Japhet Johnstone

Stages of Inversion:
Die verkehrte Welt in Nineteenth-Century German Literature

Acknowledgments

The work presented in this dissertation is the result of collaborative oversight by faculty members at the University of Münster and the University of Washington. The dissertation is submitted to each institution in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements.

University of Washington Reading Committee:

Richard Block, Chair

Marshall Brown

Richard Gray

Abstract

Stages of Inversion: Die verkehrte Welt *in Nineteenth-Century German Literature* presents a literary ahistory of inverted subjectivity that runs parallel with, and at times contrary to, the historical consolidation of homosexual desire in the pathologized figure of the "invert." Its argument builds on five different literary moments in the nineteenth century from Ludwig Tieck's *Die verkehrte Welt*, E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Prinzessin Brambilla*, Georg Büchner's *Leonce und Lena*, Gottfried Keller's *Kleider machen Leute*, and Arthur Schnitzler's *Der grüne Kakadu*. The literary and theatrical inversions in these works suggest a potential for queer identities *avant la lettre* that resists identitarian pressures and raises questions about the intersection of identification, theatricality, and the history of (homo)sexuality. The study stages a dialogue between literary, philosophical, and scientific discourses from the past and the present with a focus on queer theory and concepts like disidentification (José Muñoz) and drag (Judith Butler). While in the end the psycho-sexual-medical discourse seems to appropriate inversion (as perhaps best seen in Proust), there remains an ironic core to inversion in its many forms that elides both propriety and subjection. Indeed, the irony of inversion runs throughout the nineteenth-century texts under examination, proving again and again how difficult it is to instrumentalize inversion, especially in the name of identification.

(*Deutsche Fassung*)

Die Studie *Stages of Inversion:* Die verkehrte Welt *in Nineteenth-Century German Literature* entwickelt eine alternative Geschichte des "verkehrten" Subjekts in der deutschen Literatur. Diese Geschichte, die im 19. Jahrhundert beginnt, läuft teils parallel, teils aber auch gegenläufig zu Verortungen homosexuellen Begehrens, wie sie gleichzeitig in der pathologisierten Figur des "Invertierten" Gestalt annehmen. Die Studie nimmt fünf exemplarische Stationen dieser Geschichte in den Blick: Ludwig Tiecks *Die verkehrte Welt*, E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Prinzessin Brambilla*, Georg Büchners *Leonce und Lena*, Gottfried Kellers *Kleider machen Leute* und Arthur Schnitzlers *Der grüne Kakadu*. Die literarischen und theatralischen Verkehrungen, die diese Texte inszenieren, bieten Möglichkeiten an, Identitäten anders zu denken als es die im gleichen Zeitraum entstehende Identitätskategorie "des Homosexuellen" erlaubt. Im Gegensatz dazu unterminieren die verkehrten Identitäten—queere Identitäten *avant la lettre*—die dominierenden Identitätsdiskurse der Zeit. In der Erkundung der Schnittstellen von Identifikation, Theatralität und Geschichte der (Homo-)Sexualität geht die Studie auch dem Dialog zwischen literarischen, philosophischen und wissenschaftlichen Diskursen nach, deren Wirkmächtigkeit sich bis in unsere Gegenwart erstreckt. Obgleich es dem psychosexuellen Diskurs scheinbar gelingt, die Figur der Inversion für seine Zwecke zu vereinnahmen, bleibt ein ironischer Kern dieser Figur davon unberührt—weshalb die Figur grundsätzlich Vereinnahmung und Subjektivierung widersteht. Ironische Konfigurationen finden sich in allen fünf Akten der Inversion, die in *Stages of Inversion* untersucht werden. Diese Konfigurationen weisen noch einmal nachdrücklich darauf hin, wie schwierig es ist, die "verkehrte Welt" im Namen von Identitätspolitiken zu instrumentalisieren.

Table of Contents

Prologue: Inverted Worlds and Queer Methods

The history of inversion is long and twisted. The chapters of this dissertation present part of that history as it appears in literary texts in German-speaking Europe in the nineteenth century. The importance of the theater to the concept of inversion will soon become clear, but here at the beginning, before the beginning, the genre conventions of drama come into play as the basis for the structure of my study. *Stages of Inversion:* Die verkehrte Welt *in Nineteenth-Century German Literature* begins with this Prologue that looks both backwards into the tradition of the inverted world as well as forwards to the specific methods and concepts underpinning the literary analyses that constitute the main body of this work . These analyses might be thought of as five "acts" in a tragicomedy that follows our protagonist, the figure of inversion, through different stages over the course of the nineteenth century. The Prologue provides a brief history of this figure leading up to 1800 before turning to questions of methodology and theoretical apparatuses. Still before the five main acts commence, the *Vorspiel* introduces the philosophical discourse on inversion, which will contribute to arguments in the subsequent chapters and was the point of departure for my thinking about inversion. After the final act, but before the curtain falls, the Epilogue recontextualizes inversion at the end of its passage through the nineteenth century as part of a history of reifying sexual identity. The Prologue and Epilogue might also be thought of as the *Kulissen* that flank my study. While academic linearity requires placing these two aspects of inversion's history at specific points along a line of argumentation (I have decided to place them at the beginning and the end), they should really both be thought of as accompanying the analyses all along the way. Indeed, the philosophical and sexual as well as the historical folk traditions associated with the inverted world will appear again and again throughout the five acts in varying degrees and to different ends.

A Brief History of the Inverted World

The tradition of the inverted world most directly relates to practices in folk culture in which social norms are suspended and often reversed. One striking, oft-cited example of an early manifestation of an inverted world is the Roman festival of the Saturnalia, during which practices that were usually forbidden were allowed. The clearest inverted relationship was between masters and slaves; the masters would serve the slaves over the course of the festival. Giorgio Agamben's description of the festival practices as belonging to a "state of exemption" shows the range of relationships involved: "During these feasts (which are found with similar characteristics in various epochs and cultures),

men dress up and behave like animals, masters serve their slaves, males and females exchange roles, and criminal behavior is considered licit or, in any case not punishable" (*State of Exception* 71).[1] The inverted world of the festival marks a different mode of being in which everything from animal/human status to legal/illegal distinctions are suspended. Ancient Greece and Rome frequently serve as sources for studying the history of inversion and its diverse forms. For example, in *Das Phänomen der verkehrten Welt in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, Hedwig Kenner discusses in detail other practices of role-reversal in antiquity involving, among other things, gender inversion.[2] In addition to ritual practices, Kenner also focuses on the figure of Dionysus and his mythologized ability to transform gender. She connects this myth to the festival cross-dressing as well as to the theater practice of men performing all of the roles in a play—including and especially women's roles. These festival practices establish role-reversal as a defining feature of representing inverted worlds.

Another staple of the inverted world is that it presents a deviation from the status quo. Sometimes this deviation is so far-fetched that it is immediately understood as impossible. In this sense, Ernst Robert Curtius discusses "die verkehrte Welt" as part of the *impossibilia* or *adynata* tradition—a listing of impossible things that indicates a remote temporality that will likely never come to pass ("when pigs fly" or "when hell freezes over").[3] Curtius cites Archilochus, the Greek poet from around the seventh century BCE, as one of the first to use *impossibilia*. He goes on to trace the tradition up to Virgil's *Eclogues*, emphasizing the "time is out of joint" connotation in these lists of impossible occurrences. The inverted thing about these impossibilities is the incongruous combinations they entail. Curtius provides the lines from Virgil, "Nun möge der Wolf aus freien Stücken die Schafe fliehen […]" (105)—the wolf would just as soon flee from the sheep—a reversal of the natural wolf and sheep roles. *Impossibilia* invert a standard

---

[1] The discussion of Saturnalia and carnival appears as part of Agamben's presentation of the *iustitium* tradition – a period of mourning and celebration during which the normal rule of law is suspended. To be sure, Mikhail Bakhtin also mentions this type of reversal between ruler and slave in his study of Rabelais' grotesque world (198-99). I will turn to Bakhtin in more detail below. For an insightful and interdisciplinary introduction to the history of inversion see Barbara Babcock's introduction to *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*. She, too, looks back to antiquity and traces the tradition up through Hegel and on to Henri Bergson's theory of laughter. David Kunzle also gives an historical overview of the tradition with a special focus on the figure in visual culture.

[2] Kenner's discussion of this cross-dressing and gender-morphing tradition has been criticized as lacking proper historical documentation to corroborate her claims about the prevalence of these practices in society (see, for example, Lendle). However, this point of critique only stands if one insists on separating texts and myths from the other "real" social spheres. Since my historical literary analysis does not do so, I would not be so quick to dismiss Kenner's methods.

[3] Michael Kuper's study of inversion, which I discuss directly, questions Curtius' emphasis on *adynata* as an example of inversion. Kuper sees Curtius' understanding of the figure as too broad and proposes a narrower version of inversion, which is nevertheless quite far-reaching.

relationship and, therefore, connote that such a time will never come because it is contrary to the nature of these things: Wolf scare sheep—not the other way around. Both the inversions included in festivals and rhetorical inversions would continue to be part of the inverted world repertoire in later periods.[4]

The inverted world in the Middle Ages appears prominently in the carnival tradition. As with the Saturnalia, carnival marks a festive period during which normal relations get turned around. Certainly, the most relevant discussion of this tradition for literary studies is Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*, in which he portrays how the carnivalesque appears in Rabelais' works, drawing from the folklore and cultural practices of Rabelais' time and the medieval traditions that were still very much a part of the French Renaissance. Central to his study is the grotesque, which also relies on inversions, most vividly as bringing the inside out. When it comes to the grotesque body, the divisions between inside and outside do not hold, as the inside becomes part of the outside through secretions or openings. But there are also other inversions at work here. The grotesque body and grotesque language belong to unofficial culture, in which hierarchies of class and power need not be respected (116). Grotesque and carnivalesque elements also find their way into later representations of inverted worlds.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries seem to have been particularly important centuries for representations and practices of inversion.[5] Michael Kuper's *Zur Semiotik der Inversion: Verkehrte Welt und Lachkultur im 16. Jahrhundert* includes an introductory discussion of inversion that suggests a structural definition of inversion that I discuss more fully below. Kuper points out a particularly illustrative cultural tradition from the sixteenth century, namely, visual representations of inverted worlds in broadsheet types (*Bilderbögen*): "Weitere Bildtypen der Inversion sind vor allem in den populären Bilderbögen des 16. bis 19. Jahrhunderts in Form der Verkehrung von alters- und geschlechtsspezifischen Rollenverhältnissen anzutreffen, die die Geschlechtsrollenumkehrung durch einen Kleider-, Rollen- oder Positionstausch

---

[4] I will address the treatment of inversion in the tradition of rhetoric within the context of philosophical inversions directly. For now, just a cursory look at its presentation as a poetic and rhetorical expression permits mention of certain handbooks of rhetoric and motifs. *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, Heinrich Lausberg's standard reference work, for example, mentions *inversio* in passing in relationship to allegory (para. 896) and anastrophe (para. 462). *Metzler Literatur Lexikon* includes an entry on "Inversion," but it is very brief and limited to the rhetorical device of inverted syntax with a cross-reference to "Hysteron," an inversion of temporal or logical relationships (359).

[5] At least they have been the focus of numerous historical and folkloric studies on the subject. See, for example, Ian Donaldson's *The World Upside Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding*, and Werner Röcke's article "Das verkehrte Fest: Soziale Normen und Karneval in der Literatur des Spätmittelalters."

signalisieren" (15).[6] These scenes provide a clear picture of what might have been included in the common image-repertoire of the inverted world—and though this dissertation does not attempt a comprehensive comparative historical analysis of the visual archive on inversion, a couple examples from this period render inversion even more imaginable:

Figure 1: ".COSI . VA . IL . MONDO . ALLA . RIVERSA." ca. 1560 (Source: http://www.hetoudekinderboek.nl/OWCentsprenten/CosiVa/Cosi%20Va.htm)

This engraving from the sixteenth century depicts many relationships that continue to be recycled well into the nineteenth century in broadsheet prints: a woman in arms while the man has his hands full with sewing and mending, a man with a cane or crutches carrying an able-bodied person, an ox butchering a butcher, and a child punishing his father. 300 years later, in the Oehmigke & Riemschneider print from around 1860 (fig. 2), we see a boy knitting, a child swaddling its mother, and a ram butchering the butcher. The nineteenth-century print also includes reversals that do not involve swapping social positions with another figure but are more generally absurd, like the rider on horseback facing the wrong direction—and yet even this simple turnaround helps emphasize the overall sense of the images: In the inverted world things are not as they should be.

---

[6]   This tradition is presented in further detail by David Kunzle in his essay "World Upside Down: The Iconography of a European Broadsheet Type."

Figure 2: "Die verkehrte Welt," Oehmigke & Riemschneider, ca. 1860. (Source: http://www.hetoudekinderboek.nl/OWCentsprenten/OW-jpg/Oehm%20zn%20Verkehrte%20Welt.jpg)

These early forms of moral info-tainment seem to uphold the age-old dictum from Horace's *Ars poetica* concerning the purpose of the arts: "prodesse et delectare." The comical and entertaining images instruct the viewer about how the world is not. As with the *adynata* from antiquity, these relationships indicate impossible conditions that would never normally occur. They represent, to return to Agamben's terminology, states of exception.[7] In this suspension of the status quo, new combinations become imaginable, even as certain pairings are reused to the point of becoming clichés.

These examples from folk and visual culture carry into the modern period, while inverted worlds also were becoming a more common part of literary traditions. As we get closer to the nineteenth century in German-speaking Europe, some German literary representations of inverted worlds leading up to the period deserve mention (however

---

[7]   Agamben takes up the idea of the state of exception from various perspectives. He engages extensively with Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology* and his concept of the *Ausnahmezustand*. He also provides historical, linguistic, and juridical explanations as to how states of exception have been implemented in different times and places. The book is also a critique of the state of exception that erupted following the events of September 11, 2001.

briefly) as evidence for the growing literary interest in the figure: Grimmelshausen's "Die verkehrte Welt" (1672) in his *Simplicissimus* series, Christian Weise's play *Von der verkehrten Welt* (1683), and Johann Ulrich von König's *Die verkehrte Welt* (1725). These texts attest to just how well-known the tropes of the inverted world were. Grimmelshausen begins his tale of Simplicissimus' visit to the underworld by addressing the reader, explaining that he should not expect any of those typical inverted world images:

> ERstlich bitte ich / verzeihet mir / Hochgeehrter Großgünstiger und curioser lieber Leser etc. Wann ihr mich betrogen findet / dafern ihr villeicht vorstehents Kupferblat sambt dem Titul nur angesehen / und euch darauff eingebildet / ihr werdet sonst nichts anders als kurtzweilige: Doch denckwürdige Historien / Wunderfäll und seltzame Geschichten / die sich etwan da und dort in unserer Jrrdischen so genanten Verkehrten Welt zugetragen / zulesen haben; Als nemlich / wie wunderbarlicher Weiß hier das Wilt den Jäger jagt und erlegt; Wie unversehens dort der Ochs den Metzger metzget und umbgebracht / und so fortan; Warumb solte aber ich dergleichen Sachen beschreiben / die wir täglich vor Augen sehen? (2)

Grimmelshausen prepares the reader for a different sort of inverted world, not the one that we see every day, for the world is already full of inverted relationships. In promising another kind of inverted world, Grimmelshausen draws on the tradition of *impossibilia* and the limits of representation:

> Sehet Hochgeehrter lieber Leser / von einer solchen verkehrten Welt werdet ihr hierinnen etwas zulesen finden; Wann ihr aber villeicht vermeinen möchtet; ob hätte ich die höllische Qual viel zu grausam entworffen / und der Teuffel sey nicht so schwartz als man ihn mahle; So wisset zweitens / daß ich davor halte / gleich wie es unmüglich ist / die himlische Freud der Seeligen auszusprechen / daß es auch eben so ohnmüglich sey / die Pein der Verdambten nach ihrer grösse zubeschreiben. (2)

The implicit reader is cast as both aware of what belongs in an inverted world and critical of authors who do not represent common figures according to convention or who fail at representing them adequately. Already with Grimmelshausen, the inverted world appears to offer an occasion for meta-reflection about the relationship between author and reader, representation and language, as well as norms and deviations.

In addition to featuring variations on inverted worlds, these texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also share an interest in the theater as a site of inversion and a growing tendency to bring together theatrical elements within inverted world texts. Although Simplicissimus' stroll through hell is told in prose, his dialogues with the damned are reminiscent of dramatic dialogues. Meanwhile, Weise's and König's inverted worlds are both plays, and Weise's text in particular already brings together many characteristics of the inverted world that remained in circulation in the next centuries with commedia dell'arte characters vying for power and Apollo as their rival. These early examples of literary inverted worlds in German-speaking literature have also

been rather neglected in the history of the tradition. While they have a lot to tell us about inversion, the nineteenth century witnessed an extraordinary expansion of inversion, not only in literary texts but also in the fields of philosophy and science.

Inversion as an Object of Study

Studies on inversion and inverted worlds are not uncommon. Quite a few focus on periods prior to the nineteenth century, while others look to the early twentieth century for figures of inversion in the discourse of sexual pathology and the history of the homosexual emancipation movement, but those studies tend to overlook the tradition of inversion outside its sexological connotations.[8] The problem with inversion seems to be that it is so pervasive that any study of the phenomenon—mine included—must set up clear parameters in order to keep from becoming an encyclopedic endeavor. And yet, the call for such a far-reaching study has been around since at least the 1970s. Manfred Frank and Gerhard Kurz write in their study of inversion in the writings of Novalis, Hölderlin, Kleist, and Kafka, "Denkbar wäre eine problemgeschichtliche Darstellung des neuzeitlichen Denkens als Analyse seiner Verwendung der Metapher der Umkehrung" (75). About a decade later, Werner Hamacher expresses a similar sentiment in "The Second of Inversion: Movements of a Figure through Celan's Poetry," when he states, "One could demonstrate the efficacy and determining power of the figure of inversion […] over a wide range of philosophical and literary texts from romanticism and classicism to Feuerbachian and Marxian materialism as well as so-called poetical realism and into neo-romanticism" (341). Rather than attempt this sort of grand project, the dissertation aims to fill a gap in the literary history of inversion as it was represented during the nineteenth century, a gap that a recent conference in 2015 on the *ordo inversus* makes all the more apparent. With a focus on German classicism and a range of topics, the annual conference of the Deutsche Klassikstiftung maintained Novalis' writings on Fichte as the chronological upper limit of its examination of inverted orders in the nineteenth century, nor did the overlap between inverted orders and perversion seem to trouble scholars in this context. Of course, an entire conference devoted to the concept of *ordo inversus* prior

---

8   See, for example, Deborah Cohler's book *Citizen, Invert, Queer: Lesbianism and War in Early Twentieth-Century Britain*. Cohler's book is in many ways a model for how one might "do" the history of inversion, but she keeps her scope very narrow: sexual inversion in Britain during the first decades of the twentieth century. This narrowness is not, however, short-sighted but rather strategic and effective. Indeed, Cohler's weaving of literary, political, and sexological discourses utilizes an analytical framework that I, too, draw upon.

to the nineteenth century unwittingly helps raise pointed questions as to how figures of inversion persisted after Goethe.[9]

Though the nineteenth century has not been the focus of studies of inversion, there have been numerous studies of the figure from other periods.[10] The most important of those studies for my purposes is Michael Kuper's *Zur Semiotik der Inversion*. His book provides some of the best conceptual groundwork for thinking about the structure of inversion. I would like to borrow his basic definition of inversion as he uses it to look at the mechanics of inversion in the sixteenth century and then ask about ways in which this definition (along with other metaphysical implications, as Kuper shows) might be revised for a study of the nineteenth century. His examination of the semantics of inversion draws extensively from literary and cultural theory (Russian semioticians like Jurij Lotman are of particular importance) and incorporates findings from fields such as anthropology and folklore. This interdisciplinary scope is both a strength and a weakness of the book. The anthropological purview means that Kuper makes some very insightful cross-cultural observations; the drawback is that these observations tend towards a universalizing gesture that foreshortens ways of thinking about inversion as a mechanism itself opposed to positing universal truths about human nature. Still, Kuper's general theory of inversion is instructive as a point of departure.

