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**THE URBAN ROMANTIC: CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH AND THE CITY**

by

**MARGARET M. DOYLE**

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York**

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

## THE URBAN ROMANTIC: CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH AND THE CITY

by

Margaret M. Doyle

Adviser: Professor Rosemarie Haag Bletter

Caspar David Friedrich gained his reputation painting the German countryside, but the artist remained a city dweller his entire life. This dissertation investigates the urban presence in his work, i.e. the inclusion of towns and urban wanderers as subject matter and the urban perspective that informed his landscapes. Its underlying aim is to disrupt the standard narrative of Friedrich as a reclusive monk investigating infinite nature, in order to view him instead as a social creature, influenced by the urban culture in which he was embedded. In doing so, it seeks to “denaturalize” Friedrich’s production, so that the cultural constructedness of his work becomes more readily visible.

Although the discourse on nature is a hallmark of German Romanticism, the city also became an object of inquiry during the period, and cityscapes found a growing audience alongside landscape painting. The urban places Friedrich depicted were those that played the most significant roles in his life: the Baltic medieval towns of his youth and the Baroque city in which he lived his entire adulthood, Dresden. In his work, the small Gothic town acts as the essence of *Heimat*, or home, and becomes the bearer of meaning

in a way that Dresden never does. The artist's attachment to Dresden, which offered him opportunities a small town could not, remained an ambivalent one, and his images of the Saxon capital reflect a sense of disconnect between himself and his adopted hometown.

Investigating the urban foundations of Friedrich's production allows for a deeper understanding of his imaging of nature by opening up discussion of the urban cultivation of the countryside. Town and country were inextricably linked during the Romantic era, despite their perceived opposition to one another. The Romantic devotion to nature emerged while German society itself was becoming more urbanized, its material needs increasingly encroaching upon the resources of the countryside. Considering Friedrich primarily as an urban-based artist exposes the connections between his art and his time, overturning the usual emphasis on the artist's peculiarities.

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<sup>1</sup> Catalogue raisonné numbers are given for all works by Caspar David Friedrich. For paintings and most works on paper, the reference is to Helmut Börsch-Supan and Karl Wilhelm Jähniġ, *Caspar David Friedrich: Gemälde, Druckgraphik und bildmäßige Zeichnungen*. For other works on paper, two references are given: to the catalogue number in the unpublished dissertation of Sigrid Hinz, "Caspar David Friedrich als Zeichner"; and to the page number of the published image in Marianne Bernhard, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich. Das gesamte Graphische Werk*. See bibliography for source citations not given in full.

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Fig. 134 W. H. Rossmässler, *Stubbenkammer*, 1835. Plate from *Die Provinz Pommern*.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION: FRIEDRICH BY THE SEA

[T]his introduction focuses attention solely on one thing..., namely, that in landscape painting, it was especially Friedrich who, with a thoroughly profound and energetic spirit, and in an absolutely original way, reached into the heap of the mundane, the prosaic, and the hackneyed and, in triumphing over it with a keen melancholy, lifted out a distinctive, new, radiant poetic direction from its midst.

Carl Gustav Carus, *Friedrich der Landschaftsmaler*<sup>1</sup>

Here is a man who has discovered the tragedy of landscape.

Pierre-Jean David d'Angers<sup>2</sup>

An aspect of Caspar David Friedrich's life that is universally known but rarely considered in more than a cursory fashion is that he, for all his connection to nature, for all his supposed monk-like personal characteristics, lived an urban life, surrounded by people in a necessarily social setting. Nurtured by small town culture in Northern Germany, educated in a royal Danish city, Copenhagen, he came of age and developed his career in a major urban center, Dresden. Friedrich, in much of the literature, would seem to have experienced a hermetic life in the town, impervious to the influences of his urban environment except for the intellectual currents he would have encountered there. Yet if

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<sup>1</sup> “[H]ier soll diese Einleitung nur auf eins...aufmerksam machen, nämlich, daß in der Landschaftsmalerei namentlich Friedrich es war, welche mit einem durchaus tief sinnigen und energischen Geiste und auf absolut originale Weise in den Wust des Alltäglichen, Prosaischen, Abgestandenen hineingriff, und, indem er ihn mit einer herben Melancholie niederschlug, aus dessen Mitte eine eigentümlich neue, leuchtende poetische Richtung hervorhob.” Carl Gustav Carus, “Friedrich der Landschaftsmaler,” *Kunstblatt*, nos. 86 and 87 (1840): 364. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> “Voilà un homme, que a découvert la tragédie du paysage.” Pierre-Jean David d'Angers, as quoted by Carus, *Ibid.*

the melancholic monk contemplating a desolate, sublime nature, as imagined in his iconic *Monk by the Sea*, 1810 (fig. 1), is to be considered one side of his complex persona, then the young bourgeois lover, happily heading toward an urban destination with his female companion in the painting *On the Sailboat*, 1818/19 (fig. 2), painted shortly after Friedrich's marriage (possibly in honor of that occasion), must be seen as another. While he communed with nature, Friedrich also was engaged with culture, which must be seen as having an equally important impact on his work. This is the underlying goal of my dissertation, which does not intend to reject out-of-hand the prevailing assessment of Friedrich and his art, but to refine the picture of his "nature" – meaning, that is, both his persona and the subject of his painting – by concentrating on the social environment in which he most often found himself immersed – the city. In considering his life in the city as well as the urban motifs in his work, I am striving to widen the path of Friedrich's gaze beyond that of the brooding countryside, in order to locate the connections between his lifelong project of painting nature and the urban society in which he painted. Thus the ultimate aim of this dissertation, in a sense, is to "denaturalize" Friedrich's production, so that the cultural constructedness of his work becomes more readily visible.

### Construction of a Reputation

In 1840, shortly after Caspar David Friedrich died from the effects of a stroke suffered five years earlier, Carl Gustav Carus – noted gynaecologist, natural scientist, and amateur painter – published an appreciation of his friend and former artistic mentor in the

art journal *Kunstblatt*.<sup>3</sup> The brief essay begins with a lament over the moribund state of landscape painting at the end of the eighteenth century after the accomplishments of artists such as Ruysdael and Lorraine during the previous century. Having set this up as foil to Friedrich's entry onto the artistic scene, Carus then posits Friedrich's legacy as the revival of the genre through the creation of a highly original body of work distinguished by its poetic quality and deepness of thought. Carus uses a form of the word *eigentümlich* (characteristic or distinctive, but also peculiar or odd) four times in the essay with regard to Friedrich's aesthetic, twice speaks of melancholy, and furthermore cautions against considering Friedrich's landscape art as the only true form of the genre, much less as the exclusive one to be emulated by other artists. Friedrich's work is positioned as revolutionary and momentous, but also as a singular event separate from the art of the times, of which nothing comparable was to be found.

The perceived peculiarity of Friedrich's aesthetic, predicated on a desolate, melancholic, and mystical image of nature that is considered to be his most typical, is a theme that occurs repeatedly in the reception of his art. In the year of Friedrich's death, the writer Count Atanazy Racynski summed up the artist's oeuvre with the following generalization: "Friedrich paints gloomy objects; barren stretches of land, desolate seas,

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 363-365. A year later the article was published in book form along with excerpts from Friedrich's writings, his portrait, and reproductions of his drawings, as *Friedrich der Landschaftsmaler* (Dresden: B. G. Teubner, 1841; facsimile reprint, Berlin: W. Keiper, 1944). Helmut Börsch-Supan and Karl Wilhelm Jähnig's catalogue raisonné reprints the entire essay as well. Helmut Börsch-Supan and Karl Wilhelm Jähnig, *Caspar David Friedrich: Gemälde, Druckgraphik und bildmäßige Zeichnungen* (Munich: Prestel, 1973), 128 and 130.

polar ice, fog, snow, glaciers, night, church graveyards, and the like.”<sup>4</sup> Almost twenty years later, in 1859, an acquaintance, declaring that the artist had only ever had a small public for his “poetic creations,” echoed Racynski’s assessment of Friedrich’s oeuvre, insisting that it consisted almost entirely of “night scenes with dawn or dusk, moonshine on the countryside and the sea, fall or winter landscapes, approaching storms, storms at sea, or ruins.”<sup>5</sup> Another nineteenth-century writer accused him of painting only “terrible, tragic scenes of a dead nature, wintry forests in night and fog, decayed church courtyards with open graves and ghostly funeral processions...”<sup>6</sup>

More than a century later, this assessment of Friedrich’s work essentially has remained in place, as writers have tended to focus unquestioningly on a certain heaviness in Friedrich’s images even as they have used different methodological approaches to claim his artistic project for various religious-philosophical, socio-political, or nationalist concerns. Integral to this grave image of his production is the perception of the artist’s morose character. Although the nineteenth-century writers quoted above do not broach

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<sup>4</sup> “Friedrich malt die düsteren Gegenstände; öde Landflächen, Seewüsten, Polareis, Nebel, Schnee, Gletscher, Nacht, Kirchhöfe und dergleichen.” Atanazy Racynski, *Geschichte der neueren deutschen Kunst*, vol. 3, trans. Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen (Berlin: by the author, 1841), 222; in Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 130.

<sup>5</sup> “Nachtstücke mit Morgen- oder Abenddämmerung, Mondscheinen auf Land und Meer, Herbst- oder Winterlandschaften, heranziehende Gewitter, Seestürme order Ruinen.” W. Wegener, “Der Landschaftsmaler Friedrich. Eine biographische Skizze,” in *Unterhaltungen am häuslichen Herd*, n.s. 4 (1859): 71-77; in Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 148.

<sup>6</sup> “...schauerlich traurige Szenen einer erstorbenen Natur, winterlichen Wald in Nacht und Nebel, verfallene Kirchhöfe mit offenen Gräbern und gespensterhaften Leichenzügen...” Hermann Becker, *Deutscher Maler. Von Asmus Carstens an bis auf die neuere Zeit in einzelnen Werken kritisch geschildert* (Leipzig: C. Reissner, 1888), 373; in Börsch-Supan, 163.

this subject directly, in emphasizing the “peculiar,” the “deeply melancholic,” and the “gloomy” aspects of his work, they get at the heart of the received picture of Friedrich’s personality. The idea of Friedrich’s saturnine nature thus has come to stand for both his persona and the subject of his artwork. In much of the scholarship, he is cast (quite literally by some) as the monk by the sea, a loner obsessed with death and only truly content when communing with and seeking spiritual truths in an infinite but alienated nature.<sup>7</sup> That his psyche was permanently wounded was announced to the public as early as 1804, in an anonymous review of the annual exhibition in Dresden, in which the incident that subsequently has been cited repeatedly as the source of his melancholy – his brother’s death by drowning when Friedrich was a boy – is described in sorrowful detail. Several years after Friedrich’s death, another tale emerged that added to his reputation for despondency. According to an encyclopedia entry from 1849, Friedrich’s long beard was a cover-up of an attempted suicide: “During a stay in Dresden he could not free himself of his gloomy thoughts, which became so strong that he once cut his throat in his room, and if a friend at this second had not opened the door and stopped him, he certainly would have taken his life....The more his circumstances improved, the lonelier he felt.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Börsch-Supan has identified the figure in *Monk by the Sea*, 1810, as a self-portrait of Friedrich. Helmut Börsch-Supan, “C.D. Friedrich’s Landscapes with Self-Portraits,” *Burlington Magazine* 114 (September 1972): 624.

<sup>8</sup> “...bei einem Aufenthalt in Dresden konnte er sich nicht von seinen düstern Vorstellungen befreien, die so überhand nahmen, daß er einst in seinem Zimmer sich eine Halswunde beibrachte, und, wenn nicht in diesem Augenblick ein Freund die Thür geöffnet und ihn daran verhindert hätte, würde er sich sicher das Leben genommen haben....Je mehr sich seine Verhältnisse verbesserten, um so mehr fühlte er auch das Einsame seiner Lage.” Adam Weise, “Friedrich (Kaspar David)” in *Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste von J.S. Ersch und J.G. Gruber*, I, 50

Willi Wolfradt, in the first influential monograph of the twentieth century, recapitulated this idea, writing that despite having close friends, Friedrich “slid even deeper into loneliness and the brittleness of being. At the heights of his success he experienced isolation, alienation, and sorrow even more strongly.”<sup>9</sup> Although much of the literature of the last thirty years has begun to give a fuller picture of both Friedrich and his art, the idea that his image of nature is always desolate, dark, and filled with a mystical aura, and that this in turn reflects and is explained by his morose, pious personality, which itself is to be explained by the tragic events of his childhood, has persisted. Helmut Börsch-Supan, the influential co-author of Friedrich’s 1973 catalogue raisonné, asserts that Friedrich’s poem “Aphorisms on Art and Life” (“Why, it has often occurred to me to ask myself, do I so frequently choose death, transience, and the grave as subjects for my paintings? One must submit oneself many times to death in order some day to attain life everlasting”<sup>10</sup>) “must be seen as the compulsive witness for the leitmotif of his creation.”<sup>11</sup> And he finds signifiers of death in even the seemingly brightest of Friedrich’s

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(Leipzig: F. U. Brockhaus 1849), 147-148; in Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 139.

<sup>9</sup> Willi Wolfradt, *Caspar David Friedrich und die Landschaft der Romantik* (Berlin: Mauritius Verlag, 1924), 11.

<sup>10</sup> “Aphorismen über Kunst und Leben.” English translation in Helmut Börsch-Supan, *Caspar David Friedrich* (New York: George Braziller, 1974), 7. “Warum, die Frag ist oft an mich ergangen/Wählst Du zum Gegenstand der Malerei/So oft den Tod, Vergänglichkeit und Grab?! Um ewig einst zu leben,/ Müß man sich oft dem Tod ergeben.” The poem was found in the Johann Christian Clausen Dahl estate and published in Sigrig Hinz, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich in Briefen und Bekenntnissen* (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1974), 103.

<sup>11</sup> “Diese Verse müssen als verbindliches Zeugnis für das Leitmotiv seines Schaffens genommen werden.” Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 14.

images, with something seemingly as innocuous as grass becoming “symbol of the rash transitoriness of life...”<sup>12</sup> While a 1986 monograph by Tina Grütter focuses on the perceived mournful aspects of Friedrich’s rock formations, Albert Boime declares in his 1990 history of Romanticism that “Friedrich’s landscape was an extended space within which to release his grief.”<sup>13</sup>

Equally predicated on the doom and gloom associated with Friedrich is the popular narrative of the decline of his reputation among his contemporaries, which sets the beginning of the story of his misunderstood and unrecognized genius already during his lifetime. According to this account, Friedrich’s audience had deserted him in the decades before his death, having rejected his landscape imagery as too old-fashioned, too idiosyncratic, and too depressing for its own newly-acquired Biedermeier tastes. Upon his death, so the narrative goes, “he was already virtually forgotten.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, by the end of the nineteenth century, he was supposedly so utterly obscure that the curator of the Berlin Nationalgalerie did not even recognize his name or know that the museum possessed pictures by him. Instead, it took the Norwegian art historian Andreas Aubert – who was intrigued by references he came across while researching Friedrich’s housemate and close friend, the landscape painter Johann Christian Clausen Dahl – along with the

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<sup>12</sup> “Sinnbild für die rasche Vergänglichkeit des Lebens...” Börsch-Supan/Jähnig, 227.

<sup>13</sup> Tina Grütter, *Melancholie und Abgrund: Die Bedeutung des Gesteins bei Caspar David Friedrich* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1986). Albert Boime, *Art in the Age of Bonapartism 1800-1815* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 512.

<sup>14</sup> Wieland Schmied, *Caspar David Friedrich* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1995), 13.

memory of an old museum janitor (custodian in the best sense of the word), who set the curator straight about the Nationalgalerie's collections, to bring about Friedrich's rediscovery at the close of the century.<sup>15</sup>

There are certainly aspects of Friedrich's life and work that help to corroborate this received image of himself, his work, and his reputation, and they must be addressed. His painted subjects include cemeteries, open graves, moonlight, fog, dusk, and solitary wanderers, even more so than the works of others of his generation, which were also highly obsessed with such themes. Many of the most reproduced and discussed of his images, such as *Monk by the Sea*, 1810 (fig. 1), *Abbey in the Oak Forest*, 1809/10 (fig. 3), *Cloister Cemetery in Snow*, 1817/19 (fig. 4), and *The Polar Sea*, 1823/24 (fig. 5), are images of a cold, desolate nature that would seem to confirm an overall lugubriousness in Friedrich's work. By many lifetime accounts, the artist himself cut a solemn figure, with

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<sup>15</sup> Wilhelm Niemeyer recounts the story of Aubert's search for Friedrich in his introduction to the German translation of Aubert, *Die nordische Landschaftsmalerei und Johann Christian Dahl* (Berlin: Safari-Verlag, 1947). Cited in Schmied, who, though dismissing some of the accuracy of the narrative, nevertheless confirms the gist of it. Schmied, 14-15.

While the myth of Friedrich's triumphant inclusion into the pantheon of the greatest nineteenth century artists always has posited Aubert as the single impulse behind his revaluation, in fact a number of factors were behind the making of Friedrich into the quintessential German Romantic artist. As Börsch-Supan has pointed out, the published memoirs and biographies of his artistic contemporaries Wilhelm von Kügelgen, Louise Seidler, and Ludwig Richter in the 1870s and 1880s brought renewed attention to him at the end of the nineteenth century even before Aubert did, while several prominent museums (Berlin, Dresden, and Hamburg) made new acquisitions for their collections in the early 1900s. Börsch-Supan, however, still insists on the primacy of Aubert's "rediscovery." Börsch-Supan/ Jähnig, 56. See Wilhelm von Kügelgen, *Jugenderinnerungen eines alten Mannes* (Berlin: Hertz, 1870; reprint Düsseldorf/Leipzig: Wilhelm Langewiesche-Brandt, [1908]); Louise Seidler, *Erinnerungen und Leben der Malerin Louise Seidler*, ed. Hermann Uhde (Berlin: Hertz, 1874); Ludwig Richter, *Lebenserinnerungen eines deutschen Malers* (Frankfurt: J. Alt, 1885).

hulking eyebrows, bushy, long sideburns, and a frequently introverted, quiet demeanor. Kurt Waller wrote of his encounter with Friedrich in 1818: “As I entered into the room, a slender man stood up, with a large face that was gaunt und heavily furrowed, bushy blond eyebrows, and strong, reddish sideburns...He was very withdrawn and hung out with few people. Every day he took long walks, but always alone and to lonely, little visited paths.”<sup>16</sup> Friedrich helped to foster his monk-like self-image with a self-portrait, from ca. 1810 (fig. 6), that has become his most frequently reproduced, in which the thirty-something artist’s deep-set eyes peer out beneath a tumble of overgrown hair and eyebrows, while the curly shanks of his sideburns vie to meet each other at the chin. He wears a plain frock that drapes shapelessly like a sack over his body, and his right eye, deep in shadow, stares out in an almost menacing way. In this portrait, Friedrich presents himself as something of a social misfit – despite the fact that around this time (1810), the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm III purchased one of his canvases (*Abbey in the Oak Forest*), and he was accepted as a member of the Royal Prussian Academy of Art in Berlin.

Remaining a bachelor until age forty-three, Friedrich pursued an ascetic life that did seem to border on the monkish – which was necessary to some extent, given his limited income. Upon his marriage in January 1818 to Caroline Brommer, a young

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<sup>16</sup> “Als ich in das Zimmer trat, erhob sich ein schlanker Mann, mit einem großen Gesichte, das hager und stark gefurcht war, buschigen blonden Augenbrauen und enem starken, röthlichen Backenbart...Er lebt sehr eingezogen und geht mit wenigen um. Jeden Tag macht er große Spaziergänge, aber immer allein und auf einsamen, wenig besuchten Pfaden.” Kurt Waller, “Der Landschaftsmaler Friedrich. Eine Skizze,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunst, Literatur, und Mode* III (1818): 1215, 1216; in Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 88.

woman many years his junior, he wrote to family members in amazement at the sudden realization that so many household goods were essential: “coffee roaster, coffee grinder, coffee strainer, coffee bag, coffee pot, coffee cups; everything, everything has become necessary; pots and little pots, bowls and little bowls, pans and little pans; everything, everything has become necessary.”<sup>17</sup> Still, even with this introduction to the world of domesticity, his studio room apparently remained as it was depicted in his close friend Georg Friedrich Kersting’s 1812 painting *Caspar David Friedrich in his Studio* (fig. 7), free of all but the most necessary tools of the artist – bottles of paint, oil, an easel, palettes, and with the window closed off to the distractions of the outer world, a practice suggestive of his advice to artists to “close your physical eye, in order to see your picture first with your mind’s eye...”<sup>18</sup>

Before he married, Friedrich often traveled by himself, sometimes for days at a time, and wrote in “Aphorisms about Art and Life,” that “...in order not to hate people, I

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<sup>17</sup> “Nötig geworden sind: Kaffeetrommel, Kaffemühle, Kaffeetrichter, Kaffeesak, Kaffeekanne, Kaffeetasse; alles, alles ist nötig geworden. Töpfe und Töpfchen, Schüssel und Schüsselchen, Tiegel und Tiegelchen; alles, alles ist nötig geworden.” Friedrich to Greifswald relatives, 28 January 1818, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 35.

<sup>18</sup> “Schließe dein leibliches Auge, damit du mit dem geistigen Auge zuerst siehest dein Bild...” The advice was given in an unpublished, undated manuscript consisting of observations on the work of living and dead artists, now titled “Äußerung bei Betrachtung einer Sammlung von Gemäldung von größtenteils noch lebenden und unlängst verstorbenen Künstlern,” in *Ibid.*, 92. Recently a critical edition of the manuscript has been published. See *Kritische Edition der Schriften des Künstlers und seiner Zeitzeugen / Caspar David Friedrich*, vol. 1, ed. Gerhard Eimer and Günther Rath (Frankfurt am Main: Kunstgeschichtliches Institut der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, 1999).

must avoid their company.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, he once told the Russian poet Wassily Schukowsky that he needed to experience nature alone, in order to unite with “his” clouds and cliffs and to be able to commune with nature.<sup>20</sup> That Friedrich was an embittered old man at the end of his life is also not to be disputed; having for numerous years endured ill health and then finally suffering a debilitating stroke five years before he died, he found himself unable to paint in oil, which crippled his ability to provide for his family – a blow from which he did not recover. Schukowsky was taken aback by his appearance and mental state while visiting him shortly before he died, writing that the artist “cried like a child” before him, so distraught was he over his present circumstances.<sup>21</sup> His vexed state of mind led him falsely to accuse his bewildered wife of infidelity, according to this friend. But this was well past the point at which Friedrich had produced most of his works; his last years saw a few sepias and almost no works in any other medium. His dark mood at the end of his life cannot be retroactively imposed upon all of his earlier years and work.

Friedrich’s declining reputation and posthumous obscurity, his alienation from the society in which he lived, his anti-social behavior, and the extent to which his body of

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<sup>19</sup> “...um die Menschen nicht zu hassen,/ Muß ich den Umgang unterlassen.” Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 82. Most recently this has been quoted by Peter Schjeldahl in his review of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s “Moonwatchers” show. “Inspired Lunacy,” *New Yorker*, 1 October, 2001, 116. Translation above from Schjeldahl article.

<sup>20</sup> Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 227. Schukowky reports this in a letter to the Grand Princess Alexandra Feodorovna, stating that he had asked Friedrich to accompany him to Switzerland, an offer Friedrich rejected because of needing to experience nature alone.

<sup>21</sup> Schukowsky, dairy entry from 19 March, 1840, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 229.

work consists of a melancholic, barren nature, have been emphasized so much that it has created an uneven image of his production. What tends to be forgotten is how often he did not paint images of death: alongside funereal, dark, subjects, he also produced vedute-like scenes, bountiful landscapes of springtime and summer, peaceful idyllic landscapes, views of quaint towns embedded into the countryside, and works intended for the consumption of a mass audience in a theatrical setting. On the one hand, it is true that for at least some of his contemporaries, Friedrich represented the worst tendencies of contemporary art.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, his supporters were neither paltry in number nor

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<sup>22</sup> The most vociferous of Friedrich's contemporary critics was Freiherr Basilius von Ramdohr, who was horrified by what he interpreted as the use of landscape to convey allegory and mystical ideas in the painting *Cross in the Mountains (Tetschen Altar)*, 1807/08 (Börsch-Supan/Jähniġ cat. no. 167), exhibited by Friedrich in his studio during Christmas of 1808. See F.W. B. Ramdohr, "Über ein zum Altarblatte bestimmtes Landschaftsgemälde von Herrn Friedrich in Dresden, und über Landschaftsmalerei, Allegorie und Mystizismus überhaupt" (written 7 January 1809), published serially in *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* (Vienna), 17 January 1809; 19 January 1809; 20 January 1809; and 21 January 1809; in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 134-151. Ramdohr's critique unleashed a backlash of essays supportive of Friedrich (by Ferdinand Hartmann, Gerhard von Kūgelgen, Christian August Semler, and Johann Jacob Rūhle von Lilienstern) in what has come to be known as the *Ramdohrstreit* or Ramdohr dispute.

Other critics of Friedrich included Heinrich Meyer, who with the encouragement of Friedrich's former supporter Goethe castigated the "New German religious-patriotic" tendencies in contemporary German art, writing that "...Friedrich of Dresden has remained up to now still the only one who has tried to place mystical-religious meaning in his landscape paintings and drawings." ("...Friedrich zu Dresden ist bisher noch immer der einzige geblieben, welcher in landschaftliche Gemälde und Zeichnungen mystisch-religiöse Bedeutung zu legen versuchte.") Heinrich Meyer, "Neu-deutsche religiös-patriotische Kunst," in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Über Kunst und Alterthum in den Rhein- und Maingegenden* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1817), I, no. 2; in Börsch-Supan/Jähniġ, 87. For a thorough discussion of the Meyer critique, see Frank Büttner, "Der Streit um die 'Neudeutsche Religios-Patriotische Kunst,'" *Aurora* 43 (1983): 55-76.

timid in their recognition of Friedrich's achievements.<sup>23</sup> During his lifetime, Friedrich attained a considerable amount of fame, if not fortune, gaining a reputation as a singular, brilliant artist whose works were highly original, and his work was collected by a number of aristocratic patrons. A glance through the exhaustive register of literature in the Friedrich catalogue raisonné demonstrates the fallacy of supposing that Friedrich had disappeared from national consciousness already in the years before his death, that he was universally discredited by this time, or that he then remained forgotten throughout the rest of the century until Aubert "rediscovered" him. In the last decade of his life, Friedrich had works exhibited every year from 1830 to 1838 (the last exhibition three years after his debilitating stroke), receiving at least some notice (positive and negative, and often substantial) for each showing. Toward the end of his career, he appears in G. K. Nagler's *Neues allgemeines Künstler-Lexicon* (New General Art Lexicon) of 1837, in an entry that begins by describing him as "a brilliant landscape painter."<sup>24</sup> A postscript to Carus's obituary speaks of the "highly desirable opportunity" then available to purchase drawings from the artist's estate, an indication that his work was still quite collectible at the time of

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<sup>23</sup> Among his loyal supporters and friends (besides those named above in the Ramdohr dispute) were the artists Georg Friedrich Kersting, Louise Seidler, Caroline and Wilhelmine Bardua, Phillip Otto Runge, Johann Christian Clausen Dahl, Carus (his later biographer, who however sometimes displayed an ambivalency toward Friedrich's achievement), and the writers and critics Heinrich von Kleist, Clemens Brentano, and Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert.

<sup>24</sup> "...ein genialer Landschaftsmaler." G. K. Nagler, *Neues allgemeines Künstler-Lexicon*, IV (Munich: E. A. Fleischmann, 1837), 499; in Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 127.

his death.<sup>25</sup> After his death, Friedrich is not cited as often or as fully as during his lifetime, but he most certainly does not disappear.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, he is described as “the most influential landscape artist of Romanticism” in an 1887 monograph on Philipp Otto Runge by Herman Petrich.<sup>27</sup>

A look through other self-portraits also reveals other Friedrichs besides the monkish one of ca. 1810. Compare that portrait to a slightly earlier one, from ca. 1806/09 (fig. 8) in which the artist is depicted looking off to the right, without the piercing glance of the later picture, and wearing more conventional clothing, with a jacket placed casually over his open-collared shirt. He again sports the long bushy sideburns that would not have been very fashionable in Dresden, but together with his dress they give him the look of a plain-spoken and unpretentious Baltic fisherman (the likes of whom he would have known growing up in Greifswald), more than that of the tortured soul of the ca. 1810

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<sup>25</sup> “...höchst erwünschste gelegenheit...” Carus, *Friedrich der Landschaftsmaler* (1841), 10. The coda is not published in Börsch-Supan/Jähniig.

<sup>26</sup> Among other citations, he is one of the subjects of an anonymous essay on “Three Landscape Painters” in a literary journal from 1843 (“Rückblicke. Drei Landschaftsmaler. I. Professor Friedrich,” *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* (1843): 493-496); receives a decent treatment in the *Allgemeine Encyklopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste von J.S. Ersch und J.G. Gruber* (See footnote 8 above); plays an important role in A. Hagen, *Die deutsche Kunst in unserem Jahrhundert I* (Berlin: H. Schindler, 1857), 81-84; is prominent in Carus’s successful memoir, *Lebenserinnerungen und Denkwürdigkeiten*, 4 vols. (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1865-66); and has two works plus a biography included in the 1878 Berlin Nationalgalerie catalogue of the collection by Max Jordan, *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Kunstwerke in der Königlichen National-Galerie zu Berlin* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1878), 93. For excerpts of these texts on Friedrich, see Börsch-Supan/Jähniig, 132, 139, 144-145, 152-155, and 160.

<sup>27</sup> “Fridrich [sic] entwickelte sich zu dem einflußreichsten Landschaftfer der Romantik.” Hermann Petrich, *Philipp Otto Runge. Pommersche Lebens- und Landesbilder*, Part 2 (Stettin: n.p., 1887), 241; in Börsch-Supan/Jähniig, 162-163.

drawing. The ca. 1803 *Self-Portrait with Supporting Arm* (fig. 9), meanwhile, depicts him in the traditional pose of melancholy, with head leaning on one hand, sitting in his overcoat, vest, and kerchief, pen and blank paper before him, gazing out the window. But the melancholy here is not one of the eccentric loner; rather, it is that of the young Romantic artist waiting for artistic inspiration to strike, searching for his creative genius – a conventional pose, to be sure, used by many other artists in their self-portraiture. A study for a woodcut from ca. 1802 (fig. 10) depicts the profile of a serious young man who may have somewhat bushy sideburns but is otherwise presented in a quite respectable manner, wearing overcoat and tightly knotted kerchief. And finally, an even earlier self-portrait, from ca. 1800 (fig. 11), reveals a young, clean-shaven man in bourgeois dress staring out hesitantly with big eyes and open mouth, as if surprised at what his piece of chalk could do. This portrait was produced as a friendship portrait, for exchange with a friend to whom it is dedicated: “If you are serious about having my portrait, then I think I have not done wrong with this exchange – drawn by myself.”<sup>28</sup> It is evident at this point in Friedrich’s life that he was very much a part of society, having just finished his education and moved to Dresden, and had not withdrawn himself from it.

Indeed, Friedrich may have needed to spend time alone, and he may not have been a regular on the social circuit of Dresden, but a hermit he was not. Notations from his notebooks from one of his trips to Rügen reveal that he had to have been conversant with the local inhabitants there in order to have learned some of the local traditions, suggesting

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<sup>28</sup> “wenn es Ihr Ernst gewesen ist, mein Portrait zu haben, / so glaube ich durch diesen Thausch, nicht ein Unrecht/ begangen zu haben – von mir selbst gezeichnet.” See catalogue entry in Börsch-Supan/Jähniß, 248.

a more sociable character than generally is allowed him.<sup>29</sup> He frequently voiced his need for the company of friends and family. He once stayed alone for a week in the Uttewalder Grund without having seen a single person – but this, an entire week of solitude, was too much even for him, and he needed to be in the company of human beings again.<sup>30</sup> Writing to his wife Caroline, who had gone off on a short trip with the children, Friedrich was compelled to speak about the isolation he felt:

Everything is stillness - stillness - stillness around me; this stillness is certainly good for me, but I wish all the time not to have it to such a high degree around me. I eat my breakfast alone...., alone I consume my lunch, alone my supper. – I go out of a room, out of one chamber into the other alone and always alone; it is good for me, but I wish all the time not to have it like this.<sup>31</sup>

While it is possible to find reports about Friedrich's moroseness from those who knew him, the opposite is also true, that there are lifetime reports about Friedrich's genial personality. The Romantic nature-philosopher and scientist Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert wrote:

Who however saw in the artist Friedrich only this, one side of his being: the deep, melancholic seriousness, he only knew half of him. I have known few people who in social company with others who namely appealed to him, had such cheerful good-naturedness, such a gift for silliness, as he did. With the most serious

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<sup>29</sup> Hermann Zschoche, *Caspar David Friedrich auf Rügen* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1998), 25.

<sup>30</sup> Schukowsky reported this in a letter to Grand Princess Alexandra Feodorovna, 23 June, 1821, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 227-228.

<sup>31</sup> "Alles ist Stille – Stille – Stille um mich her; diese Stille tut mir zwar wohl, aber immer möchte ich sie nicht in einem so hohen Grade um mich haben. Allein genieße ich mein Frühstück...., allein verzehre ich mein Mittagessen, allein mein Abendbrot. – Ich gehe aus einer Stube, aus einer Kammer in die andere allein und immer allein; et tut mir wohl, aber immer möchte ich es nicht so haben." Friedrich to Caroline Friedrich, 10 July 1822, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 49-50.

expression he spoke and told things that aroused in the others unstoppable laughter; everywhere he came, he brought, if he liked the company, merriness and a happy bearing. If he sat absorbed in utter seriousness at his work, and children from the neighborhood came to him, he chatted away and joked with them like a child himself....<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, Friedrich's way with children was recorded further by Schubert, who said that he could not turn down the request of any child. The artist Louise Seidler called him "one of the nicest, most pleasant personalities in all of Dresden."<sup>33</sup> The few remaining letters of Friedrich to friends and family often are revealing of this more social, open side of Friedrich. In 1813, for instance, the artist reported to the Danish nature philosopher Frederik Christian Sibbern that he had received a visit from another nature philosopher, Henrik Steffens, who spoke so nicely about art that Friedrich "could have kissed him."<sup>34</sup>

Despite such clues regarding the multifaceted nature of Friedrich's personality, it

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<sup>32</sup> "Wer aber in dem Maler Friedrich nur diese eine Seite seines Wesens: den tiefen, schwermütigen Ernst sah, der kannte ihn nur halb. Ich habe wenig Menschen kennengelernt, welche im geselligen Umgang mit anderen, wenn diese nämlich ihm zusagten, eine so heitere Gemütlichkeit, eine solche Gaben zum Scherz hatten, als er. Mit der ernstesten Miene sprach und erzählte er Dinge, welche bei allen anderen ein unverlöschliches Lachen erregten; überall wohin er kam, brachte er, wenn ihm der Kreis gefiel, Heiterkeit mit sich und fröhliches Bezeigen. Wenn er in tiefen Ernst versunken bei seiner Arbeit saß und es kamen Kinder aus der Nachbarschaft zu ihm, da plauderte und scherzte er mit diesen selber wie ein Kind...." Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert, *Der Erwerb aus einem vergangenen und die Erwartungen von einem zukünftigen Leben: eine Selbstbiographie*, vol. 2 (Erlangen: J. J. Palm und E. Enke, 1855); in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 221.

<sup>33</sup> "[E]ine der erfreulichsten, angenehmsten Persönlichkeiten in ganz Dresden." *Erinnerungen und Leben der Malerin Louise Seidler*, 46; in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 226.

<sup>34</sup> "Er sprach so schön über Kunst daß ich ihn hätte küssen mögen." Friedrich to Frederik Christian Sibbern, 14 July 1813, in Herrmann Zschoche, "Fünf unbekannte Briefe Caspar David Friedrichs an Frederik Christian Sibbern," *Dresdener Kunstblätter* 6 (1993): 180.

has been primarily the “monkish seclusion” in which he worked that has captured the imagination of scholars, not the social setting of his daily life.<sup>35</sup> However, considering Friedrich as an urban-based artist opens up a way of approaching his rich body of work that sees connections between his art and his time rather than emphasizing simply the artist’s *Eigentümlichkeit*. It will be argued here that Friedrich’s reaction to the urban environment that nurtured him and his career, even if he does not record it directly, is the key to determining his artistic goals, rather than his reaction to the nature he visited as an outsider – for the latter was a reaction informed by and predicated on the actuality of his urban life.

#### A Modern Friedrich Historiography

Friedrich’s art has been analyzed in a seemingly exhaustive number of ways: for its religiosity, particularly in relation to his Pietist faith; in light of the era’s myriad scientific, philosophical, and mystical inquiries into nature as well as its aesthetic discourses surrounding the sublime and the beautiful; for its evocation of a burgeoning German national consciousness, especially in the wake of the Napoleonic conquest; as a parallel to Romantic literature, e.g. the writings of Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), Ludwig Tieck, and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder; against socio-historical, political, and class concerns; in relation to dream theory; iconographically, through symbolic readings of nature, time, and Gothic architecture; for its relationship to Dutch art, Romantic art, and

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<sup>35</sup> Willi Geismeier uses the phrase “Die mönchische Zurückgezogenheit” to describe Friedrich’s working manner. Geismeier, *Caspar David Friedrich*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Leipzig: VEB Verlag, 1990), 31.

twentieth-century art; and through a consideration of the particular regions that Friedrich explored.<sup>36</sup> Besides the major monographs and dissertations, there have been dozens of articles on particular works or particular themes and numerous exhibitions producing important catalogues. What emerges from the literature on Friedrich is a narrative that places him at the very start of a trajectory of modernism, where he functions as a kind of priest of high art, a Romantic genius who risked alienation in order to present his subjective vision. Although a complete review of the literature is beyond the scope of this introduction, a summary of the major modern approaches to his work is necessary in order to outline the contribution this dissertation will make.

At the 1906 *Jahrhundert-Ausstellung*, the influential exhibition of German art from 1775-1875 at the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, Friedrich was presented as one of the most potent forces in art of that period. In the accompanying two-volume catalogue to the show, director Hugo von Tschudi links Friedrich to Impressionism, noting in his work a focus on light and atmosphere that seemed to portend the direction of art in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Reviews of the show also latch onto this aspect of his work, and, rather than characterizing him simply as an idiosyncratic German Romantic artist whose influence did not extend beyond his circle of acquaintances in the first

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<sup>36</sup> For an in-depth, though not up-to-date, analysis of Friedrich reception from the Romantic period through the early 1970s, see: Werner Hofmann, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich und die deutsche Nachwelt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974). See also Werner Sumowski, *Caspar David Friedrich - Studien* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1970), chapter on the state of Friedrich research; and Françoise Forster-Hahn, "Recent Scholarship on C. D. Friedrich," *Art Bulletin* 58 (1976): 113-116.

<sup>37</sup> Hugo von Tschudi, *Ausstellung deutscher Kunst aus der Zeit von 1775-1875 in der Königlichen Nationalgalerie Berlin*, vol. 1 (Munich: Bruckmann 1906), 156-173.

decades of the 1800s, critics discuss Friedrich in terms that placed him squarely within the broader context of European art and that made his work more relevant to modern and contemporary art (i.e. Impressionism and its heirs).<sup>38</sup> This is an interesting assessment of Friedrich, for while his links to Impressionism have faded from the scholarly debate, in the latter half of the twentieth century the artist was held up as the progenitor of expressionist modernity by art historians like Klaus Lankheit and Robert Rosenblum, who linked him instead to the emotionally charged art of Van Gogh and the spiritually abstract art of Wassily Kandinsky and Mark Rothko.<sup>39</sup>

Scholarship on Friedrich rose exponentially during the first decades of the twentieth century until the end of World War II, when it dropped off dramatically. This was a casualty of the vehement Nazi rhetoric surrounding his work in the previous decade, but also an indication of the general material conditions of the time, which hindered scholarship or publishing of any kind.<sup>40</sup> Friedrich ultimately was not abandoned as an

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<sup>38</sup> For reviews that make the connection between Friedrich and Impressionism, see Heilbut, "Die Jahrtausendausstellung in der Nationalgalerie," *Kunst und Künstler*, IV, (1906): 249, 250; Ferdinand Laban, "Bericht über die Berliner Jahrhundert-Ausstellung," *Die Kunst* XIII (1905/06): 289-295; and Louis Réau, "L'Exposition centennale allemande à Berlin," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 35 (1906): 426-428.

<sup>39</sup> Klaus Lankheit, "Die Frühromantik und die Grundlagen der 'gegenstandlosen' Malerei," *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher* (1951): 55-90. Lankheit declares that Friedrich marks the point at which "absolute painting" is first conceivable (59).

Robert Rosenblum, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition* (New York: Icon Editions, 1975). See chapter 1.

<sup>40</sup> The question of Friedrich's appropriation by the Nazi ideological machine is a fascinating one in its own right. When the National Socialist regime took over Germany in 1933 and began to proclaim on every aspect of cultural life, it targeted Friedrich as a model German artist, finding in the subject of his work – the northern German landscape – ideological resonances with its own rhetoric of land. Some literature on the painter

untouchable subject by German scholars, as were many contemporary artists of the Third Reich, but instead began to be reinterpreted and reclaimed as a great European artist. In the later 1950s and 1960s, scholarly output on Friedrich began heading toward the level it had reached in the previous decades; however, postwar scholars working on Friedrich had to negotiate not only the impedimenta of the Nazi appropriation of the artist, but also the reality of cold-war politics, with Friedrich's works divided among museums in east and west and hence inaccessible to scholars from the other side, who also had to deal with the massive loss of documents, primary source material, and even works of art during the war, making research difficult.<sup>41</sup> Outside of Germany, a lingering effect of the Nazi misappropriation of Friedrich has been an insistence by some scholars to read Friedrich's works primarily as vehicles for nationalist sentiment.<sup>42</sup> In post-Nazi Germany, such

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became infested with a particularly vehement nationalistic tone, and attention to him increased considerably, culminating in 1940 when an unprecedented number of articles and books were published in conjunction with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. For essays on Friedrich scholarship during the Nazi era, see Berthold Hinz, "Die Mobilisierung im deutschen Faschismus," in Hofmann, *Nachwelt*, 56-63; and Peter Rautmann, "Romantik im nationalen Korsett. Zur Friedrich-Rezeption am Ende der Weimarer Republik und zur Zeit des Faschismus," in Kurt Wettengl, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich. Winterlandschaften* ([Heidelberg]: Edition Braus, [1990]), 33-41.

<sup>41</sup> Börsch-Supan, for instance, was unable to get a visa to visit East Germany until after the signing of the Berlin Agreement of 1971, after he already had finished the manuscript for the catalogue raisonné. Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 10. Peter Rautmann meanwhile told me in an interview in Hannover in September 1997 that during the cold-war era it would have been easier for a non-German scholar to gain entrance into East Germany to do museum and archival research than for a West German.

<sup>42</sup> This is the primary focus of the chapter on Friedrich in Stephen Eisenman's *Nineteenth Century Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994); of Albert Boime's lengthy section on Friedrich in his *Art in the Age of Bonapartism*; and of the article by Victor H. Miesel, "Philipp Otto Runge, Caspar David Friedrich and Romantic Nationalism," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* 33, no. 3 (1972): 37-51.

readings had (and still have) little currency. Yet scholarship in the two Germanys handled Friedrich's legacy in perceptibly different ways – even while the intended outcome, repudiation of the Germanic chauvinism that shrouded Friedrich, remained the same.<sup>43</sup>

During the cold-war period, western scholarship often broached themes that East German scholars de-emphasized, such as Friedrich's religious beliefs and the mystical impulses in his art.<sup>44</sup> The particular vigor with which it has been argued that Friedrich's art can be seen as the start of a trajectory of modernism and especially as a forerunner of abstract art (a link first made by Lankheit in 1951, brought to prominence by Rosenblum in 1975, and still very much a topic current among German scholars today), thus placing his work in an international context, must be read against the taint of Nazi approbation of Friedrich as a specifically *German* artist.<sup>45</sup> This formalist direction, however, was not

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<sup>43</sup> Forster-Hahn recognized this split in East and West German scholarship already in her 1975 article cited above.

<sup>44</sup> The most influential writer addressing the religious interpretation of Friedrich's imagery is Börsch-Supan (see below). But Friedrich's religious beliefs and use of religious symbolism have been considered by others, such as Gerhard Eimer, *Zur Dialektik des Glaubens bei C. D. Friedrich* (Frankfurt a.M.: Kunstgeschichtliches Institut der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, 1982); and Colin Bailey "Religious Symbolism in Caspar David Friedrich," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 71 (1989): 5-20. East Germans did not completely ignore the topic. See for instance, Karl-Ludwig Hoch's dissertation on Friedrich's piety, "Caspar David Friedrichs Frömmigkeit und seine Ehrfurcht vor der Natur" (Ph.D. diss., Universität Leipzig, 1981), which was the basis for his later *Caspar David Friedrich in Böhmen* (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1987).

<sup>45</sup> For instance, the approach of formulating affinities between Romanticism and modern, especially abstract, art was used in the major 1995 exhibition of German art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at the Haus der Kunst in Munich, in which Friedrich played a major role. See the accompanying catalogue by Christoph Vitali, ed., *Ernste Spiele, Der Geist der Romantik in der deutschen Kunst 1790-1990* (Stuttgart : Oktagon, 1995), published in English as Keith Hartley, ed., *The Romantic Spirit in German Art*

taken up by East German scholars to any great extent. Instead, East German scholars, working under the demands of Marxist concerns, became more heavily invested in locating Friedrich's art production between the French revolution and the failed 1848 German one, stressing what was described as Friedrich's realistic – as opposed to mystical – interpretation of nature, and thus “salvaging” him from the pitfalls of a subjective, individualist Romanticism. Friedrich's politics became an important issue, as questions of patriotism and nationalism were translated into questions of anti-capitalism and anti-feudalism.

The most significant post-war writer on Friedrich undeniably has been Börsch-Supan, whose 1958 dissertation took a crucial step in analyzing the structural and spatial characteristics of the artist's paintings.<sup>46</sup> The dissertation examines in detail the distinct planar division of Friedrich's paintings, whereby foreground and background meet up with one another without the aid of a unifying middle ground; it demonstrates Friedrich's use of

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1790-1990 (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994). Some other examples of German scholars linking Friedrich to modern art in their otherwise historic analyses are: Grütter, who includes a short section comparing Friedrich's pictorial space to Cezanne (53); Schmied, who discusses a number of early twentieth century artists in relation to Friedrich (40-42); Rautmann, who in “Romantik im nationalen Korsett” does not simply write about Friedrich's scholarly reception but also addresses German artists of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s; and Ewelina Rzucidlo, who in her published dissertation on Friedrich's use of the backwards figure and perception includes a section on the work of Paul Nash and Renée Magritte. See *Caspar David Friedrich und Wahrnehmung. Von der Rückenfigur zum Landschaftsbild* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 1998), 223-228.

<sup>46</sup> Helmut Börsch-Supan, “Die Bildgestaltung bei Caspar David Friedrich” (Ph.D. diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1958). Along with Börsch-Supan's dissertation and catalogue raisonné, Sumowski's important *Studien* acts as the other early fundamental work on Friedrich prior to 1974.

compositional devices such as a rigid system of symmetry, repetition, and triptych form; it identifies the tensions built into the figure-ground relationship (i.e. the tendency toward estrangement of the body from the space around it, as in *Monk by the Sea*); and it reintroduces and builds upon what Wolfradt in 1924 first recognized as the “hyperbolic scheme” found in so many of Friedrich’s paintings: that curious bending of both sky and earth, as in the late, brilliant work *The Large Enclosure*, ca. 1832 (fig. 12). In an influential analysis of Friedrich’s development, Börsch-Supan divides his work into six different phases based on formal and structural changes. The basic tenets of this formal development have remained unchallenged.

In his groundbreaking dissertation, Börsch-Supan is concerned primarily with formal analysis; but later, in the catalogue raisonné (which he completed after it had been started in the 1920s by Karl Jähnig), and in numerous subsequent articles, he ties his analysis into Friedrich’s compositional strategies to the artist’s subjective religious feeling, so that the formal structure of the works, along with iconographical interpretation of their motifs, is inevitably linked to religious-philosophical concerns of the day, and in particular to Friedrich’s deeply held Pietistic beliefs. In Börsch-Supan’s classic analysis, the foreground/background dichotomy found in so many of Friedrich’s works becomes a symbolic rendering of the tension between life on this earth and a longing for the hereafter, while the frequent painting of pendant pictures is meant to express contrasting thoughts as thesis and antithesis.<sup>47</sup> The experience of nature, according to Börsch-Supan, “for him was an allegory of a religious one in which the certainty of death and the hope of eternal

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<sup>47</sup> Börsch-Supan/Jähnig, 24.

life to come were interwoven.”<sup>48</sup> Indeed, an afterlife-oriented religious fervor played the most important role in Friedrich’s perception of the world, according to Börsch-Supan:

Friedrich’s art is in extraordinary measure the expression of his spiritual and psychological constitution. A deep religiosity, more exactly the fixation of his thoughts on life after death, determined the ways that he collected experiences, and marked out the borders of the sector that he perceived in his environment. Sensory appearance was to him revelation of the supersensory.<sup>49</sup>

Börsch-Supan’s analytical system becomes overly rigid when he presents it simply as a lexicon, whereby Friedrich’s works are to be interpreted like hieroglyphs, with nature offered as a “secret, mysterious language” in which every object and compositional device reads in particular way, a heavy emphasis, as noted above, placed on themes of death and the hereafter.<sup>50</sup> An indication of the extent of this lexical interpretation is found in the “motif” section of the catalogue raisonné, in which Börsch-Supan lists the various themes in Friedrich’s work and where they appear, as well as a brief explanation of their meanings. Thus a bridge, as it appears in almost twenty works, is to be read always in this way: “[a]s the connection between two banks, a symbol of the Christian religion, which makes possible the way from this life to the hereafter.”<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, this sort of

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<sup>48</sup> Börsch-Supan, *Caspar David Friedrich*, 7.

<sup>49</sup> “Friedrichs Kunst ist in außergewöhnlichem Maß Ausdruck seiner geistigen und seelischen Konstitution. Eine tiefe Religiosität, genauer die Fixierung des Denkens auf das Dasein nach dem Tod, bestimmte die Weise, wie er Erfahrungen sammelte, und steckte die Grenzen des Sektors ab, den er von seiner Umwelt wahrnahm. Die sinnliche Erscheinung war ihm Offenbarung des Übersinnlichen.” Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 14.

<sup>50</sup> Börsch-Supan, *Caspar David Friedrich*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> “Als Verbindung zweier Ufer Sinnbild der christlichen Religion, die den Weg vom Diesseits zum Jenseits ermöglicht.” Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 225.

reductiveness has filtered into many other scholars' readings of Friedrich. Yet the importance of Börsch-Supan's work cannot be discounted, especially in his insightful analysis of Friedrich's characteristic pictorial structure. The catalogue raisonné, while not imperfect insofar as dating, attribution, and completeness in listing all works are concerned, is a major undertaking that has supplied subsequent scholars with a wealth of information and interpretive analysis from which to work from or against.<sup>52</sup>

In East Germany, Irma Emmrich and Willi Geismeyer rejected the philosophical/intellectual-historical/religious interpretation of Friedrich and introduced a social-historical interpretive framework that would be the hallmark of East German scholarship (but also an important avenue for exploration by West German scholars during the 1970s). Friedrich's status as a member of the bourgeoisie is the focus of their scholarship, and the attraction to landscape and feel for nature is viewed as a distinctly middle-class phenomenon.<sup>53</sup> Geismeyer's influential monograph examines Friedrich's use of the

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<sup>52</sup> In addition to Börsch-Supan's dissertation and catalogue raisonné, which document primarily the paintings, Sigrid Hinz's dissertation on Friedrich's drawing style and the subsequent catalogue of works on paper (based on the work done in the dissertation), and Hinz's collection of Friedrich writings, however few they may be, have created an immense wealth of gathered material with which Friedrich scholars can work. See Sigrid Hinz, "Caspar David Friedrich als Zeichner: Ein Betrag zur stilistischen Entwicklung der Zeichnung und ihrer Bedeutung für die Datierung der Gemälde" (Ph.D. diss., Universität Greifswald, 1966); Marianne Bernhard, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich. Das gesamte Graphische Werk*, essay by Hans H. Hofstätter (Munich/Herrsching: Manfred Pawlak Verlagsgesellschaft, 1974); and Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*.

Börsch-Supan's influence has resonated over the years in monographs such as Alina Dobrzecki, *Die Bedeutung des Traumes für Caspar David Friedrich* (Giessen: Wilhelm Schmitz Verlag, 1982) and Grütter.

<sup>53</sup> Geismeyer, *Caspar David Friedrich*.

*Rückenfigur* and interprets it as the longing of the bourgeoisie for union with nature.<sup>54</sup>

The author points to the anti-feudalist, progressive German patriot Ernst Moritz Arndt, with whom Friedrich was friends, as an indication of Friedrich's own political beliefs and reflects on Friedrich's reaction to the Napoleonic Wars and the translation of that reaction into politically-charged motifs in works such as *Hutten's Tomb*, 1824/25 (fig. 13). The primacy of realism – as opposed to mysticism – in Friedrich's work is the other major emphasis of East German scholarship, in the work of scholars such as Klaus Haese and Hannelore Gärtner.<sup>55</sup> While Haese decries earlier “reactionary misinterpretations” of Friedrich and rejects the role of mysticism in his work, Gärtner characterizes Friedrich's art as progressive in thought and feeling, inflected by as much democratic national consciousness and bourgeois humanism as could be expected by a member of the German bourgeoisie at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>56</sup> Like Haese, she places him at the very beginning of the development of a new type of bourgeois realistic art, and also emphasizes his proletarian origins. Ultimately, she pits both Friedrich's and Runge's “democratic, liberal” art against the conservative Nazarenes, a polarity that infiltrates the larger portion of post-war scholarship on German Romanticism. The anniversary year of 1974 (Friedrich's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday) produced two very important exhibitions and

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<sup>54</sup> See also Geismeyer, “Die Staffage bei Caspar David Friedrich,” *Forschungen und Berichte, Staatliche Museen Berlin* 7 (1965): 54-57.

<sup>55</sup> Hannelore Gärtner, “Caspar David Friedrich 1774-1974” in *Bildende Kunst* no. 8 (1974): 366-372; Klaus Haese, “Der Realismus in der Landschaftsmalerei Caspar David Friedrich” in *Bildende Kunst*, no. 8 (1974): 373-377.

<sup>56</sup> Haese, 373.

accompanying catalogues (Hamburg, *Caspar David Friedrich, 1774-1840*, and Dresden, *Caspar David Friedrich und sein Kreis*) that give some indication of this East-West split in Friedrich scholarship: the Hamburg catalogue concentrates on intellectual history, placing Friedrich's art within the tradition of landscape painting and outlining various motifs, while the Dresden catalogue starts out with an essay on Romanticism and Realism and includes a detailed, eight-page time table that lists economic and political events along with developments in art and science.<sup>57</sup>

During the 1970s, however, two important West German dissertations took the socio-historical direction further, reading Friedrich's paintings more thoroughly against a specifically political backdrop. Peter Märker's dissertation, "Geschichte als Natur" (History as Nature), ties both history and nature together through the concept of "development" – the development of nature through its cycles, and the development (i.e. forward progress) of human history. For Märker, Friedrich's work can be divided into political and non-political images, with 1815 – the year of Napoleon's final defeat – as the date that marks the start of Friedrich's engagement with politicized imagery. His dissertation deals only with post-1815 works, reading them in light of the German struggle for liberation and the ensuing, but quickly dashed, hopes for political reform that had been articulated by a liberal bourgeoisie during the years of Napoleonic occupation.<sup>58</sup> The

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<sup>57</sup> Werner Hofmann, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich, 1774-1840* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1974); and *Caspar David Friedrich und sein Kreis* (Dresden: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, 1974).

