

# *An Unrelieved Heart: Hegel, Tragedy, and Schiller's Wallenstein*

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In 2007 the maverick German theater director Peter Stein extended his streak of Herculean theatrical accomplishments to include a ten-hour, single-day production of Friedrich Schiller's *Wallenstein*. Beyond the appeal of adding this feat to his seven-hour *Oresteia* and twenty-one-hour *Faust*, Stein professed his attraction to the timeliness of Schiller's trilogy: his aim in producing this classic, he reported, was to explore a text

that has exclusively to do with politics and that touches on themes relevant to all of Europe: What political system can guarantee peace and security in Europe? What are the eternal laws of political action; to what extent is the new old and the old new; what is historical necessity and individual failure;

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to what extent can we influence the march of history; can one even modify a generally recognized political and economic system?<sup>1</sup>

The question of how to secure peace in Europe certainly pervades *Wallenstein*, but it is left painfully unanswered within the scope of the play. The trilogy's action takes place almost precisely in the middle of the Thirty Years' War; its guiding question is whether Wallenstein, commander in chief of the Austrian emperor's army, will betray the emperor and side with the Swedes, thus perhaps ending the brutal war in Sweden's favor. At the play's conclusion, its eponymous protagonist's death ensures that the war rages on for another fourteen years. The eventual conclusion of the war, the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, resulted in the system of nation-states that still shapes European politics today. In the early 1790s Schiller had waxed enthusiastic about this outcome, writing: "Europe emerged unsubdued and free from this dreadful war in which it recognized itself for the first time as a coherent community of states." In 1792 this political system still seemed to Schiller "invulnerable," "holy," and a "lasting work of statecraft."<sup>2</sup> In this enthusiasm we see evidence of Immanuel Kant's historical essay "Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent," an influence most obvious in Schiller's inaugural lecture on becoming professor of history at Jena in 1789. In this lecture, titled "What Is, and to What End Do We Study, Universal History?," Schiller had claimed that the task of the "universal historian" was to identify the "rational aims in the development of the world and a teleological principle in *world history*."<sup>3</sup> The "rational goal" in the case of the Thirty Years' War, he suggested in his history of the conflict, was the community of states (*Staatengesellschaft*) it created. Schiller seems indeed to have had questions similar to Stein's in mind—questions regarding the possibility of a stable, secure Europe.

The relevance of *Wallenstein* for contemporary questions of German and European identity was made more pointed by Stein's choice of a venue for his 2007 production. Instead of producing this classic of German literature in Berlin's downtown theater district, Stein chose the Kindl Brauerei, a brewery converted into a theater expressly for this occasion in the outlying Berlin

1. Bernd Havenstein, "Wallenstein," *Zeitreisen*, [www.zeitreisen.com/Reisen/berlin\\_wallenstein.htm](http://www.zeitreisen.com/Reisen/berlin_wallenstein.htm) (accessed September 26, 2007). Translations from the German are my own unless otherwise noted.

2. Quoted in F. J. Lampert, "Schiller and the 'European Community': 'Universal History' in Theory and Practice," *Modern Language Review* 93 (1998): 428–29. Original quotations are from Schiller's *Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert Göpfert, 3rd ed., vol. 4 (Munich: Hanser, 1962), 366, 745.

3. Lampert, "Schiller and the 'European Community,'" 428.

neighborhood of Neukölln.<sup>4</sup> Neukölln provides a snapshot of Germany's, but also Europe's, growing pains: it is the Berlin neighborhood with the highest Turkish population, and its reputation tracks all the standard anxieties about immigration and ethnic tension. Ongoing crime and violence have made the neighborhood the subject of various films, including the 2006 *Knallhart (Tough Enough)*, for instance, which portrayed Turkish gangs terrorizing and conscripting the young Germans economically unfortunate enough to live there. For *Wallenstein*, a play about the future of Germany, German culture, and Europe, Neukölln offers an uncomfortably appropriate stage.

Schiller conceived of the idea of writing a play featuring Wallenstein as a tragic hero while writing his history of the Thirty Years' War, which he published serially between 1791 and 1793. In the late 1790s Schiller wrote to Goethe more than once that the sheer magnitude of the subject proved almost too much for him: the fact that *Wallenstein* ended up as not one but three plays attests to the subject's immensity. But in its premieres in 1798 and 1799, the trilogy was widely hailed as a success. Schiller himself wrote to his longtime correspondent C. G. Körner after its first performance: "*Wallenstein* has had an extraordinary effect on the theater in Weimar, and has swept up even the most unfeeling audience members. The response was unanimous, and no one talked about anything else for the next eight days."<sup>5</sup>

But not all reviews, of course, were positive. One mixed review was written by the young, essentially unknown philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, who apparently read the published version of all three plays in 1800 or 1801. Hegel divides the play into two separate tragedies, the first of which is simply Wallenstein's decision to betray the emperor. Hegel writes that the tragedy of this decision is "presented with greatness and consistency" and is evidence of Schiller's genius. The second tragedy depicts the consequences of Wallenstein's betrayal, which include his own death as well as those of his wife, brother- and sister-in-law, several other close advisers, and the play's masculine love interest, Max. Against these consequences, Hegel lodges an uncharacteristically passionate protest: "The immediate impression after the reading of *Wallenstein* is a mournful speechlessness over the fall of a mighty man to a mute, deaf, dead fate. When the piece ends, everything is destroyed, the kingdom of nothingness and death is victorious; it does not end as a theodicy."

4. The production became even more of a sensation when its lead, Klaus Maria Brandauer, broke his foot during the play's run, forcing Stein to read Wallenstein's lines until Brandauer returned to finish the remaining performances in a wheelchair.

5. Friedrich Schiller, *Wallenstein: Text und Kommentar*, ed. Frithjof Stock (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2005), 719. Hereafter cited as *TK*.