He situates his study of inversion in the field of cultural semiotics with an emphasis on inversion as an "operational code" (*Operationscode*). The goal of the book is nothing less than this: "Die konstitutiven Merkmale des kulturellen Inversionscodes sollen herausgearbeitet und seine zeichenhafte Manifestation in Texten unterschiedlicher Art soll untersucht werden" (7). Kuper's project and mine overlap in our shared concern for how inversion codes appear as constitutive elements in the sign systems at play in a selection of literary texts. Despite Kuper's universalizing anthropological claims, his framing of inversion as it relates to sign systems delineates productive ways of thinking about inversion as a fundamental operational code. Kuper sets up this framework with some mighty assumptions about the beginning of humanity and "second reality": "Am

---

[9]   Of the various talks held at the conference, Violetta L. Waibel's appears to be the one that comes closest to addressing some of the inversions with which I, too, engage. Her paper explores the literary and philosophical connections between Novalis and Fichte in the former's "Fichte-Studien." See conference website for the *Tagungsbericht* (http://www.klassik-stiftung.de/forschung/zentrum-fuer-klassikforschung/jahrestagungen/).

[10] There are single-author studies that focus on inversion in the works of nineteenth-century authors, for example, Jörg Bong's study on Tieck, *Texttaumel: Poetologische Inversionen von "Spätaufklärung" und "Frühromantik" bei Ludwig Tieck*. But even here, Bong limits the contextualization of inversion to the historical discourse on vertigo (*Schwindelgefühle*) as presented mainly by Karl Philipp Moritz in his *Magazin für Erfahrungsseelenkunde*. Bong does impressive work connecting this discourse to the philosophical texts of German idealism and romanticism, but the most striking limitation of the study is that it culminates in an analysis of a single text, *Der blonde Eckbert*.

Beginn der Entwicklung der menschlichen Kultur steht die Erfindung der zweiten Wirklichkeit" (20). This second reality is the world of signs—a doubling of reality that humans created in order to satisfy their especially complex psychical needs. The evolutionary theories that Kuper supports via this second reality of signs derive in large part from the writings of Ivan Bystřina, the Czech communications theoretician. They are problematic in many respects. To name just one, Bystřina posits a "natural language" that comes about through biological factors. A detailed rebuttal of this claim would be too tangential here and might involve recapitulating the entirety of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. Instead, I would like to emphasize that Kuper's theory further posits a set of tertiary codes that can themselves effect change within the primary code of natural language. And these tertiary codes are at work in the language used to produce creative, artistic works—plays, novels, etc. The structure of these tertiary codes depends on and allows for inversion, as Kuper shows. Indeed, the operation of inversion belongs to the problem-solving repertoire of tertiary code systems. These systems provide the experimental playgrounds for finding solutions to problems in the other two levels of reality:

> Zur Gruppe der Operationscodes gehört auch der kulturelle Inversionscode, der die Handlungsanweisungen zur Durchführung von Verkehrungsaktionen vorgibt. Der Inversioncode ist einer der radikalsten Typen unter den Operationscodes, regelt er doch den völligen Austausch der Pole binärer Oppositionen. Die Inversionsoperation selbst funktioniert als eine der radikalsten Lösungen von allen möglichen Operationen an den Strukturen von Codes und Texten. (24)

Kuper obviously sees inversion as providing solutions to human problems, even as oppositional binaries give structure to tertiary (textual, aesthetic/artistic) codes. But as he goes on to connect the tertiary codes to the carnivalesque as understood by Bakhtin, it becomes clearer that operations of inversion do not solve problems in an instrumental way. Rather inversion makes problems apparent in the first place and exposes social structures, making it possible to think about whether and how they might be reconfigured.

Kuper's approach to inversion as a specific cultural code, along with his initial definition of inversion, establishes a precise focus for an examination of the phenomenon. Even as the definition gets expanded later, it is helpful as a preliminary restriction for a basic understanding of inversion. For Kuper, inversion depends on binary oppositions. He clarifies this point in his critique of Curtius' treatment of inversion, which, as we have seen, is based on a connection to *adynata*: "Adynata stehen also den Phantasiewelten, Lügendichtungen, Utopien, Endzeitvorstellungen und Wunschmärchen sehr viel näher als der verkehrten Welt, die sich in den spätmittelalterlichen bzw. frühneuzeitlichen Flugschriften auf die Inversion binärer Oppositionen bezieht" (14). A "true" inversion,

Kuper writes, requires two poles that stand in opposition to one another. While my line of analysis aims precisely at questioning the potential for inversion to destabilize such oppositions and perhaps undo them, Kuper's point is well taken here. A winged lion, a donkey with a lyre, or crabs nesting in trees are all strange, impossible things, but do not immediately denote an inversion properly speaking. While these other absurd possibilities need not be ignored, my study is more concerned with the inversions of binary oppositions and their undoing. In this respect, Kuper's definition and framing of inversion sets the course for my inquiry into the history of inversion, especially as it pertains to the interplay between the different levels of operational codes. The analyses of literary texts that follow also build upon a presumed potential in tertiary codes, the very stuff that literature is made of, for interfering with and altering other levels of reality, such that the inverted world makes problems perceptible that otherwise remain unreflected and unproblematic on the primary and secondary levels of reality—and ultimately calls into question the positing of such levels in the first place.

Inversion – *Verkehrt* – Queer

The inverted world has had many names and faces over the millennia. Both its Latinate and Germanic names are significant to a study of nineteenth-century German literature, as both appear in German-speaking contexts leading up to and during this time. The etymology of "to invert" or the German *invertieren* derives from the Latin *in-vertĕre* and is related to the word *verse*, which originally refers to the turn of the plough in a field as it starts a new row.[11] The Latin and the Germanic roots indicate a similar movement. As *Grimms Wörterbuch* notes in its multiple-page definition of *verkehren*, this turning movement is the word's oldest meaning: "die älteste und verbreitetste bedeutung des wortes ist 'umkehren, anders kehren'" (vol. 25, col. 628). An inversion or *Verkehrung* is a sort of turning around or turning back with a seemingly endless number of metaphorical applications, especially in German. "Verkehrung," "verkehrt," "verkehren," and "Verkehr" all relate to the shared root of *kehren* ("to turn"). This word cluster has other connotations that the Latinate *Inversion* does not share. In the German, inversion and perversion overlap in the adjectival "verkehrt," and the relationship between "Verkehr" and "Verkehrung" allows for curious semantic slippages due to the versatility of the word "Verkehr," which can mean anything from traffic and circulation to intercourse, conversation, and trade/commerce. The expression "die verkehrte Welt" retains more of a negative connotation than the English "inverted world" and would perhaps be better

---

[11]   Verse: "Latin *versus* a line or row, spec. a line of writing (so named from turning to begin another line), verse, < *vertĕre* to turn" (OED online).

translated as the perverted (instead of inverted) world.[12] Indeed, the Latin *mundus perversus*, which can be found on certain broadsheets from the seventeenth century, preserves this semantic overlap with perversion.

Figure 3: *Mundus perversus*. Engraving from the seventeenth century. (Source: http://www.hetoudekinderboek.nl/OWCentsprenten/CosiVa/Cosi%20Va.htm)

But there is little reason to limit the range of possible meanings of inversion; instead if we keep these various denotations and connotations in play for now, we might better see how inversion extends into manifold cultural realms. Yet, at the same time, there are pragmatic reasons for preserving the form that Kuper lends to inversion as an operational code that deals with binary oppositions. As a world turned around, the inverted world marks a deviation from the path, be it the straight path of the plough in the field or the moral path of righteousness. The potential perversion that accompanies every inversion means that the inverted world is home to the abnormal, the monstrous, and the strange.

"Die verkehrte Welt" might also be understood as a queer world. Indeed, this English adjective that has gained so much attention in late twentieth and early twenty-first-century theory and politics is another potential translation of "verkehrt," both having connotations

---

[12] *Die sprichwörtlichen Redensarten im deutschen Volksmund* lexicon in its entry on "Welt" cites Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 1599 painting of literalized sayings, which includes an image of an inverted world, in its dating of the expression (Schirmer 509).

of deviance, twisting away from the normal.[13] At the risk of frontloading an argument that is meant to unfold over the course of this study, inversion and queer share a history of ambiguity that is not a symptom of faulty precision but is rather constitutive of the two words. So when Annamarie Jagose proposes the following description of how to understand queer, she is also providing guidelines for studies such as mine that would end up foreclosing certain paths of analytical thinking should they constrain multivalent terms to narrow definitions:

> Once the term "queer" was, at best, slang for homosexual, at worst, a term of homophobic abuse. In recent years 'queer' has come to be used differently, sometimes as an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications and at other times to describe a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies. What is clear, even from this brief and partial account of its contemporary deployment, is that *queer is very much a category in the process of formation*. It is not simply that queer has yet to solidify and take on a more consistent profile, but rather that *its definitional indeterminacy, its elasticity, is one of its constituent characteristics*. (1, emphasis added)

This characterization of queer is as pertinent today as it was in the 1990s when Jagose's book was published, as the term and field of study continues to expand to encompass new and changing social issues. As intolerable as such indeterminacy can be, especially within the context of academic research, the figure of the inverted world demands it in order to do justice to the figure's ability to liquefy supposedly fixed terms. At the same time, semantic breadth and versatility should not be confused with ubiquity and imprecision. For all of their overlaps, "queer" and "verkehrt" remain distinct words and for the purposes of this Prologue, that distinction comes to bear on a heuristic difference between methodology and content. In other words, the dissertation pursues a queer methodology in its study of *die verkehrte Welt* in the nineteenth century.

The same critical openness that characterizes the word queer in the context of theory and politics forms the basis of my study, which borrows heavily from what Judith Halberstam describes as a queer methodology in *Female Masculinity*. A queer methodology resists the disciplinary constraints of other methodologies thereby allowing for methods that "collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behavior" (13). Moreover, it does not treat textual analysis as fundamentally isolated from other modes of analysis that have as objects of study things supposedly more real than texts. Halberstam explains this

---

[13] Calvin Thomas provides an etymological overview that establishes this connection between queer, torque, and twisting: "The word 'queer', which has 'torque' and 'twist' in its etymological background, is itself torqued and twisted, promoted from slur to affirmation, productively reworked into a transitive, transformative verb, and the infinitive phrase 'to queer' emerges to take on a newly performative 'labor of ambiguating categories of identity'" (17). The final expression in quotes within the quote is from Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's 1995 article "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?"

second point by contrasting her textually based analysis to the position that some sociologists have taken against queer theorists and their intimate relationship to texts. As a solution, Halberstam proposes a more balanced approach that acknowledges the undeniable role that texts play in almost any study of human behavior and at the same time acknowledges the significance of historical contexts and lived experiences. My research takes up these two points with a body of evidence that consists predominantly of textual sources, each with their own historical backdrops, which I then reframe through more recent theoretical concepts.

The literary texts by canonical authors that I foreground serve as the raw material for a sequence of readings informed by contemporaneous and competing discourses on identity from the nineteenth century and beyond. These contextualizations necessitate transgressing the borders of proper disciplinary domains. But this dissertation is less a contribution to the ever-popular field of interdisciplinary scholarship, than it is more part of a project that Halberstam elsewhere calls "anti-disciplinarity" as "knowledge practices that refuse both the form and the content of traditional canons," and thus, "may lead to unbounded forms of speculation, modes of thinking that ally not with rigor and order but with inspiration and unpredictability" (*Queer Art of Failure* 10). Such an approach is perhaps all the more necessary when confronting the demands of multiple disciplines and discourses, each vying for their own epistemological supremacy. For my study, this multiplicity of disciplines includes not only the traditional canon of nineteenth-century German literature, but also the canon of literary theory as an academic field, both in the North American context of literary studies and the German context of *Literaturwissenschaft*. In the face of these competing forces, anti-disciplinarity supports critical interventions that question the very nature of disciplinary knowledge. The risk of embracing anti-disciplinarity as a mode of critique is that the ensuing arguments will likely be dismissed as imprecise, poorly structured, or lacking command of a body of knowledge. However, Halberstam is not proposing a surrealist, poetically inflected scholarship or mode of writing here—indeed, *The Queer Art of Failure* follows clear lines of argumentation, even as it endeavors to be less serious and less rigorous. While my study indulges in inspired comparisons and unpredictable pairings, it nevertheless strives to maintain an academic style that leads readers through bizarre worlds of inversion.

This study seeks out possibilities of generating new questions like the ones that Halberstam refers to when she writes, "In some sense we have to untrain ourselves so that we can read the struggles and debates back into questions that seem settled and resolved" (11). To fill in the blanks of this sentence with the content of the inverted world means returning to the question of identity and the subject in the nineteenth century that certainly

seems settled and resolved in some scholars' eyes and to ask how this strange figure of inversion complicates our understanding of subjectivity.

In terms of methodological practice, this study consists of performances of queer reading as explained by Andreas Kraß, who characterizes queer reading as a tool for questioning the concept of the canon. He builds upon the critical strategies developed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the Closet*, in which she articulates the stakes of going through the canon's closet. Kraß acknowledges the importance of forming an anti-canon that is populated by authors who do not meet the heteronormative standards of the traditional canon, but he also emphasizes the role of the reader/scholar in queering the traditional canon: "Andererseits stellt man den traditionellen Kanon massiv in Frage, indem man ihn gegen den Strich liest. *Queer Reading*, so lautet der Terminus technicus, ist eine Lektüreweise, die nicht nach dem Begehren des Autors, sondern des Textes fragt" (238). Kraß is suggesting something very radical here, namely that the text itself has its own agency of desire, and this textual desire yearns for a reader to understand it. This reversal of agency serves as the basis for queer reading as reading against the grain and upsets communication models that figure the text as medium between author and reader. Queer reading allows a text to speak freely, unfettered by authorial intent, a freedom which is particularly necessary in my analyses because of the canonical status of the authors under investigation. The selection of authors and works does not aim at fulfilling quotas for certain identity categories, but rather presents a group of white, male authors whose works unquestionably belong to the canon of nineteenth-century German literature. With this canonical selection in place, the study then pursues readings that question a specific text's critical potential in a literary history of inverted worlds in order to ask how inversion structures the "Begehren des Textes."

Coinciding with the practice of queer reading and, moreover, providing the basic structure for the individual chapters is what Richard Gray in *Stations of the Divided Subject* calls an "intensive historiographical method" (1). This method does not endeavor to create an exhaustive literary history; instead, it uses close reading as a strategy to examine historical moments. The analysis of the inverted world texts aims to strike a similar balance as the one that Gray establishes between "detailed textual analysis" and "generalizing sociohistorical and cultural commentary." The intensive historiographical method relies on the interpretation of literary texts as a source for historical claims. However, it does not lend itself to the writing of linear histories.

Indeed, the literary history that I present should not be seen as a successive development that follows some notion of progress. If anything, the history of the inverted world is more cyclical and twisted, full of perversions and deviations from the path. In looking back to the nineteenth century, this study necessarily has to come to terms with

some of the common problems involved in writing about the past. My approach to questions of historical contextualization and argumentation takes its lead from Valerie Rohy's 2006 article "Ahistorical." Rohy makes a case for historical argumentation that does not flinch at being called "anachronistic." Her article frames this issue with an analysis of Poe's "Ligeia," a story that, she claims, demands a queer historical gaze. Rohy answers that demand with a theoretical reflection on queer temporality as a mode of historical analysis itself:

> A backward, 'ahistorical' approach offers an occasion to revisit the time lines of queer literary history: the straight-arrow rhetoric against anachronism, the turn back toward retrospection and queer temporality, the Victorian association of sexual deviance with temporal deviance, and contemporary queer accounts of identification, anachronism, and alterity. (65)

Though fascinating, the details of Rohy's reading of Poe are not necessary here to grasp the methodological implications of her article—though I should point out that Rohy also finds evidence for her queer notions of time and history in nineteenth-century literature. Her description of queer reading clarifies how certain historical approaches relate to literary theory. Such a method should be unapologetic: "Queer reading requires attention to historical specificity, but it does not demand a defense of an authentic past against the violation of backwardness" (66). In this respect, my study, too, depends on historical specificity, yet it does not make claims to recreate a complete and authentic picture of the past from which the texts under examination emerged.

In order to better understand the somewhat defensive position that Rohy takes, it helps to understand what Rohy is arguing against. The problem with ahistorical or anachronistic scholarship, so the logic goes, is that it sets contemporary concepts into a historical past that did not know such concepts. This objection to "presentism" is common when it comes to terminology referring to sexual identities. For example, an objection to anachronistic terminology might indicate that it makes little sense to study homosexuality in Ancient Greece, since the term "homosexuality" was a product of the nineteenth century. Referring to similar objections about the study of homosexuality, David Halperin defends the use of current analytical categories for a study of the past:

> A genealogical analysis of homosexuality, in other words, begins with our contemporary notion of homosexuality, incoherent though it may be, not only because such a notion frames our inquiry into same-sex sexual expression in the past but also because it contains within itself genetic traces, as it were, of its own historical evolution. (107)

While the metaphor of genetics might raise some objections, Halperin's claim does help articulate the aims of my project: *Stages of Inversion* looks back into the family history of queerness when its name was (also) "inverted sexual desire" (*verkehrte*

Geschlechtsempfindung)[14] and then "looks awry," as Rohy puts it. My study is less concerned with establishing a linear genealogy that goes from Hegel's *verkehrte Welt* to Proust's *l'inverti*, instead I am suggesting an alternative history of inversion that is itself queer and perverted insofar as it resists the trajectory of homosexual identity into the twentieth century (and twenty-first century). It is thus not so much a history of the invert as it is an ahistory of inversion.[15]

Even though figures of inversion are my primary objects of study, the question guiding the analyses of inverted worlds is how do they allow for, complicate, shift, and problematize different ways of thinking about identity? No doubt, trying to get a grasp on the term "identity" itself might be the basis for a multivolume work; therefore, my use of "identity" will necessarily fall short of the extensive and detailed treatment that term has received elsewhere.[16] Still, a discussion of identity in the nineteenth century would indeed benefit from at least a preliminary definition. While on the one hand this study poses questions as to why and how inversion was caught up in the formation of identities in the nineteenth century in German-speaking Europe, and further asks about the meaning of identity in the first place, "identity" is also simply an operative term, shorthand for the answer to the question "Who am I?" So in a work of fiction, whenever a character in a text assumes the role of another character, we might think of that as a case of switching identities. The character would answer the question "Who am I?" differently now that she has assumed another name with other mannerisms, desires, and ways of speaking. More generally, we might think of identity as the collective set of possible answers to the question "Who am I?" Do we give our name? Our place of birth? Family relations? Occupation? Do we have to say our sex/gender or is it evident? How do we identify ourselves and how are we identified? Much like "inversion" and "queer," the significance,

---

[14] This term to describe what would later become known as "homosexuality" was in circulation among sexologists up through the beginning of the twentieth century. Here is an instance of its use from Wilhelm Stekel's *Onanie und Homosexualität* from 1921 that shows both terms in coexistence: "Man wird jetzt verstehen warum ich nie den Ausdruck 'konträre oder verkehrte Sexualempfindung' gebrauche, warum ich nie von Inversion und Perversion rede, wenn ich die Homosexualität behandle. Zweck dieses Buches ist, auf das Vorhandensein homosexueller Triebkräfte in *jedem* Menschen hinzuweisen und das Normale an dieser Erscheinung klarzustellen. *Denn normal ist alles, was natürlich ist. Und von Natur aus sind wir nie monosexuell, sondern bisexuell*" (176). Around the turn of the century Norbert Grabowsky still speaks primarily of "verkehrte Geschlechtsempfindung" in his *Die verkehrte Geschlechtsempfindung oder die mannmännliche und weibweibliche Liebe* from 1894. I return to this sexual aspect of inversion's history in the conclusion of the dissertation.

[15] Of course, the elephant in the room here in this cursory discussion of historical approaches to the history of sexual identities is Michel Foucault, in particular his *History of Sexuality: Volume 1*. His work will certainly inform my study in specific and general ways that are perhaps best left to the individual chapters.

