulsion did the need for edifices and clothing come about. Architecture and the yearning to found cities thus initially got connected with mankind's fallen nature and his injudicious disobedience.

Although not a builder, Abel represents a more sensitive interaction with the earth than his brother, implicitly becoming the model for a paradisaical world existing prior to the problems of architecture. One might, as many have, dream of re-attaining a perfect architecture in paradise. Yet if there were no buildings prior to the world of thorns and thistles, one may feel obligated to question, in this Biblical context, if architectural perfection is truly possible. This question gets addressed in the story of the Tower of Babel, a narration which provides us with a memorable account of architecture as an act of vainglorious self-assertion: "And they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.'"[455] Reportedly, God inflicted upon those builders exactly what they were hoping to avoid. "So the Lord scattered

[453] *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha,* ed. Michael Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Gn 4:12.
[454] Likewise, the account of the holy city Jerusalem descending from Heaven is unambiguous in that John saw "no temple" in the city. Ibid., Rv 21:22.
[455] Ibid., Gn 11:4

them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city."[456] Significantly, this suggested that human beings should not have striven for a pretentious rivalry with divine perfection. A further implication remains, namely that architecture cannot provide humankind with a community – only God can supply this. The building as a center of a genuine society fails because of God's intervention – which in turn occurs because of man's pride. In most illustrations of this event, the tower dominates and disregards the city at its base, drawing a sharp distinction between the vertical and the horizontal. Indicated by the Scriptures is that the job of humankind was not to pierce the clouds with towers in the search for architectural perfection, but to do something more modest.

Prior to Babel, however, architect Cain had tilled the earth to plant seeds, eventually thereafter offering fruits from his garden to God. The account in Genesis speaks then of the earth opening its mouth to receive the blood of Abel from the hands of Cain. Accordingly, Cain, as the son of Eve, offers the metaphorical fruit of the devil tainted with the blood of his brother. The connection between the tilling of the earth and the building of architecture is also present in creation myths regarding other cities. In the Enūma Eliš, for example, the building of Babylon and the wielding of a pick were symbolically connected.[457] Similarly, in the founding of Rome, Romulus ploughed a furrow to demarcate and thereby sanctify the boundaries of the city-to-be.[458]

One cannot imagine an architecture which does not, as its first act, cut into the ground. While Cain's brother followed and watched over the beasts which had been born of the land and

[456] Ibid., Gn 11:8
[457] See W. G. Lambert, "Mesopotamian Creation Stories," in *Imagining Creation*, eds. Markham Geller and Mineke Schipper (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 53.
[458] See Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, vol. 1, *Theseus and Romulus; Lycurgus and Numa; Solon and Publicola*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (London: William Heinemann, 1914), 119-21.

named by his father, Cain, although seemingly more stationary, plowed the land in a manner recalling God's planting the garden eastward in Eden. The desire to be like God in the turning over of the soil could represent the outcome of pride as a response to the voice of the serpent which had offered divine knowledge to Cain's parents. Even though Abel's occupation would appear to have been a more ambulatory one than a sower's, to follow and watch over sheep is not on par with roaming the earth. In light of these associations, seed, blood, and building are allied, metaphorically speaking, and are no longer in harmony with the earth. Such are the beginnings of the attitude towards architecture in the Bible.

Overall, the Old Testament metaphors of the terrestrial city and of architecture are predominantly disparaging. With the aforementioned notable exception of the praise for Zion, cities are allied with phenomena such as prostitution, cesspools, ruins, violence, rusty pots, and bloodshed. In the account of Zion, by contrast, the city is identified as a holy mountain. In Psalm 48, a hymn of Jerusalem as the city of God, for example, one can find praise for architecture. "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King."[459] The relation between cities, primeval hills, and the defeat of chaos is a highly significant one and extends beyond Christian boundaries.[460] If the defeat of chaos prefigures the art of making in holy cities, then in mortal cities that disorder is allowed room to breathe. In rocaille work, recalling earlier thinking, the architecture depicted has not been clearly victorious over the forces of chaos. The intermingling of elements in a rocaille engraving

[459] *Bible*, Ps 48.
[460] For accounts of this connection prior to Christianity, see Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954) and James Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).

elicits understandings of a pre-ordered world where architecture is not desirous of asserting a dominance over nature.

More typical than the initial description of Zion, however, are the depictions of the cities for mortals in the Bible. Here, the close connection between trade among cities and prostitution comes to the fore again and again. In Isaiah 23, the outcome of Phoenician cities, and especially of Tyre, is accounted for. "At the end of seventy years, the Lord will visit Tyre, and she will return to her trade, and will prostitute herself with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth."[461] The connections return again with the image of Israel as a sexually unfaithful wife.[462] Likewise, with the allegory of the sisters Oholah and Oholibah, who personify Samaria and Jerusalem respectively, cities are portrayed as wanton women. Because of their adultery, the cities of Samaria and Jerusalem were to be punished with death. "Moreover this they have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary on the same day and profaned my sabbaths. For when they had slaughtered their children for their idols, on the same day they came into my sanctuary to profane it. This is what they did in my house."[463] Moab, or its capital Dibon, fared equally poorly when it was represented as a man being drowned in a cesspool.[464] In this section, sometimes referred to as the "Isaiah apocalypse," the concept of the city being overtaken by and returning to nature also emerges. The Bible speaks here of an unnamed city in relation to primeval chaos: "The city of Chaos is broken down, every house is shut up so that no one can enter."[465] Far removed from the Garden of Eden, the city in general is perceived as a destitute and ruinous place: "Desolation is left in the city, the gates are battered into ruins."[466] Much like

[461] *Bible*, Is 23.
[462] Ibid., Ez 16.
[463] Ibid., Ez 23.
[464] Ibid., Is 25.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Ibid.

the very terrain that God had banished Adam and Eve to, the city remains an inhospitable setting. "For the fortified city is solitary, a habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness; the calves graze there, there they lie down, and strip its branches."[467] Architecture has at such a point indeed ceded to nature.

The Old Testament goes on to contrast this perception of architecture with the strong city of Jerusalem. Nonetheless, this image of the strong city does not persist for long. Ezekiel indicates that the people of Israel have transgressed against God. He calls them "a rebellious house" and goes on to say that the Almighty is going to lay waste to the architecture of Israel and to hand over Jerusalem to strangers. Reportedly, God has indicated "I will avert my face from them, so that they may profane my treasured place; the violent shall enter it, they shall profane it."[468] In the same section a recollection of the bloodied hands of architect Cain surfaces: "For the land is full of bloody crimes; the city is full of violence."[469] Later in Ezekiel one encounters the city described both as a pot and as a city within a pot. In Ezekiel 11, the leaders of the people speak of their big town in Zion, noting that "this city is the pot, and we are the meat."[470] Having false confidence in Zion's imperviousness, they assure the inhabitants of the city's safety. Thirteen chapters later the allegory of the pot returns as Jerusalem is to be boiled in a pot while assailants attack it. "Take the choicest one of the flock, pile the logs under it; boil its pieces, seethe also its bones in it."[471] The city as place of blood shedding gets mentioned again in the prophecy against Jerusalem, the bloody city. "You shall say, Thus says the Lord GOD: A city! Shedding blood within itself; its time has come; making idols, defiling itself."[472] As a totality,

[467] Ibid.
[468] Ibid., Ez 7.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Ibid., Ez 11.
[471] Ibid., Ez 24.
[472] Ibid., Ez 22.

these comments show that, apart from the initial description of Jerusalem, the Scriptural city is largely portrayed as a prostituted, drowned, ruined, violent, rusty, and bloody environment.

The Biblical suspicion of architecture continued over time, especially in scenes portraying the Nativity. Painters throughout Christian history were to place Nativity scenes in a ruin, such as, for example, a dilapidated barn, so as to suggest the insufficiency of human building and thus the need for the Savior.[473] In the *Nativity Scene* by the rocaille artist Martin Engelbrecht, six cutout cards form a miniature theater box in which the Nativity is surrounded by a verdant and ruined architectural setting (fig. 15). Vegetation keeps on appearing attached to, next to, and on top of the architectural members. The Christ child, located on the fourth card of the scene, is situated in the middle of a rustic stone-and-wooden structure attempting unsuccessfully to provide adequate shelter. Broken beams and tree-limb supports allude directly to an architecture deprived of something. Christ's incarnation is thus called for, obviously not only to save this fallen architecture, but to redeem mankind itself. In consequence, we might ask if the dream that the builder has to be a second God is not a dream generated from pride, a false dream that attempts to cover up a communal fallen nature.

Despite periodic vacillation in its stance, the Biblical understanding of architecture is generally one of doubt. The first city mentioned is born of Cain the fugitive, who tills the earth rather than safeguards its animals. Architecture, superfluous in Paradise, emerges from a less-than-perfect land whose soil has been plowed, but now almost in vain. This very same suspicion of the need for architecture reoccurs in rocaille, wherein a turned-over earth and an unsuspecting architecture unite in the world of representation. In many rocaille illustrations the ground has been agitated to such an extent that it seems to give rise to architecture as if it, architecture, were

[473] Two centuries prior to rocaille, Albrecht Dürer, Albrecht Altdorfer, and Hans Baldung Grien, for example, would each be very explicit about the ruinous character of architecture in their Nativity scenes.

a living organism. In Nilson's engraving *Spring* (fig. 14), the earth dramatically rises up, merges with a cellar entrance and a balustrade, and gives birth to a quasi-natural and quasi-architectural urn-mounted pier. The romantic figures in the scene engage in conversation and wine drinking despite the significant theatrical events occurring beside them. The agitated springtime organism stands centrally within the composition and opposes itself to the narrative under way. As reinforced in the poem beneath all this, the cool and hard air which has sculpted this rocaille element remains at odds with the warmth of love and wine. Through its ruined state this garden aspires to become the Garden of Eden. Biblical metaphors of the city reinforce this desire by reiterating the fall from Paradise, metaphors in which theological images of destruction and prostitution show up between evocations of a city merging with the natural world. The wilderness has forsaken architecture, battering it into a ruin. Ruins such as those appearing in conjunction with the Nativity express the call for architecture to be validated and sanctified. Building upon these metaphors, rocaille work elicits this very Scriptural fusion of architecture and nature and the resultant interest in architectural ruins.

Ruins

This section investigates the eighteenth-century fascination with ruins as evident in the work of rocaille artists. The connection between rocaille and ruins is particularly apparent in rocaille's background in the grotto, discussed separately in the following section. Architecture's general subservience to nature in the ruin allows for an interest in cycles of creation and decay. Attention needs also to be given to how particular sentiments would be called upon, inasmuch as the ruin would directly remind the viewer of the passage of time and of the impermanence of artifacts. Also discussed is a certain disquietude, with respect to time, which would mark

rocaille and allow it to be increasingly pictorial and aesthetic. Eventually, it turned out that ruinous rocaille would turn away from its architectural support and from its capacity to mediate between the arts.

In the eighteenth century the art world excelled in the creation of real and imaginary ruins. From Alessandro Magnasco's decaying environments to Giovanni Battista Piranesi's limitless prisons to Giovanni Francesco Marchini's disordered worlds, the permanence of architecture was often called into question. In addition to visualizing or imagining the past, these ruins displayed a general insecurity with the present. One was desirous of knowing how the future would see one's own time. A painter such as Hubert Robert could thus show a gallery of the Louvre in a state of potential future decay.[474]

In Bavaria itself, and preceded by numerous grottoes, the Magdalenenkapelle at the Nymphenburg Palace in Munich demonstrated a clear interest in understanding itself as being under the influence of time (fig. 16). This artificial ruin provided the Wittelsbach Elector Maximillian Emanuel with a chapel for meditating upon the penitent Mary Magdalen. Placed in a *jardin sauvage* not far from the main palace, the structure was equipped with a full proto-rocaille grotto chapel in its interior (fig. 17). Such grottoes as places of reflection were not new to the eighteenth century. More novel, although with some precedents, was that the building was constructed as if it were in a state of ruin. Planned cracks were pervasive, certain elements were left unfinished, and materials got oddly juxtaposed—as if the building had been repaired over time. Built ruins such as this one, though artful constructions, allow nature to triumph over man and his pride. They challenge architecture by being perpetually incomplete. In this chapel the

[474] Hubert Robert, "Imaginary View of the Grande Galerie of the Louvre in Ruins," 1796.

elector could thus contemplate both his own personal pride, through St. Magdalen, and mankind's pride, through the building as a whole.[475]

In his dissertation work on rocaille, Hermann Bauer rightly links rocaille to the ruin.[476] Although conscious that he is not engaging the full tradition of the representation of ruins within rocaille engravings, Bauer discovers a quasi-ruinous aspect to rocaille architecture. With respect to the final phases of rocaille, he suggests a particularly strong connection between the ruin and "earth-rocaille."[477] Indeed, in the last known Bavarian rocaille engravings, a turn to the depiction of purely natural elements can be detected. Gottlieb Leberecht Crucius' engravings of the 1760s illustrate a world in which architecture has been all but completely overcome. This possibility of building something ruin-like had already emerged in the Renaissance, in grotto architecture. Such earlier grottoes presented what Bauer terms a "return to a wild, natural and ruinous state."[478] From its inception, rocaille would take on a very similar function as those earlier grottoes. In turning architecture into a picture of itself, the ruin shares much with rococo architecture.[479] The exterior of the Magdalenenklause demonstrates this very self-pictorialization (fig. 16). The façades do not allow the building materials to appear to age naturally, but rather complete the aging process all at once. The building is thus presented in a potential future state at the time of its construction. As the spectator will never know how the chapel has truly matured, the building steps out of natural time and becomes an image of a desired future. The architecture presents a picture of itself and its nature-like capacity to age things. While nature typically demonstrates its aging power in a short time frame, architecture

[475] For a discussion of the significance of the "cultivated frailty" of ruins in this chapel, see Harries, *Die Bayerische Rokokokirche*, 257-61.
[476] Bauer, *Rocaille*, 26-27.
[477] Ibid., 56.
[478] Ibid., 27.
[479] Ibid., 71-74.

generally takes longer. By collapsing the time of the aging process and by feigning maturity, the artificial ruin hopes to be allied with nature herself. With respect to engravings, rocaille not only retains these quasi-ruinous aspects, but also actively generates such fragments or ruins. Rather than represent a complete work of art, the rocaille-as-fragment mimics nature, finding fulfilment in future growth. In Nilson's *Der Jäger*, for example, a hunter, joined by his lady friend, prepares for the dual pursuit of wildlife and of love (fig. 18). He and a putto recline on top of an architectural fragment which is more suited to their individual poses than to any specific architectural configuration. While the hunter and his rifle surround a small earthly grotto, the hunter's companion and the putto point to the heavens above. Along with the dogs who are anxious for the hunt, the lady and the putto allude to the question of fidelity. The ruinous fragment that the hunter and the putto rest on is deeply intertwined with elements of nature and symbolically mediates between the terrestrial and heavenly connotations of the engraving. The fragment imitates nature in the hopes of taking on her capacity for change. Overall, rocaille retains a deep affinity with the general eighteenth-century obsession with ruins, whether they be of architecture, sculpture, or other manmade objects.

Rocaille architectural pieces often have an air of wanting to be natural in their appearance.[480] At will they can become earth, rocks, plants, or animals. No observer would rightly mistake rocaille architecture for real nature, but the two begin to blend together in novel ways. In *Der Jäger*, for example, even though the natural and architectural components of the illustration are thoroughly confused, the artificial nature of the construction remains evident. Like nature, rocaille architecture aspires to have periods of prominence and of decay, a situation which draws strong parallels to the interest in the artificial ruin. This interest in architecture's

[480] This desire has precedents in prior architectural ornament, particularly that of the grotesque, e.g., as with Rütger Kassmann.

general subordination to nature captivated the era in which rocaille artists were working.[481] Along with the ruin, the architect's work falls into decay and reminds one of the transience of being and of one's creations.[482] The eighteenth-century fascination with transience would also reflect a nostalgia for the past and a desire to see the future.[483] Evoking a sentiment, whether it be melancholy, helplessness, suspicion, or the like, the ruin attempts to elicit personal emotions in the same manner as nature does. Nature eventually completes the aging process that the architect had hastily begun.[484] The manmade ruin thus desires to show, via the emotions, the decline of architecture. A viewer might reflect on the transience of things manmade and on the gloominess of cultural decline, for example. Yet equally important to this general deterioration is the overall assault on the capacity of architecture to permit dwelling. Instead of affirming the will to dwell, architecture disintegrates and allows nature to take over. The loss of faith in architecture turns into a feeling of helplessness and of surrender. This new architectural role is not a passive one, however, as it permits the manipulation of nature which has been allowed to take over. The natural therefore becomes the seemingly-natural. Wandering through a garden, one might encounter, for instance, an artificial Gothic ruin in the midst of a landscape and

[481] Hans Sedlmayr has noted how a so-called "garden revolution" dethroned architecture from its dominant position in the very same era as rocaille: Sedlmayr, *Art in Crisis*, 96. Historically, gardens were typically subordinate to their architectural counterparts. In the eighteenth century, however, gardens gained in importance and architecture within garden settings increasingly became merely incidental. Haphazardly located, hidden in remote corners, and without strong relations to the parks they were placed in, the architecture could be removed without great sacrifice. Because of this condition, Sedlmayr can speak of the beginning of a "curtailment of the sovereignty of architecture." Ibid.

[482] This return to nature recalls the "City of Chaos" in the Bible (Is 25). The once fortified city now stands alone, is without inhabitants, and approaches wild nature herself. Animals rather than humans are nourished by its vegetation.

[483] Thus the English poet and gardener William Shenstone would write: "A ruin, for instance, may be neither new to us, nor majestic, nor beautiful, yet afford that pleasing melancholy which proceeds from a reflection on decayed magnificence." See his "Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening," in *The Works in Verse and Prose, of William Shenstone, Esq.*, vol. 2 (Dublin: G. Faulkner, 1764), 77.