He concludes as follows: “Life against life; but only death rises up against life, and incredible! horrific! death triumphs over life! That is not tragic but appalling! This rends the heart in two (see *Xenien*), one cannot bound out of such an experience with a relieved heart!”<sup>6</sup>

Two things are puzzling about this diatribe. First: the image of the unrelieved heart comes, as Hegel acknowledges in his own text, from the *Xenien*, Schiller and Goethe’s coproduced series of epigrams. The original epigram reads as follows: “We moderns, we depart the theater shaken to our core. / The Greek instead leapt forth with a relieved heart.”<sup>7</sup> By citing this epigram, Hegel acknowledges Schiller’s own understanding that modern tragedy does not lighten our hearts. Why would he then say, as if in reproof, that *Wallenstein* meets this stipulation? Given Hegel’s dismay, after all, it seems that Schiller had indeed written a tragedy from which moderns like Hegel leave with unrelieved hearts. Why not then simply say that Schiller had successfully met his own criteria? He wrote a tragedy from which moderns like Hegel leave with unrelieved hearts. Second: why did Hegel find the end of *Wallenstein* so dreadful? High as the death toll is at the play’s conclusion, it is no higher than that of *Antigone*, *Hamlet*, and *The Robbers*, three plays that Hegel often cites without objecting that they depict death rising up against and triumphing over life. What then makes the end of *Wallenstein* so horrific?

At this early stage of his career, Hegel had yet to write systematically about tragedy. In his first major work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), tragedy indeed plays a prominent role, but Hegel’s comments there primarily treat ancient tragedy, specifically *Antigone*. But by the time of his mature lectures on aesthetics—given between 1818 and his death in 1831—Hegel had developed a systematic account of tragedy, especially the difference between ancient and modern tragedy.<sup>8</sup> In these lectures he mentions *Wallenstein* several times, now without protesting its bleakness. But by exploring *Wallenstein* through these later lectures, we still find some explanation of his initial condemnation.

While Hegel had yet to turn his attention fully to tragedy at the time of his *Wallenstein* review, history’s philosophical status was very much on his mind. Indeed, the historical significance specifically of the Thirty Years’ War occupied Hegel during these same years. In his essay known as “The

6. G. W. F. Hegel, *Frühe Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 618–20.

7. “Wir Modernen, wir gehn, erschüttert aus dem Schauspiel, Mit erleichterter Brust hüpfte der Grieche heraus.” See Johannes Hoffmeister, ed., *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1936), 456.

8. For a record of Hegel’s various lectures on aesthetics, see Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, *Einführung in Hegels Ästhetik* (Munich: Fink, 2005), 17. Gethmann-Siefert also specifically discusses Hegel’s essay on *Wallenstein* (126–35).

German Constitution” (“Verfassungsschrift”), also written around 1800, he returns to this seminal war several times in ways that presage his mature philosophy of history. Based on this essay, I suggest below that while Hegel’s later discussion of modern tragedy offers some insight into his critique of *Wallenstein*, his indignation is just as much explained by his nascent philosophy of history. Comparing these views with Schiller’s increasing disillusionment with the idea of progress in history illustrates, in addition, a fundamental philosophical disagreement between the two thinkers. Ultimately, by triangulating among Schiller, Hegel, and Stein, we watch some interesting ideas in motion: ideas of history, of tragedy, of Europe and national identity, and even the idea of *Wallenstein* himself.

### **Wallenstein: Historical Sources and Plot**

The historical *Wallenstein* was a minor member of the nobility who rose to political prominence in the Thirty Years’ War. Because he raised huge sums of money and troops for the Austrian emperor Ferdinand, he was promoted several times, ultimately to the position of prince. His success proved his downfall, however, as his power became a threat to the emperor. Whether *Wallenstein* was, as the emperor suspected, plotting a rebellion or negotiating with the invading Swedes remains, as a historical matter, unclear: regardless, soldiers loyal to the emperor killed *Wallenstein* in his bedroom on February 25, 1634.

Schiller adapted these historical facts as the general outline of his trilogy. The question of whether *Wallenstein* plans to betray the emperor is, in Schiller’s hands, magnified tremendously: for much of his time on stage, *Wallenstein* himself is unsure of his intentions. When he finally does ally himself with the Swedes, it is only after enough of his secret negotiations with them have been discovered to make any protestations of innocence to the emperor implausible. To this plot, Schiller adds a fictional love story and a father-son conflict. *Wallenstein* has unyielding trust in his old friend and lieutenant general, Octavio Piccolomini, and in Octavio’s son, Max; in addition, Max and *Wallenstein*’s daughter, Thekla, are in love. Max is passionately loyal to *Wallenstein*, but Octavio, alarmed at *Wallenstein*’s flirtations with the Swedes, has betrayed *Wallenstein* to the emperor. With the emperor’s orders to the troops to abandon *Wallenstein* and follow him in hand, Octavio continues to deceive *Wallenstein*, and Max, by appearing faithful. When finally confronted with Octavio’s betrayal of *Wallenstein*, Max initially refuses to believe in the latter’s guilt. When irrefutable evidence surfaces, Max must choose between his father and *Wallenstein*. Unable to live with either choice, he engages the Swedes in a battle he knows he cannot win and is killed. Octavio deserts

Wallenstein, taking all but Wallenstein's most loyal troops with him. Realizing he has been betrayed, Wallenstein flees from Pilsen to Eger where he wrongly believes himself to be safe. As the play ends, guards loyal to the emperor kill Wallenstein; his wife is dying of grief; her sister and brother-in-law are both dead; and Thekla has disappeared. In the play's last moments Octavio receives word that the emperor is rewarding his service by making him a prince: a bitter promotion, given that he has paid for his loyalty with the life of his son.

### *Hegel and Tragedy*

A brief description of Hegel's mature theory of tragedy may help clarify his displeasure with Schiller's play. Ancient tragic protagonists are primarily embodiments of particular moral "powers." Lacking the reflection essential to modern agents, characters such as Antigone act as instantiations of a particular ethical force, in her case the family. The ethical order of ancient Greece was divinely harmonious, Hegel claims, but when it entered the human world, collisions were inevitable. Thus Antigone, representing the family, and Creon, representing the state, clash. In the ensuing destruction of individuals, the "one-sidedness" of these commitments is also destroyed, allowing the ethical harmony to be reinstated. Through this destruction, an ancient tragedy reassured the audience that the moral order was preserved.<sup>9</sup> The ancient Greeks could leave the theater, then, with relieved hearts.

Modern tragedy, Hegel writes, instead "adopts into its own sphere from the start the principle of subjectivity. Therefore it takes for its proper subject matter and contents the subjective inner life of the character who is not, as in classical tragedy, a purely individual embodiment of ethical powers."<sup>10</sup> Instead of seeing herself as an instantiation of the power of the family, for instance, a modern agent will focus on her stance toward that power. Even in a case like Hamlet's, in which avenging his father's murder is a question of restoring an ethical order, the play's primary interest is in his internal processing of this goal.