<sup>58</sup> Peter Märker, "Geschichte als Natur: Untersuchungen zur Entwicklungsvorstellung bei Caspar David Friedrich" (Ph.D. diss., Christian-Albrechts-Universität, Kiel, 1974). See also Märker, "Caspar David Friedrich zur Zeit der

cycles of nature (seasonal as well as times of day) are interpreted according to a Hegelian understanding of the process and development of history. Like Geismeyer, Märker sees a politically-engaged Friedrich, a partisan who was devastated by the repressive atmosphere of the restoration era. Nonetheless, Märker sees Friedrich's paintings as presenting an optimistic outlook about the eventuality of the bourgeoisie triumphing over repressive forces.

Peter Rautmann pursues this link further in his published dissertation, reading Friedrich's entire career in a political vein, not just the post-1815 works.<sup>59</sup> Like Märker, he interprets Friedrich's landscape as embodying the ideal social visions of the German bourgeoisie in the early 1800s. Rautmann also investigates the theme of transitoriness that others, particularly Börsch-Supan, have elaborated on; but in contrast to these previous religious-based interpretations, Rautmann connects the thematics of transience to the idea of historical change and posits that Friedrich develops a conception of a national landscape. Rautmann disagrees with previous scholarship that sees resignation in Friedrich's works in the restoration period, but differentiates his own interpretation of Friedrich's hopes from Märker's idea of Friedrich's unbounded orientation toward the future. For both Märker and Rautmann, the tension inherent in the structural encounter of foreground and background, as identified by Börsch-Supan, is not so much an expression of a religious desire for the afterworld seen from this world as a reflection of hope in a

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Restoration," in Berthold Hinz, et al., *Bürgerliche Revolution und Romantik. Natur und Gesellschaft bei Caspar David Friedrich* (Giessen: Anabas-Verlag, 1976), 43-72.

<sup>59</sup> Rautmann, *Caspar David Friedrich: Landschaft als Sinnbild entfalteter bürgerlicher Wirklichkeitsaneignung* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1979).

future in which liberal democratic values would overcome the suppression of freedoms experienced in Friedrich's day. For Rautmann, "Friedrich's landscapes contain the anticipation of desired changes in the societal reality."<sup>60</sup>

More recently, Joseph Leo Koerner's 1990 monograph, the most significant one in the English language, takes Friedrich in a direction not found in previous German literature.<sup>61</sup> Koerner presents a semiotic reading of the pictorial structure of Friedrich's work, trying to locate a "system" in Friedrich's use of symbolism. He characterizes Friedrich's work as *Erlebniskunst*, or art of experience, using an invented term that echoes a concept put forth by Carus, *Erdlebenbildkunst* (art about the life of the earth – his term for landscape painting). With *Erlebniskunst*, Koerner suggests that Friedrich is depicting his own inner experience on the canvas and not strictly that which his eyes have viewed in the outdoors. According to Koerner, "Friedrich proposes a more totalizing and reflexive project: the whole of represented nature will appear as the picture of the artist's inner experience of self and world."<sup>62</sup> Koerner's reading of Friedrich through intellectual history involves a keen use of Romantic theory, so that the experience of viewing Friedrich's landscapes, which often are difficult to see because of pictorial devices such as fog or blockage of the view, is akin to that of a process in time or a journey, which in itself parallels Romanticism's self-definition (Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis) as a process of

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>61</sup> Joseph Leo Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>62</sup> Koerner, 74.

becoming rather than a state of being. Similarly, Koerner draws the connection between the Romantic theorizing of the fragment and Friedrich's fragmentary slices of nature. Koerner is concerned with the viewing and the viewer of Friedrich's landscapes and posits that the longing for access to the divine and union with nature that they inspire ultimately is frustrated. He concentrates on the "historical strangeness" of Friedrich's paintings, trying to identify that which separates him from his peers, and in so doing continues the pattern of considering Friedrich's *Eigentümlichkeit* that had been set into motion already by the artist's colleagues such as Carus.

Finally, two recent dissertations on Friedrich have sought out new investigatory channels for understanding his work. Ewelina Rzucidlo concentrates on Friedrich's use of the backwards figure, perception, and the golden section, while Gretchen Bender seeks to differentiate the gendered - male and female - gazes in Friedrich's work in relation to the spaces of the period (e.g., physical spaces such as those of the panorama or the touristic countryside, as well as constructed spaces within the paintings themselves).<sup>63</sup> My own work intends to add to and participate in these new modes of considering Friedrich, even while it has also been influenced by much of the earlier scholarship, especially in the consideration of the early nineteenth-century bourgeois attraction to landscape, an approach that has helped to deconstruct some of the religious-mystical aura surrounding Friedrich's production. However, the discussion in these earlier cases generally has been

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<sup>63</sup> See Rzucidlo (footnote 45 above), and Gretchen Bender, "Interior/Landscape: Placelessness and the Gendered Gaze in the Work of Caspar David Friedrich" (Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 2001).

related to questions of politics and nationalism that are not my primary concern. What I propose to do is examine the palpable urban presence within his landscapes as well as the urban perspective that informed his imaging of nature, i.e. in his use of concepts such as the sublime or the morality of nature, which must be seen as urban constructs. No significant study of the motif of the city in Friedrich's work has been published, despite the fact that a city or town appears in or is the setting for over twenty out of some 240 known oil paintings (including lost works), several watercolors and sepias, and a number of drawings.<sup>64</sup> In addition, the particularities in his imaging of different towns have not been outlined distinctly. And because Friedrich's work typically has been held up as both "high art" and notably distinctive – and therefore separate from the popular viewing experiences of the day – his connections to urban popular culture have not received extensive enough consideration.

Such issues will be the concern of my dissertation. In Chapter Two, I will consider Friedrich's life in the towns he lived in and analyze the Romantic perception of the city and urban life in order to have a context in which to understand the artist's attitudes toward the city and urban life. Chapters Three and Four will investigate Friedrich's use of the motif of the town, looking at differences in his attachment to the northern towns of his youth, Greifswald and Neubrandenburg, and to the hometown of his adult life, Dresden. I will argue that while his childhood hometown and others like it in the same region

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<sup>64</sup> Friedrich's works on paper, including sepias, watercolors, and drawings, comprise a significant part of his oeuvre. Thus they will be addressed in this dissertation along with oil paintings.

remained for him the essence of *Heimat* (home), the artist had a more ambiguous attachment to Dresden. I will also point out ways in which some of the works in question reveal strong connections to popular forms of visual representation. Finally, Chapter Five examines nature as an urban commodity, investigating the impact of industrialization and the growth of tourism on the countryside. If, in the end, I overemphasize Friedrich's gaze at the world of man, as opposed to nature, it is in an effort to overturn the balance of Friedrich scholarship. By considering these themes, it is my intention to disrupt the usual narrative of Friedrich as the reclusive monk investigating an infinite landscape. Instead, I will insist on viewing Friedrich as a social creature, living in a community of people with whom he interacted daily, painting for an urban-based audience, and influenced by the culture in which he ultimately was embedded.

## CHAPTER 2

## URBAN LEGENDS: FRIEDRICH AND THE ROMANTIC CITY

Now and then I walk through the city, with open eyes, and see – much that is absurd, even more that is repugnant, and now and again something beautiful.

Heinrich von Kleist, letter to Adolfine von Werdeck<sup>1</sup>

The city is a fact of nature, like a cave, a run of mackerel or an ant-heap. But it is also a conscious work of art...

Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*<sup>2</sup>

Far from the civilized folk

Caspar David Friedrich was born in 1775 in Greifswald, a small Hanseatic town of about 5,000 residents located on the coast of what was then Swedish Pomerania.<sup>3</sup> In Greifswald, Friedrich grew up three blocks away from the city's marketplace in a large house on the Langestrasse, one of the main streets that ran (and still runs) the length of the town through the market, hence fairly central to much of the daily commotion of town life. Both of his parents had moved to the medieval port city in the early 1760s from Neubrandenburg, a somewhat smaller town some sixty kilometers to the south that had

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<sup>1</sup> “Zuweilen gehe ich, mit offenen Augen durch die Stadt, und sehe – viel Lächerliches, noch mehr Abscheuliches, und hin und wieder etwas Schönes.” Heinrich von Kleist to Adolfine von Werdeck, Paris, 29 July 1801, in Kleist, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 2, ed. Helmut Semdner, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., exp. and rev. (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1977), 677.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Company, 1938; reprint, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Greifswald had 5033 inhabitants in 1783 according to Johann Friedrich Zöllner, *Reise durch Pommern nach der Insel Rügen und einem Theile des Herzogthums Mecklenburg, im Jahre 1795, in Briefen* (Berlin: Friedrich Maurer, 1797), 133. Zöllner was a Prussian official who visited Greifswald as a tourist.

been founded by the Margrave of Brandenburg in the thirteenth century. Neubrandenburg acted as a kind of second hometown for Friedrich, who often stopped by to visit relatives on his way to and from Greifswald. Greifswald and Neubrandenburg were both typical northern German towns in terms of architecture, layout, economy, and citizenry, although Neubrandenburg had a small aristocratic presence not found in Greifswald. In the year of Friedrich's birth, each town still claimed an old defense wall that enclosed within its perimeter sturdy Gothic brick churches, northern Renaissance-style gabled buildings, and row after row of plain eighteenth-century houses. Neither had any great reputation as alluring destinations for outside visitors. Johann Rellstab, in his published account of travels through Mecklenburg and Pomerania in 1797, was incredulous that the Duke of Strelitz could have chosen Neubrandenburg as his summer residence, and dismissed Greifswald's architecture by noting that the best the city had to offer was the view out of it: "Except for the schools and the university buildings I could not name any excellent building in Greifswald. The town hall and the churches are nothing special, except that you can enjoy a nice view across the Baltic sea from the towers."<sup>4</sup> Neubrandenburg and Greifswald were populated mostly by merchants, artisans, laborers, and, in Greifswald at least, fishermen and sailors who plied the nearby waterway, as well as employees at the city's saltworks. Neubrandenburg's economy was based on weaving and brewing, and it

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<sup>4</sup> "Außer der Schule und dem Universitätsgebäude wüßte ich in Greifswalde kein vorzügliches Gebäude zu nennen. Das Rathhaus und die Kirchen haben nichts besonders, als daß man von den Thürmen einer schönen Aussicht nach der Ostsee genießt." Johann Carl Friedrich Rellstab, *Ausflucht nach der Insel Rügen durch Meklenburg und Pommern*, ed. and with afterword by Wolfgang Griep (Bremen: Ed. Temmen, 1993), 34. (Originally published Berlin: 1797.)

was the principal town of its region. Indeed, both had been fairly thriving towns at one time. Greifswald, noted a late eighteenth-century observer, had experienced “a not inconsiderable bloom in older times.”<sup>5</sup> And Neubrandenburg’s former significance was borne out by the splendor of its city gates. But like many German cities, neither truly recovered from the devastation wrought by the Thirty Years’ War, which decimated populations, destroyed economic systems, and left urban ruins in its wake. Neither could be characterized as flourishing in the late eighteenth century, even though Greifswald, with its Baltic port, university, saltworks, and steadily growing population, offered a more inviting economy than Neubrandenburg did – hence, perhaps, the motive for the migration of Friedrich’s parents in the 1760s.<sup>6</sup> While neither town enjoyed a reputation of being particularly beautiful, they both would prove to be important pictorial sources for Friedrich’s paintings.

Friedrich’s family was steeped in artisanship. His father, Adolph Gottlieb, was a candlemaker and soapmaker – not a lucrative profession, but one that earned enough to keep his large brood a part of the *Kleinbürgertum* that accounted for most of Greifswald’s population.<sup>7</sup> Friedrich’s mother, Sophie Dorothea Bechly, was the daughter of a

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<sup>5</sup> “Greifswald ist eine Mittelstadt, die in älteren Zeiten einen nicht unbeträchtlichen Flor hatte.” Zöllner, 133.

<sup>6</sup> See Zöllner’s book for a contemporary account of Greifswald in the late eighteenth century, 129-151.

<sup>7</sup> According to Geismeyer, candle and soapmakers in Pomerania faced fierce competition from Lübeck, Stettin, and Danzig, and some encountered financial hardships. However, Friedrich’s family seems not to have been destitute. Geismeyer, *Caspar David Friedrich*, 13.

blacksmith. Of the artist's four brothers who survived into adulthood, three were craftsmen. One followed the father into the soapmaking business, a second was a blacksmith, and a third was a carpenter and wood carver who produced Friedrich's prints. The fourth was a shopkeeper. Caspar David's own creative inclinations were channeled into drawing classes at the relatively late age of sixteen. His earliest surviving artistic attempts are not particularly suggestive of any future brilliance, and, given the orientation of the family, it is reasonable to conclude that the drawing lessons were intended more with the goal of steering the boy into an artisanal profession such as engraving rather than encouraging him to become a fine artist.<sup>8</sup>

Friedrich's first art instructor was Johann Gottfried Quistorp, professor of drawing at the Greifswald University, whose teaching method was to have students copy prints from his personal collection.<sup>9</sup> Greifswald itself did not have a public art collection. It is

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

In 1955 the Greifswald Museum discovered a cache of nineteen drawings from the estate of the Friedrich family and attributed them to Friedrich. (Since then the authorship of at least one of the drawings has been questioned, but most of them are still presumed to be by Friedrich.) The collection for the most part consist of some rather uninspired linear drawings of nudes, some set in landscapes, and body parts. The body parts are probably done after a study book of physiognomy and anatomy by G. O. Preißler, *Gründliche Anleitung, welcher man sich im Nachzeichnen schöner Landschaften und Prospekte bedienen kann*, 1766. Sigrid Hinz, "Caspar David Friedrich als Zeichner," (1966), 27.

The next earliest group of works by Friedrich that have been authenticated are several watercolors based on Friedrich Schiller's *The Robbers*, from 1799 (i.e. soon after Friedrich's studies in Copenhagen were completed). These, too, are rather awkward pieces.

<sup>9</sup> Not much is known about Friedrich's lessons with Quistorp, except that they took place in the professor's apartment, and, according to a brief mention of Friedrich by Quistorp, did not last very long. Hinz, "Caspar David Friedrich als Zeichner" (1966), 27. It is likely that Friedrich was a private student, as no documentation of his matriculation at the university is known to exist. The university itself had only about sixty students.

possible that his early training under Quistorp left a lasting impression on Friedrich's technique: his teacher was an architect by profession, and something of the linear precision required by architectural rendering underpins all of Friedrich's work. This becomes particularly apparent in Friedrich's rendering of buildings, boats, and his designs for monuments and graves that reveal the artist to be, in G. F. Hartlaub's term, an "architektonischer Denker" or "architectonic thinker."<sup>10</sup> But is also evident in his meticulous depictions of the elements of nature and the often exacting construction of his landscape compositions.

In 1794, several years after beginning his drawing lessons, the nineteen-year old Friedrich headed to Copenhagen to continue his studies at the prestigious Royal Academy of Art, which had the advantage of free tuition, even for foreigners.<sup>11</sup> This made it appealing to a student from a family of modest means like Friedrich, and also helped to attract a large contingent of students from outside of Denmark. The academy's faculty

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Quistorp's collection consisted of fifty paintings and almost 1400 works on paper. There has been speculation that Quistorp took Friedrich out to draw from nature. However, Hinz points out that even if Friedrich may have accompanied his teacher to visit the poet and nature preacher Gotthard Ludwig Kosegarten (with whom Quistorp was friends) on the island of Rügen, that the professor nevertheless believed copying works of art was the most appropriate form of learning for beginners, not drawing from nature, and therefore the study of nature would not have played any major role at this point. Hinz, "Caspar David Friedrich als Zeichner," in *Friedrich und sein Kreis*, 75.

<sup>10</sup> G. F. Hartlaub, "Caspar David Friedrich und die Denkmals-Romantik der Freiheitskriege," *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, n.s., 27 (May 1916): 201.

<sup>11</sup> For an account of Friedrich in Copenhagen, see Helmut Börsch-Supan, "Caspar David Friedrich und Philipp Otto Runge in Kopenhagen," *Aspekte der Romantik, Text & Kontext* 18, special issue (1983): 44-66; and Colin Bailey, "Caspar David Friedrich. Eine Einführung in Leben und Werk," in *Caspar David Friedrich og Danmark. Caspar David Friedrich und Dänemark* (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 1991), 115-142.

boasted several prominent artists, including Nicolai Abildgaard, a history painter; Jens Juel, known at the time primarily for his portraits but also a significant painter of landscape; and Christian August Lorentzen, a landscape artist. Friedrich's academic studies proceeded along a traditional, somewhat conservative route: first he was required to master elementary drawing, then free-hand drawing, then plaster model drawing, and finally live model drawing; in addition, he would have been introduced to mythology and art history, as were all the students, in order to aid in the conception of his artistic endeavors.<sup>12</sup> Oil painting was not an option – if a student wished to learn the technique he needed to make his own arrangements to study privately with a professor – and Friedrich's subsequent use of the medium betrays his initial immersion in drawing (in both Copenhagen and Greifswald), for many of his paintings (especially early ones) have the appearance of being colored-in drawings. In addition to his academic training, Friedrich earned money during his student days working for the engraver J. J. Georg Haas, coloring engraved copies of paintings, including those by Lorentzen.<sup>13</sup> From this experience he surely learned the compositional rules for making a pleasing, marketable *veduta*.<sup>14</sup>

Copenhagen, like Greifswald, was a Baltic city built of brick, its economic lifeline

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<sup>12</sup> Bailey, "Caspar David Friedrich. Eine Einführung," 119.

<sup>13</sup> Christine Hoffmeister, "Werke und Wegbereiter der Industrielandschaft," in *Caspar David Friedrich: bildende Kunst zwischen der Französischen Revolution von 1789 und der bürgerlich-demokratischen Revolution von 1848* (Greifswald: Ernst-Moritz-Arndt Universität, 1974), 76.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy F. Mitchell has explored the connections between Friedrich's art and landscape *vedute* in "From Vedute to Vision: The Importance of Popular Imagery in Friedrich's Development of Romantic Landscape Painting," *Art Bulletin* 64 (1982): 414-423.

the trade centered around its port. But, in addition, Copenhagen was a large, cosmopolitan town, with an aristocratic presence and a thriving cultural scene that included an important royal art collection available to the academy students for study purposes,<sup>15</sup> a theater that performed the latest European stage works, and one of Europe's premier ballet companies. This must have been a startling change of scenery for Friedrich, for Greifswald by comparison was provincial and lacking in artistic stimulation.<sup>16</sup> Upon completion of his courses in 1798, when Friedrich returned to Germany, he chose not to settle down in his hometown. Instead, he followed a friend and fellow student to the splendid Baroque *Residenzstadt* of Dresden, where, with the exception of a brief stay back in Greifswald at the turn of the century, he spent the remaining four decades of his life.

Friedrich's decision to move to an unfamiliar city of 60,000, rather than return to the familial setting of his small hometown, with its proximity to his beloved Rügen, was influenced – according to the artist himself, eighteen years after the move – not only by Dresden's environs (particularly “Saxon Switzerland,” the source for a significant portion of his future artistic production), but also by the wealth of the city's justifiably famous art collection, one of Europe's most magnificent.<sup>17</sup> The presence of a number of friends who

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<sup>15</sup> Bailey, “Caspar David Friedrich. Eine Einführung,” 118.

<sup>16</sup> Rellstab, visiting Greifswald in 1797, derided its cultural backwardness, writing that “The fine arts certainly may be provided for better than music, for the latter seems to make almost absolutely no sensation here.” (“Für die bildende Künste mag wohl besser gesorgt seyn, als für die Musik, denn die letztere scheint hier noch fast gar keine Sensation zu machen.”) Rellstab, 34.

<sup>17</sup> See Friedrich's letter to Friedrich August I of Saxony, 6 October, 1816, in Karl-Ludwig Hoch, *Caspar David Friedrich: Unbekannte Dokumente Seines Lebens* (Dresden: VEG Verlag der Kunst, 1985), 62.

had taken up residence there, the art academy (Germany's foremost), the possibility of exhibiting at the academy's prestigious annual shows or even gaining a professorship, and the prospect of patronage from a well-to-do, culturally-involved populace also must have contributed to this decision as well. In any case, from an economic standpoint, Dresden offered much more potential for the young artist than his little hometown, and life in Copenhagen must have opened his eyes to the advantages of living in a cosmopolitan city.

During his forty years in Dresden, Friedrich lived along the Elbe river at an address from which he could journey fairly quickly into the surrounding countryside. But just as quickly, the artist could walk to the heart of the Altstadt, or old city. Just a few meters away from Friedrich's apartment were Dresden's most famous landmarks: the Baroque Zwinger palace, which housed many of the city's worthy museum collections; the Renaissance Schloss or palace, home to the Saxon electors; the popular public promenade of the Brühl Terrace; and the most recognizable part of the city silhouette, the Frauenkirche with its bulbous dome. Within a few years of settling down in Dresden, Friedrich himself became something of a city landmark, as one of its many luminaries who was called upon by a long list of visitors to the town. Princes, notables, artists, and intellectuals all made a point of stopping by to visit Friedrich, who by mid-career had become one of Dresden's most renowned resident artists, perhaps its most famous. Even toward the end of his life, when Friedrich's wretched health made him miserable and prevented him from continuing his painting, and when according to posthumous reports he supposedly was forgotten and out of fashion, visitors dropped in to see him. Upon his death in 1840, the artist was interred in Trinity cemetery, within the boundaries of the old

city walls.

The above recitation of facts is intended not simply as a quick biographical sketch of the artist, but to make a point of the urban environment in which Friedrich spent his entire life, of the urban culture that produced this landscape painter. Friedrich belonged culturally to the city, where he lived, not to the rural land, which he painted. Early in his career, he had expressed a desire to live out his life in the countryside, away from society. A partial diary entry from 1803, written from the village of Loschwitz (a few kilometers away from the Dresden Altstadt, and today incorporated into Dresden proper), where Friedrich spent the summer living in a room of a farmhouse, waxes dreamily about the glories of life in the country. Beginning in the middle of a sentence, the partial entry records his observations as he sits outside the house:

...played so earnestly, so industriously in the courtyard under a pear tree, saw the doves cooing under the roof. And the pet dog in his little house, not on a chain, so calm. Everything seems to reveal love and domestic peace. Then I asked God and ask him also now....may he grant me the luck to spend my life in peace in the country, far from the civilized folk.<sup>18</sup>

This wish was never realized, despite Friedrich's observation that he felt "the happiness of life in the country more every day" in Loschwitz.<sup>19</sup> Friedrich returned to the "civilized

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<sup>18</sup> "...so innig so emsig im Hofe unter einem Birnbaum spielte, sah wie die Tauben sich schnäbelten unter dem Dache. Und der Haushund in seiner Hütte, nicht an der Kette, so ruhig. Alles schien Liebe und häußlichen Frieden zu verrathen. Da bat ich Gott und bitte ihn auch jetzt....er möge mir eines Glück gewähren, in ruhe mein Leben auf dem Lande zu verleben Vern von dem gesitteten Volk." Diary entry, [July 1803], in Hoch, *Unbekannte Dokumente*, 23. The previous sheet in which the diary entry begins is missing.

<sup>19</sup> "Thäglich fühle ich das Glück des Landlebens mehr." Diary entry, 5 August [1803], in *Ibid.*, 26.

folk” in Dresden after several months in the village, and the closest he came to this early dream of setting up actual residence in a rural area (as opposed to going on long journeys or spending a month or two in the countryside to collect drawings) were those few months some three miles outside of Dresden’s city gates, and then another eight spent in self-imposed exile during the Napoleonic wars in the village Krippen on the border of Saxony and Bohemia. While the artist’s fame rests upon his engagement with nature, specifically the German countryside, his day-to-day life was spent in a setting distinguished more by densely packed architecture, street life, and the hustle and bustle of the marketplace than it was by mountains, rivers, and forests. No farmers or peasants were to be found in his immediate family, and his attachment to the countryside was not one of native experience of home.

Yet scholarship has tended to naturalize Friedrich’s connection to the landscape he painted. Friedrich’s love of nature certainly was sincere and profound from an early stage in his life; however, it was not the only determining factor in his career or the sole influence on his artwork. Although he gathered most of the material for his painting out-of-doors, from sketches and drawings done after nature, he also went indoors, to art collections to study paintings. Indeed, in his initial training, he learned to become an artist as much from looking at art as from looking at nature. Werner Hofmann states unequivocally in a recent monograph that Friedrich “decided in favour of landscape from the first.”<sup>20</sup> However, it cannot be assumed that he thought of himself from the start solely

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<sup>20</sup> Werner Hofmann, *Caspar David Friedrich* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 18.

and conclusively as a landscape artist, or that he gave no thought to other professional possibilities. His adoption of landscape as the subject of his artistic project is all too often presented as a straightforward trajectory, one that could not have proceeded any other way. In fact, the first few years after leaving the academy present the picture of a young man attempting to establish a career without having determined fully what that should entail. Upon his arrival in Dresden, Friedrich signed up to study under the history and portrait painter Professor Schulze, an indication that he considered his training incomplete and that he had not entirely decided that nature would be the sole object of his artistic pursuits.<sup>21</sup> He also attended the live model drawing sessions at the academy when first in Dresden, writing to a friend in a modest but quietly proud tone about his improvement in that area.<sup>22</sup> And in 1800 Friedrich applied (apparently unsuccessfully) for the position of drawing instructor to the children of a Polish prince, a job that would have given him financial stability, even while compromising his ability to pursue his own creative inclinations.<sup>23</sup>

Further disrupting the account of Friedrich's predetermined and single-minded route to representing nature are the remnants of his earliest production, before he became competent in the technique of oil painting and gave himself over entirely to the subject of

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<sup>21</sup> Mayumi Ohara, "Demut, Individualität, Gefühl, Betrachtungen über C.D. Friedrichs kunsttheoretische Schriften und ihre Entstehungsumstände" (Ph.D. diss., Berlin, 1983), 4.

<sup>22</sup> See undated letter from Friedrich to Johann Ludwig Gebhard Lund (from 1799?), in Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 217.

<sup>23</sup> See letter from Friedrich to Lund, 15 November 1800, in Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 218.

landscape. These include works such as illustrations for Friedrich Schiller's *The Robbers*, a series of portrait drawings of family and self, and dozens of studies of narrative scenes set outdoors, various figures, and architectural structures. While his *Robbers* watercolors expose an awkwardness with the human figure that reappears at times in later paintings, Friedrich displayed a genuine talent for portraiture in his renderings of himself and his family, many of which are quite sensitive images of individual sitters, whether the petit-bourgeois craftsman or the bohemian artist. That at this early stage he might have considered the possibility of earning his living not as a freely creating landscape artist, but in some other field, is suggested further by the art historian Emil Waldmann's revelation that Friedrich's lost writings include not only an essay on painting figures into a landscape, but also an essay on portraiture.<sup>24</sup>

Even as his career progressed and he was solidly identified as a painter of landscape, Friedrich continued to produce a significant number of drawings of objects outside the natural world. Sigrid Hinz, in her dissertation on Friedrich's drawing style, asserts that the bulk of Friedrich's drawings consists of nature studies.<sup>25</sup> This may be true, but the number of drawings of objects outside of the natural world is significant, much more than Hinz allows. Buildings, towns, and general architectural motifs, boats and

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<sup>24</sup> Waldmann states that a manuscript still in the possession of Friedrich's grandson in the early twentieth century included chapters entitled "Über das Malen von Bildnissen" (On Painting Portraits) and "Über das Hineinkomponieren von Figuren in die Landschaft" (On Placing Figures into the Landscape). The manuscript has since been lost, but the grandson told Waldmann of its contents in detail. See Waldmann, *Caspar David Friedrich Almanach* (Berlin: Gurlitt, 1941); Ohara, 3-4, and Börsch-Supan, 192.

<sup>25</sup> Hinz, "Caspar David Friedrich als Zeichner" (1966), 23.

nautical details, gravestones, monuments, costumes, and even furniture and other decorative arts are rendered with exceptional care for construction and underlying structure. As Hinz admits, Friedrich's architectonic designs are not totally self-evident creations for a painter of landscape (although Friedrich's tectonic finesse is in fact quite evident in many of his oils, in paintings of ruins, Gothic churches, sailboats, and interiors), yet these drawings, some of very large formats, not only betray a real preoccupation with the structure of things, but also suggest how wide a gaze Friedrich cast at the world around him.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, a curious series of pen and colored ink drawings of fashionable bonnets from 1806 illustrates the intensity with which Friedrich could look at the world of civilization. Three hats, each slightly different from the next in coloring and patterning, are depicted resting on stands (figs. 14-15). These three bonnets were drawn on the same day, June 1, 1806, and the sequence of their drawing is evoked from their arrangement on the paper: a yellow cap patterned with flowers around its edge and decorated with pink ribbon faces out to the left on one sheet; a blue cap covered with an all-over flower pattern and sporting a satiny yellow bow is positioned below it on the same sheet and is seen from the back; and a green cap trimmed with yellow band and a purple ribbon tied in front, depicted on a second page, faces out to the right, with a glimpse of the wooden stand peeking out from the opening of the stiff lace brim. In their three-hundred-sixty-degree rotation, they become a sort of Three Graces of hats, offering up every angle necessary for understanding their basic structure.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

These are not isolated works, unique among Friedrich's production. The artist completed a number of other hat studies, along with several drawings of female figures that come remarkably close to the fashion plates published in the popular *Journal des Luxus und der Moden*, a monthly journal primarily aimed at women wishing to keep informed of the latest in the arts, including theater, literature, fine arts, and fashion. What is fascinating about all these studies is the painstaking attention devoted to their rendering, as much as Friedrich might normally invest in his studies of isolated trees or plants or rocks. Indeed, a beautiful pencil study of a single woman's shoe, a wooden clog, dated June 30, 1806 (fig. 16), is positioned in one of his sketchbooks between two nature studies from the same date; the shoe, it should be noted, is rendered with more care for exacting detail than either study before or after it.

The shoe in fact belonged more to Friedrich's environment than the bushes or trees. Unlike his contemporary John Constable, whose lifelong project centered around his own backyard, and whose family worked and owned much of the land that became the stuff of his painterly imagination, Friedrich was an outsider in the country. When he ventured into nature to gather the visual material that he used in his artistic production, it was as a visitor rather than a native, a tourist with a keen eye for the beauties of the land. Friedrich was at heart a townsman, like most of the figures that populate his landscapes, and no understanding of his vision of nature and the German countryside is complete without keeping this in mind. Friedrich may have longed for the countryside, which provided him with subject matter, but it was the urban environment that provided the opportunities – however limited at times – that enabled him to live as an artist.

Although Friedrich did choose nature as the primary subject of his artistic project, the city, in one way or another, makes its presence felt in a large number of his works, and even at times becomes the primary focus. The city as silhouette, positioned in the distance of a landscape along the horizon, is the most frequent means by which the motif appears in his oils.<sup>27</sup> A townscape appears in at least twenty of Friedrich's known paintings (even more often in drawings), and urban references such as city dwellers strolling in the landscape or large ships heading in and out of ports are included in many more. With few exceptions, the towns that appear in Friedrich's works are the three that played important roles throughout his life: Greifswald, Neubrandenburg, and Dresden. Greifswald, his birthplace, and Neubrandenburg, his parents' birthplace, are the most frequently depicted. Dresden appears less often, but several of Friedrich's most important works are interior scenes from his apartment in Dresden, in which windows give a glimpse of nature beyond the building's walls, inverting the relationship between town and country found in the city-in-the-distance paintings. When Friedrich strays from this trio of "hometowns," it is usually to depict a city that evokes the environment of his childhood and youth, such as Stralsund, the Hanseatic neighbor to the west of Greifswald, or an imagined city built of brick Gothic architecture. All of these images raise the question of why an artist so attached to the land, and to a particular rhetoric of nature as both moral guide and source

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<sup>27</sup> There are *Port by Moonlight* and its lost pendant, *Port after Sunset with Shepherd and Flock of Sheep*, from 1811; *City at Moonrise* from ca. 1817; *Greifswald in Moonlight* from ca. 1817; *Neubrandenburg* from ca. 1816/17; *View of Braunschweig*, 1818; *Ships in Greifswald Harbor*, ca. 1818-1820; *Meadows near Greifswald*, ca. 1821; *Evening (Sunset behind the Dresden Hofkirche)*, 1824; *Hill and Field near Dresden*, 1824; *The Evening Star*; and the unfinished *Neubrandenburg Burning*, ca. 1835.

of longing, devoted himself so frequently to depicting the markers of civilization in the midst of that nature. Less tangibly in Friedrich's art, there often is an architectonic element imbedded in his landscape composition that challenges notions about the period's understanding of the concepts nature and naturalness, while exposing the very constructedness of Friedrich's image of the countryside. Thus in Friedrich's art one perceives not so much a nature defined against culture, but a nature defined by culture.

As a motif in Friedrich's work, the city has never received extensive attention, and scholars have rarely recognized that the artist dealt so often with the subject.<sup>28</sup> For the most part the city is discussed as a singular occurrence within individual paintings rather than as a recurrent theme. Where it is discussed as a collective motif, it is primarily the northern city as silhouette that is addressed, and it is primarily interpreted as having an ideological program embedded symbolically within it. Inevitably the city is declared to be visionary in character, its frequent placement on the horizon in the distance seen as marking it as an object of longing and expectation. This structural reading of the city as a visionary apparition of desire occurs in a number of readings that interpret the content of that desire differently.

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<sup>28</sup> Discussions of the motif of the city appear in Nicolas Zasko, "Das Motiv der Stadt bei Caspar David Friedrich," in *Bildende Kunst* 8 (1974): 378-382; Zasko, "Zur Ikonographie und Motivik im Werk Caspar David Friedrichs. Das Bildmotiv des Berges und der Stadt," in *C. D. Friedrich: bildende Kunst zwischen der Französischen Revolution und der bürgerlich-demokratischen Revolution*, 53-57; Rautmann, *Landschaft als Sinnbild*, 86-92; Gotthard Brandler, "Die Stadt als Abbild und Sinnbild. Zur Darstellung der Stadt in der deutschen Malerei des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts," in Peter Betthausen, ed., *Studien zur Kunst und Architektur um 1800* (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1979), 188-197; Siegmund Holsten, "Stadt am Horizont," in Hofmann, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich: 1774-1840*, 44-45; and Gerhard Eimer, *Caspar David Friedrich und die Gotik* (Hamburg: Verlag Christoph von der Ropp, 1963), 22-28.

Because much of the urban motif in his work is composed of Gothic architecture, the “city” frequently is collapsed with the “Gothic” and discussed together with solitary Gothic structures in Friedrich’s landscapes such as ruins and churches. This architectural style is then interpreted for its religious implications, and the city is read as an image of Heavenly Jerusalem, an otherworldly vision, thus linking it to a prominent interpretation of Friedrich’s general project, the consecration of the landscape, the very structure of which is seen as having eschatological symbolism.<sup>29</sup> According to Börsch-Supan, the most ardent adherent of this type of reading, Friedrich believed that the hereafter was “the real *heimat* [homeland] of human beings,” and therefore any depiction of a northern Gothic town in the distance, such as *Greifswald in the Moonlight*, ca. 1817 (fig. 17), becomes, as a representation of Friedrich’s own idea of home, a literal embodiment of a future paradise.<sup>30</sup>

Another reading interprets the city, described as the “Gothic,” in terms of a nascent German nationalism that celebrated the Gothic as *vaterländisch* (national, i.e. from the fatherland), as opposed to the foreign (French and Italian) classical and Baroque styles.<sup>31</sup> That the city becomes a persistent motif in Friedrich’s production only after 1814

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<sup>29</sup> This approach is especially argued by Börsch-Supan. Brandler also acknowledges this, although he disagrees with Börsch-Supan on the extent to which the eschatological symbolism is prevalent.

<sup>30</sup> Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 337.

<sup>31</sup> See Eimer, *Friedrich und die Gotik*, Ulrich Schulze, *Ruinen Gegen die Konsertativen Geist: Ein Bildmotiv bei Caspar David Friedrich* (Worms: Werner’sche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1987); Zaska, “Zur Ikonographie und Motivik,” esp. 55-56; Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 230 and 449; and Hans-Joachim Kunst, “Die politischen und gesellschaftlichen Bedingtheiten der Gotikrezeption bei Friedrich und Schinkel,” in B.

has furthered speculation that it was motivated primarily by political concerns, paralleling the common interpretation of Friedrich's landscapes as conveying nationalist sentiment in the wake of Napoleonic conquest.<sup>32</sup> Gerhard Eimer, for instance, connects Friedrich's enthusiasm for Gothic architecture to the German patriot (and fellow Greifswalder) Ernst Moritz Arndt, who called for national monuments to be built to commemorate the fight against the French, the assumption being that these would be in the Gothic style.<sup>33</sup> Another author, Nikolaus Zaske, asserts that "The Gothic cities of the north German homeland become... in Friedrich's work the symbol for the presentness of national [*vaterländisch*] history."<sup>34</sup>

Märker and Rautmann, in a similar vein, read the tension between near and far in the city paintings as the marker of a utopian desire and expectation for a future German civilization.<sup>35</sup> In their analyses, the city is not simply politically motivated, but also acts as a bourgeois symbol, a vision of an ideal future based on the values of a democratically-

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Hinz, *Bürgerliche Revolution und Romantik*, 16-41.

<sup>32</sup> See chapter on Caspar David Friedrich in Boime, 511-636.

<sup>33</sup> Eimer, *Friedrich und die Gotik*, 20.

<sup>34</sup> "Die gotischen Städte der norddeutschen Heimat wurden... in Friedrichs Werk zum Sinnzeichen für die Gegenwartigkeit vaterländischer Geschichte..." Zaske, "Zur Ikonographie und Motivik," 55.

<sup>35</sup> Märker, "Geschichte als Natur," 97-100. Rautmann, *Landschaft als Sinnbild*, 86-91. It is also true, however, that city paintings begin to become more popular in general with growth of the bourgeoisie and the urbanization of the German populace. By no means do all of Friedrich's city images have potentially politicized meaning, as a work like *Meadows near Greifswald* (fig. 36) strikes a much more vedute-like, yet at the same time personal, tone than *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*, ca. 1820 (fig. 18).

leaning, reform-minded middle-class, to which Friedrich is assumed to belong.<sup>36</sup>

Rautmann, for instance, writes that the city in the painting *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace (Harbor by Night)*, ca. 1820 (fig. 18), is presented “as a symbol of human culture in which the political concept of an ideal future society, bourgeois and national, which is founded on freedom, equality, brotherhood, takes shape.”<sup>37</sup> Märker meanwhile argues that the “Gothic vision” that is the destination of the couple in the painting *On The Sailboat*, 1818/19 (fig. 2), is “above all the ideal image of their political hopes.”<sup>38</sup> Märker furthers his argument by noting the politically charged *altdeutsch* (old German) clothing the male figure wears, a style that had been banned after 1815 in certain German and Austrian territories because it was linked to so-called demagogic activities. While Friedrich is not known to have worn such clothing himself, many of the male figures in his paintings do wear the recognizable beret, cloak and long hair that belonged to this particular fashion.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Zaske takes this view in “Das Motif der Stadt bei Caspar David Friedrich,” while Hermann Zschoche asserts that in Friedrich’s works, cities are almost always presented on the horizon as “Zukunftsvision” – a vision of the future. Zschoche, *Rügen*, 61. Other important discussions viewing some of Friedrich’s city images as symbols of an ideal bourgeois future are included in Rautmann, *Landschaft als Sinnbild*, 86-91, and Märker, “Geschichte als Natur,” 97-100. Rautmann allows for the connection between the political and the religious.

<sup>37</sup> “Es ist die Stadt als Sinnbild menschlicher Kultur, in der die politische Vorstellung eines zukünftigen bürgerlichen-nationalen, auf Freiheit, Gleichheit, Brüderlichkeit beruhenden Gesellschaftsideals Gestalt gewinnt.” Rautmann, *Landschaft als Sinnbild*, 89.

<sup>38</sup> Märker, “Geschichte als Natur,” 100.

<sup>39</sup> When asked about the pair of men in such outfits in one of the *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* paintings (of which there are two versions, plus one variant with

What the above approaches to Friedrich's use of the city fail to do is present a broad consideration of the urban presence in Friedrich's work, which I wish to address here. Furthermore, distinctions between Friedrich's depictions of the north German brick towns of his youth, whether Greifswald, Neubrandenburg, or an imaginary town evocative of these, and depictions of the adopted town of his adulthood, Dresden, fail to be clarified. Carl Schorske has noted that Germany had two basic classes of cities throughout the eighteenth century and at the dawn of the nineteenth: "the surviving medieval towns... still centers of economic life but with a rather sleepy traditional bourgeois culture;" and the "baroque political centers, the Residenzstädte."<sup>40</sup> Culturally, Friedrich was a product of the former type of town, and yet he spent his entire adulthood and career in the latter. It will be my contention that conflicts in his feelings toward the two types are played out in his city images. While there has been some attention to Friedrich's depictions of the northern Gothic town, his images of Dresden tend to be excluded from the general accounts of his city motif, no matter whether the motif is interpreted as a reference to bourgeois-patriotic sentiment or as an ethereal vision of the afterworld. Where the Dresden pictures are mentioned, they are given cursory attention. This is in part because of Dresden's lack of Gothic architecture (which makes it difficult to fit images of the city into the themes discussed above), but also in part because of the compositional strategies

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a female figure), Friedrich replied that they were plotting "demagogic activities." See Karl Förster, *Biographische und literarische Skizzen aus dem Leben und der Zeit Karl Försters* (Dresden: H. M. Gottschalck, 1846), 156-57; in Hinz, 210-211.

<sup>40</sup> Carl Schorske, "The Idea of the City in European Thought: Voltaire to Spengler," in Oscar Handlin and John Burchard, eds., *The Historian and the City*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press and Harvard University Press, 1963), 100.

that Friedrich uses to depict the Saxon capital, which will be outlined in Chapter 4.

My own project is geared toward a notion of belonging and longing in Friedrich's work that takes into account the differences in his approach to the towns of his youth and the town of his adulthood, and one that goes beyond – while not necessarily rejecting – standard discussions of nationalism, patriotism, politics, and religion in Germany during the Romantic period. I intend to look at the city as object, not through it as symbol. What does it mean that Friedrich so easily substitutes the city for natural phenomena as the thing-to-be-looked-at in his paintings, that the view of a town is pondered by wanderers just as deeply as the view onto the sea or from the top of a mountain? How does Friedrich the itinerant townscapest reconcile with Friedrich the consummate landscapist? Why does Friedrich so frequently block the view of Dresden in his works? I am interested in the ways in which Friedrich's city motif does not and cannot fit into the usual narrative of his production, of the ways the motif disrupts the codified accounts of his imaging the German landscape, just as the cities themselves so decidedly interrupt the countryside in those paintings. Moreover, I am interested in a broader account of the urban presence in Friedrich's paintings, not only the depiction of his north German hometowns and of Dresden, but also the urban wanderer (as something other than a political symbol), the encroachment of civilization onto the countryside, and the ways in which Friedrich's work participated in the new modes of perception that sprang up in urban settings. Before proceeding to chapters on the northern town and on Dresden, however, I will first consider the position of the city in the Romantic period in Germany, giving a brief overview of its historic, social, and material conditions as well as its

perception in both text and image.

Stadtluft macht frei/Stadtluft erdrückt

In 1800, “Germany” was simply a fragmented collection of states in which some form of the same language was spoken and which belonged nominally, but not for long, to the quasi-defunct Holy Roman Empire. Primarily an agricultural land, two-thirds of its inhabitants lived in rural areas.<sup>41</sup> While a slow but steady migration of the population from agricultural into urban areas was perceptible already at this time, the peak period of urbanization did not commence until after the 1850s.<sup>42</sup> No single city acted alone as the economic, cultural, and political epicenter of the German territories, or captured the imagination of its populace as the quintessential German city. Instead, a dispersed collection of royal seats and *Bürger*-administered towns shared the roles of a Paris, London, or Rome.<sup>43</sup>

Most German towns were like Greifswald and Neubrandenburg, rather provincial

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<sup>41</sup> Mack Walker, *German Home Towns, Community, State, and General Estate 1648-1871* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971), 32.

<sup>42</sup> Berlin was the first true metropolis in Germany and remained the only one for many decades, well into the twentieth century. For a good discussion of the urbanization of Germany, see Jürgen Reulecke, *Geschichte der Urbanisierung in Deutschland* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985).

<sup>43</sup> The German word *Bürger* is difficult to translate as the English word bourgeoisie, for, as William Vaughan has noted, the term “was defined more by being the citizen of a town, than by being a member of the middle classes.” This was true for the first few decades of the nineteenth century in most German cities, and therefore I will use it wherever it seems appropriate. William Vaughan, “Germany,” in Andrew Hemingway and William Vaughan, eds., *Art in Bourgeois Society 1790-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 202.

and small by today's standards, with populations under 10,000. Until the closing decades of the nineteenth century, none of the largest cities – Berlin, Hamburg, Dresden, Munich – could compare to other European metropolises in terms either of population or of urban dynamism.<sup>44</sup> Industrialization also appeared later in Germany than it did in England or France, and thus the urban ills associated with the new technologies and with the great influx of workers answering mass production's need for labor – the din and the pall, the overcrowded living conditions, the consequent social unrest – did not make their presence greatly felt in German cities until several decades into the century. Nevertheless, at the start of the nineteenth century, German towns and cities grappled with numerous problems particular to the urban environment. They had a higher mortality rate than the countryside, primarily because of unhygienic conditions. Sewage was an unrelenting issue, as plumbing was primitive or even non-existent.<sup>45</sup> The filth of the city – even before industrialization – infiltrated everywhere, whether from sewage problems or the dust and dirt of the streets. Berlin, the largest city in the German territories, remained unpaved until the 1820s.<sup>46</sup> Poverty was high in cities, and there was a lack of affordable housing for the underclass.

Thomas Nipperdey has characterized German towns of the early nineteenth

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<sup>44</sup> Vienna was in fact the largest German-speaking city during most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

<sup>45</sup> Rellstab reported with some disdain from Greifswald that the town had no drinkable water; instead it had to be carried in from a nearby village. Rellstab, 36.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck, 1800-1866* (Princeton University Press, 1983), 114.

century as remnants of earlier ages: “Right into the first third of the century, most German cities still maintained an old-world, almost medieval character, with ramparts and ditches, walls and gates, with little old houses and a few big ones, with gardens, fields and barns within the town precincts, with crooked alleys, grass on the frequently recobbled streets, and sandy open squares.”<sup>47</sup> Mme. de Staël’s own first-hand account of the German city in the early 1800s both softens and confirms this characterization. In *Germany*, she reports that “The towns are in general well built and are embellished by the proprietors with a sort of good-natured care.” However, she was not impressed by any new architecture: “Modern architecture in Germany offers nothing to our contemplation worthy of being recorded,” she declares. Rather, in her opinion, “The monuments of Gothic antiquity are the only remarkable” buildings in Germany, an assessment that betrays her close association with Friedrich Schlegel.<sup>48</sup>

Even in a city that was not typically medieval in feel, like Dresden (which was substantially rebuilt after the Thirty Years’ and Seven Years’ Wars), old-world problems were a challenge. An 1830 guidebook, purporting to describe Dresden “as it is,” gave a candid description of the town. The author, while generally giving a favorable account, nevertheless casts a critical eye on its environment from the viewpoint of a native:

Berlin is a northern city, built as northerners should build; Dresden, in a climate

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Mme. de Staël, *Germany*, vol. 1 (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1860), 28-29. “Les monuments gothiques sont les seuls remarquables en Allemagne...L’architecture moderne, en Allemagne, n’offre rien qui mérite d’être cité; mais les villes sont en général bien bâties, et les propriétaires les embellissent avec une sorte de soin plein de bonhomie.” *De l’Allemagne* (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot Frères, Fils et Cie, 1859), 14-15.

differentiated little from [Berlin], seems to have been founded by southern Italians or Spanish architects, to whom it occurred to shut out the annoying sun everywhere possible, as in their native countries. Narrow alleys, skyless, dark houses, little courtyards averse to light... – all this is good in Spain or Portugal, but loathsome at the 51<sup>st</sup> latitude... Thus our Dresden, as pleasant as it is to live there in mid-summer, is also equally unbearable in February, in April and November. The narrow alleys, hostile to the sun, maintain here until late in spring a keen, unhealthy air [*Kellerluft*] that is comparable only to the air in our perpetually locked churches...<sup>49</sup>

Nipperdey's description of the state of German towns at the dawn of the nineteenth century is that of the medieval/Renaissance town that came to haunt the German consciousness for the first time during the Romantic period. Earlier in the eighteenth century, there had existed a distinct repulsion for old-world cities, often perceived as dark, foul-smelling, vermin-infested, and moldy – and for no little reason. That Dresden, a city that had seen the benefits of royal patronage in its building projects and city planning during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, could still generate a report of such dankness as above, gives some indication of what the situation in less affluent towns must have been like. As W. D. Robson-Scott has noted, "Unspoilt medieval towns were the rule rather than the exception [in Germany], towns which had altered astonishingly little from medieval times either architecturally or

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<sup>49</sup> "Berlin ist eine nördliche Stadt, gebaut, wie der Nordländer bauen soll; Dresden im Klima wenig von ihm unterschieden, scheint von süditalienischen oder spanischen Baukünstlern gegründet, denen es, wie in ihrem Vaterlande, darauf ankam, die lästige Sonne überall nach Möglichkeit auszuschließen. Enge Gassen, himmellose, finstre Häuser, lichtscheue Höfchen... – alles dies ist gut in Spanien und Portugal, aber abscheulich unterm 51sten Breitengrade. ... Eben daher ist unser Dresden denn auch, so angenehm es im Hochsommer zu bewohnen ist, eben so unerträglich im Februar, im April und November. Die engen, der Sonne feindlichen Gassen unterhalten hier bis spät ins Frühjahr hinein eine eifrige Kellerluft, die nur der in unsern ewig verschlossenen Kirchen vergleichbar ist...." Ernst Scherzlieb, *Dresden, wie es ist* (Zwickau: Verlage der Gebrüder Schumann, 1830), 6-7.

hygienically....though the Middle Ages were certainly a living reality to the eighteenth-century Germans, they were a living reality which was almost entirely bad.”<sup>50</sup>

The overwhelming drawbacks ascribed to such towns, however, were erased by the new Romantic perception of the old world that emerged in the later decades of the 1700s. The Romantics’ rescuing of medieval architecture and art from the dust bin of history has been well documented and recounted.<sup>51</sup> The appropriation of the Gothic style as a specifically German event became the crux of its reevaluation. Goethe’s histrionic “On German Architecture” of 1772, a paean to Erwin von Steinbach, whom he erroneously identified as the lone architect of the Strasbourg cathedral, formulated and celebrated this notion: “This is German architecture!” The construction of the Strasbourg *Dom* was compared to the creation of the world: “I owe it to your instruction, noble genius, that I no longer reel when confronting your profundities, that my soul is touched by the blissful calm of a spirit who can look down on such a creation and say, as did God, ‘It is good.’”<sup>52</sup> Twenty years later, in 1792, Georg Forster addressed the unfinished

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<sup>50</sup> W. D. Robson-Scott, *The Literary Background of the Gothic Revival in Germany* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 120.

<sup>51</sup> See for instance Hannelore Gärtner, “Patriotismus und Gotikrezeption der deutschen Frühromantik,” in Betthausen, *Studien zur Kunst und Architektur*, 34-50; and Robson-Scott.

<sup>52</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “On German Architecture,” in *Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. John Gearey, trans. Ellen von Nardroff and Ernest H. von Nardroff (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 6 and 8. “das is deutsche Baukunst...” “Deinem Unterricht dank ich’s, Genius, daß mir’s nicht mehr schwindelt an deinen Tiefen, daß in meine Seele ein Tropfen sich senkt, der Wonneruh des Geistes, der auf solch eine Schöpfung herabschauen, und gottgleich sprechen kann, es ist gut!” “Von deutscher Baukunst,” in *Goethes Werke*, ed. Paul Stapf (Berlin and Darmstadt: Tempel Verlag, 1967), 7:587.

Cologne cathedral in *Ansichten vom Niederrhein* (Views from the Lower Rhine), bringing it into German consciousness as the epitome of German architecture while initiating the movement for its eventual completion.<sup>53</sup> Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and Ludwig Tieck's *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar), 1797, further fanned the flames of historicism in its glorification of the art of Raphael and Dürer, the latter of whom was cast as an unseen but essential character in Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (Franz Sternbald's Journeys), 1798.<sup>54</sup> Less than a decade later, the *Lukasbund* brotherhood of artists strove to adopt what it viewed as the purity of these earlier styles of art, underscoring this heightened attachment to the past.

The old-world German city as a whole, not just its individual structural elements and adornments, was idealized by German Romantics, who developed a taste for what Robson-Scott has termed "the Urban Picturesque," that is for the quaintness of the medieval atmosphere, which went beyond simply the style of its buildings.<sup>55</sup> In 1795 Georg Friedrich Rebmann could write of Nuremberg that "Nothing great, nothing sublime, nothing ambitious is to be found here. Everything is cramped, petty, depressed,

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<sup>53</sup> Georg Forster, *Ansichten vom Niederrhein* (Berlin: Voss, 1791).

<sup>54</sup> Wilhelm Wackenroder and Ludwig Tieck, *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, in Wackenroder, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Silvio Vietta and Richard Littlejohns, vol. 1 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1991). Ludwig Tieck, *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen*, in *Werke, in vier Bänden*, ed. by Marianne Thalmann, vol. 1 (Munich: Winkler Verlag, [1963]).

<sup>55</sup> Robson-Scott, 119.

everything is a picture of emptiness and deterioration.”<sup>56</sup> But a year later, Wackenroder’s opening to an essay on Dürer recast the dark, stifling quality of the medieval street as the charm of the irregular: “Nürnberg! you once world-famous town! How I liked to wander through your crooked streets; with what childlike love I looked at your ancestral homes and churches which bear the firm trace of our old paternal art!”<sup>57</sup> The urban decay of the medieval town was aestheticized, becoming pleasing to the eye, much in the same way that wilderness, also during this period, shed its negative associations to become a view-worthy spectacle.

The fascination with medieval society and its architectural vestiges had a strongly literary impetus. Although Goethe temporarily regretted his youthful exuberance over Strasbourg, old-world towns were used as settings in many of his works throughout his

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<sup>56</sup> “Nichts Großes, nichts Erhabenes, nichts Emporstrebendes ist hier zu finden. Alles ist beengt, kleinlich, niedergedrückt, alles ein Bild der Leerheit und des Sinkens.” Georg Friedrich Rebmann, *Kreuzzüge durch einen Teil Deutschlands*, ed. and with commentary by Heinz Weise (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus Verlag, 1990), 12. Originally published as *Wanderungen und Kreuzzüge durch einen Teil Deutschlands* (Altona: Verlagsgesellschaft, 1795).

<sup>57</sup> Wackenroder, “Memorial to Our Worthy Ancestor Albrecht Dürer,” in Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, ed., *From the Classicists to the Impressionists*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 63-64. Holt translates *altväterischen* as ancestral, but it could also be meant in the sense of old-fashioned, that is, referring to the specific type of architecture of the town.