[484] Sedlmayr interprets this completion as a prophetic moment, one in which the anti-architectural spirit of the ruin fulfils itself. *Art in Crisis*, 97.

imagine that it is now under nature's control. In fact the construction is made by contemporary hands and of contemporary materials. The ruin pulls architecture out of the realm of inhabitation and into the realm of aesthetic contemplation.

Ornament's role in the affirmation of the will to dwell is crucial to its existence. As the prime cultural communicator for architecture throughout history, ornament always instructed the inhabitants, edifying them with respect to their everyday lives. As eighteenth-century arts loosened in their interconnectedness, the meaning of ornament would significantly be altered. Lessing pointed to that very separation when propounding the thesis that painting and poetry belonged to distinct worlds. Even so, like the human body itself, ornament has always grown out of the architectural body which made its very existence possible. Successful ornamentation of the human body always calls forth and heightens attributes already present in the person. In the built world, ornament's meaning depended upon the architecture and the other arts with which it was in conversation. The separation from those other areas would thus be deeply felt by ornament, as its main function was a mediatory one.

Rocaille ornament partook of such a mediation and gained its own meaning through a synthesis of the arts. This mediation occurred in various ways. Physically, as in ecclesiastical architecture, the ornament negotiated the terrain between architecture, fresco, painting, and sculpture. As these elements came into contact with each other, ornament provided the possibility for a mutual and physically interactive conversation. As a simplified example, in Balthasar Neumann's Käppele (1745-50) in Würzburg, a cartouche-like rocaille ornament inhabits both sides of a window recess (fig. 19). As the architectural delineation approaches the ornament, the rocaille work grabs hold of, disrupts, and bends the architectural entities into conversation with it. This manner of communication would also occur between the beholder and

the program of the church. Through ornament the participant could come to a better understanding of the symbolic intentions of the church builders. Akin to a metaphor, ornament sought out similarities between elements and brought them to the fore. Over time this communicative role would become increasingly absent in rocaille, and the neutrality of the ornament would become less apparent. Ever more emancipated, the ornament would need a new justification for its existence. Where did ornament now come from, if not organically from the architecture that it had always served? Nature would provide one avenue of authorship, with rocaille's frequently ruinous character speaking directly to the demise of ornament. Rocaille could be subject to time, a possibility to be discussed next, and therefore age and perish just like a ruin. The ruin had long been the ultimate expression of an architecture that had come and gone; it was of the same conceptual character as ornament ill at ease with time.

The desire to collapse time in the ruin conceals a desire to manipulate nature and forego the natural ageing of things. By constructing a building as it might appear after many years rather than as a new building, the architect anxiously jumps to an implied future state without allowing a due course to take place. This insecurity confirms a desire for greater control. The architectural ruin first collapses time artificially, by building a future condition in the present, but then has to allow time to age the ruin again, naturally. A future era would then look back at the artificial ruin, unable to distinguish between its natural aging process and its artificial one. To what extent was the perceived age of the building a product of time and to what extent was it a product of the architect's initial manipulations? Such distinctions would be difficult for a spectator to make. The architect's lack of concern for the future and for the present's ability to naturally become the future pervades the faux ruin. Equally uncomfortable with inhabiting the present, rocaille becomes more like a picture of itself than itself. It presents an image of a future

state in which nature has taken over architecture, often rendering it ruinous, and the spectator is left unsure as to the true age of the object. In light of this pictorialization, the ornament turns to represent architecture in the guise of ornament-as-architecture. But can these rocaille engravings be considered true architecture? Instead of representing rococo architecture, ornament turns its back on architecture and plays with the idea of its own servitude to its bearer. No longer content with *presenting* the beauty of architecture, ornament turns to *representing* that architecture. Thus in Göz's engraving of a column (fig. 11), for example, the ornament depicted does not bring the important characteristics of the architecture to our attention, but rather becomes that architecture. The depicted shells, foliage, and water engulf their bearer and become the very subject of the column itself. One finds an ornament relying on itself, due to its inability to communicate with the architecture it formerly served, anxious for a future that could relieve the pressures of the present, due to its lack of respect for the natural age of things, and subject to a certain end, like a ruin, due to its willingness to be subsumed by natural powers.

In rocaille engravings, architecture has the power to fall into ruin just as nature can claim its elements at the end of their lifespans. The engraver thus controls the outcome of his creations. Standing in a very nervous relation to time, he cannot wait for nature herself to fulfill the promise of decay, but does so himself. Rather than being content to exist within time, he wishes to control it. Desired is an overall ending to architecture. This demise, however, may indeed be prophetic of a future attitude towards architectural permanence, but it also wishes to impart into the hands of the architect a control of natural processes.

The intrigue with ruins spoke to the discovery of a creative power, like nature herself, which mankind could usurp. Uneasy with depicting an architecture of the present, the rocaille artist imagined a future which looked back at his work as a past phenomenon. That artist could

thus conceptually claim the ending of his own architecture and thereby trump nature's inevitable processes. The natural outcome of the architecture would be in the artist's own hands. The seemingly marginal rocaille engravers from Augsburg thus played a significant role in the evolution of the dream that an architect could embody the power of creation.

The overall evolution of the architectural ruin was bound up with that of the landscape garden. The ruin did not desire to control the garden, but to return to it—to return especially to the Garden of Eden, where architecture played no role. The confidence that architecture could provide humans with true places of dwelling was lost in the artificial ruin. In the midst of ruins, man did not know his place nor feel at home in the world. Instead he turned to nature for answers and attempted to embody natural creative powers in his own being by representing architecture as if it had been aged by nature herself. Rocaille, inextricably linked to the ruin, would experience a parallel attraction to nature. As rocaille's relation to architecture became strained, partially through an interest in ruins, that ornament attempted less and less to reveal architecture's ambitions and more and more to present itself as an autonomous artifact. The desire to return to Paradise and to a natural setting existing prior to the chaos inflicted by architecture remained strong. In that beatific garden, rocaille could free itself from architectural indebtedness and absorb nature's own powers of creation and control over the built world.

Grottoes

While the visual lineage between rocaille and the grotesque is well documented, the intent in this section is to draw directly upon the connections between rocaille and the grotto.[485] The conception of a half-natural and half-architectural phenomenon, so prevalent in rocaille,

[485] On the connection to the grotesque, see Schütte's discussion of the "grotesque structure" of rocaille in his *Ordnung und Verzierung*, 143; Bauer, *Rocaille*, 3-6.

resonates deeply with the tradition of the grotto. So too does the importance of the senses and of the elements. Likewise, a mutual connection to theater defines the two realms. As the grotto is not an eighteenth-century invention, this section aims to interpret, without becoming a discussion of a prior era, the ways in which rocaille ornament learned from its background in the grotto.

In eighteenth-century lexicographical accounts of rocaille, the connection between rocaille and the grotto is clear. In 1716, Christian Wolff would equate rocaille with grotto work and define it as an architectural term which referred to shells, crystals, marcasite, iron slag, stones and other petrified things constructed in grottoes.[486] Johann Zedler, writing in 1732, would similarly define rocaille simply as grotto work.[487] By 1781, Lukas Voch would concentrate on the association between rocaille and the rockwork (*Felsenwerk*) within grottoes.[488] While rocaille had many different German terms associated with it, one in particular made the connection most apparent: *Felsenwerk*. In Voch's dictionary, not only is rocaille's imitation of natural rock called out, but the placement of rocaille within grottoes is also brought to the reader's attention: "Felsenwerk. Rocaille. It is a word related to ornament, and a composition of boorish architecture, which imitates natural rock and is made of millstone-like stones which are full of holes from shells and fossilized things of various colors. They are fixed on grottoes and fountains."[489] The emphasis on the imitation of natural rock in the definition is significant. This relation directly mimics the role of the grotto itself. As Voch himself would describe it in the same dictionary, the grotto is "a cave, which is mostly underground and which serves to cool things off on hot summer days."[490] Further on in the description he would remark

[486] Christian Wolff, *Mathematisches Lexicon* (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1716), 1215.
[487] Zedler, *Universal Lexicon*, 95.
[488] Lukas Voch, *Allgemeines Baulexicon* (Augsburg, 1781), 102. One must recognize, however, that these interpretations of rocaille were by Enlightenment critics.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Ibid., 131.

on the "confused and unordered" nature of the grotto which renders one unaware that it has been done with diligence and artfulness.[491] Thus, in this specific work, rocaille and the grotto are linked not only in their combined usage, but also in how the two approach nature by disguising their man-made character.

The imitation of nature figures heavily in the tradition of eighteenth-century descriptions of the grotto. The conception of *la grotte artificielle* within the *Encyclopédie* provides an early point of reference:

> Artificial grotto. Artificial grottoes are rustic hand-made buildings that imitate natural grottoes, if they are pertinent; one decorates them on the outside as rustic architecture; one ornaments them on the inside with statues and fountains; one uses stalactites, petrifications, marcasite, crystals, amethyst, mother-of-pearl, coral, iron slag, and generally all sorts of fossilized minerals and shells; each nation displays its own particular taste; but one of the most noble and perfect of works in this genre is that of the *Grotto* of Versailles, which can only be seen in print.[492]

Crucial in this definition, to begin with, is the simulation of the natural grotto. The aim to mimic nature as closely as possible was a cornerstone of the development of the grotto. For example, in the grotto chapel of the Magdalenenklause, the rockwork is interspersed with natural shells and lifelike artificial birds and plants (fig. 20). The shells themselves are very often arranged to simulate open flowers. The concept of nature as a model must here be understood in the tradition of nature as a divine model.[493] With the *Encyclopédie*'s definition, however, two sites in particular are named for the location of ornamentation, namely architecture's rustic exterior and the interior water-spouting statues and fountains. Through architecture's rusticity, a handiwork product approaches the natural to the extent that that work is confused with it. The

[491] Ibid.
[492] Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1966), 969.
[493] Nonetheless, the Enlightenment objection to rocaille was largely based upon a perceived lack of connection to the natural world.

hand of the architect has seemingly been subdued to allow nature to take over. Having been in the presence of the grotto's statues and fountains, one marvels at the human imagination in its quest for divine illumination. In either locale the rocaille-encrusted grotto remains at the heart of the question of the natural versus the artificial.

The statuary and fountains of many eighteenth-century grottoes drew directly from classical sources. It was the Renaissance, with its penchant for reviving antique myths, that had begun a re-implementation of these prior mechanical wonders in garden settings.[494] Ancient exemplars such as Hero of Alexandria's writings *Pneumatica* and *Automata*, Philo of Byzantium's mechanical water effects, and Al-Jazari's treatise describing water-raising devices would have been known to these forerunners of the rocaille grotto. Likewise, whether it were of Acis and Galatea, Echo and Narcissus, Neptune and his entourage, Daphne, Diana, or Orpheus and Eurydice, classical myths provided material for the illustration and construction of the western grotto. Nilson's engraving *Project d'une Grotte* illustrates this connection well (fig. 21). In this depiction the Roman goddess Diana is seated at the center of a rocaille grotto with a symbolic shell placed immediately behind her. Surrounding her in a stage set-like fashion is a rocaille architectural backdrop comprised of stones, ornaments, foliage, putti, statuary, and a bird. A fountain lies at the base of her feet, its waters flowing from human and animal statuary. Diana, with her bow in hand, quiver abaft, and hunting dog close by, is flanked not by her usual nymphs, but by two ladies of Nilson's day peering through openings. The rustic rocaille architecture rises from the symbolically profane ground to eventually become indistinguishable from the divine natural elements which surround it. Nilson here draws from the classical myth

[494] On the seventeenth-century interest in mechanical wonders in grottoes, see Salomon de Caus, *Les Raisons des forces mouvantes* (Frankfurt, 1615) and *Hortus Palatinus* (Frankfurt, 1620).

of Diana bathing in grotto waters, and especially from that myth's intended confusion of nature and art. Ovid's version of the story recounts that

> There was a valley … sacred to the active Diana. In the extreme recess of this, there was a grotto in a grove, formed by no art; nature, by her ingenuity, had counterfeited art; for she had formed a natural arch, in the native pumice and the light sand-stones. A limpid fountain ran murmuring on the right hand with its little stream, having its spreading channels edged with a border of grass. Here, *when* wearied with hunting, the Goddess of the woods was wont to bathe her virgin limbs in the clear water.[495]

If the artificial grotto, laden as it is with rocks and shells, approaches the natural grotto, it thus also approaches nature as a whole (fig. 20). Given the overall understanding of a divine origin to nature, the grotto architect would also be approaching a sacred realm. Despite what might appear to critics as a base, cave-like, and unrefined architecture, this connection in the grotto of the everyday to the supernatural must be kept in mind. Pierre de Ronsard understood this relation well when he wrote in his poem about the Grotto of Meudon of a dually divine and sacred grotto.[496] At first glance one might question this association. However, the indistinctness of the artificial grotto mirrors the inability of mankind fully to comprehend the divine. Reason alone could only get a participant so far. Early seventeenth-century historian André Du Chesne recognized this miraculous nature of the grotto when he described a manmade antre located at Saint-Germain en Laye. At this location, the rarest marvels of the earth had resolved to bribe the senses, intoxicate reason, and steal the soul of anyone looking at or hearing them. He who ventured into the grotto reportedly ended up by losing feeling, whether it be of the eye or of the ear.[497]

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[495] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 91.
[496] Pierre de Ronsard, *Les Oeuvres de Pierre de Ronsard*, vol. 4, *Les Eclogues et Mascarades* (Lyon: Thomas Soubron, 1592), 55.
[497] See Alfred Chapuis and Edmond Droz, *Automata: A Historical and Technological Study*, trans. Alec Reid (Neuchâtel: Éditions du Griffon, 1958), 43-46.

In the eighteenth century the human imagination was still conducting a quest for divine illumination. The grotto remained a kind of built narrative within that pursuit – an imaginative appearance of divine truth given to man through nature. The architect would adhere to the principles of natural magic so as to guarantee propitious action from the heavens. The gardens that the grottoes were set in were often utilized as sites for theatrical performances, places where automata and waterworks could serve in the retelling of classical myths. Yet the long-standing interest in these ancient myths was also combined with a concern for Biblical narratives. Overall, these verdant creations were intended to simulate the ultimate garden on earth, the Garden of Eden.[498] Since there was no need for architecture in the first garden, subsequent attempts to recreate that environment had to confront the question of dwelling. If Adam and Eve were at home in their own skin, it follows that architecture was born of their fallen nature. The grotto, as the most natural of architectures, could escape the problem of paradise's lack of building by giving over to nature.[499] Wandering through such a garden setting, a spectator might mistake the work of man for the work of God and thus not call into question the existence of architecture within a presumably sacred setting. The grotto can therefore be seen as demonstrating the uneasiness of the act of placing architecture within a natural setting.

The ability to recreate Paradise on earth grew out of Renaissance thinking and out of an increasing attentiveness to hermetic magic. John Calvin's sixteenth-century thesis holding to their being a three-pronged knowledge of God in nature, man, and the Holy Scriptures provided

[498] An early example of this quest is in the writings of Bernard Palissy who wrote of wanting to create a garden as beautiful as any since Eden. See his *Les Oeuvres de Bernard Palissy*, ed. Anatole France (Paris: Charavay Frères, 1880), 76.
[499] This sense of a retreat to nature could also be seen in Palissy, a devoted Huguenot finding refuge in his grotto.

a sort of backbone for the creation of grottoes.[500] Throughout its history, the grotto could be and has been interpreted as the most human and earthly of the garden scenarios. Its critically established connection to the underworld, to origins, and to birth would certainly promote such an understanding. Historically, the grotto has been regarded as something disclosing the ideas behind the forces of nature. The grotto's underlying machinery, however, is well hidden. Although it may happen to him, enlightened revelation or inspiration is not a particular aim of the grotto visitor. Geometry and mechanics remain at the base of the human-divine continuum, and the viewer thus does not need to understand the workings of the grotto—only to marvel at them.

More than any other part in a garden setting, the grotto has a vivid dialogue with the senses. In this manner it is the most sensuous of garden elements. The four traditional Aristotelian elements of earth, water, air, and fire merge to provide an enlivening mise en scène. The rough textures, the cool atmospheres, the jets of water, the dark recesses, and the visual variety form primal channels through which the human desire to approach the divine can take place. With one's senses having been awakened, divine inspiration can enter the grotto visitor more easily. Eighteenth-century grottoes stress the interdependence of man and his senses and thus challenge conceptions of sense-bound geometry as remaining lower in status than mentally perceived arithmetic. Within the grotto one can come to understand things divine. Earth, water, air, and fire conspire, appear to be in perpetual motion, and draw one closer to true motion, which is known only to God. The architecture within the grotto, indistinct as it is, appears to be without beginning or end. As it merges with nature, questions of where one starts and where the other leaves off ensue. Thus, through its emphasis on motion and through its insistence on

[500] See Katja Grillner, "Human and Divine Perspectives in the Works of Salomon de Caus," in *Chora 3: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 79-102.

confused boundaries, the grotto allows for the contemplation of the relation between man, God and nature. Baumgartner's engraved series of the four elements demonstrates very well this interrelationship in which nature and architecture dance together under the influence of earth, air, water, and fire (fig. 22).

In many ways the desire to emulate nature in rocaille is a desire to emulate its ability to evade boundaries between natural elements. Do the seasons, the elements, and time not cause frontiers to vanish? These natural conditions are to be found again and again as themes in rocaille works. Rocaille architecture moves in accordance with the actions of nature.[501] Baumgartner's *Die Luft* shows this very capacity of architecture to be set into motion by natural forces—in this case—air (fig. 22). Lacking traditional supports, the architectural elements appear largely to be held up by nothing more than the atmosphere surrounding them. The natural scenes depicted in such engravings are never at rest. By the power of the elements, they surge, swell, and twist like the waves of the ocean or stalks in the wind. It is as if they were showing their newfound power over architecture, causing the built world to submit to the forces of the physical world. Manmade structures are no longer in control and can here only respond to the actions of the elements.