[16] I might name any number of works here, but to just give a sense of the potential breadth this concept can have, see the anthology of essays entitled *Identity* (2010) that includes contributions from the fields of immunology, law, and musicology. See Walker and Leedham-Green.

context, and implications of "identity" will also depend on the text in question and the specific argument it enables.[17]

This study focuses on questions of identity and subjectivity as they relate to inversion, and thus demands a discussion of the premises behind these two terms as analytical categories. Judith Butler's *Subjects of Desire* provides one possible model for a historical study of subjectivity in the Western tradition. Her reading of Hegel depends on and establishes an understanding of the subject as a metaphysical necessity in human life—that is to say, subject status (be it political, social, sexual, medical or otherwise) is the prerequisite for joining the ranks of the other individuals that constitute society. She emphasizes the philosophical discourse on subjectivity in particular:

> The unified subject with its unified philosophical life has served as a necessary psychological premise and normative ideal in moral philosophies since Plato and Aristotle. Without a discrete subject with internally consistent desires, the moral life remains indefinite; if the subject is ambiguous, difficult to locate and properly name, then to whom shall we ascribe this life? (4)

The philosophical discourse is intimately related to the psychological one, as they both circumscribe an individual interiority that underlies metaphysical thought. With reference to a long line of Western male thinkers—Aristotle, Spinoza, Leibniz, and, of course, Hegel—Butler claims that what is at stake in the establishment of the unified subject is not merely necessary for matters of morality (e.g., an individual agent who is responsible, or not, for certain actions), but in this tradition there is an even more fundamental concern: "the grander effort *to secure a preestablished metaphysical place for the human subject*" (5). The importance of this "metaphysical place" becomes clear in her later books that focus more on how mechanisms of exclusion conspire to deprive certain individuals from the status of human subject in the first place, in particular individuals whose desires do not align with the social norms of the dominant culture. This issue comes to a point in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* with the question as to which lives qualify as "grievable." Butler draws a striking connection between victims of war who go unmourned in the United States' "war on terror" and individuals whose sexuality or gender render them unworthy of grief: "After all, if someone is lost, and that person is not someone, then what and where is the loss, and how does mourning take place?" (32).

---

[17] This paragraph is an attempt to preempt concerns about mixing academic scholarship and explicitly politically and socially critical argumentations. Rather than limiting the scope of my study by foregrounding "identity," I challenge the presumption that identity is ever separate from other aspects of culture. Whether identity is understood in terms of establishing a sentient, psychological subject, as in the works of Freud, whose theories on the formation of identity might also be understood as a theory of the "subject" or whether it is understood as a political category evoked by minority groups to secure representation, identity remains undeniably a central concept for psychology, politics, and literature. For more on the connection between identity politics and representation, see my essay "Unthinking Divisions: Gender between the Social and the Literary?"

In this respect, subjectivity becomes a matter of life and death—and not in a metaphorical sense—as being granted subject status is a vital step in making an individual's life matter.

Nineteenth-century inverted worlds raise issues about how mechanisms and figures of inversion are implicated in the process of subjection. Part of this concern relates to larger questions that Butler poses about the metaphysical place of the human subject in the Western tradition. More specifically, inversion and subjectivity become problematic when thinking through the basic relations of subject and object. Butler demonstrates how the phenomenological inversions that Hegel stages involve switching subject and object—or subject and predicate—leaving us with a Hegelian syntax typical of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*: "The rhetorical inversion of Hegelian sentences as well as the narrative structure of the text as a whole convey the elusive nature of both the grammatical and human subject" (18). This connection between grammar and subjectivity has unique implications when literature (as a language-based medium) is taken as the site for negotiating subject positions and the limits of identity, as this dissertation does.

Another similarity between my study on inversion and identity and Butler's on desire and subjectivity draws from a line of questioning that asks into possibilities of thinking about the subject that do not depend on the principle of identity. *Subjects of Desire* shows how the French philosophers and theorists of the twentieth century took up the issue of desire as the unaccountable remainder that escapes the totality of the Hegelian dialectic. The work focuses specifically on Deleuze and Foucault's rejection of Hegel's principle of identity, which depends on subjection as a mode of enslavement (15). The French reception of Hegel provides several ways to think about the subject that avoid and dismantle this principle of identity. *Subjects of Desire* shows that, though the two terms identity and subjectivity are frequently inseparable, there is an important gap between them. My study of nineteenth-century inverted worlds explores this gap and the ways in which subjectivity (as a political and social space for individuals) can become disarticulated from identity. Butler further distinguishes the subject from the individual in *The Psychic Life of Power*:

> 'The subject' is sometimes bandied about as if it were interchangeable with 'the person' or 'the individual.' The genealogy of the subject as a critical category, however, suggests that the subject, rather than be identified strictly with the individual, ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a placeholder, a structure in formation. Individuals come to occupy the site of the subject […] and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in language. (11)

Not only does this specification help to understand how the subject allows for something like individual identity to emerge, it again indicates the inevitable role of language in the process of subjection. In order to gain subject status and, therewith, access to something

like an individual identity, there must be a pre-established linguistic space for the subject. Identity might then be understood as a special type of subject, a sub-category between subject and individual.[18]

More current work in the ever-changing and contested field of queer studies has taken a critical look at the history of shaping identities, asking about the potential risks of too eagerly claiming a shared "queer" identity. Concepts like "disidentification" and the "anti-social thesis" are often scrutinized for the ways in which they break with certain traditions in the politically (and emotionally) charged field of identity-based scholarship. The concept of disidentification has appeared in recent debates concerning the intersections of identity categories (race, gender, class). The point of reference is most often the work of José Esteban Muñoz. In basic terms, his idea is that the mechanisms of identification for a specific (prescribed) identity are interconnected with mechanisms of exclusion and oppression. The question that disidentification poses is whether or how we might problematize and disempower these mechanisms through rejecting identification as the primary means of organizing social and political (and for that matter cultural) action. The radical proposition here is that disidentification allows for a power play within identitarian systems, based on the imbalance of power created when an individual is unintelligible. The dangerous side of intelligibility is not unknown to Muñoz; however, the more pressing issue seems to be whether or not the cost of becoming readable and intelligible is worth it.[19] The problem is that when someone becomes readable, they also become traceable and tractable—they become subject to surveillance. Muñoz's treatment of this tension strikes a sophisticated balance between the threat of intelligibility and the power of identification: "Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology" (11). In certain respects, *Stages of Inversion* looks to the nineteenth century for instances of disidentification during a period when new identities were being formed, identities whose staying power has proven formidable, for better or for worse. The dissertation

---

[18]   Althusser's presentation of the interpellation of subjects and ideological state apparatuses deserves mention here as well. Butler highlights the importance of language in interpellating (gendered) subjects in Althusser's theory (*Psychic Life* 106-31).

[19]   David Halperin also addresses this tension. He notes in particular the demand for homosexuality to be visible and/or legible: "Claiming a normatively masculine gender identity is always a dicey act for a gay man to carry off in a society that routinely continues to associate male homosexuality with effeminacy. And since one of the demands that our society makes on homosexuality is that it be--if not visible--at least legible, that it always reveal itself to careful, expert scrutiny, any attempt to assert the entirely unmarked character of male homosexuality, to insist that it does not produce any decipherable signs of its difference is bound to be met with skepticism and resistance." (*How to Be Gay* 59)

looks for literary moments of disidentification that exploit the rules of identification and identity to such an extent that those rules become denaturalized and de-essentialized.

Stages of Inversion approaches its object of study in queer ways, which becomes a complex task given the fact that the object is itself queer in multiple senses of the word. Part of that complexity also derives from the terminological openness that characterizes both the inverted worlds of the nineteenth century as well as the analytical categories I use to examine how identities are shaped, disheveled, and reconstituted through inversion. The study is historical in its purview even as it resists certain tropes of historical thinking about the instantiation of identities. This is an especially risky balancing act, given that the study follows a chronological succession of texts, while at the same time calling into question linear histories of identity formation and pathologization. But precisely by reenacting a historical progression, it becomes all the more clear why teleologies of certain identities are untenable. So instead of attempting another history of sexual identity, I present an analysis of how inversion is always already intimately involved in a literary practice of playing with identity. This play is above all theatrical, another term which will take on multiple meanings and valences throughout the study.[20]

Itinerary through the Inverted Worlds

As we approach the end of the Prologue and come closer to the textual inverted worlds of the nineteenth century, I would be remiss if I did not say a few words about the selection criteria behind the main objects of study and, subsequently, define more specifically some of the parameters of this study. Probably the most perplexing thing to some readers will be that, in this study of inversion in literary texts, I am not analyzing works that feature same-sex desire as a prominent plot element or as a defining trait of fictional characters. The study turns instead to examples in which inversion plays a fundamental role in the language, structure, and configurations of a text. Yet, these texts

---

[20] I will return to different theoretical discussions of performativity and theatricality throughout the chapters of this dissertation. My intention at this point is to merely introduce the terms rather than provide a comprehensive discussion of their various theoretical implications. Butler's thinking is perhaps the most obvious starting point, but there are other authors who emphasize different aspects of these terms that I should note here. For example, in *Theatricality as Medium*, Samuel Weber looks at the long history of casting theater as a threat to political life, beginning with Plato's denunciation of mimesis and up to the role of digitalization of media in the twentieth century. The nuanced argument enforces theater's potential to disrupt political order, especially as it interferes with structures of subjection and individuality. Erika Fischer-Lichte also highlights elements of theatricality and performativity, such as the shifts between the "art object" and the "art event" involved in her examination of the inversions (reversals) between audience and spectator in theatrical performances. These theatrical inversions work towards a collapse of the division between on-stage and off-stage worlds. Her main examples, however, come from twentieth-century performance art pieces.

are neither homosexual in content nor in terms of their authors' biographies. In fact, I am not sure what a "homosexual" text would entail, to be honest. And yet, there certainly is another literary history of "actual" inverts in the nineteenth century, but that is not the story investigated here, even though there is plenty of work still to be done filling in the gaps of a LGBTQ literary history. My argument proposes a different approach to interrogating concepts of identity based on inversion in this period, informed in part by Lee Edelman's statement as to the potential of other texts that do not deal directly with "homosexuality" to tell us something about the very notion of identity and by extension sexual identity: "The sphere of gay criticism need not be restricted to the examination of texts that either thematize homosexual relations or dramatize the vicissitudes of homosexual/homosocial desire" (*Homographesis* 20). Same-sex desire is not wholly absent from the text corpus under examination or from my discussion of them, but it is also not center stage—and sometimes significantly so, looming below the reflective surface of a text, not in a Freudian sense of repression, but rather in often quite literal ways. More importantly, my engagement with the history of homosexual identities is admittedly tangential; however within the context of inversion the tangential is not to be discredited. Again, I am proposing nothing less than an alternate history to the history of inversion, one that obsesses about the literary and the theatrical, the force of language and its limits, and the other possibilities of telling the story of inversion in the nineteenth century that do not necessarily end in the pathologized figure of the invert.

The collection of literary texts that I analyze all use inversion in prominent and obvious ways. Most of them include literal instances of inversion, that is, the word "verkehrt" (or one of its derivatives) appears in the texts. In addition to this rather one-dimensional criterion, the texts also each highlight the theatricality of inversion—sometimes overtly, like when a play inverts audience and performers by bringing an audience member into the action on stage; sometimes more covertly, like in the use of masquerade and disguise within the inverted world of carnival. Finally, each text also includes a play-within-a-play structure that further complicates the theatrical inversions already at work. The selection of texts is certainly not exhaustive. There are other nineteenth-century literary texts that feature inversion prominently, such as Heinrich Heine's poem "Verkehrte Welt" from 1821 that delivers a biting critique of European society with religion and national pride as obvious sources of inverted relationships.[21]

---

[21] Other examples might include Ludwig Hub's 1841 popular poem by the same title or Adolf Glassbrenner's 25-part homonymous poem from 1855. Not to mention the vast number of passing references to the inverted world tradition, such as in Brentano's introduction ("Herzliche Zueignung") to his later version of "Gockel, Hinkel und Gackeleia," in which he writes, "Nicht aus mir, sondern nur aus Achtung vor den ehrwürdigen Leuten, die aus ihren Ursachen die Welt verkehrt nennen, habe ich den Nürnberger Bilderbogen von der verkehrten Welt genauer studiert, und, um eine höchst wichtige

And many other texts use the play-within-a-play structure or the trope of *theatrum mundi* to call into question the boundary between the theatrical world and the world beyond the stage. One might also think of the tradition of blurring waking life with dreaming from Calderóns play *La vida es sueño* at the end of seventeenth century to Grillparzer's *Der Traum ein Leben* from the first half of the nineteenth century. But rather than venturing to create an extensive catalogue of all the literary texts that refer to the inverted world and related theatrical and literary devices, the select texts serve as striking examples in which these elements converge and condensate to produce unique ways of representing inversion as a problem with/of identity—not as a problem to be solved, as if everything would be okay if set back to normal, but rather as problem that exposes other problems such that any attempts to contain or pathologize an identity based on inversion bring up fundamental questions about what identity means in the first place.

The first segment of the dissertation, the *Vorspiel*, deals with inversion as a philosophical trope in the nineteenth century. I look at three German philosophers and their most obvious uses of inversion with attention to how those instances relate to questions of identity and subjectivity. From Hegel's *Phänomenologie* to Marx's critique of Hegel to Nietzsche's transvaluation of values, inversion lends itself to different and sometimes opposing philosophical projects. Missing from this section is a discussion of romantic irony as another operation of inversion. However, this aspect of inversion immediately becomes a central issue in my analysis of Ludwig Tieck's play. These philosophical contexts set the stage for the literary texts, which in turn engage with an array of philosophical themes in their presentations of inverted worlds.

"Act 1" undertakes an analysis of Tieck's *Die verkehrte Welt* as a critique of Enlightenment subjectivity, especially in terms of spectatorship and the inverted relationships between stage and audience. Tieck pushes the theatricality of inversion to extremes in his 1797 comedy, which seems to enact the ironic evacuation of the subject that Hegel accuses the romantics of. And yet, the dialectic between audience and stage world reflects some of the same theatricality that Hegel evokes in his portrayal of the emergence of self-consciousness. Caught between Kant's enlightenment spectator of the sublime and Hegel's dismissal of irony, Tieck offers a figure of the ironist as a cultural critic with stronger affinities to Kierkegaard's protagonists and their ironic stance. In the end, *Die verkehrte Welt* indicates the incalculability of inversion and a rejection of the instrumentalizing reason of the Enlightenment, while providing a theatrical subject position that itself is capable of affecting critical inversions.

Lücke in ihm zu ergänzen, das feierliche Amt eines Enkels übernommen, der seiner Großmutter ein Märchen beschert" (9).

In the next act, I discuss E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Prinzessin Brambilla* (1820) and its engagement with philosophical and fantastical notions of identity set against the inverted world of carnival in Rome. As in Tieck's text, play acting and the theater are key to the questions of identity that the novella poses, as the main character Giglio undergoes a transformation from pathetic tragedian to successful comedian. His course of development is riddled with holes—both literal and figurative/structural—which seem to threaten his success and the success of the narrative itself. These holes are ultimately necessary for inversions to take place, while at the same time they must be eliminated in order for the protagonists to achieve their final status as viable members of bourgeois society. Given its dual function, inversion and the holes that enable it coincide with aspects of the *pharmakon* as presented by Jacques Derrida. The connections between inversion, pathology, and writing necessitate looking into the holes in the text and gazing beyond the mere surface of the inverted reflecting pool that is both symptom and cure in Giglio's development.

"Act 3" turns away from pathological forms of inversion to look more specifically at political inversion as portrayed in Georg Büchner's comedy *Leonce und Lena* (1836). The text utilizes theatrical measures to bring about a shift in the status quo. At the center of this theatrical political strategy is Valerio, the king's fool and the prince's confidant. Valerio's use of language calls into question the signifying systems at work in the land of Popo. Drawing from Julia Kristeva's theory of the semiotic, I present Büchner's text as a reflection on "the theatrical" as an interstitial term between the semiotic and the symbolic that undoes, on the one hand, the mystical essentialism of the former and, on the other hand, the patriarchal constraints of the latter. Within this context, Valerio appears as a revolutionary fool whose final decree, calling for a world without labor, speaks to the special kind of non-work that theatrical signification performs or, to use J.L. Austin's verb, "does." Thus, the inverted world brought about in the play appears as one in which the fool's language (and not the king's) is law and where appearances continue to be deceiving even when the masks are taken off.

The next act deals more intensively with questions of masks, masquerade, and dressing up. Gottfried Keller's *Kleider machen Leute* (1874) takes place in a world where deviations are at once unwelcome and yet also the very source of narration. The people of Seldwyla are generally a happy and above all normal bunch of Swiss citizens. However, there are a few exceptions. Wenzel Strapinski is one of those. The protagonist of the novella indulges in a special sort of masquerading: he is compelled to put on clothes that do not match his class and trade. This inversion of class through clothing gives way to other inversions of power, gender, and agency in the text. Indeed, the association between active/passive and male/female are central to Strapinski's character as his

deviation proves to be something more perverse than merely dressing up. His performance of class and masculinity appears to mask an underlying passivity, which instead of correcting, the story allows to persist, albeit under the even more convincing masquerade that we find at the end of the text: Strapinski and his wife Nettchen complete a perfect performance of bourgeois coupledom, even while Strapinski holds on to his passive masculinity.

Finally, we arrive at the end of the nineteenth century with an analysis of Arthur Schnitzler's *Der grüne Kakadu* from 1898 that highlights the complex relationship between identity and acts within the criminal and revolutionary space of the Tavern of the Green Cockatoo. In this setting, the play asks what becomes of acts when they seem to be merely part of the show and yet obviously have off-stage implications. The last analytical act foregrounds the spatial relations in Prospère's tavern and discusses the many threshold figures therein, who ride the line between theater and reality. Schnitzler's play further pinpoints a detachment between acts and identity enabled by theatrical inversions. From that detachment, new modes of recombination emerge that further allow us to think about the revolutionary and subversive potential of both theater and inversion, especially in terms of dismantling identitarian regimes. This configuration of acts and identities is all the more telling, given the fact that the space itself seems to be the queer agent in the text, rather than a single fool figure or a particularly deviant individual. In this respect, the final analysis sets up my concluding discussion of inversion and identity within another context, in which acts and identity were indeed cemented together.

By way of conclusion, the Epilogue presents inversion in the history of sexuality and how it served as a model for the emerging discourse on homosexual identity. This version of inverted identities must renounce the shared lineage of inversion and irony that has been central to the other inverted worlds of the dissertation. My study, thus, closes with a reflection on the irony of this lack of irony in what would become the more prominent figure of inversion in nineteenth-century history. The invert would find a stable, if pathologized identity, by the beginning of the twentieth century, despite the chain of queer figures found in the inverted worlds of German literary texts. And yet, the disruptive nature of inversion seems to return at the end of twentieth century, as the invert/homosexual encounters the queer, and the sexual politics of identity indeed seems to embrace something of the theatrical that was integral in nineteenth-century portrayals of queer, inverted worlds.

To be clear, the stakes of this study are the very parameters of identity as they are taking shape in the nineteenth century. It aims to present an untold literary history of inversion that questions the relationship between the *verkehrte Welt* and identity without re-inscribing categories of subjectivity that might best be suspended within these topsy-

turvy worlds. At the same time, *Stages of Inversion* also engages with the history of sexual subjectivities and the increasingly scientific and pathological treatment of identity and desire. This engagement, however, involves an investigation of the queer potential of inversion to disrupt that history. To this end, the multiple meanings of *verkehrt* might serve as a heuristic for the structure of my argument: abnormal, perverse, foolish, deviant, revolutionary, queer.

Vorspiel: Philosophical Inversions

"('Vom Himmel durch die Welt zur Hölle')"
—*Faust* quoted in *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (21)

This section gives an overview of inversions in the philosophical discourse of nineteenth-century German-speaking Europe that is meant to provide a backdrop for the analysis of literary texts that constitutes the body of the dissertation. The philosophical appropriations and representations of inversion frame the problem of inversion as it relates to identity, making it clear that, for example, even when we are deep within the quadruple inversions of stage and audience in Tieck's *Die verkehrte Welt*, the structure and mechanisms of literary inversions nevertheless relate to discourses grounded in epistemological, political, and social contexts.

In momentarily moving away from the folk tradition and towards more abstract configurations, we might elaborate on Kuper's definition and say that inversion is a kind of deviation that involves a shift between two opposed terms, where the one term comes to occupy the place of the other. An algebraic example gives an impression as to how this relationship works: $\frac{x}{y}$ can be inverted and becomes $\frac{y}{x}$. An inversion of a single term is also possible, if we consider negation as another operation of inversion, such that x and –x are understood as opposite terms.[22] The German idealist Johann Gottlieb Fichte presents a different equation in his *Wissenschaftslehre*: "Ich = Ich." This famous self-positing of the self also undergoes an inversion through double negation: "Nicht ich = Nicht ich." For Fichte, the inversion of the self into its negation is a necessary operation in positing the self.[23] That is to say, a negation is required in order to establish the opposed terms in the first place. If these copulas seem too abstract, we might turn to Fichte's contemporary and commentator Novalis, who provides a more tangible label for the *Tathandlung*, as Fichte's fundamental positing of the self is called. Novalis refers to this passage that serves as the foundation for the *Wissenschaftslehre* as an "ordo inversus," an inverted ordering of the world that relies on the reversal of opposed terms.[24] Novalis connects

---

[22] Barbara Babcock relates negation directly to inversion in her introduction to the collected volume of essays on *The Reversible World* (13-14).