Because modern tragedies are based on the subjective principle rather than on individuals as instantiations of objective ethical powers, Hegel argues, modern tragedies do not end with the restoration of some preexisting objec-

9. This reading of *Antigone* has been fundamentally challenged on many levels; Hegel indeed seems to paint a reductive picture of Antigone's and Creon's relationship to their roles. See, e.g., Michelle Gellrich, *Tragedy and Theory: The Problem of Conflict since Aristotle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). Here, however, I discuss Hegel's position without criticizing it.

10. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1223. Hereafter cited as *Aesthetics*.

tive ethical order. They instead depict individual goals colliding either with others' goals or with the established ethical order. Moderns, then, leave the theater horrified: we are led through observing the demise of tragic characters to reflect on how responsible we are for our own actions. Unlike audiences of ancient Greece, who could see Antigone's actions, for instance, as justified, since she represented the power of the family, modern protagonists have as their justification only their own conviction. Their responsibility, and their guilt should things go wrong, is all their own.

The fact that modern tragedies depict not an ethical order but an individual struggle means that the sheer number of possible tragic plots, characters, and endings increases exponentially. For this reason, Hegel claims, we can gesture only broadly at the characteristics of modern tragedy. Still, Hegel lists three components of modern tragedy and discusses how each is specifically modern. In what follows, I briefly consider to what extent *Wallenstein* fits each category.

### *Modern Tragic Aims*

As is appropriate to the characteristics of modern tragedies generally, tragic characters often pursue personal aims: love, honor, or personal ambition. Even if a modern tragic hero like Hamlet has a more universal aim in mind, such as avenging his father's murder, the tragedy will focus on that aim *as Hamlet's*: on how he, as an individual, processes and executes this aim. As Hegel puts it, "What presses for [tragic agents'] satisfaction is the subjectivity of their heart." He then mentions *Wallenstein*, attributing to him "a great universal aim, the unity and peace of Germany" (*Aesthetics*, 1225, 1224). So how is *Wallenstein's* attitude toward this aim specifically modern?

Before answering this question, I want to point out how the idea of *Wallenstein himself* was, as it were, in motion. Both Schiller and Hegel depict *Wallenstein* as German. Hegel, to repeat, attributes to *Wallenstein* the "great universal aim" of German unity; Schiller has *Wallenstein* declaring that "never shall it be said of me I carved / Up Germany, and sold her to a stranger"; the Swedish envoy Wrangel says, when conversing with *Wallenstein*, "We must take care in dealing with the Germans," in which group he clearly includes *Wallenstein*.<sup>11</sup> But the portrayal of *Wallenstein* as an early German patriot is misleading at best, since *Wallenstein* was arguably not German; he was Czech. He was born and died in towns that remain within the Czech Republic today;

11. See Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers and Wallenstein*, trans. F. J. Lamport (London: Penguin, 1979), 249, 336. Hereafter cited as *W*.

his first language was Czech; the castle that he built directly below Prague Castle is still called Wallenstein's Castle and is currently the seat of the Czech parliament. Borders and national identity of course did not mean in Wallenstein's time what they mean now, but, given that *Wallenstein* was interpreted partly as a play about the early history of the German nation, it is a telling misrepresentation by both authors. Ludwig Tieck seems more thoroughly to have forgotten that Wallenstein was not unambiguously German; he roundly criticizes Schiller, whom he calls the German "national poet," for missing the opportunity to make *Wallenstein* a patriotic play (*TK*, 958).<sup>12</sup>

Be that as it may, Schiller gives us plenty of additional reasons to doubt that Wallenstein's *principal* aim is a universal good such as peace or the unification of Germany. Only once does Wallenstein mention a "fatherland," namely, when he states that he does not want to go down in history as the person who betrayed his fatherland to foreigners. He complains, through Max, that the emperor seems unwilling to end the war, but this seems a secondary complaint. His claim that he is unappreciated and mistreated by the emperor, by contrast, often seems particularly salient (*W*, 338, 236, 342–43). And personal ambition undoubtedly plays a role: Wallenstein reports, for instance, that his life's goal has been to see a crown on his daughter's head (*W*, 378).<sup>13</sup> Wallenstein thus fits Hegel's example of a character in modern drama: he embodies not the power of the family or of the state but his own power, driven by his own aims and desires.

### *Internal Discord*

As a few of Schiller's especially disgruntled critics enjoyed pointing out, *Wallenstein* is a play—in fact, three plays—in which very little happens. The threat of cataclysmic events is relentless, but decisive action is perpetually delayed until the glaring inaction—Wallenstein's inability to decide whether to betray the emperor—precipitates the relatively few things that do happen. A clearly annoyed Garlieb Merkel complains in *Briefen an ein Frauenzimmer über die wichtigsten Produkte der schöne Literatur* (*Letters to a Woman on the Most Important Products of Belles Lettres*, 1801): "Abandoned by the

12. Golo Mann, in his 1971 biography of Wallenstein, describes Wallenstein's parents as "good Czechs" but traces Wallenstein's mastery of the German language and says that as an adult, he "hardly felt himself any longer to be a Czech." "All of which," Mann nevertheless concludes, "does not signify that Germans accepted him as one of themselves or that he was ever able to get Bohemia out of his system" (*Wallenstein: His Life Narrated*, trans. Charles Kessler [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976], 14, 214–15).

13. See also Wallenstein's central monologue (*W*, 329).



majority of the army, [Wallenstein] flees to Eger: that is all that he does” (*TK*, 917). Much of the rest of the play is given over to Wallenstein’s chronic indecision. Given that the trilogy lasts for over ten hours, such exasperation is perhaps understandable.

Hegel would have had a response to Merkel’s complaint. It is typical of modern protagonists, Hegel says, that multiple possible actions lie open for them. Unlike Antigone and Creon, whose courses of action are never in question, modern protagonists see their actions as essentially separate from the ethical order around them. Having primary recourse only to their own subjectivity makes modern agents more subject to self-doubt. Self-doubt in turn prompts them to deliberate, sometimes excessively, about what they should do. This “swithering” (*Schwanken*), as Hegel puts it, among various options and motivations often constitutes the heart of the drama.