“Nürnberg! du vormals weltberühmte Stadt! Wie gerne durchwanderte ich deine krummen Gassen; mit welchen kindlichen Liebe betrachtete ich deine altväterischen Häuser und Kirchen, denen die fest Spur von unsrer alten vaterländischen Kunst eingedrückt ist!” Although the essay was used in the later *Herzensergiessungen*, it was published originally as “Ehrengedächtniß unsers ehrwürdigen Ahnherrn Albrecht Dürers von einem kunstliebenden Klosterbruder,” in Johann Friedrich Reichardt, ed., *Deutschland*, vol. 3, part 7 (Berlin: Bei Johann Friedrich Unger, 1796); reprinted in Wackenroder, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 1, 43.

life, including *Götz von Berlichingen* (Bamberg in the fifteenth century), *Egmont* (Brussels in the sixteenth century), and *Faust* (set partially in an unnamed German university town in the sixteenth century, its opening scene taking place in “a high vaulted, narrow Gothic room”). Old-world cities such as Nuremberg, Bamberg, and Cologne became a point of pride, not only for their architectural achievements, but also for their ideal example of civic life. German Romantics looked at the medieval town as a model of proto-democratic self-governance by a newly constituted *Bürgertum*. Town life of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was linked to the heights of German culture, and to the zenith of religious devotion.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte was instrumental in the reassessment of the achievements of the Middle Ages, including the idea of republican governance, and crucially linked these achievements to urban culture. His popular *Addresses to the German Nation*, given first as lectures in 1807 and 1808 before being published, declared that in German towns of the Middle Ages,

every branch of culture quickly developed into the fairest bloom. In them arose civic constitutions and organizations which, though but on a small scale, were none the less of high excellence; and, proceeding from them, a picture of order and a love of it spread throughout the rest of the country. Their extensive commerce helped to discover the world. Their league was feared by kings. The monuments of their architecture are standing at the present day and have defied the ravages of centuries; before them posterity stands in admiration and confesses its own impotence.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. R. F. Jones and G. H. Turnbull (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 104. “In diesen entwickelte sich schnell jeder Zweig des gebildeten Lebens zur schönsten Blüte. In ihnen entstanden, zwar auf Kleines berechnete, dennoch aber treffliche bürgerliche Verfassung, und Einrichtungen, und von ihnen aus verbreitete sich ein Bild von Ordnung und eine Liebe derselben erst über das übrige Land. Ihr ausgebreiter Handel half die Welt entdecken.

Fichte, moreover, thoroughly linked Germany's history, all of its greatness, everything it ever had achieved, to the creation and life of its cities.<sup>59</sup> The citizens of these cities, the burghers, were endowed with "the spirit of piety, of honor, of modesty, and of a sense of community," and, according to Fichte, "everything which is still worthy of honour among the Germans" had sprung from this class.<sup>60</sup> As Schorske has written, "Fichte thus fortified the self-consciousness of the German bourgeoisie in its struggle for nationalism and democracy with a concrete model from its own history, a lost paradise of its own creation to regain."<sup>61</sup> In Germany of the nineteenth century, where the growth of the bourgeoisie and advances in progressive thinking were inevitably linked to urban centers, such rhetoric found a wide and receptive audience.<sup>62</sup>

A vocal taste for town life was found among a few prominent Romantics,

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Ihren Bund fürchteten Könige. Die Denkmäler ihrer Baukunst dauern noch, haben der Zerstörung von Jahrhunderten getrotzt die Nachwelt steht bewundernd vor ihnen, und bekennt ihre eigen Ohnmacht." *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, intro. Reinhard Lauth (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1978), 102.

The addresses were written after Napoleon's triumphant entry into the German states and were meant to boost the morale of the occupied population.

<sup>59</sup> "The history of Germany, of German might, German enterprise and inventions, of German monuments and the German spirit – the history of all these things during that period is nothing but the history of those cities." Fichte, *Addresses*, 104-105. "Die Geschichte Deutschlands, deutscher Macht, deutscher Unternehmungen, Erfindungen, Denkmale, Geistes, ist in diesem Zeitraume lediglich die Geschichte dieser Städte." *Reden*, 103.

<sup>60</sup> Fichte, *Addresses*, 105. "mit dem Geiste der Frömmigkeit, der Ehrbarkeit, der Bescheidenheit, des Gemein/sinnes." "...alles, was noch jetzt Ehrwürdiges ist unter den Deutschen, [ist] in seiner Mitte entstanden." *Reden*, 103.

<sup>61</sup> Schorske, 101.

<sup>62</sup> Reulecke, 18.

especially as the century moved on. While the sleepy towns of Jena and Weimar had been the early setting for Romantic writers and poets, Germany's largest city, Berlin, became their mecca in later decades.<sup>63</sup> Bettina von Arnim, for one, embraced urban life, which she found more stimulating, interesting, and fulfilling than life in the countryside. While her husband Achim felt himself physically and spiritually in decline when in Berlin, and consequently headed often to the country to revive himself, she scorned what she thought of as the dulling effect of rural life.<sup>64</sup> E.T.A. Hoffmann wrote to his friend Theodor Gottlieb Hippel from Berlin in 1820 that "the lively life in the big city...really just has a wonderful effect on the soul."<sup>65</sup> At the same time, one finds in Romantic writing and especially in travel guides of the period much positive notice about the cultural offerings and stimulation to be found in towns and cities. As Gerhart von Graevenitz has pointed out, it was not just that new discourses arose in cities during the Romantic period, but the city itself became an object of discourse.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See Marianne Thalmann, *Romantiker entdecken die Stadt* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1965), 8-10.

<sup>64</sup> The letters that Achim and Bettina von Arnim wrote to one another reveal how strongly each felt attached to country and urban life, and are published as *Achim und Bettina in ihren Briefen. Briefwechsel Achim von Arnim und Bettina Brentano in zwei Bänden*, ed. Werner Vordtriede, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1985). See especially vol. 1, 183, 285, 428-429. See also Ute Frevert, "Stadtwahrnehmungen romantischer Intellektueller in Deutschland," in Gerhart von Graevenitz, ed., *Die Stadt in der Europäischen Romantik* (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 72-73.

<sup>65</sup> "...das lebendige Leben der großen Stadt...wirkt doch nun einmal wunderbar auf das Gemüt." Hoffmann to Hippel, 24 June 1820, quoted in Thalmann, 9.

<sup>66</sup> Gerhart von Graevenitz, "Die Stadt in der Europäischen Romantik," in *Die Stadt in der Europäischen Romantik*, 13.

Yet despite this tangible good will toward the modern city, the predominant Romantic perception of contemporary urban life was that it was dirty, unhealthy, corrupt, and artificial, all the while that the town of the past was idealized. Joseph von Eichendorff's often quoted aphorism, "Stadtluft erdrückt" (city air stifles)<sup>67</sup> challenged the timeworn but more hopeful sentiment stemming from medieval times, "Stadtluft macht frei" (city air liberates). By the time Eichendorff's character uttered those words in *Ahnung und Gegenwart* (Premonition and Present), 1815, serfdom had been abolished (thanks greatly to the *Code Napoléon*), and the peasant's view of the city as a place to seek the freedoms lacking in the country had been inverted into a bourgeois desire to escape the city for the freedoms offered by the country. Anti-urban feeling was based on a notion of the city as too large, too crowded, and too hectic for the health and mental well-being of its individual residents. When Goethe's Werther felt the confines of the town to be toxic, he headed out to the balm of the countryside, exclaiming his relief at having escaped.<sup>68</sup> The scientist Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert, referring to a cycle on the ages of man by Friedrich, noted that "The noise of the city has brought on the dreams of still cottages on blooming hills, the song of the turtledoves."<sup>69</sup> Friedrich himself felt that the

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<sup>67</sup> Joseph von Eichendorff, *Ahnung und Gegenwart*, in *Werke in fünf Bänden*, eds. Wolfgang Frühwald, Brigitte Schillbach and Hartwig Schultz (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), 2:242.

<sup>68</sup> Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, in *Goethes Werke*, 3:193.

<sup>69</sup> "Die Träume von stillen Hütten auf blühenden Hügeln, das Lied der Turteltauben, hat das wüste Geräusch der Stadt verdrängt." Schubert, *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (Dresden: Arnoldische Buchhandlung, 1808; facsimile reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), 305.

city could be confining like a prison, and morally corruptive as well, suggesting that people close themselves off when locked up within city walls, becoming worse human beings, and acting civilly to one another only once they are in “God’s free nature.”<sup>70</sup>

Explicit in much of this Romantic critique of the (modern) city is that its greatest failure lies in its not being the country. Conversely, implicit in much of the Romantic engagement with nature is a critique of society and civilization, and civilization’s principal incarnation, the city. The boundaries of walled-in towns, many of them set originally during the Middle Ages, remained largely intact in Germany until well into the eighteenth century, and had allowed for a clear distinction between town and country.<sup>71</sup> The country, in many cases, began immediately outside the walls. Entry into the city was only available through the gates, making towns like fortresses that could keep out any undesirable elements. The separation between the two entities of town and country was made even clearer at night, when the city was locked up, the keys unavailable to any unfortunate person who happened to arrive too late to enter.

Antagonism between town and country reaches back to antiquity. Raymond Williams’s succinct summary of the differences between the historic concepts of city and country speaks just as well to the Romantic situation in Germany:

On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence,

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<sup>70</sup> Zschoche, *Rügen*, 66.

<sup>71</sup> Reulecke, 15. It was only at the end of the 1700s that the process of *Entfestigung* (the tearing down of the fortifications) began in earnest. A few towns that missed out on economic and population booms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries kept all or part of their walls. Neubrandenburg is one such rare case – its medieval wall is still completely intact.

and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation.<sup>72</sup>

Yet the relationship between the seemingly contradictory concepts town and country has never been simply one of tension, but also is marked by symbiosis. The city always has been linked to the countryside, bound to it in definition (the city is not the countryside, and vice-versa) and in economic terms as well (e.g. the city is dependent upon the country for agricultural goods). As Lewis Mumford writes, "Ecologically speaking, the city and countryside are a single unit; if one can do without the other, it is the country, not the city."<sup>73</sup>

For all the anti-urban feeling to be found among German Romantics, the corresponding cult of nature was primarily an urban-centered and urban-produced phenomenon, its main formulators and adherents inhabitants of German cities and towns, Friedrich included. Romantic intellectuals, in contrast to most of the German population, were mobile, rarely staying in the region of their youth, as they headed off to the university and then moved on again after their studies were complete, at times more than once.<sup>74</sup> But most prominent Romantic writers, artists, and thinkers, including those who dealt primarily with nature as subject matter, congregated as a matter of course in towns, where they found like-minded company to share their interests and an audience to support their

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<sup>72</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 1.

<sup>73</sup> Mumford, 68.

<sup>74</sup> Frevert, 56.

endeavors.

By contrast, the countryside only rarely became a place in which Romantics set up permanent residence. Instead, it played an important role for the “civilized folk” as an arena for recreation as well as an instrument of edification. Townspeople – and not just intellectuals or artists – headed out to explore the world beyond the city walls, taking along popular travel books that marked out areas offering particularly admirable views. Aesthetic discourses on the beautiful and the sublime in nature were current among bourgeois urban audiences, and not only through first-hand reading of the writings on the subject by Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller. Such audiences were the primary consumers of popular journals like *Kunstblatt* or *Journal des Luxus und der Moden*, in which discussions of these concepts regularly were to be found, primarily in relation to the image of the countryside in the visual arts.

Indeed, the painting of the countryside flourished especially in cities, where it found an audience receptive to experiencing nature as an aestheticized entity – and as a commodity – that is, not simply as hills, valleys, and trees, but as Landscape.<sup>75</sup> Landscape is the genre most closely associated with Romantic art in Germany, and it is the genre in which German Romantic painters produced their most innovative work. Phillip Otto Runge, who lived in Dresden and in Hamburg, gave voice to an entire generation’s rapture in a letter from 1802 in which he contemplated the position of the contemporary artist with regard to choosing subject matter. One key sentence of his letter alone has become a

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<sup>75</sup> Besides Dresden, other major centers of landscape painting included Berlin (Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Karl Blechen), Düsseldorf (Karl Lessing, Ferdinand Theodor Hildebrandt), and Munich (Johann Georg von Dillis, Wilhelm von Kobell, Carl Rottmann).

kind of catchphrase for the German Romantic artistic movement, but it is worth citing the larger passage at length because it gives such a clear picture of the factors at play in the ascendancy of landscape during the period and of the intense and constant grip that nature held on the Romantic imagination:

All beautiful compositions now tend toward landscape...[D]on't we all see spirits in the clouds at sunset? Doesn't this inspire quite definite thoughts in our soul? Is it not true that a work of art comes into being only at the moment when we feel ourselves united with the universe? Can't I capture the vanishing moon, as I might capture a vanishing figure which has awakened a thought in me, and couldn't both, moon or figure, become art? And what artist who had really sensed this, and who had been awakened by nature...could fail to seize the right subject for the expression of his feeling?...everything is becoming more airy and light than before, everything gravitates toward landscape...could we not reach the point of highest perfection in a new kind of art, in this art of landscape, and perhaps reach a higher beauty than existed before?<sup>76</sup>

Yet even as landscape was fast becoming the fundamental avant-garde genre of the nineteenth century, its theoretical antipode, the city, also was transformed into a popular object of scrutiny, particularly as the German population became less rural. While

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<sup>76</sup> Runge to Daniel Runge, Dresden, February 1802, in Lorenz Eitner, ed., *Neoclassicism and Romanticism 1750-1850: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 145-146. "...alle schönen Compositionen neigen sich zur Landschaft hin...Wer sieht nicht Geister auf den Wolken beym Untergang der Sonne? Wem schweben nicht die deutlichsten Gedanken vor die Seele? Entsteht nicht ein Kunstwerk nur in dem Moment, wann ich deutlich einen Zusammenhang mit dem Universum vernehme? Kann ich den fliehenden Mond nicht eben so festhalten, wie eine fliehende Gestalt, die einen Gedanken bey mir erweckt, und wird jenes nicht eben so ein Kunstwerk? Und welcher Künstler, der dieses in sich fühlt, den die Natur...erweckt, wird nicht nach dem rechten Gegenstande greifen, um diese Empfindung an den Tag zu legen? ...alles ist luftiger und leichter, als das bisherige, es drängt sich alles zur Landschaft...Ist denn in dieser neuen Kunst - der Landschafterey, wenn man so will, - nicht auch ein höchster Punct zu erreichen? der vielleicht noch schöner wird wie die vorigen?" *Hinterlassene Schriften von Philipp Otto Runge*, ed. Daniel Runge, vol. 1 (Hamburg: Verlag von Friedrich Perthes, 1840; facsimile reprint, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 6-7.

the depiction of the countryside offered urban audiences fantasies of turtledoves to quiet the noise of the city, cityscapes presented them with an idealized portrait of themselves, that is, of the ultimate expression of their civilization. In the next section, the image of the city in German art of the Romantic era will be considered in its various manifestations, both as the dream of a glorified German past and as the reflection of progressive, modern times. As will be seen, although a negative attitude toward urban life (at least in its contemporary form) is manifest in the writings of many German Romantics, criticism of the city and its many discontents fails to mark its pictorialized form until well into the industrialized century.

### Stadtlandschaft

Much of German townscape painting of the first half of the century finds precedence in older traditions. Artists had at their disposal a long and varied history of the depicted city. It had appeared as a vision of Heavenly Jerusalem in medieval painting, as the idealized *Città* of Italian Renaissance painting, and in the backgrounds of numerous Netherlandish religious scenes and works by Albrecht Dürer. It was everywhere in seventeenth-century Dutch painting, set along the horizon of a flattened landscape or meticulously described in prosaic yet intimate formulations of the bourgeois sphere. It was chronicled over the course of several centuries in thousands of topographic prints of entire towns growing out of the enveloping countryside, and in the *Vogelschaupläne*, or bird's-eye-view maps, of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was celebrated in all its resplendent form in eighteenth century *vedute*, especially by Italians such as Canaletto,

Francesco Guardi, and Bernardo Bellotto, whose huge, vivid canvases of important European cities (including Dresden) were precursors to the panoramas, dioramas, and town portraits of the 1800s. All of these precedents in some way informed the practice of townscape painting of the Romantic period.

In Germany, townscapes appeared with increasing frequency especially after 1815, when a Biedermeier sensibility began tempering Romantic sentiment.<sup>77</sup> The growing market for city views in Germany in the early 1800s is indicated by the increasing number of books of town views, the numbers of which rose even faster with the introduction of new means of mass production (e.g. lithography) that allowed for a wider distribution of the printed image.<sup>78</sup> Yet even where reportage is the main work of a town portrait, as in the prints in such books, until the middle of the 1800s the cityscape served the function of cataloguing city facades, not of revealing (or critiquing) the daily realities of city living. Despite the hesitance shown toward modern urban life in Romantic writing, the city in the first decades of the nineteenth century generally is portrayed positively in visual representation, whether as imagined in the past or as observed in modern times,

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<sup>77</sup> On the city in German art of the early 1800s, see Brandler; Franz-Dietrich Jacob, *Historische Stadtansichten* (Leipzig: VEB Seeman Verlag, 1982); J.A. Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth, "Die Stadt im Bild," in Ludwig Grote, ed., *Die deutsche Stadt im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1974), 295-309; Irgard Wirth, *Berliner Malerei im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1990), chapter "Die Architektur- und Vedutemalerei"; and Irgard Wirth, *Bilder deutscher Städte* (Berlin: Brüder Hartmann, 1966).

<sup>78</sup> Typical is the six-volume book by Ludwig Lange, *Original-ansichten der vornehmsten Städte in Deutschland, ihrer wichtigsten Dome, Kirchen und sonstigen Baudenkmäler alter und neuer Zeit* (Darmstadt: G. G. Lange, 1832-1846). For a discussion of books of city views, see Jacob, 119-121.

whether up close and sharply detailed, or from a distance and romantically hazy. Lit by the moon or covered under the veil of fog, the city became a bearer of enigmatic meaning and mood, much like the Romantic landscape. City interiors were surveyed for their most characteristic, picturesque, or sublime views, and limned with architectural precision. Bird's eye views of roofs and towers provided a normally unseen sweep of the town for perspective-hungry audiences. And from a distance, the city silhouette formed a harmonic whole with the countryside encircling it, a skyline to be beheld and admired by wandering townsmen – and the beholder of the painting.

Amidst the transformation of German urban life at the dawn of the industrial age, two dissimilar but equally idealized perceptions of the city were set into motion in German art and prevailed as countering notions of urban life. On the one hand remained the sleepy old-world town, a homey place evocative of yesteryear, frequently dark and crumbling, yet cozy and nest-like, a Gothic cathedral its prominent heart and indicative of its exalted (and religious) past. This pictorial motif appealed particularly to artists most closely associated with early Romanticism, who also often envisioned the city's historical past in narrative works. But it had currency throughout much of the century, even long after Romantic atmospherics had been swept away, in nostalgic images of (contemporary) provincial town life by artists like Carl Spitzweg.

On the other hand, there was the dynamic modern town, an exciting, open space full of sights and activities. In its depicted form, it became the shimmering yet tidy stage set of a bourgeois citizenry, with its active consumption of a new commercial culture. The crystal clear topography of a town and its surroundings, seen from street level or viewed

from above, characterizes the depiction of the modern town from this period. City portraits were particularly prevalent in the middle decades of the century, but the taste for them was fostered much earlier by the introduction of the panoramas that strove to capture the precise likeness of their subjects.

As noted above, Gothic revivalism and the reinventing of the era of Dürer and Luther as the German Golden Age helped to transform the perception of the old-world town from one of crowded dankness into that of the urban picturesque. The compressed space of the old-world town proved to be compelling material for the imagination of many artists. Johann Christian Xeller's drawing, *Nuremberg with the Castle*, ca. 1814 (fig. 19), depicts a view of happily crowded rooftops in a town where the buildings seem not claustrophobically close to one another but snug, as in a warm embrace. The fairy-tale quality associated with the old-world city is evident in an early Moritz von Schwind, *Strolling in front of the City Gate*, ca. 1827 (fig. 20), in which the turreted town is presented as a kind of playground for adults, its miniaturized dimensions creating a curious, child-like backdrop for the merriness of the modern bourgeois flâneurs directly outside its walls. Such a reduction of the old-world urban setting in relation to the figures inhabiting it occurs especially in narrative works like Peter Cornelius's drawing *After Church* from his Faust cycle of 1816 (fig. 21), and Franz Pferr's painting *Entry of the Emperor Rudolf of Habsburg into Basel*, 1808-1810 (fig. 22). While the interaction of the figures remains the primary focus of these works, the picturesquely diminutive urban locale imparts an alluring naivete to the scenes, even where that contradicts the gist of the narrative action, as in Faust's seduction of Margarete.

Carl Gustav Carus frequently taps into the aura of the old-world city in works like *Balcony in the Moonlight* from 1836 (fig. 23), *Faust (Easter Stroll)*, 1821 (fig. 24), and *View of Dresden with the Hofkirche and Schloss*, ca. 1830 (fig. 25), which gives a distinctly medieval feel to the Baroque city. His *Morning Bells* from 1840 (fig. 26), a work that demonstrates the grip the urban picturesque had in Germany even after the bloom of Romanticism had faded, depicts a cramped rooftop view of an imaginary town, “an *altdeutsche* city at dawn” (in Carus’s own words), with a river leading far into the distance to a low set of mountains perched along the horizon.<sup>79</sup> The bells of the foreground church announce the daybreak, their peals scattering the birds into the morning air. The work’s rounded top is evocative of a medieval altarpiece, matching form to content, namely the two prominent churches within its frame. Bathed in the pink of dawn that transforms the entire city into the same pale palette, the painting conveys the intangibility of a dream.

Frequently portrayed in winter or fall, old-world towns are cast as an enticing place of refuge, as in Karl Wilhelm Götzloff’s *Winter Landscape with Gothic Church*, 1821 (fig. 27), where the fabulous city is almost burrowed behind the rising landscape as if huddling under a blanket. Here two townsmen in medieval dress walk through the snow, their path leading them to the warmth of the town that offers the prospect of shelter from the crisp winter air. Ernst Ferdinand Oehme’s *Cathedral in Winter*, 1821 (fig. 28),

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<sup>79</sup> “eine altdeutsche Stadt im Frühlicht...” Carl Gustav Carus, *Lebenserinnerungen* vol. 2 (Weimar: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1966), 60. Marianne Prause identified the passage in this book that refers to this painting. Prause, *Carl Gustav Carus* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1968), 202.

presents a variant of this refuge theme, as a group of monks heads to the warmed, candle-lit sanctuary of a church that glows like a furnace in the middle of the unrelenting frosty grayness blanketing the town. Oehme draws on the Romantic notion of the piety of the Middle Ages and the quasi-mystical presence of its churches within the towns that built them. Novalis's essay "Christendom or Europe," 1799, which praises the supposed unity of Europe under one church during pre-Luther days, characterizes the enticing atmosphere of the Christian church in older times: "With what brightness did one leave the beautiful gatherings in the mysterious churches that were decorated with animated paintings, filled with sweet scents, and livened with sacred uplifting music."<sup>80</sup> This tantalizing imagery contrasts with the foul air of the perpetually locked church described in the Dresden guide of 1830.

While pictorial representations of the old-world town were imbued with longing, nostalgia, and historicist pride, the image of the town of modern times was intimately tied to what Stephan Oettermann has called the nineteenth century's "see-fever," the intense desire for the spectacle of the view. Many city portraits from the first half of the century render architectural structures with a hyper-precision that speaks to an ardent scopophilia. Paintings and drawings of the contemporary German town evince an urgent need to record and to capture all with a quasi-scientific precision. Indeed, rather than *Bilder* (pictures), commissions of the period for city portraits designate them as *Aufnahmen*, a

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<sup>80</sup> "Mit welcher Heiterkeit verließ man die schönen Versammlungen in den geheimnisvollen Kirchen, die mit ermunternden Bildern geschmückt, mit süßen Düften erfüllt, und von heiliger erhebender Musik belebt waren." Novalis, "Die Christenheit oder Europa. Ein Fragment Geschrieben im Jahre 1799," in *Novalis Werke*, ed. Gerhard Schulz (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1981), 500.

more technical term eventually synonymous with the photograph, indicative of recording or taking down.<sup>81</sup> Pictures of the modern town from this period strive for the wide view angle and unframed view offered by the panorama – which in Germany between 1800 and 1840 more often than not were of city views, e.g. London, Rome, Berlin, Palermo, Frankfurt, and Hamburg.<sup>82</sup>

Whether a town was envisioned as old world or up-to-date was not necessarily linked to its age and the style of its architecture. Johann Carl Enslen and Carl Georg Enslen's large watercolor, *Dresden Neustadt Seen from the Palace Tower*, 1820 (fig. 29), presents a much different image of the town than that given by Carus's smoky *View of Dresden with the Hofkirche and Schloss* (fig. 25), although the same prominent church is used in both (seen, however, from different points of view). The Enslen painting is a brightly lit vista of the town from above, a soaring, unobstructed view elevated over even the heights of the Catholic *Hofkirche*, looking down at the figural sculptures on the church's roof that in turn look down toward residents in the street. The view maps a slice of the *Altstadt* around the *Hofkirche*, the curve of the Elbe, the bridge over to the *Neustadt*, and some of the outlying landscape. Crowds of ant-sized figures mill about the

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<sup>81</sup> Wirth, *Bilder deutscher Städte*, 20.

<sup>82</sup> On the panorama in Germany, see chapter "The Panorama in Germany" in Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 185-285. Originally published as *Das Panorama: Die Geschichte eines Massenmediums* (Frankfurt: Syndikat, 1980). (Page citations are to the translated edition.) See also *Sehnsucht: Das Panorama als Massenunterhaltung des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1993), esp. chapter by Stephan Oettermann, "Die Reise mit den Augen – 'Oramas' in Deutschland," 42-51.

square next to the Hofkirche, strolling up and down the steps of the Brühl Terrace, while a number of different types of boats and ships ply the waters of the Elbe. Dresden, the painting insists, is an active, productive city.

The fantastic lighting in *Dresden Neustadt Seen from the Palace Tower* is a common feature of such city views. Such light emphasizes clarity of view and allows for details that otherwise might pass unnoticed. Wilhelm Barth's painting *The City Palace and the Old Market in Potsdam*, ca. 1820 (fig. 30), also uses the brightness of the sun to create dramatic plays of light and shadow. The composition is constructed with a strongly perspectival point of view that matches the neat linearity of the neoclassical royal town. As in the Enslin painting, the high-up view is used to create a feeling of wide-open spaces (as opposed to Carus's *Morning Bells*, where it emphasizes the town's compact layout). Here again, architecture commands more attention than do the scattered figures. This fascination with the structural framework of the urban space characterizes the modern town portrait.

Berlin, Germany's largest and most modern town, was the city that inspired the liveliest production of cityscapes, with architectural painters like Eduard Gaertner and Johann Erdmann Hummel creating a comprehensive catalogue of viewable sites. The town's appearance had not always been perceived kindly. Mme. de Staël granted that pre-Schinkel Berlin was "a large city, with very broad streets, perfectly straight, the houses handsome, and the general appearance regular," but she nevertheless found it rather unappealing because of its modernness. In her words, it

displays no traces of ancient times. Not one Gothic monument remains amid its

modern habitations; and nothing of the antique interrupts the uniformity of this newly created country.... Berlin, an entirely modern city, beautiful as it is, makes no serious impression....its magnificent new-built houses seem destined only for the convenient assemblage of pleasures and industry. The finest palaces in Berlin are built of brick; hardly any stone is to be found even in its triumphal arches.”<sup>83</sup>

But within the decade, Berlin’s modernness itself became the point of fascination for those who would depict it. What city painters like Gaertner and Hummel were particularly adept at conveying was a sense of the city as a bourgeois phenomenon – even though Berlin itself was the royal seat of the most powerful sovereign in Germany. In their paintings, Berlin’s public spaces, even official, “royal” ones, are given over almost entirely to the town’s middle-class inhabitants, who stroll, mingle, and shop. The paradigmatic example of Berlin as bourgeois town is Hummel’s *The Granite Basin in the Berlin Lustgarten*, 1831 (fig. 31). In the painting, the recently erected, highly polished basin reflects not so much the town around it but its residents, who have come to marvel at the feat of its engineering.<sup>84</sup> The Berliners gather around the bowl in the Lustgarten, a green, open space across from the royal Schloss, next to the Berlin cathedral, where Prussian kings worshiped and were buried, and directly in front of Schinkel’s Museum am

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<sup>83</sup> Mme. de Staël, *Germany*, 111-112. “Berlin est une grande ville, dont les rues sont très-larges, parfaitement bien alignées, les maisons belles, et l’ensemble régulier....on n’y voit rien qui retrace les temps antérieurs. Aucun monument gothique ne subsiste au milieu des habitations modernes; et ce pays nouvellement formé n’est gêné par l’ancien en aucun genre....Berlin, cette ville toute moderne, quelque belle qu’elle soit, ne fait pas une impression assez sérieuse...ces magnifiques demeures, nouvellement construites, ne semblent destinées qu’aux rassemblements commodes des plaisirs et de l’industrie. Les plus beaux palais de Berlin sont bâtis en briques; on trouverait à peine une pierre de taille dans les arcs de triomphe.” *De L’Allemagne*, 81-82.

<sup>84</sup> The basin was carved from a single piece of marble. Paul Ortwin Rave, *Kunst in Berlin* (Berlin: Staneck Verlag, 1965), 106.

Lustgarten (the Altes Museum), a public home for the royal collections of art (and the original planned site for the basin).<sup>85</sup> Yet there is no aristocratic representative among the figures, and even the view of the gargantuan Schloss is blocked by the bourgeoisie-reflecting basin in the foreground.

The brightly-lit image of the modernized city found success not only in paintings of Berlin. Heinrich Adam's *The New Munich*, from 1839 (fig. 32), for instance, gives a picture postcard collection of the city's most important buildings and spaces centered around the main depiction of the newly rebuilt Odeonsplatz. Celebrating the massive construction projects instigated by Ludwig I, who appointed Leo von Klenze to redevelop the city into a new capital of the arts, the sites presented in the painting are sunny, open spaces, each featuring a new neo-classical or neo-Gothic building.<sup>86</sup> *The New Munich* was a pendant to Adam's *The Old Munich*, also 1839 (fig. 33), which depicts older areas of town. While *The New Munich* presents an official portrait of the contemporary city through orderly images of imposing buildings, *Old Munich* uses local color to give a picturesque account of the historic city. The central painting of the Odeonsplatz in *The*

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<sup>85</sup> Schinkel actually had commissioned the bowl to sit in the center of his museum rotunda, but it was too large and had to be placed elsewhere. Rave, 107-108.

<sup>86</sup> For an account of the transformation of Munich in the early nineteenth century, see Winifried Nerdinger, ed., *Romantik und Restauration: Architektur in Bayern zur Zeit Ludwigs I., 1825-1848* (Munich: Hugendubel, 1987); Winifried Nerdinger, "Stadtplanung in München um 1800/Town Planning in Munich Around 1800," *Daidalos. Berlin Architectural Journal* no. 7 (1983): 75-82; and Steffi Röttgen, "Florenz in München. Anmerkungen zum florentinischen Baustil unter König Ludwig I. von Bayern," in Karl Mösender and Andreas Prater, eds., *Aufsätze zur Kunstgeschichte. Festschrift für Hermann Bauer zum 60. Geburtstag* (Hildesheim/Zurich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1991), 318-338.

*New Munich* is full of well-dressed figures who ride horses or stroll through the square, but the Marienplatz (the central marketplace) of *The Old Munich* is populated by a colorful group of mixed company, primarily lower classes of laborers and servants.

As is evident from the example of the Adam paintings of Munich, or the Dresden pictures of the Enslen brothers and Carus compared above, an individual town could be perceived in completely disparate ways. A predominantly medieval town could take on the sheen of the modern metropolis, especially when imagined as the idealized setting of the heroic German past. In such cases, the old-world city often was tidied up, presenting a clear image of that past as a noble example of civic life.<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, even Germany's most modern town, Berlin, could be humbled in size and pomp to give the relatively young city a distinctly old-world flavor. For instance, Eduard Gaertner's *Reetzengasse/Parochialstrasse*, ca. 1831 (fig. 34), depicts not the strict linearity of Berlin's neoclassical main boulevard, Unter den Linden, but the curved narrowness of an alley in its oldest section, with its crammed-in houses and working-class inhabitants. As in Adam's depiction of old Munich, here the laborers and small-time shopkeepers become local color, assigned to the older part of town; the new, showcase sites belong instead to the middle and upper classes in Gaertner's work.

While the discussion of the city's image in visual representations so far has concentrated on close-in depictions, the town seen from the surrounding countryside, a

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<sup>87</sup> Frequently the grandiosity of that past is manifest in the depiction of oversized cathedrals that lend a bit of the fancifulness of a Walhalla to the scene (e.g. Schinkel's lost *Gothic Cathedral near the Water*, 1813, or Carl Hasenpflug and Carl Georg Enslen's paintings of Cologne with an anachronistically finished cathedral).

genre that had enjoyed a long and varied tradition, remained a staple formula of the city portrait throughout the early nineteenth century. From a distance, the hustle and bustle of the town was quieted, and the structural specificity of individual buildings was transformed into the larger profile of a single entity, a phenomenon aptly rendered by Philip Otto Runge in an undated paper cut-out, *Silhouette of Wolgast* (fig. 35). The components of the city skyline were fairly standardized, consisting of the spires and domes of churches, towers of castles and city halls, the gables of houses, and perhaps the enclosing walls that kept the city intact. City and landscape, though separate from one another, nevertheless tend to create a harmonious whole in the art of the Romantic era.<sup>88</sup> The visual appeal of the contained city embedded in, but distinct from, the surrounding nature was underlined by the fact that panoramas continued to present such images long after the growing towns had torn down their walls in order to expand into outlying suburbs, thereby blurring the boundaries between town and country.<sup>89</sup>

Friedrich began incorporating the motif of the city into his work at a time when it was gaining in popularity in general. Yet for all the myriad visual approaches to the city described above, his use of the motif often stands apart from that of his colleagues, and Friedrich often resists participating in the dominant modes of envisioning the city and urban life. His cityscapes, like his landscapes, almost never yield a narrative, nor do they tend towards elaborate description. While he participated in the culture's admiration of

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<sup>88</sup> Jacob, 94-121.

<sup>89</sup> Heinz Buddemeier, *Panorama, Diorama, Photographie. Entstehung und Wirkung neuer Medien im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1970), 22-23.

the medieval town, his fixation on the northern Gothic city never results in the nostalgic, idealized narrative of the past that dominates the paintings of medieval towns by artists like Schinkel and Hintze. Friedrich's Gothic cities are not glimpses of an idealized past world, as they are in the works of so many of other artists of the time, but rather are set in modern times. Just the same, while some of his urban figures are dressed in *altdeutsch* costume, these are contemporary Germans, never historic ones. Yet while Friedrich does not submit to German Romanticism's medievalizing tendency other than in his emphasis on the depiction of Gothic towns and architecture, the fascination with the vibrant consumer culture of the modern town also fails to fix his attention. Despite Friedrich's agility in architectural rendering, descriptive accuracy of tectonic surface and structure is, with one important exception, almost never a primary interest in his city images.<sup>90</sup>

Friedrich's incorporation of the city motif into his paintings most often falls into the genre of the city in a landscape. The embrace of civilization by an accommodating nature, indeed, the peaceful coexistence of the two, is evident in several of his paintings, such as *Meadows near Greifswald*, ca. 1821 (fig. 36), or *Neubrandenburg*, ca. 1816/1817 (fig. 37), in which the towns act as self-contained entities rising dramatically out of nature, like a mountain or other natural phenomenon. These images of northern Gothic towns most often come closest to the precedent of the Dutch townscape of the seventeenth century, without yielding as much intense scrutiny of surface and detail, and retaining in some cases (though certainly not all) a glimmer of the medieval concept of Heavenly

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<sup>90</sup> That exception is the veduta *Marketplace at Greifswald*, 1818 (fig. 38), which will be addressed in Ch. 3. Several of Friedrich's harbor scenes, on the other hand, do reveal a fascination for the structural framework of ships and boats.

Jerusalem. Such negotiation between the secular and the religious underscores a tension between the two that remained an important aspect of Friedrich's production his entire life. Furthermore, his depictions of the northern Gothic town address his sense of belonging, for they reveal a strong attachment to the provincial small town culture of his youth.

Friedrich's images of Dresden, on the other hand, address the landscape artist's discomfort with his choice to live his life in the big city, rather than in the countryside. A tangible rift between town and country is manifest in Friedrich's Dresden images from the 1820s. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 4, the complete and utter separateness of nature and city is forced by the compositional structure of the Dresden pictures, despite the fact that Dresden's self-image was highly invested in its connection *to* nature, and that it had by then already expanded well into the surrounding countryside. The city appears in a distant zone, cut off from the foreground hills of the countryside with no intermediary plane between them.

In the following two chapters I will analyze the motif of the city in Friedrich's work in more depth, first looking at the depiction of Greifswald and the northern German town, and secondly considering the depiction of Dresden and his home in the city. Throughout these next two chapters, Friedrich's immersion in urban culture will be a subtext to the pictorial analysis. Ultimately I intend this emphasis on the urban presence in Friedrich's work to help "denaturalize" Friedrich's connection to the countryside, thus exposing the cultural constructedness of his lifelong project of depicting nature.

## CHAPTER 3

## HEIMAT

“Where are we going then?” “Always homewards.”

Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*<sup>1</sup>

### Roots

In Goethe’s 1813 poem “Gefunden” (Found), the author finds a beautiful flower while walking in the forest, which at first he desires to pluck. The flower makes an appeal to him that it will die if simply pulled, and so instead he digs it up, “roots and all,” to replant outside of his home, where it blooms once again.<sup>2</sup> Goethe thereby suggests that the relationship between man and nature could and should be one of mutual benefit, so long as man approaches nature with respect. But the poem also speaks to the importance of roots, which are crucial for the ability to flourish. Although Goethe has removed the flower from its natural environment, it thrives in its new home, in the author’s garden outside of his house, if only because the writer has carefully tended to its roots. I begin this chapter by considering the notion of roots – which, along with its necessary counterpart, wandering, was so important to German culture of the Romantic era – because these concepts are central also to Friedrich’s work. The uncelebrated northern medieval towns that so often appear on the horizon of his landscapes are the very essence

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<sup>1</sup> “Wo gehen wir denn hin?” “Immer nach Hause.” Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, part two, in *Novalis Werke*, 267.

<sup>2</sup> “Ich grubs mit allen/Den Würzlein aus...” Goethe, “Gefunden” (1813), in *Goethes Werke* vol. 1, *Gedichte. West-östlicher Divan*, 560.

of his own roots, reminders of his emotional home, long after he left to live in the big city.

Roots and uprootedness are intimately tied to notions of belonging, of the feeling of home, permanence, and history. The idea of belonging played a major role in Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in the question of identity and national self-definition. German national identity became a pertinent issue in great part because of the very lack of a defined Germany – i.e. there was no single, unified country that all German speakers claimed as their own (nor even a single, dominant German dialect), but instead a plethora of regions divided by religious and political affiliations. As Isaiah Berlin has pointed out, the concept of belonging came into the discourse of the time primarily through the work of Johann Gottfried Herder, whose writings helped crystalize many of the conceptual preoccupations of Romantic intellectuals.<sup>3</sup> Herder in fact was interested in what made a group of people cohesive, what the forces were that united them. His outlining of the collective consciousness of a community, in other words a kind of national spirit, has come to be seen in more recent times as one of the generating sparks behind the formulation of modern nationalism.<sup>4</sup> But one important distinction between Herder's idea of belonging, and nationalism as reflected through the lens of the twentieth century, was that for Herder, language, culture, custom, and ritual connected people together, not blood or race or even the political state. Whether one terms this nationalism (or as Berlin

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<sup>3</sup> Berlin writes, "The whole notion of being at home, or being cut off from one's natural roots, the whole idea of roots, the whole idea of belonging to a group, a sect, a movement, was invented largely by Herder." *The Roots of Romanticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 60.

<sup>4</sup> See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Darmstadt: Joseph Melzer Verlag, 1966).

does, “populism”), its importance lay in bringing the question of belonging to the table, and defining it as sharing in a common cultural heritage.<sup>5</sup>

The motifs of roots and belonging, of home, homelessness, homesickness, upheaval, and wandering, permeate Romantic writing, philosophy, and art. The desire to feel at home in the world and to belong to it, yet the at the same time the sense of alienation and estrangement from it, are intertwining experiences that define the Romantic condition. Novalis famously declares that “philosophy is actually homesickness – *The desire to be at home everywhere.*”<sup>6</sup> Yet the quest to be at home was, in the Romantic mind, frequently a frustrated one. Georg Philipp Schmidt von Lübeck’s poem “Der Unglückliche” (The Unlucky One) of 1808, for instance, presents a wandering narrator who feels himself to be a stranger in his current place, seeking his beloved land, “where they speak my language,” only to realize that happiness is found wherever he is not – in other words, the feeling of home is always elusive.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Berlin defines populism as “the belief that the value of belonging to a group or a culture, which, for Herder at least, is not political, and is indeed, to some degree, anti-political, different from, and even opposed to, nationalism.” Berlin, “Vico and Herder,” in *Three Critics of the Enlightenment. Vico, Hamann, Herder* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 176.

This does not preclude some amount of cultural chauvinism in Herder, who in his analysis of different cultures and nations tends to ascribe more heroic properties in general to German nations or tribes than to many other peoples – although he credits climate and environmental issues for such discrepancies rather than racial characteristics. See Book 16 in *Ideen*, 423-437.

<sup>6</sup> “Die Philosophie ist eigentlich Heimweh – *Trieb überall zu Hause zu sein.*” Novalis, “Das allgemeinen Brouillon,” in *Novalis Werke*, 491.

<sup>7</sup> “Das Land, das meine Sprache spricht.” Georg Philipp Schmidt von Lübeck, “Der Unglückliche,” first published in 1808 under the title “Des Fremdlings Abendlied;” republished in 1815. The poem was set to music by Franz Schubert in 1816 under the

While the general topic of pleasant wandering in nature and the inevitable return home, as formulated in “Gefunden,” appears in much of Romantic literary and artistic production, the trope of the wanderer who is always searching, never quite at home, or who must go on a longer, sometimes arduous journey in order to eventually rediscover home, remained a potent one for writers of the Romantic era. In several major novels of the period, the character of the wanderer is a youth who leaves the comfort of home and family in the town of his birth, finding many of his adventures through an engagement with the world of nature in which he travels, but to which, it is clear, he never quite belongs. Goethe’s protagonist in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship), 1795, for instance, leaves his family to travel with a theater troupe, learning much along the way but finally finding his way back to a sense of home as he settles down with his son and prepares to marry his true love. Two of Romanticism’s major novels follow through with this theme, Ludwig Tieck’s *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (Franz Sternbald’s Journeys), 1798, and Novalis’s *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 1802. Tieck’s Sternbald, a pupil of Albrecht Dürer, departs from his hometown of Nuremberg for a long voyage through several lands, where he comes across many adventures. As he heads out of the city, his best friend Sebastian sings to him “the old German song of travel,” which promises that one of the rewards of journeying is coming home: “Parents, sister, brother, friend/perhaps also your lover cries,/let them cry, sad and happy/Life changes soon this

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current title. See David L. Mosley, “Wandering as Topic and Trope in Early Nineteenth-Century German Culture,” in Larry H. Peer, ed., *Romanticism Across the Disciplines* (Lanham/New York/ Oxford: University Press of America, 1998), 57-59. The poem is cited there in entirety.

way, soon that,/never without alas! and oh!/Home remains true to you and trusting,/return only as a faithful one,/ travel and departure/bring joys of reunion.”<sup>8</sup> Novalis, meanwhile, sends his protagonist Heinrich off on a long journey far from home, seeking that which remained unattainable, embodied in the form of the desirable but evanescent blue flower.<sup>9</sup> In all of these novels, wandering is associated with adventure, learning, and personal growth, but also struggle, unfulfilled longing, and the desire for the “joys of reunion.”

There is no doubt then that questions of belonging and the search for home weighed heavily upon the minds of Romantics, and it is my contention that this is also true of Caspar David Friedrich, who uprooted himself as a young man from his familial environment, yet never let go of his attachment to the region he considered home. Wandering, of course, has long been recognized as a primary leitmotif of Friedrich’s production. From his earliest paintings to his last, figures journey through the landscape, contemplating nature and their relationship to it. Even when there are no figures in Friedrich’s landscapes, there often is a sense of wandering, of the beholder coming upon

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<sup>8</sup> “...das altdeutsche Lied vom Reisen.” “Eltern, Schwester, Bruder, Freund,/ Auch vielleicht das Liebchen weint,/ Laß sie weinen, traurig und froh/ Wechselt das Leben bald so, bald so,/ Nimmer ohne Ach! und Oh!/ Heimat bleibt dir treu und bieder,/ Kehrst du nur als Treuer wieder, / Reisen und Scheiden/ Bringt des Wiedersehens Freuden.” Tieck, *Franz Sternbald*, in *Werke*, 1:705-706.

<sup>9</sup> Heinrich’s wanderings and the search for the blue flower of course have other, mystical meanings. While related to legends of the search for the Holy Grail, it is inflected with a Romantic desire for self-exploration rather than simply spiritual salvation. See Rosemarie Haag Bletter, “The Interpretation of the Glass Dream – Expressionist Architecture and the History of the Crystal Metaphor,” *Journal for the Society of Architectural Historians* 40, no. 1 (1981): 29-30.

scenes “imagined as pauses within a journey,” as Koerner has argued.<sup>10</sup> Friedrich himself is viewed in the literature essentially as the permanent wanderer, an exile without a true home, who, like the figure in *Monk by the Sea*, struggles in vain to locate himself in the world and find meaning. But alongside such existential queries, the idea of home also plays important roles in his work, and is not necessarily always elusive.

Friedrich’s own attachment to his roots in northern Germany, a region he left at the age of nineteen, is a complicated one, as will be outlined below. His acknowledged devotion to the regions of his childhood has been read primarily as manifesting itself in his visual exploration of the landscapes of northern Germany, specifically the region known as Pomerania. Because the thematics of his production are so closely tied to this landscape, contemporaries such as Johann Jacob Rühle von Lilienstern viewed him essentially as a Nordic artist, one who was “raised in [the north’s] icy air, near the dark flowing chalk coasts of the Baltic sea.”<sup>11</sup> In more recent times, Ludwig Grote has declared that the source of Friedrich’s art is to be located in the place of his origins, identified by him as Rügen and the Pomeranian Baltic coast.<sup>12</sup> Märker also has written of Friedrich’s affinity for the North, not as a strictly delineated geographical location, but rather as a concept bound to the idea of freedom; nevertheless, he has developed his thesis primarily through

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<sup>10</sup> Koerner, 14.

<sup>11</sup> “grossgezogen in ihrer eisigen Luft und an des baltischen Meeres dunkel umfluteten Kreideküsten.” Johann Jacob Rühle von Lilienstern, *Reise mit der Armee im Jahre 1809*, vol 1 (Rudolstadt: n.p., 1810), 42-44; in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 219.

<sup>12</sup> Ludwig Grote, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich. Skizzenbuch aus den Jahren 1806 und 1818*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berlin: Verlag Gebrüder Mann, 1944), 5.

discussion of landscape imagery.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Hilary Anne Braysmith has traced the specific meanings of Pomeranian motifs, e.g. Gothic church ruins within the landscape, suggesting that Friedrich's predilection for Baltic themes reflects a Pomeranian *Weltanschauung*.<sup>14</sup> She furthermore has exposed the Pomeranian intellectual tradition in which, in her words, "the distinctive aspects of an individual's identity were closely bound up with one's place of birth and shared Pomeranian, Swedish-Pomeranian and Baltic culture as distinct from other regions," thus making a case for Friedrich's own self-identity as a Pomeranian.<sup>15</sup>

The use of the northern landscape in Friedrich's art is an essential aspect of his work, but in connecting Friedrich to his origins, scholars have concentrated on the natural landscape of the larger Pomeranian setting, all but ignoring what might more rightfully be called his native environment, the provincial north German town. Although Friedrich might have explored the fields and meadows outside of Greifswald's city walls as a youth, it was the town and its harbor that provided the bulk of the visual stimuli in his young life. When the motif of the northern Gothic town appears in Friedrich's art, it must at some level be referenced back to this environment. Instead, it has been discussed most frequently in either political terms, specifically in the context of a larger, nascent German nationalism, or in religious terms, that is, as conveying Friedrich's eschatological

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<sup>13</sup> Märker, "Geschichte als Natur," 175-188.

<sup>14</sup> Hilary Anne Braysmith, "The Evolving Imagery of Caspar David Friedrich: An Investigation of His German and Baltic Patriotism" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

aspirations. In this chapter, I wish to zero in on localized ideas of belonging and longing in Friedrich's affinity for the familiar architectural framework of the urban environment of his youth. While many scholars will have Friedrich longing for the *Jenseits*, or the afterworld, in his work, I will argue for a reading of his imagery that is firmly rooted in the *Diesseits*, in the physicality of this world, meaning (specifically for this chapter's purposes) his small town *Heimat*.

*Heimat* is one of those German words that requires a translation through paragraphs rather than single words. Although straightforwardly translated as "home," "hometown," or "native country," these phrases cannot give a full account of the complex set of feelings and associations concerning notions of identity and belonging aroused by the use of the word. It is awash with implications of nostalgia, of a sense of that which is lost and irretrievable, and seems inexorably linked to the provincial world view of small-town petite bourgeoisie and village farmers. Although *Heimat's* meaning in today's world is freighted with the burdens of Germany's unchecked, mid-twentieth century nationalism, it has another history that extends back several centuries. The Grimm brothers identify the appearance of *Heimat* in the German language as early as the fifteenth century, and define it simply as "the land or also only the strip of land, in which one is born or lives for a lasting period."<sup>16</sup> As Celia Applegate has pointed out, in the mid-eighteenth century the term shows up rarely in written documents and was in danger of disappearing from use until early Romantic authors, calling for a renewal of the language by bringing back to life

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<sup>16</sup> Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 14, part 2 (Leipzig: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1877): column 865.

ancient or ignored German vocabulary, consciously sought to re-introduce the word into everyday use.<sup>17</sup> Karl Philipp Moritz called it a “venerable expression,” claiming that together with *Vaterland* it suggested an image of “homey tranquility and happiness...which is contained in the lovely sound of the German word *heim* [home].”<sup>18</sup>

The common image of Caspar David Friedrich as someone who withdrew from society, a pantheistic recluse who, alone in his austere studio, re-created his private interactions with nature, would seem to preclude any association with a word suggestive of “homey tranquility and happiness.” I use the term deliberately to disrupt this reductive image of him (and by extension his work) and at the same time to convey a sense of Friedrich’s provincial origins. The small towns of Greifswald and Neubrandenburg, or an imagined city suggestive of the two, appear over and over again in Friedrich’s paintings long after the artist had left northern Germany permanently. Indeed, northern Germany never left his imagination, and one of his last, unfinished paintings is a large canvas of Neubrandenburg, drafted with a precision that belies the fact that it had been a decade since he had last seen the town.<sup>19</sup> While Friedrich lived almost the entirety of his adult life

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<sup>17</sup> Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials. The German Idea of Heimat*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), 7.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>19</sup> *Neubrandenburg Burning*, 1835 (Börsch-Supan/Jähniß cat. no. 427.)

Over the years, Friedrich’s frequent visits to northern Germany yielded many studies of nature, boats, and other nautical motifs, but only a few studies or sketches survive (or were completed) of buildings in Greifswald (the Jakobkirche, 1815, the Nikolaikirche, 1818, and a finished watercolor of the city silhouette, 1818), Neubrandenburg (the Marienkirche, 1809, and a city gate, 1809) and nearby Stralsund (the city hall, 1815).

in Dresden, a *Rezidentstadt* that was larger, more important, and more glamorous than any town in Pomerania, it was nevertheless the medieval towns of his youth that became the conveyor of meaning in his paintings.

The small, northern medieval town remained, for the artist, the essence of *Heimat*, the place he posited as home, even while he himself was uprooted from this environment. Despite Friedrich's early wish to live in the countryside, he envisioned *Landleben* – life in the country – only a few times in his paintings.<sup>20</sup> More often, the countryside is presented as something to be visited, to be contemplated in a way that suggests the beholder as outsider, someone who is not native to the land. On the other hand, it is the towns in Friedrich's paintings that are posited as the dwelling places of almost all of the figures who appear in his landscapes, for rather than monks, hermits or peasants, most often these are wanderers in urban bourgeois dress. The wandering townsmen belong not to nature, to which they come as visitors, but to civilization, i.e. the small medieval towns that are depicted as objects of contemplation in Friedrich's paintings just as surely as the elements of nature are. Several of Friedrich's paintings explicitly conceive of "home" as a town toward which travelers journey, e.g. *Neubrandenburg*, 1816/17 (fig. 37); the lost *City with Moonrise and Wanderer*, ca. 1815; and *On the Sailboat*, 1818/19 (fig. 2).

Northern Germany (or perhaps more appropriately western Pomerania) was a region Friedrich proudly proclaimed as his own – this was his native cultural heritage, and it is important to stress its separate identity from other German territories, particularly

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<sup>20</sup> For example, there are the two pleasant little scenes of farmhouses either near Greifswald or on Rügen, *Flat Country Landscape*, and *Landscape with Windmills*, both ca. 1822/23 (figs. 42-43).

Catholic Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, or Austria, or even a larger, theoretical pan-Germanic state. The Baltic region where Friedrich grew up was a stronghold of Pietism, a place of farmers, fishermen, craftsmen, and sailors. There were no major urban centers, but rather a consortium of little ones such as Greifswald, Stralsund, and Stettin, most of which had very little aristocratic presence and were governed instead by middle-class citizens. The region had its own dialects that were difficult for outsiders to comprehend, its own cultural heritage, including folk tales and songs, and distinct ethnic backgrounds. Its landscape, quiet, flat, and to a great extent bereft of forests or wooded areas, had long been ignored (with the exception of the island Rügen) by observers of nature. Few travelers bothered to include its territories and towns among their stops, in part because it was so far away from anything else of greater significance.

Friedrich's close identification with and enduring interest in the region are evident not only in his many visual representations of it. In a famous letter from 1814, he addressed Rügen-born political agitator Ernst Moritz Arndt as "*Landsmann*" or compatriot, signing off also as "Your Compatriot."<sup>21</sup> He jokingly (but tellingly) wrote to his brother Heinrich that his Saxon wife, named Caroline Bommer, perhaps in reality was a "Pommern" (Pomeranian), her ancestors having mistakenly switched the P to a B when spelling the family name; and proudly related that at any rate she ate herrings "as though a born *Pommern*."<sup>22</sup> At some point, Friedrich wrote a fairy tale that derived almost directly

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<sup>21</sup> Friedrich to Ernst Moritz Arndt, 12 March 1814, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen* 24.

<sup>22</sup> "...als wäre sie eine geborne Pommern..." Friedrich to Christian Friedrich, 26 March 1818, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 37.

from the folk tales he heard on Rügen.<sup>23</sup> In 1817-1818 he enthusiastically prepared and submitted designs for a new interior decoration of a church in Stralsund, Greifswald's closest neighbor, in response to a request from the Stralsund city council, confirmation of the close ties he kept with the region.<sup>24</sup> He named his son Gustav Adolf, born in 1824, after the Swedish king who until 1815 was sovereign leader of Pomerania (an act which indicates the slippery notion of "German" identity at this time and also sheds light on the complexity of Friedrich's liberal-democratic leanings). Between 1803 and 1826, the artist traveled five times to northern Germany, not necessarily an easy feat considering the travel conditions of the time and Friedrich's limited income. In one letter to brother Adolf, he explained, almost with pride, that he made his wife cry by suggesting they might never return to Greifswald again.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the 1826 trip was the last one the artist made, as he headed all the way up to Rügen to take a cure during an extended illness, although there were closer and easier locations he could have chosen.

As a "Pommern" in Dresden, Friedrich would have been marked as a provincial outsider through his dialect and accent. Indeed, his early writings reveal a colloquial, unlettered style.<sup>26</sup> Friedrich recognized, even embraced his provincialism. "You know,

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<sup>23</sup> Ohara, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Friedrich wrote to his brother Christian about the invitation from the city council to create designs for the church. See undated letter from 1817 in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen* 33.