Of those elements, the grotto's connection to earth, water, and air remains directly evident. The earthen cave with its cool breezes and damp environment speaks directly to these three classical components. The element of fire, though, might not readily be visible at first. Interpretations of the grotto-cave as a kiln, however, bring fire directly into the equation. The understanding of the interior of the grotto as fired earth is readily evident, for example, in the

[501] One could recall Penther's definition of rocaille as a "growing rock." Penther, *Ausführliche Anleitung*, 1:133.

earlier writing of Bernard Palissy. Describing the machine that makes a chamber become a grotto that French potter writes

> When the masonry is finished, I want to cover it with several layers of enameling, from the top of the vaulted ceiling down to the floor. This done, I should like to build a big fire in it … until the aforesaid enameling has melted and coated the aforesaid masonry …" "[The] inside of the chamber would seem to be made of one piece … and would be so highly polished that the lizards and earthworms that come in there would see themselves as in a mirror.[502]

Palissy clearly wished his grotto work to be seen not as his, but as nature's, so that in it one could forget about the grotto's production. This conception held sway well into the eighteenth century. Men and animals alike were to be deceived. As a result of an erasing of the architect's hand, nature was hopefully perceived to be the generating force exactly as she was in a typical rocaille architectural composition. Such a formulation was built upon classical thinking, specifically on Pliny's anecdotes on artists. In both accounts the idea of nature as the teacher of art gets embedded.[503]

In addition, rocaille work stands firmly in a tradition of architectural rusticity that belongs to the development of the grotto. Carl Pier, active in Augsburg around 1750, demonstrated this connection aptly. His works present rustic and ruined architectural settings showing nature in the process of transforming the constructions of mankind (fig. 23). In Figure 23, for example, a series of waterfalls cascade over a grotto-like foundation which is suggestive of natural rockwork, pumice, and stalactites. Both grottoes and rocaille works such as this one remain

[502] As noted by Gaston Bachelard in his *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 131.
[503] See Ernst Kris, "Der Stil 'Rustique,' Die Verwendung des Naturabgusses bei Wenzel Jamnitzer und Bernard Palissy," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 1 (1926): 207.

rustic yet carefully constructed.[504] Yet, as mentioned before, more is at play than a simple combination of that which is natural with that which is not, for artificial means get used to simulate the natural, as if nature had been directly cast or molded. In its time such a simulation was seen as a departure from classical beauty, a point of view echoed in numerous eighteenth-century critiques of rocaille.

A further departure from a classical notion of beauty is evident in the aforementioned indistinctness of the grotto surfaces. One might wish to account for this in terms of the desire to approach a purely natural state. Architecture is overcome by the forces of nature and thus allows its appearance to become less distinct. Yet this lack of clarity operates on another level as well. The perceived indecipherability stands as a metaphor for mankind's lack of a perfect visual understanding. As happens with anamorphic perspectives, the human spectator must seek out a clarity not immediately present to him, and thus re-enact his search for God. In the case of many post-Renaissance gardens, such as the Villa Lante, Versailles, and Sanssouci, that intelligibility would reach its high point in the formal and geometricized garden always somewhat distinct from the grotto within. In the opposition of visible geometry to its hidden counterpart, the grotto remains at odds with an interest in mastery and possession of nature. A deep divide thus exists between the thinking of Descartes and the evolution of the grotto.[505] Rocaille engravings can be seen to emerge from this very tradition. Yet whereas anamorphosis always reveals the existence of a point at which clarity can be achieved, rocaille work does not. The state of being

[504] Pierre de Ronsard, a contemporary of Palissy, recognized the blending of human skill and nature in grottoes when he spoke of "The plan, the frontispiece, and the rustic columns which erode the honor of the ancient columns." Ronsard, *Les Eclogues*, 5.

[505] Despite this division, Descartes would take up the topic of the grotto in *Treatise on Man*. Equating the human body with a machine, he would describe the statuary within a grotto in mechanistic terms. Tubes, engines and springs would be arranged so that the participant would cause statues to move, just as water could cause a water mill to turn. René Descartes, *Treatise on Man*, in *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: L. Cerf, 1897), 11:120, 131.

perpetually confused in the search for a vantage point of understanding signals an important change in the lineage of post-anamorphic works. The participant now finds himself at the threshold between the sacred and the aesthetic.

In their having been set within larger garden settings, grottoes presented a desire to demonstrate a perceptible encyclopedia of the sensuous world. The often vast array of minerals, corals, stones, and petrified objects within them allowed the beholder to witness the magical properties of nature as symbolic images. Nature's magical and hermetic properties could be directly sensed in a manner more palpable and less systematic than that resulting from the reading of an encyclopedia. Combined with this sensuality there remains a certain deceptive character of the eighteenth-century grotto. While artistic pursuits moved away from the illusion of truthful representation so as to elicit more deceptive means, nature on the whole granted art and science a greater role. Theatrical spectacles, in which grottoes often figured very prominently in the wake of Vitruvius' writings, increasingly turned to the effect they held on the spectator. Wonder, suspense, surprise, and fear became key elements in orchestrating an emotional attunement with the participant.

That the grotto was a frequent character in theater design in western history remains well known. Within the world of architectural treatises, Serlio's mid-sixteenth-century description of the theatrical satiric scene portrayed a rustic forest environment devoid of stately architecture and drew from Vitruvius' account of satiric theater, which last included a grotto. Indeed, Serlio's description stressed the splendor, variety, and beauty of the scene and had much in common with then contemporaneous descriptions of grottoes.

> What a magnificent sight that was to see: so many trees and fruits, so much greenery, so many different flowers, all made of the most delicate silks of various colours. There were banks and

> rocks covered with many types of sea shells: snail and other small animal shells, branches of multi-coloured coral, mother-of-pearl and sea crabs set in the rocks.[506]

In Vitruvius' account, the satiric scene was more briefly outlined: "There are three styles of scenery: one which is called tragic; a second, comic; the third, satyric . . . the satyric settings are painted with trees, caves (*speluncis*), mountains and other country features, designed to imitate landscape."[507] It is to these *speluncis* that early grotto designers turned when recreating nature's caverns. From a classical insistence on the importance of the source of the spring to a captivation by architectural and even mechanical forces, the grotto charted a lineage in which art eventually imagined itself to be surpassing nature.

Serlio's account of the satiric scene stresses the rude and rustic characteristics of the theatrical depiction. Stage elements should be "made plaine [*sic*] without any respect" much like rustic people who express themselves plainly.[508] The conceit and cunningness of the workman get emphasized, as does the commendable ability of artificial elements to surpass natural ones. It might seem contradictory for the artisans to be asked to make things both without respect and yet worthy of esteem. Yet it is the craftsman's work that should be respected most, in that it portrays elements that seem to be done in a plain manner. Overall, such portrayals as Serlio's go on to figure heavily in later grotto constructions.

The frequent use of the grotto as a direct backdrop for theatrical events furthered the connection of grottoes to theater.[509] The cave or cavern entrance was seen as being akin to the

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[506] Sebastiano Serlio, *Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture*, vol. 1, *Books I-V of "Tutte l'Opere d'Architettura et Prospetiva*," trans. Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 91.
[507] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, 5.6.9.
[508] Sebastiano Serlio, *The First [-Fift] Booke of Architecture*, vol. 2 (London: Robert Peake, 1611), Ch.3, Fol. 26.
[509] As George Kernodle notes: "Renaissance courtyards and parks were filled with fountains in the form of rocky grottoes – grottoes which took the shape and often the columns and adornment of the arcade

proscenium arch. Chauveau's 1650 engraving of the prologue for Corneille's *Andromède* (fig. 24) and Fischer von Erlach's 1721 *Hellbrunn* rock-theater (fig. 25) exemplify this association. [510] These entrance archways can be seen to mark a threshold between the humans without and the figures within. In Fischer von Erlach's rock-theater, the performative aspect of the work remains clear. His statements regarding nature as the only architect needed and theater as requiring no other ornament than what nature has provided point to the very interweaving, existing in rocaille as well, of architectural ornament and nature.[511]

Just as rocaille ornament, and ornament itself, were coming to an end at the close of the eighteenth century, so too did then the highpoint of grotto work end. Symptomatic of this closure were the events at Versailles. When a messenger came to announce to Marie Antoinette that townsfolk were marching upon the palace, the queen was to be found seated in her grotto at the Petit Trianon, "surrendering to reflections of grief" about the imminent turmoil.[512] In a time of political upheaval, the monarch had retreated to the palace's womb, to the ultimate garden, and to the only place at Versailles that architecture did not fully command.

From very early writings on rocaille, the connection between rocaille and the grotto was made evident. Key to understandings of the grotto was the importance of imitating both natural rocks and nature's own grottoes. The artificial grotto's purpose, to parallel nature's own rocky caves, would take part in the quest to understand the divine model of nature herself. The

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screen. Such grottoes were popular in the Baroque theatre and usually stood in the position of the back screen or wall." See his *From Art to Theatre: Form and Convention in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 75.

[510] In addition to the seventeenth-century grottoes which have survived, much of our understanding regarding them comes from such engravings, as well as from accounts and literature of authors such as Salomon de Caus.

[511] Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, *Entwurff einer historischen Architectur*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1725), 22.

[512] Gustave Desjardins, *Le Petit-Trianon, histoire et description* (Versailles: L. Bernard, 1885), 346-47.

architect's presence would be subdued, so as not to be readily visible. Again, through this lack of clarity the grotto would speak to mankind's inability to grasp the sacred. The Garden of Eden, free of architecture as it was, would remain the ultimate model. For this reason, the artificial grotto could become the most non-architectural of conditions within a garden setting. Rocaille ornament's indistinctness and lack of a readily defined architecture would come out of these conceptions of the grotto.

Furthermore, the lack of clearly identifiable geometries in the grotto would be central to rocaille work. Rather than seeking geometric figures, the grotto participant would rely on his senses to approach the sacred. The resultant emotional effect on the spectator rose to a new level of importance in rocaille as did the theatricality of the grotto. For both the rocaille grotto and the Enlightenment critique thereof, nature served as a model. Their conceptions of nature, however, differed. Whereas the rocaille grotto partook of an earlier understanding of wondrous nature, the subsequent understanding saw it as being rational. Thus the critics of rocaille could believe that the previous generation had not carefully considered the natural—on account of the latter's different understanding of the phenomenon. Rocaille, through the tradition of the artificial grotto, provided the site at which architecture could most closely approximate the natural environment.

Symbols

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard interprets shells as subjects warranting serious reflection on the part of potters or enamellists. The seashell of his meditation bears much in common with the same element in rocaille work. Just as the *travail de coquille* or *Muschelwerk* of rocaille ornament appears to multiply by itself, so too does Bachelard become fascinated by

the seashell as constructing its home from within, as shown when he speaks of "a young slug that was building its house and fortress with its own saliva."[513] This natural condition suggests an internal process, and if one thinks of the shell as an act of architecture, nature would then have the capacity to create its own dwellings. It was exactly this capacity to create from within, harnessing nature's own processes, which was present in the rocaille shell.

Ultimately, Bachelard understands these places of retreat in sensual terms: "Here a man wants to live in a shell. He wants the walls that protect him to be as smoothly polished and as firm as if his sensitive flesh had to come in direct contact with them. The shell confers a daydream of purely physical intimacy. Bernard Palissy's daydream expresses the function of inhabiting in terms of touch."[514] This interest in sensual touch would define rocaille as well. As mentioned before, the five senses were a common theme in rocaille engravings (fig. 26).

The two most prevalent natural elements in rocaille engravings were the shell and the acanthus leaf. As for the former, an inherently strong connection existed between the shell and rocaille, out of which unity came their symbolic meaning.[515] Central to an understanding of the shell was the notion, held in antiquity, of the origin of the pearl. This interpretation continued throughout the Middle Ages and remained uncontested even throughout the baroque era. Seventeenth-century Italian theologian Filippo Picinelli, referencing the works of Pliny, gave an account of the birth of the pearl.[516] In his narration, a shell ascended from the depths of the sea to the water's surface and opened itself. A drop of slack water from the heavens fertilized the shell. Then the shell descended again and gave birth to the pearl. Symbolically speaking, the pearl has as much to do with the heavens as it does with its physical location in the sea. As

[513] Bachelard is here quoting Bernard Palissy. Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 128.
[514] Ibid., 131.
[515] See Hawel, *Der spätbarocke Kirchenbau*, 324-30.
[516] See Picinelli's *Mundus Symbolicus*, ed. Augustinus Erath (Cologne, 1694), 12.25.

Hawel suggests, that pearl thus becomes a product of the union of heaven and earth, of the underworldly and the heavenly, and of the archetypical feminine and masculine.[517] It is in the shell itself that this transformation reportedly takes place.

This origin of the pearl has long been understood as an image for the birth of Christ. This symbol emphasized both the human and the divine nature of Christ. Already in the fifth-century Council of Ephesus was this image used to explain the virgin birth. The image of Christ as pearl and Mary as virgin shell was henceforth handed down in religious writings.[518]

While the Virgin Mary, via the symbolism of the shell, presided over the creation of sacred rocaille, Venus did so for secular rocaille. Sedlmayr would directly acknowledge that the central figure of the *style rocaille* was Venus:

> Her attributes – rock and conch, coral and reed, water, wave, and foam – constitute the treasury of rocaille ornamentation. Her element, water, determines the fluidity of forms. Its movement, the wave, suggests the pattern of surging and plunging, its colors, the deep cool blue of the sea and the white of glistening spray, together with the roseate hue of the conch and the iridescence of mother of pearl, produce a typically rococo color harmony.[519]

The shell with a pearl is accordingly the symbol of the union of God and man: divine nature merges with human nature and vice versa. It is precisely this merger that is also present in rocaille, where human artifact blends into heavenly nature.

The implied meanings did not end there. Beyond the theological understanding of Christ as both man and God, the mystery of transubstantiation could also find its expression in this

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[517] Hawel, *Der spätbarocke Kirchenbau*, 326.
[518] An attentiveness to Mary and in particular to her origins was certainly present in eighteenth-century Augsburg. See, for example, Joseph Zoller's emblem book about the conception of Mary: *Mira satis, ac sine omni peccato Mariae sanctissima conceptio* . . . . (Augsburg, 1712). Mary, whose "snow-white color" gets remarked upon, is presented as a genuine and beautiful pearl and her illustration is subtitled: "Always Bright."
[519] Sedlmayr, "Synthesis of the Arts," 26.

symbolic image. Hawel rightly extends these understandings into the grotto: "The grotto is to be regarded as a formal extension of the shell, and thus also participates in its symbolism."[520] The placement of a shell over a divine figure in church ornamentation was common at the turn of the eighteenth century. In particular, figures on pulpits often had such shell apses. Symbolically, the shell intends and allows us to understand the figure as being changed or converted. In line with all this, Hawel thus defines the shell as "die symbolische Form der Verwandlung," or the "symbolic form of transformation."[521] The transformed figure's human nature yields to the eternal. He desires to return to his original state of being created by God before the Fall. Salvation is accomplished.

The shell was often placed above a saint in lieu of the customary halo. Other shell locations included the vicinity of side altars with relics. Death, symbolically not having the last word, is thus in the church transformed. Clearly, the symbolism of the shell has much to do with the overcoming of death. Rocaille engravings, however, self-evidently do not celebrate the resting grounds of a saint, as might be done in a church. In a built work, such as the ambulatory of the Wieskirche, the shell-shaped openings above the columns march along with the knowledgeable pilgrim to suggest his eastward transformation and triumph over death (fig. 27). The gushing and flowing structure temporally extends the pilgrim's quest for unification with the divine. Like the shell itself, the entire church becomes a site of transformation on many levels.

With rocaille printed works, however, the symbolism is more concentrated. On an immediate level, there exists a transformation of architecture into nature. As mentioned before, this should be interpreted as a divination of mankind's human status. The constant evocation of the shell and of things aquatic, however, suggests something more, insofar as ornament itself is

[520] Hawel, *Der spätbarocke Kirchenbau*, 327-28.
[521] Ibid., 328.

being transformed, undergoing its own metamorphosis and abstraction from being a communicative and physical part of architecture to being a spiritualized entity. The body of ornament gets left behind in the pursuit of purity. In the case of the Bavarian church in general, the entire edifice becomes an ornament, transforming and sanctifying the people within. For the ornamental engravings, ornament itself becomes the subject of conversion.

As for the acanthus leaf, it remained an equally important symbolic element which had had a long tradition in Bavarian ornamentation. Time and again, this plant appears in rocaille engravings, sometimes even becoming the main theme there (fig. 28). Like the shell, or *conchylium*, the acanthus also finds a home in Picinelli's *Mundus Symbolicus*. "In fact," Hawel stresses, "the acanthus is simply the vegetable ornament of the baroque."[522] The plant's significance to architecture stems largely from the legend handed down by Vitruvius in which the Athenian sculptor Callimachus invented the acanthus-laden Corinthian capital.[523] The sculptor was inspired by the young leaves of the acanthus plant on the grave of a young girl. The girl's nurse had placed a basket with the cups of the child on top of the grave. Through this wicker basket grew the acanthus leaves and shoots which were eventually encountered by the sculptor.