[23] Manfred Frank and Gerhard Kurz develop an extensive argument around the reflective figure of inversion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that takes Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* as its point of departure. See their essay, "Ordo inversus: Zu einer Reflexionsfigur bei Novalis, Hölderlin, Kleist und Kafka."

[24] Frank further elaborates upon the connection between Novalis' reception of Fichte's *Wissenschaftlehre* and his conception of self via reflection and inversion in his lectures *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*. He notes here again Novalis' use of the term *ordo inversus* in reference to Fichte's treatment of the self and its negation. Frank provides Fichte's own language for this form of negative determination: "Nichts wird erkannt, was es sei, ohne uns das mit zu denken, was es nicht sei […].

Fichte's negative determination of the self with the figure of the inverted world as a mode of reflection.[25] For Fichte, the way out of this inverted reflection is to double the reflection. This doubling allows the self to set things straight and secure itself as absolute. At the very beginning of a text that sets out to establish an entire theory of knowledge and science, as Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* proposes to do, inversion quickly becomes a basic operation responsible for forming the self.

Between such abstract philosophical formulations and the folk tradition is perhaps the simple definition of inversion as we find it in the works of ancient rhetoricians and the European traditions they inspired,[26] namely as a reversal of the normal word order. The term they use is *anastrophé* in Greek and *inversio* in Latin, but they also call this shift in order *perversio, reversio*, and *inlusio* (Rehbock 587-89). Of course, calling this a simple definition is misleading. Who establishes the normal order of words? What impact does this rhetorical inversion have on a text? While I do not undertake an examination of syntactical inversions, the disruption of (grammatical) norms also connects this form of inversion with the philosophical and later pathological characterizations of inversion. Here the Latin term *perversio* is as telling in this regard as the use of *inversio* by Cicero and Quintilian. In addition to syntactical inversion, the term can include semantic inversion and even extends to an almost general term for all rhetorical figures of substitution. In this sense, Cicero refers to it as a sub-category of irony, while Quintilian associates inversion with *allegoria*. Their treatment of the term defines it as the trope that allows the meaning of a word to turn into something else, even into its opposite.[27] These broad meanings of *inversio* did not carry over into the terminology of later rhetorical treatises in the European tradition, and the term became reserved for syntactical inversion. Nevertheless, this early understanding of inversion as the very basis for rhetorical figures of semantic substitution sets up later discussions of the rhetorical nature of language. Perhaps, the extension of inversion to include irony itself is most telling here. Indeed, the discussion of inversion in my study will circle back to irony perpetually. Irony haunts the following discussion of nineteenth-century philosophers and the role of inversion in their

---

    [D]iese Art unserer Erkenntnis, nämlich etwas vermittelst des Gegensatzes zu erkennen, heißt etwas bestimmen" (*Einführung* 256).

[25] Frank explains that the connection is based on a literal understanding of reflection: "Auslöser von Novalis' Gedankenexperiment ist eine Besinnung auf die ursprüngliche Wortdeutung von 'Reflexion'. 'Reflexion' heißt ja Spiegelung, und alles Gespiegelte ist seitenverkehrt" (*Einführung* 253). I return to this understanding of reflection as inversion in act 2 as part of my analysis of *Prinzessin Brambilla*.

[26] See Thomas Conley's *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*.

[27] Cicero writes, "Jests dependent upon language further include such as are derived from allegory, from the figurative use of a single word, or from the ironical inversion of verbal meanings" (Cic. De or. II 65.261). Quintilian explains, "*Allegory*, which is translated in Latin by *inversio*, either presents one thing in words and another in meaning, or something absolutely opposed to the meaning of the words" (Quin. VIII, 6, 44). See also Rehbock 589.

thinking, but more as a ghost of this rhetorical tradition, which relies in part on an equating of *inversio* with allegory and tropes in general. The connection between the abstract and rhetorical forms of inversion and the folk tradition was not lost on Novalis, and it is precisely that connection that will often factor into the analysis of literary texts from Tieck to Schnitzler that constitute this study, especially in my discussion of E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Prinzessin Brambilla* in Act 2.

If we understand inversion as a reversal of opposed terms that results in a relationship that must be read as abnormal, then it quickly becomes apparent how the inverted worlds of the nineteenth century might enrich a study of how inversion enables, but also troubles, concepts of identity in a period when new subject positions were taking on greater importance. The series of inverted moments from nineteenth-century German philosophy presented here focuses on the normative forces at work in figures of inversion in the writings of three major nineteenth-century philosophers, Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, before ending on the question of irony and its entanglement with inversion.

Hegel's Phenomenological Inversions

Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* reinforces at every turn the power of dialectical thinking to secure knowledge and affirm identity and difference. His idealist dialectic (in contrast to Marx's materialist dialectic, as we will see directly) pursues an epistemological question that has occupied philosophers and poets as far back as Plato, namely, how to account for discrepancies between the inner and the outer world, between our perception of an object and *das Ding an sich*, between idea and matter, between body and spirit. Inversion plays a key role in Hegel's attempt to address this tension, and the *Phänomenologie* is unique among Hegel's works for its explicit and extensive portrayal of inversion. Hegel makes it an integral part of the philosophical project that guides spirit's journey from mere perception to absolute knowing.[28]

Philosophy, according to Hegel, is the basis for all other knowledge; thus, among the *Phänomenologie*'s many aims is the goal of establishing philosophy as a science.[29] The book thus shows how philosophy fulfills this expectation by using philosophical argumentation itself to bring the reader (along with spirit) to "absolute knowing" at the

---

[28] Many scholars point out the central importance of the inverted world for the entire *Phänomenologie.* See, for example, Joseph Flay's "Hegel's 'Inverted World'"; Hans-Georg Gadamer's "Hegel – die verkehrte Welt" in *Hegels Dialektik* (31-47); and Donald Phillip Verene's chapter "The Topsy-Turvy World" in *Hegel's Recollection* (39-58).

[29] The Preface to the *Phänomenologie* explicitly states this goal from the very beginning: "Die innere Notwendigkeit, daß das Wissen Wissenschaft sei, liegt in seiner Natur, und die befriedigende Erklärung hierüber ist allein die Darstellung der Philosophie selbst" (6).

end of the book. The *Phänomenologie* performs the very thing that Hegel says philosophy ought to do. It takes the reader's mind through the philosophical training required for scientific knowledge, so that by the end of the book the reader has been shaped (*gebildet*) in accordance with the strictures of philosophical reason.[30] As such it is a sort of handbook for philosophical thinking that proscribes how we come to know the world and our selves.

The guide is complicated by Hegel's inclusion of the inverted world. Spirit's passage through the inverted world appears on the threshold between perception and consciousness, both in terms of capacities of the self as well as the sections of the book (I will address the latter in more detail below). The inverted world radically interrupts the *Phänomenologie*. All that we think we know, or more precisely all that we perceive, could actually be the opposite of how we perceive it in this "zweite übersinnliche Welt," as Hegel calls it (111). In other words, the subjective understanding of an object is limited (as Kant also shows in his first critique, which so famously undid Kleist[31]) by perception, and the objective truth of an object—the essence of a thing—might appear to us as if it were the exact opposite. If this rendition of Hegel sounds confusing, Hegel himself is surprisingly lucid on this point:

> Nach dem Gesetze dieser verkehrten Welt ist also das Gleichnamige der ersten das Ungleiche seiner selbst, und das Ungleiche derselben ist eben so ihm selbst ungleich, oder es wird sich gleich. An bestimmten Momenten wird dies sich so ergeben dass was im Gesetze der ersten süß, in diesem verkehrten Ansich sauer; was in jenem schwarz, in diesem weiß ist. (111-12)

Hegel then proceeds to transfer this inverted perception of taste and sight into social and juridical terms that are based on normative concepts like crime and punishment. It quickly becomes clear that Hegel is turning our perception of the sensual world on its head

---

[30] Hegel makes this task clear in his seething denouncement of those common-sense thinkers who rely merely on prefaces and first paragraphs for knowledge: "Dieser gemeine Weg macht sich im Hausrocke, aber im hohenpriesterlichen Gewande schreitet das Hochgefühl des Ewigen, Heiligen, Unendlichen einher – einen Weg, der vielmehr schon selbst das unmittelbare Sein im Zentrum, die Genialität tiefer origineller Ideen und hoher Gedankenblitze ist" (51-52). Taking the high road here means reading the whole book, not just prefaces and first paragraphs.

[31] The metaphor of seeing the world through the green lenses is a familiar image from Kleist's so-called "Kant Krise." Here are the lines he wrote to Wilhelmine von Zenge on 21 March 1801 in response to reading Kant: "Wenn alle Menschen statt der Augen grüne Gläser hätten, so würden sie urteilen müssen, die Gegenstände, welche sie dadurch erblicken, sind grün – und nie würden sie entscheiden können, ob ihr Auge ihnen die Dinge zeigt, wie sie sind, oder ob es nicht etwas zu ihnen hinzutut, was nicht ihnen, sondern dem Auge gehört" (634). For a sense of Kant's argument and how it might lead to such a distraught questioning of reality, see the introduction to the first critique in which the problem of knowledge stems from sorting out what we know through experience and what we know a priori: "Wenn aber gleich alle unsere Erkenntnis mit der Erfahrung anhebt, so entspringt sie darum doch nicht eben alle aus der Erfahrung. Denn es könnte wohl sein, daß selbst unsere Erfahrungserkenntnis ein Zusammengesetztes aus dem sei, was wir durch Eindrücke empfangen, und dem, was unser eigenes Erkenntnisvermögen (durch sinnliche Eindrücke bloß veranlaßt) aus sich selbst hergibt, welchen Zusatz wir von jenem Grundstoffe nicht eher unterscheiden, als bis lange Übung uns darauf aufmerksam und zur Absonderung desselben geschickt gemacht hat" (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft* 39).

together with our sense of social norms. In the inverted world, that which we would otherwise call black is white, criminal is legal, and normal is abnormal.

The passage through the inverted world is a necessary step in the dialectical movement of the *Phänomenologie*. Indeed, the motor behind spirit's development is the dialectic itself. The familiar process of positing, negating and sublating structures much of Hegel's thought.[32] Hegel's mark on dialectical thinking is perhaps most apparent when it comes to the last phase, sublation. Hegel uses the word *Aufheben*. Its multiple meanings resist a simple translation, as the word designates both cancelation, a lifting up, preservation, and resolution. The dialectic in the *Phänomenologie* undergoes inversion as a necessary step in completing the movement of sublation (*Aufhebung*) that resolves the tension between thesis and antithesis, that is to say, between opposed terms like black and white, crime and punishment, etc. In this way, the passage through the inverted world that appears in the first section of the *Phänomenologie* is a metaphor for all other inversions of thesis and antithesis that occur later in the book, for example, when master and servant switch positions:

> Aber wie die Herrschaft zeigte, daß ihr Wesen das Verkehrte dessen ist, was sie sein will, so wird auch wohl die Knechtschaft vielmehr in ihrer Vollbringung zum Gegenteile dessen werden, was sie unmittelbar ist; sie wird als in sich *zurückgedrängtes* Bewußtsein in sich gehen, und zur wahren Selbständigkeit sich umkehren. (134)

We might think of the *Phänomenologie* as an extended reflection on inverting relationships, in which the series of inversions that take place even early on belong to a teleological project that has "absolute knowledge" as its end. That means the abnormal states that Hegel presents are ultimately contained within a normative process through their instrumentalization into the course of spirit's development. As part of this grand hi/story, the inverted, topsy-turvy world becomes a phase of historical knowledge that must be overcome in order to reach the next stage of consciousness.

Hegel's inverted world is, at first glance, dissimilar to the inverted worlds we find in the folk tradition of *mundus inversus*. Just as Hegel argues for philosophy as a scientific discipline, so too does he bring the inverted world into a scientific context. The mechanism of inversion remains constant within the scientific terminology he uses. In the moment of inversion, the perception and the essence of a thing become confused: What seems black might actually be white, what seems sour actually sweet. But in addition to these fairly basic examples, Hegel cites others that are less immediately tangible: the magnetic North pole might be the South; the oxygen pole might be the hydrogen pole. Certainly, this last pairing might not be the most helpful example for a reader

---

[32] This sequence was practiced by Kant in his critiques as well, lest we forget that Hegel was not the first philosopher to use this structure for his argumentation.

unacquainted with the study of electricity around 1800, but rather than elaborate on the details of that branch of science, I would like to stress the inclusion of scientific combinations of inverted pairs in the first place. Unlike the quotidian examples of sweet/sour and black/white, magnets and electricity do not immediately belong to the repertoire of inverted world figures common in the folk tradition. Here, Hegel's rendition of the inverted world extends its boundaries to include the realm of science.[33]

The scientific—and obviously also philosophical—appropriation of the inverted world in the *Phänomenologie* is all the more remarkable for Hegel's final juridical examples. After these initial pairings, which seem to merit little explanation, Hegel deals in more detail with the inversion of crime and punishment—or, to be more precise, acts and retribution. Things get much more complicated here. An act of revenge that is meant to destroy the original aggressor, when inverted, would be an act of self-destruction for the person seeking revenge. The inversion seems to turn around the direction of the avenger's will back onto himself. Hegel elaborates upon this example, stating that when we are dealing with punishment and the law (as opposed to personal vendettas), punishment in the inverted world becomes a pardon, allowing for the prosecuted to escape the contempt of society. Indeed, the criminal in the inverted world even attains honor:

> Wenn nun diese Verkehrung, welche in der Strafe des Verbrechens dargestellt wird, zum Gesetze gemacht ist, so ist auch sie wieder nur das Gesetz der einen Welt, welche eine verkehrte übersinnliche Welt sich gegenüberstehen hat, in welcher das, was in jener verachtet ist, zu Ehren, was in jener in Ehren steht, in Verachtung kommt. Die nach dem Gesetze der ersten den Menschen schändende und vertilgende Strafe verwandelt sich in ihrer verkehrten Welt in die sein Wesen erhaltende, und ihn zu Ehren bringende Begnadigung. (112)

The juridical example, however, is not a new development in representing the inverted world. For example, Christian Weise's *Von der verkehrten Welt* from 1683 features an inverting and perverted judge, named Alamode, who sets the world spinning from one inversion to the next when he assumes the role of *Landesrichter*. His judgments create a chain reaction that leads to a widespread perversion of morals. The striking thing about Hegel's representation of the inverted world is how it brings the figure into a scientific context, while also recycling elements of the folk tradition and at the same time raising ethical and legal issues. Still, there is little trace of absurd, grotesque, or carnivalesque images in his passage through "die verkehrte Welt." The scientification of inversion – rendering it part of an epistemological teleology—seems to strip the operation of its folkloric and figurative origins. In this sense, Hegel exposes inversion to the conservative

---

[33]   In Kunzle's overview of different types of inverted pairings found in the broadsheet engravings, he does not mention anything to do with elements or electricity—though an inversion of poles represented by an inverted globe does appear in the visual culture tradition (41).

forces of rationalist thinking, a stark shift from the absurdity otherwise at work in the *ordo inversus*.

But perhaps the most important thing about the inverted world in the *Phänomenologie* is how Hegel incorporates it into the overall project of substantializing the subject and subjectifying substance, that is to say, of bringing consciousness to spirit. The placement of the inverted world within the structure of the *Phänomenologie* says a lot about the function of inversion in general. It appears at the end of the section "Kraft und Verstand," in which Hegel negotiates how perception deals with difference and how we might come to understand forces through laws (of nature), but that this understanding is quite different from a real knowledge (based on reason, which we have not yet attained) about these objects. Part of the problem is that perception and understanding are merely operations of consciousness, that first stage of spirit's development before it gains awareness of itself. Without this self-awareness, knowledge remains understanding and is limited to explanations of forces, a sort of masturbatory act of consciousness that does not actually tell us anything about the world:

> In dem Erklären ist eben darum so viele Selbstbefriedigung, weil das Bewußtsein dabei, es so auszudrücken, in unmittelbarem Selbstgespräche mit sich, nur sich selbst genießt, dabei zwar etwas anderes zu treiben scheint, aber in der Tat sich nur mit sich selbst herumtreibt. (117)

The inverted world is introduced here as/at the limit of understanding. Another position is necessary in order to escape the vertigo of the inverted world, in which everything might actually be the opposite of itself. And that other position is achieved when consciousness turns towards itself and acknowledges the difference that resides with it—as both perceiving subject and perceived object. The inverted world thus stands for that moment of recognition, of peering behind the screen of appearances into the inner world. This is what Hegel means when he calls the inverted world the supersensible world—the world beyond appearances. But the inverted world is only the initial encounter with that supersensible world, when consciousness is fixated on differences. Overcoming this fixation occurs through the sublation of consciousness at the end of "Kraft und Verstand" just after the inverted world passages, when consciousness becomes self-conscious. It is a theatrical moment:

> Dieser Vorhang ist also vor dem Innern weggezogen, und das Schauen des Innern in das Innere vorhanden; das Schauen des *ununterschiedenen* Gleichnamigen, welches sich selbst abstößt, als *unterschiedenes* Innres setzt, aber für *welches* ebenso unmittelbar die *Ununterschiedenheit* beider ist, das *Selbstbewußtsein*. (118)

When consciousness peaks behind the curtain of perception it finds itself there, both as same and different from itself. This knowledge of the same as also being potentially

different is the knowledge gained in the inverted world, when we realize that things on this side of the curtain might be the exact opposite on the other side, which is to say, the inverted pairing of sameness and difference is the most important inversion for the becoming of self-consciousness at the end of the three part section "Bewußtsein."

Marx's Materialist Double Inversion

Marx uses inversion figuratively in his famous claim about the Hegelian dialectic. In the afterword to the second edition of *Das Kapital*, he draws a clear line between his version of the dialectic and Hegel's—they are not merely different but complete opposites.

> Die Mystifikation, welche die Dialektik in Hegels Händen erleidet, verhindert in keiner Weise, daß er ihre allgemeinen Bewegungsformen zuerst in umfassender und bewußter Weise dargestellt hat. […] Sie steht bei ihm auf dem Kopf. Man muß sie umstülpen, um den rationellen Kern in der mystischen Hülle zu entdecken. (11)

This passage alone puts the two versions of the dialectic into an inverted world relationship, in which the Marxist dialectic is based in the material world and Hegel's in the world of ideas. And yet, in Marx's depiction, Hegel's perversion of the dialectic still maintains its basic structure. In other words, the form of the dialectic itself is somehow consistent between Hegel and Marx. The "right" way of thinking involves turning Hegel's inverted dialectic inside out. Marx's dialectic is somehow closer to the rational core of dialectical thinking and does away with the mystical covering that enshrouds Hegel's thought through this grotesque gesture of inversion.

Unlike Hegel, Marx does not include an elaborate description of an inverted world in his writings. And yet, the figure holds a significant place in his philosophy, especially with regard to his critique of Hegel, which does involve an explicit reference to inversion. But even beyond this specific reference, inversion seems to be a fundamental figure for Marx. As with Hegel, the connection depends on a dialectic movement, a way of thinking in and through oppositions that at some point requires the opposing terms to switch positions. Those positions are positions of power, and Marx deploys inversion as a figure in class conflicts and as part of his vision of the proletarian revolution.[34] Moreover, he proposes inverting the inverted world of German idealism. Hegel's dialectic is backwards insofar as it proposes a world in which ideas provide the structure for material existence. Marx claims the opposite: Material existence provides the structure for ideas, and if we

---

[34] Hans-Joachim Helmich writes on the figure and structure of inversion throughout Marx's works and in doing so draws connections to the inversions found in the writings of Hegel, Feuerbach, and other German philosophers. Helmich's focus is on Marx's "thinking" as a hermeneutical project, which is to say, he presents it as a cohesive whole, in which the parts (the inverted world) relate directly and logically to the overarching meaning.

are going to change our ideas we have to change the material base: "Nicht das Bewußtsein bestimmt das Leben, sondern das Leben bestimmt das Bewußtsein" (*Deutsche Ideologie* 349). This well-known line emphasizes inversion as not only structurally present in Marx's opposition to Hegel (in the opposition between material and ideal as an inverted world polarity), but it reveals inversion to be present in his use of language. The chiasmus that the sentence builds is a syntax that, as Hans-Joachim Helmich shows, can be found throughout Marx's writing and is just one example on the level of language that attests to the centrality of inversion.[35] In *Deutsche Ideologie*, Marx turns around the basic form of "German philosophy" by switching the flow between heaven and earth: "Ganz im Gegensatz zur deutschen Philosophie, welche vom Himmel auf die Erde herabsteigt, wird hier von der Erde zum Himmel gestiegen" (349). This reversal coincides with the more specific inversion of the relationship between (material) life and (ideal) consciousness. By positing life as determinant of consciousness, Marx radically revises the Hegelian dialectic, which he accuses of the former, namely positing consciousness as determinant of life. While Marx's position vis-à-vis Hegel's dialectic might seem overly simplistic when thought in terms of putting something back on its feet, inversion obviously has broader implications for Marx's critique of German idealism.