<sup>25</sup> Friedrich to Adolf Friedrich, 13 May 1820, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> There is a distinct shift in the tone of Friedrich's writing around 1808-1810 to a more refined, polished prose, probably reflective of his immersion in the highly-cultured

dear Köthe,” he wrote to a professor, “that I am not one of the erudite artists of our time....I am not one of the eloquent painters of which there are now so many so, capable of saying twenty-four times...what art is, while they were not capable in 24 years of showing a single time in their works of art what art is.”<sup>27</sup> This feistiness is that of the self-acknowledged provincial, who in the end knows that he knows more than the highly-educated elite. The quarrel with artists who seemed to act on their intellect rather than their feeling permeates Friedrich’s long, unpublished manuscript, the so-called “Remarks on a collection of paintings, mostly by living or recently deceased artists.”<sup>28</sup> In it, Friedrich castigates contemporary artists for, among other things, consulting the opinion of others too much rather than relying on innate ideas, or for trying to think up a composition rather than feel it.

Friedrich’s provincialism is also evident in the fact that he was one of the few of the German Romantics who refused to leave Germany, either physically or in the subjects he chose to paint. The one exception was his time spent in Copenhagen, but even that, as indicated in the previous chapter, was a town linked in many ways, in culture and atmosphere, to the region of his youth. Of all the known paintings that Friedrich

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sphere of Dresden. See Börsch-Supan, 13; and Ohara, III.

<sup>27</sup> “Sie wissen lieber Köthe, daß ich keiner von den hochgelehrten Künstlern unserer Zeit bin....Ich bin keiner von den sprechenden Malern davon es jetzt so viele giebt so im stande sind vierundzwanzigmal zu sagen was kunst ist werent (sic) sie nicht instande gewesen in 24 Jahren ein einzig mal in ihren Bildwerken zu zeigen was Kunst ist.” Friedrich to Professor Friedrich August Köthe, January 1811, in Hinz, *Unbekannte Dokumente*, 48.

<sup>28</sup> Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 85-130. See Ch. 1, footnote 18.

completed, very few depict landscapes that are not to be found within a small radius encompassing what today are areas of north eastern and central Germany, western Poland, and the Czech Republic, all of which were part of the greater German territories in the early 1800s.<sup>29</sup> Italy, the dream of so many of his compatriots, who longed for its promised glimpse of antiquity and its plethora of historical and artistic treasures, could not lure Friedrich into experiencing its delights. It is not that Friedrich had no inclination to travel there because of his profound love of homeland or some intense dislike of Italy (as was perhaps the case with France, for obvious wartime reasons), but rather that he could not envision the effects such a trip would make upon himself if he had to return. To his friend and fellow artist J. L. G. Lund, who asked him to come visit him in Rome in 1816, he wrote:

Thanks for the friendly invitation to come to Rome, but I quite frankly admit my sensibility was never drawn to it. But now, since I have browsed through a few of the drawing books of Herr Faber, I'm almost of a different opinion. I can now certainly imagine traveling to Rome and living there. But the thought of returning north from there I cannot imagine without shuddering; in my mind that means as much as burying oneself alive. To stand still I can put up with, without grumbling, if that is what fate wills; but turning backwards is contrary to my nature, my whole being rises up against it."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The exceptions include two polar shipwreck paintings – the lost *Shipwreck off the Coast of Greenland*, ca. 1821 (Börsch-Supan/Jähniġ cat. no. 295), and *The Polar Sea*, ca. 1823/24 (fig. 5); several Swiss landscapes – the destroyed *High Mountains (Swiss Landscape)*, ca. 1824 (Börsch-Supan/Jähniġ cat. no. 317), *The Watzmann*, 1824-25 (Börsch-Supan/Jähniġ cat. no. 330), and *Landscape with Mountain Lake in the Morning*, n.d. (Börsch-Supan/Jähniġ cat. no. 382); and the mediterranean *Temple of Juno at Agrigento* from 1830 (Börsch-Supan/Jähniġ cat. no. 381), a work so out of character for Friedrich that its authenticity was long questioned. In contrast to almost all of Friedrich's other works, none of these paintings depict regions the artist ever visited.

<sup>30</sup> "Dank für die freundliche Einladung, nach Rom zu kommen, aber ich gestehe frei, daß mein Sinn nie dahin getrachtet. Abert jetzt, da ich einige der Zeichenbücher des

What could it mean that Friedrich would feel himself buried alive if he had to return to Germany after a trip to Italy? By 1816 he had found his niche in painting the landscape of northern and central Germany. To go to Italy would mean rethinking his whole project, which might well result in his working in a mode he saw practiced all too often by others who had succumbed to the lure of antiquity. This is what is most commonly gleaned from Friedrich's letter, but the fear of "turning backwards" might also be read as having other implications for Friedrich's life.

Friedrich's decision not to go to Italy because of the horror of having to return north is not quite parallel to his decision to leave Greifswald permanently, since of course he did continue to visit Greifswald and remained emotionally attached to the town, which played an important role in his subject matter. But the thinking behind the decision – that to go backwards after a life-altering experience would be intolerable – may illuminate the artist's decision to settle in Dresden rather than Greifswald, for it is possible that Friedrich also realized that he might have been "buried alive" had he gone back to live his life out in the town he grew up in. While Friedrich did not uproot himself from Germany to other lands, it is true, on the other hand, that he willingly left Greifswald. Friedrich was the only

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Herrn Faber durchblättert, bin ich fast andern Sinnes geworden. Ich kann mir es jetzt recht schön denken, nach Rom zu reisen und dort zu leben. Aber den Gedanken, von da wieder zurück nach Norden, könnte ich nicht ohne Schaudern denken; das hieße nach meiner Vorstellung soviel als sich selbst begraben. Stillezustehen lasse ich mir gefallen, ohne Murren, wenn es das Schicksal so will; aber rückwärtsgehen ist meiner Natur zuwider, dagegen empört sich mein ganzes Wesen." Friedrich to J. L. G. Lund, 11 July 1816, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 32.

one of his large family to move so far away to a large city with no nearby relatives.<sup>31</sup> Here Friedrich's complicated relationship to his home becomes clear, because it was only by leaving this small town and its provincialism that he was able to achieve his artistic ambition. As noted in Chapter 2, Friedrich's father was a soap and candlestick maker, a member of the petty bourgeoisie. In Greifswald, Adolph Friedrich applied for, and became, a *Bürger* or citizen of the "second class," a step below merchants, doctors and lawyers, but above fishermen, sailors, porters, cobblers and day laborers.<sup>32</sup> But in Dresden, Friedrich (now an academically trained professional, the only one in his family) transcended this particular class. There his circle of friends and acquaintances included prominent political agitators, artists, writers, scientists, and even members of the aristocracy. Friedrich's trajectory from Greifswald to Copenhagen to Dresden demonstrates that he was well aware of the limitations he would face staying in his childhood home, which may have offered him family and familiar comfort, but could not provide the environment necessary for his artistic career to thrive.<sup>33</sup>

Friedrich's reputation as an artist whose personality bordered on the anti-social conflicts with the image of someone cognizant of the limitations, both social and

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<sup>31</sup> Two siblings who also left Greifswald settled in familiar territory: a brother moved to Neubrandenburg and a sister to Breesen, a village outside of Neubrandenburg. The three other living brothers remained in Greifswald, including the engraver Christian, who traveled extensively 1808, including a trip to Paris, before returning home.

<sup>32</sup> Friedrich's father received the Greifswald citizenship in 1763. Horst-Diether Schroeder, "Caspar David Friedrichs Elternhaus," in Hannelore Gärtner, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich. Leben Werk Diskussion* (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1977), 197.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

professional, of small-town life. But it cannot be denied that by moving to a town like Dresden, Friedrich almost automatically elevated his social circle, which in turn only could have helped his career. Friedrich's own family demonstrated an awareness of the importance of location and social connections. His father moved to Greifswald most likely in search of better economic conditions, which made him somewhat unusual for a resident of a small town.<sup>34</sup> And over the course of the births of their ten children, Adolph and Dorothea Friedrich began to replace the craftsmen (second and third class citizens) who had acted as godparents to their offspring with merchants, pastors' wives, and even a doctor, all *Bürger* of the first class, in a manner that suggests their own social aspirations.<sup>35</sup> This is not to claim that Friedrich himself had aggressive ambitions for upward mobility; indeed all indications are that he had no great sympathy for the ways of upper classes. But at some level he must have realized the usefulness of social connections in earning a living as an artist, since a large percentage of his own patronage came from the ranks of the aristocracy, and sufficient income was a constant source of tension in his life, especially after his marriage.

That Friedrich was conscious of his need to move on, away from his roots, is demonstrated by the fact that he actually left his hometown twice. The first time was in 1796 when he went to Copenhagen to study, since he could not receive sufficient artistic training at the Greifswald University. The second time he left was in 1803, after having

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<sup>34</sup> Greifswald apparently had no soapmaker until Friedrich's father arrived, and the prospect of no competition may have been the primary motive behind his move. *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>35</sup> See *Ibid.*, 200-201.

returned from Dresden for an eighteen-month stay. When he left the second time, it was a permanent move back to Saxony. Some scholars have suggested that Friedrich might have suffered from a failed love affair in Dresden when he first arrived there, and went home to recuperate in the comfort of familiar surroundings, citing as “evidence” the melancholic images of women from his sketchbook of ca. 1801-1802.<sup>36</sup> I would suggest another possibility – that, as a young artist fresh from the academy, Friedrich was having difficulty earning a living and needed to return to where he could be supported financially while he figured out what exactly he planned to do with his career and collected a body of images in his sketchbooks that would serve his production. He certainly did not gain professional recognition until 1803, after he returned to Dresden and had entered several sepias into the annual art exhibition there, and no work of his is known to have sold until after he left Greifswald the second time. In the end, Greifswald, although it offered him family and comfortable familiarity, as well as proximity to his beloved Rügen, could not keep him. Friedrich’s two departures from Greifswald are a sign of his personal ambition, an acknowledgment that the town was not enough.

Nonetheless, Friedrich’s repeated depicting of the northern cityscape, like his rendering of the northern landscape, indicates that the environment of his youth continued to occupy a considerable part of his painterly imagination. For even while he lived as an adult in a city known for its architectural majesty, whose proximity to the artist’s workplace would have made it an easy model for his town motifs, Friedrich drew more

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<sup>36</sup> Hans Dickel, *Caspar David Friedrich in seiner Zeit, Zeichnungen der Romantik und des Biedermeier* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta humaniora, 1991), 35.

frequently upon the familiar (but uncelebrated) architecture of his distant hometown. He envisioned the small-town urban environment not only as the site of his familial roots (*Marketplace at Greifswald*, 1818, fig. 38), but also as the home to return to after a walk through the countryside (*Neubrandenburg*, fig. 37), as the desired destination for bourgeois travelers (*On the Sailboat*, fig. 2), as the model for the idealized city (*Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*, ca. 1820, fig. 18), and as the primary element of a picturesque vista (*Meadows Near Greifswald*, ca. 1821, fig. 36), a sight to behold with the same amount of admiration as the nature that surrounded it. Dresden, the environment of his adulthood, and the only other town consistently to make it into his oeuvre, is never layered with these same meanings. Friedrich's rendering of the landscape of the north has been addressed fairly extensively, but in the next sections I will present case studies of works in which he took up as subject matter the towns of his *Heimat*, the place where he belonged culturally and linguistically, but from which he had uprooted himself to pursue his career. While Friedrich's use of the motif of the northern town cannot be viewed entirely as an autobiographical project in the manner of Constable's use of the landscape of East Bergholt, there nevertheless is a self-referential aspect to his repeated use of the familiar forms of his childhood environment, as if he insists on his continued belonging to it despite his self-chosen exile.

### Going Home

Friedrich's linking of *Heimat* to the small Gothic town can be demonstrated by considering several pictures in which he places figures who are themselves returning home

or are already “home.” In general, two types of figures appear in Friedrich’s works: the fishermen, sailors, and occasional shepherds or farmers who work with and in nature, and are thus bound to the land or sea; and the strangers to the land who have come to contemplate it, whether monks or urban wanderers. Friedrich’s use of staffage in this way is not out of the ordinary for the time, and indeed, as Sumowski has pointed out, seems to reflect the division of acceptable figure types outlined by Friedrich Schelling’s *The Philosophy of Art* (1802).<sup>37</sup> Schelling argues that “the people in a landscape either must be portrayed as indigenous, as autochthonous, or they must be portrayed as strangers or wanderers recognizable as such by their general disposition, or even clothing, all of which is alien in relationship to the landscape itself.”<sup>38</sup> Friedrich, who himself approached the countryside as a stranger, more often includes the latter type of figure within his landscapes, and their appearance openly declares that the scene depicted is something to be experienced, a view worthy of being contemplated.

The exact character of the relationship between man and nature in Friedrich’s landscapes has engendered some amount of debate. Do his landscapes convey a bourgeois longing for reunion with an estranged nature, do they actively thwart that desire by depicting a permanent state of estrangement, or do they in fact posit the unity of man and

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<sup>37</sup> Sumowski, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, ed, trans. and intro. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 146. “Die Menschen in der Landschaft müssen...entweder als gleichsam auf der Stelle gewachsen, als Autochthonen geschildert werden, oder sie müssen auch durch die im Verhältnis zu der Landschaft fremde Art ihres Wesens, Aussehens, ja selbst der Bekleidung, als Fremde, als Wanderer dargestellt werden.” *Schellings Werke* suppl. vol. 3, *Zur Philosophie der Kunst 1803-1817*, ed. Manfred Schröter (Munich: C. H. Beck and R. Oldenbourg, 1959), 197.

nature? The inclusion of the *Rückenfigur* who actively looks at the scene, a pictorial conceit dating back centuries but given new intensity by Friedrich, often makes explicit the difficulty inherent in answering this question.<sup>39</sup> For instance, the gesture of the figure in *Woman Before the Setting Sun*, 1818 (fig. 39), who holds her arms wide open to embrace the view of the sun falling behind a mountain, its rays mirrored in the crown of her head, suggests the harmony between the two; yet at the same time, the path the woman has come along stops abruptly at the edge of the field, and there is an unbridgeable distance between the figure in the foreground and the remote destination of her gaze, which is partially blocked from the painting's beholder.<sup>40</sup> Many of Friedrich's landscapes are characterized by this paradoxical combination of unity and distancing, of the beholder being invited into the landscape only at some point to be blocked from complete access.<sup>41</sup>

Yet the question of belonging and estrangement needs to be reconfigured when the gaze of the urban *Rückenfigur* is directed not at pure landscape, but at the figure's urban

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<sup>39</sup> See Sabine Strahl-Grosse, *Staffage Begriffsgeschichte und Erscheinungsform*, (Munich: tuduv, 1991); and Koerner's discussion on the *Rückenfigur*, 162-166. The conventional *Rückenfigur* gestures in a way to acknowledge the landscape, and in one popular variant, is depicted as an artist taking down the scene in drawing, e.g. Lucas van Valckenborch's *View of Linz*, 1593 (Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main), in which an artist with sketchbook in hand and his companion sit on a hill that overlooks the valley in which the city of Linz lies, with the panorama comprising a large undulating mountain range far beyond the town.

<sup>40</sup> This feeling of harmony, of course, can be seen as being predicated primarily on the correlation of nature, fecundity, and the feminine, especially given that the point at which the sun's rays begin to emanate is parallel to the woman's womb.

<sup>41</sup> Koerner at the same time has noted the paradoxical function of the *Rückenfigur* "as site of both our identification with, and our isolation from, the painted landscape." Koerner, 217.

home. Despite the emphasis on wandering and continued searching in Friedrich's work, the concept of "home" is not an alien one to his production. Offerings of refuge and shelter in otherwise formidable landscapes, and depictions of cozy domiciles set comfortably into natural surroundings occur frequently. *Church Ruins in the Forest*, 1831 (fig. 40), for instance, is an image of an unstable, dilapidated hut that nevertheless serves as a welcome place of rest for the two men who build a fire outside of it. Despite its humbleness, it becomes more valuable than the imposing ruins of a brick church behind it. The tiny cottage in *Morning*, ca. 1821 (fig. 41), with its smoking chimney, emits an inviting warmth as the place to return at the end of the day for the fisherman out on the river, a theme Friedrich repeated in a few years later in *Solitary House in the Pine Forest*, ca. 1825 (fig. 42). And the pendants *Flat Country Landscape* and *Landscape with Windmills*, ca. 1822-23 (figs. 43-44), present a rustic idyll of farm life, with sparkling white houses that play off against the brilliant green of the land. But such dwellings are not conceived necessarily as the domain of the wanderer; instead, they are part of the viewing experience of the landscape, the object of the beholder's gaze. The cozy farm houses and rustic dwellings are part of the otherness of the landscape, not a site of belonging for the urban *Rückenfigur*, and in none of Friedrich's paintings do such figures contemplate them. It is rather the small medieval town that is offered to the gaze of the urban *Rückenfigur*: between 1815 and 1820, Friedrich completed at least five paintings (two now lost) that envision an encounter between townspeople and their town.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Besides *Neubrandenburg*, there are *On the Sailboat*, *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*, and the two lost paintings *Balcony in front of the Cathedral in Twilight*, 1816 (Börsch-Supan/Jähniq cat. no. 219), and *View of Braunschweig*, 1818 (Börsch-

Friedrich's understanding of the small town as a place of home, a place of comfortable belonging and longing, is evident in the following passage in his diary, which he recorded in 1803:

I stepped just at this moment out of a dark, gloomy forest and found myself on a sizable hill. Before me in the valley, surrounded by fertile hills, it lay quite cheerfully there, the pretty little city, and in the evening glimmer the newly covered slate tower gleamed. The Elster wound through the lush meadows full of flowers, quite lovely to see. And behind the hills lay the mountains, and behind the mountains rose up cliffs, and so lay cliff upon cliff in a row, until far out into the airy distance. Full of great joy I stood there long and looked out into the beautiful region, saw how the herds of cattle and sheep approached the little town, saw how the industrious harvester with the gleaming scythe rushed toward [the town] Elsterwerda.<sup>66</sup>

Friedrich then rushes toward the town, remembering an encounter with a pretty girl he had experienced several months before, and walks through its quiet streets looking for her. He sees her through a window and smiles at her before she turns shyly away, blushing with embarrassment. The town, envisioned as the place to return after a day in nature for both Friedrich and the harvester, here embodies desire as well.

While the above diary entry does not match as exactly any of Friedrich's city

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Supan/Jähniŕ cat. no. 226), both of which were said to have backwards figures looking at the view.

<sup>66</sup> "Ich trat soeben aus einem dunklen, finsternen Wald und befand mich auf einer ziemlichen Anhöhe. Vor mir im Tale, von fruchtbaren Hügeln umgeben, lag sie gar freudlich da, die niedliche Stadt, und im Abendganz blinkte der neu gedeckte Schieferturm. Durch die üppige blumenreiche Wiese schlängelte sich die Elster, gar lieblich zu schauen. Und hinter den Hügeln lagen die Berge, und hinter den Bergen ragten Felsen hervor, und so lag Fels an Fels gereiht, bis weit hinaus in luftige Ferne. Voll hoher Freude stand ich lange da und sah hinaus in die schöne Gegend, sah, wie die Herden der Rinder und Schafe dem Städtchen sich naheten, sah, wie die fleißigen Schnitter mit den blinkenden Sensen Elsterwerda zueilten." Diary entry [1803], in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 81.

silhouette paintings, the general tone of the passage, in which the town becomes an eminently viewable part of the landscape and acts as a desired destination, certainly evokes at least one of them. In *Neubrandenburg* (fig. 37), two wanderers find themselves before a magnificent view of the town with the soft hills of a small mountain range rising behind it and a gentle meadow in front of it. Walking sticks in hand, they have come along a path out of a darker area just off to the right, perhaps some woods, indicated by the scrubby, dense underbrush surrounding the path, and they are absorbed by the drama of the scene, which is marvelous enough to stop the men in their tracks. A bright orange strip of sunrise and thick white clouds emerge like rays from behind the mountains and cityscape, birds fly in formation over the town, and dark, gray clouds rendered in active brushwork churn away in the upper sky. The tower of a church ascends far above the mountain tops, the beauty of its architectonic symmetry set off against the organic puffs of clouds behind it. Although their differences are made clear enough through this juxtaposition, nature and culture nevertheless are placed on the same level of view-worthiness.

Despite being identifiable as Neubrandenburg, it is not a true portrait of city and environs that Friedrich has given, for the town has been altered for visual effect. As Friedrich Scheven writes: "The landscape that the artist places in front of the silhouette is [...] a 'dream landscape,' in which poetry and truth are both given. Poetry prevails. Therefore it is in the end pointless to attempt to try to pinpoint exactly where the artist stood when drawing the town and to try to name every depicted building."<sup>67</sup> Among the

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<sup>67</sup> Friedrich Scheven, "Neubrandenburg im Leben und Werk Caspar David Friedrichs," *Carolinum* 32, no. 45 (1966): 25.

changes to the town's buildings, for instance, is a Gothic high tower added to the main church, the Marienkirche, which gives the town skyline its most striking feature.<sup>68</sup> The artist has similarly tinkered with the environs of Neubrandenburg, adding mountains where none exist, and placing a large megalithic grave in a region where none was known to have been. Thus the painting is not a simple topographic rendering. Instead, Friedrich heightens the visual appeal of the end destination, as though to beckon the men toward it, even as they stop to enjoy the spectacle. The pretty little town is contained within its walls, a coherent, organic whole that can be perceived easily with one quick glance. Embedded in its beautiful setting, it is surrounded by a ring of trees that covers up the city walls, softening the defensive nature of the fortifications. But the greenery opens up at one point to reveal one of the town's handsome Gothic gates, positioned parallel to the picture plane, an assurance of access and entry, and a welcoming element. Without it, the city would appear closed off entirely behind the screen of trees.

Friedrich's two men are dressed alike in the floppy hats and cloaks that signify the *altdeutsch* style of clothing discussed in Chapter 2. It is the exact same outfit worn by the two figures in *Wanderers by the Sea*, ca. 1817 (fig. 45), by one of the figures in *Two Men by the Sea at Moonrise*, 1817 (fig. 46), and by both in *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*, 1819 (fig. 47), and it is similar to the dress of wanderers in a number of other works. Wilhelm von Kügelgen, son of Friedrich's friend and fellow artist Gerhard von Kügelgen, described the *altdeutsch* uniform and its meaning in his memoirs:

It was certainly a wondrous spirit that held the minds of young people at that

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

time... I now also was wild about the return of the fatherland to its distant past, namely to its traditional virtues of honesty and loyalty, of faith, courage, and chasteness. And since I believed I recognized these qualities in those who dressed themselves as *altdeutsch*, then I also dressed myself in such a costume, in order to bear witness to my own virtue and to be recognized by other like-minded people. Down-to-earth Rosa [Kügelgen's friend] of course said: even if he must admit that we, with our long hair and shaved necks, really were old Germans and forefathers from distant times, he still did not know that such people had never deceived and lied; therefore he did not understand where we got the tremendous confidence in our clothes. I was not offended...and went running around totally uninhibited before his and everyone's eyes in the most ridiculous masquerade. An incredible velvet beret on top of long flowing hair, a short black cape with a wide shirt collar laid over it, and an iron chain, of course no sword, but still a dagger, whose ebony handle sat on a silver skull: that was my outfit.<sup>69</sup>

The dress, Kügelgen explains, was worn by students, whether *Bursche* (university students), or students at the academy of art like himself. (Similar attire was worn also by German artists living in Italy, who did not necessarily agitate for political change, but rather were convinced that they were indicating their orientation to the sensibility of Germany's greatest era.) In Kügelgen's account, the outfit at first was nothing more than a fashion statement of the youth that shocked older generations. His father shook his head

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<sup>69</sup> "Es war allerdings ein wunderlicher Geist, der damals in den Köpfen der jungen Leute spukte... schwärmte ich auch jetzt noch für Rückbildung des Vaterlandes zu seiner Vorzeit, namentlich zu deren traditionellen Tugenden der Ehrlichkeit und Treue, des Glaubens, der Tapferkeit und Keuschheit, und da ich diese Eigenschaften an denen zu erkennen glaubte, die sich altdeutsch trugen, so legte auch ich solche Tracht an, um meine Tugend zu bekennen und Gleichgesinnten kenntlicher zu sein. Der nüchterne Rosa sagte zwar: wenn er auch zugeben müsse, daß wir mit unseren langen Haaren und kahlen Hälsen wirkliche Altdeutsche und Erzväter aus grauer Vorzeit seien, so sei es ihm doch unbekannt, daß solche nie getrogen und gelogen hätten, daher er nicht begriffe, wo wir das ungemaine Zutrauen zu unseren Rücken hernähmen. Ich nahm es ihm nicht übel...und fuhr fort, vor seinen und aller Leute Augen ganz unbefangen in der lächerlichsten Maskerade umherzulaufen. Ein phantastische Sammetbarett auf lang abwallendem Haar, eine kurze schwarze Schaupe mit breit darüber gelegtem Hemdkragen, und an einer eisernen Kette, zwar kein Schwert, doch einen Dolch, dessen Ebenholzgriff auf silbernem Totenkopf saß: das war mein Aufzug." Kügelgen, 385.

in wonder and confusion (“It is really something else, this brand new way of young people!”) though he let it go; his mother hated the look, and berated him constantly about it.<sup>70</sup> It was only when the whole costume – long hair, beret, and cloak – was banned in Dresden as demagogic, following the murder of the conservative author August von Kotzebue by a student in 1819, that it began to take on a more serious meaning, as the consequences of life under restrictive measures became clear.<sup>71</sup> Kugelgen reluctantly gave up the *altddeutsch* costume, because, he wrote, as son of a professor, naturally he had to go along with believing that the style no longer was a sign of human and patriotic virtue, but was stained by an evil deed.<sup>72</sup> Unhappily shorn of his locks and once again in “philistine clothing,” he stayed at home for weeks before he felt comfortable heading outside.

The politically-charged history of the clothing, which Friedrich acknowledged in his half-joking comments that his *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* were plotting demagogic activities, have led to a general consensus among scholars that the artist’s own pro-democratic sentiments (or at least hopes for a new Germany) are mirrored in his repeated insistence on clothing his figures in such costume. Yet at the same time, it is a strangely passive demonstration of conviction, for any political statement implied by such clothing is always overshadowed in Friedrich’s works by the other visual tasks at hand. If

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<sup>70</sup> “Es ist doch was besonders um diese nagelneue Auflage von jungen Leuten!” *Ibid.*, 386-387.

<sup>71</sup> The ban in Dresden was a response to the Carlsbad Decrees, which linked the fashion and students to “demagogic” activities and banned the costume in Austria and other areas.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

the two men in *Neubrandenburg* are indeed “demagogues,” they are at the same time absorbed in a very respectable and popular activity of the day: the *Spaziergang* (walk) out into the countryside to seek views of nature. At this point in their journey, they have come across one particularly stunning scene that incorporates both nature and their hometown. Several of Friedrich’s paintings with figures in *altdeutsch* dress were acquired by aristocratic patrons, suggesting that the works were read at the time in ways other than political.

Whether or not their berets and cloaks are strong political statements, the only “certain” information that can be gleaned from the way the two men are dressed is that they are part of a population that would have worn such outfits, i.e. residents of the town, not peasants or farmers who work the land. In this much at least, they are similar to staffage found in other landscapes of the day, such as the bourgeois couple in Schinkel’s *Landscape near Pichelswerder*, 1814 (fig. 48), standing on a hill overlooking a view of the village Pichelswerder outside of Berlin, spread out along the horizon line. Yet even here a critical difference from *Neubrandenburg* can be perceived: on top of the hill, with a row of trees below them, the figures look out at the sight of the village on the horizon not as a destination to reach but as part of a panoramic view they have come across during their walk. Indeed, the village is too far away to recommend itself as the direction in which the pair are heading (and there is no middle ground in the painting to even allow for this as a possibility), and the refinement of their clothing suggests anyway that they are Berliners, not villagers. The wanderers of *Neubrandenburg*, on the other hand, are walking along a path that suggests a return to the walled-in town, and the distance

between the figures and the town is bridgeable. The object of their gaze appears not as something permanently elusive to them, but as their implied destination, i.e. their home.

While the pair in *Neubrandenburg* have paused on their journey to contemplate the view of their destination, the couple in the large oil *On the Sailboat* (fig. 2), actively head toward theirs. Holding hands expectantly, they look toward the city along the horizon where their vessel is heading. The young man sports the velvet beret and long hair that signifies the *altdeutsch* dress, yet, as in *Neubrandenburg*, specifically political intentions are muted by other concerns. Painted a year after Friedrich's sudden marriage to Caroline Brommer, *On the Sailboat* is one of his most domestic paintings, in its implications of union and common journey of the young couple, who leisurely lounge on the boat's prow as they head to the city. Most scholars agree that the medium-sized picture represents Friedrich and his wife, if not literally (the long hair of the male figure was in fact a style that Friedrich himself did not wear), then at least as a suggestion of the couple's recent "embarkation" in matrimony and perhaps even their honeymoon trip to Greifswald.<sup>73</sup> Or, as Wieland Schmied puts it, the two "have just begun their life's journey together....aboard the 'ship of life.'"<sup>74</sup> The city in the distance is not specifically identifiable but rather has a generic presence to it. Its largest building is a massive two-towered Gothic cathedral, and several other smaller spires, towers, and a squat, domed building line the horizon. Sabine Rewald has tried to concretize the location, identifying the body of water as the

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<sup>73</sup> See for instance Ohara, 232; and Sabine Rewald's catalogue entry in Rewald, Robert Rosenblum, and Boris I. Asvarishch, *The Romantic Vision of Caspar David Friedrich* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990), 48.

<sup>74</sup> Schmied, 84.

Greifswalder Bodden that divides Greifswald from the nearby island of Rügen, and suggesting that the town depicted is an amalgamation of Dresden, Greifswald and Stralsund.<sup>75</sup> Yet the city is painted in very pale tones, with only a few details visible, so that the buildings are dematerialized and do not lend themselves to such specific identification (especially with any of Dresden's buildings). And while its position on the water is reminiscent of Greifswald, it is not an exact match, for Greifswald does not sit directly on the Bodden, but rather on a smaller river tributary.

Börsch-Supan has suggested that the city represents the afterworld and the couple are on a death journey to the other side, but such grim thoughts seem unlikely coming from Friedrich during the happiest period of his life, and nothing in the picture itself suggests such a reading.<sup>76</sup> The painting resists a narrative in the sense of a real identity for the couple or in any specific story of the boat ride – whether a day-long boating trip, or the end of a longer journey from elsewhere. Instead, expectation – and not just longing – is the prominent sentiment of the painting, for implied in the painting is the couple's eventual arrival at the city. Such a reading is intensified by the couple's gesture of grasping each other's hands, signifying unity of purpose, common goal and shared journey. The couple does not man the boat; instead, the two are consumers of the journey, enjoying the sight before them as it comes gradually into focus. They lean forward for an unobstructed, commanding view of the skyline (unlike the painting's beholder, who can see the "view" only between ropes and mast and the ship's passengers).

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<sup>75</sup> Rewald, catalogue entry, *Romantic Vision of C. D. Friedrich*, 48.

<sup>76</sup> Börsch-Supan/Jähnig, 353.

The suggestion of movement makes the approach to the coastline livelier. The boat almost bursts into the picture plane, as Friedrich has cropped the image in an unusual manner, cutting off the vessel on all sides, top and bottom, left and right. The steep angle at which the boat is depicted conjures up the upward swing of the bow as it glides through the water.<sup>77</sup> The visualization of motion differentiates these *Rückenfiguren* from others who stand completely still in front of the view. It links the couple to the object of their gaze, the city, by implying their eventual contact with it. This is one of Friedrich's most cheerful pictures, with its promise of domestic bliss. Despite the tension of the ropes and curved sails, much of the rest of the picture gives only a sense of calm. The water ahead of the boat with its cargo of contented lovers holding hands is smooth, free of waves. The two here head homewards, to the medieval harbor town that beckons them forward.

While the pair in *Neubrandenburg* contemplate the view of city and landscape from afar, and the couple in *On the Sailboat* actively head toward their destination, a different type of relationship between figure and town characterizes the painting *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*, ca. 1820 (fig. 18), a dark, still image of two women in bourgeois dress captivated by the view of a Gothic city and its harbor. The compositional space is extremely tight, for the women are only a few yards away from the objects of their gaze, not at a remove. Although they are in one respect separated from the view of the town, through the balustrade of the terrace that runs horizontally through the

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<sup>77</sup> This implied motion, even while the rest of the picture remains quite still, sets *On the Sailboat* apart from most of Friedrich's other paintings.

composition, on the other hand they are in essence in the middle of the urban space, closer to the background of the composition than any other *Rückenfigur* is to the ultimate object of his gaze. Here Friedrich allows a place for the beholder to find his own bearing, as the foreground terrace runs smoothly out of the bottom edge of the canvas, preventing the lack of groundedness that is typical of so many of his landscapes, which not only fail to provide a stepping point from which to imagine entering the picture, but often erect a barrier to it. It is as though in *Sisters* he welcomes the viewer to join the women on the terrace and share in their view.

Although a night-time scene, the women wear no overcoats, shawls, or hats. This suggests that they are already “home,” in a completely artificial environment (the city) which, however, is the “natural” environment of urban dwellers like themselves. There is no need for them to tear themselves away from their view, to return to a distant home, for home is pictured right before them. The essence of the view and their viewing experience will be discussed further below, but what is of importance here for this discussion is the concept of the journey being over, that unlike other *Rückenfiguren*, they have arrived at their final destination, the small medieval harbor town. In this they remain something of an anomaly among Friedrich’s figures, no longer wanderers, but residents of the place they inhabit. In the next sections, I want to discuss images of the place Friedrich once was a resident of, Greifswald, to consider the ways in which he posits it and its surroundings as a comfortable space, a landscape (or cityscape) of memory that conjures up some amount of nostalgia.

### Heimat as Veduta

The sense of *Heimat* is palpable even in some of Friedrich's less overtly interpretive works. Friedrich is not commonly associated with *vedute* – straightforward, popular representations of noteworthy and scenic views, either urban or landscape, that flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in the form of easily collectible prints as well as paintings. However, even if they do not reenact wholly the formulaic idealizations that are characteristic of the genre, as Timothy Mitchell has demonstrated, the artist's early works do in fact rely on certain aspects of landscape *vedute*, in terms of composition, thematics, and the isolation of distinctive shapes.<sup>78</sup> But Friedrich also produced later works that can be seen as participating in this tradition, as the three Greifswald pictures discussed below demonstrate. These three Greifswald images at first give the impression of being simply topographical renderings of the scene depicted, unfiltered through the altering eye of the artist's imagination. They are in many ways more traditional than most of the artist's production in terms of their compositional strategies. However, that the artist has chosen not to transform the views to any significant extent, they paradoxically are revealing of the artist's intimate connection to the town – not as a symbol to fit into his larger artistic project, but in terms of remembrance of the forms and places known to him since childhood. Taken together, these Greifswald pictures create a sense of place, of a small town and its comfortable embeddedness in the countryside, and of the comfortable embeddedness of its inhabitants within its space.

Friedrich's watercolor *View of Greifswald from the East*, 1818 (fig. 49), for

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<sup>78</sup> T. F. Mitchell, 414-424.

instance, is a quiet, prosaic scene. The view is set along the river Ryck on a mild sunny day, and a rowboat filled with men glides along toward a sailboat further upriver. The setting, with its clear sky, calm water, picturesque windmills, Gothic churches, and sailboats, is one of utter pleasantness, neither sublime nor threatening, with nothing to cast a shadow on the brightness of the day. Here the viewpoint is seemingly set from atop a bridge, although typically for Friedrich, no real clue of the viewer's groundedness is given. Yet other than this idiosyncratic compositional device, the space is conventional, a single continuous one that flows smoothly from foreground to background with no abrupt conjunctions. Greifswald appears as a small but clearly defined entity spread along the horizon, its churches and harbor identifiable, as the flatness of the landscape surrounding it allows for an unimpeded view. The ability to see into the distance without foreground obstruction remained an important aspect of a traditional landscape *veduta*, and contributed to the period's notion of a good view in general, whether in art or in nature. Rellstab, for instance, wrote about Greifswald, a town he had no aesthetic admiration for in general, that "It also may be among the city's merits, that you can see it from far away. Thus I saw it while on Rügen even at a distance of twelve miles."<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, he noted that Neubrandenburg only offered one way from which it could be viewed satisfactorily from a distance; otherwise the view was blocked from all other directions.<sup>80</sup> Thus, although the *View of Greifswald from the East* presents nothing out of the ordinary,

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<sup>79</sup> "Auch das mag wohl zu den Vorzügen dieser Stadt gehören, daß man sie sehr weit sehen kann. So sahe ich sie auf Rügen noch in einer Entfernung von zwölf Meilen." Rellstab, 36.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

the access to a sweeping panorama in itself would have been reason enough to consider it a good view.

Another unobstructed, and similarly unpretentious, view of Greifswald is found in *Meadows near Greifswald* (fig. 36). Here the standpoint is from the west, rather than the east, and Friedrich bathes the meadows surrounding the town in the glow of daylight. The painting is a pleasant, bucolic image of an abundant landscape that includes windmills, a small pond, a flock of geese, and a soft green and yellow field in which brown horses frolic and graze. A low ridge with a few bushes and trees running across the canvas separates a foreground strip of lush, gently rolling ground from the flatter meadow beyond. Enforcing the clarity of this division is the lighting, which leaves a darkened foreground zone in shadow and brightens up the middle ground. Yet this does not translate into a barrier, as one might expect in other Friedrich paintings, but acts only as a marker of distance. The horizon line, occupied nearly entirely by the city spreading out along it, divides the canvas almost evenly into zones of earth and sky. The creamy yellow sky against which the city is silhouetted turns slowly to a pale blue as it reaches the top of the canvas. No dark clouds jeopardize the peacefulness of the view. Greifswald itself is constructed in pale colors, blue and purple and pink, but the individual structures are marked out quite clearly and accurately. Highlights and shadows cast on the buildings emphasize the three dimensionality of the town.

The town is nestled snugly into its surrounding landscape, with verdant foliage filling spaces in and around the buildings, on both sides of the town walls, providing a harmonious conjunction of nature and culture even while the city is contained and

separated from the countryside by its medieval fortifications. The containment of this city, which is content to remain within its borders, suggests an intimacy among its inhabitants, for there is a human dimension to its small, manageable acreage. One of the old city gates faces out toward the meadow, both entrance into and exit from the enclave, a border between town and country. Directly outside the town walls are farmhouses and other agricultural structures, including the windmills that transform the energy of nature into human use. The grassy meadow is soft and inviting, and the prancing horses in the meadow add an element of action to the scene that is unusual in Friedrich's production. These horses are not fenced in, or saddled, but enjoy the roam of the land. They are free, and act freely in the landscape, jumping, running, grazing.<sup>81</sup>

Like *View of Greifswald from the East*, the composition offers optical clues to lead the eye back comfortably into depth of space, such as the horses that diminish in size as they appear farther in the distance. Moreover, there is a clear division of three spatial zones (foreground, middle ground, and background), which invites the eye to wander without setting up barricades. This painting of a strikingly ordinary scene also compares well to precedents in the Dutch seventeenth-century tradition, in which simple, "pleasant places" were rendered as counterparts to more sublime or visually rich landscapes of the

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<sup>81</sup> Animals are somewhat uncommon subjects for the artist. Occasionally birds appear in the sky, or on the ground (as is the case in this painting, with dozens of little white specks – geese – spotting the grass near the small pond); owls become the focus of several early and late sepias and swans are the subject of a couple of paintings; a dog appears with his master in one work; and there are a few other instances of sheep and cattle. Otherwise, although Friedrich often painted fields around Greifswald or Dresden, cattle and other domesticated animals that most likely frequented those fields are not to be seen. By including the horses and the geese in this painting, Friedrich adds to the pleasantness of the scene.

day.<sup>82</sup> Hans Joachim Neidhardt has pointed out that despite the lack of human figures in the scene, the landscape has a tangible human dimension to it, in the sense of being a country idyll.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the horses, the geese, the windmills, the temperateness of the climate make for a harmonious image of an ample Nature. And the inclusion of Greifswald adds to this effect, for it is clear that town and country have no ideological clash with one another.

Greifswald, as Rellstab noted somewhat smugly, was not considered a particularly beautiful city. Only the eighteenth-century university buildings (which Friedrich does not include in any Greifswald image) were granted a pleasing design, but none of the towns buildings were celebrated in the contemporary literature as examples of truly distinguished architecture. Prior to this painting, there are very few depictions of Greifswald other than the maps and the typical city *Ansicht (veduta)* prints that had recorded German towns since the middle ages. By depicting the town in a large oil, indeed in taking up Greifswald as a subject repeatedly, Friedrich evinces a kind of civic pride in his hometown, elevating it to the status of fine art and making a visual statement about its view worthiness.

*Meadows near Greifswald* made the town visible to an audience that otherwise would have little recourse to knowing it. Because it has no sublime message to convey, but rather is simply a careful rendering of a familiar, beloved sight, *Meadows near Greifswald* seems at the same time almost more of a personal work than some of Friedrich's more

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<sup>82</sup> See Walter S. Gibson, *Pleasant Places, The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>83</sup> Neidhardt, "Verzeichnis der Gemälde," in *Caspar David Friedrich und sein Kreis*, 135.

evocative paintings. The town's main buildings are depicted fairly accurately, which Friedrich was not always concerned to do when incorporating recognizable cities into his compositions.<sup>84</sup> Märker has pointed out that the church towers have their later Baroque crowns intact in this painting, a fact that would not be so remarkable if Friedrich had not so often transformed such elements into purely Gothic ornament in other works (for instance, in images of Dresden, as will be discussed in the next chapter.)<sup>85</sup> Although the view may not be entirely topographical, clearly this is no idealized city. Rather, the painting serves to record the pleasant associations of a town beloved to the artist.

Both *View of Greifswald* and *Meadows near Greifswald* were the outcome of a trip Friedrich made in 1818 to visit his relatives. Friedrich traveled home at this time to introduce his recent bride to her new in-laws, who apparently had known nothing of the romance that led to the surprising end of Friedrich's bachelorhood. During this trip he produced another portrait of Greifswald, one of his most uncharacteristic works.

*Marketplace at Greifswald*, 1818 (fig. 38), is a large (54 x 76 cm), ambitious watercolor that has received little extended commentary in the literature, neglected perhaps because of its complete disjunction with the rest of his production.<sup>86</sup> It is Friedrich's only finished

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<sup>84</sup> The careful nature of Friedrich's presentation is suggested by the fact that Friedrich actually drew a preparatory sketch for the paintings, one of the few that Friedrich ever completed. Although Friedrich often incorporated studies of individual structures such as trees into paintings, it was rare for him to complete an entire preparatory sketch for one.

<sup>85</sup> Märker, "Geschichte als Natur," 192.

<sup>86</sup> Perhaps another reason for its relative obscurity in the literature is that it resides in the somewhat isolated Greifswald, in the former East Germany, and therefore is out of the sight – and thoughts – of many art historians. Recently the watercolor has attracted

picture of a view inside a town that depicts its inhabitants seemingly going about their everyday business – in other words, a true city *veduta*. It is also his most heavily populated picture, giving a sense of the real urban population of the town in a way that no other work attempts. In many ways it is Friedrich's most intimate work, one that reveals his sense of belonging to small town German culture yet at the same time acknowledges his departure from it.

The watercolor depicts the town square of Greifswald from a vantage point looking west, with a central view down the Langestrasse, the major artery into the marketplace and the site of the home where Friedrich was born and raised. The view includes several of the city's most important buildings: at the left edge of the square is the town hall; next to it stands the apothecary; and the brick Gothic steeple of the Nikolaikirche rises behind the two of them. The sky is filled with a thin layer of yellowish and gray clouds that open up high over the city to reveal some bits of blue behind them, not dramatically, but almost without comment. This field of color is the most fluid area of the work; otherwise a linear quality dominates the composition, which overall has the effect of being a colored drawing rather than a watercolor. An array of townspeople fills the square, walking, working, and chatting. The composition presents a unified space organized by one-point perspective, which provides a tangible, three-dimensional setting, as the eye is allowed to wander comfortably into the distance down the length of the Langestrasse to the gate at its end. Once again in a Greifswald image, Friedrich uses receding lines and reduction in scale of figures and objects to indicate this gradual

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more attention, for instance in Hofmann's large monograph from 2000.

progression into depth, a tactic that, as will be seen in the next chapter, is completely missing from the Dresden pictures.

The town setting of *Marketplace at Greifswald* acts not as an object of contemplation, as it does in Friedrich's other major city interior, *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*, but as an arena of action, where both work and social encounters take place. The trio of religion, commerce, and government implied by the three largest buildings grouped to the left (the church, the apothecary, and the town hall) marks the staple institutions of the small German "hometown" as defined by Mack Walker, who differentiated the hometown from the village and the larger city in part by the stability of its residents, the citizens who seldom left the place of their birth.<sup>87</sup> (Both Friedrich's and his parents' migratory ways were actually unusual for small townsmen.<sup>88</sup>) Greifswald in the early nineteenth century was a small town of about 5000 inhabitants; its main industries – shipping, trade, and ship-building – hinged upon its location near the Baltic sea, although its primary claim to fame was the university whose reputation, like its enrollment, had been in serious decline for decades. It had always been a city of the middle and lower classes, and Friedrich depicts it as such, populating it with the various strata of the *Kleinbürgertum*, the petty bourgeoisie.<sup>89</sup> In addition to the respectably dressed figures socializing in the foreground of the market, a whole array of Greifswald

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<sup>87</sup> Walker, 31.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Walker also defines the German hometown in part by its lack of resident nobility, and its size: no more than 10,000-15,000 residents.

society makes its way around town. A laborer in his apron and cap carts barrels across the market, a kneeling old woman begs next to a monument in front of the apothecary, the pharmacist arranges potted plants on a shelving unit set up along the apothecary's roof balcony; a well-dressed man lounges on a bench in front of the building; two children fight on the Langestrasse next to a woman carrying a basket for shopping; and further down the street a tiny figure hauls a barrel on his back. Beyond him, one can perceive numerous other figures, even while they are too small to be made out entirely.

*Marketplace at Greifswald* is in essence a drawing, and as such it expends much energy describing the town and its inhabitants, suggesting the amount of looking that Friedrich did inside the center of his hometown. Indeed, the meticulous attention to the objects of civilization in this work is remarkable. Clothing is rendered with particular care. Lace and bows, tucks and ribbons, buttons, puffed shoulders, and ruffles adorn the outfits of the townspeople. Friedrich displays a genuine concern for the cut and hang of the clothing, a real understanding of sartorial assemblage and the variety of fashion as related to age, occupation, and gender. In 1811, the *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* reported that Friedrich's friend and fellow artist Georg Kersting, a painter of interior genre scenes, had painted the figures in the large oil *Morning in the Riesengebirge*, 1810 (fig. 50).<sup>90</sup> This has led to general speculation, now commonly disavowed, as to whether Kersting painted most of the figures in Friedrich's landscapes, since it has been assumed that the latter was a somewhat ineffectual figure painter. Friedrich himself, despite his alleged

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<sup>90</sup> N., "Die Kunstausstellung in Dresden, am Friedrichstage, den 5. März 1811," *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* 26 (1811): 371-373; in Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 78-79.

early essay on painting figures into a landscape, confessed to his brother that figures really were not his “thing.”<sup>91</sup> And yet, while this might be the case, it seems that Friedrich did have an inclination for rendering clothing, as witnessed not only by the diverse outfits of *Marketplace at Greifswald*, but by the seldom-discussed cache of drawings of attire, not necessarily related to this watercolor, that the artist completed between 1801 and 1806 (discussed briefly in Chapter 2).

But it is not just the clothing that is considered with such care in *Marketplace at Greifswald*. The entire composition is detail driven. Buildings are rendered with an intense concern for details of construction, as Friedrich gives a veritable index of architectural elements. Red tiles are individually outlined on the roofs of buildings. Blind windows, volutes, and crockets decorate the ornate stepped gable of the Gothic apothecary. The Nikolaikirche’s brick tower, pierced by tracery, culminates in a balustrade topped by a confection of lanterns, onion domes, pinnacle, and weathervane. The town hall is decorated with a bell tower capped with a spire, volutes running down the sides of its gable, and such seemingly insignificant details as the gutter and drain pipe visible on the shaded north side of the building. Down the Langestrasse, which culminates in one the town’s medieval gates, windows and shutters are clearly delineated, spouts protrude from facades, and, even as the view fades into partial obscurity, poles carrying lamps or signs are visible.

Ironically for Friedrich the landscape artist, the things in *Marketplace at*

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<sup>91</sup> “...das [i.e. figures] so eigentlich meine Sache nicht ist...” Friedrich to Christian Friedrich, 5 May, 1816, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 29.

*Greifswald* the artist scrutinizes the least are the trees that line the right side of the square and the Langestrasse. These are not the trees of Friedrich's nature studies, where every leaf is delineated. Their foliage is rendered instead through alternating bits of light and shade that create the general impression of bulk, as in eighteenth-century landscapes such as those of Gainsborough. In addition, the sky, which often appears in Friedrich's landscapes as an important compositional element, depicted at twilight or dawn with spectacular lighting and cloud formations, is here rendered with absolute constraint. It provides a bland backdrop for the town skyline, and refrains from acting as an object to be observed. In *Marketplace at Greifswald*, it is clear, the artist gazes upon the man-made world and its inhabitants, not the natural world.

Börsch-Supan writes about the watercolor that "[t]he return to his roots is a return to the eighteenth century overall," calling the watercolor "foreign" to Friedrich's production, a picture in the manner of Bellotto's large canvases of Dresden's interior, which he suggests could have inspired Friedrich.<sup>92</sup> But the work does not echo wholly the tradition of the city *Ansicht*, for Friedrich has not chosen the "correct" vantage point for optimum viewing of the marketplace, at least according to remarks made about the watercolor, which his brother Heinrich owned, in a travel souvenir book about Rügen, Pomerania, and Silesia. The author of the book had stopped in Greifswald and visited

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<sup>92</sup> In fact, according to Angelo Walther, catalogues of the gallery that oversaw Bellotto's Dresden paintings painted for the Saxon king indicate that they were out of sight from the Dresden public until 1834, when they were put on display after six decades in storage. Prints of the works, however, were widely distributed. Angelo Walther, *Bernardo Bellotto genannt Canaletto: Ein Venezianer malte Dresden, Pirna und den Königstein* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1998), 20.

Heinrich, spotting the work on his wall. Twenty years after Friedrich completed *Marketplace at Greifswald*, W. H. Rossmässler described the watercolor, which he granted was beautiful. But, its pleasing effect notwithstanding, he regretted that the view was not quite what it should be, because it did not show the “whole visible side of the market.”<sup>93</sup> In other words, the image did not incorporate an extensive enough angle of vision in order to work as a good view; had this been the case, Rossmässler stated, he happily would have made an engraving of the work for inclusion in his book.

In spite of the care with which the architectural detail of the buildings is rendered in Friedrich’s watercolor, the view he chooses does partially block some of the town’s main sights: the Nicolaikirche in the background is cut off by the apothecary and the town hall, which is itself cut in half at the edge of the watercolor. And the buildings of the north side of the market are covered by the foliage from the line of trees. Furthermore, the stretch of the Langestrasse from the market to the city gate is composed around a head-on angle of view, so that the building facades of the street are all foreshortened. This does not allow for a long view of the side street with its row after row of windows, which is so commonly found in city *Ansichten*.

A comparison with the two engravings of the market place by Rossmässler that were included in his souvenir book demonstrates what he at least expected of an *Ansicht*, and therefore what he found lacking in *Marketplace at Greifswald*. The first view (fig.

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<sup>93</sup> [W. H. Rossmässler], *Die Provinz Pommern in Landschaftliche Darstellungen nach eigenen Zeichnungen in Stahl gestochen von Rossmässler. Erster Band, Rügen, Pommern und Schlesien*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berlin: Mittler, 1835), 27. The book’s reference to Friedrich’s watercolor has not been published elsewhere in the literature.

51) is of the same side of the square as Friedrich's work, but the vantage point is set farther back, somewhat higher, and has moved to the left, closer to the southeast corner of the square. In this way it manages to encapsulate a more sweeping view of the market than does the watercolor. The town hall facade is shown in full, and because of the particular angle chosen, the Nikolaikirche appears to the left of it instead of behind it, making visible much of its east facade. The whole of the south side of the market appears, allowing for the lines of windows to lead the eye further into the depth of the square until they meet up with a row of small houses sandwiched between the town hall and the Nikolaikirche. The sense of three-dimensionality is intensified by the linear pattern of the cobblestoned square (absent in Friedrich's picture, where the figures stand on packed dirt, indicating some amount of infrastructure improvement in the ensuing years), with the lines leading diagonally to the center, causing a slight curvature of the ground and adding to the haptic quality of the space. Because of the point of view, the Langestrasse disappears behind the apothecary, and only one building on it is seen *in toto*, although the gables of the two houses next to it peek out behind and to the right of the apothecary. In the small stretch of the street that does appear, however, the angle of vision provides more visual information of the buildings' structure than is the case in Friedrich's watercolor. Most of the north side of the market is cut off (as it was in Friedrich's image also because of his positioning of the trees).

In Rossmässler's engraving, two buildings are identified below the image in writing, the Rathaus (town hall) and the Apotheke (apothecary), and their significance is amplified by the bright light striking their facades, even as other buildings sit in partial or

full shade. The brightness of their facades also contrasts against the cloudy sky above and behind them. The town hall in particular rises up boldly in the middle of the composition (and taller than it is as rendered in Friedrich's watercolor), becoming the work's focal point. As in Friedrich's work, here the marketplace is filled with clusters of townspeople, including an organ grinder and tambourine-waving singer who entertain a man and some children. Children also play in front of the town hall, and respectably dressed bourgeois citizens stroll through the square.

The second view of the Greifswald marketplace (fig. 52) from Rossmässler's book is of the east side. The angle of vision is closer to the ground than in the first view, with an up-close depiction of a group of women washing clothes at the water pump in the right hand corner of the engraving. It encompasses the whole of the east side with its trio of picturesque brick gothic buildings, surrounded on each side by more classicizing plain white facades, the fat square tower and roof of the homely Marienkirche behind the square to the north, and the corner building of the square's north side. A neat row of trees stands at attention directly in front of the three brick buildings, but unlike Friedrich's watercolor, their foliage reaches up only to about the first storey of the buildings, allowing most of the facade to be exposed. As in the first view, a somewhat dramatic cloud coverage adds to the view-worthiness of the scene. In Rossmässler's engravings the architecture of Greifswald comes to the fore, as he tries to capture the pleasantness of the heart of this Baltic town for his anonymous audience. The clarity of the rendering and specificity of the view allow it to be both recognizable to a tourist who had been to the town and concrete to those who had not.

Despite the seemingly anecdotal nature of Friedrich's watercolor, which appears at first glance to be a simple portrait of a typical small town of the nineteenth century, it is unlike Rossmässler's two views in one very important way, for it was not meant for the consumption by an unknown audience. Instead, it is quite arguably Friedrich's most personal work: here the marketplace has become the stage setting for his extended Greifswald family. According to family tradition, the most prominent figures in the watercolor – and those who seem most aware of their status within the composition – are portraits of his Greifswald relatives. A group of four men in the foreground includes three of Friedrich's brothers, each of whom is depicted with the attribute of his profession, plus a family friend. Brother Adolf, a transporter of goods via horse and cart, carries a whip; the candle and soap maker Heinrich wears an apron, and Christian, a carpenter and woodcutter, holds a ruler. Family friend Johann Joachim Praefke, a merchant, has no immediately recognizable attribute of his profession on hand, but wears a slightly more formal overcoat, white ruffle, fancy-cut pants and slippers that bespeak not only his somewhat more elevated financial status, but also his recent acquiring of the rank of Greifswald *Bürger*, first class.<sup>94</sup> All the men stand assured and poised: Praefke, positioned slightly apart from the circle made by Friedrich's three brothers, stands erect with his hand tucked into his jacket; Adolf crosses his arms confidently behind his back as he holds the whip, legs spread apart, head held up high; Christian rests his weight on one

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<sup>94</sup> According to one source, Praefke is wearing the suit of a *Bürger*, the rank of which he received in 1817. Kurt Wilhelm-Kästner, Ludwig Rohling and Karl Friedrich Degner, *Caspar David Friedrich und seine Heimat* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1940), 67.

black-booted leg, the other striding forward, with ruler held firmly in his right hand; and Heinrich, his back to the viewer (Friedrich's only *Rückenfigur* who does not contemplate the scene in front of him in silence), stands with body slightly twisted in contrapposto, shifting his weight onto his left leg, with arms bent toward his chest as though holding something. These are men at ease in their surrounding as well as in their roles, a group that has claimed the center of town as its own. They are the darkest figures in an otherwise pale composition, as well as the largest, and so immediately draw attention to themselves.