Hamlet is perhaps the modern tragic protagonist most famous for his indecision, but Wallenstein sets a new standard. Throughout most of the play, he resolutely refuses to decide whether to betray the emperor. He seems strangely fascinated with the question of what he himself thinks, a fascination that leads him to some curious and, in the end, inaccurate assessments of which courses of action are open to him. *Wallenstein’s Death*, the trilogy’s concluding play, opens with Wallenstein and his astrologer, Seni, consulting the stars. Based on Seni’s findings, Wallenstein concludes that the stars are in his favor: it is time to act. Wallenstein resolves:

This is no time for doubt and ponderings,  
 . . . . .  
 . . . Now we  
 Must act, and quickly, now, before the signs  
 Of Fortune’s favorite take their flight again,  
 For ever-changing is the face of heaven.  
 (W, 324)

As if to emphasize this celestial instability, Wallenstein and his astrologer are interrupted by the news that the emperor’s troops have intercepted Wallenstein’s messenger to the Swedes and have confiscated damning documents signed by his brother-in-law.

It would seem that Wallenstein’s hand is finally forced: regardless of his actual intentions, written evidence that he toyed with betraying the emperor exists and is in his enemies’ hands. When Wallenstein rails against the misfortune of having his spy caught, his general Illo instead calls it good fortune: perhaps it will finally force Wallenstein into action. But Wallenstein protests

that since he himself did not sign the documents, no evidence against him exists. This borders on the delusional, and Illo tells him so.<sup>14</sup> The Swedish envoy is waiting to meet with him and will require an answer. Left alone before the envoy enters, Wallenstein delivers one of the play's most famous monologues, in which he muses over whether his inaction could have consequences more definitive than any action:

What? I, no longer act as I might choose?  
 No longer turn back if I wanted? Must  
 The deed be done because I thought of it,  
 Did not dismiss temptation, let my heart  
 Draw sustenance from this fair dream, assembled  
 The means by which it could perhaps come true,  
 Merely kept open doors where I might enter?  
 Great God in Heaven! It was never meant  
 In earnest, I had never so resolved.

(W, 328–29)

Here for the first time, Wallenstein seems to recognize the perilous position he has put himself in. But his realism about his options does not last. In the course of negotiations, the Swedish envoy reveals not only that he knows that Wallenstein's messenger has been captured, making Wallenstein's return to the emperor essentially impossible; he also knows that Wallenstein has been negotiating with the Saxons as well. Wallenstein's position is substantially weaker than he thought. His ostensibly covert negotiations are something of an open secret.

Wallenstein's response to this information, however, is to refuse to decide—and this despite both his own conclusion from the stars, namely, that he should act, and a realistic assessment of his position. Having sent the Swedish envoy away, Wallenstein says to his brother-in-law Terzky and to Illo:

Nothing has happened—yet, and—now,  
 I think I will not, after all . . .  
 Live by the grace and favor of those Swedes?  
 Their condescension? I could not endure it.

(W, 338)

14. Wallenstein's refusal to use evidence to make a decision is likely another way in which Schiller means to depict his protagonist's freedom. As I discuss below, Schiller talks about finding a "concept of independence" in recognizing the "utter lack of some purposeful connection among the phenomena," in effect suggesting that human freedom begins where an overreliance on cause and effect ends (*Essays*, ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom and Walter Hinderer [New York: Continuum, 1993], 80).

Terzky and Illo recognize this conclusion as the self-deceptive muddle that it is. Given that the Swedes know that Wallenstein has also been negotiating with the Saxons, Wallenstein cannot expect them to trust him. He must give them Prague as collateral, exactly as they demand. Wallenstein's only option is to break with the emperor now, and decisively, or be defeated in disgrace. But Wallenstein is not moved. The decision, he believes, is still his to make.

At this point in the plot, the Countess Terzky, Wallenstein's sister-in-law, enters. Hearing that Wallenstein still refuses to cast his lot with the Swedes, she unleashes a full-throttle assault on Wallenstein's indecision. She first accuses him of cowardice, then paints a picture of a fate worse than death: if he returns to the emperor now, the emperor may not have Wallenstein killed, she suggests, but will allow him to live out his days under castle arrest so that he can be, as she puts it in one of the play's most famous lines, "a king—in miniature!" (W, 341). She reminds him of insults suffered at the emperor's hands, then finally begins to attack his moral scruples in a manner worthy, as some commentators have pointed out, of Lady Macbeth:

But they are in the wrong, who are afraid  
 Of you and yet put power in your hands.  
 A man of character is always right  
 If but consistent with himself, there is  
 No wrong for him except in contradiction.

The Countess is not finished. She continues, describing how the emperor turned a blind eye to Wallenstein's military crimes when they were performed in the emperor's service:

What profited the Emperor, that pleased him;  
 And silently he sets upon those crimes  
 The seal of his approval. What was right,  
 Then when you did it for him, it is now  
 Become at once so wicked, when *against*  
 Him it is turned?

She clinches her argument:

Admit then, that between yourself and him  
 There never can be talk of right and duty,  
 Only of power, and opportunity.

(W, 344–45)

Finally convinced, Wallenstein orders the Swedish envoy to be summoned and riders to be sent conveying his decision to ally himself and his army with the Swedes. From this point on Wallenstein no longer “swithers.” But the swithering—so typical, in Hegel’s view, of modern tragedy—has exacted a price: Wallenstein’s indecision has fatally weakened his position. The results of his internal conflict are, to repeat, disastrous.

### *Denouement*

Finally, Hegel makes two major points about the denouement of modern tragedies. First, he considers what kind of reconciliation modern tragedies are capable of achieving. Ancient dramas, as we now know, concluded with the restoration of the moral order. Insofar as modern tragedies confirm a moral order, Hegel says, “it is colder, more like criminal justice, owing to the greater reflectiveness of the wrong and crime into which individuals are forced when they are intent on accomplishing their ends” (*Aesthetics*, 1230). For such outcomes to be tragic rather than simply like the conclusion of court cases, Hegel adds, the protagonists must be reconciled to their fate in one of three ways: by believing in heavenly reward, by showing courage in the face of death, or by recognizing that the fate they are suffering is appropriate to their deeds.

Second, Hegel compares the way in which the denouement is brought about in ancient as opposed to modern tragedies. In ancient tragedies, the conclusion is often a direct consequence of the central crime, as it were: Antigone’s death results directly from Creon’s dictates; Haemon’s and Eurydice’s deaths result directly from Antigone’s death. In modern tragedies, by contrast, Hegel claims that “actions come into collision with one another as the chance of external circumstances dictate, and make similar accidents decide, or seem to decide, the outcome” (*Aesthetics*, 1223). Hamlet’s death, for example, is brought about not as a direct result of his avenging his father but in a duel with Laertes, who agrees to poison Hamlet in revenge for his sister’s death. Romeo and Juliet’s love is, as Hegel puts it, “shattered by the crazy calculations of a noble and well-meaning cleverness,” namely, the plan hatched to spirit both of them out from under the tyranny of their families: a plan that results instead in their deaths (*Aesthetics*, 1232).