This tale emphasizes the emergence of life from the condition of death, and thus not only suggests the cyclical nature of things, but also underscores the childlike and playful characteristic of the acanthus. Scholars have noted the connections between the acanthus and divine favors or deification.[524] One analyst, Kempter, who studied representations of acanthi on grave vases, has

[522] Ibid., 324.
[523] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, 4.1.9-10.
[524] See Konrad Schauenburg, "Zur Symbolik unteritalischer Rankenmotive," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Römische Abteilung* 64 (1957) and Hans Jucker, *Das Bildnis im Blätterkelch: Geschichte und Bedeutung Einer Römischen Porträtform*, 2 vols. (Olten: Urs Graf-Verlag, 1961).

interpreted the plant as being an expression of hope for the hereafter.[525] It thus seems reasonable to understand the acanthus as symbolic of a belief in immortality. The architecture of rocaille, in assuming such natural forms as it does, partakes directly in this belief that, in merging so comprehensively with nature, the built world aspires to have cycles of death and rebirth. Architecture too hopes for immortality.

Despite the connection to the Italian narrative of the five architectural orders, the identity of German acanthus ornament is different from that found in Latin countries. Ultimately, German acanthus ornament draws heavily from goldsmiths' representations of flower ornaments. Wavy arbitrary acanthus leaf tendrils result from this continuous development (fig. 28).[526]

Alongside the shell, the acanthus leaf comes to play a dominant role in rocaille, visually as well as conceptually. Its connotations of divine favors and of immortality play a significant part. As rocaille architecture attempts to become more natural and to even be confused with an acanthus-filled nature, it too hopes to be reborn like a spring flower. The symbolism inherent to the shell is equally as rich. Used in grottoes and fountains for more than a century, shell-work had been associated with the Virgin Mary and with Venus, figures germane to rocaille. The account of the birth of the pearl would furthermore suggest the shell to have been the womb for Christ, the pearl itself. Thus the shell becomes a quasi-architectural site of transformation where the human element gives way to the eternal. Rocaille ornament's merger of the natural and the divine with the architectural would enact that very symbolism.

[525] See Friedrich Kempter, *Akanthus: Die Entstehung eines Ornamentmotivs* (Leipzig: Heitz, 1934).
[526] See Felicitas Rothe, *Das deutsche Akanthusornament des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, 1938), 32.

Conclusion

The encyclopedic categorization of natural elements gives way in rocaille. Honoring nature for her abundance and creativity, the rocaille artist would indiscriminately merge elements such as shells, rocks, and acanthus leaves with architectural components. Non-hierarchical in composition, the composite parts would compete for the viewer's attention and presumably elicit emotions connected to wonder and marveling.

At the core of this merger of the natural and the architectural remained a general suspicion of architecture. This distrust has a significant pre-history dating back to Genesis. The fratricide Cain, disconnected from the earth as he was, would become the Bible's first architect, and the city he created would be likened metaphorically to the act of being expelled from a nurturing earth. Paradise, whose soil yielded greater richness than the subsequent demanding terrain, had no need for architecture. The ongoing debate as to the merits of architecture has been around ever since the Roman Empire converted to Christianity. Rocaille would move in the direction of a general disbelief in architecture. In rocaille a desire to return to the Garden of Eden was visible in architecture's submission to the natural world, and the eighteenth century was not without its interest in an intellectual return to mankind's place of origin.

Partially as a result of the Old Testament attitude towards the city as a construction of fallen man on a forsaken earth, rocaille architecture would succumb to the hands of nature, as in the building of a ruin. The ruin would consistently appear in traditional Biblical paintings of the Nativity scene, suggesting that architecture could never truly provide adequate shelter and thus it would call the need for Christ into being (fig. 15). The architectural ruin, a staple of rocaille work, interconnected with the tradition of the landscape garden. Via the original garden, nature would complete the destructive work of the architect. Central to the experience of such ruinous

landscapes were the emotions of the participant. Reflections on transience, decline, and surrender were called forth by the architect. Spectators could marvel at nature, with all her creative powers, and at how able she was to turn manmade elements into rocks, leaves, shells, or any other natural phenomena.

Rocaille architecture thus took on the capacity to create natural beauty, a power once ascribed only to Nature's Creator. Architecture had burdened itself with the allure of perfection. Yearning, along with Alberti, to become a second God among men, the architect could envision the power of endless creativity. Architecture would not grow old, but would consistently renew itself. Its beauty would be self-evident and its allure constant. However, whereas Alberti's painter hoped to radiate divine qualities based on a mastery of artificial perspective, the rocaille engraver did so by blurring his boundaries with those of nature. With the promise of proper perspective here broken, a new manner of retaining godlike characteristics would be needed. Rocaille and its merger of natural and architectural elements would fill that void.

As the most significant site of this fusion was the grotto, this garden element remained deeply connected to rocaille. Here the indistinct character of these partly natural and partly architectural caves would mirror the inability of the participant to comprehend the sacred. The quest for such a comprehension would occur sensuously rather than geometrically. Rocaille—indistinct, sensuous, theatrical—allowed architecture its closest proximity to nature. Via the shell and the acanthus leaf in particular, rocaille would present a site of transformation—the human seeking the eternal, architecture hoping for immortality, and ornament as the subject of its own conversion.

4 *Theatricality*

Introduction

Ornament, and specifically the ornamented frame, frequently found itself mediating between the lived world and the perspectival world of theater in rocaille. In *The Broken Frame,* Harries proposes, with respect to rocaille, that as "the normal separation between frame and framed is denied, so is the separation between pictorial representation and ornamentation. Ornament is pictorialized; pictorial representation ornamentalized."[527] Although with antecedents, this comprehensive blending condition implies a new status for the frame in the history of framed pictorial representations. The frame's role as a communicative divider gives way to a new role as merger of ornament and picture. As a result, rocaille work seemingly adopts an illusionistic world only to reveal that world's very illusionism and to distance itself from such theatrical deception through developments in the frame itself.

At the core of this chapter is an investigation into the understanding of theater as presented in two treatises: Andrea Pozzo's *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* of 1693 and 1700 and Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena's *L'architettura civile* of 1711. These understandings are discussed in relation to the discernable theatricality of rocaille. At issue is the degree to which rocaille engravings respond to or distance themselves from the assertions within the writings. Questions as to the viewer's positioning, the nature of the drawn or engraved line, and the status of the frame guide the interpretation.

[527] Harries, *Broken Frame,* 76.

Central to eighteenth-century denunciations of rocaille was the perceived theatrical departure from a perspectival reality. The criticism observed rocaille's attack on Albertian perspective and spoke of an irrational, non-Vitruvian and unstudied manner of drawing. Fünck stood for many when in 1747 he suggested that beauty would be out of the question should one try to represent rocaille in perspective.[528] Fiorillo focused on the lack of reality and on the impossibility of rocaille representations.[529] Stieglitz longed for Greek and Roman order, decrying a displacement of beautiful proportions.[530] These admonishments pointed to the desire for a return to what was thought to be a purer taste – one based on Vitruvius and adherent to an overriding reason.

Departure from Andrea Pozzo

Italian architect, painter, and lay brother of the Society of Jesus, Andrea Pozzo, published his lone theoretical treatise, *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum*, in two volumes in Rome in 1693 and 1700.[531] Dedicated to Emperor Leopold I, the work emerged towards the end of Pozzo's life after a considerable artistic practice. It has been called the "first truly practical manual on perspective,"[532] and an "image-led treatise,"[533] exhibiting what subsequent authors have noticed as a usefulness inherent in his work. In Volume One the perspectival examples move along with

[528] Fünck, "Betrachtungen," 419.
[529] Fiorillo, *Groteske*, 3.
[530] Stieglitz, "Versuch über den Geschmack," 179-91.
[531] Andrea Pozzo, *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* (Rome: J. J. Komarek, 1693) and *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum . . . Pars Secunda* (Rome: J. J. Komarek, 1700). The first English edition consulted was: Andrea Pozzo, *Rules and Examples of Perspective Proper for Painters and Architects, etc.*, trans. John James (London: B. Motte, 1707). The German one was: Andrea Pozzo, *Der Mahler und Baumeister* Perspectiv (Augsburg: J. Wolff, 1708).
[532] Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louise Pelletier, *Perspective Hinge*, 71.
[533] Rodney Palmer, "'All is very plain, upon inspection of the figure': the visual method of Andrea Pozzo's *Perspectiva Pictorum et Architectorum*," in *The Rise of the Image: Essays on the History of the Illustrated Art Book*, eds. Rodney Palmer and Thomas Frangenberg (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 158.

an increasing level of difficulty, from a description of the perspectival method to two-dimensional plans and elevations, to three-dimensional solids which become pedestals, to columns of the various orders and cornices, to tabernacles, to theatrical scenes, to architectural elements seen from below or *di sotto in su*, and finally to the *quadratura* method in which the reader-architect is invited to construct a three-dimensional world by designing in perspective. Volume Two continues the architectural examples and includes façades, tribunes, pedestals, triumphal arches, architectural fragments, theaters, Sacred Theater, *di sotto in su* cupolas, altars, churches, doors, windows, stairs, and fortifications.

The treatise was well known to Bavarian artists and architects after its translation into German toward the end of the first decade of the eighteenth century. The earliest reception of the original treatise in Germany dated from the same year as the publication of the first volume. In that Latin text the speed of constructing Pozzo's method and the succinctness of his optical delineations were emphasized.[534] Pozzo's plates, reprinted throughout the century in Augsburg, became actual models for a number of Bavarian illusionistic frescoes. As evidence of the treatise's practicality, many of the German translations of his writing during the eighteenth century had been made specifically for students.

So as better to perceive the ambiguities surrounding rocaille's theatrical nature, this section investigates Pozzo's treatise and its specific theoretical relation to rocaille ornamental engravings. The section begins by presenting Pozzo's conception and admonishment of what he terms "occult lines," lines which rocaille representations were later eager to explore. Next, the possible deception of the viewing eye gets encouraged by Pozzo, provided one is guaranteed a

[534] *Acta Eruditorum* (Leipzig, 1693), 498.

fixed position or "due place" when viewing a perspectival scene.[535] The use of a single viewpoint would later receive a strong critique. In rocaille work, which responded to that critique, the viewer was continually encouraged to wander in search of a greater understanding of the scene and not to return to a single vantage point. Later in this section, the relation of this exact positioning to its precedent scientific discoveries gets briefly considered, after which Pozzo's stated need for the ease of perspective construction gets remarked upon. While deception of the eye may have been a desirable goal for Pozzo, the clarity of technique in making the deception remains vital for him. Following this, the extension of the idea of "due place" in theater design receives mention. At every turn in Pozzo's treatise, simplification of technique is advocated—an interest in reduction to which rocaille would turn its back. Pozzo's division of a scene into four quadrants is subsequently interpreted as a progression from geometry to shadow. The objections he lists to his use of a single point of view, as rocaille would have responded to, are then described. Lastly, rocaille's attitude to theater is defined in this section through its rejection of the baroque illusionistic approach.

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In his introductory "To The Lovers of Perspective," Pozzo is quick to construe perspective as a new manner of optical delineation "free from the encumbrances of occult

[535] The insistence on a fixed viewing place held theological connotations as well. The Jesuit desire to create a communion between human beings and God's light, here within a geometrical structure, was at issue. Overall, however, Pozzo's interest in pictorial illusion and the dissolution of the spectator's world into the religious pictorial world overshadowed his advocacy of a deceived eye.

lines."[536] In various locations throughout the treatise, he reminds readers of the drawbacks of those offending lines.[537] Pozzo contrasts the occult with a common and easy rule that all lovers of perspective should resolve to learn. In drawing the specific points necessary for designing in perspective, he assures the novice, one is capable of approaching the one true point, God. In short, as discussed later in this section, the artist can literally draw himself towards divinity. This acknowledgment of the symbolical meaning of the vanishing point as infinity, which allies itself with divinity, rests upon the then-antecedent history of perspective drawing.[538]

Pozzo initially portrayed perspective in the following manner: "The Art of Perspective does, with wonderful pleasure, deceive the eye, the most subtle of all our outward senses; and it is very necessary to be known of all, who in Painting would give a due Place and Proportion to their Figures, and more or less Strength requisite to the Lights and Shades of the Picture."[539] This deceptive pleasure, Pozzo indicated, depended foremost on the viewer's position, or the "due place," relative to any scene before him.[540] The acceptability of this theatrical picture was governed directly by the stationary beholder's response. The importance of this "due place" is evident within the instructions on perspective themselves.[541] In Figure 16, *The Tuscan Base in*

[536] "togliendo da essa tutti gl'intrighi delle linee occulte," in Pozzo, *Perspectiva*, "Ad Lectorem Perspectivae Studiosum." This notion of an occult line refers to those elements not drawn in accordance with proper perspective.
[537] For example, in "Ad Lectorem Perspectivae Studiosum." Rocaille engravings, with their playful manner of drawing, would naturally depart from this calling.
[538] Pozzo would partially acknowledge that history in an introductory illustration showing the desired architect's drafting table. In the illustration, three books are to be found within a room. In the original 1693 edition, Palladio's writings and an unmarked book lie on a shelf on the wall. Vignola's treatise on the five orders is open on the table itself. The 1707 English edition of the treatise, however, took the liberty of assigning the unmarked book to Vitruvius. In the German edition consulted for this chapter, Vignola is absent and only Palladio remains. The only three architects that Pozzo refers to in his writing, however, are Vignola, Palladio, and Scamozzi. Alberti's writing, despite the marked influence of his thinking, is absent from both the writing and the illustration.
[539] Pozzo, *Rules and Examples of Perspective*, "Ad Lectorem Perspectivae Studiosum."
[540] "la giusta situatione e diminutione alle figure," in Pozzo, *Perspectiva*, "Al Lettore."
[541] This idea of a fixed viewing point stems from Alberti's *On Painting*.

Perspective, Pozzo emphasizes the ability to discern visual truth from a single vantage point. "When your draught is finished, if you view it at the due distance, and perpendicularly to the point of sight; you'll readily discover and rectify what's amiss," he says.[542] Accordingly, in stepping outside of this point one would not retain transcendental vision. Pozzo calls upon a reader to occupy a specific place within the geometrical setting of the world so as to control the physical reality before one (fig. 29).[543]

By way of contrast, Bavarian rocaille engravings would explicitly deny such a fixed positioning. With respect to architecture, Hertel notes that "the Bavarian Rococo church interior has so multiplied the points of perspective as to abolish the notion of "due place and proportion" put forth by Pozzo."[544] The spectator is compelled into motion, whether organized as in a pilgrimage, in the church service itself, or otherwise.

Scientific discoveries of the preceding era had brought about an insecurity of man's position in the universe. Along with Copernicus and Kepler, one supposedly needed to recognize that only from one specific vantage point unoccupiable by human beings, that of the sun, could one determine the order of the universe. Further, while viewing a *quadratura* painting, one would re-enact a symbolic re-centering and reveal the order of the illusion at hand. Wandering around in front of the picture, one might search for that central position that would give one greater comprehension – an exploration which would also double as a search for God. This momentary positioning, however, would give one access to a quasi-divine understanding of the workings of the painting.

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[542] Pozzo, *Rules and Examples of Perspective*, Figure 16.
[543] In many of Pozzo's *quadratura* paintings, such as the ceiling of Sant'Ignazio in Rome, the beholder's exact position is marked on the floor of the building.
[544] Hertel, *Pygmalion in Bavaria*, 75.

The prideful assumption that one could, if only fleetingly, occupy a center, spoke of a greater proximity between the mundane and the sacred. Just as putti were descending in churches to lower and lower realms, so too was the common man elevating himself to apparently greater and greater levels of understanding. Put in theatrical terms, the Renaissance royal box, a position proclaiming the divine nature of the ruler, had become a layman's right. The journey to find the unique point of view had long been in play, and it now came with the promise that it could be fulfilled, but at the price of trading reality for fiction.

In the section of "Figures" prior to the *quadratura* illustrations, Pozzo develops his approach to perspective. Pozzo's initial description of how to draw in perspective departs little from the account in Alberti's *On Painting*. Pozzo recognizes, for example, that the distance from the viewer to the picture plane is equal to the distance from the "point of the eye" to the "point of distance" on the centric line.[545] Pozzo also recognizes that the picture plane, which he calls the "section," has had various names in prior theories: "the veil, transparent medium, section, cloth, or table."[546] Pozzo's first drawing example, much like Alberti's floor tiles in *On Painting*, is a square out of which emerges an architectural pedestal.

A sense of the need for ease and expediency of construction is present in the work from its very outset. In Figure 2, for example, Pozzo speaks of sparing the time and labor of the reader so as to avoid confusion. In Figure 3, drawing paper gets folded crosswise so as to be of ready use. In Figure 4 the folded paper gives the reader an advantage. This spirit of ensuring an easy method recalls Alberti's similar approach in *On Painting*. Furthering that ease is a certain equivalency between drawings and buildings that one can sense in the work as well. The concept of the drawing as being directly representative of the building becomes clear when

[545] Pozzo, *Rules and Examples of Perspective*, Figure 1.
[546] Ibid.

Pozzo suggests that the "geometrical plan, as I have formerly hinted, is no less necessary for the painting [of] a design in perspective, than it is for raising a structure with solid materials."[547] Geometry, used in both scenarios, becomes the device that allows the collapse of the drawing onto architecture, or the thought of architecture as an extension of drawing, to happen.