To the left of this masculine sphere of work is a feminine, domestic sphere. Three women and two children walk in the direction of the men. Family tradition also has identified these figures as members of the extended Friedrich family.<sup>95</sup> Christian's wife, Elisabeth, carries her young son Heinrich Adolf, as an older daughter, Caroline, grasps her skirt. Elisabeth has stopped and turned, apparently looking out of the watercolor at the viewer. To her right, Adolf's wife Margarete and her sister Wilhelmine Jarmer continue walking, even as one turns to the other in conversation, gesturing as she talks. More family members, several nephews, appear in the right corner of the square, at the horse and cart held by Heinrich's houseboy. One child, Adolf's son Adolf, stands next to the cart, resting his arm on its back and staring out of the picture, as does the servant. Two other, smaller, boys (Adolf Jr.'s brother Karl and Heinrich Jr.) sit in the cart facing backwards, and while they do not look directly out at the viewer, they too, seem to have been posed for the composition, their arms neatly folded in front of them, resting on the

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<sup>95</sup>Wilhelm-Kästner/Rohling/Degner, 67.

edge of the cart. According to family tradition, Elisabeth and her children appear once again standing facing the cart and wagon, and Margarete and Wilhelmine are also doubly represented, walking further along, as though Friedrich were depicting a movement in time.<sup>96</sup>

Friedrich's watercolor, then, is as much a family portrait as it is a portrait of a town. While he represents enough of the town to make it recognizable, his angle of vision is one of familiarity, rather than embodying the all-encompassing gaze of the touristic eye, as in Rossmässler's work. The view is taken from brother Heinrich's home along the market square, and includes the view down the street toward the place of the artist's birth. Friedrich also has zoomed closely into the space of the marketplace, thereby making the foreground figures more prominent within their frame of reference than usually occurs in traditional city views. In Bellotto's painting of the *Neumarkt in Dresden*, 1749 (fig. 53), for instance, the townspeople gathered in the square are literally overshadowed by the architecture surrounding them; although the large size of the canvas allows for relatively large figures, it is the architecture that commands attention. The townspeople go about their business, selling their wares, greeting acquaintances, absorbed in the various social transactions that characterize life and commerce in a city – and for the most part without disturbing the real focus of the painting, the structure of the market square.

Rossmässler's prints also emphasize the city over the small figures that populate it.

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<sup>96</sup> Wilhelm-Kästner/Rohling/Degner, 67. While this last identification relies solely on family lore, certainly the identification of the men, recognizable through their attributes, is credible. Thus the identification of the women and children as their families seems plausible, even if exact naming of each figure remains unreliable, especially regarding the doubled representation.

Friedrich's center group of four men, on the other hand, are quite prominent in their size and in their coloring, both of which mark them apart from the rest of the watercolor. Their demeanor calls attention to their group, as they appear to be men at ease in – or one might even say in command of – their surroundings.

Rather than depicting his family in a more traditional type of portrait of the period, in the comfort of the home, surrounded by their possessions, Friedrich places them in the marketplace, which openly declares the location as Greifswald. By occupying the town square almost entirely with his large extended family and including a view of the street he grew up on, Friedrich presents Greifswald as an image of family and the familiar, claiming the town as his own. The act of creating the watercolor for his brother also points to the personal nature of the piece, which functions as a quasi-apotheosis of the Friedrich family. But there remains a curious combination of intimacy and distancing in the work. Rautmann has pointed out that the specificity of the picture, as a portrait of family and hometown, demands the topographic approach that Friedrich gives it.<sup>97</sup> The exactness of rendering and the accumulation of details that fill the composition betray Friedrich's unwavering, careful gaze at this scene and its inhabitants, which he treats as importantly as the scenes of nature that were the gist of his production. But there is also a feeling of ambivalent distancing in Friedrich's gaze, of someone looking at the scene from the "outside."

Returning to Greifswald at the peak of his popularity as an artist, proudly with new bride in tow, Friedrich created this souvenir of that trip for his relatives. Yet as a work of

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<sup>97</sup> Rautmann, *Landschaft als Sinnbild*, 90.

remembrance of the family reunion, Caspar David himself is not included here among the Greifswald Friedrichs, and neither, it appears, is his bride.<sup>98</sup> His presence is only suggested, by the returned gaze of the boy and man on the right and of the sister-in-law of the left, who look in the direction of the window of Heinrich's home from where Friedrich would have beheld this view. Friedrich creates a scene of family, while positioning himself on the outside (or literally inside, that is, in Heinrich's home, looking out), as the absent sibling who left home for the big city in order to make a name for himself in his chosen profession. Leaving himself out, Friedrich addresses the ambivalence of his situation. Greifswald is Friedrich's hometown, and yet it is no longer entirely home, as he no longer belongs wholly either to it or to this group of relatives. This could have been his life. He could have been included in that circle of figures occupying the town center, but it was a space that Friedrich gave up, and needed to give up, in order to become a successful artist.

Friedrich became the fine artist of the family, but, as pointed out in the previous chapter, it is quite possible that his family originally intended him to head into a less exalted, but more stable, profession, such as that of an engraver (just as his brother Christian became a woodcutter who produced prints). If that had occurred, his own lot could have been that of his brothers, remaining in the small town. Friedrich, whose remaining correspondence with relatives reveals the strong bonds between him and his family, must have felt some amount of conflict about his situation. Greifswald, unlike Dresden, meant family. The space of the town center in the watercolor is envisioned as a

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<sup>98</sup> While the identity of the male figures can be tied to their outfits with a fair amount of confidence, it cannot be ruled out absolutely that one of the childless women in the composition is in fact Caroline Friedrich, family lore notwithstanding.

comfortable one that his brothers confidently take over. Dresden, whose vibrant urban center Friedrich never once depicted, was a town that Friedrich could never hope to occupy as confidently as do his brothers in the center of Greifswald. Thus in one sense the *Marketplace at Greifswald* represents something that is lost and irretrievable, a relinquished *Heimat* that cannot be replaced, roots that cannot be dug up and transplanted. It is a remembrance of a reunion in which the artist recognizes his self-chosen outsider status in the place of his origins.

### Harbor View

In a number of Friedrich's paintings, ships and ports, despite their implications of departure and travel, are imbued with a sense of *Heimat*, in that they are intimately linked to the memory of his hometown. Scholarship has tended to invest Friedrich's nautical themes with heavy transcendental symbolism, as markers of life and death. Peter Wegmann, for instance, interprets the ships in the background (but not those in the foreground) of *Port by Moonlight*, 1811 (fig. 54), as referring to the ship of life.<sup>99</sup> Börsch-Supan, in particular, posits a rigid lexicon to interpret individual harbor motifs as though the works were metaphorical diagrams. Accordingly, boats sitting in a port with sails down always symbolize death, as do ships heading into a port at night; anchors embody the hope for eternal life; the progression of a series of ships into the distance becomes a symbol for the course of life; and the perpendicular placement of yard to mast is a reference not just to the cross of Jesus but, especially when there are many of them in

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<sup>99</sup> Wegman, 82.

one image, also to cemeteries with their clusters of gravestones.<sup>100</sup> Willi Geismeier, meanwhile, writes that for Friedrich, the harbor symbolizes “the harbor of life, the divine origins and the destination of the changing earth.”<sup>101</sup>

But as Nikolaus Zaske points out, ships have a prosaic function in addition to whatever symbolic status they have been assigned, for they are reminders of their travel goal and their place of departure, i.e. the city, as well as the trade that goes on in an active port.<sup>102</sup> Thus there is another possibility of approaching the harbor scene in Friedrich’s work: to consider it for the artist as the mill, farms, and horses were to Constable, that is, as the images of livelihood surrounding him as a boy (the harbor was minutes away from Friedrich’s childhood home) that came to preoccupy his imagination as an adult. The water was one of Greifswald’s economic saving graces, for the harbor built along the town’s outlet to the sea lent the town some of its remaining significance, providing a setting for fishing, trade, and shipbuilding. Thus the harbor was an integral part of the Greifswald environment, a factor in the town’s identity. Friedrich’s own affinity for maritime culture is evident already at the start of his artistic career, for a number of his earliest works are of nautical themes, such as the etching *Sailboats on Rocky Coast* from 1798 (fig. 55). He completed numerous boat and harbor drawings during his visits to

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<sup>100</sup> See for instance Börsch-Supan’s explanatory notes to Friedrich’s motifs in Börsch-Supan/Jähnig (as well as individual readings of harbor scenes): “Boot,” 225; “Hafen,” 227; “Schiff,” 229.

<sup>101</sup> “Der Hafen... erhält die Bedeutung des Lebenshafens, des göttlichen Ursprungs und Zieles des Erdenwandels.” Geismeier, *Caspar David Friedrich*, 39.

<sup>102</sup> Zaske, “Das Motiv der Stadt,” 381.

Greifswald, which he then used as the basis for a number of paintings throughout his career, even years after he had remained in landlocked Dresden. At the end of his life, when his production slowed down, nautical themes continued to prevail in sepias such as *Two Anchors on the Beach*, ca. 1837/39 (fig. 56).

In Friedrich's own life, there are no clues that suggest the artist himself was a keen boater, or that he ever went fishing. Yet despite the scholarly impulse to read all of Friedrich's nautical motifs as transcendental metaphors, several of his harbor scenes suggest that Friedrich often came to the waterfront as an enthusiastic observer, taking note of the harbor as workplace rather than as symbol. In this next section I wish to discuss a trio of harbor genre paintings, *View of a Harbor (Greifswald Harbor)*, 1815/1816 (fig. 57), *Greifswald Harbor*, ca. 1818/1820 (fig. 58), and the destroyed *Greifswald Harbor (Harbor of Greifswald after Sunset)*, ca. 1821 (fig. 59). These paintings convey a sense of the pleasure of observation, in descriptive passages that clearly seem informed by actual experience. Like the Greifswald *vedute*, together they create a sense of place, that of the Baltic port.

In the earliest of the three paintings, the 1815/1816 *View of a Harbor*, a flotilla of large ships is crammed into the harbor, the vessels' sails down, at rest for the evening. The twilight sky glows with lovely streaks of orange, yellow, pink, and purple that are reflected in the water. Despite a few gray clouds that threaten to roll in at the top of the canvas, the overall ambience of the painting is one of evening calm, indicated especially by the smooth glassiness of the water, which displays not so much as a ripple. Painted after his 1815 trip to Greifswald, the work does not necessarily depict Greifswald harbor per se,

for there is no identifying structure included in the composition.<sup>103</sup> But the stimulus to paint this major work came from the return to his childhood home, as several drawings from the journey underpin its composition.<sup>104</sup>

Draftsmanship is in fact key to the work, which yields a significant amount of details of the ships and their construction. Friedrich's apparent concern for structural correctness in the boats and ships he composed is evidenced in his ownership of a large, carefully constructed model of a fully rigged Danish frigate, the sort of model long employed in the studios of self-identified marine painters.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, Sigrid Hinz has pointed out that at times Friedrich's sailboats are overly rigged, with masts raised too high, and thus were unseaworthy. This indicates that the artist was more concerned with pictorial effect than he was with nautical accuracy. In *View of a Harbor*, this effect is present in the impressive masts and rigging of the two large foreground ships, which are echoed in the vessels on either side behind them, creating a forest of timber and rope. The painting's vertical framing accentuates the size of the ships' masts, which fill up most of the canvas. There is an element of the sublime in these massive man-made objects: both (to borrow Kantian terms) of the mathematical sublime – in the sheer height of the poles –

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<sup>103</sup> The work was listed in an inventory in 1840 as a view of the Stralsund harbor. However, when it was exhibited first in 1816, it was called simply "A Harbor." Börsch-Supan, 334.

<sup>104</sup> Two main drawings are of the two large foreground ships, identified in Hinz's dissertation as number 667 and 668, reproduced in Bernhard and Hofstätter, 634 and 635.

<sup>105</sup> Hans Jürgen Hansen, *Deutsche Marinenmalerei. Schiffsdarstellungen, maritime Genrebilder, Meeres- und Küstenlandschaften* (Oldenburg, Hamburg: Stalling, 1977), 17.

and of the dynamical sublime – in the factors of danger and thrill embodied by the tiny figure climbing up the rigging of the right foreground ship. His ascent compares to the clambering tiny figures of *Morning in the Riesengebirge* (fig. 50), even if the overt spiritual aspect of that painting is not in evidence here.

Although Börsch-Supan reads the phalanx of masts as hinting of crosses in a cemetery, and Neidhardt insists with reference to this work that “with Friedrich ships in a harbor almost always mean the beginning or ending of the life journey,” *View of a Harbor* resists such melancholic readings.<sup>106</sup> The water is calm, the sky is beautiful in its transition from day to dusk, and sailors and other figures add a pleasant, human touch to the scene, giving a sense of a real place and its activities. In addition to the sailor on the right ship, two other sailors work on the hull of the other large one to its left, a peculiar enough detail (they appear to be stuck to the outside of the vessel, although they are balancing on top of floating planks) to indicate Friedrich’s first-hand knowledge of the ways of ship maintenance. To the far left are two figures in a small boat, perhaps fishermen. And more prominently, three men set their row boat out toward one of the large ships sitting in the harbor, bringing two passengers, a man and woman, with them. A Danish pennant drapes behind the rowboat, while a ship to the right hoists a Swedish flag up on its mast, both reminders of where the vessels in the port have come from and of the international ambience a harbor town, even a provincial Baltic one, could sometimes experience. Almost all of the figures in the painting are active, with the exception of the couple being

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<sup>106</sup> Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 334.

“Schiffe im Hafen [haben] bei Friedrich fast immer eine Bedeutung im Sinne der beginnenden oder endenden Lebensreise.” Neidhardt, 128.

rowed out to their vessel. Fishermen and sailors, in Friedrich's world, almost never have time to contemplate the world around them. The painting, overall, is testimony to Friedrich's ability to work in traditional (and marketable) genres, in this case marine painting. It was exhibited in 1816 in Dresden and led to Friedrich's induction as a member of the Dresden Academy. Later the same year it was sent to the Berlin Academy exhibition and was immediately purchased by Friedrich Wilhelm III as a birthday present for his son the crown prince.

A few years later, Friedrich painted the Berlin *Greifswald Harbor*, ca. 1818-1820 (fig. 58), another medium sized, vertical painting depicting an active port. Boats of various shapes and sizes make use of the thoroughfare, including a large vessel with two large masts and abundant rigging that is berthed in the middle of the picture. A crescent moon inhabits the lower left sky in the bright orange strip of twilight that rests evenly above the city in the distance, suggesting that the three busy fishermen in the foreground are ending their day rather than beginning it. Greifswald itself is recognizable not only by its harbor, but also by the familiar outlines of the fat Marienkirche and its sleeker neighbor across the main square in town, the Jakobkirche. Darkness has already descended upon the silhouetted strip of foreground (consisting of fishermen, row boat, small hill, and netting), while the remaining light of day still illuminates, however weakly, the bevy of boats on the reflective green water, the pale urban backdrop, and the brilliant sky against which the central ship casts the nautical outline that so often captured Friedrich's imagination.

The steady progression into depth is delineated clearly through the placements of

objects in foreground, middle ground, and background. The small strip of foreground is marked on the left by the rowboat dragged to shore by two men, a fisherman walking by a mound of earth in the middle, and fishing nets held up by wooden posts to the right. The middle zone is carved out by a succession of boats that lead the eye diagonally into the distance. The city sits on a somewhat elevated strip of land beyond the harbor in the distance. In addition to the progression into depth, the composition is distinguished by a pyramidal scheme consisting of the largest ship, placed in the center of the picture, its tall masts rising in triangular form, surrounded on four sides by objects that complete the pyramid: the towers of the churches in the left background, the small sailboat to the left, the fishing nets in the right foreground, and the sail boat in the distance to the right.<sup>107</sup> In this way Friedrich carves out a believable space that allows the eye to wander about in it.

In his 1973 catalogue raisonné, Börsch-Supan listed *Greifswald Harbor* among Friedrich's "doubtful and erroneously attributed works," even though the work's authorship previously had never been cast into doubt.<sup>108</sup> Since then he has recanted this position and declared the painting to be authentic.<sup>109</sup> Why Börsch-Supan originally rejected this work is revealing of many of the assumptions underlying the most common perception of the artist's production. The painting includes familiar elements of Friedrich

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<sup>107</sup> Walter Petrenz, "Niederländische Einflüsse in der Kunst Caspar David Friedrich" (Ph.D. diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1957), 24.

<sup>108</sup> Börsch-Supan/Jähnig, 484.

<sup>109</sup> There is still some speculation, however, that the foreground figures might have been painted later by a different artist. See Peter Krieger, ed., *Galerie der Romantik* (Berlin: H. Heenemann, 1997), 41.

iconography, e.g. a transitional time of day (indicated by a spectacularly colored sky), the silhouette of a city in the distance, the bare masts and ropes of a large ship, and fishing nets and poles on the shore, yet these were dismissed by Börsch-Supan as a follower's weak pastiche, with a particular Stralsund artist suggested as the work's real creator. Moreover, Börsch-Supan claimed the work did not fit within Friedrich's production. The characteristic method of Friedrich's compositional construction is missing (the painting uses traditional perspectival construction of foreground, middle ground and background), the three figures were said to serve only narrative purposes, and the ships were declared to be without allegorical meaning. Börsch-Supan insisted that Friedrich would have depicted ships arriving at the harbor at nightfall in order to symbolize death, but here one of the ships is leaving the harbor, calling such an interpretation into question.

The presence of the three fishermen at work in *Greifswald Harbor*, like the figures in *View of a Harbor*, also makes an overtly transcendental interpretation more difficult, as they bring the painting into the prosaic realm of the everyday. Instead of being absorbed by the scenery around them, embodying for the viewer the act of looking at and contemplating the world, these three are absorbed in their own work, the making of their livelihood. They are reminders of the role of the boats and harbor as conveyors of commerce and as a source of income for the small town, rather than as symbolic images of death, or the afterlife, as many would have them be. The consequent placing of the scene into the everyday, taking it out of the realm of symbolic meditational image, was sufficient grounds for Börsch-Supan to question (for a time at least) the painting's authenticity. For him it was unacceptable to imagine that Friedrich might have worked in a genre mode,

creating a picture with less symbolic content than narrative potential.

Yet a third harbor painting establishes Friedrich's observational eye. *Greifswald Harbor (Harbor of Greifswald after Sunset)*, ca. 1821 (fig. 59), also depicts a quiet port in the evening, populated by several sailors in traditional costume working on the body of a ship and sitting on an overturned keel, while a washerwoman bends over her work on a pier.<sup>110</sup> Bits and pieces of boats, including a couple of anchors that jut up as well as wooden planks and barrels, are scattered around the ground next to the water's edge. To the right, fishing net poles are stuck crookedly into the earth. A forest of masts crowds the center of the picture, leading the eye back diagonally into space from left to right. As noted by Zschoche, the location of the view is identifiable: behind the ships to the left is a street with houses and the medieval Fangel tower, the last remains of Greifswald's medieval city fortifications along the Hafenstrasse.<sup>111</sup>

*Greifswald Harbor (Harbor of Greifswald after Sunset)* is an intimate portrait of a harbor up close, not prettified and cleaned up, but instead depicting the flotsam and jetsam that naturally accompany such a nautical space. Plants and weeds grow up around the unclaimed debris lying scattered in the foreground, and a skeleton of a boat is sandwiched into a small space behind a wooden hut and the docked boats behind it. The latter is probably in the process of being built (the ladder next to it suggestive of construction), an indication of Greifswald's ship building industry, which began to improve in the early

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<sup>110</sup> The painting was destroyed in the 1931 Munich Glaspalast fire but is recorded in good quality photographs.

<sup>111</sup> Zschoche, *Rügen*, 94.

nineteenth century.<sup>112</sup> There is something about the conjunction of so much wood – the boats, the wooden huts, the wooden poles – and the water that leads to a sense of decay, of rot, which is compounded by the abandoned planks with their jagged edges and cracks, and the post, at which a small boat is docked, that leans at a forty-five degree angle, not quite ready to surrender to the river. This is the stuff that Friedrich knew well from long-time experience, that he had scrutinized not just as a visitor but as a native who lived among it, and it is significant that he places the scene quite close to the viewer, not at a remove. Looking at the painting in reproduction today, even in black and white, one is struck by the familiarity with the scene that it conveys, as though the artist could have painted the scene with no memory aids such as sketches to help him, because he had the image stored in his mind.

Friedrich would have had first-hand knowledge of Dutch marine painting from the collections of Copenhagen and Dresden, and there is an obvious temptation to compare his own maritime pictures to that tradition.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, a painting such as Friedrich's *Sailboat*, 1815 (fig. 60), a large ship on the rough waters of the open sea, makes a strong claim for his indebtedness to seventeenth-century Dutch precedent. But Friedrich's harbor scenes present an important difference from their Dutch counterparts, in that they are never a celebration of an empire's fleet and its power in dominating the open seas. These are neither glorious scenes of battle, nor grand images of a royal harbor as promenade, but

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<sup>112</sup> See Franz Scherer, "Zur Schifffahrt und zum Schiffbau 1775 bis 1900," in Horst Wernicke, ed., *Greifswald. Geschichte der Stadt* (Schwerin: Thomas Helms Verlag, 2000), 253-259.

<sup>113</sup> Hansen, 16-17.

rather they are quiet, descriptive scenes that give a glimpse of the unglamorous, uncelebrated side of the small-town port. Despite the impressive power of the bulky ships, so manifest in the 1815 *Sailboat* (fig. 60), or in the foreground ships in *View of a Harbor* (fig. 57), there is also a humanizing aspect to the harbor scenes that borders on the nostalgic. Koerner has used the term “landscapes of memory” in relation to Friedrich’s work, specifically citing the nostalgia inherent in a painting like *Meadows near Greifswald* (fig. 36).<sup>114</sup> So too, do the Greifswald harbor scenes act as images of the past. Painting such works in landlocked Dresden, Friedrich calls upon scenes well known to him from his youth, using some of the few individual studies of Greifswald motifs done on the spot as guides but relying more often upon his visual imagination. In his works, people, even ships, regularly return to the medieval towns of his youth – an act of return that Friedrich, despite any emotional longings he may have had, could not make regularly or permanently.

#### Addendum: Die Erdachte Stadt

As noted above, Friedrich’s Gothic towns have been interpreted as a visionary apparitions, either as images of Heavenly Jerusalem, with its attendant longings for death, the afterworld, and religious transcendence, or as political statements about aspirations for a unified, democratic Germany. The grip these interpretive models have wielded on scholarship is so strong that in certain respects the paintings in question have received inadequate attention regarding their own structural and pictorial specificities. In other

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<sup>114</sup> Koerner, 235.

words, scholars have been so concerned to analyze the visionary that they have sometimes failed to observe the visual. While the above discussion demonstrated the Gothic towns' importance to Friedrich's notion of home and sense of belonging, in this final section I want to consider several paintings of northern Gothic towns that in particular have been isolated as "visionary" in nature. I would like to break out of this constrictive explanatory mode in order to concentrate on other, formal particularities of these works, thereby giving them a richer context of understanding.

### Heavenly Jerusalem

Friedrich began painting city views in 1811, in moonlit scenes that evoke the atmosphere of a Baltic town on the water without necessarily reproducing recognizable skylines. The buildings in two of these, *Port by Moonlight* (fig. 54), and *City at Moonrise*, ca. 1817 (fig. 61), are tall, spiky, Gothic confections, not particularly matched to Greifswald's own rather plebeian architecture, although the harbor location suggests Greifswald's nautical frame of reference.<sup>115</sup> A third painting, *Greifswald in the Moonlight*, 1817 (fig. 17), presents an actual likeness of Friedrich's hometown, albeit somewhat pale

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<sup>115</sup> *Port by Moonlight* was exhibited with its (now) lost pendant, *Port after Sunset with Shepherd and Sheep* (Börsch-Supan/Jähniß cat. no. 197) in 1811 at the Weimar Art Exhibition. *Port after Sunset* apparently depicted the same town as *Port by Moonlight*, but from a different vantage point. The next year *Port by Moonlight* was exhibited alone, and its pendant was never exhibited or mentioned again in the literature. Traditionally the city in the work(s) has been identified as Greifswald, but Peter Wegmann, in the catalogue of the Oskar Reinhart Foundation collection, which owns *Port by Moonlight*, notes that it is instead a vision of an ideal city, not a portrait of a specific town. Wegmann, et. al., *Caspar David Friedrich to Ferdinand Hodler: A Romantic Tradition* (Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1993), 82.

and moody, its waterfront full of fishing nets, with several fishermen in a rowboat heading toward the foreground coastline, going home after a day of work. All three paintings share compositional similarities in their uneventful layering of a jagged shoreline, a body of water, a silhouetted town on the distant horizon, and a moon positioned behind the city. In the *City at Moonrise*, the vertical framing changes the emphasis from the spread of the city along the horizon to the towers rising symmetrically into the night sky. The *Port by Moonlight* boasts a harbor filled with large sailing ships, the masts of which echo the towers of the large churches. In a fourth painting of a moonlit view of a Gothic town on the water, the *Memorial for Johann Emanuel Bremer*, ca. 1817 (fig. 62), the composition is more distinctive, consisting of a cultivated foreground garden and pergola set directly against a less cultivated strip of land filled with poplar trees, both of which are separated by a body of water from a distant pallid Gothic city and its crowded port.<sup>116</sup> The town, once again, is a fantasy of turrets and towers, not an identifiable city.

These nocturnal scenes are related compositionally to the long-standing tradition of topographical prints and paintings of city profiles laid out along a waterfront and viewed from the distant shore, e.g. Esias van de Velde's *View of Zierikzee*, 1618 (fig. 63), and to seventeenth-century moonlight views by Dutch painters like Aert van der Neer, e.g.

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<sup>116</sup> Johann Emanuel Bremer was a doctor and pharmacologist in Berlin who died in 1816. Friedrich's relationship to him is uncertain, other than Bremer was also originally from Pomerania. In a letter to his brother Christian in 1808, Friedrich wrote that should his brother travel to Paris he should mention to mutual acquaintance that a "Herr Bremer" was also currently in Paris, but this is the only textual reference to the two's relationship. Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 22. See also Börsch-Supan, "C. D. Friedrichs Gedächtnisbild für den Berliner Arzt Johann Emanuel Bremer," *Pantheon* 27 (1969): 399-409.

his *River Landscape in the Moonlight* (fig. 64) or the similar *Moonlight on the River before a Town*, ca. 1648-50 (Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden), which Friedrich could have seen in the Dresden royal art collection. Yet they are the sort of works that have led to the speculation that the motif of the city in Friedrich's work is almost always used as an otherworldly image, a Heavenly Jerusalem positioned at a distance to evoke longing for the afterlife, and set in dialectical opposition to a foreground filled with symbolic maritime debris, e.g. nets and anchors and overturned rotting boats. Friedrich's message in such paintings, according to Peter Wegmann, is the "juxtaposition of death with hope and resurrection."<sup>117</sup> Certainly the towns that spread softly along the horizon line of *Greifswald in the Moonlight* and *Memorial for Johann Emanuel Bremer* do have an ethereal quality, like Brigadoons rising out of the mist. The memorial function of the Bremer picture, which acts as a contemporary *Andachtsbild* (devotional picture), is more than evident in the symbolic performance of its highly structured composition, with its mournful poplars, long associated with death, the garden gate into which Bremer's name is written, and the eucharistic vines. The painting is divided not only into separate horizontal strips of foreground, middle ground and background, but also, like a triptych, into three vertical sections by the precisely placed trees that form the pergola. Bremer, a doctor who had died in 1816, is commemorated here with a picture of an arboreal canopy that forms a rectangular space like a tomb. It is an eternal resting place with a view, appropriately for a fellow Pomeranian, of a small Gothic harbor town.

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<sup>117</sup> Wegmann, 82. Wegmann is referring specifically to *City at Moonrise*, but he gives the same interpretation to *Port by Moonlight*.

In surmising that Friedrich tapped into the familiar vista of his hometown in these works in order to signify Heavenly Jerusalem, scholars are looking to the tradition in Western painting, dating back to the middle ages, of artists depicting John's apocalyptic vision, the city with its jeweled towers and golden walls, in the form of the town they knew best (in Friedrich's case, of course, Greifswald).<sup>118</sup> Methodologically, such interpretations also parallel scriptural readings of the Dutch landscapes to which Friedrich's are obviously related, whereby depictions of distant, contemporary towns are read as symbolizing salvation.<sup>119</sup> However, if Friedrich literally were attempting to give a personal inflection to the scriptural concept of Heavenly Jerusalem in a whole series of works, then the fact that most of the cityscapes identified as *Jenseits* visions are depicted under a full moon would need to be reconciled with John's specific revelation that "the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (Rev. 21:23). Otherwise the moonlit view would seem a deliberate disregard for scripture that would be surprising coming from a devout Pietist. In the end,

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<sup>118</sup> For discussion of the imagery of Heavenly Jerusalem, see M.L. Gatti Perer, ed., *La Dimora di Dio con gli uomini* (Ap 21,3): *Immagini della Gerusalemme celeste dal III al XIV secolo* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1983); Barbara Schock-Werner, "Bamberg ist Jerusalem – Architekturporträt im Mittelalter," in *Der Traum vom Raum. Gemalte Architektur aus 7 Jahrhunderten* (Marburg: Dr. Wolfram Hitzeroth Verlag, 1986); and Bianca Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1987).

<sup>119</sup> Several of Rembrandt's pictures in particular have been read in this manner. See Josua Bruyn, "Toward a Scriptural Reading of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Paintings," *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987), 96-97. See also the chapter on "Scriptural Readings. Its Uses and Abuses," in Gibson.

such a reductive approach assumes that Friedrich's work calls for mere deciphering of traditional iconographic language, while also positing the artist's participation in a visual tradition that, by the early 1800s, had ceased to be relevant to most viewers. Friedrich did at times (more often in the first decades of his career) resort to conventional allegory to suggest faith, but for the most part it is clear the artist questioned the continued viability of such imagery and instead pursued a more idiosyncratic way of conveying meaning in his work.<sup>120</sup>

The Bremer painting undeniably is concerned with death, but this is in keeping with an elegiac work. The other moonlit towns have no such frame of reference, and simply because they are similar in composition and employ a similar motif does not justify the assumption that they too share the same meaning. Even the airy *Greifswald in the Moonlight* is brought squarely into the realm of the present by the presence of the two fishermen rowing along the water, who, together with the crudely constructed nets jutting precariously out of the water, are reminders of the fishing culture of a specific Baltic town, Greifswald. The fishermen's boat heads toward the foreground coastline, not the city, which undercuts the assumption of the city as the painting's longed-for destination. The painting may or may not be informed by scriptural content, but it most assuredly is

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<sup>120</sup> *The Cross on the Mountains (Tetschen Altar)*, 1807/08 is the most famous example of Friedrich's iconoclastic practice. The artist depicts not the historic crucifixion but a crucifix, as though to make clear the time for depicting certain things and events had passed, just as (in Friedrich's own explanatory text of the piece) "the age when God the father walked on earth" had long passed. "...die Zeit, wo Gott der Vater unmittelbar wandelte auf Erden." See Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 133.

By around 1820, with few exceptions, Friedrich stopped incorporating monks, crosses, angels, or visionary Gothic churches into his compositions.

informed by the artist's celebration of the unconventional beauty of a misty, nocturnal view of his hometown, with its rough rocky waterfront juxtaposed to silhouetted Gothic buildings.

The town of *Port by Moonlight*, meanwhile, is too hard, too concretely there to inspire eschatological readings. Here a windmill makes a prosaic addition to a skyline that is also marked by many low rising, nondescript buildings, perhaps houses. These are the types of structures that filled up most of the neighborhoods of small German towns, not the showpiece buildings that usually surrounded the market squares, and by including them it is as though Friedrich aims to present the outlines of a believable city. Although Wegmann calls the foreground "a barren strip of coast" that "marks the dying present," in fact much of the ground is covered with grass, its green coloring breaking through the darkness of the scene, and the grove of fat trees to the left suggests that this is hardly a wasteland. *City at Moonrise*, on the other hand, with its exaggerated Gothic spires, seems more from the world of the fairytale, a nod to the mythic medieval German towns of Romantic fantasy. The vertical canvas acts to enforce the upward thrust of the parallel towers that frame the rising yellow globe and that seem almost giddily tall in relation to the rest of the town. The dominating visual factor of both paintings is the use of the silhouette, which has the effect of making the buildings coalesce into one single entity that easily and immediately is perceived as "town," in a theatrical way that seems aligned to the stage set, as though both of these paintings could be backdrops waiting for a story.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> For instance, an 1816 design for a scene in *The Magic Flute* by Schinkel (fig. 65), depicts a nighttime view including a moon, body of water, and silhouetted forms that compares well to these two paintings in mood if not in exact content.

Yet even more than that, the use of the silhouette, the nighttime setting, and the bright moons rising behind and above the towns strongly recalls the aesthetic of *Lichtspiele*, the moonlight transparencies and other popular forms of illuminated representations, usually of landscapes, that captured the hearts of audiences in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For instance, *Moonlight Landscape*, ca. 1785 (fig. 66), by Jacob Philipp Hackert (the artist who introduced the technique), while not depicting a city, likewise plays upon the effect of a full moon rising above a darkened silhouetted form (in this case mountains) with a reflecting foreground body of water and dramatic cloud coverage.<sup>122</sup> Lit from behind, such works acted as a kind of pre-cinematic encounter, as an assembly of viewers was able to perceive actual light in the form of the illuminating flame that flickered and caused the sensation of movement. Friedrich possibly could have seen a moonlight transparency during one of his trips to Rügen (one by Hackert belonged to the vicarage in the village Wieck, next to the Cape Arkona that Friedrich visited several times), for he expressed a fair amount of interest in these types of communal viewing experiences.<sup>123</sup> He executed at least three transparent pictures and he prepared plans for several others that would have been shown together as a cycle and would have incorporated musical accompaniment during a “performance” of them.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> For a discussion of these, see Birgit Verwiebe, *Lichtspiele. Vom Mondscheintransparent zum Diorama* (Stuttgart: Füsslin Verlag, 1997), esp. 15-26.

<sup>123</sup> Johann Jacob Grumbke described having seen the Hackert transparency in Wieck in his travel book *Streifzüge durch das Rügenland* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1988), 45-46. Originally published under the pseudonym Indigena (Altona: Johann Friedrich Hammerich, 1805).

<sup>124</sup> See Verwiebe, 55-62.

One of his remaining transparencies, *Mountain Landscape with City*, 1830/35 (fig. 67), can be viewed either in normal lighting for a daytime scene of a river landscape, or in a darkened room lit from behind to create a “nighttime” moonlight version that reveals a silhouetted Gothic city on the water, which in appearance is very similar to the silhouetted cities in *Port by Moonlight* and *Town at Moonrise*.<sup>125</sup> Obviously Friedrich painted *Mountain Landscape with City* years after the two city moonlight paintings, so it cannot be projected backwards onto them. But the similarities are striking enough to open up consideration of the transparency aesthetic: the city as silhouette, the dramatic illumination through moonlight, the play of reflection on the water, the silent, reflective mood. One could argue that even if *Port by Moonlight* and *Town at Moonrise* are indeed intimations of death and the afterlife, they nevertheless come to such a position by combining visual and conceptual elements that connect them to more popular concerns of the day: the enduring appeal of the paper cutout silhouette as art form, the general affinity for the perceived magical and metaphysical qualities of the moonlight view, and the mythic associations and fantasies placed upon the small medieval German town.

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<sup>125</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Marianne Heinz of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel, for allowing me to experience the different visual effects of the transparency, a watercolor and tempera work on paper which is seldom on display because of its fragility.

The other transparency is a small watercolor, *Moonlit Landscape*, ca. 1830/35 (Börsch-Supan/Jähmig cat. no. 440). The scene is dark, with a moon rising over a pond surrounded by trees that are silhouetted against the sky. Friedrich cut out the moon and mounted the work on another piece of plain paper, with the intention of having the image lit from behind so that the moon would shine.

### Artificial Reality

The reception of Friedrich as a progenitor of modernism, as a kind of priest of high art, has left little room in the literature for discussion of any connections between his production and popular forms of visual culture of the Romantic era such as *vedute*, transparent pictures, panoramas, or silhouettes. But as someone who lived his entire adult life in a major urban center like Dresden, which in addition to its fine art collections offered such delights as a wax figure cabinet, important theater productions, panoramas and at least one diorama, it must be assumed that Friedrich came into contact at some point with such media – and certainly, as I am arguing here, his paintings evince an interest in them. Jörg Traeger has described the late eighteenth century, the era in which Friedrich grew up and first learned his craft, as an “epoch of artificial reality,” and this “aesthetic of the artificial” remained firmly in place throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>126</sup>

Artifice is a term not normally used in discussions of Friedrich, but in fact it stands alongside nature as one of two poles that define his production. The conspicuous constructedness of many of Friedrich’s landscapes has always prevented them from being merely naturalistic renderings of nature. Friedrich may have discarded eighteenth century rules for constructing landscape imagery, but many of his images are carefully built compositions that portray not an entirely natural nature, but rather an envisioned nature.

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<sup>126</sup> Jörg Traeger, “Grenzformen der Kunst in der Goethezeit. Zur Ästhetik des Künstlichen,” in Ernst Hinrichs and Klaus Zernack, eds., *Daniel Chodowiecki (1726–1801) Kupferstecher, Illustrator, Kaufmann* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1977), 181.

Moreover, much of Friedrich's painted world seems to have sprung from an architectonic eye, by which I mean not only his inclination for understanding the underlying structure of things, but of building compositions piece by piece.

There are, for instance, the myriad pictures in which nature is turned into a frame to the view beyond, e.g. *Chalk Cliffs at Rügen*, 1818/19 (fig. 68), and *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (fig. 47). His devastating *The Polar Sea*, ca. 1823-24 (fig. 5), is read commonly as either a religious image of afterlife or a symbol of political failures, but the actual construction of the composition is what holds the viewer immediately and unrelentingly: the snapped chunks of ice, with their thick, jagged edges and sharp corners, seem less a part of nature than the debris of a collapsed architectural structure. The use of symmetry and repetition in his works, in paintings such as *City by Moonrise*, where twin towers frame the rising moon, or *Woman on the Beach at Rügen*, ca. 1818 (fig. 69), with its lyrical row of sailboats, also points to a quasi-architectural sense of composition.<sup>127</sup> And the horizon line of *On the Sailboat* is so perfectly straight that it has an odd, artificial effect – not in terms of it being some sort of other-worldly vision, but quite the opposite: the perfectly level horizon seems of this world, that is, a painted backdrop that does not try to fool the eye.

In the *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace* (fig. 18), which openly declares the constructedness of its setting, nature retreats almost completely as the urban sphere steps forward. The painting is a work that has garnered interest primarily because of its

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<sup>127</sup> See Börsch-Supan's dissertation noted in Ch. 1 for Friedrich's use of symmetry and repetition.

apparent borrowing of structures from several German towns in order to patch together an entirely imaginary city, an *erdachte Stadt*, in Friedrich's own term.<sup>128</sup> This has led to discussion about the implications such an imaginary town generates regarding the state of a greater Germany. But beyond the admittedly idealized nature of the town, I would argue that the immediate visual engagement between the two women and their town, together with the work's particular pictorial strategies, offer an opportunity to discuss the ways in which a Romantic subjective vision coexists with other, more popular (and typically urban) modes of perception of the period.

In their silent act of looking, the two women are much like the *Rückenfiguren* in *Neubrandenburg* (fig. 37), but here the setting is completely urban, for they are in the middle of the town, several meters away from a group of public buildings and a crowded harbor. The women, dressed in identical outfits, stand stiffly in the center of a foreground balcony, the left figure placing her hand on the other's shoulder, both their backs turned toward the viewer.<sup>129</sup> They are separated from the scene before them by the balustrade that runs parallel to the picture plane across the canvas. The rising towers, steeples, and ship masts coalesce into a striking pattern of spikes and jags across the entire background of the work. Nature has all but disappeared, with the exception of the barely perceptible

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<sup>128</sup> Friedrich to Ernst Moritz Arndt, 12 March, 1814, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 25. (See discussion below.)

<sup>129</sup> Although Sabine Rewald has called these Old German costumes, I have found a fashion plate from the 1815 volume of the *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* (plate no. 7) that, while more elaborate and more upscale than these dresses, shares a similar cut, including the stand-up collar. Thus, even if they are referencing historic German dress, they could at the same time be part of the current style for the period. Rewald, catalogue entry, *Romantic Vision of C. D. Friedrich*, 55.

water of the quay, several tiny white flowers that have pushed their way up through the cracks between the square slabs of stone of the terrace, and the eerie brown nighttime sky, pierced by a brilliant star that sheds some light over the top half of the scene. The lower half of the vertical canvas remains in darkness.

The city is composed of several elaborate Gothic structures, including a large cathedral with four towers that dominates the scene, a large round tower to its left, a square tower in front of the cathedral facade, and another tower, perhaps an entrance gate, on the right edge of the painting. Directly behind the balustrade to the right of the figures is a monument consisting of a cross accompanied by two mourning figures. There are no other living human beings besides the two women, nothing in the city to give it any sense of life. The crowded verticality of the picture contrasts with the openness, and often emptiness, of his horizontal landscapes. Here the pictorial space is jammed with angular, rectilinear forms, of architecture and ships. Despite its array of Gothic architecture, so closely aligned at the time with the idea of the organic, the city is pure geometry, completely inorganic. Some scholars have tried over the years to pinpoint exact sources for the buildings, suggesting it is an amalgamation of several northern German towns. P.H. Feist suggests the cluster of buildings to the left are Gothicized versions of the "Five Towers" of Halle; Sigrid Hinz declares that the building in front of the cathedral is based on the Stralsund Rathaus; and both Hinz and Hans Joachim Kunst read the harbor motif as conjuring up Greifswald.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> P.H. Feist, "Der Hallmarkt als Hafen. Zu einem Gemälde von C.D. Friedrich," *Hallesches Monatsheft* III (1956), 449; Sigrid Hinz, "Zur Datierung der norddeutschen Landschaften Friedrichs," in *Greifswald-Stralsunder Jahrbuch* 4 (1964), 265; and Hans

Much has been made of the visionary character of the work, monumental in its combination of majestic civic and religious buildings, the impressive gathering of ships, the large cross at the edge of the harbor, the peculiar lighting, the contemplative gaze of the women, and the overall silence of the image. In a letter written to the German patriot and writer Ernst Moritz Arndt during the time of the Napoleonic occupation in 1814, Friedrich described his work on a picture of an imagined city (*einer erdachten Stadt*) in whose town square he placed a monument to the Prussian General Gerhard von Scharnhorst, killed in the fight against Napoleon.<sup>131</sup> Most likely this painting was not *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*, but another, similar picture, which appeared at the annual exhibitions of the Berlin and Dresden academies, in 1815 and 1816, titled *Balcony in front of the Cathedral Square in Twilight, Fantasy by C.D. Friedrich*, in the Dresden catalogue.<sup>132</sup> However, the similarity in composition of the two works (see footnote 133), together with *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*'s monumental character, suggests that Friedrich had some sort of memorial function in mind for this work as well. In fact, scholars primarily have taken it

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Joachim Kunst, "Caspar David Friedrich und die Gotik," paper presented in Hamburg, 5 December 1974, cited in Rautmann, *Landschaft als Sinnbild*, 86.

<sup>131</sup> Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 24.

<sup>132</sup> The painting is now lost, but it was described in reviews as a large vertical painting of man and woman in *altdeutsch* dress standing in a brilliant twilight on a terrace with balustrade, from which they had a view onto two streets separated by a gothic church with several towers, two of which were bound by a bridge (as in the cathedral in *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*). Between the church and the balustrade lay a cemetery with gravestones and statues. Unlike the *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*, this town view included houses, one of which sported a light in its window. Towers from churches were seen further in the distance and a quiet harbor and the moon added to the still mood of the painting, according to one viewer. See Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 83-86, and 333-334.

for an idealized image of a future Germany. While Märker interprets the Gothic city as the vision of a future Christian epoch, Eimer sees the Gothic related directly to Friedrich's hopes for a democratic, united nation.<sup>133</sup> Rautmann speculates further that the town's apparent derivation from four different German cities (Halle, Stralsund, Neubrandenburg, and Greifswald) symbolizes (as per Eimer) the hope for a democratic, unified Germany, with the emphasis on the Gothic architecture strengthening the idea of the image's national (German) character, and the identically dressed and posed women symbolizing the concept of equality (of humankind, that is, not women in particular).<sup>134</sup>

These readings shed light on one aspect of the work, although it must be noted that Friedrich's own contemporaries, in their reviews of the work, failed to read an explicitly political, Germanic message in it. (It furthermore was purchased directly out of his studio by the Russian grand duke Nikolai Pavlovich in 1820.) But I would like to take the discussion out of this interpretive mode altogether and into a consideration of the perceptual models of the time by concentrating on the artifice that characterizes the work. *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace* is a portrayal of a city center, and hence a sense of

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<sup>133</sup> Märker, "Geschichte als Natur," 99. Eimer, 18.

<sup>134</sup> Rautmann, *Landschaft als Sinnbild*, 89. Rautmann has expanded upon the tenuous argument by Peter Feist that the four-towered cathedral and separate tower behind it are based on the so-called "Five Towers" of Halle. However, Halle's church is a mixture of Romanesque, late Gothic and Renaissance features, less showy than the richly decorated, purely high Gothic structure of Friedrich's painting, with its elaborate Gothic choir and thin high towers. Other than Feist's own conjecture that Friedrich stopped by on the way to Weimar, there is no evidence that Friedrich ever visited the town. Furthermore, no contemporary account of the painting recognized it as Halle. Rather than pinpoint exact sources for the buildings, Friedrich's *erdachte Stadt* is best seen as a harbor town of medieval character and brick buildings, and thus most certainly a reference to the Baltic towns of his origins.

constructedness is to be expected. But even beyond this, the entire picture seems to suggest itself as an artificial construction (or as imaginary, at any rate): the buildings and the boats are almost impossibly crowded together, the terrace's placement seems a curious one for an urban space, and the lighting of the picture is altogether strange. It is true that Friedrich had in mind an imaginary city, but it is as if he makes no attempt to hide this construction behind a naturalizing facade that suggests some real place, as he does in *Port by Moonlight* or *City at Moonrise*.

In fact, the structure of the painting resembles nothing so much as that of a panorama, an art form that was essentially an urban mode of representation, as panoramas were set up exclusively in cities, where spectacles in general began to proliferate. (In addition, the expense of creating it required the size of a city audience in order to be an economically successful endeavor.) In *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*, the women stand on a high platform to look at the view that rises above and below them, separated from it by the balustrade and yet at the same time seemingly having entered the town's space. The lighting, minimal as it is, parallels the manner in which panoramas and similar structures were illuminated. Coming from a single source (the star) at the upper edge of the canvas, it shines down almost exclusively upon the backdrop of the city, leaving the women in darkness. Panoramas were introduced to Germany as early as 1799, and a report from 1800 about the so-called "Nausorama" on display in Hamburg matches structural particularities of *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*: "The painting...is set up in a half-circle in an octagonal building built especially for it on the large marketplace. The light falls from above onto it, and the viewer stands on a somewhat higher stage, so

that the painting is partly below and partly above him, and he notices no window. In this way the light appears to come from the painting itself, which leads to the deception that one is standing in the landscape."<sup>135</sup>

Stephan Oettermann already has connected Friedrich's work to the aesthetic of the panorama by reading another vertical painting, *The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, 1818 (fig. 70), as an image of a viewer at a panorama, citing the "platform" the wanderer stands on to gaze at the scene, separated from him by the fog, the particular lighting that "corresponds to the lighting principle of the panorama," and the curved lines of clouds and atmosphere that suggest the figure stands before a curved painted surface. Oettermann suggests that in such works Friedrich conceives of the "view of the world as panorama."<sup>136</sup> While Oettermann had in mind Friedrich's landscapes, it is helpful also to keep in mind the popularity of panoramic city views in Germany with reference to *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*, and the fascination urban audiences expressed for viewing images of their "own" world, i.e. the city, as well as the natural world of the countryside. As pointed out in Chapter 2, many of the first panoramas to be exhibited in Germany were city views, and, starting around 1820, paintings of urban interiors were becoming more and more common.

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<sup>135</sup> "Das Gemälde ... ist in einem besonders dazu errichteten breiteren achteckigten Gebäude auf dem großen Markte in einem Halbzirkel aufgestellt. Das Licht fällt von oben auf dasselbe, und der Zuschauer steht auf einer etwas erhöhten Buhne, so daß das Gemälde theils unter theils über ihn ist, und er kein Fenster bemerkt. So scheint das Licht von dem Gemälde selbst zu kommen, welches in die Täuschung versetzt, als ob man eine Landschaft hineinstehe." "Die Panoramen," *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* 15 (June 1800): 290-291.

<sup>136</sup> Oettermann, *Panorama*, 45-47.

In *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*, Friedrich may have been imagining his vision of the ideal German city, basing it upon his own urban experience of living in a medieval port town, and the painting may have been meant as a patriotic memorial of sorts. Yet there is at the same time a kind of entertainment value at work here, which both participates in and subverts the perceptual experience of the panorama. There are limits, of course, to the reading of the work as “panorama.” It is on the one hand very far removed from such city portraits as Gaertner’s optically gripping *Panorama of Berlin*, 1834 (fig. 71), a six-paneled work (two sets of triptychs) in which a group of residents clamber on top of the Friedrich-Werder church for the excellent views it afforded. The scene is brightly lit in order to facilitate looking, with active figures adding a bit of local residential color, and the 360° angle of vision promises a command of sight – nothing is cut off from view. By contrast, the darkness of Friedrich’s vertical painting of an imaginary city hinders that same sort of visual appeal. Despite the two female observers, the city seems uncannily depopulated, and is not the lively scene of a modern German metropolis.

Yet at the same time, *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace* speaks to a desire for the theatrical view of the urban space embodied by such paintings as Gaertner’s Berlin scenes – but in Friedrich’s easel painting terms. Underneath the veil of darkness are glimpses of descriptive architectural details and other tantalizing bits of visual information, which compel the viewer to look long and hard enough in order to perceive them. Besides these architectural embellishments, Friedrich has packed the space with an overflow of buildings and boats. And although the canvas does not offer the wide-angle view, there is

a sense that the city extends beyond the range of the frame, implied by the horizontal strip of balustrade that runs in front of the women. Several contemporary observers referred to the painting's "magical" air, as though they were attracted to the work by some unknown force. One reviewer for a Viennese paper noted that "[a] bright star twinkles at us and the more you look at it, the more remarkable its silent gleam of light becomes and you see more and more stars appearing in the violet-colored ether."<sup>137</sup>

The point here is not to suggest that Friedrich intended *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace* literally to be an image of viewers at a panorama, but rather to enunciate ways in which a work like this might be informed by the period's popular practices of vision, especially in their emphasis on the spectacle of viewing. This remains true even while Friedrich undermines some of the allure of the optical command offered by popular modern media, by incorporating a Romantic, subjective mode of vision alongside the modern *Sehsucht*, or desire to look. The women's act of looking, featured so prominently that it becomes just as much the point of the picture as the city beyond the balustrade, transforms the town and harbor into a visual commodity, bestowing upon it a degree of view-worthiness. Despite their prominence in the composition, the two women do not block the heart of the view to the extent that the figures in *The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (fig. 70) or *Woman before the Setting Sun* (fig. 39) do. The city gives a visual

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<sup>137</sup> "Ein heller Stern funkelt uns entgegen und je mehr man hinblickt, desto täuschender wird sein stiller Lichtschimmer und mehr und mehr Sterne sieht man erscheinen in dem veilchenfarbenen Aether." ["Über die Dresdener Ausstellung"], *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunst, Literatur, Theater und Mode* (1820): 990, in Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 94. The reference to the violet light, which another reviewer also commented on, suggests that the painting has darkened over the years into more of a brown monochrome.

performance and the women are its audience, seemingly spellbound. Theirs becomes a communal viewing experience as they share in the sight together, with one woman's hand touching the shoulder of the other.

There has been some speculation about Friedrich's own experience of visiting panoramas, and he certainly would have had the opportunity to see one as early as 1801 in Berlin (where, it has been suggested, he made stopovers on his trips to Greifswald), when a panorama of Berlin itself was exhibited there.<sup>138</sup> Panoramas were also exhibited in Dresden, and it would seem surprising if Friedrich, an avid visitor to the royal art collections and a keen observer of contemporary art (as revealed by his "Remarks on a collection of paintings"), did not stop by such a major attraction as a panorama, with all the attention such spectacles received.<sup>139</sup> Indeed, further suggestive of the impression the panorama might have made on him is a series of paintings of the Riesengebirge that indicate he may have been planning to create his own version of one.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Although Oettermann states that "[s]cholars have found evidence that Friedrich himself visited panoramas," his cited source (Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 311) does not in fact confirm this, so it is unclear where he obtained this information. Oettermann, *Panorama*, 47 and 354, note 119. Regarding Friedrich in Berlin, see Börsch-Supan, "Caspar David Friedrich und Berlin 'Der Anfang einer Vorgeschichte,'" *Berlin in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Jahrbuch des Landesarchivs Berlin* (1988): 55-81. In this essay, however, Börsch-Supan does not discuss panoramas or anything else Friedrich potentially could have seen during his stopovers.

<sup>139</sup> Carl von Voss, who visited Dresden in 1822, commented in his diary on several panoramas currently on display there, including ones by the Enslin brothers. Carl von Voss, *Eine Reise nach Dresden 1822* (Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske, 1986), 37, 43, 186, 262.

<sup>140</sup> See Günther Grundmann, "Fragmente zu einem Riesengebirgspanorama Caspar David Friedrichs?," *Schlesien* 4 (1959): 148-52; and Grundmann, "C.D. Friedrich: Topographische Treue und künstlerische Freiheit, dargestellt an drei Motiven des

In some ways *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace* acts as a bridge between Friedrich's past life in small-town Pomerania and his adult life in urban Saxony. The scene depicted is obviously based upon the model of the German town that he knew so well from his youth, whether or not it is an amalgamation of structures taken from specific towns. The brick Gothic architecture, the town cathedral in the central *Platz*, and the harbor with its flotilla of sailboats, all represented the ideal town for Friedrich, small in size, medieval in flavor, the natural habitat for people like the "sisters" who gaze at it, neither aristocrats nor peasants, but ostensibly of the educated middle classes, who could appreciate its beauty as well as any moral, political, or spiritual implications that may have been assigned to it. This sort of aesthetic and intellectual appreciation, however, as well as the culture of the spectacle that the painting conjures up, belong less to the world of the provincial town, to a Greifswald, than to a more worldly urban center like Dresden, where a populace more attuned to both the delights of mass entertainment and the merits of aesthetic contemplation could have recognized themselves in the sisters' observational stance. Thus, even as Friedrich reaches back into his provincial past for visual inspiration, the more sophisticated environment of his urban adulthood reveals its impact on his painterly imagination.

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Riesengebirgs panoramas von Bad Warmbrunn aus," *Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen* 19 (1974): 89-105.