In this context, Hegel complains about modern tragedies in which only unfortunate, accidental circumstances doom the hero, when he or she is brought down simply by “fate of finitude.” In such a case, the ending “is also displayed as purely the effect of unfortunate circumstances and external accidents which may have turned out otherwise.” Interestingly, to describe this sort of play, Hegel uses words that resemble the string of negative adjectives

tives he uses in “Über Wallenstein” (“On Wallenstein”): such endings, he says are horrible, empty, dreadful (*Aesthetics*, 1231). Accidental endings can, however, themselves be redeemed if the playwright shows that the character’s fate lay somehow deeply in the character in question. Shakespeare portrays Romeo and Juliet’s love as so pure that it seemed unfit for this world. The same is true for Hamlet. Although his death might seem the accidental effect of a duel with Laertes, death was, as Hegel says, in Hamlet’s heart from the beginning (*Aesthetics*, 1231).

How can we parse *Wallenstein* in terms of these criteria regarding a play’s denouement? En route to answering this question, let me articulate another major criticism that Schiller encountered: namely, that *Wallenstein*, far from exhibiting the sort of greatness typical of tragic heroes, is rather pathetic. Although we are given to understand that *Wallenstein* was a great general who inspired the awe and love of his soldiers, we see no such moments of glory or inspiration.<sup>15</sup> The one time he appears before his army, the soldiers mutiny and he is forced to flee. His enemies repeatedly outmaneuver him: the emperor has much better intelligence of his actions than *Wallenstein* realizes, as do the Swedes. In addition to being indecisive, he allows himself to be bullied and manipulated by his allies, especially his sister-in-law. At the play’s conclusion, *Wallenstein*’s intelligence again fails him: he is almost willfully unaware that he is surrounded by those who either wish his death or who are too cowardly to prevent it. After eagerly seeking supernatural signs to guide him in the past, in the last scene he rejects all mystical warnings—one from the stars delivered by his otherwise trusted astrologer, another from a dream recounted by his sister-in-law. A banquet is being given to celebrate a victory for *Wallenstein*’s army; *Wallenstein* himself, however, declines to join his comrades at dinner. Rejecting their soldierly companionship, *Wallenstein* does the least heroic thing imaginable: he goes to bed. On the way to his chambers, he converses briefly with Gordon, the keeper of the castle who well knows that *Wallenstein*’s killers are only waiting for him to be unarmed. *Wallenstein* then exits this ten-hour marathon of indecision with the following words:

Gordon, good night!  
 I hope that I shall have a long night’s sleep,  
 For great has been the toil of these last days.  
 See it is not too early that they wake me!  
 (W, 463)

15. See again Merkel’s criticisms as well as Süvern’s critique in *TK*, 891.

After Wallenstein retires, Buttler's two hit men, following a trivializing comic scene, attack and kill Wallenstein in his bedroom. Schiller does not even grant Wallenstein the nobility that he grants Wallenstein's subordinates: attacked at their celebratory dinner, his officers go down fighting, earning the grudging admiration of their murderers. Wallenstein's death in comparison is inglorious, denying him the stature that would otherwise have given his death dignity.<sup>16</sup>

To return to the characteristics of modern denouement that Hegel isolates: first, the circumstances of Wallenstein's death make it impossible for him to be reconciled to it in any of the ways Hegel mentions. He is not allowed the opportunity to embrace his fate, to face death bravely, or even to deliver lines fixing his greatness or courage in our memory. To phrase this in terms of Hegel's early essay: death triumphs over life partly because Wallenstein does not meet death with any defiance or resolve. Not only does Wallenstein die, but his ostensible greater goal, namely, the end of the war, fails. In *Antigone* our distress at the heroine's fate is tempered by Creon's regret and the sense that the ship of state is, this time truly, safe. Although Hamlet's death signals the end of his family's reign, his father's death is avenged and Fortinbras's last words suggest that his memory will be honored. At the conclusion of *Wallenstein*, by contrast, the ship of state continues to be imperiled with no land in sight, and both Wallenstein's and Octavio's families "[stand] in desolation" (*W*, 471).

*Wallenstein* ends then without any of the modes of reconciliation Hegel describes as possible in modern tragedy. But Wallenstein's death does exhibit the cold, criminal justice Hegel describes as typical of modern tragedies. Far from dying at the hands of the emperor's assassin or on the battlefield, Wallenstein is killed on the orders of Buttler, a regiment commander whose honor he has deeply offended. We learn early in the play that Wallen-

16. Ehrhard Bahr suggests that the bleakness of *Wallenstein's* ending classifies it as a *Trauerspiel*, or "play of mourning," rather than a tragedy: a claim supported by the fact that Schiller gave *Wallenstein's Death* the subtitle *Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen*. Bahr cites Walter Benjamin's distinction between tragedy and *Trauerspiel*, then suggests that *Wallenstein* more closely resembles the *Trauerspiel*, since, like standard plays in that genre, it includes no culminating redemption or reconciliation. This interpretation is complicated, as Bahr admits, by the fact that Schiller in his correspondence repeatedly refers to *Wallenstein* as a tragedy ("Wallensteins Tod as a 'Play of Mourning': Death and Mourning in the Aesthetics of Schiller's Classicism," *Goethe Yearbook* 51, no. 1 [2008]: 182). This is true also, for instance, in Schiller's letter to Goethe that accompanied the final draft of the manuscript. There Schiller writes: "If you judge of this play that it is now really a tragedy . . . then I will be fully contented" (*TK*, 709). For other references by Schiller to *Wallenstein* as a tragedy, see *TK*, 649, 663.

stein had encouraged Buttler to apply, based on decades of loyal service, to the emperor for a noble title. Behind Buttler's back, Wallenstein sabotages this request by deriding him to the emperor. Wallenstein's aim in doing this, we are given to understand, is to hedge his bets. By provoking Buttler's rage at the emperor for this imagined slight, Wallenstein ensures that Buttler will betray the emperor and follow Wallenstein should Wallenstein himself abandon the emperor. Initially, the plan works. Buttler's fury at the emperor for the mocking rejection of his application binds him in fierce loyalty to Wallenstein. When Buttler discovers that Wallenstein engineered this disgrace, however, his fury is massively intensified and redirected at his former benefactor.