Hegel's dialectic is not the only thing standing on its head according to Marx. The mysteries of commodity fetishism turn the world of goods upside down as well. The language that Marx uses to introduce the concept of commodity fetishism echoes the language Hegel uses in the *Phänomenologie* to describe the inverted world and even brings in a bit of the fantastical element from the folk tradition of inverted worlds. A piece of wood that becomes a table undergoes a transformation from matter to a functional object and then another transformation when it becomes a commodity. This second transformation upsets the relationship between the table and other objects: "Er [the table] steht nicht nur mit seinen Füßen auf dem Boden, sondern er stellt sich allen anderen Waren gegenüber auf den Kopf, und entwickelt aus seinem Holzkopf Grillen, viel wunderlicher, als wenn er aus freien Stücken zu tanzen begänne" (*Das Kapital* 50). The transformation into a commodity is more miraculous than if the table were to start to dance—but more importantly for my reflection on inversion is how the commoditization of the table means not only turning itself on its head, but, by extension, all other objects now appear upside down. The implication seems to be that as the table undergoes alienation from its wooden origins, it calls into question all other objects' relationship

---

[35]   "Auf der *Ebene der literarischen Stilanalyse* bleibt also festzuhalten, *daß Marx*, indem er sich in extenso des Chiasmus als Stilmittel seiner Kritik bedient, *das Prinzip der 'Verkehrung ins Gegenteil' bzw. 'Umkehrung' selbst permanent rhetorisch verwendet* (was auch in der häufigen Verwendung von 'umgekehrt' bei Marx sichtbar wird)" (Helmich 112).

with their material origin. Once a table becomes a commodity, what is to stop us from turning stone, food, or labor into commodities? Or, for that matter, bodies, pathologies, and identities?

The inverting table functions similarly to the inverted world in Hegel's *Phänomenologie*, insofar as both instances of inversion rely upon a detachment between the essential nature of an object and its phenomenological presence. Marx's inversion is based on the assumption that there is a more natural mode of relating to objects and other humans, one that is more transparent and does not stand everything on its head. In the case of the table inversion appears reminiscent of the folk tradition of inversion, specifically as an inversion of objects with other objects—a type of inversion that David Kunzle incidentally notes is quite rare in the broadsheet tradition but nevertheless part of it (41). Moreover, the table's inverted value initiates an inversion of the rest of the world, making the table analogous to the figure of the fool who turns everything on its head. The description of inversion through this image of a dancing table recalls the *impossibilia* of antiquity, while the syntax conjures up familiar figures from the inverted world tradition. Marx evokes that tradition here in order to criticize this capitalistic process which strips things (including humans) of their innate (use-)value, which is to say, inversion becomes a symbol of alienation. If the commodification of the table turns the world of objects on its head, then the commodification of labor inverts all other relations in a capitalist society. But even as capitalism and the commoditization of goods turn the world on its head, Marx would have us turn the world (and Hegel) back on its feet. Thus, for Marx inversion is also a means to an end, or rather inversion itself is the necessary mechanism for getting us out of the inverted world.

Certainly another important topic related to the question of identity in Marx's philosophy is class (consciousness) versus (capitalist) individuality. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's critique of the individual capitalist subject brings out the stakes of the dialectic between *Gattungswesen* and the bourgeois subject, but rather than provide a summary of that discussion at this point,[36] let us return, instead, to the opposition stated in the quote above between life (as material reality) and consciousness (as ideality): "Nicht das Bewußtsein bestimmt das Leben, sondern das Leben bestimmt das Bewußtsein." The sentence itself depends upon a logic of inversion that binds life and consciousness together in one of the most basic Marxist concepts, namely that the conditions of (re)production determine the superstructure of society. The inversions between life and consciousness and between the table and other objects depend on a sense of false perception or even "false consciousness."

---

[36] I will deal with Adorno and Horkheimer more fully in act 1 in my discussion of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and how it relates to inversion as part of their critique of the Enlightenment's legacy.

The connection between these improper and perverse modes of relating to the world might be most easily recognized in Marx's stark critique of religion. As the "opiate of the masses," religion, too, engenders inversion in the modern state: "Dieser Staat, diese Sozietät produzieren die Religionen, ein *verkehrtes Weltbewußtsein*, weil sie eine *verkehrte Welt* sind" (*Zur Kritik der hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie* 378). Indeed, the commodification of goods is also a phenomenon from the "Nebelregion der religiösen Welt," insofar as it pertains to the phenomenon of the fetish (*Das Kapital* 51). And that same inverted world, which understands consciousness as shaping life, relies upon a religious ideality based on a trajectory from heaven down to earth. This critique of the inverted world of religion draws heavily from Feuerbach's proposition of another corrective double inversion. In extremely reduced terms, Feuerbach proposes a reversal of the subject and predicate relation in religious thinking. God did not create humans; humans created God. Feuerbach's anthropological philosophy puts humans at the center of their world, making them also the agents (subjects) of their world.[37] While there are many more instances of inversion that could be discussed here, including the inversion of power between proletariat and bourgeoisie in *The Communist Manifesto*, I will save some of those other examples for discussions of power, labor, class, and fetishes later.

This overview of Marx and inversion concludes with a brief discussion of how Louis Althusser's characterizes the difference between Marxist and Hegelian dialectics. His argument also hinges on the afterword to the second edition of *Das Kapital*, where Marx states that he has "settled his relations" with Hegel.[38] Althusser goes to great lengths in order to show that the inversion that marks the difference between Marx and Hegel is pervasive in Marxist practice but has not yet been sufficiently theorized. Althusser's theorization of inversion outlines the two's conflicting treatment of concepts, abstractions, and material reality. In doing so, he makes it obvious that Marx's project is about straightening out a queer understanding of how knowledge works:

> And we prepare to put things straight, that is, to put abstraction in its right place by a liberating "inversion" – for of course, it is not the (general) concept of fruit which produces (concrete) fruits by auto-development, but, on the contrary, (concrete) fruits which produce the (abstract) concept of fruit. Is that all right? (190)

Althusser immediately answers his own question with a "no." And yet, even as Althusser shows that Marx's approach was not so one-dimensional as to wholly denounce a certain

---

[37]   Again, Helmich provides a lucid and succinct formulation of this issue: "Feuerbachs Religionskritik enthüllt die Religion, die Welt des Christentums als eine *verkehrte Welt*, in der sich die (Phantasie-) Produkte von ihren Produzenten, den Menschen, losgelöst und gegen sie verselbständigt haben" (132).

[38]   I am referring specifically to Althusser's text "On the Materialist Dialectic: On the Unevenness of Origins." 161-218.

materiality to concepts, it is hard to ignore how this wording reveals Marx as trying to straighten out fruits as he sets the world back on its feet.[39]

Nietzsche's Inversion of Perversion

Nietzsche also argues for an end to the inverted world in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, when he calls for an "Umwerthung aller Werthe." One way of understanding this transvaluation of values implies that Nietzsche wants to do away with the norms and moral values of modern society and replace them with other values that allow for more personal freedom and an extreme relativist perspective regarding ethics and the law.[40] To be sure, the precise semantic limit of the term trans- or revaluation, and even the choice of how to translate *Umwerthung*, remains a highly debated topic.[41] But the movement itself is lucid: Nietzsche, like Marx, is actually calling for a double inversion. The originally good attributes of strength and power have been turned into bad attributes. Now the weak and powerless are considered good, while the truly strong and powerful are seen as bad or evil. He makes it repeatedly clear that, first, the Jewish class of priests and, later, Christians enabled this reversal of the originally good qualities. His demand for an "Umwerthung aller Werthe" appears within a problematic anti-Jewish context that continues to trouble Nietzsche's reception into the twenty-first century.[42]

> Die Juden, jenes priesterliche Volk, das sich an seinen Feinden und Überwältigern zuletzt nur durch eine radikale Umwertung von deren Werten, also durch einen Akt der *geistigsten Rache* Genugtuung zu schaffen wußte. […] Die Juden sind es gewesen, die gegen die aristokratische

---

[39] The dynamics at play between Althusser, Marx, and Hegel involve multiple and refractive readings, which Richard Block lays out in his article "Second Reads: Althusser Reading Marx Reading Hegel." Block examines the relationships between the three thinkers in terms of the various and overlapping structures, overdeterminations, and contradictions that constitute their theories. As Block rehabilitates Althusser against claims that the French philosopher is just reiterating Marxist ideology, he also refers to the spectatorial inversion that takes place in Althusser's account of reading, in which the reader becomes something like an audience member who joins the action on stage (229-30). This configuration of reading will become particularly salient in the analysis of Keller's *Kleider machen Leute* in Act 4.

[40] Philippa Foot uses this particular movement in her critical recapitulation of the revaluation of values. Foot even uses the language of inversion as a topsy-turvy state: "These old concepts were turned on their heads when the perspective of the weak prevailed" (211).

[41] Duncan Large points out the proximity between *Umkehrung* and *Umwerthung* in Nietzsche's writing. He further points out that inversion is the preferred French translation for the term and that the standard English translations occlude this important aspect of the concept (6).

[42] As with most of Nietzsche's argumentation in the *Genealogie*, his claims are never far from his highly contested anti-Jewish statements. For a thoughtful overview of the problematic reception of Nietzsche in the twentieth century, see Steven Aschheim's essay "Thinking the Nietzsche Legacy Today: A Historian's Perspective" (13-23). Aschheim stresses that even as a "post-structuralist Nietzsche" continues to dominate recent scholarship, it is important to keep in mind the vacillations in how scholars and others have cast Nietzsche's thought, of course, with the Nazi appropriation of Nietzsche as the foremost cautionary example.

> Wertgleichung (gut = vornehm = mächtig = schön = glücklich = gottgeliebt) mit einer furchteinflößenden Folgerichtigkeit die Umkehrung gewagt und mit den Zähnen des abgründlichsten Hasses (des Hasses der Ohnmacht) festgehalten haben. (*Genealogie* 779)

Here, the inversion of values that the Jews initiate is an act of revenge and rebellion. Nietzsche famously calls it the "Sklavenaufstand in der Moral" (779), and its success can be found in the extent to which this moral inversion remains unnoticed. The fact that everyone seems to accept the weak, ugly, miserable, and sick people of the world as good attests to the complete and seamless original reversal or perversion of values. Nietzsche wants to invert the "Umwerthung aller Werthe" so as to bring things back to the prior and proper conditions. But more than championing some mythical past in which the physically strong ruled, the process of double inversion that Nietzsche presents coincides with and highlights a fundamental moral relativity that calls into question any absolute or objective positing of what is good or evil.

In what might seem an apparent contradiction to Nietzsche's own relativism, he nevertheless presents a rather absolute denunciation of the inverted world in the *Genealogie*. He sees great injustice in the reversal of power relations that deprives those who are truly strong in body and soul from their natural right to happiness:

> Aber es könnte gar kein größeres und verhängnisvolleres Mißverständnis geben, als wenn dergestalt die Glücklichen, die Wohlgeratenen, die Mächtigen an Leib und Seele anfingen, an ihrem *Recht auf Glück* zu zweifeln. Fort mit dieser "verkehrten Welt"! Fort mit dieser schändlichen Verweichlichung des Gefühls! Daß die Kranken *nicht* die Gesunden krank machen! (865)

The parallel syntax of this passage aligns the inverted world with a softening of emotion and feelings. The juxtaposition underscores the other oppositions that Nietzsche evokes in his characterization of what is wrong with the world. The soft and weak state of society is also sick and stands in opposition to the few strong and healthy individuals, who possess true power. The metaphor of sickness is particularly important for thinking about the shifting valence of the figure of inversion over the centuries. While images of the sick man treating the doctor appear in various *Bilderbögen*,[43] Nietzsche takes the trope of disease and infection even farther. Sickness is the new normal:

> Je normaler die Krankhaftigkeit am Menschen ist – und wir können diese Normalität nicht in Abrede stellen –, um so höher sollte man die seltenen Fälle der seelisch-leiblichen Mächtigkeit, die *Glücksfälle* des Menschen in Ehren halten, um so strenger die Wohlgeratenen vor der schlechtesten Luft, der Kranken-Luft behüten. (683)

---

[43] Christian Weise's play also includes the sick man/doctor inversion as one of the many scenes of inverted judgments, over which Alamode presides.

The miasma of normality threatens to contaminate the few lucky members of that mythical race of strong men. The image here is not of an isolated reversal of doctor and patient but rather an all-pervasive perversion of what is right, good, and healthy.

Nietzsche's twist on the inverted world emphasizes the connection between perversion and inversion, while also supporting Marx's version of the inverted world, in which the status quo is itself an inverted world. In contrast to Marx, however, Nietzsche's inversion of the inverted world does not aim at achieving an objective materialist understanding of human relations. Instead, Nietzsche casts doubt on claims to any sort of objective truth, especially when that truth is based on scientific methods. For Nietzsche, there is no objective science. To try to arrive at the truth through science requires turning the truth itself on its head:

> Wer es umgekehrt versteht, wer zum Beispiel sich anschickt, die Philosophie "auf streng wissenschaftliche Grundlage" zu stellen, der hat dazu erst nicht nur die Philosophie, sondern auch die Wahrheit selber *auf den Kopf zu stellen*: die ärgste Anstands-Verletzung, die es in Hinsicht auf zwei so ehrwürdige Frauenzimmer geben kann! (890)

A strict scientific basis of knowledge also turns philosophy on its head. And with truth and philosophy anthropomorphized as *Frauenzimmer*, the image of two inverted allegorical ladies accentuates the absurdity that Nietzsche attributes to those philosophers and scientists who lay claim to science as the grounds for coming to (objective) truth.

This discussion of science, truth, and philosophy comes up in Nietzsche's critique of the ascetic ideal in the *Genealogie* and leads to his questioning of the essential value of truth itself. Indeed, the will to truth that science represents contrasts with the will to deceit that is essential to art (314). In this opposition we find the inverted world scenario that Nietzsche presents elsewhere. For example in "Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne," he exposes the structure of language as itself dependent upon lying—or rather, language can never adequately (or truthfully) represent reality:

> Was ist also Wahrheit? Ein bewegliches Heer von Metaphern, Metonymien, Anthropomorphismen, kurz eine Summe von menschlichen Relationen, die, poetisch und rhetorisch gesteigert, übertragen, geschmückt wurden, und die nach langem Gebrauch einem Volke fest, kanonisch und verbindlich dünken: die Wahrheiten sind Illusionen, von denen man vergessen hat, daß sie welche sind, Metaphern, die abgenutzt und sinnlich kraftlos geworden sind, Münzen, die ihr Bild verloren haben und nun als Metall, nicht mehr als Münzen, in Betracht kommen. (314)

The inversion that takes place here exposes truths as mere illusions. Basically, the truth is a lie. But these illusions are not ephemeral. They enable circulation (*Verkehr*) in the first place—and not just in trade with money. The circulation of ideas through language can end in an exchange of clichés or in opening up new possibilities if someone keeps the illusory origins of language in mind and works with language on these grounds. But these

possibilities will not come about if we rely on language to deliver rational truth. Indeed there seems to be no way to avoid the poetic and rhetorical aspect of language—and thus we might think again of Cicero and Quintilian's broad understanding of *inversio* as encompassing tropes in general, rhetoric's capacity to transform a word's meaning. If the truth is based on worn out metaphors, then logic itself is subject to the twists and turns of inversion as a rhetorical device, whereby the device becomes the very basis of language itself.[44]

Coincidentally, Nietzsche's essay ends with an image of the Saturnalia, as a festival when people are free from the slavery of the rational intellect and are free to deceive and lie with creative force: "Der Intellekt, jener Meister der Verstellung, ist so lange frei und seinem sonstigen Sklavendienste enthoben, als er täuschen kann, ohne zu *schaden*, und feiert dann seine Saturnalien" (320). The inverted world of festival time appears here as the actualization of the double inversion proposed in the *Genealogie*, in which slave morality is cast off and in its place the free play of signification allows for the creation of new relationships both in thought and in the material world.

Nietzsche's inverted world is significantly a perverse one. This perversion is based, in part, on a misappropriation of "actual" power and the power acquired through cultural (not natural) means as described in the *Genealogie*. At the same time, the double inversion allows for a perversion of the normative structures established through the rational use of language, as Nietzsche shows in "Über Wahrheit und Lüge." In the end, Nietzsche's discussion of power, perversion, and setting the inverted world straight must be treated with no small amount of skepticism, for his treatment of them constantly runs the risk of being involved in another operation of inversion, namely, irony, an operation which Hegel actively opposes and for which Marx's materialist base has little room. So if it seems that Nietzsche's inverted world, like Hegel's and Marx's, needs to be set straight in order to reinstate a natural relationship that has been perverted, we must understand this position as itself subject to an inversion brought about through Nietzsche's treatment of language as fundamentally figurative, which he reiterates in his ironic stance towards language and absolute values in general.[45]

---

[44] This line of thinking leads us quickly to Paul de Man's analysis of Nietzsche in *Allegories of Reading*. The chapter "Rhetoric of Tropes" deals with the intersection of literary and philosophical discourses in Nietzsche's work. At that intersection, de Man shows, is Nietzsche's discussion of rhetoric. De Man brings to a point the overlapping meanings of inversion as a rhetorical or figurative device within the context of Nietzsche reversal of good and evil, truth and error: "All rhetorical structures, whether we call them metaphor, metonymy, chiasmus, metalepsis, hypallagus, or whatever, are based on substitutive reversals, and it seems unlikely that one more such reversal over and above the ones that have already taken place would suffice to restore things to their proper order. One more 'turn' or trope added to a series of earlier reversals will not stop the turn towards error" (113).

[45] Of course there is another prominent inversion in Nietzsche's oeuvre that might be mentioned here: The turning upside-down of the hourglass in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*: "Die ewige Sanduhr des

* * *

This cursory look at the philosophical discourse on inversion is meant to provide a sense of how far-reaching the implications of creating an inverted world can be. As folkloric entertainment, it might seem a bit harmless. Here, however, it appears as a basic element in philosophical thinking and serves as the foundation for everything from securing a substantial subject to the moral realignment of the world. Some of the specifics of these philosophical contexts will return as we examine the literary examples of inverted worlds, not as a matter of influence or to determine who was the source for whom, but rather as interlocutors in a dialogue that spans centuries and transgresses the lines that would otherwise divide genres and disciplines. One very important example of how inversion comes to play such a significant role in philosophical and literary texts can be found in the discussion on irony. In many ways, inversion and irony cannot be thought separately. This is especially the case when it comes to Hegel and his response to romantic irony, but also in Kierkegaard's writing on irony (as a response to Hegel) and the figure of the ironist that emerges from his works. Yet rather than attempt the task of recapitulating the history of irony here, the interference of irony and inversion will be of primary concern in Act 1 of the dissertation, in which Tieck's use of the two disrupt the reign of rationality and classical beauty on Mount Parnassus.

Daseins wird immer wieder umgedreht – und du mit ihr" (202). However, the eternal return of the same presents a different kind of reversal, or rather no reversal at all. The repetition enabled through the turning over of the hourglass does not imply change and that is precisely the point. Therein lies the potential terror of this thought experiment.