## CHAPTER 4

## ELBFLORENZ

In truth, other cities have their glory; Berlin has its martial pomp, Hamburg has its trade, Paris its society, its academic riches, London its navy, Vienna its pastries, Rome its beautiful wilds, its memories and so on; our Dresden has its nature and its sense of art.

Ernst Scherzlieb, *Dresden, wie es ist*<sup>1</sup>

### Friedrich and Dresden

Caspar David Friedrich lived in Dresden for forty years, all of them as an adult, almost two-thirds of his life. It was his home from age twenty-five until his death, minus a year and a half return to Greifswald in the early 1800s. But in the long career of the painter, the city was not once the primary focus of one of his paintings, or even a prominent motif within an Elbe valley landscape. It did not even appear in a minor role in any painting for the first quarter-century of his life in the city, and when it finally did, it was often changed so as to be almost unrecognizable. Almost always it is fragmented, never a coherent whole like the northern Gothic city views. As a result, historians rarely have paused to consider the impact of the city of Dresden on Friedrich's art. I will argue in this chapter that this gap in Friedrich's subject matter is no oversight. Instead, it reflects a city dweller's profound ambivalence, if not a willful blindness, to the urban landscape in which he lived.

In 1803, when Friedrich settled permanently in Dresden, he moved into an

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<sup>1</sup> "Fürwahr, andre Städte haben ihren Glanz; Berlin hat seinen martialischen Pomp, Hamburg hat seinen Handel, Paris seine Gesellschaft, seinen wissenschaftlichen Reichthum, London seine Weltschiffahrt, Wien seine Pasteten, Rom seine schönen Einöden, seine Erinnerungen und so fort; unser Dresden hat seine Natur und seinen Kunstsinn." Scherzlieb, 139.

apartment in a neighborhood, An der Elbe, occupied primarily by residents with limited incomes, like himself.<sup>2</sup> The street An der Elbe was located just outside the historic city walls, a location that would have allowed Friedrich the comfort of living in Dresden, but not being confined by it. In this way he could head into the countryside on his side of the river and back without having to pass through the city gates. Although Friedrich eventually changed addresses in 1820, it was simply to a few doors down the street, on the same block, and he stayed put there for the remainder of his life. Yet Dresden was never a constant in Friedrich's life, for the city underwent many changes during the Romantic era.

Although he lived in the same neighborhood for forty years, it was hardly the same environment in 1840 that it was in 1803. War, foreign occupation, destruction, rebuilding, and immense growth all left their mark on the city. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, Dresden was a much larger city than Greifswald, but it was in no way a sprawling metropolitan area, even by the standards of the day.<sup>3</sup> A 1778 map of the city shows a compact town enclosed within hefty medieval fortifications, on the opposite side of which were some developing neighborhoods and royal gardens (fig. 72). Dresden's walls (a "truly impressive bulwark" in the words of one eighteenth-century observer<sup>4</sup>)

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<sup>2</sup> Schubert, *Selbstbiographie*, vol. 2, 182.

<sup>3</sup> According to Hans Joachim Neidhardt, the city had only approximately 600 buildings inside its walls at this time. Neidhardt, *Dresden wie es Maler sahen* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Weidlich, 1983), 63. In this respect, it is interesting that Friedrich chose to settle in Dresden, as opposed to the much larger Berlin, which he visited for an unknown length of time early in his career, before deciding to move to Saxony. See Börsch-Supan, "Friedrich und Berlin."

<sup>4</sup> The observer was Pieter van der Aa, who published *La galerie agréable du Monde* in 1729, a series of maps and views of towns from the sixteenth to the eighteenth

remained in place until 1809, when Napoleon himself gave the order to start tearing them down, a project that lasted until 1829.<sup>5</sup> Friedrich reported to his brother Christian about the destruction of the ornate city gates, which were to be memorialized in drawing beforehand. With this action, he wrote, city and suburbs were to become one.<sup>6</sup> By 1816 the part of the wall nearest his apartment was gone; by 1820 the closest portal, the elegant Pirna Gate, was torn down; and by the end of his life his street was incorporated wholesale into the boundaries of “downtown” Dresden, as the city had expanded well beyond its former walls.

How Friedrich reacted to the changes in Dresden was never recorded, nor has anyone thought to ask the question. What one finds in writing about Friedrich and the celebrated hometown of his adulthood is mostly a discussion of his immersion in the *Dresden Romantik*, the intellectual swarm the city boasted in the latter years of the 1790s and early decades of the nineteenth century. Phillip Otto Runge, Carl Gustav Carus, Georg Friedrich Kersting, Gerhard von Kugelgen, Louise Seidler, Heinrich von Kleist, Ludwig Tieck, Johann Jacob Rühle von Lilienstern, Christian August Semler, and Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert all lived (at least for a time) in or around Dresden during Friedrich’s years there, and all were included among Friedrich’s circle of friends and

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century, with a commentary on each city. Partially republished as *Europäische Städte-Ansichten um 1700* (Hamburg: Harry V. Hofmann Verlag, 1963), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Fritz Löffler, *Das alte Dresden. Geschichte Seiner Bauten* (Dresden: Sachsenverlag, 1958), 122.

<sup>6</sup> See undated letter to Christian Friedrich, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 38.

acquaintances. How these figures may have influenced Friedrich (and the reverse), and how their combined efforts defined the scope of Romanticism as it played out in Dresden, have been the primary focus of the question of "Friedrich and Dresden." But very little has been made of his reaction to the town, of what he looked at, and how he approached it visually.

This is perhaps not surprising, for Friedrich left almost no commentary on the town. Even more importantly, although Friedrich spent forty of his sixty-six years in the Saxon capital, and although its environs became a significant part of his subject matter, the city itself has very little presence in Friedrich's art, certainly much less than the northern Gothic towns discussed in the previous chapter. Friedrich's direct observation of architectural Dresden, as far as can be ascertained from the remaining body of drawings and sketches, was limited primarily to a study from 1799/1800 of the Frauenkirche dome and the Hofkirche and Schloss towers, a couple of drawings of the ruins of the Brühl Belvedere,<sup>7</sup> and a small city silhouette sketch from 1800, composed of a thin line that registers like a tiny heart monitor across the sheet. The city appears a few times more as subject matter in his finished works of art, yet, as will be outlined below, never as the primary focus of the composition. Rather than celebrate the familiar outlines of city monuments, as so many of his colleagues did, Friedrich hid them, blocking out the all-encompassing view with physical barriers or atmospheric veils, or changing their form so as to make the city almost unrecognizable. Even where the town is "present" in

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<sup>7</sup> For identification of the Brühl Belvedere sketches, see Gisela Helbig, "Zur Bestimmung von Bildmotiven bei Caspar David Friedrich. Das Brühlische Belvedere in Dresden," *Sächsische Heimatblätter* 32 (1986): 94-97.

Friedrich's work, then, it is notably absent – obliquely suggested, indicated perhaps by a few tops of towers, but essentially barricaded from the viewer's gaze and always fragmented. In several works, the urban location of the viewpoint remains undisclosed in favor of depicting the adjoining nature, and at times Friedrich deliberately erases traces of the city.

The fact that Dresden's presence never makes itself felt in his work in a major way may be the reason for the silence about his visual treatment of the city, but it is just this blindness to his immediate surroundings that demands attention. For Friedrich's approach to Dresden does not seem to be the consequence of an unintentional sightlessness, of one who simply did not bother to look at the view before him, but of a willfull blindness, that is, a deliberate eclipsing of the town. This chapter explores Friedrich's depictions of Dresden and argues for a visual estrangement between the artist and the city. Furthermore, it expands upon the previous chapter's discussion of belonging and being "at home," not only by discussing Friedrich's reluctance to embrace the image of his adult hometown (as opposed to that of his childhood *Heimat*), but also by analyzing scenes from his Dresden apartment. As will be demonstrated below, Friedrich's gaze at Dresden suggests an ambivalence toward the regal town that played the longest and most significant role in his life.

### Ansicht/Aussicht

For a young landscape artist, Dresden offered much that a small provincial town could not: a vibrant artistic setting, the promise of patronage, and opportunities for

exhibition. It also offered easy proximity to a beautiful countryside. In this section I will consider the role that Dresden played in the Romantic imagination, for it was a town of considerable reputation that attracted many of Germany's prominent artists and writers, and an entire discourse on the town and its affinity with nature sprang up during this period. At the dawn of the Romantic era, Friedrich's adopted home counted itself among the ranks of Germany's leading cities. Its resident royals were not only the electors of powerful Saxony, but also had been, between 1697 and 1763, the kings of Poland. This, together with the conversion of the electors and the entire court to Catholicism (to ensure the kingship), had brought in an influx of foreign visitors, from Polish nobility to Vatican envoys, who added a dash of cosmopolitanism to what previously had been a more isolated royal seat. Outside of Dresden, the Saxon countryside was a dynamic site of early industrial activity, much of which was carried out under royal oversight. The two rivers flowing through Dresden, the Elbe and the Weisseritz, were found to be particularly useful sites for watermills. While the political power of Dresden began to wane with the loss of Poland in 1763, the economic power of Saxon manufacturing only increased throughout the next century.

Culturally, Dresden offered spectacular art collections, a lively music scene with one of Germany's most active opera houses, and showcase architecture. It is therefore not surprising that among German cities, it garnered some of the most ardent adulation from travelers, well before and throughout the Romantic period.<sup>8</sup> More than a few of

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<sup>8</sup> For an account of Dresden's reputation during the Romantic period, see Gerald Heres, "Gloria Dresdensis. Dresdens Ruhm in der Goethezeit," *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden* 10 (1980): 7-27.

Dresden's notable buildings were singled out as being particularly beautiful, and overall its appearance seems to have pleased most commentators. A 1782 guide book to Dresden, abundant in its praise, described Dresden as "one of the loveliest cities in Germany," most of whose streets were "lovely, wide, and straight," all of whose public and private buildings were built "in a beautiful style, out of stone" and many of whose bourgeois homes looked "like palaces."<sup>9</sup>

Under the reigns of Augustus the Strong and his son, Augustus III, Dresden had taken on its characteristic Baroque and Rococo opulence, as the city was heavily rebuilt after the destruction of the Thirty Years' War and the Seven Years' War. Many of the monumental buildings that created the town's famous skyline were erected during their tenure, including the Zwinger Palace, the Frauenkirche, and the Catholic Hofkirche.<sup>10</sup> Thus, by the time Friedrich arrived in 1799, the city had already lost much of its medieval flavor, and taken on a regal ambience. By this time as well, the familiar view of the Dresden Altstadt, stretched out along the Elbe, and viewed either from the Neustadt bank of the river or from a distant point in the surrounding landscape, had long been etched in the mind of visitors and citizens alike.<sup>11</sup> Although it did not inspire quite the industry of

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<sup>9</sup> "...die meisten Straßen sind schön, breit und gerade...All öffentlichen und Privatgebäude sind von einer Schönen Bauart, von Bruchsteinen, und vier bis fünf Stock hoch. Viele bürgerliche Häuser haben das Ansehen von Pallästen..." *Beschreibung der vorzüglichsten Merkwürdigkeiten der churfürstlichen Residenzstadt Dresden und einiger umlegender Gegenden*, vol. 1 (Dresden: Walterischen Buchhandlung, 1782), 26-27.

<sup>10</sup> For the most thorough account of Dresden's architectural history, see Löffler.

<sup>11</sup> Bellotto's giant canvases left a formidable legacy in terms of the city's image, as works such as *Dresden from the Right Bank of the Elbe Below the Augustus Bridge, 1748* (fig. 73), which depicts the Altstadt river landscape, were widely dispersed through prints.

city portraiture that Berlin did in the nineteenth century, Dresden's reputation as a town of great beauty meant it was depicted regularly in the art of the Romantic era, especially in readily collectible prints of *Ansichten* (close-up views) and *Aussichten* (prospects).

Part of Dresden's great appeal was the richness of its art collection, which was perhaps Germany's most brilliant.<sup>12</sup> While Herder saw Dresden as the Florence on the Elbe ("Bloom, German Florence, with your treasures of the art world!"<sup>13</sup>), J. J. Winckelmann celebrated it as the new Athens for artists. Yet while it was the art collections that helped make Dresden a key stop on tours of Germany, the city had a second, equally compelling, attraction – the beauty of the nearby countryside, which earned a widespread reputation already in the eighteenth century. The Elbe river valley near Dresden was distinguished by gentle hills and lush patches of woods, as well as cultivated gardens and rustic farmland. The 1782 guidebook to Dresden referenced above offered a list of ten particularly good *Luft-Oerten*, or open-air grounds, in the Dresden countryside (in addition to twelve gardens in and right outside of Dresden), all of which

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Although Angelo Walther has noted that Bellotto's paintings in the royal collection may not have been given much public access in the last decades of the 1700s through the 1830s, they were certainly known through their engraved and etched copies. Walther, 20.

<sup>12</sup> The collection achieved prominence primarily through the collecting sprees of Augustus the Strong and his son Augustus III in the first half of the 1700s. Of particular note were the acquisitions of the collection of the Duke of Modena and Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, which brought well-known works from Italy and established Dresden's international reputation as a center of art. See Harald Marx and Gregor J. M. Weber, *Dresden in the Ages of Splendor and Enlightenment* (Columbus: Columbus Museum of Art, 1999), 30-39.

<sup>13</sup> "Blühe, deutsches Florenz, mit deinen Schätzen der Kunstwelt!" Herder, *Adrastea*, in *Herders Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1885), 3:436.

were readily accessible for day trips.<sup>14</sup> It was not only the local population that benefited from these pleasure grounds, but also the many outside visitors who came to experience their delights. Some twenty kilometers southeast of the city was the even more celebrated region known as Saxon Switzerland, so called because of the rocky highland it boasted. Friedrich felt a strong attraction for this striking terrain, which was within easy reach.<sup>15</sup> He explored the entire region on at least eight different trips between 1800 and 1820, and took its topography as the subject of many works.

Nature thus became a part of Dresden's own self-image, a perception enhanced by the town's division by a river, for the Elbe, together with Dresden's relative compactness, allowed the countryside to be readily visible from certain parts of the city. Heinrich von Kleist, in a letter to Wilhelmine von Zenge from 1801, described his immediate environs, i.e. the center of Dresden, by focusing on nature: "Today I lay on the Brühl Terrace, I had brought along a book to read, but my mind was elsewhere and I put it away. I looked from the high bank over to the beautiful Elbe valley, it lay there under my feet like a painting by Claude Lorrain – it seemed to me like a landscape embroidered on a carpet, green meadows, villages, a wide river that turns quickly to kiss Dresden, and as soon as it has kissed it, recedes quickly again – and the splendid wreath of mountains, which the carpet embraces like an arabesque border – and the pure blue Italian sky that hangs over

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<sup>14</sup> *Beschreibung der vorzüglichsten Merkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 1, 10.

<sup>15</sup> A passport document allowing Friedrich free access to Saxon Switzerland for the purpose of drawing is found in the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Dresden (KA 63, 60), and reprinted in Hinz, *Unbekannte Dokumente*, 12-15. For an account of Friedrich in Saxon Switzerland, see Karl-Ludwig Hoch, *Caspar David Friedrich in der Sächsischen Schweiz* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1995).

the entire region.”<sup>16</sup>

The synthesis of nature and culture invoked by Kleist’s description is typical of the Romantic perception of Dresden. “The art and the environs” became a kind of city slogan, inevitably appearing in any description or mention of the town.<sup>17</sup> Even its nickname, *Elbflorenz* (Elbe-Florence) merged the two concepts into one harmonious entity, while the Dresden art academy enjoyed a reputation as a haven for landscape painters because members such as Johann Alexander Thiele, Adrian Zingg, and Johann Christian Klengel had established a strong tradition of painting the city’s natural environs. In August Wilhelm and Caroline Schlegel’s dialogue “Die Gemähde” (The Paintings), a conversation about art among three friends that was published in the journal *Athenaeum*, the artist Reinhold describes the outdoor scenery in Dresden as the group leaves the gallery where they met to discuss the works of art: “Before us the quiet river; beyond it, planes rise up in gentle waves behind the green bank, there below the city with the dome of the Frauenkirche is reflected in the water, above, hills of vineyards gather densely around the

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<sup>16</sup> “Heute lag ich auf den Brühlischen Terrassen, ich hatte ein Buch mitgenommen, darin zu lesen, aber ich war zerstreut und legte es weg. Ich blickte von dem hohen Ufer herab über das herrliche Elbtal, es lag da wie ein Gemälde von Claude Lorain unter meinen Füßen – es schien mir wie eine Landschaft auf einen Teppich gestickt, grüne Fluren, Dörfer, ein breiter Strom, der sich schnell wendet, Dresden zu küssen, und hat er es geküßt, schnell wieder flieht – und der prächtige Kranz von Bergen, der den Teppich wie eine Arabeskenborde umschließt – und der reine blaue italische Himmel, die über die ganze gegend schwebte...” Heinrich von Kleist to Wilhelmine von Zenge, 4 May 1801, in Kleist, 647.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Friedrich’s comment in a letter to the Saxon king in 1816 about the reason he moved to Dresden in the first place, that is, because of its artistic treasures and the beauty of the surrounding countryside. Friedrich to Friedrich August I of Saxony, 6 October, 1816, in Hoch, *Unbekannte Dokumente*, 62.

bend, studded with country houses and covered atop with evergreens...”<sup>18</sup> The scene before them then prompts a second participant, Louise, to launch a discussion about landscape painting.<sup>19</sup> Here the nexus of nature and culture comes full circle: mirrored in the surface of the river, the skyline of the city acts as one other aspect of the natural landscape, while the landscape itself participates in the dialogue on art.

An extended commentary on the Dresden skyline predicated on the perceived harmony between the spheres of town and countryside is contained in Scherzlieb’s 1830 guide book, in a passage in which the tour guide, coincidentally named Friedrich, takes a group of visitors outside the city for a full sweep of the view:

...Friedrich led us through the Augustus street straight to the Elbe bridge, which yesterday in the evening twilight we visualized more than actually saw. We stood and enjoyed the delightful spectacle...left and right before us the Neustadt, the Altstadt with its fantastic cathedral, behind us the hills of the Meissen wine country, covered with villas, countless villages and May festivities on the banks of the Elbe under wide shadowed avenues; the Ostra-Gehege enclosure embraces the banks with a green wall of foliage, and a colorful group of ships draws the view to the next foreground.

“You know that I have traveled around a lot,” Friedrich said to the joyfully astonished group, “yet I can hardly remember such a city view as this one anywhere else. London has larger river views, but it simply is missing the countryside; Paris is also rich in such views, however, the city delivers everything, the environs nothing; the same case with Rome and Florence, whose rivers are much too tiny; only Lyon, viewed from its bridges, vividly calls to mind this view,

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<sup>18</sup> “Vor uns der ruhige Fluß; jenseits erhebt sich hinter dem grünen Ufer die Ebne in leisen Wellen, dort unten spiegelt sich die Stadt mit der Kuppel der Frauenkirche im Wasser, oberhalb ziehn sich Rebenhügel dicht an der Krümmung hin, mit Landhäusern besäet und oben mit Nadelholz bedeckt....” “Die Gemälde,” *Athenaeum*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1799): 54 (Facsimile reprint of entire series, Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta’sche Buchhandlung, 1960).

<sup>19</sup> “Encountering this joyful region, perhaps you will like to hear a few descriptions of landscapes....” “Im Angesicht dieser lachenden Gegend hören Sie vielleicht um so lieber ein paar Beschreibungen von Landschaften...” *Ibid.*, 54.

in which city and land melt into a panorama...one does not see where this one begins and that one ends."<sup>20</sup>

Scherzlieb's passage offers an idyllic portrait of a city view in which the countryside plays at best as significant a role as the urban architecture. The match between the two in terms of the visual pleasure they provide is indicated by their fusion, for, as Scherzlieb suggests, there is no real boundary between them.

Artists had exploited the river landscape and the surrounding Elbe valley in their views of Dresden since at least the 1700s.<sup>21</sup> But the affinity between city and nature, an equation of the view worthiness of both, is particularly emphasized in pictures of Dresden

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<sup>20</sup> "Mit diesen Worten führte uns Friedrich durch die Augustusstraße geraden Weges auf die Elbbrücke, die wir gestern im abendlichen Halblichte mehr geahnet, als gesehen hatten. Wir standen und genossen des reizendsten Schauspiels...links und rechts vor uns die Neustadt, die Altstadt mit ihrem großartigen Dom, hinter uns die Höhenzüge des Meißner Weinlandes, mit Villen besät, am Elbufer unter weitschattigen Alleen unzählige Dörfer und Maierien; das Gehege umschloß die Ufer mit einem grünen Laubwall, und ein buntes Schiffsleben zog den Blick auf den nächsten Vorgrund hinab.

'Ihr wißt, ich bin weit umher gewesen,' sprach Friedrich zu den Freudigstauenden; 'doch eine Stadtansicht, wie diese, ist mir kaum von irgend woher erinnerlich. London hat größere Flußansichten, allein ihnen fehlt das ländliche; auch Paris ist reich an solchen, doch liefert die Stadt alles, die Umgebungen nichts; derselbe Fall ist es mit Rom und Florenz, deren Flüsse wieder allzuwinzig sind; nur Lyon erinnert, von seinen Brücken herab betrachtet, lebhaft an diese Ansicht, in der Stadt und Land sich in einem Panorama verschmelzen...Man sieht nicht, wo dies anfängt und jene aufhört.'" Scherzlieb, 3-5.

<sup>21</sup> Christian Wilhelm Ernst Dietrich's *View of Dresden*, ca. 1735 (Nationalmuseum, Stockholm), for instance, is in fact a landscape painting of an idyllic view of the Elbe and its valley with the city as one scenic passage along the river's flow. Bellotto produced several river landscape views of Dresden that unsentimentally depict the brown river banks on either side of the Augustus bridge as messy, unpaved swaths of land that contrasted with the highly refined lines of architecture. The river itself appears in his paintings less a picturesque element of nature than as a working component of the city, equally serving boating traffic and commerce, fishermen, and laundresses.

throughout the Romantic era.<sup>22</sup> Christian Gottlieb Hammer's colored engraving of Dresden from the southwest, from the end of the eighteenth century (fig. 74), presents a charming river scene of landscaped greenery embracing an equally scenic city. A similar view from the same bank of the river is found in Adrian Zingg's sepia colored etching, *Dresden from the Pieschener Winkel*, ca. 1810 (fig. 75). Here the city is given over entirely to activities of leisure, as Hammer's picturesque peasants are replaced by bourgeois merry-makers who stop to gaze at the view of the town framed by the sylvan setting. Carus's *Boat Trip on the Elbe at Dresden*, 1827 (fig. 76), which dramatically captures the anticipation of the approach to Dresden by framing the bright view through the interior cabin of a boat whose young passenger gazes ahead at her destination, suggests the city not so much as Florence on the Elbe as Venice on the Elbe, for here the town seems to float between the spheres of water and sky. Even four decades into the century, in Johann Christian Clausen Dahl's *Dresden in the Moonlight*, 1839 (fig. 77), nature shares equal footing with civilization in the imaging of the town. A romantic moonlit scene reminiscent of Friedrich's Gothic city paintings, the painting is composed from the same point of view as Bellotto's most famous Dresden portrait, namely from the right bank of the Elbe on the Neustadt near the gardens of the Japan Palace. The

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<sup>22</sup> While this is true generally of many city views from the Romantic era, it is my contention that the degree to which nature is emphasized in views of Dresden, to a great extent because of its river landscape, was especially high. For a collection of Dresden images, see Neidhardt, *Dresden*. In contrast to the lush river landscape views of Dresden, Bellotto's interior city portraits from the mid-eighteenth century, as well as Biedermeier works such as Gaertner's *The Frauenkirche in Dresden*, 1838 (Museum Georg Schäfer, Schweinfurt) or Samuel Prout's lithograph *The Rampische Gasse behind the Frauenkirche*, ca. 1838 (Stadtmuseum, Dresden), reveal just how built-up the urban environment actually was.

moonlight, reflected in the Elbe, and the spectacular clouds formations provide the scene's most dramatic moments. The monumental silhouettes of the towers in the middle and right of the composition are matched by the huge tree at the left edge of the painting, and figures with horses walk into the river along its eastern bank, giving an inflection of the countryside to the middle of the city.

The melding of city and land into a panorama as characterized by Scherzlieb above is particularly evident in landscapes depicting the wider Elbe valley with Dresden in it, such as Schinkel's watercolor *Distant View of Dresden*, after 1803 (fig. 78). In this telescopic view (indicated by the black circular framing of the view), the man-made city blends in among its surroundings as though an organic part of the landscape, like the trees, bushes, and hills that adorn the rest of the valley.<sup>23</sup> Dresden's recognizable towers could be seen from miles away in all directions, which is even more apparent in Carl August Richter and son Adrian Ludwig Richter's series of thirty views of Dresden, published in 1823, than in Schinkel's watercolor.<sup>24</sup> Included among the *vedute* are numerous scenes set in various locations on either side of the Elbe, with a tiny city planted in the valley in the distance of each.<sup>25</sup> While the pleasure of the view of the city is matched by the

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<sup>23</sup> At this early point in his career, Schinkel's interest in panoramic views already was evident in other works, such as *The Bohemian Mountain Range at Twilight*, 1803 (Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin), a gouache done after he toured Bohemia, and most famously in his 1808 panorama of Palermo.

<sup>24</sup> Schinkel's watercolor, however, is no mere *veduta*, as it freely incorporates elements into the view that did not exist, such as a castle and mountains.

<sup>25</sup> Carl August Richter and Adrian Ludwig Richter, *30 Mahlerische An- und Aussichten von Dresden und den nächsten Umgebungen* (Dresden: Arnold Verlag, 1823).

pleasure of viewing nature in these scenes, the blended panorama means that the city does not become the primary focus of the composition, as it does in Friedrich's northern town paintings, but rather one part of the whole: one cannot make out quite precisely where the city ends and the countryside begins.

When Friedrich headed out into the countryside to gather images for his paintings, he certainly would have come across many such panoramic views of Dresden, gleaming towers and all, but unlike other artists of the day, he seemed to find little in them that was worth recording, either close in or from a distance. Friedrich first took up the subject of Dresden early in his career in a pair of sepias of views from his apartment window, which will be discussed below. However, recognizable architectural motifs from the town appear in his finished oil paintings only much later, well after he completed his first city paintings in 1811, which took Greifswald as model, as discussed in the previous chapter. All of Friedrich's paintings depicting Dresden eschew the traditional vistas discussed above, for the artist wholeheartedly embraces only one aspect of the town's dual image, that is, the natural surroundings, while minimizing the urban scene. As will be outlined below, Friedrich's compositions suggest not the blended panorama of city and land celebrated by Scherzlieb and visualized by Schinkel, Richter, and other artists, but the separation of the two, a distancing of the city from its environs.

#### The Eclipsed City, or Dresden's Absent Presence

Friedrich finally incorporated views of Dresden into his paintings only after two and a half decades of living in the city, producing four small works between the middle of

the 1820s and the 1830s. This came at a time when his travels had begun to slow down, and three of the paintings are composed from very similar standpoints on the right bank of the Elbe, not too far out of town. None of them can be considered *vedute* in the traditional sense, nor do they incorporate the evocative atmospherics of the moonlit northern Gothic town paintings, denying Dresden the suggestive role the Gothic towns play. This section will discuss the averted gaze implied by the quartet of paintings, which impede or change in some way the view of the city. Additionally, it will consider two other major works in which the nearby city is ignored completely. Studying these paintings collectively will expose the artist's visual disengagement from his chosen hometown.

In one odd little painting, *Hill with Ploughed Field near Dresden*, of 1824/25 (fig. 79), a large hill, divided into two strips of bright green grass and brown ploughed earth, occupies almost half the canvas. On top of the hill are several bare trees, their vein-like branches spreading across the yellow sky. A strip of light blue in the distant horizon meets the yellowed sky. The sky delicately shifts from this yellow to a very pale orange-red and then to a light blue at the top of the canvas, providing a kind of halo for the little arbor. Jutting up out of the distant zone of blue background are the tips of Dresden's tallest buildings, composed with quick applications of a slightly darker shade of blue: the Kreuzkirche, the Frauenkirche, the Schloss and the Hofkirche. Other than these few architectural shapes, Friedrich has taken almost no pains to try to mark out other structures or forms within the band of blue paint – a few vertical strokes here and there may signify something other than the pigment, but otherwise the blue is used only as a

marker of distance.

The standpoint, from the eastern side of the Elbe, is an discomfiting one, in that it refuses the spectacular, all-encompassing view of the city that would be had from atop the hill. Such a view, one can speculate from the tantalizing blue strip, would have laid out a fine panorama, allowing the eye to take in, in one or two sweeping glances, the whole of the town and valley surrounding it. The pleasure of such a view is captured by a painting composed from a similar vantage point, Carus's *View of Dresden at Sunset*, 1822 (fig. 80), in which two figures in urban dress watch the sun set over Dresden from the top of what may be the same hill as in Friedrich's work. But while Carus's composition also blocks part of the long-distance view with the foreground hill, it nevertheless allows a significant amount of skyline to appear, and detailed (if altered) descriptions of the buildings. In Carus's work, the city has a real presence that manages to maintain an equilibrium with the spectacle of nature, including the massive twilight sky above it and the meticulously painted terrain of the foreground that dominates a good third of the painting.

In Friedrich's painting, by contrast, the more mundane brown earth, picked over by the large ravens that descend upon it, and the green grassy mound that acts as platform for the autumnal trees become the central focus of the work, as if Friedrich insists upon their view-worthiness over that of the panoramic town. Not only is the view of the city mostly blocked by the hill in front of it, but the buildings depicted, Dresden's most famous, are rendered as pale, airy figures, with less detail and solidness than the towns of Friedrich's northern townscapes, for instance *Meadows near Greifswald*, ca. 1821 (fig.

36). They are simply tiny, silhouetted shapes, constructed out of a few strokes of paint, and do not coalesce into a unified, coherent skyline. In contrast to this lack of detail, the trees that frame the city, looming large over it, are painstakingly composed, albeit in thin applications of pigment, with sliver-thin branches individually mapped out, adorned by single dots of remaining leaves.

The coloring of the three layers of the earth, a brown foreground, green “middle” ground, and blue background, mimics the color structure of traditional landscape painting. Friedrich, however, tweaks that tradition by refusing to choose the obvious viewpoint – from the peak of the hill – offering instead a view *of* the hill. Like many other of his landscapes, there are no framing devices used – instead trees spring up in the middle of the painting, as if the expected arboreal coulisses have been pulled in from the painting’s edges, so that instead of framing the view, they become the view. The pale blue of the background does play upon the conventional use of atmospheric perspective, yet at the same time it resists adding a true spatial dimension. Instead, the horizontal strip of paint underscores the spatial flatness of the canvas. The painting reads like a sedimentary layering of bands of color set on top of each other, an impression broken only by the silhouette of branches against the sky and the architectural peaks that cross the horizon line. Where these hints of buildings jut up behind the mound, they act to emphasize the complete separation of the blue background from the green and brown hill foreground – in other words, they suggest an erasing of the connective tissue of middle ground. Country and city do not melt into one here, but are fragmented components of the composition, with one destructing and opposing the other.

A similar view of Dresden appears in two other works, most notably *The Evening Star – View of Dresden* of ca. 1830/35 (fig. 81), another small painting. The same buildings as in the earlier Dresden picture, the Kreuzkirche, the Frauenkirche, the Schloss, and Hofkirche, are again seen from the east, and again the access to the view is blocked by a hill. The clear division of the picture into different zones by the color scheme that characterizes *Hill with Ploughed Field* is muted in this composition. The time of day is later, casting a darker tone over the entire picture, although the setting sun and striated clouds provide a dramatic show. The hill is shorn of trees, so that the view to the city is more direct, but here the outlines of the buildings have been substantially altered: the Fraunkirche is missing its lantern, while the towers of the Schloss and Hofkirche have become Gothicized.

Three figures climb the hill. A woman accompanies a young girl to the left, while a young boy has run ahead of them, joyously waving his arms at the impressive heavenly show. Such abandonment is rarely portrayed in Friedrich's oeuvre; the sober demeanor of the two female figures is more in keeping with the restraint his figures usually demonstrate. On top of the hill, the group should be able to enjoy an unimpeded view, but the darkness that is soon to descend completely has already begun to blanket the urban panorama; it is the final disappearance of the sun that provides the visual spectacle here, not the almost imperceptible Dresden.

Neidhardt, who has given the most extensive commentary on Friedrich's Dresden images, suggests that in Friedrich's paintings Dresden "is a part of the landscape, appears in the distance on the horizon, becomes symbol, vision of historic or religious hope, a

goal, anchored in the present reality only by motif.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, like many other scholars, he finds little interpretive difference between the Dresden paintings and the northern town paintings. A typical reading of *Hill with Ploughed Field near Dresden* takes its autumnal setting, with the harvested field, barren trees, and scavenging ravens, as harboring intimations of death, a morality tale of the passage of time.<sup>27</sup> In the same way, *The Evening Star* also has been read as an illusion to death, despite the liveliness of the child sprinting to the top of the hill, which would seem to preclude such morbid intimations. Börsch-Supan further proposes that the city in both paintings symbolizes the afterworld, in the manner of the northern town.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the curve of the grassy hill is evocative of a burial mound, and it is true that the seasonality of cultivated land has a long tradition of conjuring up correspondences with the human life cycle, a correlation often tapped by Romantic painters like Runge and Friedrich.<sup>29</sup> Yet if the city is meant as a *Jenseitsvision*

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<sup>26</sup> “Die Stadt ist bei ihm Teil der Landschaft, erscheint in der Ferne, am Horizont, wird zum Symbol, zur Vision geschichtlicher oder religiöser Hoffnung, zu einer Zielvorstellung, nur motivisch verankert in der gegenwärtigen Realität.” Neidhardt, *Dresden*, 65.

<sup>27</sup> See Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 393; and Helmut R. Leppien, *Caspar David Friedrich in der Hamburger Kunsthalle* (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1993), 32.

<sup>28</sup> Börsch-Supan reads the city as symbol of the afterlife, with the boy’s joyful greeting to be read as an unconscious death wish. Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 425. Furthermore, an entry in a recent exhibition catalogue advises that “(t)he evening star is a distant messenger of death and resurrection,” suggesting that the different postures of the figures reflect that Friedrich “may here be symbolising two different approaches to nature, that of two stages of life or of the two sexes: one of humility, one of enthusiasm.” Andreas Blühm, ed., *Philipp Otto Runge/Caspar David Friedrich: The Passage of Time*, trans. Rachel Esner (Amsterdam: Zwolle, Waanders Publishers, 1996), 106.

<sup>29</sup> Friedrich worked with this theme most notably in a sepia series of the four seasons in which each season is accompanied by a male/female couple of corresponding

in the Dresden paintings, it is curious that the sweet vision is obstructed, and that this blockage occurs only with images of Dresden, never in the northern Gothic town paintings.

In fact, when considering the Dresden paintings altogether, what becomes apparent is that Friedrich, rather than imbuing the town with visionary meaning, renders it visionless. Taken collectively, the Dresden paintings express a blocked gaze, not the direct one of the towns in *Neubrandenburg*, 1816/17 (fig. 37), *Meadows near Greifswald* (fig. 36), or the moonlit harbor scenes (figs. 17, 54, 61). A third painting of Dresden in which the city is most present out of all of his works demonstrates the ambivalence of Friedrich's gaze. *Evening (Sunset, Sunrise behind the Dresden Hofkirche)*, 1824 (fig. 82), is a tiny, unfinished painting that depicts the city once again from behind a hill on the eastern side of the Elbe. In this case, however, more of the city is perceptible, and it appears with greater attention to detail than in the previous works. Yet this is no mere *veduta*, for Friedrich has altered the town's features in a manner similar to what he did in the *Evening Star*, but to an even greater extent. The Frauenkirche and Schloss are completely missing. While the Hofkirche is fairly recognizable, a Gothic tower has replaced its Baroque campanile, and the second large building to its left, a church with a Gothic tower, does not match any known structure in Dresden. If it represents the Kreuzkirche, it has migrated, for it stands in the place of the Schloss.

Clouds roll over the city, and the picture has the feel of a nature study. It is small and thinly painted. Across the bottom of the hill is inscribed, or rather scraped, "Abend  


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 age.

October (sic) 1824,” (Evening October 1824) in the manner of Friedrich’s sketches and studies, which he carefully documented.<sup>30</sup> Friedrich’s housemate Dahl created a similar study of a rollicking display of clouds above the tops of Dresden buildings, which are cut off by the frame of the canvas (1834, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin). In both works, the buildings serve to position the sky in a specific place, i.e. above Dresden. Friedrich’s painting also marks a specific time, as the dating suggests a documenting of what Friedrich saw above the rooftops of Dresden one evening in October, 1824. Yet against this particularized recording of the sky, Friedrich offers a rendering of Dresden that is inflected not by pure vision, but solely by imagination. The Gothicizing of the Hofkirche, the addition of unknown buildings, the omission of other, major structures that defined the city, act to compose a kind of anti-portrait. Friedrich may have been looking at the sky above Dresden on that particular date in the evening, recording its statistics, but, the altered skyline suggests, he did not bother recording his actual view of the city.

The significance of Friedrich’s playing with the Dresden skyline lies in the type of architectural alterations he made. In *Evening*, the Hofkirche is prominent along the skyline. The church was built in the mid-eighteenth century to serve the Saxon royal house, recently converted to Roman Catholicism. Its Baroque tower was crowned with a

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<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, Friedrich rarely signed or dated any of his paintings. Börsch-Supan asserts that the work is not a nature study by suggesting that the cloud motif was taken from a cloud study dated September 1824, but this connection seems tenuous – while there certainly are similarities in the cloud striations, they are not, in my opinion, clear enough to warrant a connection. It is the painting’s support, canvas, speaks for its status as a finished work (rather than a study), for Friedrich is not known to have done oil-on-canvas studies. Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 393.

small onion dome, an architectural feature found more typically in southern Germany on Catholic churches. Thus the church could be said to represent two things that were completely foreign to Friedrich's small-town, Pietist upbringing: royal governance and the Catholic Church.<sup>31</sup> By transforming the church's tower from a Baroque to a Gothic structure, and by adding a second Gothic building to a town that had no prominent Gothic architecture, Friedrich seems to reconstruct Dresden into the more familiar outlines of the towns of his *Heimat*, departicularizing its Dresden-ness, even more than in the *Evening Star*, which also transformed towers into Gothic structures. It is of some significance, then, that *Evening* is the only Dresden picture that actually renders buildings of the town with some amount of three-dimensional clarity. The city is also depicted more expansively, filled out with generic houses and buildings. And while a hill rises in the foreground, it does not impede the view to any great extent, nor does it compete with the town for the viewer's attention as much as in the other two paintings. Only the transformed Hofkirche and, ironically, the hill that is recognizable from the other two paintings, bespeak the town's identity as "Dresden." The painting suggests that Friedrich finds the town viewable only when it is, in essence, not really Dresden.

All of the above three paintings depict Dresden from what may be the same or a

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<sup>31</sup> Friedrich's dislike of royal governance has been read into his letter to Arndt in which he voices his frustration at the German people living "in thrall to the princes. Where the people have no voice, they are also not allowed to respect or have any sense of themselves as a people." Quoted in Hofmann, *Caspar David Friedrich*, 264. "Solange wir Fürstenknechte bleiben... Wo das Volk keine Stimme hat, wird dem Volk auch nicht erlaubt, sich zu fühlen und zu ehren." Friedrich to Arndt, 12 March, 1814, in Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 24. For Friedrich's connection to the Protestant church, see Eimer, *Zur Dialektik des Glaubens*.

similar vantage point. In a fourth work from the mid-1820s, *View of Dresden* (fig. 83) there is no hill to block the view of the city, but the pale silhouettes of the Kreuzkirche, Frauenkirche, Schloss tower, and Hofkirche are just barely perceptible in the hazy distance, against the sky. In comparison to the darkened, clearly delineated foreground, the city is faded and ethereal, and the viewer's eye struggles to penetrate the hazy atmosphere. While the mist blocks visual access to the town, a rustic, dilapidated fence placed horizontally across the foreground acts as a physical barrier between viewer and town. A path is placed parallel to the fence, suggesting movement, but not toward the city. Thus Friedrich denies any sort of access to the town, both physically and visually.

*View of Dresden* possesses some compositional similarities to the 1817 *Greifswald in the Moonlight* (fig. 17), where direct passage to the city is also blocked by physical impediments (the water and some fishing nets). In that work, Greifswald too is painted in pale tones along a steady horizon line. Yet its presence remains palpable and the town is the focus of the composition, while Dresden's presence in *View of Dresden* is so faded as to be almost indiscernible. Furthermore, the insistence of the barricade in *View of Dresden* is not at all apparent in *Greifswald in the Moonlight*. The fencing creates an unmistakable horizontal, and the painting is divided clearly into the zone of the foreground and background, with no connective middle ground. While *Greifswald in the Moonlight* truly is a painting of a town under a moonlit sky, *View of Dresden* would more correctly be named *View of a Fence and Bleak Landscape*.

Two paintings speak to Friedrich's averted (rather than blocked) gaze at Dresden, both from the 1830s. Only a few of Friedrich's finished works are constructed from a

viewpoint inside the boundaries of a town, and of those that are, it is only in two pictures of northern towns, the *Marketplace at Greifswald*, 1818 (fig. 38) and *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace*, ca. 1820 (fig. 18), that he directs his gaze with close-up scrutiny upon the architecture of the city. In two scenes set within the boundaries of Dresden, on the other hand, the urban location of the viewpoint remains unclear. In the *Augustus Bridge in Dresden*, ca. 1830 (fig. 84), for instance, Friedrich completely ignores the two halves of the city in favor of a straight-on view of the river and the bridge that connects them.<sup>32</sup> Behind the bridge are several tall masts of docked ships, and smoke rises from a few houses on the right river bank. Directly beyond the river are trees and gentle hills, and above it, a zig-zag sunset adds a splash of color to the composition. Against this view of nature, two urban *Rückenfiguren* stand on a stone foreground, barricaded on their built-up turf by an iron railing, the Augustus bridge acting as a second barrier to the countryside behind it.

Taking the Augustus bridge as a marker of place, Friedrich's viewpoint should be literally in the middle of the city, a few yards away from the heart of the Altstadt. Yet the artist has altered the scene, for a straight-on view of the Augustus bridge from the distance given could not be possible from either bank of the Elbe, only from the middle of the river; nor does the countryside follow behind the bridge as closely as depicted. Dresden itself remains completely hidden, signified only by the stone slabs and iron railing of the

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<sup>32</sup> The painting, formerly in Hamburg, was destroyed in the disastrous 1931 Munich Glaspalast fire, which saw the destruction of several major works by Friedrich. Obviously the lack of first-hand observation prevents an in-depth pictorial analysis of the work here, but photographs of the painting, including a decent color one, still exist and enable at least a basic discussion of the work.

foreground, the distinct arches of its famous bridge, and its two residents. Indeed, the city, or at least part of it, has been erased, for the elegant buildings of the built-up right bank, seen clearly in two of Bellotto's paintings, *Dresden from the Left Bank below the Fortifications*, 1748 (fig. 85), and *Dresden from the left Elbe Bank above the Altstadt Bridgehead*, 1748 (fig. 86), have been replaced by a few rural thatched-roof farmhouses. Splitting the canvas into opposing zones of foreground and background, Friedrich thus manages to present an abrupt contrast of urban and rural, even while managing to ignore the urban part of the scene that must have been before him.

Friedrich masks the urban location of another work, the remarkable late masterpiece, *The Large Enclosure*, ca. 1832 (fig. 12), a depiction of a water-soaked landscape distinguished by the gentle yet tangible bend of the earth.<sup>33</sup> While it appears to be set far away from civilization, the painting in fact depicts Dresden's *Grosses Ostragehege*, a large reserve only a half mile northwest of the Altstadt center. The line of trees to the left marks one of the three large avenues running through Dresden. These trees and the entire area itself are seen clearly in the background of Carl Wilhelm Arldt's lithograph *View of Dresden to the Northwest*, 1833 (fig. 87), a panorama from the tower of the Hofkirche. While Friedrich's view suggests a scene of quasi-wilderness, Arldt's vista underscores not only the reserve's connection to the town it adjoins, but also its own

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<sup>33</sup> The curvature of the earth in this painting cannot be explained by vision alone, for normally this bend is not visible to the naked eye, unless possibly when the view is of the open ocean. Instead it may be that Friedrich was responding to the aesthetic of panoramas, which created a three-dimensional sense of space in part through the curvature of the canvas. Thus *The Large Enclosure* could be read as another indication of Friedrich's awareness of and borrowing from the popular culture of his day. I am grateful for Rosemarie Bletter for her discussion of this painting with me.

cultivation, embodied by the straight lines of planted trees running through the reserve. In Friedrich's painting, however, these do not register as planned landscaping.

Friedrich's subject matter is an unconventional choice. If the view were turned about forty-five degrees to the left – as in C.A. and A. L. Richter's print *Dresden from the Ostragehege*, 1820 (fig. 88), from a series of thirty views of Dresden's environs – it would encompass a panorama of the city, rather than the emptiness of the marshy ground. The Richters's view, for instance, takes in both Neustadt, Altstadt, and the connecting Augustus bridge, with picturesque laborers in the foreground. However, as in the view of the *Augustus Bridge*, Friedrich literally turns his back on the city in a move that reads like Rellstab's opinion of Greifswald cited in Chapter 2, that the best thing about the town was the view out of it. The averted gaze is also present in Friedrich's two sepias, *View from the Artist's Studio, Left Window* and *Right Window*, from ca. 1805/06 (figs. 89-90, to be discussed more in depth below), which depict the view outside of the town via the course of the Elbe in both directions. The view offered by the sepias ignores Dresden's built-up urban environment, instead "blocking" the Neustadt across from Friedrich's studio by means of the apartment wall.

Blockage is a structural distinction of Friedrich's paintings, not an uncommon compositional strategy. Most often it is a *Rückenfigur* who blocks the scene from the beholder, but sometimes fog or atmosphere act as an impenetrable veil, as is the case in *View of Dresden*.<sup>34</sup> Often this blockage does not simply act as an instrument of

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<sup>34</sup> See for instance, Friedrich's astonishingly beautiful *Fog*, 1807 (Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna), a jewel-like painting in which two boats appear on a water like ghosts, barely perceptible through the fog that is the true subject of the painting.

frustration, but lures the beholder even further into the painting by creating a sense of longing for an unobstructed view. While the figure in *The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, 1818 (fig. 70), is placed directly in the heart of the scene, embodying the act of observation for the viewer, enough of the panorama is revealed to create a sense of its spectacle. This seems not to be the case of the Dresden paintings. Nowhere does Friedrich give a hint of the city's entire splendor, and the 1800/02 line drawing is the only work that renders a "complete" skyline. The view that the little boy reacts to in *Evening Star* is that of the fantastic heavens above him, not the dark, bare glimpse of the city below, just as the two men in *The Augustus Bridge* gaze not at the magnificent, celebrated town surrounding them, but at the twilight sky above the mountains.

Friedrich was an artist who frequently disregarded convention when formulating his landscapes, ignoring long-held rules about beauty, composition, and meaning. And while his scrupulous replication of the physiognomy of nature – of trees, clouds, rock formations – appears to betray an adherence to topographical specificity, he routinely based his work on imagination rather than corporeal vision, freely composing scenes using sketches from different locations.<sup>35</sup> It is perhaps, then, unfair to point out scenes that do not appear as they do in reality, e.g. the erasure of the Neustadt in *The Augustus Bridge*, or the Gothicized depiction of Dresden in *Evening*, as though they are topographical mistakes. But the point here is not the single painting and its idiosyncracies. Rather, it is the repeated obstruction, obfuscation, and aversion of Friedrich's gaze at Dresden that

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<sup>35</sup> Friedrich's belief in the importance of imagination above vision in the artist's work was articulated in advice to artists to "close your physical eye, in order to see your picture first with your mind's eye..." See Ch. 1, footnote 18.

suggests a willful blindness to it. Friedrich left no verbal commentary about his feelings toward the town. The closest he came to expressing reserve may be his 1803 diary entry from his few months in Loschwitz, in which he held out hope of living his life “far from the civilized folk,” perhaps a reference to those people he had met in his few years in the big towns of Dresden and Copenhagen. As I hope became apparent in the last chapter, Friedrich’s depictions of Greifswald, Neubrandenburg, and the generic northern Gothic town, which are portrayed with some attention to detail, out in the open, posited as the home of admiring urban wanderers, and used as models for idealized and generic cities, signal his own identification with the small town environment of his childhood, even as he left it for more opportunity. As Rautmann has argued, these towns represented for Friedrich the ideal of human culture.<sup>36</sup> But they also represented the culture that Friedrich most easily identified with: that of provincial, *bürger*-ruled “hometowns.”

Friedrich’s veiled depictions of Dresden, on the other hand, are never used as bearers of meaning in the way that his views of northern towns are. The fact that he remained in the town for four decades certainly does not support an argument that he despised it, nor is it my intention to propose such a thesis in this chapter. Instead, it is to note how Friedrich’s visual approach to Dresden (i.e. blocking it, erasing traces of it, ignoring it, and modifying it to appear more like the towns of his youth) registers an ambivalence on his part toward this sophisticated *Rezidenstadt*, where he arrived as a provincial outsider. The Saxon capital may have had many admirers during the Romantic era, but Friedrich never joins in the praise. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated in the

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<sup>36</sup> Rautmann, *Landschaft als Sinnbild*, 86-91.

next section, even images of Friedrich's own household in Dresden convey no sense of attachment to his little plot of home in the city.

### The Artist in His Studio

Interior scenes are rare in Friedrich's oeuvre, but he produced several important works that depict his Dresden apartment. Although these are not actual portraits of Dresden – at least, not in the traditional sense of rendering recognizable buildings or a skyline – the city is implied in the location, and, in several of the works, in the view outside the window. Friedrich's sparse images of his rooms in Dresden present themselves as a counterpart to the Baroque splendor of Dresden's streets. The tension between inside/outside at the heart of the window pictures brings to the fore the constant subtext of Friedrich's work, the dialectic between nature and culture. Friedrich's paintings of his wife in their Dresden apartment, meanwhile, allow for a discussion of notions of home and domesticity in the artist's work. In these next two sections, I want to give an extended commentary on Friedrich's images of home, that is, his studio/apartment along the street An der Elbe, in order to consider further the artist's gaze at the environment he knew best.

Friedrich lived in a spare apartment whose austerity is captured efficiently by the pale monochrome of sepia in two small companion pieces, *View from the Artist's Studio, Left Window* and *Right Window*, from ca. 1805/06 (figs. 89-90) which depict the interior west wall. In each sepia, a window opens toward the river and its bank on the opposite side, so that together the two create a panoramic span of the view. Friedrich has zoomed

in close to his subject matter, and the bottom edge of the work cuts off the walls before it meets the floor, allowing for no foreground in either work. Although at first glance one view appears to begin where the other stops, the drawings do not align exactly when placed together (they are, in fact, of slightly different dimensions). In addition, the right window is a direct, head-on view, while the left window is approached from an angle, so that the wall appears to be tilted away from the picture plane. Erik Forssman asserts that both windows were painted from same standpoint, which accounts for the different perspectival effects (i.e., the artist stood right in front of the right window while pivoting toward the left window) even while the outside river landscape appears as a unified space.<sup>37</sup> However, even if this were to be the case, the different angles from which the two views are approached break up any experience of their continuity with one another. But, as I hope to demonstrate below, these sepias cannot be taken as simply and literally mapping out the view from Friedrich's apartment. They are highly constructed, carefully arranged works in which the artist articulates his situation as a landscape artist living in a city.

The visible accoutrements of the room are few, and simple at that. In the left window drawing, a mahlstick leans against the corner, and a note on the window sill, in a bit of *tromp-l'oeil* that is unusual for Friedrich, reads "Dem Herrn C. D. Friedrich in Dresden vor dem Pirnaschen Thor..." ("To Herr C. D. Friedrich in Dresden outside the Pirna Gate...."). Attached to the panes of the bottom window, thrown open to let in air,

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<sup>37</sup> Erik Forssman, "Fensterbilder von der Romantik bis zur Moderne," in Erik Forssman, Brita Linde, Armin Tuulse, eds., *Konsthistoriska Studier tillägnade Sten Karling* (Stockholm: Universitetet Konsthistoriska institutionen, 1966), 289-291.

are sheets of paper that would block out the view if the window were closed.<sup>38</sup> A mirror hangs high on the wall at the right edge of the drawing, the frame of a door reflected in it. Below the mirror hangs a small work of art whose subject matter is almost indiscernible, although it may be a portrait, as part of a circular shape evocative of a head can be made out. The only other object is a large key that hangs between the frame and the window – the key, one guesses, to the door seen in the mirror.

In the view of the right window, the other halves of the mirror and the picture frame continue along the left edge of the sheet, as though Friedrich also were creating a panorama of his apartment in addition to that of the river landscape. (However, when placed together, as noted above, neither the edges of the mirror nor of the picture frame form an exact match.) Answering the key in the left scene is a pair of scissors hanging at the same level in the right one. Other than these few objects, nothing else is visible in the room – no curtains adorn the window, no furniture appears, no plants relieve the insistent architecture of the walls, frames, and window panes, whose linear essence is softened only by the curve of the upper window recess. Indeed, both images are further testimony to Friedrich's architectonic eye, as he ably carves out the space of the room, using line, light, and shade.

In contrast to the geometric austerity of the architecture, the view outside is rich with visual diversions. Directly in front of the right window (and much closer to the walls

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<sup>38</sup> Friedrich is known to have placed the paper on the windows to keep out the direct light. Later on wooden shutters provided more substantial coverage. In the left view sepia, the nails keeping the paper up are visible on the right window pane. See Börsch-Supan/Jähnig, 285.

of the building than could have been the case<sup>39</sup>) the bare mast and ropes of a large sail boat appear, and a smaller row boat manned by one rower passes by midstream. Directly across the river, Friedrich depicts a rural scene: picturesque farm and village houses are clustered to the left; a row of poplars line the bank to the right; in the background are a few pale hills. It was in this direction that Friedrich often headed to explore the landscape, and it is into this picture that the artist inserts a half-portrait of himself, his forehead and eyes peering mysteriously (if not a bit impishly) out of the mirror on the right half of the wall. It is the one instance in Friedrich's oeuvre in which the artist depicts himself for the viewer in the (implied) act of observing the landscape – significantly, though, not in the open air, but through the window of his apartment.

In the view from the left window, in the direction of the city, the Augustus bridge cuts across the water, but, as in the later painting of *The Augustus Bridge*, Friedrich's choice of viewpoint blocks both the Altstadt and the Neustadt. The river winds to the right behind the bridge, its banks lined with trees. Despite this bit of landscape, the river in this left view is nonetheless more industrious than its right counterpart. One small sailboat heads past the right pane of the window, while to the left, immediately in front of Friedrich's building, a woman sits next to a docked boat and an anchor, the rocky bank of the river barely visible above the frame of the window sill. Another small row boat glides on the river parallel to the bridge. Behind the bridge sit numerous sailing ships, conveyers of Dresden's trade, and a few houses on the Neustadt side of the river are just barely

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<sup>39</sup> Maps of Dresden from the period indicate that the street An der Elbe did not sit directly on the water's edge (as the proximity of the sailboat to Friedrich's window suggests), but was set back by a considerable stretch of land.

visible next to the ships. A few puffs of smoke seem to be rising behind the line of trees, in the direction of Friedrichstadt, a small industrial suburb of Dresden.