Yet Buttler himself does not kill Wallenstein; he bullies Gordon into complicity and then recruits two bumbling mercenaries to kill Wallenstein. Had Buttler performed the deed himself, perhaps Wallenstein would have had a moment to recognize his guilt and reconcile himself to the cold justice of his death. But Wallenstein's treatment of Buttler was petty; it is fitting, in a cold, criminal way, that Wallenstein should die at the command of this disgraced minor character rather than gallantly at the hands of the emperor's army.<sup>17</sup> After Wallenstein is dead, Octavio arrives and is horrified, having apparently wanted to capture Wallenstein alive. Buttler's protestation that he believes Octavio gave him orders to kill Wallenstein rings hollow. Wallenstein, it seems, has died not for the world-historical crime of having betrayed a sovereign but for the petty crimes of manipulation and deceit.

We remember Hegel's observation that modern tragic endings are sometimes accidental in the sense that the protagonist's demise is not always related to the plot's main tension. Wallenstein's death fits this criterion: Wallenstein dies not in battle against the emperor's troops but because of a betrayal he undertook on the side, as it were. In this sense, the denouement is accidental rather than following directly from the play's main subject matter. It is this characteristic of modern tragedies that Hegel seemed most to dislike. Tragedies ending in this way were horrible and empty unless the death is connected somehow to the character in other ways: that death lay in Hamlet's heart from the beginning or that Romeo and Juliet's love was too beautiful for a corrupted world. If there is a parallel in Wallenstein's case, it is to his petty deceit: deceitfulness as a characteristic dooms him as Romeo and Juliet's love doom them and Hamlet's death-directed heart dooms him. But if this is true, a much darker picture emerges from *Wallenstein* than from either of the

17. Ernst Brandes, in his 1800 review of the print edition, makes a similar point (*TK*, 907).

Shakespearean plays in question. In Shakespeare's cases the dooming characteristics are arguably noble, whereas Wallenstein's damning characteristic is manifestly not.

Of the three characteristics Hegel assigns to modern tragic denouements, then, *Wallenstein* exhibits the two negative ones (the cold, criminal justice and the accidental nature of the death) and neglects the positive, namely, the reconciliation granted by a hero's embracing of his death. By quoting Schiller's own claim that moderns leave the theater with unrelieved hearts, Hegel acknowledges that Schiller could not have intended a catharsis of the ancient kind. But Hegel seems to suggest that *Wallenstein* is horrifying *beyond* modern tragedy's already innate tendency to leave its spectators unsettled rather than relieved. True: moderns must enter the theater without hope of relief. But to subject them to cold, criminal justice, an accidental death, and a disgraced main protagonist and *then* to deny them any reconciliation is to allow death to triumph over life.

### ***Schiller and Hegel, History and Tragedy***

Why would Schiller subject his audience to such darkness? I think that the answer lies in the intersection of two ideas in motion in Schiller's own thought during this time: his conception of history and his theory of tragedy. First, as to history: in the 1790s Schiller had temporarily given up playwriting to pursue historical and philosophical studies. His first major historical work, on the Dutch rebellion against the Spanish, preceded his history of the Thirty Years' War. The trajectory of these works shows Schiller gradually abandoning the belief in inevitable progress within history that we saw illustrated in the passage from "What Is, and Why Do We Study, Universal History?"<sup>18</sup> Doubtless this disillusionment was influenced by Schiller's deep dismay at the violent turn of events following the French Revolution and especially the mass murders during the Terror of 1793–94. Schiller makes his receding faith in historical progress explicit in his philosophical essay "Concerning the Sublime" (probably written in 1794–96).<sup>19</sup> Here he writes that, far from exhibiting reason and freedom, "the world as historical object is at bottom nothing but the conflict of natural forces among themselves and with human freedom." He continues: "If one approaches history only with great expectations of being

18. For a description of this development, see Lesley Sharpe, *Schiller and the Historical Character: Presentation and Interpretation in the Historiographical Works and in the Historical Dramas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), esp. chap. 2.

19. Frederick C. Beiser dates it earlier in *Schiller as Philosopher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 238.



illuminated and of learning, how very disappointed one is! The claims of experience refute all the well-meant attempts of philosophy to bring what the moral world *demands* into harmony with what the real world *does*.” Humans’ only option, in the face of this evidence, is defiance: we must continue to assert our freedom despite the evidence to the contrary. Schiller writes: “Neither [the human being’s] power nor his skill can secure him against the treachery of fate. Thus, it is good for him if he has learned to endure what he cannot change and to surrender with dignity what he cannot save!”<sup>20</sup>

As to Schiller’s evolving theory of tragedy: motivated especially by his conclusions in *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, Schiller resolved to bring realism into his tragedies. His correspondence indicates that he had chosen a historical subject specifically to wean himself of his sentimental, idealist tendencies.<sup>21</sup> At several points Schiller explicitly acknowledges that Wallenstein is not a great hero. He calls him weak and childish, a figure whose rawness and immensity make him “badly qualified to be a tragic hero.”<sup>22</sup> In a 1796 letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt, Schiller writes that Wallenstein gives him the opportunity to illustrate his differentiation between realism and idealism: “There is nothing noble about [Wallenstein], he does not appear great in any of his actions, he has little dignity and the like; I hope nevertheless through purely realistic means to establish him as a dramatically great character. . . . In *Wallenstein* I want to try to compensate for a lack of idealism with pure reality” (*TK*, 590).

So how do Schiller’s abandoning of his belief in historical progress and his commitment to realism in Wallenstein’s character intersect? One answer lies in his articulation of the sublime. As Schiller suggests in several essays of the 1790s, the sublime is central to tragedy.<sup>23</sup> We experience the sublime when we are made aware of our natural limitations and simultaneously of our ability to assert our freedom from those limitations. Tragedy, then, should fill us with awe at our ability to defy and withstand the ruin of our best intentions: it should indicate to us the freedom that exceeds our natural limitations. Schiller arguably does this in the character of Max, who, unable to choose between his father and Wallenstein, chooses death. Max thus defiantly asserts his moral freedom against circumstance. “Instances can occur where fate scales all

20. Schiller, *Essays*, 81, 82.

21. See, e.g., Jill Bermann, “History Can Restore Naivety to the Sentimental: Schiller’s Letters on *Wallenstein*,” *Modern Language Review* 81 (1986): 369–87.