Act 1: Inverted Spectatorship as Critique of Enlightenment in Tieck's *Die verkehrte Welt*

> "As philosophy begins with doubt, so also that life which may
> be called human begins with irony."
> —*The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard (349)[1]

Representations of inverted worlds necessarily call into question the relationships that they depict. Whether it is the relationship between a farmer and a donkey or between a child and a parent, the role reversal might expose an imbalance in power or even comment on injustice. The representation, however, does not always unequivocally condemn the "normal" relationship (the farmer using the donkey for labor) but rather might simply rely on the absurdity of such an inversion, as if to say, "Now wouldn't that be crazy! A donkey riding a farmer! Who ever heard of such a thing?" The humor lies in the obvious impossibility of the occurrence ever happening. Hence, the image of the boy knitting in an Oehmigke & Riemschneider *Bilderbogen* from around 1860 is ridiculous because what boy would ever knit?[2] Of course, the line between a critique of norms and a reinforcement of them is not so neatly drawn.[3] Ludwig Tieck's 1798 play *Die verkehrte Welt* presents multiple inverted relationships that draw attention to new standards in social and political behavior that belong to the cultural and historical phenomenon of the Enlightenment. This chapter argues that Tieck is obviously presenting a critique of Enlightened practices and ideas that would, in a Kantian fashion, have all individuals be the rational masters of their own destiny. Thus, the play participates in a critique of the Enlightened subject, but without offering any simple solutions as to how to rectify such inverted relationships as, for example, an author having to submit to the will of his newly emancipated reading public.

Within the genre of drama, the inverted world has had a long history going as far back as the representations of *impossibilia* found in plays by ancient Greek authors, as mentioned in the prologue. Without going that far back into literary history, at this point, it is perhaps more helpful to look back in a bit more detail to Tieck's more proximate predecessors from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who wrote inverted world plays in German. Christian Weise and Johann Ulrich König took up the motif in their

---

[1] Translation modified. Original in Latin: "*Ut a dubitatione philosophia sic ab ironia vita digna, quae humana vocetur incipit*" (64).

[2] See figure 2 in the Prologue.

[3] Walter Münz addresses this ambiguity within inverted world representations in his afterword to the Reclam edition of *Die verkehrte Welt*. In reference to Christian Weise's play he notes that "die 'verkehrte Welt' [erscheint] traditionsgerecht als Zerrspiegel einer intakten Seinsordnung, deren Legitimität durch ihre zeitweilige Aufhebung erst recht erkennbar wird" (165).

works, drawing from the images found on the *Bilderbögen* that were on sale at market fairs (*Jahrmärkte*). Indeed, Tieck himself makes this connection explicitly in reference to Weise's play: "[*Die verkehrte Welt*] ist eigentlich nur eine Nachahmung eines alten Stücks im Zittauischen Schultheater, und der Verfasser (der Rektor Weise) gesteht, wie ihn einige alte zum Verkauf herumgetragenen Bilderchen auf diese Idee geführt hätten" (*Bambocciaden*, iii-iv, qtd. in Münz 135). The direct reference to Weise and the printed images invites a closer look at the 1683 play in order to better highlight the historical specificity of Tieck's adaptation a little over 100 years later—after the French Revolution and in the wake of the Enlightenment.[4]

Already by the last quarter of the seventeenth century, images of the inverted world were shaping literary works. Weise's *Von der verkehrten Welt* uses the vignette images as a structural element within the larger dramatic structure of his five-act play. The individual inverted relationships appear within legal cases on stage as part of the courtroom drama set up in act I when the character Alamode assumes the role of judge and starts conducting trials and making judgments based on the principle of inversion. For example, Alamode decides in favor of a customer who wants to sue a merchant for having charged him money for a suede vest. The customer not only receives his payment back from the merchant, but also gets to keep the article of clothing. In subsequent cases, a beggar is made to pay alms to a wealthy man, and a farmer is forced to carry his mules. These inverted courtroom decisions then spill out into other realms of life, including an inversion in family relationships, so that a daughter unabashedly starts telling her parents whom she wants to marry, and a grandfather ends up in a baby cradle. The repertoire of inverted images is almost as numerous as the number of characters in the play (over 100!).

With Weise's play it is difficult to tell where the critique lies and where he is presenting us with *impossibilia* that we are meant to laughingly dismiss as an absurdity. The play depicts the rise and fall of Alamode's inverted world regime. In the end the perverse judge and his sidekick, Scaramuza, are put in their place by a higher authority, namely Apollo. Indeed, the inverted relationships to which Alamode's judgments give way ultimately seem to be condemned as lacking virtue, when Apollo takes back the judge's seat and brings Alamode to trial. Only through Apollo's judgment and condemnation of Alamode is the world set back in order. And yet, Apollo, as the god of truth, occupies the judge's seat with just as much tyrannical self-assurance as Alamode. While his judgments do seem reasonable—Alamode is simply banished from Parnassus

---

[4]   The connections to König's play might also be of interest. However, the play does not seem to be as immediately relevant, given that Tieck clearly foregrounds Weise's version. Indeed, both Ruth Petzold and Alfred Behrmann claim that Tieck had no knowledge at all of König's 1725 text (Petzold 179n29, Behrmann 152-53n16).

in the end—Apollo's word is law. And his power to enforce the law is great: "APOLLO. Leget die Sache aus / wie ihr wollet; Der Ausgang wird euch lehren / wie weit sich die Macht unsers Richterstuhls erstrecket" (222). Sitting as judge over Parnassus, deciding which allegorical figure will be allowed to join the virtues, Apollo appears as a benevolent dictator, but a dictator nevertheless. Rather than making some final judgment over Weise's play, however, I would argue that this sort of ambiguity, when it comes to power and judgment, is something inherent to representations of the inverted world. Indeed, the inversion of the inverted world (to turn it back around the right way) is not altogether possible. In the end, we do not find the world returned to its previous idyllic state. Something irreparable occurs once inversion takes hold that not even the god of light and truth can reinstate for us. While the 1683 version of the play does not reflect at length upon this ambiguity, it does leave room for questioning the rule of Apollo as the beneficent tyrant. And Tieck's play picks up precisely on this question that unsettles the dominant view of reason as the highest virtue.

Tieck's challenge to the tyranny of reason, however, was not met with welcome arms. In fact, the affront to reason was a matter of both the content and form of the play, leading his publisher Friedrich Nicolai to reject the manuscript with a long, pedantic letter explaining the faults of the play.[5] According to Nicolai, the play (and its author) was too "eccentric" (*exzentrisch*). Rather than acknowledging this eccentricity as a literary strategy, Nicolai claims that it results in alienating the play's audience. He warns Tieck that eccentric writing will not make him a memorable author who stands the test of time. Eccentricity is, in fact, nothing other than a sign of laziness:

> Das Reich der exzentrischen Imagination ist einförmiger, als es dem Faulen scheint, der gern selbstgefällig darin herumspaziert; das Reich der Natur ist höchst mannichfaltig, aber es ist nicht so leicht zu erforschen, wer es aber zu erforschen und interessant darzustellen weiß, findet Wahrheit und Leben, da jener bloß Träume findet, die vergehen, sobald das Morgenlicht strahlt. (*Briefe an Ludwig Tieck*, December 19, 1797)

Nicolai establishes a tension here between the realm of the eccentric imagination and the realm of nature. Tieck's play belongs to the former, which is ephemeral and tendentious. The artist who devotes himself to hard work and the study of the natural world will find truth and life through his endeavors. Shakespeare, Nicolai adds, belongs to this category of artist: "Shakespear ist nicht exzentrisch, sondern wahre, menschliche Natur meisterhaft

---

[5]   Scholars use this letter as evidence for a variety of arguments. Edwin Zeydel, for example, uses it to underscore the play's lack of aesthetic value and emphasize its perverse nature: "In view of the many perversions, it is no wonder that, according to Tieck's own statement of 1828, the publisher mistook Acts I-III and Acts IV-V, respectively, for two different plays" (89-90).

dargestellt" (ibid.). The eccentric artist or work of art clearly stands in opposition to the natural world, to truth, and apparently to humanity itself.[6]

As scandalizing as Nicolai's rejection of the play is, the actual reception of it was quite subdued. Its unsuitableness for the stage is perhaps most clearly conveyed in Tieck's own description of the austere silence that pervaded the room on the evening the play was performed as readers' theater. No one found it funny in the least:

> Der heitere Mann freut sich auf die Vorlesung eines lustigen Lustspiels; seine geistreiche Gattin, selbst Schriftstellerin und Dichterin, hatte eine kleine Gesellschaft vereinigt, und der Vortrag begann. […] Aber zu meinem Erstaunen fesselte ein steinharter, unbezwinglicher Ernst die Versammlung, und man hätte einen rührenden moralischen Vortrag nicht mit mehr Stille und Fassung anhören können. (*Schriften*, vol. 1, xxiii)

It is easy to imagine that a play with over seventy characters, some playing as many as four parts, might be difficult to absorb by just hearing it read out loud over the course of an evening. Still, the play retained its reputation as unperformable over the years, and it was not until the mid-twentieth century that an attempt was made to put it on stage.[7] The play's legacy as an aesthetic and artistic failure makes it particularly significant as a potential source of resistance to conventional notions of beauty, theatrical standards, and the importance of reason. As an eccentric work of art it falls out of the realm of the acceptable, the logical, and the reasonable.[8]

Die verkehrte Welt was written in a period bookended by two incredibly influential philosophical works: Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) and Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807). The play's critique of reason as the chief tool of Enlightenment

---

[6] The comparison to Shakespeare is not just a reference to any old prominent author. Tieck's connection to Shakespeare was deep set and thus the comparison all the more hard hitting. His involvement with translations of Shakespeare's plays into German together with A.W. Schlegel is well known and a matter of some debate. Tieck also wrote extensively on Shakespeare. For an overview of some of the controversy surrounding Tieck's role in Shakespeare translations, see Kenneth E. Larson's "The Origins of the 'Schlegel-Tieck' Shakespeare in the 1820s."

[7] Karl Pestalozzi refers to a school performance in 1963 that is likely the first stage performance ever (Pestalozzi 141).

[8] The unperformability and eccentricity of Tieck's play has something almost postdramatic about it. While Hans-Thies Lehmann presents a lineage of postdramatic theater whose "pre-history" includes theater's dramatic crisis in the 1880s, I would argue that *Die verkehrte Welt* has a place in this pre-history as well, almost 100 years earlier. The disconnect between text and performance in Tieck's play resonates with the rift Lehmann identifies in the works of Gertrude Stein: "Eine Spaltung zwischen Theater und Text hat sich herausgebildet. Gertrude Stein galt und gilt als unspielbar, was durchaus zutrifft, wenn man ihre Text[e] an den Erwartungen des dramatischen Theaters mißt. Fragt man lediglich, welchen 'Erfolg' ihre Texte auf dem Theater hatten, so muß man ihr eindeutiges Scheitern als Theaterautorin attestieren" (79). The shared failure of Tieck's and Stein's plays might indicate a queer lineage of the theater, one that incorporates failure into its textuality. Here Halberstam's *Queer Art of Failure* takes on added relevance as encouragement to pursue the postdramatic history of failure as particularly queer; however, it must suffice for now to merely point out the postdramatic affinities between Tieck and Stein.

thinking is not subtle. Still, the role of spectatorship in Kant's writings and the connection between inversion and irony in Hegel's works provide a framework that bring the radical elements of Tieck's critique to the fore. Beginning with a recapitulation of some of Kant's most canonical explanations of the Enlightenment and spectatorship, I then turn to an analysis of the play as a critique of the Enlightened spectator. The argument will lead through the inversions of spectator and performer positions and the politics of inverted spectatorship before coming to the role of irony in the play as an anti-Enlightenment strategy and how Hegel's critique of Romantic irony attests to its potential for upsetting stable and tyrannical regimes of power and knowledge.

What is Enlightenment Spectatorship?

The Enlightenment as a philosophical, literary, social, and political movement values reason as the highest human faculty. As an ideological system, Enlightenment thinking posits a rational subject who can use reason to confront any and all issues in the world from religious dilemmas to political conflicts. The Enlightened subject is capable of thinking by himself,[9] without being told by some authority what is right or wrong, true or false. Kant's characterization of the Enlightenment and the Enlightened subject in his 1784 essay "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" provides a picture of how this set of ideas was circulating at the end of the eighteenth century. The famous opening lines, "Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen" (167), presents understanding as the faculty capable of freeing an individual from the shackles of self-imposed immaturity and obtaining majority status. Most people (and all women, as Kant specifically points out) prefer being told how to think about things rather than use their understanding to come to conclusions themselves. The Enlightened subject, on the contrary, does not shy away from the challenge of thinking for himself.

Kant's version of the Enlightenment also sets up an oppositional dynamic between the lazy, frightened, passive subject and the thinking, daring, active one. The former simply consumes and accepts whatever information might be handed down from a higher authority. Speaking as this passive subject, Kant writes, "Habe ich ein Buch, das für mich Verstand hat, einen Seelsorger, der für mich Gewissen hat, einen Arzt, der für mich die Diät beurteilt usw., so brauche ich mich ja nicht selbst zu bemühen" (169). It is much easier to just accept received truths about the world. The Enlightened subject, however,

---

[9] The Enlightened subject is decidedly male; hence my choice to use "himself" here is meant to reflect that restriction within the historical discourse.

is capable of making his own decisions and does not need these external sources of wisdom to guide him towards good judgments, moral or otherwise. While Kant's focus here is not on aesthetic judgment and the use of reason and understanding when it comes to art and literature, his description nevertheless applies to a mode of reception that might be extended to modes of passive spectatorship. In opposition to this passive spectator, who merely consumes what is placed before him, one might assume that the Enlightened spectator actively uses his reason to evaluate anything from the value of certain food stuffs to the aesthetic merits of a theater spectacle.

The use of reason when it comes to aesthetic judgments fills many pages in Kant's third critique, but even in his short essay on the Enlightenment we can already see how passive reception generally stands over and against the active, Enlightened spectator's engagement with the world. According to Kant, the Enlightened subject uses his reason to form conclusions independently of religious or political authorities. He observes the world critically but also carefully. He does not contradict orders immediately, but rather draws up rational arguments in written form from the safety of his desk and with the protective cushioning of time and distance. The Enlightened spectator does not jump into the fray, but rather critically observes from a distance and then later issues his "public" opinion.[10] In this sense, the Enlightened subject/spectator shares qualities with Kant's spectator of the sublime. The encounter with the sublime, as described by Kant in *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, depends on the spectator observing the sublime spectacle from a safe distance. Without this distance, when the spectator finds himself in harm's way, the experience cannot be sublime because the sublime experience depends upon a reassertion of the incredible mental capacities (*Seelenstärke*) of the spectator. Indeed, the sublime experience is a testament to the faculty of reason (as opposed to the experience of beauty that Kant relates specifically to understanding), for the spectator encounters something that is inconceivable to reason, and yet the very fact that he recognizes that the spectacle he is witnessing surpasses reason is evidence for how great human thinking is:

> Also, gleichwie die ästhetische Urteilskraft in Beurtheilung des Schönen die Einbildungskraft in ihrem freien Spiel auf den Verstand bezieht, um mit dessen Begriffen überhaupt (ohne Bestimmung derselben) zusammenzustimmen: so bezieht sie dasselbe Vermögen in Beurtheilung eines Dinges als erhabenen auf die Vernunft, um deren Ideen (unbestimmt welchen) subjektiv übereinzustimmen. (124)

---

[10] Kant explains in "Was ist Aufklärung?" that this active use of reason should only be used "publicly" by which he means in the context of public discourse as an author or teacher. One should not, however, start "reasoning" when one's civic duty (to political, military, or church authorities) is required in the very moment. Thus, even an imagined active spectator at a theater spectacle might not engage his reason during the play but later use it to write a critique of the work of art.

Whereas beauty cannot be understood in conceptual terms, the sublime cannot be contained by ideas. Sublime experience also depends upon the subject's awareness of scale. He must acknowledge his own smallness in the face of the absolute greatness he sees in the sublime. This acknowledgement demands a proper distance to the sublime object. The sublime experience is thus always relative and subject-based. It surpasses the human scale of reason, and since this is its very definition it is always bound to this scale. The Enlightened spectator of the sublime establishes a mature and rational subject position over and against the greatness of the sublime by acknowledging his autonomy from the natural world whose violence unfolds before him—at a safe distance.

Though the theater spectacle does not figure directly into Kant's discussion of the sublime, there is something theatrical about his description of the sublime encounter with nature. Not only does the safe distance between spectator and spectacle mirror the relation between stage and audience in a proscenium theater, but the language itself is more dramatic. Kant's description is a remarkable deviation from his usual laborious prose in the third critique:

> Kühne überhängende gleichsam drohende Felsen, am Himmel sich auftürmende Donnerwolken, mit Blitzen und Krachen einherziehend, Vulkane in ihrer ganzen zerstörenden Gewalt, Orkane mit ihrer zurückgelassenen Verwüstung, der grenzenlose Ozean, in Empörung gesetzt, ein hoher Wasserfall eines mächtigen Flusses u. dgl. machen unser Vermögen zu widerstehen, in Vergleichung mit ihrer Macht, zur unbedeutenden Kleinigkeit. Aber ihr Anblick wird nur um desto anziehender, je furchtbarer er ist, wenn wir uns nur in Sicherheit befinden; und wir nennen diese Gegenstände gern erhaben, weil sie die Seelenstärke über ihr gewöhnliches Mittelmaß erhöhen, und ein Vermögen zu widerstehen von ganz anderer Art in uns entdecken lassen, welches uns Mut macht, uns mit der scheinbaren Allgewalt der Natur messen zu können. (130-31)

The natural forces support and even call into existence a human faculty that allows us to compare ourselves to nature. Even the most violent natural catastrophe, when viewed in safety, can then be instrumentalized and turned into evidence for human being's own greatness. As such, the sublime spectator is also an Enlightened subject who asserts his independence from higher powers by making appropriate use of reason.

Enlightenment spectatorship relies upon an instrumentalization of the spectacle, of nature, and of other subjects. This relationship has most famously been portrayed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in which they repeatedly show how the legacy of Enlightenment ideals has enabled atrocious ideological structures to persevere. In Homer's works, the battle between myth and epos unfolds with Odysseus as the champion of epic subjectivity—a sort of proto-Enlightenment subjectivity that has abided in Western civilization ever since. Adorno and Horkheimer call him the "Urbild eben des bürgerlichen Individuums" (50). Odysseus's subject status is secured through his repeated trickery, which is characterized by

discarding his selfhood in order to ultimately preserve it: "Odysseus, wie die Helden aller eigentlichen Romane nach ihm, wirft sich weg gleichsam, um sich zu gewinnen" (55). With reason guiding Odysseus through his adventures, his conflicts with chthonian figures ought to be understood as a narrativized and rationalized extension of the conflict between epos and mythos. Everywhere in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus uses reason to triumph over mythical opponents. Adorno and Horkheimer portray him as an Enlightenment hero capable of asserting rational subjectivity over and against nature (nature itself being mythical). The Enlightenment comes to embody a certain subject position, an identity that demarcates itself through the use of reason.

The cutting critique of the Enlightenment that Adorno and Horkheimer develop depends upon its paradoxical premise, which finds expression in the episode with the Sirens, an episode that also foregrounds spectatorship in significant ways. Here Odysseus appears as the rational spectator who overcomes forces of nature in order to consume art and beauty.

> Der Gefesselte wohnt einem Konzert bei, reglos lauschend wie später die Konzertbesucher, und sein begeisterter Ruf nach Befreiung verhallt schon als Applaus. […] Das Kulturgut steht zur kommandierten Arbeit in genauer Korrelation, und beide gründen im unentrinnbaren Zwang zur gesellschaftlichen Herrschaft über die Natur. (41)

Odysseus bound to the ship mast becomes the contemporary concertgoer. And the combination of instrumentalized reason with the imbalance of power between Odysseus and his men shows how Enlightenment practices ensure that society always rules over nature. Odysseus appears as an Enlightened spectator in the face of a sublime spectacle. Indeed, the Sirens are, in Adorno and Horkheimer's recasting of Homer's tale, a mythical phenomenon of nature. Nature and myth share semantic qualities in this line of argument, while Odysseus's spectatorship, like Kant's sublime spectatorship, depends foremost on securing a safe position over and against the two.[11] It also results in the apotheosis of the spectator-subject and the devaluation or mastery of the object of contemplation. Multiple aspects of this argument will come to bear on the reading of Tieck's play, but for now, we might hold on to the idea that Adorno and Horkheimer articulate a particular problem with Enlightenment subjection through this episode of spectatorship, namely, that the subjugation of nature (i.e., its instrumentalization) comes about through using reason to access beauty.

---

[11] This sort of oppositional positioning of Odysseus and the Sirens also relates to the history of tension between the female voice and male reason, thus an implicit gender inversion might also be at work when the position of the safe, rational, male spectator switches with the dangerous, mythical, female spectacle. For more on this tradition, see Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf's essay, "Sirenengesänge. Mythos und Medialität der weiblichen Stimme."