Both window views are *tour-de-force* pieces that demonstrate Friedrich's command of sepia, a medium he excelled in well before he took up oil. In the upper sections of both the right and left windows, he manages to paint the sky a shade barely perceptibly darker than the in the areas "exposed" by the open window below, thus managing the feat of painting glass without resorting to reflection. Each sepia includes a single metal object of approximately the same size hanging on the wall between the two windows around the same latitude and distance from the edge of the paper, which accentuate the bareness of the room because they are so beautifully rendered, and in their corporeality accentuate the flat monochrome of the wall. The foreshortening of the open window panes is a handsome feat of illusionistic trickery. The lighting in these works is exquisite, in the way the light flows in though the window and softly hits the walls, or strikes in reflection against the lower window panes. Gradations are made gently from light to dark, not an easy feat in a medium so thinly layered onto the paper. Friedrich manages, in monochrome, to give an incredible amount of information about texture and material through a seemingly infinite range of tones, from almost white to almost black, creating a picture that may have spiritual implications according to some observers, but that is also a pure delight for the eyes (this despite the fact that the subject is a bare room that takes up a good half of the depicted space in both works).<sup>40</sup> Despite the Protestant

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<sup>40</sup> Börsch-Supan has read symbolic meanings into many of the objects depicted in the room. Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 285-286.

sparseness of the works, there is real feel for the materiality of the medium and at the same time for the artist's control of it. One extra splash and the image would have been ruined.

The contrast of confined interior with seemingly boundless exterior is a recognizable formulation of the conflict between civilization and nature. In this case, the sepias seem to encapsulate the landscape artist's feeling of imprisonment indoors while his subject matter remains outdoors. Lorenz Eitner has identified the tradition of the open window motif as one of Romanticism's favorite conceits. The window, as Eitner suggests, is both barrier and threshold to the world outdoors, while the motif itself is "neither landscape nor interior, but curious combination of both. It brings the confinement of an interior into the most immediate contrast with an immensity of space outside, outdoors."<sup>41</sup> Certainly this is the case of Friedrich's sepias, when each is considered individually, especially in the more rural right window view. Against the linear confines of bourgeois urban space, the open countryside offers the antithesis of containment, and the river with its traffic conveys a sense of motion that is all but frozen in the interior.<sup>42</sup>

When considered as a pair, however, it is the view outside the windows, especially when seen against the homogenizing screen of the apartment walls, that allows for a

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<sup>41</sup> Lorenz Eitner, "The Open Window and the Storm-Tossed Boat: an Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism," *Art Bulletin* 37 (September 1955): 285-286.

<sup>42</sup> Rosemarie Bletter also has pointed out to me that the dark enclosed space opening up to a bright outside view parallels many other works of the period (not just window views), such as Carus's *Boat Trip* and Schinkel's *Distant View of Dresden* discussed above. In certain ways this framing device is suggestive of the apparatus of the camera obscura (i.e. not the inverted projection on a wall), further suggesting ways in which the period's modes of perception may have influenced Friedrich. For a historical discussion of the camera obscura, see John J. Hammond, *The Camera Obscura: A Chronicle* (Bristol: Hilger, 1981).

dialectical reading, for the depiction of the outdoors also suggests the collision of nature and culture, the dialectics of freedom and containment. The left view looks toward (even as it bypasses) the city of Dresden, and it is busier than the view directly outside Friedrich's right window, which focuses on the countryside. The large sail boat outside Friedrich's apartment in the right view is at rest, without its sails, and no labor is apparent on the agricultural land. It is the more static of the two views, presenting a tranquil alternative to the bustle of urban life suggested by the left.

To date, no one has ever questioned whether this was, in fact, the view outside of Friedrich's two Dresden windows. Through the precision of their rendering, Friedrich's window sepias appear to act transparently, as though they themselves are windows for the viewer that open up to exactly what the artist saw when he looked toward the west wall of his studio.<sup>43</sup> The careful construction of the compositions and the heightened verisimilitude of the things and scenes depicted act as signifiers of objectivity, as the sepias seem to make the statement of "this is where I am," pointing to the actuality of the artist's situation. While paintings by other artists of Friedrich in his studio would seem to confirm that the apartment itself is rendered with a fair amount of accuracy, the decorative objects on the wall notwithstanding (see, for instance, Kersting's *Caspar David Friedrich in his Studio*, 1812, fig. 7), maps of Dresden from the period call into question whether he could

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<sup>43</sup> If Friedrich painted these as a personal indexing of his living situation, he nevertheless recognized their broader distinction enough to try to sell them, sending them to Weimar in 1812 along with some others in the hopes that Goethe (or his friend Heinrich Meyer) could find a purchaser (which, however, did not occur). See letter from Heinrich Meyer to Goethe, 11 June, 1812, in Max Hecker, "Goethes Briefwechsel mit Heinrich Meyer," in *Schriften der Goethe-Gesellschaft*, vol. 34, no. 2 (Weimar: Goethe Gesellschaft, 1919): 308; in Börsch-Supan, 173.

have obtained the exact view depicted in the right window. As a map from 1813 demonstrates (fig. 91), the street An der Elbe did not face the countryside along the Elbe directly, but rather the eastern end of the Neustadt, which, in 1805, still would have been enclosed by its mighty ramparts.<sup>44</sup> The position of Friedrich's apartment on the street would have made a direct view to a completely rural area outside of the Neustadt's walls unlikely, if not impossible. True rural land began well outside the city's walls; what was found on the opposite side of the Neustadt's ramparts were pavilions, gardens, and public promenades. Friedrich's view could have included either some of the artillery sheds that were located on the Royal Stallwiese (a grassy meadow adjoining the river bank), blocks of the Neustadt in the distance, the old fortifications, or a combination of these. Thus it is clear that Friedrich deliberately has erased traces of the city in the right view, in order to depict a scene that appears completely rural.

An indication of what Friedrich's view might have included is given in two different images of Dresden from the period. The first, a watercolor *veduta* of the Elbe landscape from 1820 by Christian Gottlieb Hammer (fig. 92), indicates that the poplar trees depicted in Friedrich's window view did exist on the Neustadt bank of the river, but stood next to a thick masonry structure that probably belonged to the ramparts. Next to this line of trees are several buildings that are more urban in feel than the little thatched roof, rural *Fachwerk* house in Friedrich's sepia. The second view is given in Dahl's detail-

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<sup>44</sup> Earlier maps dating back to the eighteenth century also indicate that An der Elbe faced the Neustadt, not the countryside outside its walls. See Otto Richter, *Atlas zur Geschichte Dresdens. Pläne und Ansichten der Stadt aus den Jahren 1521 bis 1898*. (Dresden: Stengel & Markert, 1898).

rich painting *Julie Vogel in her Garden*, 1825/28 (fig. 93). The scene is set on the Neustadt side of the Elbe, with a diagonal view over toward Friedrich's street, and Friedrich's second home (where Dahl lived as well), a pink five-storied building, is seen framed through the trees of the right bank. Although the painting is later than Friedrich's sepias, the pavilion that Julie Vogel stands in front of was one of several that had lined that bank of the river since the eighteenth century – this region was already built up when Friedrich depicted it.<sup>45</sup> Something of the view that Friedrich offers in the right sepia may have been available by peering at an acute angle out of the window, but it could not have been directly across from his building as he indicates.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the combined view offered by the two windows is highly disjointed. If Friedrich's river bank were to be mapped out as suggested by the two window scenes placed together, there would be almost no space allotted for the Neustadt. Thus Friedrich deliberately shuts out the constructed city.

It is my contention that in modifying the view out the right window, Friedrich formulated a dialectic between the urban and the rural that spoke to his situation as an artist whose livelihood was based on images of the countryside but was made possible only by the urban environment in which he lived. By placing himself into the half of the mirror in the right window sepia, and by composing the scene as a head-on view, which provides easier visual access to it than to the angled left view, Friedrich identifies with

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<sup>45</sup> Neidhardt, *Dresden*, 84.

<sup>46</sup> The angle of the view is not completely parallel to the picture plane, as indicated by the depiction of the right half of the recessed window and the open right window pane.

this, the more rustic view. (The left half of this mirror, as stated above, reflects a door.) This view contains the stuff of Friedrich's production, that is, the countryside. Further suggestion that Friedrich identified with this view comes from the reflection of the window framework in the opened pane, where the lower mullion is notably widened so that the pieces of wood coalesce smoothly and unmistakably into the form of a cross. The cross adds an element of the spiritual to the scene that is not repeated in the left window (although it too offers a glimpse of a reflection in the open window), at a time in Friedrich's production when such conventional modes of symbolism were used more as a matter of course in tandem with scenes of nature than in later periods.

The left window is painted from an oblique angle that distances the view toward the city. As noted above, the open lower panes of the left window, unlike those of the right, are covered with brown paper. When closed, they will block out the image behind them, that is to say, the more urbanized of the two vistas. The Augustus bridge visible in this view raises the question of mobility and access, for the right view offers no clue as to how to cross over to the countryside, which is blocked off by the river. In fact, in order for Friedrich to go by foot to that region, he would have needed to pass through the Altstadt to the Augustus bridge and cross over through the Neustadt. The only other viable option would have been to hitch a ride on a boat from bank to bank.

The door reflected in the mirror of the left view was the means by which the artist was able to leave the apartment to head out into the countryside. This left pendant includes a note from a patron addressed to "Friedrich...outside the Pirna Gate," one of the portals that was torn down several years later, and the one Friedrich would have used to

enter the town. There is also an instrument of his work (the mahlstick), and the means to shut out the view of the town when he desired to work. While the right window gives a view of the nature that provided him his subject matter and which he longed to be immersed in, the means by which he was able to carry on his chosen profession of painting nature, the city and the patronage it offered, as well as instruments of his painting technique, are indicated in the left scene. Read together, then, these two sepias depict the gist of Friedrich's livelihood, just as they describe so well his physical situation in Dresden at this early date: neither technically in the city nor completely out of it, he straddles the border between town and country, needing proximity to both the one and the other. Friedrich may have declared his allegiance to nature, gone on long trips in the wilderness by himself, even held out hope of spending all of his days in the countryside. But it was the city that supported him and that he needed just as much as the nature that inspired him, even if he did not embrace it directly. In these early sepias, Friedrich begins to articulate a very modern contrast between city and nature, in which each is one half of a binary that needs the other to sustain its own meaning.

Despite the direct access the right window appears to give to the landscape, in the end it cuts off the view, shapes it within its rectangular borders. All landscape production is informed by the borders of its medium's support to some extent. But the device of the frame within a frame makes even clearer the way that a depiction of nature is always only an *Ausschnitt*, an excerpt, or literally, in German, a "cut-out" of the view (signified, perhaps, by the pair of scissors on the wall). In this picture of a window opening on to the outdoors, Friedrich opens up the question of the artist's relation to the nature he depicts.

Through the artist's work, outside is brought indoors, or rather it is created indoors, squeezed onto the two-dimensionality of the canvas or paper. Friedrich always insists on giving his viewers a view of nature, mediated through his townsman's eyes. Although his reflection in the mirror conveys a sense of connection to the view of the landscape, it is at the same time a reminder that he cannot escape the environment to which he belonged, even if he longed to be in the nature outside the window. For while Friedrich aligns himself with nature through his reflection in the mirror of the right view, in fact he is framed by civilization, just as surely as his landscape production is framed by the urban environment in which he worked.

### Frauenzimmer

Friedrich took his Dresden apartment building as subject matter more than a decade later in several oil paintings, all of which include a figure of a woman modeled by Friedrich's wife Caroline. Upon his marriage Friedrich assumed a whole new, more conventionally bourgeois, lifestyle, and became, as his letter to his relatives announcing the good news indicated, more domesticated than he ever had been, acquiring new belongings he never realized were necessary. Women and children appear with increased frequency in his works after this date.<sup>47</sup> After his wedding, his travels slowed down markedly, and he

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<sup>47</sup> Before his 1818 nuptials, women had appeared only rarely in Friedrich's works, primarily in early sepias and prints as narrative characters layered with meaning: the mournful, melancholic figures in works such as the 1801 woodcuts *The Woman with the Raven at the Abyss* (Börsch-Supan/Jähmig cat. no. 61), and *The Woman with the Cobweb* (Börsch-Supan/Jähmig cat. no. 60); the guiding moral force in the painting *Morning in the Riesengebirge*, 1810-11 (Börsch-Supan/Jähmig cat. no. 190); or the classical personification of love in the fecund *Summer (Landscape with Pair of Lovers)*, 1807

made only five extended trips between 1818 and the year of his death, 1840 (one of these primarily to take a cure for his ill health). While age and health had much to do with the cutback in travels through the countryside, the change in marital status and his growing family also kept him closer to home. Thus while domesticity brought much happiness to his life, it also brought more confinement within the city limits. This is reflected, perhaps, by the spate of Dresden paintings starting in the mid-1820s.

Confinement is what characterizes Friedrich's *Woman at the Window*, 1822 (fig. 94), a small painting depicting Caroline in the family's Dresden apartment. Here a young woman, her back to the viewer, gazes out of the small rectangular opening of the lower portion of a large recessed window set in a dark, plain room that resembles the room of the sepias.<sup>48</sup> One of the three shuttered panes covering the lower window has been swung inside the room to allow the woman some access to the world outside. Her view, as much as we can make of it, is of a river landscape. The masts and ropes of two boats appear outside the window, and a row of poplars forms a thick backdrop on the opposite bank of the river, which makes a faint appearance in a narrow strip of blue interrupted by the woman's body. A few gentle puffs of clouds adorn the pale sky, adding to the sense of the temperate climate of the outdoors. It is essentially the same view as in the earlier sepia of the right studio window, only in color and less visible here.

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(Börsch-Supan/Jähmig cat. no. 164). After his marriage, the increased feminine presence in his works was primarily in the figure of the contemporary bourgeois woman. With the exception of a few early woodcuts, children did not play any role in Friedrich's art until his own entered the world.

<sup>48</sup> By this date, Friedrich had moved into the apartment he would live in the rest of his life.

Although the painting is small and intimate, the woman herself is dwarfed by the large walls and window that enclose the dark space around her, an enclosure made more forceful by the verticals of the two sunlit corners of the walls of the recessed structure in which she stands. The woman's left foot is placed directly on the middle of the three lines of division between the floorboards. These three lines are echoed by the three rectangular panels of the shutters, and by the three vertical sections of the image: the window niche with the woman's body in it (the verticality of her torso extended upwards by the dividing rod of the window panes above her), and the two walls on either side of it. She leans slightly to the left, her arms placed in front of her, perhaps resting on the sill. The lean lightly skewers the symmetry of the image, as does the slight advance of the woman's right foot just in front of her left. The symmetry is interrupted as well by the standpoint from which the painting is composed, just a little to the left of center of the window, so that the right flanking wall of the niche exhibits less foreshortening than the left. But overall the rectilinearity of the room is even more unrelenting than it is in the room of the sepias, which at least offered a gentle curve in the top of the window recess. Vertical and horizontal lines define every element of the space, with the exception of the woman and two jars of red liquid on the window sill. A plain strip of molding along the lower half of the wall only intensifies the stark geometry of the room and the sense of enclosure it creates.

The room is even more bare than the room in the sepias. Once again no curtains decorate the window and no piece of furniture is in sight, but, in addition, no object interrupts the starkness of the wall, and there is no carpet to warm the now visible wooden

floor. The only objects in the room are the two glass jars. Overall, the atmosphere of the room is gloomy. The walls are a dark greenish brown alleviated only by the little bit of light that strikes them, turning a few passages into a muddy yellow. The window frame and shutters are a dark greenish blue, while the woman's green dress is highlighted with the same muddy yellow that forms the sun-struck areas of the walls. The starkness of the interior is reinforced by the contrast to the brightness of the outside world, which is unable to penetrate the room. The trees and the sky are composed of light shades of green and blue pigments, in contrast to the heavy blue of the window frame and the dirty green of the woman's dress. The strict geometric arrangement of the room gives way to the organic freedom of nature: the irregular cloud shapes and soft, sunlit foliage of the poplars, which while also vertical forms, are not as severely or as evenly formed as the straight edges of the room. The boat masts and ropes are also straight lines, but at least the descending diagonal of the ropes breaks free of the intense vertical-horizontal boxiness of the interior architecture.

The woman's stance is restrained, her lean rather timid. Her arms are held closely to her body, and despite the slight advance of her right foot, it still touches her left one. Both feet are planted firmly on the ground. In her act of leaning, the woman appears as if she would join the outside world, but her longing is constrained, quite physically, by the structure of the room. Even more than in the sepias, the dialectics of the scene are clearly drawn: outdoors is bright, open, and welcoming, indoors is dark, desolate, and oppressive. The ships suggest a mobility denied the woman – she belongs to this interior world, and as if to emphasize this, her dress and shoes are painted with the same dark pigments that

make up the room's walls and its floors, a brownish green and brown, so that there is almost a literal embodiment of the period's peculiar but common expression for "woman": *Frauenzimmer*, or women's room.<sup>49</sup>

The beholder of *Woman at the Window* is denied the view out of the window, blocked by the figure who instead becomes the focus of the painting. As noted by the critic for the *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunst, Literatur, Theater und Mode*, reviewing Friedrich's entries to the 1822 Dresden Academy exhibition, the artist's placement of the woman hinders the lighting of the piece. The painting "would have been very true and lovely," he furthermore wrote, if Friedrich had not positioned the woman from behind.<sup>50</sup> But another contemporary writer tapped into the sexualized nature of the shift in view from window scene to the woman who turns her back to the beholder. Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, after viewing *Woman at the Window*, wrote a sonnet in 1823 based on the picture, seeing it primarily and solely as an image of male desire:

She stands, wrapped in swaths of red-violet dress,  
At the window, turned away from the room  
And looks outside, absorbed in earnest thought: –  
Softly my soul trembles in me, and my bosom surges.

Who drew me here, through magic force? –  
I'd almost like to flee; – and yet cannot from here! –  
I'd like to approach her – back, o bold scheme!  
Do not incense the lovely figure!

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<sup>49</sup> The Grimms devote over three columns to tracing the history of the word and its transformation from a description of the room in which women belong or gather to signifying a single woman herself. *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, IV/I, 1, 83-87.

<sup>50</sup> "wäre sehr wahr und hübsch..." "Über die Dresdener Kunstausstellung im Herbst 1822," in *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunst, Literatur, Theater und Mode* (1822): 1042; in Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 96.

O turn – no, no, o do not turn  
 Your face to me, gracious mystery!  
 Just leave me quietly in my mental anguish.

Were there less charm, were this my luck to fade,  
 And it really were to radiate, the longed for light,  
 I would remain caught hopelessly in magic.<sup>51</sup>

The author is enchanted and plagued by the unseeable woman's face, desiring to see it and yet not, so as not to ruin the magic of the moment of being able to watch the unknowing figure absorbed in her own inner world of longing. Börsch-Supan charges that Fouqué's address to the picture "misses the point" of its content.<sup>52</sup> But in fact Fouqué is able to strike at the sexualized nature of the longing that the painting manifests, and his

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<sup>51</sup> Sie steht, vom veilchenrothen Kleid umwallt,  
 Am Fenster, abgewendet von hier innen,  
 Und sieht hinaus, vertieft in ernstes Sinnen: –  
 Sanft bebt mein Geist mir, und mein Busen wallt

Wer zog mich her, durch magische Gewalt? –  
 Fast möcht' ich fliehn; – und kann doch nicht von hinnen! –  
 Ich möcht' ihr nah'n – zurück, o kühn Beginnen!  
 Erzürne nicht die herrliche Gestalt!

O wende du – nein, nein, o wende nicht  
 Zu mir, huldvolles Räthsel, dein Gesicht!  
 Laß mich nur still im seel'gen Ahnungsbangen.

Wär's mindrer Reiz, wär' dies mein Glück vergangen,  
 Und strahlt' es wirklich, das ersehnte Licht,  
 Bleib' rettungslos im Zauber ich gefangen.

Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, from *Reise-Erinnerungen*, vol. 1 (Dresden: In der Arnoldschen Buchhandlung, 1823), 208; in Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 99.

<sup>52</sup> The point, in his terms, is the *Diesseits/Jenseits* symbolism of the here and now of the dark room set in binary opposition to the hereafter, symbolized by the trees on the far side of the river. Börsch-Supan, p. 376.

conventionalized poetry points to its participation in a genre tradition that extends back to Dutch seventeenth century painting, as Colin Bailey as rightly pointed out.<sup>53</sup> The viewer's relationship to the woman is different from the viewer's relationships to others of Friedrich's *Rückenfiguren*, not only because of Caroline's relationship to the sight before her (which is separated from her by the barrier of the window and wall) but also because of the vulnerability of her bearing: the hesitancy in her step, the slight leaning to the left, the arms held close to her body, and the smallness of her body in relation to the huge surrounding room. Although Eitner argues that in *Woman at the Window* the window is the focus of the painting rather than the woman before it, I would argue that she is the major motif of the painting and not the framed outdoor view.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the addition of the woman to the scene changes the tone of the outside/inside confrontation from that of the sepias.

The potential remains for meaning in the confrontation of inside and outside. The idea of this duality is heightened when an interior mediates the view of the outdoors, making the viewer aware of differences, here given as binary opposites: inside vs. outside, darkness vs. light, rectilinearity vs. organicity, domestication vs. wilderness, confinement vs. unboundedness, culture vs. nature. For the Romantic mind, "inside" would be figured negatively in these opposite terms, as it is certainly the case in *Woman at the Window*.

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<sup>53</sup> Bailey, "Caspar David Friedrich: Eine Einführung," 134.

<sup>54</sup> Eitner, "Open Window," 184. In this opinion he is joined by Jensen, who argues that the brightness of the outside view makes the viewer immediately bypass the figure and look to the window. Jens Christian Jensen, *Caspar David Friedrich. Leben und Werk*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Cologne: Dumont, 1995), 157.

The figure at the window, mimicking the stance of the beholder in front of the painting, not only embodies the act of vision, she also embodies the desire for the unattainable, which is cut off from her by imposing architecture, just as she is cut off from the beholder by her backward stance.

Such a negative perception of indoors is not necessarily an inevitable outcome of the motif of the interior with window and figure. J. H. W. Tischbein's 1787 ink and gray wash drawing *Goethe at the Window of his Apartment in Rome* (fig. 95) is a work quite similar in theme to Friedrich's *Woman at the Window*, yet quite different in effect. Goethe, dressed in a wrinkled shirt that is somewhat sloppily tucked into short trousers, stockings, and house slippers, stares out the window of a room in which the sole decoration is the patterned wallpaper. An open shutter again serves as the entry to the outside world, although here not much is accessible to the viewer except for a snippet of tiled roof and exterior of the house across the street, and some reflected light in the opened window pane. Although only one window shutter has been opened (out of four covering the entire window space), the room is much lighter than Friedrich's apartment in *Woman at the Window*, which is backlit, like a photograph taken with the sun behind an object, making for a somewhat illegible foreground. The poet actively leans out the window, his left shoulder raised and scrunched a bit to make room for his torso as he edges outside the narrow frame. He transfers his weight to one foot as he lifts the other heel slightly off the ground, letting the slipper fall. His head drops and turns slightly to the left, suggesting his attention is caught by something below. He is actively engaged in looking, his muscles contracted to push and pull his body, the strain evident. Friedrich's

woman, in contrast, is timid and stiff, although she also leans and has shifted her feet. The scopophilic desire acted out in both images nevertheless plays itself out differently.

Goethe's casual yet active stance embodies a sense of curiosity about the outside world and comfort with his surroundings. His is an investigative pose of someone who has opened the shutter up for himself, in contrast to the woman's constraint. While Goethe's body takes up much of the space in Tischbein's drawing, the woman is approximately half the size of the ceiling height. Although both windows are openings to the outdoors, Goethe's window pulls him out and connects him to the world, while Caroline is separated from it by the window and its shutters, and she does not penetrate her barricade.

In *Woman at the Window*, Friedrich's Dresden apartment has been remarkably unchanged by the introduction of a feminine presence into it. Notwithstanding the letter to his family about the acquisition of material goods, his studio remained as bare as ever, according to visitors.<sup>55</sup> In all of his apartment scenes, including those discussed below, no trappings of domesticity create a cozy interior space that was the hallmark of the period. The linear fastidiousness of Georg Kersting's *The Embroideress*, 1812 (fig. 96), for instance, is offset by the assortment of carefully observed objects placed around the woman, who like Friedrich's figure is absorbed in her activity. The wreath-covered male portrait, guitar, sheet music, and embroidery materials subtly define her essence, while the pale green walls, gentle light, and practical but comfortable furniture provide a welcoming

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<sup>55</sup> The sculptor Pierre Jean David d'Angers visited Friedrich in 1834 and described the studio as being furnished simply with a small table, a bed that reminded him of a funeral bier, and an empty easel; furthermore, he noted that no painting or drawing decorated the green painted walls. Hinz, *Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, 210.

ambiance not apparent in the room of the *Woman at the Window*. The potted plants on the window sill intimate a bridging of the gap between indoors and outdoors, for they can be brought in when the sun sets or the weather turns cold. Such an intersection between outdoors and indoors is denied in Friedrich's window views. Even when the window is flung open, the outside world nevertheless is blocked off by the architecture.

In Kersting's genre pieces, prescribed gender roles announce the separation of men's and women's spheres in the home: men read, write, and think, while women sew, embroider, and perform music. In *Woman at the Window*, Friedrich instead has a woman broaching the artist's own space, that is, his studio, signified simply by the jars of red liquid on the window sill. The ruffle of her collar, the folds of her dress, and the comb she wears in her braided hair all express a decorative, feminine touch that is missing completely from the room, with the possible exception of the red of the jars. The sexualized nature of the pictorial focus on the rear view of her demurely leaning figure, enclosed as it is by the assertive vertical of the room, conveys a sense of desire for her feminine presence, which is in turn equated with her longing for the outside world. Jen Christian Jensen's characterization of the room as a prison cell, to which the figure, as a woman of those times, is ultimately confined, is, I would argue, only partially correct.<sup>56</sup> For the confinement embodied here is not just that of a woman of a particular society and period, but that of the artist as well. Painted several years into his marriage, the work suggests an ambivalence toward the situation brought on by Friedrich's change in marital status: on the one hand, acceptance of the bourgeois lifestyle has led to a happiness

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<sup>56</sup> Jensen, 156.

previously unknown to the artist in the form of heterosexual union; on the other it has created a distancing of the very thing that Friedrich held dear his entire career, immersion with nature and the countryside, which he no longer is free to explore whenever he desires. Indeed, the architectural structure expresses the containment of civilization, for, as Koerner has noted, the intense pictorial symmetry of *Woman at the Window* only intensifies the separation from the landscape, even as the woman longs for immersion with it.<sup>57</sup>

The stark confinement of the Dresden apartment is expressed in two other paintings that each depict a woman silently passing through a darkened space into which a light source has intruded, spotlighting the figure. Like *Woman at the Window*, Caroline Friedrich is presumed to be the model.<sup>58</sup> In *Woman with a Candlestick*, 1825 (fig. 97), a woman heads through a doorway at the end of a dark narrow hallway. The candlelight slices geometrically through the blackened room rather than creating a gentle glow that warms the space. A window at the end of the hallway is blackened almost menacingly by the night, with no indication of what is outside. The one domestic conceit in the space is the lace window treatment, but even this is stiff, in neat folds, unlike the softly flowing curtains of Kersting's *Embroideress*. Like *Woman at the Window*, the wooden floor is stark and bare. A third work, the lost *Woman on the Stairs*, ca. 1825 (Börsch-Supan/Jähmig cat. no. 334), is known only through a black and white photograph that was

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<sup>57</sup> Koerner, 112.

<sup>58</sup> This is according to notes of Andreas Aubert, who interviewed family members at the turn of the twentieth century, when both of the paintings were still in family possession. See Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 399 and 400.

taken after the painting had been damaged by fire, but accounts of it in its undamaged condition indicate that the woman steps towards the light of an unknown source, perhaps sunlight, as she turns the corner at the top of an enclosed stairwell. Although the available photograph of *Woman on the Stairs* is difficult to decipher, it is clear that, like *Woman at the Window* and *Woman with Candlestick*, vertical lines and rectilinear architecture dominate the scene, as steep stairs run up the middle of the painting.<sup>59</sup>

What is fascinating about these three paintings of Friedrich's residence is the complete and utter absence of household coziness. These images of his abode are less interested in the presumed comforts of home than in architectonic structure, and, in the case of *Woman at the Window*, the dialectics of indoors/outdoors and the sexualized gaze at the female figure. In fact, Friedrich's most domestically-oriented paintings arguably can be said to be outdoor scenes, such as *On the Sailboat*, 1818/19 (fig. 2), with its hand-holding young couple who head toward their common destination; the *Marketplace at Greifswald* (fig. 38), which depicts Friedrich's extended Greifswald family in the artist's hometown; *The Stages of Life*, 1834/35 (fig. 98), which depicts what appears to be the artist's family on an outing at the shore; the above-mentioned *Evening Star* (fig. 81), with its animated child; and, finally, *The Evening Hour*, ca. 1825 (fig. 99), which offers itself as a counterpart to *Woman at the Window*. The painting depicts two little girls looking out an unglazed window of a rustic stone building, their arms wrapped around each other as they peer through the vines that outline the window frame. They are a pair that keep each

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<sup>59</sup> See descriptions of the work by Aubert and Emmy Voigtlander in Börsch-Supan/Jähmig, 400 (cat. no. 334).

other company, rather than solitary figures. The structure shelters the girls while picturesquely enframing the outdoor view, without, however, evoking the constraint felt in *Woman at the Window*. And, unlike *Woman at the Window*, the view out the window in large part is also available to the painting's beholder. All of these works were produced after Friedrich's marriage, when the change in thematics of his production – the sudden appearance of female figures, male-female pairs, and children – is quite palpable, and when a quietly familial tenderness, as evoked by the embracing girls of *The Evening Hour*, begins to materialize for the first time. Thus it is of interest that as Friedrich enters a conventional bourgeois lifestyle, he does not express this change so much through images of his home in the city, where that family is based, but rather through the genre to which he felt more connected, landscape.

The three Dresden apartment paintings are all dark, cryptic (and yet poignant) images that are the antithesis of Biedermeier domestic scenes. But the motif of home is not one from which Friedrich shied away; in fact, it is a common one throughout his production. *Woman at the Window*'s polemics of the prison-like confinement of an enclosed space and the freedom of an unbound nature often are inverted in landscapes that juxtapose notions of refuge and exposure. In such works, a welcoming domicile is presented as a counterpart to the elements of nature. For instance, in *Snow Covered Hut*, 1827 (fig. 100), a crude little structure offers the prospect of escape from the freezing cold, even despite the roughness of its construction, while *The Ruins of the Monastery Eldena near Greifswald*, 1824/25 (fig. 101) depicts a cozy little house set within the hollow of overgrown ruins. But it is not just the picturesque country house that is posited

as home or refuge, as the previous chapter has demonstrated. The northern Gothic city also appears as the natural habitat of Friedrich's wandering townsmen, that is, it is the home to which they return after their journey in the countryside.

The Dresden pictures do not participate in Friedrich's conception of home. The space of Friedrich's apartment is not configured as a site of welcome, with associations of domestic happiness, but simply only as either the artist's workspace or an exercise in architectonic construction and the pictorial effects of light and dark. From afar Dresden is not viewed as the final destination of wanderers beckoned by the sight of the city's inviting warmth and promise of human company. Instead, it is cut off from the landscape, obstructed from the line of sight, or modified so as to make it resemble the small Gothic towns Friedrich knew and loved. Friedrich headed to Dresden in 1799 to start up his career because it provided opportunities Greifswald could not, probably not realizing he would stay there the rest of his life (as his eighteenth-month stint back home in 1800 suggests). Yet even though it was the environment he came to know best, it never provided substantial subject matter for his work. And even though it was the city that fostered his career, where he met his wife, raised his children, and where his closest friendships were formed, it never came to replace Greifswald or the northern Gothic town as the image of home. Baroque, imperial, and cosmopolitan, ruled by Catholic nobility rather than a Protestant *Bürgertum*, it was a city that in the end remained utterly separate from the ideal of *Heimat* that Friedrich considered his own.

## CHAPTER 5

## URBANIZED NATURE:

## THE COUNTRYSIDE AS COMMODITY

Alone in wood so gay  
 'Tis good to stay,  
 Morrow like today,  
 Forever and aye:  
 O, I do love to stay  
 Alone in wood so gay.

Ludwig Tieck, *Fair-Haired Eckbert*<sup>1</sup>

Waldeinsamkeit

In Ludwig Tieck's fairy tale *The Fair-Haired Eckbert*, a song about *Waldeinsamkeit* (or "solitude of the forest," a neologism invented by Tieck that became popular among the Romantics) is sung by a magic bird that lives happily with an old woman in the forest. When the bird is abducted and brought into the city by the woman's foster daughter, however, it sings a different verse, pining for its lost happiness: "Alone in the wood so gay,/ Ah, far away!/ But thou wilt say/ Some other day/ 'Twere best to stay / Alone in the wood so gay."<sup>2</sup> During the Romantic era in Germany, as elsewhere in Europe and also in the United States, nature often was construed in idealized opposition to urban culture, a pure world untouched by the corruption of civilization. Yet this

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Tieck, *Fair-haired Eckbert*, in *Novellas of Ludwig Tieck and E. T. A. Hoffmann*, trans. Thomas Carlyle (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1991), 26. "Waldeinsamkeit/ Die mich erfreut,/ So morgen wie heut/ In ew'ger Zeit/ O wie mich freut/ Waldeinsamkeit." *Der Blonde Eckbert*, in *Werke* (1964), 2:14.

<sup>2</sup> Tieck, *Fair-haired Eckbert*, 34. "Wie liegst du weit! / Oh, dich gereut / Einst mit der Zeit. - / Ach einz'ge Freud', / Waldeinsamkeit." *Der Blonde Eckbert*, 20.

particular rhetoric of nature came primarily from urban minds, like Tieck, a Berliner, and thus must be seen as intrinsically bound to culture, mediated by its particular needs and desires. Werner Schmidt has written that German Romanticism's "conception of nature is reality outside the realm of man – nature, as opposed to culture."<sup>3</sup> Casting nature as a completely separate sphere from civilization, Romantics projected onto it moral and spiritual value, and, perceiving themselves as being alienated from it, longed for a reunion with or immersion in it in order to partake of its restorative qualities. *Waldeinsamkeit* became the image of the ideal experience of the natural world: a single human being's one-on-one encounter with the great outdoors, far from the maddening crowd.

Until this point, I have concentrated primarily on the motif of the city in Friedrich's work, but a chapter addressing the urban perception of nature is also in order, since landscape was the artist's primary artistic venue, and his attachment to the German countryside has been so naturalized in much of the literature. Many of Friedrich's landscapes present themselves as having been viewed for the first time by the human eye, and his images of contemplative figures communing with the vast realms of nature are themselves embodiments of the ideal of *Waldeinsamkeit*. But in the very act of composing his landscapes, Friedrich subjects nature to a perceptual process that is culturally generated, informed by his aesthetic sensibility, as he picks and chooses what to include within the frame and what to present to the viewer as a signifier of an experience before

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<sup>3</sup> Werner Schmidt, "Nature and Reality," in Peter Betthausen, et al., *The Romantic Spirit, German Drawings, 1780-1850* (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library and The Oxford University Press, 1988), 40.

nature. The types of landscapes Friedrich found most worthy of capturing in his work, whether barren and desolate, wild and sublime, or fecund, warm and inviting, all share the promise of exchange, offering the prospect of revealing deeper meaning to those who take the time to contemplate them.<sup>4</sup>

The Romantic ideal of nature's solitude was a complex one, and did not presuppose simply the image of utter wilderness. While Tieck's fairy tale mines the mythic Germanic primeval woods, with its magical associations and its historic positioning as the locus of Teutonic origins, others sought out a more traditionally pastoral, specifically anti-urban nature. In 1803, the art critic C. L. Fernow published an influential essay on landscape painting in which he addressed the question of why humans need the solace of nature, and just what order of nature they require:

Even the social human seeks every now and then some solitude, and leaves the noise of the cities in order to enjoy undisturbed the pleasure of beautiful nature; but he does not flee for that reason into the wilds, where a human foot never once stepped; he distances himself from society only to collect his scattered energies, and to return newly strengthened to the active life.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, nature is a kind of *Kur*, a health resort. It is a renewer of the human psyche, which is drained by the hectic life in the city. But in suggesting that people do not

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of landscape as exchange, as a cultural commodity, has been discussed aptly by W. J. T. Mitchell. See "Imperial Landscape," in W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> "Auch der gesellige Mensch sucht zuweilen die Einsamkeit und verläst das Geräusch der Städte, um sich des Genusses der schönen Natur ungestört zu freuen; aber er fliehet darum nicht in Einöden, die nie ein menschlicher Fuß betrat; er entfernt sich nur aus der Gesellschaft, um seine zerstreuten Kräfte zu sammeln, und neugestärkt ins thätige Leben zurückzukehren." C. L. Fernow, "Über die Landschaftsmalerei," *Römische Studien*, part 2 (1806): 32.

wish to go where no one else has ever been, Fernow implies that they do not in reality wish to leave society altogether. Nature is something to visit, to escape to when the burdens of civilization become too much, but only as long as it is controlled in some form. In the end, a return to civilization, the source and site of "the active life," is inevitable. Thus the Romantic era's attachment to nature is a complicated one, fraught with desire for its boundlessness but at the same time marked with the need to control. As Deborah Janson has written about the German Romantics, "the desire to live in harmony with nature exists alongside the desire to dominate it."<sup>6</sup> In this respect, it is perhaps not surprising that even an artist like Friedrich incorporated into the majority of his landscapes at least some trace of cultivation or human presence, whether a path, bridge, hut, cross, boat, ruins, or a wanderer.

Significantly, while Fernow posits that people would not enjoy visiting places too far removed from civilization, he suggests the possibility that such places could become the subject of art if the artist desired that the beholder experience the horrific atmosphere of such a wilderness: "However, a fully wild, deserted area can also be a proper object of representation; for what would be unpleasant in reality is not always displeasing in art."<sup>7</sup> Fernow is referring to the delights of the sublime, but readily admits that an artist needed to be very specific about his intentions when dealing with such a subject, i.e. that it is

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<sup>6</sup> Deborah Janson, "The Nature of German Romanticism," in Patrick D. Murphy, ed., *Literature of Nature. An International Sourcebook* (Chicago/London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998), 206.

<sup>7</sup> "Indessen kan auch eine völlig wilde, menschenleere Gegend ein schicklicher Gegenstand der Darstellung seyn; denn was in der Wirklichkeit unangenehm seyn würde, ist darum nicht immer auch inder Kunst missfällig." Fernow, 32-33.

about encapsulating the sensation of the wastelands' terror.<sup>8</sup> In other words, in the comfort of an art gallery or a person's home, in the contained form of landscape painting, the idea and image of a completely natural nature could be appealing. The thrilling danger inherent in such an encounter thus was a purely packaged one, a kind of commodity like a theme park experience. Yet even when Fernow's strictures are reversed – as in the treatise on landscape painting by another contemporary, Christian August Semler, which declared that while viewing a completely pure landscape devoid of any human intervention could be a perfectly valid aesthetic experience in the natural world, viewing a painting of such a landscape would not be – there is an element of control, of a culturally generated mediation of the land. Semler argued his points based on the observation that the viewer, when experiencing the landscape in person, would be aware of his location and whether the scene was hospitable and capable of productivity, while the viewer before a painted landscape would not possess this same knowledge and therefore be at a loss to understand the nature represented.<sup>9</sup>

The Romantics dreamed in particular of a natural landscape that offered the prospect of free movement, a space denied them in the crowded, enclosed urban environment. But the dream of open space, free of civilization's constraints, existed more as a concept than as a commonplace reality, for this ethos of pristine nature emerged

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<sup>8</sup> Otherwise, according to Fernow, landscape paintings required the trappings of the picturesque – humans, animals, and buildings – to achieve poetic character and be appealing to the eye. *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>9</sup> Christian August Semler, *Untersuchungen über die höchste Vollkommenheit in den Werken der Landschaftsmalerei, Für Freunde der Kunst und der schönen Natur*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Schäferischen Buchhandlung, 1800), 252-259.

contemporaneously and in concert with the development of the German countryside. Despite the observation by Mme. de Staël that Germany was still a land of uninhabited wilderness, the vast primal woods of Tacitean fame had long vanished into myth (and raw lumber), cut down centuries before de Staël set foot in Germany, and an extensive portion of German land had been cleared for agricultural use.<sup>10</sup> During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, even more rapid transformation was underway: there was an increase in the cultivation of arable land; expanding towns annexed their immediate environs to provide for the housing needs of increased populations; industry turned to the countryside as a reservoir of raw materials; and the newly developing tourist trade introduced the comforts of civilization into the wilds so as to accommodate the growing hordes of urban sightseers. Thus the very possibility of true *Waldeinsamkeit* (i.e., the idea that one could retreat to the isolated solace of nature), was being eroded by civilization's incursions into the countryside, even as the notion began to inflame the imagination of German Romantics (perhaps even because of these incursions).

In this chapter I want to explore the use of nature as an urban commodity by considering two of the growing encroachments of civilization onto the German countryside during the Romantic era, namely industry, which located itself originally

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<sup>10</sup> "The number and extent of forests indicate a civilization yet recent...Germany still affords some traces of uninhabited nature." Mme. de Staël, *Germany*, 27. "La multitude et l'étendue des forêts indiquent une civilisation encore nouvelle...L'Allemagne offre encore quelques traces d'une nature non habitées." *De L'Allemagne*, 13.

For a discussion of the decimation of the primeval German woods, see Christopher S. Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 128-130.

In 1800, Germany had 18 million hectares of arable land, a number that increased rapidly and steadily throughout the century. Nipperdey, 131.

outside the urban sphere (even though its production primarily was in service of urban populations), and tourism, a phenomenon spurred by city dwellers's desire to escape the confines of the town. Friedrich's own reaction to the modifications of the land that these two industries brought with them most often takes the form of the visual suppression of their intrusions. *Waldeinsamkeit*, in Friedrich's imagined countryside, remained a very real possibility. The erasure of certain cultural (i.e. urban) markers in the landscape is particularly true of sites of industry, which generally are excluded from his range of acceptable motifs, despite the fact that some of the landscapes he explored had a substantial industrial presence. The one exception, to be discussed in depth below, is an early instance in which the artist acknowledges the introduction of modern technology into the countryside by launching a visual protest against the potentially harmful effects that technology could bring with it. This negative engagement with industry remained an anomaly within German art of the period, as other artists typically ignored it, or even at times treated modern factories as view-worthy components of the landscape.

With regard to tourism, Friedrich often depicted famed natural wonders that were popular with sightseers as though they were undisturbed by any signs of human cultivation or visitation. Yet at the same time, although his urban wanderers are meant to create a solemn atmosphere of contemplation and act as ideational signifiers in the works in which they appear, they themselves point to the domestication of the land, conjuring up the ever growing attachment to nature by urban tourists and the conversion of land into Landscape. Moreover, as will be outlined below, Friedrich's particular choices of natural scenery for his pictorial subject matter suggest that he did not wander too far off the beaten track

already mapped out by other sightseers.

### From Field to Factory: The Industrial Presence in the Countryside

Friedrich is not an artist normally associated with images of industry. Throughout most of his career, he steadfastly ignored the growing industrial presence in the countryside he so thoroughly explored.<sup>11</sup> But this artistic silence followed a brief encounter that was perhaps prophetic for the eventual challenge taken up by later artists: early on in his career, sometime between 1802-1803, he produced a series of gouaches of three mills and a modern glassworks factory situated along the river Weisseritz in the Plauenscher Grund, a narrow river valley on the outskirts of Dresden (figs. 102-105).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Except for a few windmills, an industrial-use building appears in only one of Friedrich's oils, *Fog in the Elbe Valley*, 1821 (Börsch-Supan/Jähniġ cat. no. 278) and there the building, possibly a limekiln, is obfuscated by a thick mixture of fog and smoke. The landscape in the painting is an imaginary one, not identifiable with a particular site. See Börsch-Supan/Jähniġ, 367.

<sup>12</sup> The four gouaches first came into the public sphere in 1902 when the Dresden Stadtmuseum acquired them from an art dealer. The attribution stems from nineteenth century inscriptions on the verso. Although they are unsigned, their authorship has never been questioned seriously, primarily because of several signed and dated Friedrich drawings that have since been identified as preparatory sketches for figures in one of the gouaches. The three mill gouaches are the exact same measurements, while the glassworks gouache is only slightly smaller. Their dating can be based on the completion of one of the buildings depicted, in 1801, and the destruction of another by explosion, in 1803. In the aftermath of World War II, three of the gouaches disappeared and have only recently resurfaced, having spent most of the last fifty-plus years in the collection of the Bavarian industrialist Georg Schäfer. In May of 2001, the three gouaches were restituted to the Stadtmuseum by the newly-opened Georg Schäfer Museum in Schweinfurt. See Börsch-Supan/Jähniġ, 268-269; and Christel Wünsch, "Caspar David Friedrichs Landschaftszyklus aus dem Plauenschen Grund," in *Dresdner Geschichtsbuch*, 7 (2001): 201. I am grateful to Dr. Wünsch for allowing me access to the gouaches in November 2001, while they were in the process of being conserved.

The circumstances behind the origins of the Plauenscher Grund cycle remain

Friedrich's Plauenscher Grund cycle caught the beginning of change in that particular region by focusing on both traditional and new means of production. But it went further, casting a critical eye on the new technology, and in doing so acted as an uncommonly early portent of the environmental desecration of the region's natural beauty. After this early observation of technology, Friedrich turned a blind eye to the industrial presence around him, even though Saxony, one of his favorite pictorial sources, was becoming one of Germany's most heavily industrialized states.<sup>13</sup> This single, early engagement with the factories in the Plauenscher Grund points to the overall complexity of the initial reaction to the way in which the industrialization of the countryside redefined German society's relation to nature in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Many Romantic landscape artists, like Friedrich, consciously avoided dealing with the new factories that they would have encountered while exploring the German countryside. It would be decades before a real visual critique of the factory took root. Yet, as will be discussed below, in the years before a firm sentiment materialized in opposition to the social and scenic ravages wrought

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unknown. They were completed only a few years after Friedrich left the Royal Academy in Copenhagen, and before he had taught himself to work proficiently in oil, suggesting a commissioned project that paid the artist's rent while he tried to establish his career. As noted in Ch. 2, Friedrich had earned an income while studying in Copenhagen by helping J. J. Georg Haas color his engravings of contemporary landscapes paintings, and therefore would have been familiar with the essential elements of a pleasing *veduta*. See Hoffmeister, 76.

<sup>13</sup> On the industrialization of Saxony, see Rudolf Forberger, *Die Manufaktur in Sachsen vom Ende des 16. bis zum Anfang des 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958); Forberger, *Industrielle Revolution in Sachsen, 1800-1861* (Berlin: AkademieVerlag, 1982); and Hubert Kiesewetter, *Industrialisierung und Landwirtschaft. Sachsens Stellung im regionalen Industrialisierungsprozeß Deutschlands im 19. Jahrhundert* (Cologne/Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1988).

by industry, and despite the Romantic rhetoric of pristine nature, industrial motifs were sometimes employed as view-worthy, even sublime components in the landscape imagery of the period.

The Industrial Revolution came relatively late to Germany, but in the early 1800s there was already a steady increase in the construction of new mills, smelters, and manufacturing plants, some of which featured recently-imported technology.<sup>14</sup> While in subsequent years factories were placed more often in or just outside of cities (which supplied the necessary workers), in the early decades of the nineteenth century they were more likely to be located in an area with easy access to raw materials, namely, the countryside.<sup>15</sup> Industry's arrival was greeted with a mixture of approbation and hesitation. On the one hand there was a palpable attraction to the sublime power of modern means of production. The spectator-value of the factory is evident from the response of travelers to

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<sup>14</sup> Some historians have questioned the appropriateness of use of the term "Industrial Revolution" with regard to Germany. No one date can mark the beginning of industrialization, which came in spurts, and then only regionally, thus precluding the idea of an actual revolution forcing massive changes within a short period all over German-speaking lands. It was not until the arrival of railroads in the 1840s that the industrial impulse really took off, and it was only during the boom years of the 1850s and 1860s that large-scale machine production increased to the point of transforming the underpinnings of the German economy from agriculture to manufacture, resulting in mass migrations of large populations from rural to urban areas. For accounts of the industrial revolution in Germany, see Klaus Bergmann, *Agrarromantik und Großstadtfeindschaft* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1970); Hans-Werner Hahn, *Die Industrielle Revolution in Deutschland* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1998); W.O. Henderson, *The Industrial Revolution on the Continent, Germany, France, Russia 1800-1914* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1961); and Hubert Kiesewetter, *Industrielle Revolution in Deutschland 1815-1914* (Frankfurt am Main: 1989).

<sup>15</sup> See Rudolf Boch, *Grenzenloses Wachstum? Das rheinische Wirtschaftsbürgertum und seine Industrialisierungsdebatte 1814-1847* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 200; and Forberger, *Industrielle Revolution in Sachsen*.

its appearance at the turn of the eighteenth century. Guidebooks and travel diaries of the time often treat industrial buildings as *Sehenswürdigkeiten*, things worthy of being looked at, and detailed descriptions of various types of mills, manufacturing plants, and new industrial machinery appear alongside rhapsodic accounts of sublime rock formations, sunny valleys, and raging waterfalls, with little or no reproach against their incursion into the natural environment.

In one popular 1803 guide to Westphalia, for instance, the author delightedly describes a highly-industrialized landscape as having “everywhere an exciting commotion, a steadfast hammering, rattling, pounding, and a thousand types of roaring of the ceaseless industry and work,” adding that “it is wonderfully entertaining to follow and watch these manufactures in all their nuances.”<sup>16</sup> The sight and sound of industry were not deemed simply a bit of captivating diversion, however. In the guide, a moralizing lesson is drawn from the experience of the purposeful endeavors taking place in the countryside: “It is a truly encouraging and edifying sight to watch the fortuitous effects of this unparalleled diligence, which extends not only to the factories themselves, but also to the culture of the...region. Here steep, sterile cliffs have been transformed into fertile gardens, desolate mountains and valleys into nourishing grounds.”<sup>17</sup> The guide’s enthusiasm reflects an

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<sup>16</sup> “Auch in den märkischen Gebirge lebt überall ein reges Getriebe, ein ewiges Hämmern, Rasseln, Stampfen und tausenderlei Getöse des unaufhörlichen Fleisses und Erwerbes...es ist eine schöne Unterhaltung, diese Fabrikation durch alle ihre Nüancen zu verfolgen und zu beobachten...” Justus Gruner, *Meine Wallfahrt zur Ruhe und Hoffnung oder Schilderung des sittlichen und bürgerlichen Zustandes Westphalens am Ende des achzehnten Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Guilhauman, 1803), 461.

<sup>17</sup> “Es ist eine wohlthätig erfreuende und erhebende Ansicht, die segnenden Wirkungen dieses beispiellosen Fleisses zu betrachten, der sich nicht blos auf die Fabriken

early, widely-held perception of industry as a progressive force of change in a provincial country whose peasants were not long liberated from a wretched feudal system. That Friedrich Schleiermacher could dream optimistically in 1799 about advances in science and the arts bringing about the realization of modern “fairy palaces” of labor, which would put an end to the serfdom of drudgery suffered by millions of workers, speaks to the widespread currency of such thought.<sup>18</sup>

But there was also recognition, even in these early years, of the potential problems associated with industry. Although bituminous coal, the bane of industrialized England, remained uncommon in German industry until the 1850s, the stench and black soot that it produced had garnered negative notice already in the eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup> In 1801, a group of citizens from Bamberg lobbied unsuccessfully against a plan to build a coal-burning glassworks factory, right outside the city walls, on the grounds that it would have

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selbst, sondern auch auf die Kultur der Gegenden...ausgedehnt hat. Hier sind steile sterile Felsen zu fruchtbare Gärten, öde Berge und Thäler zu ernährenden Gefilden umgeschaffen worden.” *Ibid.*, 462.

<sup>18</sup> See Rolf Peter Sieferle, *Fortschrittsfeinde? Opposition gegen Technik und Industrie von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 1984), 51.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Hahnemann, founder of homeopathic medicine, published a report on the vices of bituminous coal in 1787, writing that it is “a disgusting fuel....Many writers...have decried the regions and cities where it is commonly burned. Everything is full of smoke from it, everything filthy.” (“...eine ekelhafte Feuerung...Eine Menge Schriftsteller...haben die Gegenden und Städte, wo Steinkohlen allgemein gebrannt werden, schmälig verschrieen. Alles werde davon durchräuchert, alles schmutzig.”) Samuel Hahnemann, *Abhandlung über die Vorurtheile gegen die Steinkohlenfeuerung, und seine Anwendung zur Backofenheizung* (Dresden: In der Waltherischen Hofbuchhandlung 1787), quoted in Franz Josef Brüggemeier, *Das unendliche Meer der Lüfte: Luftverschmutzung, Industrialisierung und Risikodebatten im 19. Jahrhundert*. (Essen: Klartext Verlag), 93. For a discussion of German reaction to England, see also Sieferle, 51.

a pernicious effect on health, safety, and property.<sup>20</sup> These early grievances were directed primarily at modern industry's pollution of urban areas, its harm to human health, and its attendant social evils. Protesters rarely cited its specific consequences, either aesthetic or ecological, for the countryside. Indeed, even among Romantic writers who treated nature as an object of aesthetic inquiry and experience, an industrial presence in the landscape was not necessarily cause for concern. Novalis's infatuation with mining, which stripped away the outer layer of the world to get at the inner, is a prime example.<sup>21</sup> Certainly smaller, conventional edifices such as charcoal burners were often perceived sentimentally as elements of a slowly vanishing way of life. As Rolf Peter Sieferle and Wolfgang Hädecke both have demonstrated, the Romantic critique of industry most often was expressed as regret over the demise of the paradigm of the organic in favor of the mechanical and the rational, as well as the loss of handwork and craft that inevitably accompanied the arrival of new technology.<sup>22</sup>

A forceful voice against modern industry's injury to the natural environment was not heard in Germany until the second half of the nineteenth century, in part because the early dispersal of small factories in less-densely populated rural areas meant that fewer

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<sup>20</sup> Brüggemeier, 21-22.

<sup>21</sup> Mining and miners are a prominent theme in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, while Ludwig Tieck includes a scene in *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* in which Franz pays a visit to a charcoal burner in the countryside. See also footnote 45 below.

<sup>22</sup> Sieferle; and Wolfgang Hädecke, *Poeten und Maschinen. Deutsche Dichter als Zeugen der Industrialisierung* (Munich: Carl Hansen Verlag, 1993)

people felt the brunt of its pollution.<sup>23</sup> The truly environmentally devastating practice of smelting iron with coke remained rare in Germany until well after the 1830s. Some new technologies seemed even to offer environmental advantages. For example, traditional glassworks, fired by wood-burning furnaces, were known in Germany to be destroyers of forests, owing to the amount of timber necessary to perform the work, and they were regulated by several German states already in the eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup> So the burning of coal itself, at least initially, could be viewed as a way out of the looming timber shortage – in short, as a protector of the beloved German forest.

Romantic landscape painting, as noted above, typically ignored or erased the presence of modern industry in the countryside (although some early forms of industry, such as the waterwheel mills that had long been a staple of the rustic landscape, continued to be rendered throughout the period of proto-industrialization as picturesque vestiges of centuries-old tradition.) But in a significant number of works, newer industrial forms proved to be a viable motif within landscape art – and not only in descriptive, topographical views or in works commissioned by industrialists.<sup>25</sup> For several decades,

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<sup>23</sup> See Brüggemeier; Sieferle; and Raymond H. Dominick III, *The Environmental Movement in Germany, Prophets & Pioneers, 1871-1971* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992).

<sup>24</sup> Brüggemeier, 46.