By the time the reader approaches Figure 5, the beginnings of the "common and easy rule" of perspective construction become apparent. The studious reader is to use plans and their elevations to construct the first three-dimensional geometries.[548] Quite literally, Figure 7 states, the plan and the upright or elevation are "put in perspective," with occult lines being kept at bay. Following this, and with an eye to Vignola's measurements, Pozzo takes the reader through the drawing of the five orders. Pozzo concedes that the drawing of capitals in perspective is quite troublesome and thus he recommends the precise delineation of the plan. In Figure 30 – *An Ionic Work in Perspective*, Pozzo alludes to his painting technique, which process is underscored by a desire to merge the pictorial and the real, indicating that "the conjunction of the real with the painted architecture, will be altogether imperceptible."[549] Pozzo wishes, at every turn, to avoid confusion. He understands and writes clearly about the artifice of his work.[550] Deception of the eye is the prime goal of a well-designed perspective, he reports.[551] In *Of Scenes for the Stage*, for example, he places scenes obliquely in grooves so that prompters and stage hands will not be seen by the audience.[552] Just as he does with his illusionistic frescos, Pozzo here indicates the best place from which to view the stage. The distance from the front of the stage to that viewing

[547] Ibid., Figure 96.
[548] "piante & elevationi" / "vestigiorum & elevationum." Ibid., Figure 5.
[549] Ibid., Figure 30.
[550] Pozzo, *Perspectiva*, Figure 69.
[551] Ibid., Figure 65. The baroque use of theatrical illusionism aimed largely at deceiving the senses, such as vision, rather than the soul or mind. See Richard Alewyn and Karl Sälzle, *Das grosse Welttheater: Die Epoche der höfischen Feste in Dokument und Deutung* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1959), 48-70.
[552] Pozzo, *Perspectiva*, Figure 72.

point is equal to the distance from the front to the back of the stage. In creating this equation, Pozzo claims that a "regular piece of perspective" will result.[553]

In addition to the reductive idea of putting plans and elevations into perspective, the strategy of first drawing geometrical figures, then individual elements, and finally architectural ensembles, stands out. In such an arrangement, squares and circles precede corbels, pedestals, columns, and cornices, which in turn anticipate complete architectural scenarios. Architecture accepts its possibly being reduced to basic parts capable of being joined to make wholes. Accordingly, the treatise progresses along in this linear and didactic manner, assuming that architecture comes from its parts while receiving its fulfillment through their progressive development. Gone is the historical understanding of part and whole sharing equal standing in the search for harmony in architectural creation. Pozzo no longer advances the proposal advocated by Alberti that this harmony could be realized through a uniform system of proportions.

As the treatise progresses, one notices the extent to which Pozzo departs from Albertian theory. Pozzo's text is greatly simplified, purified of speculation regarding the symbolic attributes of geometry, and always accompanied by a plan and elevation. Ever with an eye to avoiding "occult lines," Pozzo attempts to show the manner of "putting [things] in perspective."[554] He projects elevations, puts geometries into perspective, and reduces pilasters into perspective.[555] One can find a prime example of such simplification in Figure 14, *Circles in Perspective*. Pozzo here advocates the use of squares circumscribing circles to help bring the geometries into perspective. However the true approximation of the circle is not what matters.

[553] Ibid., Figure 73.
[554] Pozzo, *Rules and Examples of Perspective*, Figure 12.
[555] Ibid., Figures 13, 14, and 82.

He remarks that "where your work requires many circles, I would advise you to use as few squares as possible; lest they perplex, rather than assist you."[556] Clearly missing is the geometer's interest in finding the value of π in the squaring of the circle.

At the end of the section of "Figures," Pozzo turns to his famous *quadratura* method. Figure 88 is the first to divide a drawn scene into four quadrants. This action allows Pozzo, in the spirit of the overall book, to develop each quadrant as a step in the evolution of the finished perspective. Thus plans and elevations in the first quadrant give way to projections of corbels and other parts in the second quadrant, which cede to a perspective devoid of shadows in the third quadrant, which then in turn becomes a finished and shaded perspective in the fourth quadrant. In this work the idea that a complete architecture, or a complete architectural perspective, is one which acknowledges both day and night, surfaces. A developed interest, both drawn and written, exists between perspective "without shadows"[557] and that "with its lights and shade."[558] In Figure 71, for example, Pozzo revels in a noble piece of architecture "which struck the eye when seen by daylight, but was more especially surprising by candlelight."[559] Pozzo thus requests, when explaining how to draw a perspective on a vault, that the viewer imagine a lamp or a candle placed at the point of sight at night. This metaphorical connection between divine light and geometry allows for the projection of a two-dimensional sketch onto a three-dimensional curved ceiling.

In the section called "Objections," Pozzo answers his critics. Here he stresses the importance of perspective utilizing but one point of sight, or point of the eye. This concept is a hallmark principle of baroque illusionism, as demanded by Albertian perspective, and it aims to

[556] Ibid., Figure 14.
[557] Ibid., Figure 88.
[558] Ibid., Figure 91.
[559] Ibid., Figure 71.

tie the spectator to a specific location. However, Pozzo remains cognizant of the objections to his theory. The use of more than one point of sight would become the norm in subsequent writings on perspective, as in the work of Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena. While weighing the consequences of both perspectival systems, Pozzo argues for the use of a single viewpoint. Calling perspective a falsification of Truth, he concludes that one viewpoint is less injurious to the work than many such points. An ambiguity ensues: while the drawing of perspective aims to bring the artist closer to God by connecting him to the vanishing point with its implications of infinity, the viewing of that same scene acknowledges the fictitious nature of perspective. An architectural scene would appear to be proportionally correct when in truth not. This mode of thinking provides two scenarios for engaging with architecture. First, viewing the world from a stationary point makes things appear perfect and regular while rendering us conscious of perspective's artificial nature. Pozzo jokes about the play between the painted reality and the architectural reality of his frescos when answering his critics questioning his placement of columns upon corbels in a painted cupola for Sant'Ignazio, noting that "a certain painter, a friend of mine, removed all their scruples, by answering for me, that if at any time the corbels should be so much surcharged with the weight of the columns, as to endanger their fall, he was ready to repair the damage at his own cost."[560] Second, a roaming eye makes figures seem imperfect, yet more real, and thus truthful, all the while supporting the need to return to a proper point of view. While the wandering subject occupies a more truthful space as he perambulates, only his return to a single point of view draws him toward the divine and infinitely distant vanishing point. The true world of experience stands beside the appearance of a true world.

[560] Ibid., Figure 91.

Pozzo's description of that second viewing scenario gets very close to common descriptions of rocaille. "If therefore through the irregularity of the place, the architecture appear with some deformity, and the figures intermixed therewith seem anything lame and imperfect, when viewed out of the proper point, besides the reasons just now given, it's so far from being a fault, that I look upon it as an excellency in the work," he says.[561] Thus the deformity of architecture, along with its "lame and imperfect" figures, is necessary so as to understand the visual regularity achieved from the proper viewpoint. Yet unlike Pozzo's scheme, rocaille engravings have had no proper point to return to. Their imperfections do not justify a single point of sight. Often criticized throughout the eighteenth century as being deformed and irregular, rocaille work provides a more truthful space for the spectator, yet one that gives little room to imagine the representation of infinity.

Pozzo calls upon three reasons to defend his position in the face of objections, viz., the great masters used one viewpoint, perspective is untruthful anyway, and viewing the architectural whole is important, his reasons being "*First*, because in the vaults of halls or churches painted by the greatest masters, if they consist of one piece only, we find but one point of sight assigned. *Secondly*, since perspective is but a counterfeiting of the Truth, the painter is not obliged to make it appear real when seen from *any* part, but from *one* determinate point only.[562] *Thirdly*, because, if in a vault, for example, where you would paint one entire design of architecture and figures, you assign several points of sight, you will find no place whence you may take a perfect view of the whole, and at best you can only view each part from its proper point."[563]

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[561] Ibid., "Respondetur" / "Answer."
[562] Pozzo here directly agrees with Alberti's stance on the singular viewpoint.
[563] Ibid. This inability to articulate a perfect point of view resonates with much of rococo ecclesiastical architecture.

At the heart of Bavarian rocaille was the desire to play with perspectival drawing conventions. Pozzo's illusionistic *quadratura* technique remained a favored subject for such games. In his fresco work, Pozzo had detailed a design strategy which fused the pictorial and the lived worlds together.[564] This fusion was one of the principle modes of Italian illusionism, as well as of its predecessors, where the correct viewing of a fresco required one to stand in a fixed position.[565] This security of the vantage point in Pozzo's illusionistic work was to be called into question by the impossibility of believing in such illusionism in rocaille. As discussed regarding the next illustration, the majority of rocaille architectural settings remained physically impossible. They could not be built as depicted, for they held within them many spatially incongruent scenarios.

Rocaille points to the deceptive character of illusion and thereby unveils illusionism for what it is. By offering itself as an effective response to the rejection of the baroque illusionistic approach, rocaille plays with the very tensions involved between the world of the spectator and that of the representation. The prime vehicle for achieving this play is the frame. Pozzo's merger of the pictorial and the real attempts to induce the viewer into momentarily forgetting about both the artifice at hand and the frame. In rocaille, however, our attention turns decisively to the significance of the frame, which is simultaneously able and yet not able to hold the depiction. Thus while illustrations of the *quadratura* technique would have us cast aside the frame, in rocaille engravings the frame becomes as important as the framed.

[564] This degree of interaction, especially evident in theater construction, would be succeeded by a greater interest in audience autonomy by the time of the nineteenth century.
[565] Pozzo's illusionism causes the beholder to wonder where the beholder's environment ends and the representational one begins. That wonder ends precisely when one steps away from the privileged point of view.

Pozzo's technique abolishes the frame that traditionally contained the illusionistic representations within. With rocaille, on the other hand, the conceptual continuity of illusion between the world the viewer stands in and the illustrations beyond becomes strained. Speaking of the Bavarian rococo church, Harries has suggested that rather than reassert a delimiting border, such churches constructed a tenuous frame around frescos, one that created "an ornamental framing zone that is weaker than the traditional frame in that it links the world of the fresco to the space in which we stand, but strong enough to create some distance between the two."[566] In a similar manner, the rocaille engraving presents such a tenuous frame. Spectators are invited to partake in the worlds within the scenes, yet are denied full participation due to the architectural ambiguities and the dissolving frames. In Wachsmuth's *Der Winter* (fig. 30), for example, the ornamental frame has completely merged with the theatrical scene depicted. However the architectural space shown is physically impossible. The framing elements twist and turn, mimicking the dancers within, and yet do not resolve themselves structurally. The steps in the foreground literally unfold before one's eyes, inviting the spectator to partake in the imaginary event. Challenges to Alberti's definition of perspective here abound: the spatial location of a picture plane is impossible; the delineation of a frame is not apparent; the call for stationary and monocular vision is not made; the centric point is no longer at eye level; and the base line, formerly divided into *braccia*, has been consciously eroded and thereby no longer demands that the spectator give his human measure to the representation.

An overall indistinctness in the engraving between the real and the imaginary was no accident, born as it was of a desire to play with the illusionism present in baroque art works.[567]

[566] Harries, *Bavarian Rococo Church*, 120.
[567] This self-conscious theatricality challenges the understanding of art works which aim to exist only in the present. See Harries' commentary on Michael Fried in "Authenticity and Theatricality: Second

Ultimately, rocaille represented a world in transition. Positioned between the baroque and the Enlightenment, rocaille unveiled the baroque to show it for what it was. Even more importantly, rocaille attempted to reveal a more perfect truth, with human beings ultimately seeking a stronger connection with the divine.

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Andrea Pozzo's *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* came out at the end of a career which had dealt again and again with the technical methods present in this treatise. The work operated in a theoretical framework granting an increasing level of equivalence between the image and the text. This rising importance of the image appeared directly in the format of the book, where on a typical page the picture would grace one side of the spread, text being on the other. This layout was not a novel one, however, as it had appeared earlier in the work of Pozzo's Jesuit predecessor Jean Dubreuil, *La Perspective Pratique*.[568] To an even greater extent, rocaille books of ornament demonstrated the significance of the rise of the picture. Writing within them most often appeared on a dedicatory cartouche frontispiece or as a naming of the illustrative plates. However, it was in the approach to making the engravings and to viewing the representation where rocaille work would depart significantly from Pozzo's scheme.

From the beginning of *Perspectiva* to the end, Pozzo would continually call on the reader to draw in a manner which remained unencumbered by "occult lines." Rocaille work, with its playful manner of drawing and its insistence on using lines which did not obey a perspectival

Thoughts on *The Bavarian Rococo Church*," *Stanford Literature Review* 5, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 1988): 179-95.

[568] Jean Dubreuil, *La perspective pratique* (Paris: M. Tavernier, 1642-49).

system, would naturally depart from this calling. In Wachsmuth's engraving of a theatrical festival, *Der Winter*, the notion of needing a central vanishing point is playfully eluded (fig. 30). The spectator's eye is not invited to rest on any particular element, but rather continuously to wander, with the horizon line less than apparent, the foreground ungridded, the base line anything but regular, and the frame indistinguishable from the architecture behind it. Architectural and natural elements akin to Pozzo's occult lines predominate while creating a place that cannot actually exist. Although the onlooker has been summoned to the festivities within this scene, he ultimately doubts that he can actually attend.

Along with the noticeable emphasis on the image in Pozzo's writing was the avowed interest in the ease and simplicity of construction rules. By the time of rocaille the intricacy and difficulty of making the curvilinear engravings on copper plates, along with the lack of any set of rules to guide the artist, would set the era apart from Pozzo's and from his call for clarity. With rocaille, the representation of the frame rose to a critical level of importance, still holding the representation together yet now doing so in a deeply compromised fashion. In Pozzo's own work and writings the search for the single vantage point, and thus ostensibly for greater comprehension of the universe, ended in a discovery—one could find the all-ordering center. In rocaille works, by way of contrast, and due in large measure to the tenuous frame, any such search would remain without an apparent answer.

Relation to Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena

Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena was part of the illustrious Bibiena family, who, beginning in the 1680s and through eight family members, dominated the world of European theater sets for a century. Ferdinando's father, Giovanni Maria Galli, had been sent by Ferdinando's grandfather to study art in Bologna, where Ferdinando eventually continued the family tradition. Trained in draughtsmanship, architecture and mechanics, Ferdinando began in his mid-twenties to design theater sets, wall decorations, buildings, and formal gardens in and around Parma for the Farnese family, long-standing and noted patrons of theater. In what has been described as a true "Bibiena industry" dynastic festivals, ephemeral *apparati*, treatises on architecture, theatrical spectacles, and fine opera halls were continuously designed by the family during this hundred year span.[569]

Ferdinando was introduced to the Habsburgs in Barcelona in 1708. There he supervised celebrations for the marriage of Charles III of Spain, Archduke Charles, and was made the king's first architect and painter of festivities. As soon as that king went to Vienna to become Charles VI of Austria, he called Ferdinando to accompany him. Ferdinando's treatise *L'architettura civile* was published in 1711, just prior to his departure for Vienna.[570] His son Giuseppe executed a later treatise, *Architettura e Prospettive* in 1740, during the son's twenty-year service with Emperor Charles VI.[571] Giuseppe also built the opera house at Bayreuth (1744-48), the only theater by a member of the family which survives intact today. Although Vienna was the

[569] Tommaso Manfredi suggests that there exists an artistic "Bibiena language" which became evident first in the production of *Didio Giuliano*, the opera which inaugurated the 1687 reopening of the Teatro Ducale in Piacenza. See his "The Bibiena. Bologna," *The Burlington Magazine* 142, no. 1173 (2000): 799.

[570] Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena, *L'architettura civile preparata sú la geometria e ridotta alle prospettive* (Parma: P. Monti, 1711).

[571] Giuseppe Galli-Bibiena, *Architettura, e Prospettive* (Augustæ: Andrea Pfeffel, 1740). This work, a collection of fifty of Giuseppe's designs, shows examples of both centric point and angled perspective with only a minimal introduction and no theoretical speculation.

center of their work, Bologna being their home, their travels and foreign marriages kept them ever wandering. The family had traveled from home in Bologna to Barcelona, Naples, Vienna, Bayreuth, Stockholm, and St. Petersburg on assignments. As family collaboration was a tradition in Bologna, they were known for recommending each other for work. They also drew alike and presumably collaborated on their drawings. When Maria Theresa, daughter of Charles VI, died in 1780 and her successor's economies put an end to the vast festivities of the Viennese court, the Bibienas left Austria, their works no longer being in high demand.

In order to decipher the remarkable changes in thinking about theater, this section looks to the differences between Galli-Bibiena's *L'architettura civile* and Pozzo's *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* as well as to the former's strong conceptual and practical relation with rocaille ornamental design. As with Pozzo's treatise, Galli-Bibiena's was well known to the eighteenth-century Bavarian art world. Ferdinando's five-part text, however indebted it was to its predecessor, was less of a step-by-step unveiling of the author's perspectival technique and more of a structured and in-depth discussion on the subjects of geometry, architecture, perspective, painting, and mechanics. Its impact was immeasurable, and in conjunction with the combined Bibiena family's oeuvre, it exerted significant influence over theater in the eighteenth century.

The novel approach and perspectival technique introduced in the treatise in the *scena per angolo* would depart noticeably from the method described in Pozzo's illusionistic quadratura scenes. The privileged vantage point for Pozzo's spectator would give way to an absence of any center for Bibiena's onlooker. At stake was the relation between the world an audience lives in and that of the theatrical depiction. Parallel to that relation was the architectural interplay between the theater hall and the stage itself. The primary centric point of traditional Albertian

perspective would multiply and shift away from the center of the stage, sometimes even off it.[572] This would cause the viewer to become more mobile, for he would no longer be required to stand in one place to understand the perspectival view, and, being more mobile, would thus be more desirous to understand the scene presented. As with rocaille, which likewise does not call for a fixed viewpoint, the spectator would be free to view the scene from the position of his choosing (fig. 31). References to freedom of the imagination would permeate writings in reference to both *L'architettura civile* and rocaille books of ornament. In a similar vein, as described in the following pages, research into acoustics and theater design in Bibiena's time advocated the use of curved, conical, and bell-shaped elements—elements central to rocaille.

Bibiena's description of his theatrical system takes the reader through a detailed account of the stage, and in particular, of the wing design. An old method for positioning wings is outlined before several new methods are explained. These new methods give a measured account of the *scena per angolo* approach in a much more mathematical manner than Pozzo's descriptions of perspective drawing had. Overall, Bibiena had shifted the theoretical weight from an interest in illusion to one of performance. As one eighteenth-century writer on theater noted, a Bibiena construction developed the "art of making tiny spaces seem vast," as well as "the ease and speed of changing sets in a twinkling of an eye," and "the ability to dim or brighten the lights at will."[573]

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[572] As anamorphosis demonstrates, this placement of distance points off of the stage could be achieved without violating the rules of perspective.
[573] Statement by Stefano Arteaga, as quoted in A. Hyatt Mayor, *The Bibiena Family* (New York: H. Bittner, 1945), 24.