The stakes of the dialectic of Enlightenment are perhaps more clear and explicit in Adorno and Horkheimer's discussion of the Marquis de Sade and his work. Here, they show how the rational extension of Kant's Enlightenment thinking, specifically as found in the first sentences of "Was ist Aufklärung?", is exposed as totalitarian by the Marquis de Sade's writings. Setting reason as the ultimate virtue and measure for all human interactions (and non-human for that matter) enables social structures that condemn things like sympathy (*Mitleid*) and emotions. The Enlightenment in the hands of the Marquis de Sade becomes a cold-blooded ideology that permits, if not condones, violence as part of an explicit inversion of vice and virtue:

> Güte und Wohltun werden zur Sünde, Herrschaft und Unterdrückung zur Tugend. "Alle guten Dinge waren ehemals schlimme Dinge; aus jeder Erbsünde ist eine Erbtugend geworden" [*Genealogie der Moral*]. Damit macht Juliette nun auch in der neuen Epoche Ernst, sie betreibt die Umwertung zum erstenmal bewußt. (111)

In their depiction of this extreme consequence of Enlightenment thinking, Adorno and Horkheimer tie in the line from Nietzsche that refers to the original inversion of values, which, as we saw in the *Vorspiel*, must be inverted again. But the inversion of good and evil that Nietzsche develops appears involuntary and almost tame when juxtaposed to Juliette's willful reversal of moral standards.

While Adorno and Horkheimer present the Marquis de Sade as one who saw the wicked, perverse, and inverting potential of Kant's philosophy (and the legacy of the Enlightenment in general), I would like to pursue other possible inversions of Enlightenment thinking that do not necessarily maintain such stark oppositions. How might the pleasures that de Sade instrumentalizes speak to something fundamentally perverse about all desire? And if a perversion of power relations does belie all pleasure, how might a moral critique of the Enlightenment denounce the transvaluation of values *without* positing a new set of normative values that equally rely upon mechanisms of exclusion and an imbalance of power? Might their be another way to regard an inversion of values that does not demonize the relationship between pleasure and pain, yet that still avoids doing violence to history? But to stay with Adorno and Horkheimer for now, they do bring to a point some basic concerns behind a critique of the Enlightenment and the instrumentalization of the world through reason. Not only do they connect sublime spectatorship with the establishment of the bourgeois subject, they also argue that the promotion of Enlightenment values, such as rationality and progress, enables violence and atrocities. In one sense, Adorno and Horkheimer use the figure of the inverted world themselves to show the dark side of the Enlightenment. As opposed to Adorno and Horkheimer, Tieck does not present the role of the critical theorist as the alternative

position to the inverted world of the Enlightenment but rather presents the ironic fool—who is perhaps something of a queer critical theorist *avant la lettre*.

Die Verkehrte Welt as Critique of Enlightenment

Unlike Kant's cliff-gazer or Homer's Odysseus who must be tethered to the mast in order to keep him from interacting with the spectacle, Tieck's characters do not maintain the same level of detachment from the theater. They are ready to transgress not only the boundary at the edge of the stage but also other boundaries implicit in the genre and medium in which they find themselves. These transgressions appear as inversions, and the play is, as the title already indicates, full of them. In terms of destabilizing the Enlightened spectator position, the most important inversions involve figures who switch their position on stage with a position off stage or vice versa. Nevertheless, these spectator-performer inversions seem to only come as the result of a chain reaction set off by Scaramuz at the beginning of act I. Traditionally the commedia dell'arte trouble-maker figure (Petzold 183), Scaramuz is used to playing the part of a fool. As the curtain opens, he is in the middle of a dispute with the Poet (the author of the play). He wants to be—or play—Apollo.[12] Already the tension between being and playing a part appears as a problem, since as the Poet tries to explain, "Wertgeschätzter Scaramuz, dieselben sind beim hiesigen Theater zu einem bestimmten Rollenfach engagiert, Sie sind mit einem Worte, um mich kurz auszudrücken, der Scaramuz" (572). Scaramuz *is* the character Scaramuz and not just an actor playing Scaramuz. He is not merely slipping out of character but jumping out of his own skin into another—from fool to god of reason.

The conflict between the Poet, who wants to preserve the integrity of his artwork, and Scaramuz, who is tired of playing the fool, opens up numerous possibilities of contesting theatrical (and social) conventions. Indeed, the first figure to intervene is a member of the audience, Scävola. He answers what otherwise would have been a rhetorical statement by Scaramuz, who challenges "die ganze Welt, groß und klein," to beat him in a match of noble-mindedness (573). Scävola's response is the first explicit interaction between stage and audience world. It quickly leads to others. Now Pierrot, another commedia dell'arte figure on stage, also wants to give up his role, but not for a different one on stage. He wants to join the audience instead. As soon as he does so, another audience member, Grünhelm, decides he will go on stage and take over the position left open by Scaramuz. By the end of act I, Scaramuz has secured his role as

---

[12]   To be sure, this is also a role reversal from servant to master/god. Behrmann points out that it is actually a double inversion since Scaramuz's commedia dell'arte figure was a captain and then turned to a servant (147).

Apollo and is already taking stock of Mount Parnassus. Meanwhile, it becomes clear that the boundary between stage and audience, between fictional world and concrete reality, is completely porous, as audience members like Scävola continue to interrupt the action on stage with their commentary and as Scaramuz continues to break with the fictional, mythical setting of Parnassus and his ostensible Enlightenment values.[13]

While the inversion of stage and audience worlds does away with the safe distance of Enlightened spectatorship found in Kant's third critique, Tieck's reaction to the Enlightenment does not always require connecting so many dots. Indeed, Scaramuz is quite explicitly a champion of the Enlightenment and brings with him a new reign of reason in the name of progress and profit. Scaramuz, as the new god of light and reason, sees it as his duty to enforce the mature use of reason through the theater:

> ZUSCHAUER. Wir wollen aber auch nicht lauter Possen haben.

> SCARAMUZ. Je behüt uns Gott vor solcher Sünde! Was wäre ich für ein Apollo, wann ich das litte oder zugäbe? Nein, meine Herren, ernsthafte Sachen die Fülle, Sachen zum Nachdenken, damit doch auch der Verstand in einige Übung kommt. (577)

The humor here depends on recognizing the paradox that Scaramuz is manifesting. The Enlightenment ideal of using one's faculties of reason and understanding without the guidance or limitation of a higher authority, as Kant would have it, cannot come about when the higher authority (here, Scaramuz) decides to give his subjects some exercises to build their understanding. Thus, Scaramuz's sense of what it means to bring forth the Enlightenment runs contrary to the actual goal of the Enlightenment—and in Tieck's hands, this further reveals the fundamental contradiction of the Enlightenment as it comes across in texts like Kant's essay, namely, that the texts that promote the autonomous emancipation of the Enlightened subject themselves pose as authoritative. Of course, the other joke here is rather straightforward: Scaramuz is obviously not so gifted when it comes to using reason, thus making him a poor facilitator for others.

This discrepancy within the figure of Scaramuz remains the strongest reminder that the play rejects the authority of the Enlightenment. As Enlightened ruler, Scaramuz's most defined characteristic is his conviction that Parnassus become more progress oriented. And progress in this case means turning a profit. The economic restructuring of the mountain that is home to Apollo and the Muses is Scaramuz's first concern once he has secured his position as Apollo. When the stagehands wheel in the mountain,

---

[13]   Around this same time Goethe was returning to his Faust material and added, among other elements, the "Vorspiel auf dem Theater" that depicts a conversation between the Poet, the Director and a "Lustige Person." During the scene the three figures discuss what the German stage needs, but unlike with Tieck's play, their dispute remains rather cordial and contained within the scene and does not leak out (in explicit ways) to the rest of the drama, let alone the audience (15-21).

Scaramuz's first question is how much profit it is making him. His concern for money is a drastic change from his predecessor's concerns while ruling over the mythical site for the arts and sciences. The treasurer tells Scaramuz: "Ihr Vorgänger kannte keine einzige Münzsorte." Scaramuz replies, "Das war auch ein Narr, und ein Mensch, der wenn man ihn beim Lichte besieht, in die fabelhaftesten Zeiten fällt. Jetzt aber hat die Aufklärung um sich gegriffen, und ich regiere" (581). His description of the true Apollo reads like a prefiguration of Adorno and Horkheimer's portrayal of the conflict between myth and epos that unfolds in Homer's texts. Apollo shimmers in a past that is fable-like, myth-like. The new era of the Enlightenment does away with this mythical glitter. For Scaramuz all that glitters is gold, and financial profit is the measure of progress. Capitalism and the Enlightenment appear here already as mutually reinforcing each other. Nature, beauty, and knowledge must be subjected to regimes of maximizing profit and eliminating inefficiency.[14]

And yet, the original Apollo does not appear to counter the problem of Enlightenment tyranny. At the start of act II, Apollo is deep in his idyllic exile, speaking in meter and composing impromptu odes. He remains in this distant world that is initially safe from the ravaging that Scaramuz's rule brings about. The true god of light and reason appears mostly content to spread poetry and knowledge among the shepherds and wild beasts, that is, until Scaramuz's inverted practices finally shake him into action. Here, the parallel to Weise's play is very clear: Apollo must be called in to restore order, when the new ruler/judge's decisions start having far-reaching consequences. However, the parallel is most telling where the two inverted worlds part. Tieck's Apollo is not successful in his attempt to regain control. Moreover, he is not the paragon of truth and wisdom that the traditional Apollo is in Weise's play. This difference becomes salient when Tieck's Apollo reveals himself to a band of rebels, who have assembled to plan Scaramuz's overthrow. His anagnorisis at the end of act IV is a bit too self-glorifying. He wields his status as god over the others, and his understatement, "Ich weiß, daß wir nicht alle Götter sein können, es muß auch andre Kreaturen geben" (646), indicates that the true Apollo has the potential to be just as tyrannical, subjugating, and self-absorbed as Scaramuz. But this Apollo is more ambiguous than villainous. He is not the all-powerful god of reason that Weise employs to reestablish order, nor is he as idiotic as Scaramuz. Indeed, Tieck's

---

14   Other scholars have looked at the potential connections between Adorno's critical theory and Tieck's literary production. Jörg Bong describes Tieck's literary strategy of *Schwindel* as an affront to the tradition of "identification" and as such connected to Adorno's discussion of the "totalitären historischen Tendenz des Zwangs der 'Identifikation'" (266). Markus Ophälders aligns Tieck and Adorno in terms of their relationship to art as the "Zufluchtsstätte der Metaphysik" (369), though I would argue that in *Die verkehrte Welt* there seems to be little sense of art serving as a refuge of any kind; the realm of the aesthetic is not safe from outside pressures and vice versa.

Apollo does recognize that ultimately the play itself will come to an end—regardless as to whether or not he wins the battle over Parnassus. To be sure, it does come to a battle in act V: Apollo gathers the rebel forces together and launches an attack against Scaramuz and his followers. Apollo's metatheatrical awareness gives him a slight advantage over Scaramuz in the end, until the stage audience itself takes up arms in defense of Scaramuz and storms the stage. The curtain then closes on the renewed fray, and it is far from obvious who will ultimately win. Apollo is less a symbol for the true and good Enlightened ruler and more of a purely symbolic figure who is at home in the inconsequential realm of the idyll. His divine powers of reason are not able to restore order, instead, he must rely on the structure of the play itself to draw things to a close.

In this respect, Apollo has an advantage over Scaramuz who has no sense of the conventions of theater. As the self-proclaimed representative of the Enlightenment par excellence, the latter is both Enlightened tyrant and Enlightened spectator. Tieck portrays this Enlightened spectator as incompetent and utterly lacking in self-awareness. The play includes multiple spectacles that are staged explicitly for the fictional audience's desire for entertainment. Scaramuz's role as spectator comes to the fore in these scenes. For example, the "Große Illumination" in act III is produced by the Machinist (the props and stage effects manager), who explains to the audience the double-register of the light show:

> MASCHINIST (*gegen das Parterre*). Die ganze Erleuchtung ist im Grunde zum Vergnügen eines verehrungswürdigen Publikums eingerichtet, und der einfältige Scaramuz bildet sich ein, es sei seinetwegen geschehen. Aber wir wollen ihm davon nichts merken lassen, sonst ist ihm die ganze Freude mit seinem Geburtstage verdorben. (608)

The Machinist frames Scaramuz as an immature spectator who must be protected from the truth. Meanwhile, the audience in the text is doubly illuminated and enlightened as to the nature of the spectacle that they are observing. Scaramuz, however, must be kept ignorant.

Scaramuz's lack of reason and understanding as a spectator continues to be central to act III as a plot involving two pairs of lovers develops. This subplot takes center stage in act III, as Grünhelm and Thalia (the muse of comedy) conspire with the Foreigner (also known later as Friedrich) and Melpomene (the muse of tragedy) to find a way to get Scaramuz to grant both pairs permission to marry. The strategy they devise is a theatrical one: They plan to put on a birthday play for Scaramuz to "catch the conscience of the king." Beyond Hamlet's play-within-a-play, this performance involves multiple plays within plays.[15] It is not enough to show Scaramuz a play in which two lovers finally win

---

[15] For a detailed discussion of the play-within-a-play motif and its network of predecessors leading up to Tieck's use of it, see Ulrike Landfester's "'...die Zeit selbst ist thöricht geworden...': Ludwig Tiecks Komödie 'Der gestiefelte Kater' (1797) in der Tradition des Spiel im Spiel-Dramas" (101-133).

the consent of the bride's father. No, instead the play first shows two lovers who come up with the idea to put on a play in which two lovers finally win the consent of the bride's father. The basic play-within-a-play strategy is premised by the idea that a spectator might recognize his own position in the action on stage. This extra play-within-the-play, however, implies that for the plan to work, Scaramuz must also be shown how a play might affect someone's conscience in the first place. Scaramuz is so dull-witted that he requires the additional play-within-a-play to instruct him in the mimetic power of art. This strategy might not come as that much of a surprise given that the Enlightened spectator finds himself at a safe distance from the spectacle, where he can contemplate it without the threat of being "touched" by it. Paradoxically, in order to overcome this distance, more layers of theatricality are necessary.[16]

This multiplication of the theater through the reflections and refractions of the play-within-a-play device achieves the goal of changing Scaramuz's mind. But in achieving its goal it also succumbs to Scaramuz's own Enlightened approach to art. The lovers instrumentalize the theater in order to secure their marriages. Using theater as a means to an end is in fact thematized in the play-within-a-play itself. The Young Man (played by Friedrich the Foreigner) expresses his concern to his lover Emilie (played by Melpomene):

> O Liebe Emilie, das quält mich eben. Ist unser Projekt, ja ich mag es wohl so nennen, unser Hinterhalt, nicht eine Entweihung dieses Tages? Wir wollen ihm durch ein Schauspiel Freude machen, und wir benutzen dieses Schauspiel dazu, uns und unsre Situation darin darzustellen. Gerade an dem heutigen Tage sollten wir am wenigsten für uns zu handeln suchen, und ich brauche gerade diesen Tag als ein Mittel, um mich glücklich zu machen. (613)

Though the Young Man's concern is not about the integrity and nature of art, the worry that the lovers would be exploiting a spectacle meant to bring joy and pleasure to its spectators has implications for a more general stance towards art. These implications become visible within the larger context of the play, in which Scaramuz exploits the arts and science for profit in the name of the Enlightenment. However, the lovers' theatrical strategy is only semi-successful, which perhaps speaks even more to Tieck's criticism of the Enlightenment as an instrumentalizing and calculating ideology. They are all allowed to marry, but when we see them again in act IV, they are obviously not living in

---

[16] The layering of plays-within-plays has obviously drawn the attention of scholars writing on Tieck and this play. Lisa Galaski, for example, argues against putting too much hermeneutic pressure on defining the different layers of theatricality since the figures in the play show that these layers are completely arbitrary (27). See also Uwe Durst's article "Realitätssystemisch einfache und komplexe Varianten der Spiel-im-Spiel-Struktur" for a contrasting view that breaks the play's layers down systematically. Pestalozzi already points out the tendency for scholars to approach the play with diagrams and arrows (128). For other approaches to making sense of these layers, see also Lothar Pikulik (299) and Klaus Weimar (150-53).

matrimonial bliss. The exploitation of the theater in order to actualize the goals of the Enlightenment fails to secure two new bourgeois couples in the end. This is not to say that theater can never be used strategically, but in any event not to stabilize the position of Enlightened subjects. And whatever strategy one might have in mind, the effects remain incalculable.

Fools, Irony, and the Emancipated Spectator

In order to defy the tyranny of reason that the Enlightenment entails, one must play the fool. And playing the fool in *Die verkehrte Welt* requires an ironic detachment that differs from the relationship between Enlightened spectator and spectacle. Grünhelm plays the fool in multiple senses, including this particular one that emphasizes a familiarity with as well as joy in irony. When Grünhelm decides to become part of the action on stage, he takes over Scaramuz's role and assures the Poet that he will tend to the merry-making ("Lustigmachen," 576). This responsibility means mediating between audience and performance. In this role, he acts as a crowd-pleaser and is not at all concerned with the high principles of art and beauty that guide, for example, the Poet's work. In this sense he is perhaps more disruptive to the traditional values of art and science on Parnassus than Scaramuz, who at least maintains a sense of the (monetary) value of higher principles, even though his sense is misguided. Grünhelm instead plays to the audience and knows no other higher authority.

As the fool, Grünhelm recognizes the quality of language that allows for multiple meanings, confusion, and ironic ambiguity. Grünhelm tries to explain the metaphorical nature of certain expressions to Scaramuz, who is confused and angry that Grünhelm refers to the new "students" on Parnassus (they are wild beasts turned academics by Apollo) as "Musensöhne." Scaramuz understands this to mean that his Muses have been producing sons, which would confirm his suspicions that the Muses are a lascivious bunch:

> SCARAMUZ. Musensöhne? – Was muß ich denn da von Euch hören, Ihr liederliches Gesindel von Musen?

> GRÜNHELM. O gnädiger Apollo, das ist nur so eine hergebrachte Redensart, womit weder den Musen noch den Studenten zu nahe geschieht, so wie man den Kirchhof Gottesacker, und das Haus, wo die Verhöre angestellt werden, den Sitz der Gerechtigkeit nennt, die Soldaten heißen ja eben deswegen Verteidiger des Vaterlandes, ja man pflegt poetischerweise seine Geburtsgegend oft sogar sein Vaterland zu nennen. An so etwas müßt Ihr Euch nicht stoßen denn unsre Sprache hat außerordentlich viele Synonymen. (603-04)

In Grünhelm's explanation of the dead metaphor of the "fatherland," the metaphorical basis for all language comes to the fore. Grünhelm's awareness of language is connected to a distance from it that does not, however, imply that he is not immanently participating in language. This ironic stance is at once detached and implicated, joking and serious, on stage and off.

While other characters transgress all kinds of boundaries in *Die verkehrte Welt*, Grünhelm's ironic stance affords him a degree of power and flexibility in the inverted world that other figures do not share. The true Apollo, by contrast, is a sincere and earnest figure with a sense of right and wrong guided by deep convictions about truth, art, and beauty. Even though the god recognizes the structural limits of the dramatic medium (as when he scoffs at Scaramuz and reminds him that the play will eventually bring all things to an end), he is still bound to his character as the true Apollo. He is forever the god of light and reason on stage. As such he does not emerge as the clear victor. He, too, is subjugated to the principles that he represents: the sanctity of truth, reason, and beauty. Hence he must remain on stage, whereas Grünhelm can choose to leave the stage world behind—a freedom he shares with perhaps only the reader/spectator outside of the text. Even the very genre savvy Innkeeper (*Wirt*), who often speaks of his ill fate due to the decline of inns as popular meeting spots for characters in dramatic works, is not capable of that much detachment.[17] In addition to drawing attention to the fading popularity of inns, he also comments on his own falling out of character. But he is bound to his role and, more significantly, his setting. And even the other figure who crosses the edge of the stage twice, Pierrot, does not convey the same degree of flexibility as Grünhelm. Like Apollo, Pierrot is much more sincere than Grünhelm and returns to the stage in the end in order to support Scaramuz in battle. This show of support also exposes him as being irrevocably caught up in the fictional world. Grünhelm has, by that point, already extracted himself from the conflict and is well on his way to walking out of the theater altogether.

For many, Tieck stands as the literary master of Romantic irony.[18] Indeed, he attracts Hegel's attention in this respect and is actually shielded from Hegel's harshest criticism

---

[17] Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs focuses on the *Wirt* in particular, claiming that his self-reflexivity stands out. Unlike the relatively traditional interaction between audience and stage, the Innkeeper's metafictional interjections remain jarring (324). Peter Szondi also highlights the Innkeeper's interaction with Friedrich as an example of characters with self-awareness, as opposed to merely falling out of character (29-31).