<sup>25</sup> The motif of industry also had some precedent in European art, for example in the work of Lucas van Valckenborch, whose *Landscape with Quarry, Limekiln and Ironworks* from ca. 1580 (Sammlungen Schloss Ambras, Innsbruck) explores the interconnectedness of these three activities with an exacting inquiry into the details of their operations, set within the dramatic confines of a craggy landscape. Friedrich's Copenhagen teacher Lorentzen painted several industrial scenes of Norway in the 1780s. See Wolfgang Braunfels, *Industrielle Frühzeit im Gemälde. Erzbergbau und Eisenhütten*

most often from the 1820s to the 1840s, new industrial forms, both in visual and textual representations, were sometimes integrated into the spectacle of the view, with no negative connotations. However, artists sought to tame the potentially threatening aspects of the introduction of technology into the landscape, adapting industrial motifs to their pictorial vocabulary and to their templates of recognizable views. For instance, when a factory was incorporated into a scene, it seldom disrupted established aesthetic categories such as the picturesque or the sublime.<sup>26</sup> When industrial buildings do appear before the mid-1800s, most often they are depicted as a natural part of outdoor scenery, contributing to the picturesque trappings of the view, as had cottages and ruins.<sup>27</sup> In some cases artists constructed an aura of the organic around them, as is evident, for example, from the picturesquely dilapidated condition of the smoking huts in Heinrich Bürkel's landscapes (see fig. 106), which establishes the buildings' connectedness to the inevitable transience of nature. Johann Jakob Dorner's *Ironworks in the Mountains*, from ca. 1835 (fig. 107), reconciles its main subject with the sublime mountain landscape surrounding it by

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*in der Europäischen Malerei 1500 bis 1850* (Düsseldorf: W. Rau, 1957). For other images of industry during the early nineteenth century, see also *Das Bild der deutschen Industrie 1800-1850* (Dortmund: Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, 1958); Siegfried Salzmann, *Industrie und Technik in der deutschen Malerei von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart* (Duisburg: Wilhelm-Lehmbruck-Museum, 1969); and Wolfgang Ruppert, *Die Fabrik: Geschichte von Arbeit und Industrialisierung in Deutschland* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1983).

<sup>26</sup> A similar reaction can be traced in British art of the eighteenth century. See Francis D. Klingender's seminal study, *Art and The Industrial Revolution* (London: N. Carrington, 1947); rev. and extended ed., Arthur Elton ed. (London: Paladin, 1975).

<sup>27</sup> The German word *Hütte*, cottage or little shack, is also a term used for ironworks and other smelting plants.

presenting it as a cross between an Italian villa and a ramshackle Alpine hut. The factory is literally intertwined with nature, as trees and bushes grow in and around it and white puffs of smoke from its large chimneys disappear into the clouds above. The main part of the building is a blocky mass that mimics the chunk of mountain behind it, unmistakably asserting technology's claim to act alongside nature as the painting's locus of the sublime.

The conversion of abandoned cloisters, churches, and castles into modern industrial buildings facilitated the association of the factory with more traditional countryside edifices. The medieval castle Wetter, rehabilitated into the first blast furnace and rolling mill of Westphalia, is one such example, and Alfred Rethel's astonishing 1832 painting of the *Iron and Steel Works and Machine Factory in the Castle Wetter* (fig. 108) captures this bizarre mixture of new and old. Zooming in on the grounds of the factory with a startlingly clear touch, Rethel erases the surrounding countryside, turning the complex into a world of its own. A band of smokestacks echoes the ruins of the medieval tower, and Rethel taps the sheer magnitude and might of the factory and its operations to present it as the modern incarnation of the by-gone seat of power.

The power and drama of modern technology was an attractive motif for some German artists, paralleling the situation in England.<sup>28</sup> E. W. Knippel's colored lithograph of a major smelting plant in Upper Silesia, *The Blast Furnace of the Königshütte*, ca. 1835/40, (fig. 109), stages the scene at night so that the various fires around the complex contrast to an evening sky that has been slashed by streaks of black smoke that accompany the blazes. Adding to the sensational effect is a bright, full moon over which the dark

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<sup>28</sup> See Klingender.

clouds pass. The threatening aspects of the awesome display of power are countered by the sheer allure of the spectacle, which catches the attention of some workers who pause to gaze at it from a distance. This fascination with the factory's spectacle is even more apparent in a lithograph of *The Factory in Sayn* from the 1840s (fig. 110) that depicts bourgeois day-trippers who have journeyed to the countryside to view a large industrial complex nestled in a splendid valley like a small quaint town. The smartly-dressed party of four has positioned itself just outside the complex's grounds, the view of it framed theatrically by the landscape. The central building of the plant sports a glass facade, and the modernity of the thing is underscored by its contrast to the neo-gothic monument at the foreground's precipice.

The glorious promise of an impending industrial age is envisioned in a fanciful 1837 watercolor by Karl Friedrich Schinkel dedicated to his friend Christian Beuth, a Prussian official involved in the oversight of industry (that is, of manufacture and artisan trades). Schinkel and Beuth had traveled together in 1826 on a study trip to England, where they were particularly fascinated by the advances in technology found in Manchester and Birmingham.<sup>29</sup> The work, *Beuth on Pegasus flying over an industrial city founded by him* (fig. 111), depicts the naked Beuth blowing bubbles filled with written wishes as he flies on the winged horse over an imaginary, smokestack-filled city. The

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<sup>29</sup> See Barry Bergdoll, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: An Architecture for Prussia* (New York: Rizzoli, 1994), chapter on "Architecture and Industry: Schinkel, Beuth, and the New Commercial Landscape of Prussia," 172-208; and Gottfried Riemann, *Ahnung & Gegenwart. Zeichnungen und Aquarelle der deutschen Romantik im Berliner Kupferstichkabinett* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1994), 156.

buildings visible through the clouds of smoke are clean white structures, classical in appearance, and the smokestacks appear as quasi-obelisks throughout the city, monuments to modernity. A river separates the city from a pristine mountain in the background, which remains unaffected by the billows of smoke blowing off to the side, and a canal leads out of the city to the river, allowing ships to carry off the manufactured goods. Schinkel's private fiction creates a separate domain for industry adjacent to the countryside, imagining nature and culture bound together in a neatly ordered world, their symbiotic relationship offering great potential for the advancement of civilization.<sup>30</sup>

But such positive imagining of the relationship between nature and industry remained less common than artists' visual suppression of changes to the countryside. Nine years after Rethel's powerful documentation of the changes at Wetter, for instance, a book entitled *Das malerische und romantische Westphalen* (Painterly and Romantic Westphalia) published an engraving of the place (fig. 112). The view is from across the river, with the fortress in the background, complementing rather than overwhelming the gentle ambience of the rustic landscape. Smoke rises from the chimneys of two buildings, a subtle indication of the production taking place, but the actual smokestacks of the factory have been banished, deemed by the book's producers to be neither painterly nor

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<sup>30</sup> In fact, Schinkel was well aware of the ill effects modern industrial technology could have on the landscape (and in cities), having witnessed such in England. Thus the utopian vision of his Beuth watercolor could be read as a response to his negative impressions from the trip to Great Britain: this is Schinkel's imagined alternative to the frightful reality that he had observed. Bergdoll, 180

romantic.<sup>31</sup> Westphalia itself was a highly developed region, alongside Saxony one of Germany's most heavily industrialized areas, but the plates in the book give no indication of this, with the exception of the edited view of Wetter, itself an old fortress and hence capable of acting as "painterly and romantic."

The region known as Plauenscher Grund outside of Dresden presents an interesting case for investigating the artistic response to the development of nature, for the terrain was a famously beautiful one that also proved advantageous for the growth of industry. The area was endowed with granite cliffs, dense forests, and scenic prospects, and enjoyed a reputation as one of Saxony's most pleasing landscapes.<sup>32</sup> For decades it served as a popular destination for urban wanderers in search of an authentic experience with nature, lured there by travel books promising "unending charm and loveliness for any friend of the beautiful and the sublime" and natural wonders magnificent enough to inspire

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<sup>31</sup> Ferdinand Freiligrath and Leven Schücking, *Das malerische und romantische Westphalen* (Leipzig: Barmen, 1841). In the book, the authors deplored the factory's presence in the castle. See Jochen Luckhardt, "Zum Verhältnis von Landschaft und Industrie in westfälischen Ansichten des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Industriebilder aus Westfalen, Gemälde, Aquarelle, Handzeichnungen, Druckgrafik 1800-1960* (Münster: Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte: 1978), 13-17.

<sup>32</sup> By the time Friedrich explored the region, the Plauenscher Grund's most agreeable views already had been mapped out by predecessors like Anton Graff and Zingg, who presented scenes of leisure set amidst bucolic abundance. The most popular view by far was the entrance into the valley from the village Plauen, with its appealing combination of cliffs, a half-timbered house, and an old stone bridge arching over a rushing river. This was the part of the valley closest to Dresden, and was depicted for example in Zingg's sepia *The Plauenscher Grund*, n.d. (Kupferstich-Kabinett, Dresden) and Graff's oil *At the Gamekeeper's House*, n.d. (Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden).

“the poet, the artist, and the natural scientist.”<sup>33</sup> However, the Plauenscher Grund’s natural resources, as well as its proximity to a major urban area, Dresden, also had made it a particularly attractive site for industrial endeavors.<sup>34</sup> Mills had lined the banks of its river since at least the fifteenth century, but the region began to develop especially rapidly at the end of the 1700s. By the mid-nineteenth century, it was notably and irrevocably altered from the “romantic little place” described in earlier accounts and captured by Friedrich’s four Plauenscher Grund gouaches.<sup>35</sup>

Friedrich’s gouaches are large, finished compositions, framed by a thick edge of black ink that marks them off as suitable for display. Three of them depict eighteenth-century mills. The view of the *Königsmühle* (King’s Mill, fig. 102), a grain mill, centers it among trees and cliffs. Swans drift along the deep blue river that flows calmly through the

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<sup>33</sup> “Der Plauensche Grund, für jeden Freund des Schönen und Erhabnen von unendlichen Reiz und Anmuth.” *Beschreibung der vorzüglichsten Merkwürdigkeiten*, 713.

Sophie von la Roche, in her anonymously published *Meine Reise im Wonne und Brach Mond 1792* (1796), had predicted that the Plauenscher Grund would inspire “Dichter, Künstler, und Naturforscher.” Quoted in Hans-Jürgen Sarfert, *Literarische Wanderung durch den Plauenschen Grund*, Kursächsische Wanderungen 8 (Dresden: Hellerau: 2001): 14. Indeed, over the ensuing years, the valley counted among its many admirers Friedrich Schiller, Schinkel, Kleist, Novalis, and both Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt.

<sup>34</sup> This was particularly the case when an abundant supply of bituminous coal was discovered there in the late eighteenth century.

<sup>35</sup> “ein sehr romantischer Plätzchen.” Georg Forster, a noted travel author, used this phrase to describe the Plauenscher Grund in 1784. Quoted in Sarfert, 12.

For an account of the industrialization of the area, see also Hellmuth Heinz, “Wie der Plauensche Grund zum Tal der Arbeit wurde,” *Heimatkundliche Blätter* 2/3 (1955): 36-60. Today the Plauenscher Grund remains a heavily developed region, although recently attempts have been made to reclaim some of its former pristine state.

idyllic scene, while two figures, a genteel wanderer taking in the view and a laborer with a basket upon his back, appear along the pathway leading to the mill. The *Neumühle* (New Mill, fig. 103) was another grain mill belonging to the Saxon royal house. In the gouache, Friedrich presents a foreground narrative of a little shepherd boy asleep on the grass while cows roam out of their enclosed pasture.<sup>36</sup> The third gouache depicts the *Pulvermühle* (fig. 104), a gunpowder mill, set in a congenial landscape distinguished by lush foreground foliage and a hillside vineyard.

The three mill pictures are quietly topographic in their presentation of the natural details of landscapes in which the varied components – cliffs, river, trees and vegetation – come together harmoniously, without making a claim to a grand vision of nature. Bright, colorful, and airy, they fit comfortably within the tradition of the *vedute* that so frequently captured the valley's rustic charms, in engravings such as *The Entrance to the Plauenscher Grund*, by an anonymous early nineteenth-century artist (fig. 113), or the late eighteenth century *The Neumühle* (fig. 114) by Johann Friedrich Witzani. Scenes like these fulfilled an urban audience's expectations of the rural simplicity found just beyond Dresden's confining walls, a dream of serenity which included water-churning mills.<sup>37</sup>

Each of Friedrich's mills is embraced by the surrounding verdure and fades into the

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<sup>36</sup> A strip of shadow across the picture is the one curious element here, leading Börsch-Supan to speculate on symbolic implications of the hereafter, but heavy readings seem inappropriate for such an ultimately blissful scene. Börsch-Supan/Jähnig, 269.

<sup>37</sup> Novalis celebrated the mills of the Plauenscher Grund in his poem "An den Plauischen Grund," from 1789: "There in the bright backdrop/ a mill lies in wait to surprise us." ("Dort in dem hellen Hintergrund/ Liegt eine Mühle uns zu überraschen.") Novalis, *Schriften*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1977), 1:490.

overall view of the natural scenery, which remains undisturbed by the unseen work taking place within the buildings. The invisibility of the work allows for the visualization of a compatible relationship between civilization and nature, whereby nature's bounty is simultaneously exploited and left unviolated. Semler underscored the essence of this relationship in his landscape tome by surmising that the motif of the factory could yield both aesthetic and practical advantages in the rendering of nature. According to Semler, not only did such buildings enliven the palette of the picture by introducing colors not normally obtainable in the natural scenery, they also played the important role of indicating that the depicted landscape was both productive and hospitable.<sup>38</sup>

Nature's double offering of productivity and hospitality often was an underlying theme of early industrial landscape scenes. An example of this is found in an anonymous 1810 engraving of the *Royal Ironworks in Berlin* (fig. 115), which partially hides the factory behind a group of trees, its fire-belching smokestack peeking out behind the foliage without disturbing the overall serenity of the scene. Factory workers placed in and around the buildings are countered by a family in a boat that shares the river with a flock of ducks. The waterway is both a part of nature and a part of culture, lined by a riverbank on one side, but harnessed on the other for the factory's use. It attends dually to the realms of work and leisure, propelling the factory's wheels while offering the family a pleasant venue for a summer's day outing. Like the later images of industry discussed above, technology here is transformed into a picturesque part of the scenery.

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<sup>38</sup> Semler, 252-259, especially footnote, 257-259. Soon after publishing the book, Semler became a friend and champion of Friedrich.

Friedrich's fourth Plauenscher Grund gouache (fig. 105) takes a decidedly different turn, however, visualizing the relationship between factory and nature in a much less comfortable manner. Featured is the modern *Hagens'che Glashütte*, a glassworks factory built in 1801 by Count Ernst Heinrich von Hagen. This was the first factory in Germany to use the bituminous-coal burning furnace of the so-called "English sort," and was renowned for its size and for the innovative technology of its inner workings.<sup>39</sup> Friedrich's representation of the factory, a set of several half-timbered buildings, is immediately set apart from the depictions of the three older mills by the large plume of darkened smoke rising from the chimney tops. Color seems to have been bled from the scene, with some of the foliage surrounding the factory a sickly yellow, while a mucky brown forms the slim line of river running horizontally through the picture, virtually indistinguishable from the brown of the ground that surrounds it and echoed in the brown smoke emanating from the largest building.

Just inside the front doors of this main building are small but discernable licks of red flame, indicating the source of the smoke and giving a glimpse of the powerful operations taking place inside. Larger in scale than the mills of the other three gouaches, the glassworks protrudes into a landscape that refuses to embrace it. Across the river on a

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<sup>39</sup> Bituminous coal, called soft coal in the United States and hard coal in Europe, has a high percentage of volatile material and produces dirty yellow smoke when it burns. A factory inspector's report of the Hagen Glassworks from 1802 describes its many technological innovations with admiration, such as the receptacle large enough to hold 100 bushels of ash, and the useful cooling oven that helped prevent breakage. Forberger, *Industrielle Revolution in Sachsen*, 306; see also Heinz, 47-48, and *Deutsche Romantik. Aquarelle und Zeichnungen im Museum Georg Schäfer Schweinfurt* (Prestel: Munich, 2000), 82.

flat stretch of land is a half-hearted attempt at a framing device, a single stumpy tree from which most of the limbs have been shorn. New branches have grown awkwardly out of its bifurcated trunk, and a clump of unkempt, rough-looking vegetation surrounds it, a little bit of leftover “wilderness” in contrast to the encroaching civilization. Over in the left foreground lie the remains of the would-be parallel framing device, a wizened tree trunk that has crashed to the ground.

Most curious in the picture is a group of figures gathered next to the tree on the right, two of whom, a swarthy laborer and a boy in a bright red top and blue britches, yank down a young limb from the ailing tree. A third figure, a woman dressed in white, sprawls on the ground and gestures urgently toward the others. These are not the simple picturesque figures in the *Königsmühle* gouache, who blithely go about their way with no sense of theatricality. Instead, their unexplained actions add a distinctly ominous note to the scene: the two male figures’ endeavors echo the destruction wrought on nature by the new technology across the way, while the female figure seems to signal at them in distress.

No contemporary reactions to Friedrich’s gouaches exist, but that some of *The Hagen Glassworks*’s compositional strategies may have been perceived as less than ideal by its audience (or uncomfortable for them to look at) is evident from alterations made in a colored engraving of it by Johann Bruder in 1805 (fig. 116).<sup>40</sup> Friedrich’s landscape takes on a particularly sickly appearance when compared to its engraved copy. The dark

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<sup>40</sup> Two prints of Bruder’s engraving exist, one in the Dresden Stadtmuseum, and one in Berlin, at the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz. A nineteenth-century inscription on the Berlin print indicates that it is a copy after Friedrich’s gouache. Börsch-Supan/Jähniq, 269.

plume of smoke has been tamed into a pale gray that easily merges with the now bluer sky. The red glow of fire inside the glassworks is no longer visible, but the river Weisseritz is, its disturbing brown coloring replaced by a bright streak of blue. Friedrich's autumnal palette also has been exchanged for the robust green of summer, which is particularly striking on the formerly muddy ground of the right river bank. Overall the foliage and vegetation have been cleaned up, filled out, and made more lush. The dead tree stump in the left foreground is now a neat assembly line of plants and rocks; a small tree in the central foreground is fuller and greener; the branches arising out of the tree to the right brim with vigor; and the messy cluster of wild plants surrounding it has been transformed into a more cultivated arrangement. Most tellingly, the unsettling gathering of figures in the right corner has been replaced by a happy family of parents and four small children. Here a strapping father in clean dress stands upright and tall, in contrast to Friedrich's crouching males, while tugging on a bough much smaller and pliable than the stiff, unyielding limb in the gouache. Though still unexplained, the action no longer seems menacing, and one can imagine the father attempting to create some sort of plaything out of the branch for his children – hence an act of destruction is transformed into one of recreation and even production.

By erasing the disconcerting, threatening aspects of Friedrich's image, Bruder renders a landscape in which nature can be read as both productive and hospitable, and the factory becomes simply another ingredient of the rural picturesque. The specific "corrections" that he made in an attempt to restore harmony to the landscape signal the era's self-imposed limitations on representing industrial topography. In the *Hagen*

*Glassworks*, however, Friedrich admits no mutual benefits between nature and industry, posting instead a challenge to the factory's intrusion in and injury to the countryside. Throughout the rest of his career, such motifs never again entered into his pictorial vocabulary.<sup>41</sup> No similar challenge appears in German landscape art until Carl Blechen's smudgy view of the *Iron Rolling Mill*, ca. 1834 (fig. 117), an ambiguous and ironic look at the changing parameters of the image of nature. Although the excitement of industry's spectacle continued as a motif throughout the century, especially in works commissioned by industrialists themselves, Blechen's painting signaled the emergence of a new era of perception of the German countryside, whereby the new reality of the smokestack and its dark fume demanded a new imaging of the factory's place in the countryside.<sup>42</sup>

#### Wanderlust: The Industry of Tourism

From Herthaburg, you climb still higher and higher. After a while you see the ocean shimmering through the trees, and suddenly you are there with a full view right in front of dizzying depths. Two chalk cliffs, four and a half hundred feet high, are arranged in multiple columns across from one other, and in the gap that they form, the sea in its immeasurable dimensions lies there in front of you. This is the Stubbenkammer. It is not possible to find a simpler and more sublime view: just a simple opening to the sea, but an unending plane lying there so free and large. And the place from which you look at it, so boldly and solidly built, so wonderfully formed through the

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<sup>41</sup> The fact that Friedrich even took on the subject of the mills and glassworks in the first place has been explained by some with the suggestion that they must have been commissioned works. Farmland also shows up only occasionally in Friedrich landscapes, despite the heavily agrarian state of so much of the German countryside.

<sup>42</sup> The beginnings of this change in perception can be seen already in a passage in the 1830 guide book to Dresden that sets the bright contemporary countryside, full of industry, trade, and traffic, in nostalgic opposition to the dark, wilder countryside of earlier days, where ruins had conjured up a glorious past. Scherzlieb, 222.

angles and corners of the cliffs, so marked by colors, with the white walls of chalk against the blue sea, so friendly and shudderingly incredible through the green, shadowy forest from which one has just emerged.<sup>43</sup>

Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote the above words about his encounter with the rugged cliffs on the northern German island of Rügen in 1796, some twenty-two years before Caspar David Friedrich produced the 1818/19 *Chalk Cliffs at Rügen* (fig. 68), his own version of the experience of viewing the Baltic sea from the island's most famous coast. Here three day trippers in urban dress have come to a spot much like that in Humboldt's passage. While two of the visitors occupy themselves with something just below the precipice, the third quietly takes in the sight of the splendid expanse of pink, blue, and green sea set off against a wreath of trees and dazzling cliffs. It is a magnificent scene, one that happily marries the beauties of nature with the leisure activities of humans, and it is at once, to borrow Humboldt's words, sublime *and* friendly, with craggy peaks of chalk greeting tiny sailboats that glide across the placid water.

Humboldt's text was written down in his personal diary, which went unpublished

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<sup>43</sup> "Von der Herthaburg an steigt man noch immer höher und höher. Nach und nach sieht man die See durch die Bäume schimmern, und plötzlich steht man am Rande einer schwindelerregenden Tiefe im vollen Anblick derselben. Zwei fünftehalbhundert Fuß hohe Kreidewände lagern sich in vielfachen Säulen einander gegen über, und in der Oefnung (sic) die sie bilden, liegt das Meer vor dem Auge in seiner unermesslichen Größe da. Dieß (sic) ist die Stubbenkammer. Es ist nicht möglich einen einfacheren und erhabeneren Anblick zu finden, eine bloße Oefnung (sic) ins Meer, aber die unendliche Ebene so frei und groß daliegend, und der Schauplatz, von dem man sie sieht so kühn und fest gegründet, so wunderbar gestaltet durch die Ecken und Winkel der Felsen, so abstechend on Farben mit den weißen Kreidewänden gegen das blaue Meer, und so freundlich und schauervoll heilig durch den grünen, schattichten Wald, aus dem man nur so eben hervortritt." Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Tagebuch Wilhelm von Humboldts von seiner Reise nach Norddeutschland im Jahre 1776*, ed. A. Leitzmann (Weimar: Felber, 1894; facsimile reprint, Bern: Herbert Lang, 1970), 36.

until a century later, so the recitation of it here cannot mean to imply that Friedrich had in mind this passage while painting his canvas. Yet it is striking just how many echoes there are between the verbal and visual descriptions of the scene. Each dramatizes the emergence of a spectacular view of boundless sea made finite through the frame of trees and cliffs; each emphasizes the play of nature's pigments, pitting a tall plane of colored water against the white of the rocks; and each juxtaposes potential danger – the exhilarating sublimity of the “dizzying depths” and the jagged peaks – with a welcoming aspect of the beautiful scene, perfect for exploring on a sunny day. In each account, verbal and visual, there is an underlying assumption about who it is who would be receptive to exploring such a landscape – those who are free to enjoy this type of leisurely activity, i.e. an urban middle and upper class.

In a passage from *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Heinrich heads off to explore a cave inside a mountain with a group that includes an old miner, several shopkeepers, a young boy, and some farmers. Heinrich thinks of the caves as the “forecourts of an inner earth palace” and as belonging “to a strange subterranean kingdom,” and joins the the miner, the shopkeepers, and the young boy as they willingly go deep inside the cave, intrigued by what they might find.<sup>44</sup> The farmers resist entering too far, however, because of the numerous bones and teeth lying around on the ground. Some of these bones had become petrified, indicating they were remnants of an earlier age. But the farmers take them to be signs of a wild beast lurking nearby and head back to the entrance of the cave to wait for

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<sup>44</sup> “die Vorhöfe des innern Erdenplastes.” “einem unterirdischen seltsamen Reiche.” Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 192.

the others to finish their exploration.

What is intriguing about this passage is the way the farmers, who work with and in nature, turn back from the cave, unable to share in the aesthetic response it elicits in Heinrich and his comrades. Instead, they are caught up in pragmatic concerns – their own safety – because they know the consequences of nature’s danger (indeed, they are asked by the miner before they make their departure whether their herds had suffered losses that would have resulted in such bones lying around). The miner, too, works literally surrounded by nature, but he is at home in the cave, which is like his workplace, and need not fear it.<sup>45</sup> Heinrich and his fellow townspeople trust the miner’s instincts and allow themselves to be led into the cave so that they can learn to appreciate its secrets, of which they find many.

In Friedrich’s paintings, the aesthetic appreciation of scenery is almost always left to bourgeois townspeople. Besides the well-known contemplative figure in *Monk by the Sea* (fig. 1), Friedrich produced few landscape paintings in which the gazers at nature are not urban visitors. There is the *Morning in the Mountains*, 1822/1823 (fig. 118), in which a shepherd and shepherdess sit on a craggy hill and look out at the mountainous countryside in front of them, their flock grazing below them on a steep but soft green hill, and the unfinished *Hayers at Rest*, 1834/35 (fig. 119), in which three hayers sit on the

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<sup>45</sup> The Romantic period in Germany produced an entire discourse about the miner and his work that treats mining as a great geological quest. Accordingly, the miner searches for gold, gems, and precious material not for his own economic gain – that is happily left to the king or other landlord who receives the booty – but for purely scientific, investigative reasons expressed in spiritual and aesthetic terms. See Helmut Gold, *Erkenntnisse unter Tage: Bergbaumotive in der Literatur der Romantik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990).

ground in the middle of a field packed with haystacks, turned toward the spreading countryside decorated by a large ruin and forested hills. In addition, several paintings depict fishermen standing at the edge of the coast, apparently looking off into the distant horizon. Yet none of these figures is given same value as the urban *Rückenfiguren*. In *Morning in the Mountains*, the shepherd and shepherdess, along with their flock, are so small in size that not only are they dwarfed by the vastness of the expanding region, but they also get lost amidst the amply-sized canvas itself. The delights of the pastoral foreground scenery are consequently outweighed by the sublime unfolding of the Bohemian mountain ranges that are cut off from the foreground by a steep crevice. In *The Hayers at Rest*, the hayers cannot really be said to be participating in an aesthetic consumption of the ruins and hills beyond their hay field – instead, their bodies, slumped against the haystack, and the rake and water jug tossed on the ground suggest an end-of-the-day fatigue, or possibly a meal break. One woman bends a leg under the other in a gesture of weariness, and if she looks out toward the rolling clouds at the horizon line one guesses it is more in anticipation of the coming dusk that ends her work rather than in wonderous appreciation of nature's marvels. And in none of the scenes with fishermen seen from behind are the figures large enough to act like Friedrich's other *Rückenfiguren*, as conduits into the painting or stand-ins for the beholder. Instead, they are tiny staffage figures who are simply elements of the coastal scenery, like the fishing nets and boats.

Joachim Ritter has defined landscape as “nature that when viewed is aesthetically

present for a feeling and sensitive observer,"<sup>46</sup> a reference certainly to Schelling's own observation that "the landscape itself possesses reality only in the eye of the observer."<sup>47</sup> The shepherds and hayers in Friedrich's "pastoral" paintings do not act as observers who create the reality of the landscape before them; instead it is the painting's beholder who consumes the view. But in *Chalk Cliffs*, the bourgeois travelers have reached this out-of-the-way place in order to observe, to create the landscape, viewed as it is through the frame of the cliffs.

*Chalk Cliffs* was painted after the trip Friedrich made to northern Pomerania in the summer of 1818, the honeymoon journey meant to introduce his new bride to his relatives in Greifswald. While there, he accompanied her and his brother up to Rügen for a few days' walking tour, taking them to the island's most famous area, a ten-kilometer stretch of chalk cliffs that decorate the northeastern coastline of the Jasmund peninsula. Friedrich was a committed traveler who made at least eighteen trips within a small perimeter of north-central Europe during the course of his forty year career. Most frequently the artist explored Saxon Switzerland, which he could reach easily from his home in Dresden; he also traveled seven times to Rügen; and he made at least one excursion each to the Harz mountains of central Germany, the Riesengebirge mountains along the border of Bohemia and Silesia, and the Erzgebirge mountains between Bohemia and Saxony. With the material he gathered on these outings, he then returned to his studio to produce paintings

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<sup>46</sup> Joachim Ritter, "Landschaft," in *Subjektivität. Zur Funktion des Ästhetischen in der modernen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 150.

<sup>47</sup> Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, 144. "die Landschaft hat nur im Auge des Betrachters Realität." *Schellings Werke*, 195.

that championed the attractions of this northern landscape in defiance of an academic tradition that held the classical, Italian, countryside to be the epitome of beauty and virtue in nature.

Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that in the literature on Friedrich, a picture of him has emerged as that of a lone explorer who discovered for the first time a landscape long ignored. Indeed, as pointed out in the introduction, he often has been cast as the figure in the painting *Monk by the Sea*, the very embodiment of the brooding recluse from his groundbreaking work, who confronted nature in order to try to apprehend its awesome power and melancholic spirituality. I am inclined rather to see Friedrich as Kersting depicted him in 1811, together with the sculptor Christian Kühn, who accompanied him on a journey to the Harz mountains (fig. 120). Here is Friedrich as a sightseer on an outing, with his knapsack full of supplies to last him a few days and a companion by his side – not an uncommon mode of travel for him, despite his reputation as a loner. By the early nineteenth century, many of the scenes depicted in Friedrich's paintings and drawings already had been identified in travel books as ideal destinations for observing the wonders of nature, and were already quite popular with the touring public, whose numbers grew every year in the decades before and during the artist's career. Thus Friedrich's work must be examined in light of the modern phenomenon of tourism, as landscape became a cultural commodity that fed an increasingly mobile urban audience's desire for seeing and experiencing an unadulterated nature outside the confines of the city walls. A more accurate examination of travel culture of the period reveals that in his investigations of the German countryside, the artist was accompanied by, rather than being the progenitor of,

other wanderers.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw enormous growth in popularity of both the *Entdeckungsreise* (or “voyage of discovery”) to distant regions, and simpler jaunts through the local countryside. Reforms allowing for easier passage between the many German states, and improvements in infrastructure, transportation, and accommodation facilitated this development. Mobility that once had been limited to specific minorities (the noble classes, soldiers, or outsider groups such as performers and peddlers) now became widely available to the bourgeoisie. While something of an urban tourism had established itself by 1700, in the latter half of the century an increased scientific interest in geological phenomena, coupled with the introduction of a Rousseauian sensibility toward nature, helped ignite a general desire among travelers to seek out meaningful personal encounters with landscape as well. This occurred even in Northern Germany, where the landscape, boasting neither the links to classical antiquity of the esteemed south, nor the drama of the Alpine countryside, had long escaped positive notice.<sup>48</sup>

As touristic activity increased, the motif of the wanderer in the landscape flourished in Romantic literature. Rousseau’s *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* had been translated into German as early as 1782, and the theme of the wanderer, as noted in Chapter 3, permeated Romantic fiction. In both *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* and

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<sup>48</sup> Jost Hermand, “Die touristische Erschliessung und Nationalisierung des Harzes im 18. Jahrhundert,” in Wolfgang Griep and Hans-Wolf Jäger, eds., *Reise und soziale Realität am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1983), 176.

*Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the title characters pause often through the course of their travels to reflect upon the various natural sights before them. Scenes singled out for detailed description encompass a whole repertoire of motifs familiar to Romantic landscape painting: sunsets and sunrises, landscape seen through fog and in the moonlight, towering mountains and dark forests, dramatic rocks and crevices, rainbows and ruins, and panoramic vistas.

Also crucial to contemporary notions of ideal natural scenery were the many guidebooks and travel accounts that described in vivid detail particularly noteworthy views of the German countryside and how to reach them.<sup>49</sup> As Wolfgang Griep has written,

by the end of the 1700s, the travel literature market offered something for every age and every purpose, from geographical handbooks and practical tips, to...travel games and special offerings for children and youth. [Travel accounts] were so rapaciously bought and read that some contemporary observers...raised a warning voice against 'the many descriptions of travel in our day,' against the market-oriented compilation and hurried writing for profit's sake, since in quantity, it was argued, there was hardly any quality to be found.<sup>50</sup>

By the early 1800s, well before Karl Baedeker founded his travel publication empire, each of the areas Friedrich would explore already had been mapped out in numerous travel books that told the reader which streets and paths to take to find good views, where to

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<sup>49</sup> See Herbert Schwarzwälder, "Reisebeschreibungen des 18. Jahrhunderts über Norddeutschland," in *Reise und soziale Realität*, 127-168.

<sup>50</sup> Am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts bot der Markt Reiseliteratur für jedes Alter, für jeden Stand und für jeden Zweck, von geographischen Handbüchern und praktischen Anleitungen über fiktive Reisen bis hin zu Reisespielen und speziellen Angeboten für Kinder und Jugendliche. Sie wurden so begierig gekauft und gelesen, daß manche Zeitgenossen...ihre warnende Stimme gegen 'die vielen Reisebeschreibungen in unseren Tagen' erhoben, gegen marktorientierte Kompilationen und eilfertiges Schreiben um Profit, da in der Quantität kaum noch Qualität auszumachen sei." Wolfgang Griep, introduction to *Reise und soziale Realität*, viii.

stay overnight, what the best sites were, and what historical significance or local legends were attached to the region.

Rügen, for instance, had been traversed by hundreds of wanderers before Friedrich arrived there in 1801, and by the time Johann Grümbke wrote his 1803 guide to the region, he could devote several pages to summarizing the literature already available about the island.<sup>51</sup> Interest in Rügen's charms was already evident when the landscape painter Jakob Philipp Hackert produced a series of twelve etchings of general views of the island in 1763, and it exploded in the next decade with the publication of poems by the preacher Ludwig Kosegarten, who sang praise of Rügen's German *Urnatur* or primeval nature. Guides such as Zöllner's popular 1797 volume (see Chapter 2, footnote 3), which included passages from Kosegarten's Rügen poetry along with a set of etchings, and Rellstab's from the same year, repeatedly mentioned the same locations, thereby establishing a canon of Rügen's most notable views, with the Stubbenkammer ranking at the top. Indeed, the site's fame was such that Zöllner expressed his regret at having heard and read so much about it, wishing that he could have enjoyed the magical experience of coming across it for the first time without having known of its existence.<sup>52</sup>

Friedrich was aware of Rügen's popularity, and he exhibited some hesitation regarding the use of his pictures as popular souvenirs of its attractions – refusing, for instance, to permit any “profit-hungry engraver” to turn *Chalk Cliffs at Rügen* into prints

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<sup>51</sup> Grümbke, 7-9.

<sup>52</sup> Zöllner, 189 and 262.

for mass distribution.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, aquatint etchings by Carl Thiele done after some of Friedrich's sepias, mostly of the town Putbus and its surrounding landscape, appeared in the 1821 *Malerische Reise durch Rügen* (Painterly Journey through Rügen), a book produced by the Prince of Putbus, who wished to turn the town into a sea resort.<sup>54</sup> In any event, the sites of Rügen that Friedrich most frequently set his eyes on were those that appeared most frequently in the travel literature; and his early sepias in particular received critical acclaim and sold well.

Friedrich's renderings of these sites often correspond to the way they are presented in the travel guides. For instance, Cape Arkona, Germany's northernmost point, was best viewed, according to several accounts, from a spot on the rocky beach, looking west, in order to capture the profile of the cliff most advantageously. This too, was the place from which Friedrich almost always depicted Arkona. Meanwhile, the landscape of the peninsula Mönchgut and the neighboring district Bergen delighted travel writers with its panoramic vistas, gently rolling land, ploughed fields, traditional thatched-roofed houses, windmills, and highly recommended views out to the tiny island Vilm. Accordingly, Friedrich's works based on this particular landscape are some of his most bucolic and *veduta*-like, such as the watercolors *View across the Wreechen Lake toward Putbus* (fig. 121) from 1824/25, or the oil painting *Landscape with Rainbow*, 1810 (fig. 122), which includes the celebrated view of Vilm.

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<sup>53</sup> Wegman, 84. "...gewinnlustigen Kupferstecher..." Friedrich to Dr. Ludwig Puttrich, 22 April 1819, in Hinz, 39.

<sup>54</sup> Sumowski, 203-204.

Other of the artist's destinations garnered just as much attention from the touring public. Long before Friedrich brought his sketchbook to the Harz region of central Germany, the eighteenth-century landscape painter Pascha Weitsch already had gained a reputation for his paintings of the area's geological marvels. Like Rügen, the Harz had a whole body of literature devoted to it, including several collections of songs and stories, and a six-volume guide to Harz appreciation for young people, published in 1786. It was among the first natural sites in Germany to become a tourist phenomenon, as visitors flocked by the hundreds and then thousands to the mountain range's highest peak, the Brocken, recording their thoughts about their experience in a guest book that was published in several volumes.<sup>55</sup>

The Harz's claims to fame were its majestic mountain peaks, forbidding caves, powerful granite formations, and the dark evergreen forests that were linked both to ancient Teutonic history and the legends of *Walpurgis* night. The region provided Friedrich with landscape imagery that he employed in some of his most conspicuously patriotic works, such as the 1812 *Graves of Ancient Heroes* (fig. 123) and the 1813/14 *Cave with Gravestone of Arminius* (fig. 124), both of which make reference to the warrior who administered defeat upon the Roman army in the first century A.D.; and the 1814 *Chasseur in the Forest* (fig. 125), in which a French soldier finds himself engulfed by a thicket of large pines in a German forest in winter. In contrast to the depictions of Rügen, the Harz paintings are dark, sometimes disturbing works of claustrophobic space that

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<sup>55</sup> While in 1753 only 153 brave mountaineers climbed to the top of the Harz mountain peak named the Brocken, 421 reached it in the year 1779, and 1000 arrived there in 1800. See Hermand, 177.

depict a rugged and not necessarily welcoming landscape. Such images did not have the touristic souvenir attraction of the light and airy Rügen works, but, produced during the Napoleonic occupation, they spoke directly to the heart of the Harz's wider appeal to the German public.

Of all the types of landscapes, mountainous terrain, first viewed positively around the mid-eighteenth century, played a singularly key role in the history of tourism. *Wandern in den Bergen*, or hiking through the mountains, became a fashionable goal for both longer trips and a Sunday afternoon away from town.<sup>56</sup> Seen as offering the elemental and the untouched, and as prime examples of nature's boundlessness and power, mountains featured prominently in the discourse surrounding the sublime. Their cultural value is particularly evident in travel literature from the beginning of the Romantic period on, as traipses through mountain countryside command the longest passages written in the most exalted tenor. This effluence was directed not only at the actual geological characteristics of the elevations, but also, indeed especially, at the panoramic views they offered from their heights. The all-encompassing view of the land from the summit of a mountaintop was construed as being synonymous with the experience of transcendence, so that among all the entries in the Brocken Yearbook are many that echo the sentiment of a certain Carl Nicäus, who penned the following after having reached the summit: "To look out from the Brocken's thickly overgrown mossy heights into the deep valley, brother,

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<sup>56</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Eine Theorie des Tourismus," in *Einzelheiten I Bewußtseins-Industrie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964), 192.

that is salvation!”<sup>57</sup>

A large percentage of the mountains in Friedrich’s paintings are drawn from views of the Riesengebirge of the Sudeten chain. This was an area that had been explored with increasing interest since the mid-1700s, and, like the Harz and Rügen, generated a whole industry of travel books and popular images. Friedrich visited the area only once, in 1810, but made use of his drawings from that trip frequently over the course of the next thirty years, from the *Morning in the Riesengebirge*, of 1810/11 (fig. 50), to the *Riesengebirge* of 1830/35 (fig. 126). The mountain landscape offered him the opportunity to depict nature as unaltered by human interference; more often than not, the standpoint of the beholder is left unaccounted for. The mist-covered, sweeping views conjure up visions of a primal earthly scene, a terra incognita observed for the first time. This sense of the primordial occurs even in works in which wanderers are present, as in the *Morning in the Riesengebirge*, where a man and a woman somehow have reached the top of a difficult summit on which a cross improbably stands, signifying through its linkage of sky and earth the salvation revealed through the grace of nature.

Friedrich’s reputation even today rests largely upon his dark, brooding landscapes inhabited by monks and hermits. But as has been noted in earlier chapters, while such lugubrious figures do populate several early works, the human presence in his production from 1815 on consists, with the exception of a few fishermen and peasants, almost

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<sup>57</sup> “Von Brockens Dickbemoosten Höhen/ Ins tiefe Thal hinab zu sehen,/ Brüder, das heißt Seligkeit!” *Jahrbücher des Brockens von 1753 bis 1790 oder Namenkunde aller Personen welche in diesem Zeitraume sich in die Originalstammbücher dieses berühmten Berges eingezeichnet haben* (Magdeburg: Johann Adam Creutz, 1791), 131

exclusively of urban dwellers traipsing through the countryside. Almost always these figures mediate the view of the landscape, and nowhere is this aspect more apparent than in *The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, 1818 (fig. 70), in which a man stands commandingly in front of a fantastic scene of mountainous landscape.<sup>58</sup> Here the unusual vertical format mimics the man's stance, cutting off from the painting's beholder some of the panorama that he is privy to. Placed squarely in the middle of the canvas, blocking part of the view, it is the wanderer, or perhaps more accurately his act of looking, that dominates the composition.

While the visitor to the landscape was by no means an invention of the Romantics, the image of the contemplative city dweller (recognizable through his urban dress) gazing out at nature took on a particular urgency at this time, appearing in works by a whole array of artists other than Friedrich. The cultural constructedness of the act of observing nature becomes clear when considering the third set of Daniel Chodowiecki's series of engravings from 1779, *Natural and Affected Conduct in Life* (fig. 127), in which the proper and improper demonstration of *Empfindung*, or feeling, is envisaged through the response of a couple to the landscape before them; overt corporeal reaction to the glories of the scene is contrasted negatively to the more decorous, or "natural" way of nature appreciation. Throughout the Romantic era, the eschewing of conversational gesticulation in favor of silent devotion and reverie characterizes the depiction of these urban pilgrims.

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<sup>58</sup> The view, though imaginary, is made up of recognizable elements from the regions Friedrich explored: the large peak in the background is the Rosenberg from northern Bohemia, to the right of it is possibly the Zirkelstein from Saxon Switzerland, and some of the cliffs in the middle ground are based on sandstone formations also in Saxon Switzerland. Börsch-Supan/Jähnig, 349.

Friedrich's affinity for the *Rückenfigur* was so strong that it was regularly commented upon by contemporary observers. Sometimes his travelers ventured out alone, as in *The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, or in the lovely watercolor from ca. 1830, *The Source of the Elbe in the Riesengebirge* (fig. 128), where a tiny figure, walking stick in hand, sits deep in thought amidst the gently rolling moor whence the river begins its descent from its modest origin. More typically, however, these urban dwellers have come to the scene in a group of two or more, as in *Moonrise by the Sea* of 1822 (fig. 129). Here three city folk silently watch, as though in a theater, the spectacle of the moon's ascent through the clouds, leaving a trail of color and light in the sky and water, and providing a dramatic backdrop for the boats sailing along the water.

As noted in Chapter 3 with regard to the two figures in *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace* (fig. 18), these *Rückenfiguren* evince a decided theatrics of looking. The view as spectacle can be traced in writing of the period as well. Terms such as show, scene, stage, stageset, and drama are used heavily in travel literature to describe nature, while the temporal aspect of observing the land is constantly emphasized: the spectator pauses to watch clouds cast shadows over the land, storms develop over valleys, or the sun and moon rise, set, or break through the fog. A typical passage, from Johann Abegg's 1798 travel diary, describes watching a sunset in a manner that resonates considerably with many of Friedrich's sunset paintings: "Now the sky, instead of the earth, put on a show. The sun set divinely beautifully, and I watched it go down over the wide, large

expanse of earth until the last ray...until the last reflection in the clouds.”<sup>59</sup> Such passages occur repeatedly in both personal diaries and travel books, the authors never tiring of narrating yet another sunset in much the same way as they did a few pages earlier, just as Friedrich’s wanderers never tire of looking at views of the moon or the celestial fireworks accompanying the passage of day and night.

Beyond all these images of a blissful engagement with nature lay a somewhat more prosaic reality. As vastly improved tourist services raised the level of comfort experienced by travelers, complaints about formerly isolated scenery ruined by the presence of too many sightseers multiplied. Thus a tour guide lamented to the author of the 1830 Dresden guide (cited earlier) that a celebrated rock formation outside of town had lost its charm because of all the visitors who came to it and the restaurants, beer gardens, and musical entertainment that now surrounded it. It used to be, he griped, that one saw only a few poor cottages out that way, but now the stillness and loneliness of the place was disturbed by all the commotion just to accommodate “petty bourgeois comfort.”<sup>60</sup> Pictures of a countryside unspoiled by hordes of bourgeois sightseers presented just the sort of landscape sought out by such travelers, including Friedrich himself. The artist seldom depicted the amenities available to the wanderer, yet lodgings, restaurants, safety railings, pathways, steps, and improved means of transportation were to be found even in remote regions to accommodate the growing number of tourists, thus changing the very landscape

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<sup>59</sup> Johann Friedrich Abegg, *Reisetagebuch von 1798* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1976), 25.

<sup>60</sup> “...spießbürgerliche Bequemlichkeit...” Scherzlieb, 218-220.

he was painting. His canvas of the rock formation, the *Cliffs at Neurathen in Saxon Switzerland*, ca. 1822/23 (fig. 130), for instance, depicts an overgrown, romantic image of a landscape devoid of human presence. It catches the visual attention of the beholder by presenting the scene as though it were inhospitable to any visitor who might wish to clamber through it. Thus there is a sense that the painting conveys vicariously the experience of something remote and inaccessible.

But an 1820 etching by Ludwig Richter (fig. 131) indicates (as does Friedrich's own watercolor from a decade later; see fig. 132) that the geological wonder was altered for the convenience of travelers, through a wooden bridge erected between the rocks.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Rossmässler's prints from his 1835 book point to the modifications of the land, e.g. a safety railing that had been put up at the beginning of the century along the path to the tip of the Stubbenkammer (fig. 133). Meanwhile, the steps leading from the cliffs down to the beach, erected in 1783 (fig. 134), were the work of a local pastor who wanted to give easier access to the shoreline for the visitors who came to the lodge he ran.<sup>62</sup> And an 1805 guide to the Harz reported on the numerous additions to the landscape that were constructed for the comfort of travelers, such as stairs carved into a cliff to facilitate hiking, or a wooden hut built over slabs of granite on the ascent of a peak,

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<sup>61</sup> The etching was published in C.A. and A. L. Richter's portfolio, 30 *Mahlerische An- und Aussichten der Umgebung von Dresden* (Dresden: Arnold Verlag, 1820).

<sup>62</sup> Zschoche, *Rügen*, 20.

which allowed tourists both to take a pause in climbing and to appreciate a good view.<sup>63</sup>

These intrusions transformed the experience of viewing nature by subjecting it to the comforts of civilization, domesticating the wilderness so that it became an arena for leisure activity. As Friedrich's career approached its waning moments, the relationship of man and landscape, and the interplay between observer and wanderer, were changing forever in an increasingly crowded Germany.

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<sup>63</sup> *Unentbehrlicher Führer für Harzreisende, Enthaltend die Geschichte und Sagen der alten Schlösser, Klöster und Ruinen, und die Beschreibung aller Merkwürdigkeiten des Harzes* (Quedlingburg: Gottfried Basse, 1809), 95-96.

## CONCLUSION

Werner Sumowski noted in his important Friedrich monograph, *Studien* (1970), that a major problem with Friedrich research was that scholars tended to focus on a small selection of Friedrich's works, leading to a uneven and narrow picture of the artist and his production.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, thirty years after his book was published, this situation is still a matter of some concern, despite the wave of Friedrich literature in the bicentennial year (1974) and the steady flow of scholarship in the ensuing decades. A limited number of Friedrich's landscape paintings, primarily those that deal with the sublime or that appear to address religious and/or socio-political themes, have continued to be privileged in the literature, playing the largest role in building the artist's reputation. In this dissertation I have tried to broaden the received image of the artist by focusing primarily on a motif, the city, that seems an uncharacteristic one to study exclusively in the work of a landscape painter; and by addressing more fully a number of works that have received less attention than his canonical paintings, either because they do not fit into the received notion of Friedrich's production or because they are not "major" works in terms of size or (in the opinions of others) of art historical significance. Yet I would argue that by focusing on the overlooked details of the Friedrich's oeuvre, we gain a more complicated and ultimately incisive understanding of his artistic contributions. The intention of this dissertation thus has not been to reject outright the myriad established approaches to Friedrich's work, many of which have provided keen insight onto its particularities, but

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<sup>1</sup> Sumowski, 2.

rather to add another voice to expose further the richness of his production.

As Chapter 1 outlined, the most familiar narrative of Friedrich's life and work posits him as the quintessential German Romantic artist, a creative genius who at heart was a loner and who sacrificed potentially greater glory and riches in order heroically to honor his own subjective vision. Friedrich's work often is perceived as standing isolated in its time – in other words, it is *eigentümlich* or characteristic of him alone – and moreover is placed at the beginning of a trajectory of modernism, so that Friedrich becomes a kind of progenitor of later nineteenth and twentieth century abstraction and expressionism. Such a narrative is not completely without insight into the artist and his work, for it must be conceded that Friedrich often worked outside the boundaries of conventional artistic rules of the period, and there are surely some affinities between his work and that of later artists. But by reducing Friedrich always to being the outsider, related only to the achievements of future creative geniuses, this narrative overlooks the ways in which Friedrich was in fact a man of his times and belonged wholly to his social environment (the city), and bypasses the ways that his production did in fact address the demands of a burgeoning urban bourgeois society in which art increasingly played an important role.

In this dissertation, I have traced the cultural presence in Friedrich's work by considering the motif of the city and by outlining the discernible engagement of civilization with nature in his images, as well as by examining other ways in which his work reveals the social, urban context in which it was produced. Although Friedrich's feelings toward nature have been discussed in myriad ways, until now there has been little speculation of

his feelings toward the city, despite the fact that it was his true *Heimat*. Friedrich, in the viewpoint of many art historians, was not interested in the city per se, but only in the idea of the city used symbolically. Certainly the artist was not performing simple reportage in most of his city images (except to some extent, one might argue, in *Marketplace at Greifswald*, 1818, fig. 37). But the urban presence in Friedrich's work is palpable, and there is more to it than mere symbolism. By insisting on looking at Friedrich's towns and cities as real entities, and not through them as symbols, I have opened up a new channel for understanding his work, including his vision of nature, as a product of an urban environment. In this way I have tried to destabilize the naturalizing of Friedrich's imaging of and attachment to the countryside that has occurred over the years in the literature about him.

Chapter 2 outlined Friedrich's life in towns, tracing his trajectory from the small town of Greifswald to the larger cities of Copenhagen and Dresden, and provided an understanding of what life in German towns of the early nineteenth century might have been like, thereby setting up a context in which to understand Friedrich's own city images. The perception of the city at the dawn of the nineteenth century, which so often has been underplayed in studies of Romanticism, was seen to be complex, with both positive and negative associations coming into play during the era. Attitudes toward urban life were seen to be linked to the period's fixation with nature, so that one cannot be considered without the other. Most Romantics lived as a matter of course in towns, not in the country, for they sought out the social, intellectual, and economic opportunities found in cities. Unlike the many disapproving representations of urban life in Romantic writing,

visual depictions of cities generally were positive throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, whether the towns were portrayed in contemporary times or imagined as they were during the mythologized era of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, viewed by Romantics as the German Golden Age. As the century expanded, moreover, the contemporary cityscape became an ever more popular motif in visual representations, addressing the new sensibilities of a Biedermeier era, where bourgeois town residents expressed an eagerness to view themselves and their immediate environment in visual images. Examined against this background, Friedrich's use of urban themes in his works can be seen as both participating in and rejecting dominant attitudes toward the city.

By investigating the nuances of Friedrich's depictions of two different types of towns (the small northern medieval town and aristocratic Dresden), I have presented a concrete consideration of Friedrich's gaze at the urban environment he lived in his entire life, which up until now has been missing from Friedrich scholarship. A consideration of Friedrich's deep attachment to his small town roots, as outlined in Chapter 3, underlines more clearly the provincial origins of the artist and his positive feelings toward the small town, which for him remained the essence of *Heimat*, or home, even long after he left it. Although Friedrich sometimes envisions home in nature for others (mainly farmers or fishermen), there is no place in his landscapes for someone like himself – i.e. a born urban dweller – to return to at the end of the day, other than the towns along the horizons of his paintings. Yet the small medieval town that Friedrich idealized visually did not prove to be the ideal place to advance his career, and the move to Dresden became a necessary step in his life as an artist. As Chapter 4 showed, despite the fact that the artist lived there for

forty years, Dresden never played as important a visual role in his work as did Greifswald or its small-town neighbors, which is suggestive of the artist's conflicted feelings about his choice of living there. Indeed, when Friedrich does incorporate Dresden into his art, he demonstrates a perceptible ambivalence toward the dazzling *Rezidenstadt*, a royal, Baroque, cosmopolitan city run by Catholic leaders that contrasted in so many ways to the small, Protestant, bourgeois town of his upbringing. He chose to be exiled there in order to develop his career as an artist (an act which demonstrates even more how embedded his art was in urban culture, i.e. that his artworks – primarily images of nature – required an urban environment in order for him to be successful), and yet he could never quite imagine Dresden completely as home in either his paintings or his drawings. The town is viewed in his works at a distance, fragmented, partially or completely blocked, or altered in appearance, and never comfortably ensconced into the surrounding countryside. Nevertheless, the urban environment in which he painted had a perceptible influence on his production, for instance in the often ignored link between Friedrich's art and popular arts of his day, including panoramas, dioramas, transparencies, and *vedute*. Even if Friedrich had higher purposes in mind for his works than to be merely pieces of entertainment, this does not negate their affinity with such popular spectacles.

It is by considering the urban environment of his production that we in fact come to a deeper understanding of Friedrich's imaging of nature, for his depictions of the countryside must be seen as being framed through a town resident's perspective, as Chapter 5 demonstrated. The countryside and nature played such an important role in the thematics of German Romanticism (as elsewhere in Europe) that it has overshadowed

consideration of most of its practitioners as residents of the city. Yet town and country are inescapably linked, for the Romantic notion of nature as a source of moral and spiritual rejuvenation, as the virtuous opposite of a corrupt civilization, was a product of a period in which the countryside was viewed increasingly as a commodity. Despite the fiction of an enduring *Waldeinsamkeit*, the countryside underwent constant change during the early nineteenth century, as urban centers expanded into its territory and commanded more of its natural resources. As German towns grew in size and population, and the countryside became more urbanized through the growth of industry, the concept of nature was transformed into a highly desirous entity, something to be experienced by those for whom it seemed increasingly elusive, i.e. the urban bourgeoisie.

One need only consider that Friedrich rarely envisions fishermen, sailors, or laborers engaging with the landscape as an aesthetic commodity. Instead, it is middle-class townspeople (and one monk) who address nature in this way, for whom nature acts not as provider of livelihood but as a stimulus of the psyche. It cannot be denied that Friedrich intends his figures to be more than simple bourgeois day-trippers, and yet the parallel between the two is obvious and should not be overlooked; on a basic level Friedrich's *Rückenfiguren* indicate the consumption of nature by those who come to it as outsiders, as Friedrich himself did. Friedrich may have addressed nature with more heightened sensibilities toward its potential for revealing religious or philosophical truths, yet at the same time he was, in essence, like others clambering around the countryside alongside himself: a tourist to the woods, to the mountains, who at the end of a journey returned to his home, in the city.

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