L'architettura civile is organized as a five part text: *On Geometry*, *On Architecture*, *On Perspective*, *On Painting*, and *On Mechanics*. In *On Geometry*, Ferdinando outlines various geometric figures. His occupation requiring travel, he provides a table to assist in understanding the different scales of measurement in different cities and countries. In *On Architecture* he depicts numerous types of buildings and the architect reading that opus is called upon to account for climate, geography, materials, and appropriate kinds of ornament. In *On Perspective* Galli-Bibiena vouches for the superiority of his method compared to older and more conservative techniques. He initiates the subject of his perspectival technique in the introduction to this section, wherein he proclaims that theater perspective is different from other kinds of perspective due to the inclination of the stage. In Operazioni 39 – 45, for example, he demonstrates his variant of the *sotto in sù* or worm's eye view perspective. Pozzo was also very fond of this method, where the horizon line and the ground line converge. Interestingly, there is no reference whatever to the earlier artist in Galli-Bibiena's treatise. The section *On Painting* is devoted to perspective in painting. Here Ferdinando gives advice on the planning of sets and on different types of machinery. Operazione 67 of this section introduces the *scene vedute per angolo*. Many authors would call this manner of approaching perspective a "democratic" one, thanks to the fact that there are no rapid distortions when the spectator moves away from the privileged point of view.[574] In the final section, *On Mechanics*, or *The Art of Moving*, Ferdinando outlines methods for holding and transporting weights. As a whole, *L'architettura civile* remained the most influential document of theater history in the eighteenth century.[575]

[574] See, for example, Diane Kelder's introduction to Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena's *L'architettura civile* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971).
[575] The impact of the text and of the *scena per angolo* mode of drawing was enormous. A second edition appeared only two decades later. *Direzioni a' Giovani Studenti nel Disegno dell'Architettura Civile* (Bologna: Lelio dalla Volpe, 1731-32).

Perhaps the greatest contrast to be made in understanding the treatise is how it differs from Pozzo's writings. In moving away from Pozzo's fixed vantage point for the spectator, Ferdinando gives each individual audience member a kind of equivalency. The audience's reality gradually moves into the world of re-presentation and the privileged vantage points disappear. A vision which framed itself around the monocular gaze of one monarch would give way with such a scheme to one which more or less embraced a greater multitude of spectators. This conception had a contemporaneous musical counterpart. As the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wore on, a heightened interest in what one might term an acoustical democracy took place, one in which the ideal shape of the theater wall and its sound-reflecting capacities were at stake. In his 1632 treatise *Lo specchio ustorio*, Italian mathematician Bonaventura Cavalieri put forward the first proposals for an elliptical auditorium.[576] As part of his research into the reflection of sound by mirrors, he studied Vitruvius' account of resonance vases for theaters and concluded that their profile must have been a hyperbolic one. He further noted that in some illustrated editions of Vitruvius as well as in certain imaginative reconstructions, the vases were depicted as bell-shaped and were thus quite similar to the hyperbola.[577] Extending Cavalieri's research in their own work, the Bibiena family turned to bell-shaped auditorium designs in many cases. Francesco Galli Bibiena's notion of the "phonetic bell curve," for example, was at play in 1717 for the Teatro Ducale in Milan. Likewise, a description of the inauguration of Antonio Galli Bibiena's Teatro Comunale in Bologna dealt mostly with a treatment of Vitruvian vases.[578]

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[576] Bonaventura Cavalieri, *Lo specchio ustorio overo trattato delle settioni coniche* (Bologna: Clemente Ferroni, 1632), 129-31.
[577] Vitruvius, *Architettura, con il suo commento et figure Vetruvio in volgar lingua raportato per m. Gianbatista Caporali di Perugia* (Perugia: Bigazzini, 1536), 115, as well as Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia universalis*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1650), 284.
[578] See Antonio Galli Bibiena, *Pianta, e spaccato del nuovo teatro di Bologna* (Bologna: Longhi, 1763), 9-22.

The Vitruvian conviction that voice moves in spherical motions had a large impact on the design of theaters at the time. Stemming from the analogy of rippling and circular waves in water, theatrical areas were to avoid sharp corners, ornamentation in strong relief, and structural incoherence, i.e., anything that might obstruct the free flow of the water-like acoustical wave.[579] Italian musician Antonio Planelli, speaking of the Teatro Regio in Turin, was to proclaim that the sharp corners could in fact "devour the sound."[580] Authors writing on theater architecture, such as Pierre Patte and Francesco Riccati, likewise argued for auditoria devoid of obstacles such as columns, so that the sound waves could emanate freely.[581] One contemporary author notes how people questioned evenly-placed columns at the sides of the proscenium of a Bibiena theater.[582] During the second half of the eighteenth-century, prominent theorists emphasized the primacy of sound circulation by suggesting that angles, discontinuities, and bas-reliefs be avoided.[583] It was not until the nineteenth century that people began criticizing the belief in the advantages of acoustical circulation.

The mentality of designing theatrical rooms as curved environments extended into the workings of rocaille engravings. Time and again, rocaille would deliberately eschew orthogonal lines and acknowledge a classical conception of sound propagation as put forward by Aristotle and, in particular, Vitruvius. In Habermann's *Das Gehör*, for example, the sense of hearing is illustrated as part of a series of the five senses (fig. 26). In the illustration, two putti play music in front of an organ while surrounded by a wealth of rocaille ornamentation. The ornament

[579] Vitruvius, *I dieci libri dell'architettura*, ed. and trans. Daniele Barbaro (Venice, 1567), 259-60.
[580] Antonio Planelli, *Dell'opera in musica* (Naples: Campo, 1772), 5.4.
[581] Pierre Patte, *Essai sur l'architecture théâtrale* (Paris: Moutard, 1782), 159-60; Francesco Riccati, *Della costruzione de' teatri secondo il costume d'Italia* (Bassano: Remondini, 1790), 48.
[582] Patrizio Barbieri, "The acoustics of Italian opera houses and auditoriums (ca. 1450-1900)," *Recercare* 10 (1998): 283.
[583] See André Jacob Roubo, *Traité de la construction des théâtres et des machines théâtrales* (Paris: Cellot et Jombert, 1777), 59, and Patte, *Essai sur l'architecture théâtrale*, 169-70.

physically twists and turns, moving as if in response to the flute music being played. Rocaille here avoids sharp corners in the vicinity of the musicians, speaks to the free circulation of sound waves, and suggests that it too can hear the music being played.

In the *scena per angolo*, however, there emerges a continuity between the lived space of the beholder and the perspectival space of the theater set. The theater, both stage and audience, becomes more self-referential and less dependent on the world around it. Rather than architecturally presenting the world known to the audience, the work presents a picture of that world. While the mystery plays of the Middle Ages were performed against backgrounds of actual churches or other buildings, sixteenth century Italian architects abandoned piecemeal placement of stage set units for a more coherent perspectival order. Later, with developments in illusionism, the viewer had to search for a location that would reveal that order. Ferdinando, however, discarded this symmetry for his novel technique which used a diagonal arrangement rather than the central one that had been advocated since the time of Alberti (fig. 31). In this new method of stage design, the introduction of oblique vanishing points created an impression of reality that had not been possible with prior techniques. As the focal point got displaced from the central composition and located out of the audience's sight, the human body no longer acted as the measure of the stage painting. The primary centric point of traditional perspective got replaced with two points located beyond the boundaries of the scene, and thereby the viewer's position became more relativized than in traditional Albertian perspective.[584]

[584] It is important to note that the term "vanishing point" was not used by Galli-Bibiena. One of the two points was called the "veduta point" and the other the "distance point." Eighteenth-century Count Francesco Algarotti approached the significance of these points when he called them "accidental points." *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica* (1755).

Prevalent too with Galli-Bibiena are the dramatic shifts in the scale and perspectival exaggeration which heightened the connection between the spectators and the scene. The rapid shrinking of scale, yet another departure from Albertian perspective, was significant, inasmuch as scenery had to be drawn in perfect proportion, with actors needing to be very aware of their location on stage. The basic ground plan of the *scena per angolo* was either in a V-shape, with an acute corner pointing towards the audience members, or in an X-shape with intersecting arcades that moved both forward and backward. With these systems, the audience literally got wrapped up by the architecture of the theater, and the scenes appeared correct from everywhere in the auditorium.[585] This envelopment would make one think of the space of the stage as synonymous with that of the city. Thus, not unlike in Roman times, the theater background could be visualized as a civic façade. In some depictions the stage appears as a contingent part of a much larger space which the beholder is allowed to see from the outside. In keeping with the intention of illusionism, baroque stage design tried to join the pictorial space of the stage with the real space of the auditorium by linking the two with an axis. This new manner of perspectival thinking had much in common with rocaille. Although Ferdinando did not publicly accept rocaille, because, according to a friend, he admired and taught "true architecture without cartouches and sprays and modern frippery," his treatise can be seen as having much to do with developments in rocaille architecture.[586] In particular, the conceptual blending of the pictorial realm with the lived realm in rocaille furthered this development.

[585] This fact was even noted in the eighteenth century. See Charles-Nicolas Cochin, *Voyage d'Italie, ou Recueil de notes sur les ouvrages de peinture & de sculpture, qu'on voit dans les principales villes d'Italie* (Paris: Jombert, 1769), 23.
[586] A. Hyatt Mayor quotes from Zanotti in *The Bibiena Family*, 21.

The section on theatrical scenery within *L'architettura civile* is the only published account dealing with set design by the Galli-Bibienas. In this method, scenes are viewed at a forty-five degree angle on deep stages and are composed of as many as fifteen pairs of flat wings.[587] Wings are attached to carriages and are positioned parallel to the proscenium in grooves running continuously through the stage. Below that stage, mechanical devices support the flat wings through those groove openings. Bibiena frequently mentions to the reader that the space between the grooves be sufficient for two carriages. Throughout the section, however, he describes more than one method for positioning the wings within the set. First he demonstrates an old method of locating the wings using diagonals that recede to a centric point. Although perspectivally correct, this method produces alleys at the back of the stage which are too narrow for actors and their equipment. He therefore proposes another method, one in which the first wing is two ells and two inches from the proscenium and each alley beyond that is four ells wide.[588] At the rear of the stage is the backdrop, just behind the final wing pair. How that backdrop operates, however, he does not divulge.

All of these novel designs depicted in this treatise concern architecture within theater. Throughout these engravings Ferdinando does not emphasize a perspectival illusion as did his predecessor, but rather the nature of performance itself. Central to the creation of the *scena per angolo* is that it does not require the great stage depth that was important to prior theater stage design. The method moves away from reiterations of a single perspectival axis so as now to envelop the whole auditorium. Since the spectator is invited to view a small segment of the scene, he must imaginatively create the world beyond the frame's boundaries. Such a mental move would be an essential component of the viewing of rocaille engravings.

[587] Galli-Bibiena, *L'architettura civile*, 129.
[588] An "ell" is a measuring unit from the middle ages, roughly equivalent to 45 inches.

Significant to the term *per angolo* is that the spectator is no longer searching for a visual correspondence directly in front of him. He looks askance, equally to the left and to the right, for a visual culmination. That resolution, however, is either marginally perceptible or simply out of view. Rather than directly relating to a point of infinity, the beholder encounters a mass of architecture. Architecture being raised to the level of a subject matter by itself is no novelty, though. Since the sixteenth century, and along with the formulation of the still life, the architectural background of narratives had gained in representational importance, as in the history of the architectural fantasy. Architecture's servitude to the scene diminished over time as architecture began to tell its own story.

* * *

Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena's *L'architettura civile* had synthesized the family's approach to theater in the first of several editions and publications by the Bibienas. Moving beyond the desired simplicity of Pozzo's earlier treatise, the work accounted in a more detailed fashion for the subjects of geometry, architecture, perspective, painting, and mechanics. The work went farther than Pozzo's understanding of perspective illusion by introducing the concept of the *scena per angolo*, a perspectival method accommodated to the need for a shallow stage. This manner of perspectival thinking about theater would replace the primary centric point of Pozzo's technique with two points located in the margins of the scene. The two works, however, presented fundamentally different forms of communication. While Pozzo described a perspective method useful for built architecture and admittedly deceptive, Galli-Bibiena wrote a treatise *on* architecture and on how architecture exists in the world of *per angolo* perspective.

Rocaille engravings thus differ from Galli-Bibiena's approach in their not explicitly concerning themselves with the building of architecture. In this sense, rocaille holds deeper affinities with an artist such as Giovanni Battista Piranesi, a person invested in Galli-Bibiena's perspectival method, who had exploded it so as to put the picture frame under significant duress. In Galli-Bibiena's scheme, vision would pass beyond the frame of the depiction provided and also call the frame itself into question. The requisite and singular vantage point of Pozzo's theatrical scheme would be met with an absence of any such stationary point for the viewer of a Galli-Bibiena representation. As a result of these changes, greater audience mobility and a greater sense of democracy would ensue. In a traditional perspective scheme, the horizontal connection between man and centric point would mirror a vertical one between the world and the heavens. The infinitely and thus divinely distant centric point would provide a horizontal equivalent to the idea of vertical ascension. By multiplying and shifting the centric point and by providing new methods for horizontally-oriented wing positions, Galli-Bibiena's *scena per angolo* strategy challenged the previously sought-after vertical connection. One author has noted how, when baroque operas required scenes with descending divinities, Bibiena's new scheme was largely put aside for constructions that utilized central perspective.[589] The representation of infinity in those central perspective schemes dissolved in the *scena per angolo*. No longer did the picture receive its measure from the human participant. If the viewer moved back two steps, for example, the perspective view would not be compromised at all. In addition, and recalling Vitruvius and Aristotle, many theoretical writings on music in the period would point to the desire to conceive of musical rooms as curved, bell-shaped, and free-flowing environments.

[589] Bruno Forment, "Trimming Scenic Invention: Oblique Perspective as Poetics of Discipline," *Music in Art* 34, no. 1/2 (2009): 31-43.

These texts would exert much influence over rocaille approaches, thanks to rocaille's general reluctance to use orthogonal lines.

In all, rocaille would remain theoretically invested in Galli-Bibiena's techniques—from the increased movement of the spectator to the greater democratic nature of one's participation, on to the tension present in providing for vertical continuity. Finally, with the ideas and techniques introduced in *L'architettura civile*, symbolic representation itself would come under newfound pressure. With vertical continuity hampered, symbolic meaning would take decisive steps into the background, with aesthetic meaning moving into the fore.

In Nilson's *Die Hirtenmusic* (fig. 32), this aesthetic meaning is straightforwardly presented by means of a picture within a picture. In a move generally uncharacteristic of rocaille, a traditional frame returns to the image. That frame, however, is placed completely within another scene, creating a double image, or a play within a play. The frame, although unbroken, is surrounded by a rocaille outgrowth which emerges from the earth below and blends into the vegetation and architecture beyond. The circumstances within the internal frame are not different from those on the outside: music, shepherding, and romance grace both environments. What results is a theatrical view into a bounded scene not unlike that of Engelbrecht's miniature theater boxes. Here, however, the framed scene has little depth and is more akin to a picture than to a series of successive plates. The activities outside the frame are equal in importance to those within, rendering the internal frame somewhat superfluous. The visual paradox of having a representation embedded within another representation here conceptually weakens the integrity of the frame without having to physically alter it.

Not all Bibiena representations using the *scena per angolo* technique enact the merger of the horizon line and the ground line. Before describing the *scena per angolo*, Ferdinando lays out a more conventional theater set in which a single centric point, parallel wings, and a horizon line at eye level are used. However, the *scena per angolo* represents a marked departure from previous thinking in architectural literature. Such a manner suggests a strain on the world of representation, one in which the viewing subject no longer searches for a point of participation within the scene, but now observes from below. The entirety of the architectural view is placed above the horizon line. The architecture does not rest on the same ground as the human participant—its physical relation to us becomes heightened and becomes one which could change location at any time. The viewer's participation in the scene is secondary to the architecture itself. The spectators cannot, as in Pozzo's method, understand their place in the world via a visible vanishing point, and now they wander in a continuous architectural diorama. Even though many of the actually executed *scena per angolo* drawings from the Bibiena family do show a ground plane, the majority of those pictures inevitably take place above the centric line (fig. 31). In the tradition of the architectural veduta, the narrative became a pretext for the magical display of architecture.

When viewing a *scena per angolo*, one imagines that a larger scene than that which is presented could exist. Although one is intellectually cut off from the depiction, since one is no longer the measure of the representation as in prior times, one could imagine more. The boundaries of the representation seem to be framed by chance. One wonders if the perspectival world extends off the stage. We are mentally beckoned into the picture, albeit crawling on our hands and knees in the presence of a monumental architecture, desiring now to find what the accidental frame has left behind. Ultimately, however, our aspiration has little room in a world

in which architecture does not serve the narrative of our lives, but simply insists on telling its own story.

Conclusion

The rise of the significance of the image in architectural treatises is dramatically noticeable in Andrea Pozzo's *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum*. Prior works had certainly entertained this possibility, but the page-by-page equivalency here given to picture and word represents a novel treatment. That rocaille books of ornaments should largely be devoid of words stems in part from this changing attitude. In consequence, before the culmination of a short-lived artistic era, Johann Fünck could speak of rocaille's absent theory in 1747. Pozzo's admonishment of "occult lines, " pervasive throughout *Perspectiva*, would be explicitly denied in rocaille. Likewise, his concern for the spectator's "due place and proportion" would wane in rocaille engravings. Perspectival precision and specificity of viewing location were of little importance to rocaille artists. Instead, the viewer of a rocaille depiction was left to wander, largely for wandering's own sake. The importance of the experience over time would replace the momentary belief in total understanding. The rocaille rejection of Pozzo's approach continued in the manner of drawing as well. While Pozzo would continually attempt to make his method easy for the student to construct, with him expressing concerns similar to those made by Alberti three centuries before, rocaille work was notable for its difficulty of execution. Enlightenment critics would thus be inaccurate in their often recited dismissals of rocaille as being born of childish and untrained hands. Lastly, whereas Pozzo desired that the onlooker forget about the frame, rocaille brings the frame back into consideration, making it at least as equal in importance as the representation itself.

Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena's *scena per angolo* approach, although embedded within discussions of more conventional perspectival representations in *L'architettura civile,* departs significantly from Pozzo's treatment and retains greater affinities with rocaille work. Words certainly return in importance in this later body of writing, but the interest in fixing the participant's location on the earth does not. The individual is here free to move without doing harm to the picture being viewed. Such freedom would parallel contemporaneous understandings of music rooms as needing to be open and free of sharp corners so that sound waves could emanate without being hindered. This freedom of movement and freedom of the curved surface is precisely at issue in rocaille as well. Not able to stand at a concrete viewpoint so as to elicit a vertical connection, a person viewing a rocaille work would move horizontally through the curvilinear environments provided. In addition, in Galli-Bibiena's original treatise, the ground is in fact invisible now that the horizon line and the line of sight have merged. Overwhelmed by a monumental architecture looming above, viewers cannot much hope truly to engage in any narrative and become ever more intellectual participants. The frame, providing a chance view of the scene, could move positions with greater ease than before. So too could the spectator.[590] Engravings of rocaille ornament would further develop this interest in the frame and its fortuitous revealing of scenes, especially scenes within scenes.[591]

Calling upon these ideas present in *L'architettura civile,* the rocaille ornamental frame would continue a tenuous relation between the viewer's world and the world of the picture. Ornament's past role as boundary-keeper between the two would come to be questioned. At first the observer might wish to partake in a rocaille theatrical scene and to inhabit it mentally, as in a

[590] On the movement demanded by rocaille ornament within Bavarian rococo churches, see Harries' discussion of the pilgrimage church Die Wies in *Die Bayerische Rokokokirche,* 180-83.
[591] In contemporaneous church architecture as well, ceilings almost always had multiple frescos.

Pozzo illusion. The frame's blending with elements internal to the picture would, however, expose the theatricality for what it was and not allow for such an action. Nilson's *Das Bretspiel* points to this very problem (fig. 33). In this scene a group of men and women enjoy the board game of Tocadille. The picture frame that surrounds them here coerces the representation into a joint role. Part vegetation, part theatrical curtain, and part architecture, the frame intentionally fails to close the picture. At one point the image's border appears to be part of the architecture of a terrace on which the players sit. At another the frame gets represented as part of a theater curtain drawn to reveal the game. Once again, the artist's play with the frame speaks directly to the subject of the scene. Further, just as Nilson and his illustrated characters are at play, so too does the saying beneath the picture provide a play on words: "He who plays Tocadille is eager to win, and he who plays the ladies (*Damen*) needs all his senses."[592] The overall conceptual game that the viewer is asked to participate in now becomes the picture's narrative itself.

[592] "Damen" refers simultaneously to the queen-pieces of the game and to the women in the scene.

Conclusion

Still deeply medieval in character and yet moving toward the Enlightenment, Bavarian rocaille works found themselves in a period of great transition. Although situated at the doorstep of the mechanization and instrumentalization of geometry as would more fully be manifest in the nineteenth century, rocaille still partook of a belief in wondrous divine nature. The works defended themselves from rampant condemnation, not with words but by turning within and by elevating the sensible world to a new level. Germanic lands were in no rush to absorb the overarching cultural belief in reason that had swept across neighbor nations. When these lands eventually did turn to the ideas of the *Aufklärung*, interest in rocaille began to wane as criticism mounted. The shadowy scenes of rocaille engravings would give way to an interest in light. Their interiority would be exposed and their lack of theory bemoaned. Subjected to an intellectual analysis which they did not request, the authentic presence of rocaille ornament, and eventually ornament itself, would start to dissolve.

Our contemporary view of rocaille, via the rococo, is strongly colored by scholarship undertaken since the nineteenth century. Three characteristics stand out in the majority of interpretations: that the rococo represents a *style*, that it concerns itself with *form*, and that it contains *space*. These three terms were implicitly advanced by a variety of scholars and come with their share of challenges. A notable early exception to these predominant views appears in the work of Hans Sedlmayr and Hermann Bauer. In an encyclopedic definition of the term *rococo* the authors stress the uneasiness and difficulty of approaching the era from a stylistic vantage point. In their search to understand the rococo they surmise that standard art historical tools are more burdensome than helpful. Adding to this assessment, I would note that when

rocaille artists referred to their own work, seldom did they use the words *style*, *form*, and *space*. Negligible if nonexistent concern was given to the terms. Interpreting rocaille works on their own grounds and using their own terminology could help in overcoming this deficiency of approach.

From the very beginnings of literature reflecting on the topic, rocaille has been accounted for as a sensuous, mirthful, effervescent and elegant condition. Ever since the Goncourt brothers' overflowing admiration of the grace of rococo artists, writings have often been couched in similar terms. More recent scholarship has started to undo these preconceptions, however. When Sedlmayr and Bauer suggested in 1966 that the rococo contained a beauty destructive to art itself, the beginnings of a critique of the mainstream view were put into motion. Later analysts such as Harries would point to a sense of loss in this regard.[593] The tension present in rocaille ornament, and particularly in the ornamental frame, must be spoken for. A key to comprehending that tension is the interpretation of rocaille as an end—a historical end. The baroque had come undone and a Bavarian tradition was to come to a close. The last original Western ornament would never find an equal. Even in the final engravings themselves, frames would disintegrate and rocaille would be subsumed by representations of nature. The ensuing Enlightenment was quick to point out rocaille's shortcomings. The lack of a theory and of a conclusive name for rocaille was central to those critiques. To this day, no treatise on rocaille has been discovered. Bereft as it was of words, the ornament was thus subject to a scrutiny which it could not counter.

One of the prime tensions present in rocaille ornament is manifest through the merger of architecture and ornament. In engraving after engraving the physical boundaries between the

[593] Harries, *Bavarian Rococo Church*, 121.

two realms are consciously blurred. Since ancient times, ornament has defined its role as the most vocal part of a building. Ornament spoke to an audience just as it did in the closely associated realm of rhetoric. The challenges to ornament's capacity for speech in the eighteenth century evolved side-by-side with the waning interest in rhetoric. Aristotle, who had cautioned readers in antiquity not to ornament ordinary words without propriety, had receded into the background. Likewise, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*'s advocating for the natural health of ornament in speech met little interest in rocaille. That ornament had a moral obligation, a notion clearly developed by Cicero, was also of decreasing importance in the eighteenth-century. Additionally, Vitruvius, who had first architecturalized the notion of propriety, was of scant significance to rocaille. By way of contrast, Enlightenment authors would regularly turn to that Roman architect for theoretical support.

Just as Cicero had raised ornament to the highest level of speech, so too did Alberti elevate it to the supreme ranks of architecture and of beauty. Appropriate ornamental dress would allow architecture and human beings alike to participate fully in the public realm, argued the Renaissance theorist. Adherence to such rules, however, was not a pressing concern in rocaille, for a newfound freedom allowed ornament to distance itself from its symbolic background. Dissociated too was the primacy of Alberti's perspectival frame which had come to be eroded via a variety of techniques. The rocaille frame could blend its ornament together with the scene depicted, could fail to close itself, or could be set within yet another scene. In all cases, the frame would come to conceptually overshadow the picture and its narrative, with Alberti's cherished *istoria* now having become a distant recollection.

Another central tension in rocaille ornament appears in the fusion of architecture and nature. The recurring natural elements of rocaille—its rocks, shells, and acanthus leaves in

particular—were often indistinguishable from building elements. Such visual confusions are the inheritors of a long-standing sense of doubt about architecture. As early as in the Bible, the city and a life-giving earth often stood at odds with each other. As the product of a fallen man, architecture would always end in subservience to nature. The ruin would be the prime expression of this forsakenness for centuries following. In its ruined state, rocaille architecture also desired to return to the garden, and metaphorically to the Garden of Eden. The rocaille creator desired to be more like nature's author, creating beauty and continuing to retain power over the world of architecture. A key site of this embodiment of creativity was the grotto. Part nature and part architecture, part mundane and part sacred, the grotto opened the participant's senses and emotions to reveal mankind's intermediate status. Ever in a state of transformation, rocaille ornament, along with the symbolism of its shells and acanthus leaves, would desire continual rebirth.

A final tension in rocaille ornament exists between the lived world and the perspectival world of theater. This strain is particularly evident in the shift of interest in architectural literature from Andrea Pozzo's *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* to Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena's *L'architettura civile.* Since at least 1747, rocaille, and later the rococo, has been noted to be bereft of a theory. Books of ornament had no apparent need for philosophically summarizing their intentions. Nonetheless, many of rocaille's central premises can be found in associated treatises. A few decades before rocaille's emergence, Pozzo had asked his architectural subjects to seek out a true center, one which would grant the privilege of understanding amid the confusion of the world. He urged his reader-artists to utilize his easy method, to stand clear of occult lines, and to transcend the picture frame. Rocaille work—complex, involved, and obsessed with the frame as it was—marked a departure from his

writings. More germane, however, was Galli-Bibiena's *scena per angolo* approach. Now more mobile, the architectural subject would not find any such center. The onlooker's curvilinear horizontal movement overtook a prior interest in vertical continuity. With this new motion, the participant's world came closer to the theatrical world on stage—the rocaille frame unsuccessfully dividing the two. That ornamental frame, melding with architecture, nature, and the world of theater as it did, looked to narrate its own story.

Overall, these concerns surrounding rocaille architecture and ornament have broader connotations that go beyond their historical era. To a large extent the main question rocaille poses is one of whether or not architecture, through its ornament, should communicate with a public. Since ancient times, rhetoric, and with it ornament, had been compared to dialectic much as sound had been to sight. Although not a distinction without some measure of interplay, the difference was plain enough: rhetoric had more to do with the auditory. Many a post-eighteenth century critic, however, rejected this auditory dimension and began to understand architectural ornaments as objects to be read, clearly and distinctly, or as diagrams to be visually deciphered. By the nineteenth century such ornaments could partake of a mechanism of composition, and, via Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, be organized and designed at the will of the newly creative architect. The inability of ornament to alter sound waves, however, does not indicate that the potential for communication does not exist. Much like a silent language, architecture must still resonate with its public just as people had understood that it could for many a century.

The mediatory capacity of ornament to engage the onlooker and yet pass that attention along to the surrounding milieu was well understood by Hans-Georg Gadamer. He writes: "The nature of decoration consists in performing that two-sided mediation; namely to draw the attention of the viewer to itself, to satisfy his taste, and then to redirect it away from itself to the

greater whole of the context of life which it accompanies."[594] Ornament provides architecture with the capacity to fit into the context of life rather than to be seen as an aesthetic end, as it would when subjected to a tourist's photograph. Accordingly, ornament offers one a heightened understanding of the life world around it. Spectators are not distracted from any truth of a building through ornament, nor are they caught up with concerns of their own visual pleasure. Instead, the cultural conditions which preface that ornament are allowed to come to the fore. By way of extension, the onlooker should not seek to categorize the ornament he converses with, but to deepen his experience of it.

Challenges ensue when ornament becomes thought of in opposition to a true work of art. If subject to the world of craftsmanship, as distinguished from that of genius, ornament remains a replaceable means to an end. Questions of skill would predominate over those of utterance. Styles may come and go, craftsmen may move on, and so too could ornament. Such was the predicament of the nineteenth century. If ornament were thought of on the same grounds as an experience of art, however, such dispensability would no longer be at play. It is ornament's task to speak to us. Given the non-verbal nature of such communication, this dialogue can never be without ambiguity. It demands involvement and interpretation. Our searching for possible meanings, just as in an experience of an artwork, makes such dialogue possible. Not only does the beholder participate in the event which is the ornament, but he also can be transformed by it. Such transformation belongs largely to the realm of the emotional and the psychological. As in a game, one must engage the play from within, lest one be cast aside. Thus, as a communicative event, ornament does not provide one with a visual satisfaction dependent upon the fashion of the day, but with the chance to participate. Unlike a game, however, where all players are

[594] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, translation ed. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 140.

present at once, the dialogue of ornamentation is much slower and requires the accumulation of players over time. Our emotions are combined with those of our predecessors and those of our descendants so as to form an evolving dialogue. What ensues from this line of thinking is that the experience of ornament has the ability to become a communal event.

In prior times, ornament constituted beauty. If architectural beauty were at stake, ornament was implied. In the English language the word *ornament* remained exclusively a noun until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first known architectural example of the term as a verb, and thus as an action applied from the outside, is from the precise moment of rocaille's inception.[595] Earlier understandings of ornament suggested a phenomenon that did not function as an appendage and that could not be replaced at will. Embellishments were determined by that which they served; they presented their bearer. Ornament thus did not represent an independent condition hidden elsewhere in the architecture, but was the means or occasion by which meanings presented themselves. Rocaille, as the ornament standing at the very threshold of these changes, referred its audience to the significance of meaning, of necessity, and of communicativeness in architectural ornamentation.

[595] Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Alexander Pope, vol. 5 (London: W. Hunter, 1720), 117.

Illustrations

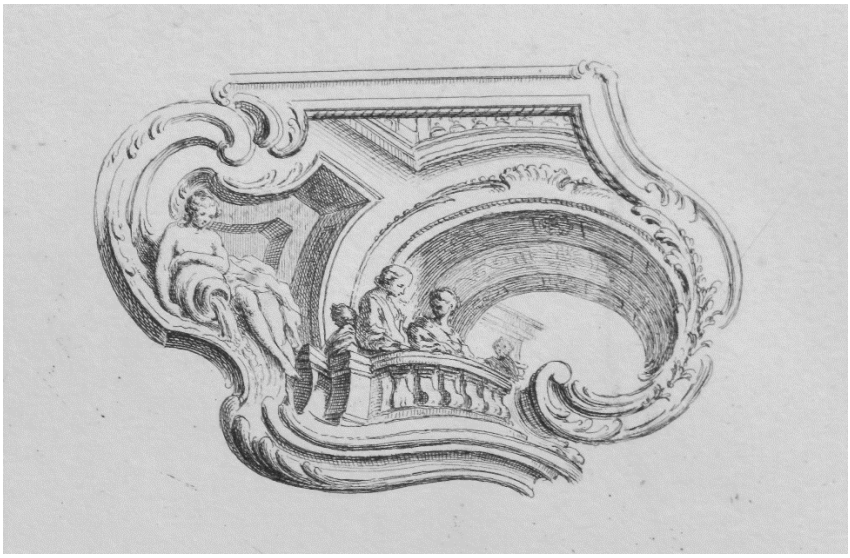


Figure 1. Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier, engraving from *Livre d'Ornemens*, 1734.

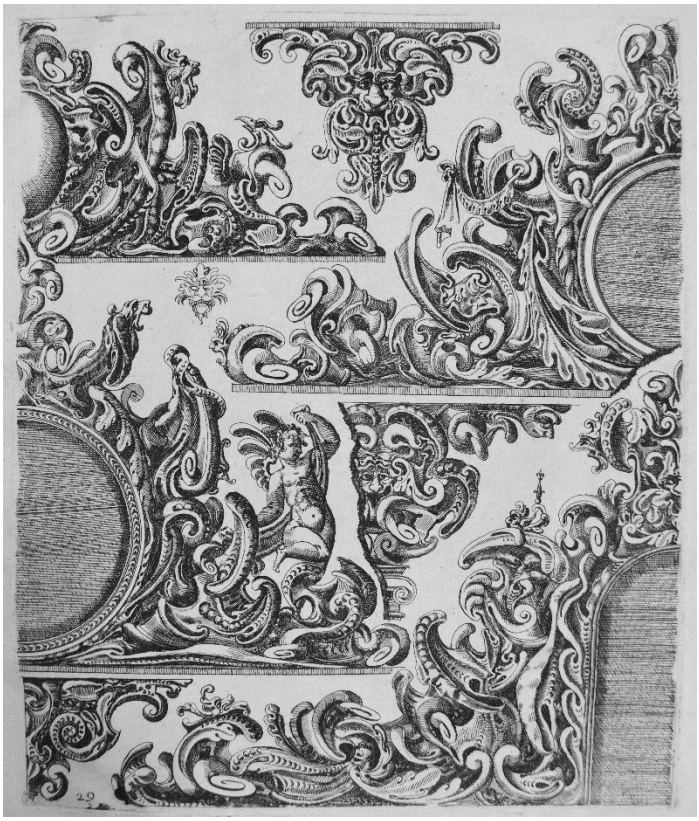
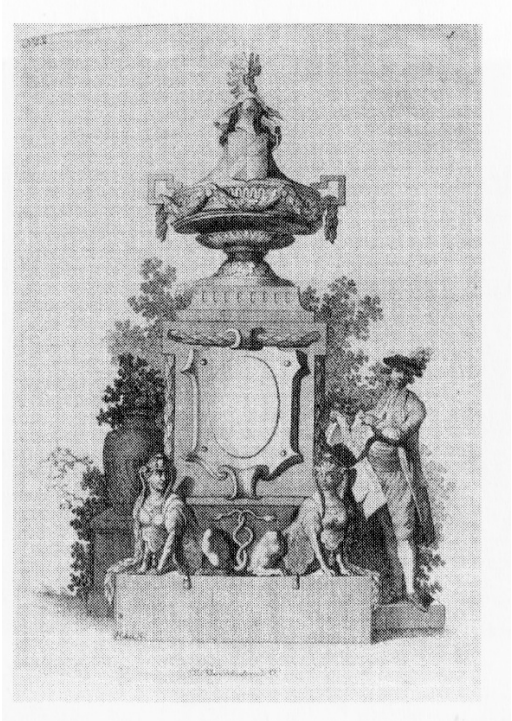


Figure 2. Rütger Kassmann, Plate 29 from *Architectur nach antiquitetischer Lehr und geometrischer Ausstheylung*, 1630.