22. Schiller to Böttiger, March 1, 1799, in *TK*, 702.

23. Beiser documents the discrepancies in Schiller’s description of tragedy even in this short time span (*Schiller as Philosopher*, 240).

the ramparts on which [a person] has based his security and there is nothing left for him to do but take flight in the sacred freedom of spirits," Schiller writes—a description that certainly fits the case of Wallenstein's would-be son-in-law.<sup>24</sup>

But it seems to me that in *Wallenstein* Schiller went beyond this more traditional depiction of the tragic sublime by attempting to evoke fortitude in the face of senseless destruction *on the part of the audience*. Wallenstein himself is not given the opportunity to embrace justice or face death courageously at the play's end. But the audience watches him succumb to forces greater than himself: historical, political forces he tried but failed to control. We witness him unable to answer the questions Stein isolates as the play's focus: questions about European security, the laws of political action, our ability to change the course of political history. We are challenged, then, to face this failure to alter history and carry on nevertheless. Only when we recognize "this utter lack of some purposeful connection among the phenomena," Schiller writes, can we develop "a concept of independence that is in surprising agreement with pure reason's concept of freedom." History, according to Schiller, we recall, records "nothing but the conflict of natural forces among themselves and with human freedom." Our calling is to recognize that we can make no sense of history and then to accept that "freedom with all its moral contradictions and physical evils is an infinitely more interesting spectacle than prosperity and order without freedom." "Considered from this perspective and *only* from this perspective," Schiller writes, "world history is for me a sublime object."<sup>25</sup>

I wonder whether this new attitude toward *history*, expressed through the darkness of *Wallenstein's* conclusion, might be the real impetus behind Hegel's criticism. A brief look at Hegel's thoughts on history during this period are instructive. To repeat: in the same years as he wrote his review of *Wallenstein*, Hegel was often occupied with history, and sometimes specifically with the history of the Thirty Years' War. In "The German Constitution" Hegel blames the Peace of Westphalia at the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War for preventing Germany "from becoming a modern state with a political power." German factions were allowed to remain relatively autonomous, with the consequence that "in the Peace of Westphalia, Germany's statelessness became organized."<sup>26</sup> Hegel's concern here is not a desire for pan-German

24. Schiller, *Essays*, 82.

25. *Ibid.*, 80–81.

26. G. W. F. Hegel, "The German Constitution," in *Political Writings*, ed. Laurence Dickey and H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 73, 74. Hereafter cited as GC.

unity or increased dominance.<sup>27</sup> Instead, true freedom as Hegel understands it will not develop without the structures of a modern state. The modern state, as Hegel here describes it, allows individual self-determination and religious and cultural diversity.<sup>28</sup> All of these are necessary in order for citizens to develop a combined sense of individuality and greater good that allows them to own their desires and so be free. But none of these criteria, Hegel further claims, can be met by the hodgepodge collection of traditions, outdated agreements, and contradictory laws left behind by the 1648 treaty. In “The German Constitution” Hegel also more than once mentions Gustavus Adolphus, the Swedish king whose early death in battle against Wallenstein’s armies is also recounted in Schiller’s drama (*W*, 257–58; also 262, 390). Hegel refers to “the noble Gustavus Adolphus” who led German princes “in a spirit of free and noble magnanimity; he defeated the armies of oppression, freeing the lands from this burden and from the even heavier burden of the loss of their religious rights” (*GC*, 59). But Gustavus’s efforts failed with his death in 1632, leaving the war to rage on.

In “The German Constitution” Hegel combines such specific historical commentary with theoretical statements that resemble his later philosophy of history. He writes that we should not believe that the state of the world is not what it ought to be: if we instead accept that “it is as it must be, i.e. that it is not the product of arbitrariness and chance, we also recognize that it is as it ought to be.” Admittedly, he continues, it is “difficult for human beings in general to rise to the habit of trying to recognize and think [in terms of] necessity,” but only by doing so will we understand history as we should (*GC*, 8). Here we also find a harbinger of Hegel’s infamous statements about the cunning of reason. “Politics, religion, privation, virtue, coercion, reason, cunning, and all the powers that move the human race,” he says, “play out their momentous and seemingly chaotic game on the broad field that is open to them.” All of these, he continues, are “instruments in the hands of higher powers—primordial fate and all-conquering time—which laugh at their supposed freedom and self-sufficiency” (*GC*, 51).

27. In fact, “The German Constitution” contains some of Hegel’s harshest criticisms of Prussia’s growing power, concluding that “Prussia itself may [now] give cause for anxiety” (84).

28. Hegel writes, for instance, that while the Roman Empire could hold a heterogeneous population together only by force, “disparity of culture and customs have become a necessary product, as well as a necessary condition, of the continued existence of the modern state.” He adds that the government “must leave to the freedom of the citizens whatever is not essential to its own role” and that “nothing should be so sacred to it [the government] as the approval and protection of the citizens’ free activity” (*GC*, 20, 23).

An evident tension in this essay may help isolate the reasons for Hegel's unhappiness with *Wallenstein's* conclusion. While Hegel clearly regrets Gustavus Adolphus's early death and the negative consequences of the Peace of Westphalia, he describes developments in history as necessary. If everything indeed "is as it must be," what justifies Hegel's regrets about the political condition of Germany? Why waste our time worrying at all, much less writing essays lamenting the state of German politics?

We can resolve this tension, I think, only if we are careful not to ascribe too much inevitability to Hegel's description of necessity in history. What exactly does Hegel find necessary? Here one of his later lectures on the philosophy of history proves helpful. "The history of the world," Hegel there claims, "is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom, a progress that we must acknowledge in its necessity."<sup>29</sup> Hegel's controversial position is that although humans are by nature free, we have only slowly come to understand this fact. Some ancient civilizations thought that one man (the sovereign) was free; others, such as the Greeks, believed that *some* humans are free. Hegel thought that his time and culture could take credit for articulating for the first time that *all* humans are free.<sup>30</sup> This understanding was, Hegel believed, far from being implemented, but the bedrock concept was there. It is a given, he seems to think, that our understanding of freedom will increase. The question is how quickly, how effectively, and with what degree of bloodshed. Hegel acknowledges that progress is not steady and that an idea such as the belief that all humans are free can exist in a society long before it is implemented in any meaningful way.

To return, then, to the Thirty Years' War as illustrating the tension between Hegel's regrets about history and his assertion that things are as they should be: the outcome of that war, Hegel seems to suggest, blocked the most immediate development of freedom by preventing disparate German political units from becoming a modern state. So long as these backward political groups encouraged their citizens' isolation, interfered with their religious convictions, or denied them "free scope for [their] own activity," the implementation of freedom would be stymied (GC, 21). An ineffective peace treaty or the early death of an enlightened leader might also hinder progress and so

29. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991), 19.

30. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 54.

be cause for regret. An exhortation to clear thinking and political engagement, such as Hegel also delivers in his essay, might speed freedom's development. But Hegel clearly never lost faith that we *could* influence history by realizing our understanding of human freedom in better or worse ways.

It is this faith that Schiller seems to have lost. Schiller instead urges us to accept history's possible meaninglessness by acknowledging our inability to change its course or to alter political events; he then urges us to embrace our freedom nevertheless. In doing so, we achieve the sublime. Through the lens of both thinkers' grappling with the Thirty Years' War, then, decisive differences in their conceptions of freedom crystallize. For Hegel, freedom requires institutional structures such as the state (along with the family and civil society) in which individuals can preserve their self-interest but shape it in the interest of a greater good.<sup>31</sup> We construct and participate in these institutions, Hegel hopes, in light of a belief that our understanding and implementation of freedom progresses. For Schiller, we must instead assert our freedom against nature's forces, against historical events, and against institutional norms, accepting that there is no necessary progress or comprehensible narrative on which we can rely.

So why, finally, did the young Hegel so object to Schiller's trilogy? It may well be that some of the ideas Hegel later developed about tragedy were already on his mind. These views could have left him dissatisfied with the play's cold, calculating justice or its lack of reconciliation. But it seems to me just as likely that he objected to it as a portrayal of history: that he correctly read Schiller's loss of faith in history into the sublime embrace of futility that the audience is invited to feel at the end. Put another way: we recall that at the end of his review Hegel mourns that "when the piece ends, everything is destroyed, the kingdom of nothingness and death is victorious; it does not end as a theodicy." But *history*, Hegel famously claims in his later lectures, *is*

31. Hegel's claim that it is of the utmost importance that a people form a state is linked to his worries about the growing tendency for each individual to be "more preoccupied with his own needs and private affairs" as the middle class and market-based economy grows (GC, 17, 63). The Treaty of Westphalia again is responsible for the fact that German estates "disregarded the best interests of the whole, and that each [estate] could and would act for its own interest, even if this interest did not coincide with the general interest" (GC, 74). An exclusive focus on self-interest interferes with freedom, Hegel thinks; the solution is to participate in rational institutions that enable us to shape our interests in recognition of others' needs and projects. Hegel's discussion of the state as correcting the self-interest developed in civil society and so enhancing freedom is a key claim of his *Philosophy of Right*. I argue for this aspect of Hegel's definition of freedom in "History and Patriotism in Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie*," *History of Political Thought* 28 (2007): 496–519.

a theodicy: if we do not recognize this, we are not viewing history philosophically.<sup>32</sup> This suggests that Hegel, however implicitly, read *Wallenstein* as a comment on history and not only as a tragedy. Schiller, Hegel seemed to fear, was commenting on the possible purposelessness of *history*. It was for this reason, I think, that the young Hegel was so appalled.

### **Conclusion: Schiller and Stein**

In conclusion, I would like to return to Peter Stein's 2007 production. Stein, to repeat, had argued for *Wallenstein's* relevance, allowing the play to pose its questions again, this time in a converted brewery in Neukölln. Given the twentieth century's wars—given immigration, globalization, terrorism, and nationalism—what will guarantee peace and security in Europe? What are the eternal laws of political action? Are humans capable of altering political history? Given Stein's assertion of *Wallenstein's* relevance, it is striking that the near-unanimous criticism of Stein's production was that it applied itself too little to the present. Stein's costumes were period costumes; the text was essentially unaltered; the sets were either old-fashionedly realistic (including, some reviews note with shocked indignation, fake snow)<sup>33</sup> or blandly minimalistic.<sup>34</sup> There was, in short, no shred of what has become standard theatrical practice: Hamlet set in World War II, Mozart in the Trump Towers, Wagner in California's Crystal Cathedral. Stein retorted that Schiller's words should be allowed to stand for themselves without "helicopters or such stupid tricks," but critics still complained.<sup>35</sup> Can one, the incredulous question ran, actually *do* theater this way anymore?<sup>36</sup>

Schiller would, I think, be surprised neither to find *Wallenstein* described as relevant some two hundred years after it was written nor to find people arguing that it could have been made yet *more* relevant. The lasting resonance of the story of a defeated general in a seventeenth-century war confirms in some sense Schiller's message about the sublime. Part of asserting our free-

32. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 15, 457.

33. Esther Slevogt, "Überwältigungsästhetik im Breitwandformat," *Nachtkritik.de*, May 19, 2007, [www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=191&Itemid=0](http://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=191&Itemid=0).

34. See, e.g., Gregor Dolak, "Steins Wallen," *Focus Online*, May 20, 2007, [www.focus.de/kultur/kunst/tid-5784/berliner-ensemble\\_aid\\_56778.html](http://www.focus.de/kultur/kunst/tid-5784/berliner-ensemble_aid_56778.html). Another reviewer comments on the traditionalism but is less critical: see Peter Hans Göpfert, "Brandauer siegt als Wallenstein," *Welt Online*, May 20, 2007, [www.welt.de/berlin/article884949/Brandauer\\_siegt\\_als\\_Wallenstein.html?r=RSS](http://www.welt.de/berlin/article884949/Brandauer_siegt_als_Wallenstein.html?r=RSS).

35. "If You Like Very Long Plays, This Will Grip You from Lunch until Midnight," *Economist*, August 23, 2007, [www.economist.com/node/9682459?story\\_id=9682459](http://www.economist.com/node/9682459?story_id=9682459).

36. Again, this comes from Slevogt, who, after some skepticism, concludes that one can ("Überwältigungsästhetik im Breitwandformat").

dom in the face of history's senselessness is accepting that these questions will continue to appear, often in distressingly repetitive ways that make clear how little we have learned. Asserting our freedom means resisting a Hegelian certainty that our consciousness of freedom is progressing. It means accepting that things are not, and will not ever be, as they ought to be: that, to repeat, we must reject "well-meant attempts of philosophy to bring what the moral world *demand*s into harmony with what the real world *does*." It means accepting that we will never be able to guarantee peace or know the laws of political action. It means nevertheless trying to assert human freedom in the face of this uncertainty. In the particular case of Stein's *Wallenstein*, it means being willing to step out of the theater with an unrelieved heart, into the midnight air of a troubled Berlin neighborhood.