Figure 3. John Sadler (after Johann Esaias Nilson), wall tile, 1756-57.

Figure 4. Johann Esaias Nilson, engraving, n.d.

Figure 5. Jean Mondon le fils, *Le Tems de la Soirée* from *Les Heures du Jour*, ca. 1738.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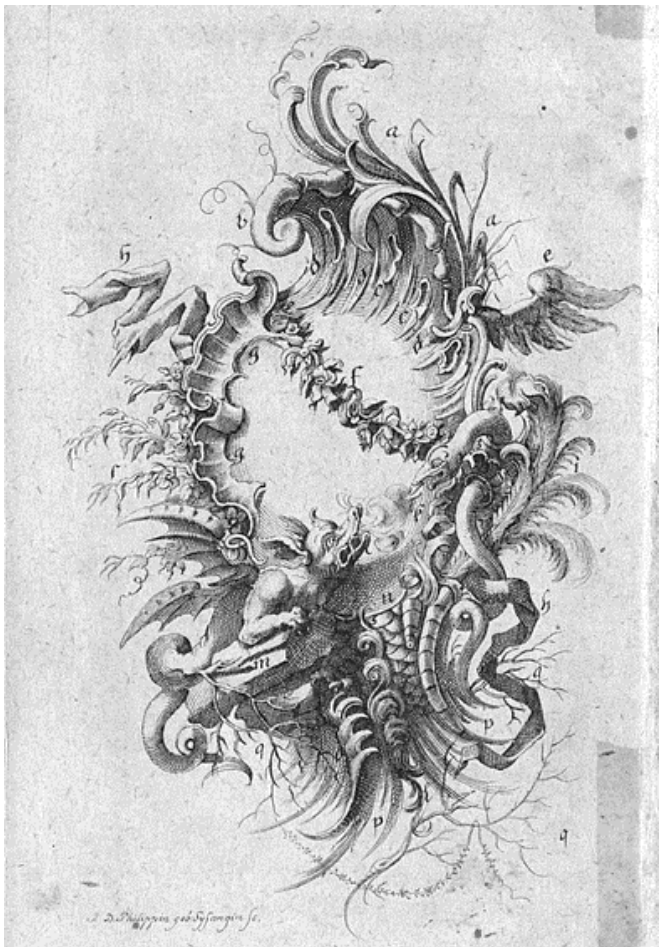

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Figure 9. Johann Esaias Nilson, *Façon Moderne d'une Porte de Jardin*, n.d.

Figure 10. Johann Esaias Nilson, *Neues Caffeehaus*, between 1757 and 1761.

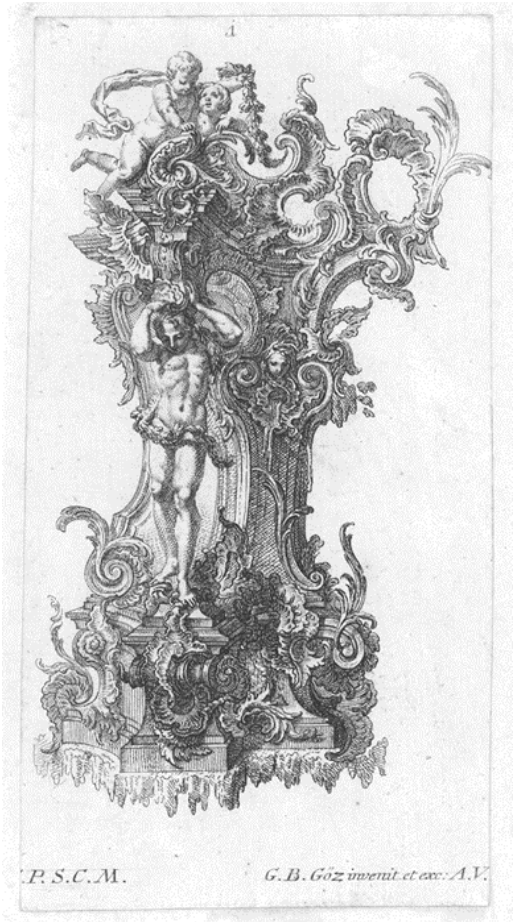

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Figure 12. Johann Wolfgang Baumgartner, *The Cellar*, 1740s. Pen and ink with wash.

Figure 13. Johann Esaias Nilson, *Das Kartenspielen*, between 1757 and 1761.

Figure 14. Johann Esaias Nilson, *Der Frühling*, n.d.

Figure 15. Martin Engelbrecht, *Nativity Scene*, n.d. Hand-colored etchings.

Figure 16. Exterior of Magdalenenklause, Nymphenburg, Munich, 1725-28.

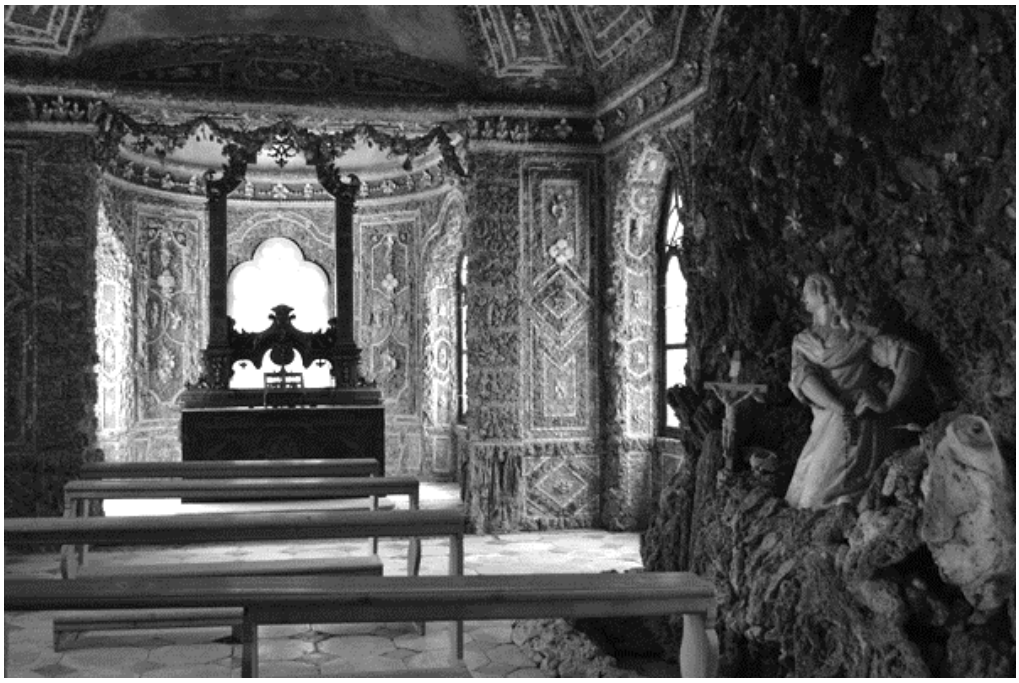

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Figure 18. Johann Esaias Nilson, *Der Jäger*, n.d.

Figure 19. Detail of window, Käppele, Würzburg, 1745-50.

Figure 20. Detail of Grotto Chapel at Magdalenenklause, Nymphenburg, Munich, 1725-28.

Figure 21. Johann Esaias Nilson, *Project d'une Grotte*, ca. 1755-60.

Figure 22. Johann Wolfgang Baumgartner, *Die Luft*, n.d.

Figure 23. Carl Pier, engraving, n.d.

Figure 24. François Chauveau, engraving of the prologue for Corneille's *Andromède*, 1650.

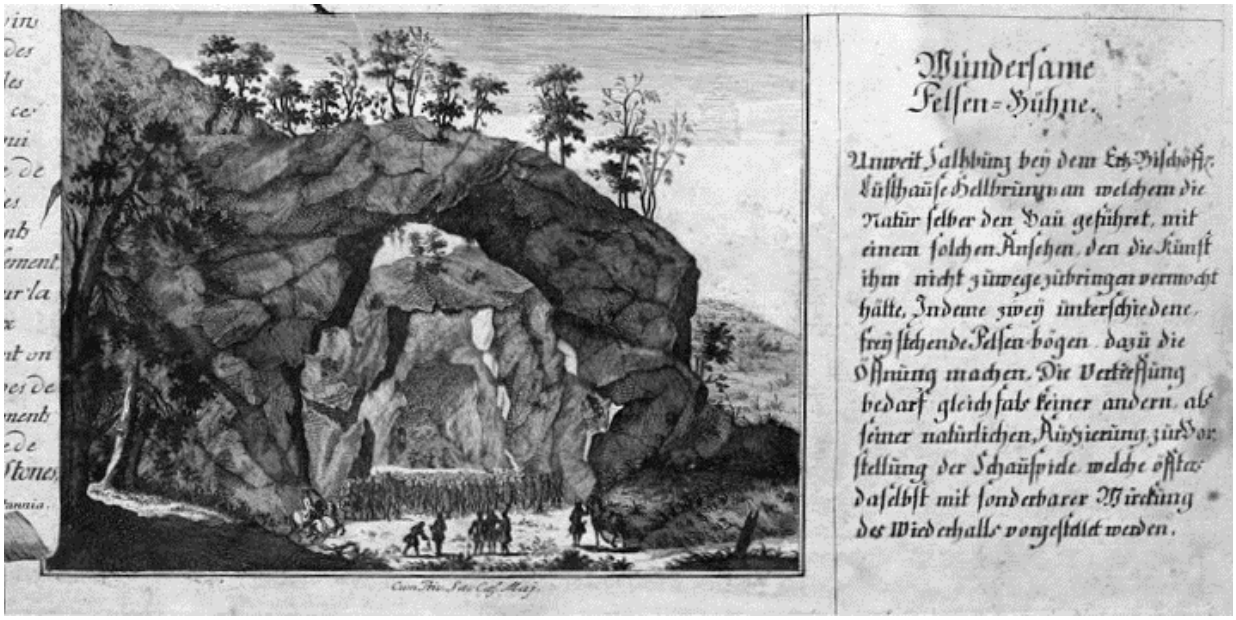

Figure 25. Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, *Hellbrunn* rock-theater, 1721.

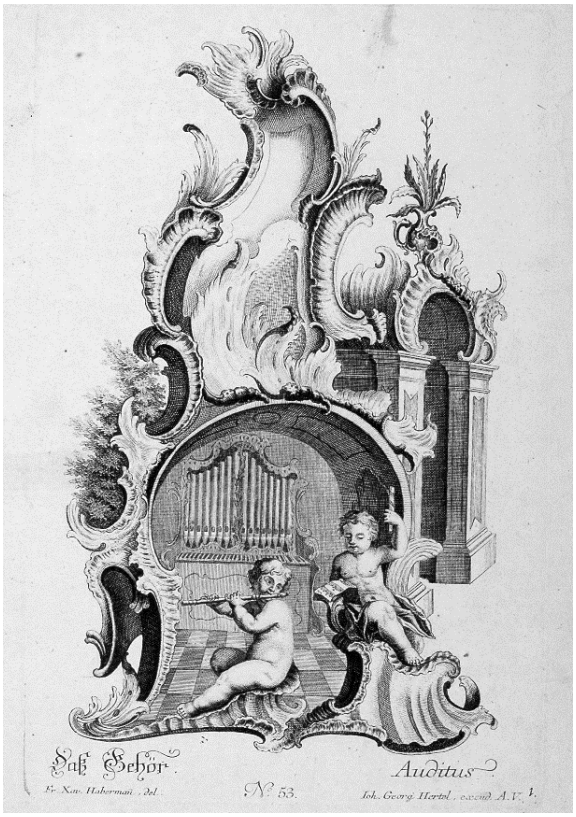

Figure 26. Franz Xaver Habermann, *Das Gehör*, n.d.

Figure 27. Detail of choir, Wieskirche, 1745-54.

Figure 28. Franz Xaver Habermann, engraving, n.d.

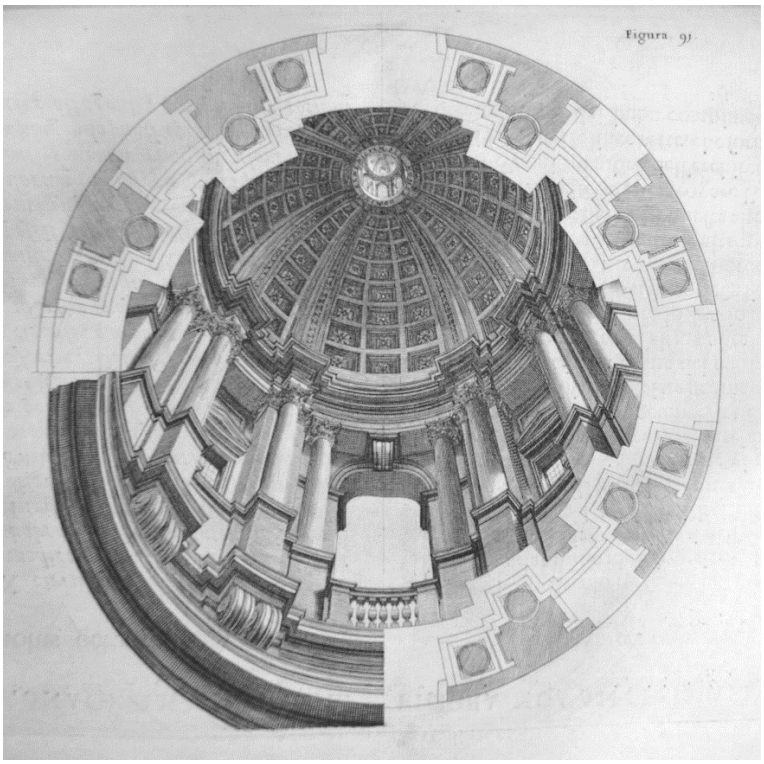

Figure 29. Andrea Pozzo, engraving (91st figure), *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum*, 1693.

Figure 30. Jeremias Wachsmuth, *Der Winter*, n.d.

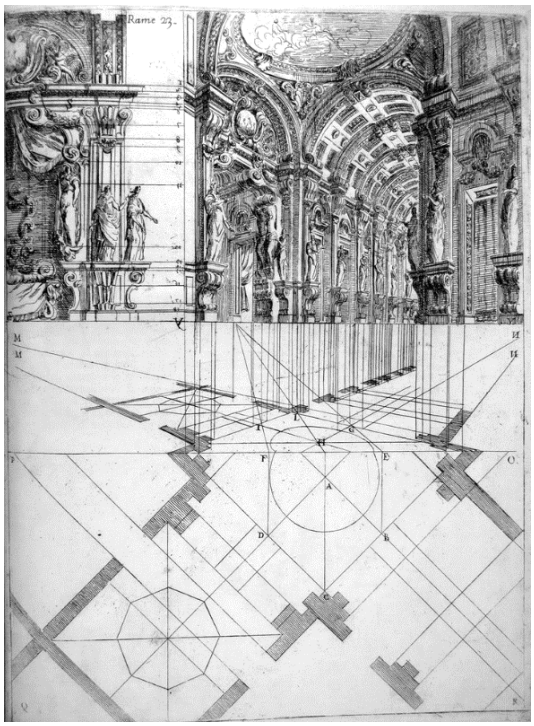

Figure 31. Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena, engraving, *L'Architettura Civile*, 1711.

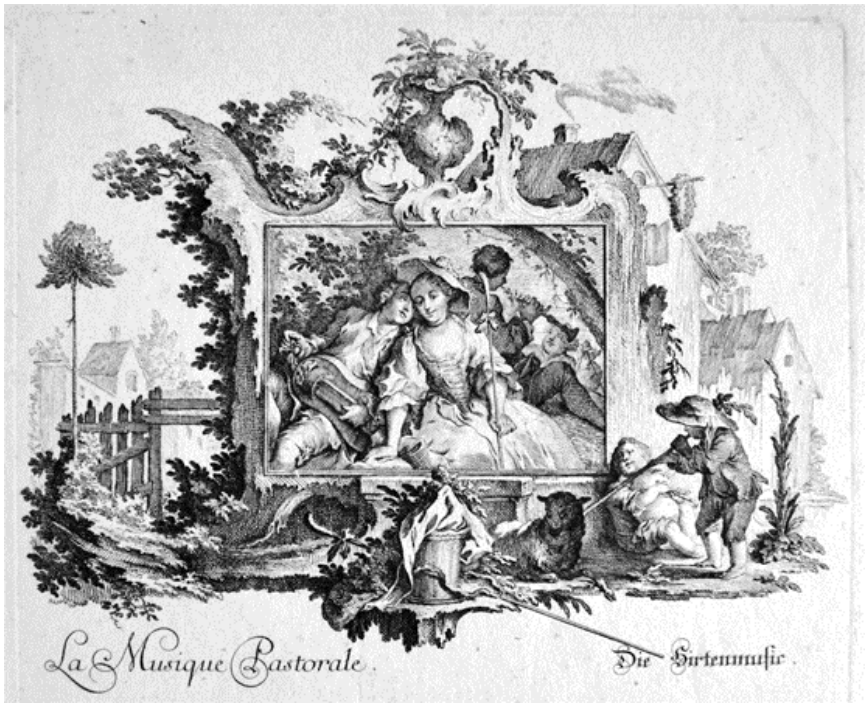

Figure 32. Johann Esaias Nilson, *Die Hirtenmusic*, n.d.

Figure 33. Johann Esaias Nilson, *Das Bretspiel*, between 1757 and 1761.

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