[18] Among those who champion Tieck as such are Manfred Frank, Lisa Galaski, and Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs. For a contrasting view that is critical of Tieck's use of irony, see Ernst Ribbat, *Ludwig Tieck : Studien zur Konzeption und Praxis romantischer Poesie* (186-87). See especially Helmut Arntzen's chapter on Tieck, in which he explicitly makes the connection to Hegel's critique of Romantic irony and Tieck's execution of it (150).

of Romantic irony. However, there are many aspects of *Die verkehrte Welt* that seem to do precisely what Hegel finds most troubling about Romantic art. The navel-gazing, self-satisfying ways of the Romantic ironist as described and criticized by Hegel seem to correspond with the intense self-reflexivity found in *Die verkehrte Welt*. In his *Ästhetik*, Hegel makes it clear that art has to be founded in a serious interest; it must have content (*Gehalt*) that stands by itself as something substantial, true, and ethically sound (94). Without a substantial interest, art is pointless, and ironic art lacks substance:

> Und nun erfaßt sich diese Virtuosität eines ironisch-künstlerischen Lebens als eine *göttliche Genialität*, für welche alles und jedes nur ein wesenloses Geschöpf ist, an das der freie Schöpfer, der von allem sich los und ledig weiß, sich nicht bindet, indem er dasselbe vernichten wie schaffen kann. (95)

This divine geniality of the ironic artist means that he treats his subject matter with detachment. He is not committed to it and could just as easily discard and destroy his creation as declare it a work of art. Hegel's critique here is directed at those Romanticists who employ irony as a consistent artistic principle, an unforgiveable paradox in Hegel's opinion, since irony stands in opposition to all that is "masterful, great, and extraordinary" ("Herrlich[], Groß[], Vortrefflich[]," 97). The Romantic ironist betrays the very definition of a work of art. Hegel's main object of criticism here is Schlegel and to some extent Solger, something that many, including Tieck, have said pertains to a misunderstanding on Hegel's behalf concerning the type of irony they had in mind, a misunderstanding that I will return to just below.19

Though his discussion of Tieck is truncated and more forgiving, the critical points that Hegel brings up do seem apt for a critical aesthetic analysis of *Die verkehrte Welt*. Indeed Hegel's writings echo what Tieck's publisher told him in that biting letter from December 19, 1797:

> Wollen Sie aber einem Manne, der unsere Literatur und unsere Schriftsteller und Leser seit 40 Jahren kennt, in etwas glauben, so werden Sie von dem exzentrischen Wege etwas ablassen […]. Das Exzentrische ist im Grunde leichte Arbeit! […] Das Reich der exzentrischen Imagination ist einförmiger, als es dem Faulen scheint, der gern selbstgefällig darin herumspaziert; das Reich der Natur ist höchst mannichfaltig […]. (*Briefe an Ludwig Tieck*, December 19, 1797)

Nicolai returns to the word "eccentric" throughout to describe *Die verkehrte Welt* and its lazy and self-indulgent author. Like Hegel, Nicolai accuses the Romantic author of being too much interested in himself—and self-interest in art is not substantial. Nicolai warns Tieck that he should take more care, think about the longevity of his works, consider his

---

19   For more discussion on the overlaps and differences between Solger and Tieck concerning irony, see Markus Ophälders' article, "Ironie bei Tieck und Solger" (365-76). Ophälders argues against the idea that Tieck's use of irony is a literary manifestation of the abstract ideas on irony developed by Solger.

readership in the decades to come, and avoid too many inside jokes. However, what is perhaps most striking in this passage from the letter is the juxtaposition of the "eccentric imagination" and the "realm of nature." The contrast means that being eccentric is unnatural. A hardworking artist with substantial interest is connected to the natural world. Thus, *Die verkehrte Welt* is an unnatural work of art. It is a deviation from natural aesthetic standards, and Nicolai refused to publish it.

Tieck, however, was not deterred by either Nicolai or Hegel. Irony is tantamount to art for Tieck, though he does differentiate between high and low irony.

> Die Ironie, von der ich spreche, ist ja nicht Spott, Hohn, Persiflage, oder was man sonst der Art gewöhnlich darunter zu verstehen pflegt, es ist vielmehr der tiefste Ernst, der zugleich mit wahrer Heiterkeit verbunden ist. Sie ist nicht bloß negativ, sondern etwas durchaus Positives. Sie ist die Kraft, die dem Dichter die Herrschaft über den Stoff erhält; er soll sich nicht an denselben verlieren, sondern über ihm stehen. So bewahrt ihn die Ironie vor Einseitigkeiten und leerem Idealisieren. (Köpke, *Ludwig Tieck II*, 238-39)

Tieck seems to provide a direct response here to both Nicolai and Hegel. He rejects the idea that irony is necessarily negative and destructive and asserts a relationship between artist and subject matter that is supported through irony, thereby also disputing the claim that irony is one-sided and just empty imagining on the part of the artist. Of course, Tieck is even more explicit in his denunciation of Hegel. Hegel misunderstood Solger, says Tieck, and in this Tieck aligns himself with the likes of Kierkegaard, who also reads Hegel as misunderstanding irony (Köpke 285). According to Kierkegaard, Hegel's take on irony was too narrow. Not only does he limit irony to a mere moment but he also does not take into account irony as it was understood in antiquity. This critique is already apparent in the list of theses at the beginning of Kierkegaard's dissertation, which taken together point to Hegel failing to hit the mark:

> IX. Socrates drove all his contemporaries out of substantiality as if naked from a shipwreck, undermined actuality, envisioned ideality in the distance, touched it, but did not acquire it.
>
> X. Socrates was the first to introduce irony.
>
> XI. The recent manifestations of irony are primarily to be subsumed under ethics.
>
> XII. Hegel in his characterization of irony has considered only the modern, not so much the ancient form.
>
> XIII. Irony is not so much apathy, divested of all tender emotions of the soul; instead, it is more like vexation over the fact that others also enjoy what it desires for itself. (349)

The chain of claims implies that Hegel did not factor in the vitality of Socratic irony and its affective potential. Kierkegaard sees potential for irony even today if understood more in terms of Socratic irony. Moreover, irony does risk vacuity if it is treated as a single

instant of reversal. Juxtaposed with this critique of Hegel's portrayal of irony in his *Ästhetik*, the inverted world in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* might indeed be seen as an early (misunderstood) reaction to Romantic irony directed precisely against taking up irony as an entire mode of being: Hegel reduces irony to a mere moment in the development of spirit as perception takes that fateful step behind the curtain to find itself as self-consciousness.[20] Kierkegaard, however, proposes that irony ought to be more than a fleeting act. Romantic irony, if handled with care, can be the basis for a whole personality.

Socratic irony is considered a higher form of irony, as Tieck himself points out and as famously captured in Schlegel's fragment 108 from the "Kritische Fragmente" in *Lyceums Fragmente*:

> Die Sokratische Ironie ist die einzige durchaus unwillkürliche, und doch durchaus besonnene Verstellung. Es ist gleich unmöglich sie zu erkünsteln, und sie zu verraten. Wer sie nicht hat, dem bleibt sie auch nach dem offensten Geständnis ein Rätsel. Sie soll niemanden täuschen, als die, welche sie für Täuschung halten, und entweder ihre Freude haben an der herrlichen Schalkheit, alle Welt zum besten zu haben, oder böse werden, wenn sie ahnden, sie wären wohl auch mit gemeint. In ihr soll alles Scherz und alles Ernst sein, alles treuherzig offen, und alles tief verstellt. (KFSA II, 160)

Socratic irony is a sort of secret language that either allows you to laugh along with the world or, if you are not initiated into the ways of irony, makes it seem that everyone is laughing at you. Moreover, irony complicates the division between earnestness and frivolity. Certainly, it is this dedifferentiation that Hegel sees as intolerable in the realm of art. At this point, we might turn back to the figure of Grünhelm and look at why the play might merit the criticism it received—not in order to show that Romantic irony is indeed unnatural and removed from true art, but rather to show how the play embraces the unnatural, the displaced, and the queer. Grünhelm's role as the fool attests to the destructive inconsequence that irony has been accused of. When the going gets tough and everybody has to pick sides, he leaves the scene. He seems to embody the eccentric, egotistical, and lazy ironist that emerges from Nicolai's critique of the play and Hegel's disparaging portrayal of Romantic irony. He can assume a role and abandon it just as easily, effectively emptying out any substantial content that might otherwise fill a subject's identity.

---

[20] For what it is worth, Pöggeler points out that Hegel and Tieck did know each other and that it is difficult to know exactly what Hegel read by Tieck and at what point in time he did so (322). Nevertheless, Donald Verene claims direct lines of influence between the two in *The History of Philosophy*. In reference to the curtain scene from the *Phänomenologie*, he flatly states that "Hegel's presentation of the 'I' is based on Ludwig Tieck's play, *Die verkehrte Welt*" (180n31). He refers to his previous book *Hegel's Recollection*, which, however, provides no further evidence of a direct connection.

Rather than treating Grünhelm as a reprobate and devoid of content, we might see him as an ironist in the Kierkegaardian sense. To be sure, Kierkegaard also cautions against irony; however, the ironists who figure as the protagonists in his works support his critique of Hegel insofar as they raise irony up to a way of life or at least a permanent stance, as something more than a moment in development that must be overcome. These ironists have a sharp sense of how social conventions work, and from their outsider (eccentric) position they are able to navigate these norms and call them into question. The ironist is an inverter of meaning and subjectivity. Indeed, the problem with irony for Kierkegaard becomes the question as to what one does with the freedom that irony creates, especially with respect to identity—the freedom to be other than oneself. Kierkegaard's protagonist-narrator from *Repetition* can be considered an ironist along with the fictional editor behind the preface to *Either/Or*. Both share a sense for the double meanings made possible through irony. After all, verbal irony gives the basic structure of irony for Kierkegaard in his dissertation: "With this we already have a determination present in all forms of irony, namely, the phenomenon is not the essence but the opposite of the essence" (264). This relationship of opposites further binds irony to inversion as both are operations based on oppositional pairs trading places.[21] If we consider the oppositional pair of inner and outer, the editor from *Either/Or* might strike us as an expert in detecting irony. His desire for the escritoire, which unbeknownst to him and the reader contains the manuscript that constitutes the rest of the book, depends upon an inversion of inner and outer that might also be considered ironic: "Perhaps it has sometimes occurred to you, dear reader, to doubt the correctness of the familiar philosophical proposition that the outward is the inward, the inward the outward" (27). The editor invites the reader to share his skeptical perspective that is also ironic insofar as this skepticism towards what is a direct reference to Hegel's *Logik* proves to be the basis for the episode with the escritoire. Without knowing that the piece of furniture contains a secret compartment, he is drawn to it and wants to possess it. This relationship to the object makes it difficult to interpret the opening lines of *Either/Or* as anything other than an ironic jab at Hegel.

As Kierkegaard makes clear in his dissertation, the ironist has a keen sense for the queer and the inverted. In its more mundane form, it allows one to better see what is strange and crooked about the world: "Betrachten wir die Ironie als ein untergeordnetes Moment, so ist die Ironie doch der sichere Blick für das Schiefe, das Verkehrte, das Eitle

---

[21]   A bond that the ancient rhetoricians already recognized. See the Vorspiel in this study for a discussion of their definition of inversion that encompasses irony.

am Dasein" (*Über den Begriff der Ironie* 261).[22] In this sense, irony lends a queer eye to the straight guy. Kierkegaard goes on to show that this moment can also extend to a general mode of perception that increases both the vanity of the ironic subject and makes the perverted even more perverse:

> Aber indem sie [die Ironie] ihre Wahrnehmung zur Darstellung bringen will, weicht sie ab, sofern sie das Eitle nicht vernichtet, sich dazu nicht verhält wie die strafende Gerechtigkeit zum Laster, nicht etwas Versöhnliches an sich hat wie das Komische, sondern eher das Eitle in seiner Eitelkeit bestärkt, das Verkehrte noch verkehrter [det Gale endnu galere] macht. (Über den Begriff der Ironie 261)

When irony is no longer just a mode of perception but also a mode of production, it transgresses the momentary nature of irony that Hegel attributes to it and becomes a unique subjectivity. The ironist is not confined to a particular ironic scenario but rather brings irony into every moment. Indeed, the editor of *Either/Or* seems to embody Kierkegaard's version of the ironist in *On the Concept of Irony*. There is something strange about the inversion of inward and outward that Hegel proposes, even if it is not articulated here in extensive terms. Perhaps, this queer gaze on Hegel is the ironist's particular strength within inverted and inverting relationships. Thus, for example, the protagonist narrator, Constantin Constantius, from *Repetition* presents a plan to the young man who finds himself in an unfortunate engagement. The plan requires an openness to irony that, unfortunately, the young man lacks. Even when he does embrace Constantin Constantius' plan, it remains unclear how things turn out. And perhaps without an ironist's approach to life, the search for repetition can only lead to the void or suicidal self-destruction.[23] The ironist's suicide, however, is not the end of his life so long as it remains part of a theatrical performance.

In both *On the Concept of Irony* and *Repetition*, the ironist is a theatrical figure. For the ironist, life is but a play: "Life is for him a drama and what engrosses him is the ingenious unfolding of this drama" (300). The ironist not only has special, queer powers of perception but he is also a drama queen, caught up in the sensual overload of the theatrical. In this position, the ironist is also well versed in role-reversals, especially reversals between spectator and performance:

---

[22] I quote the German here and just below because it makes immediately clear the connection between irony and inversion. The original Danish uses the word "Forkeerte": "Betragte vi Ironien som et underordnet Moment, saa er Ironien jo det sikkre Blik for det Skjæve, det Forkeerte, det Forfængelige i Tilværelse" (272). Here is the English from the Capel translation: "Were we to consider irony an inferior moment, we might allow it to be a sharp eye for what is crooked, wry, distorted, for what is erroneous, the vain in existence [*Tilværelse*]" (273).

[23] See Joakim Garff's discussion of the omission of the suicide in *Repetition* and its lingering absent presence (244-45).

> He is himself a spectator even when performing some act. He renders his ego infinite volatizes it metaphysically and aesthetically, and should it sometimes contract as egoistically and shallowly as possible, at other times it unfurls so loosely and dissolutely that the whole world may be accommodated within it. (300)

When the ironist assumes the role of spectator, even as he remains an actor, he reveals the dialectic constraints of the self. The ironist has a range like few other individuals. His self can be at once constrictive and suffocating and then again open and free. It is perhaps this aspect of the ironist's self that Constantin seeks out in *Repetition*. Certainly, his quest to find or create repetition is based on a desire to emancipate himself. And where does he go to try to find repetition? The Königsstädter Theater in Berlin. Indeed, the blurring of boundaries in the theater is, for Constantin, a sign of how theater and society at large meld. And this melding of theater and society comes about through the acting method of posing:

> The otherwise so reassuring mutual respect between theater and audience is suspended. Seeing a farce can produce the most unpredictable mood, and therefore a person can never be sure whether he has conducted himself in the theater as a worthy member of society who has laughed and cried at the appropriate places. (160)

The individual audience member's reaction to a pose is itself both a theatrical and a social act. The ironist has a distanced perspective that allows him to recognize the social structures that support the interaction between stage and audience even, or especially as the distinctions between the two start to fade.

Grünhelm's leap to death at the end of the play is not actually a suicide—even though he plays it up dramatically and takes leave of the stage with no small dose of melodrama. Instead of dying, he returns to the audience world, where he then delivers the final lines of the play as the last remaining spectator in the theater. Grünhelm, the ironist, escapes the dialectic of Enlightenment that consumes *Die verkehrte Welt* in the end. The moment that it becomes impossible to maintain a non-partisan position on stage, Grünhelm jumps back into the parterre, abandoning his stage wife and child and avoiding having to fight for either Scaramuz or Apollo. While this staged suicide might be seen as the final piece of evidence to condemn the ironist as devoid of substance and moral character, it equally provides a way out of the double-bind of the Enlightenment. Here Grünhelm appears eccentric in the sense that he is outside the polarities that are in constant rotation in the inverted world. In fact, from his eccentric position Grünhelm might even be the one who does the turning and inverting. Only from a position outside the center of the inverted world can someone torque the relationships and thereby also queer them.[24]

---

[24] Pestalozzi notes the openness that the play creates through inversions—an openness that does not clearly condemn or praise either the inverse or the straight world: "So wird die Umkehrung von Konventionen und Hierarchien inszeniert, ohne jedoch in der Verkehrung eine verbindliche neue

As opposed to the Enlightened emancipation that Kant proposes, brought about by reason, Tieck's version of emancipation in *Die verkehrte Welt* appears as a rejection of Enlightenment ideals. This emancipation is made possible through abandoning reason and instead embracing an ironic stance. Romantic irony in this play has been tied together with the play's techniques of parabasis, *mise en abîme*, and breaking characters.[25] It shares these techniques with *Der gestiefelte Kater*.[26] But *Die verkehrte Welt* seems even more over the top. And the stakes are slightly different in the conflict between Apollo and Scaramuz in contrast to the fairytale framework of *Der gestiefelte Kater*. While reason and good taste are also the object of ridicule in the fairytale world of his earlier play, *Die verkehrte Welt* raises the stakes and brings that critique into a battle between the god of reason and the fool. In both plays, conflicts between stage and audience world are mediated through irony. Or rather, it is only through the structure of reflection and contradiction that the play establishes how we might extricate ourselves from the dialectic of Enlightenment.

Die verkehrte Welt perverts the emancipation of the subject as conceived of by Kant and enacts the very evacuation of meaning that Hegel sees irony as capable of. The force of this critique enables a different sort of emancipation of the spectator, one with perhaps stronger affinities to the more recent thinking on active and passive roles in consuming art, as found in the writing of Jacques Rancière, in particular in his book *The Emancipated Spectator*. The cultural theorist questions the division between active and passive spectatorship that is upheld by a parallel division between the political (activism) and the artistic (passivism). While Rancière specifically reconfigures the typical spectator position seated in the audience before the screen or proscenium stage as one that contains active potential, he more importantly argues for a rethinking of the divisions that would allow us to label that sort of spectatorship as either active or passive. This in-between, borderline spectatorship is enacted in *Die verkehrte Welt*, in which no character ever seems fixed to one role or position. Grünhelm, however, stands out as an emancipated spectator who uses irony as a means to play with the divisions that structure the play world and the world beyond.[27]

Ordnung oder gar eine moralisch bessere Gesellschaft in Aussicht zu stellen: Die Komödie zielt vielmehr darauf, der Freiheit des Spiels neuen Raum zu geben" (182).

[25] See, for example, Szondi, "Friedrich Schlegel und die romantische Ironie," especially p. 29-31.

[26] Comparative perspectives on the two plays are frequent. Haym gives one of the most pointed critical comparisons when he calls *Die verkehrte Welt* the "afterbirth" of *Der gestiefelte Kater* (Haym, *Die romantische Schule*, 104). See also Galaski (27), Pestalozzi (101), Pikulik (304), and Zeydel (89).

[27] This unsettling of divisions carries with it a similar potential for social upheaval to the one Hans-Thies Lehmann discusses in his *Postdramatisches Theater*: "Theater wird eine 'soziale Situation,' in der der Zuschauer erfährt, wie sehr es nicht nur von ihm selbst, sondern auch von den anderen abhängt, was er erlebt. Sofern seine eigene Rolle ins Spiel kommt, kann sich das Grundmodell des Theater förmlich

Grünhelm's ironic, playful, and also curious mode shares in Rancière's vision of a political and politicized artistic practice that calls into question the division between an aesthetic realm separated from a political or social one. Rancière does not presume to do away with such distinctions but rather encourages exploring ways to enable a broader understanding of "aesthetic efficacy." Debates about what art can "do" for other aspects of human life often do not get past merely criticizing the spectacle for its inherent passivity (63). Rancière, however, sees more critical potential in aesthetic experience:

> Aesthetic experience has a political effect to the extent that the loss of destination it presupposes disrupts the way in which bodies fit their functions and destinations. What it produces is not rhetorical persuasion about what must be done. Nor is it the framing a collective body. It is a multiplication of connections and disconnections that reframe the relation between bodies, the world they live in and the way in which they are 'equipped' to adapt to it. (72)

None of this is to say that literary works, films, or photographs can produce effects in any direct way. Artistic production and reception, if it is to bring about change, cannot know in advance what that change will look like: "As such, they can open up new passages towards new forms of political subjectivation. But none of them can avoid the aesthetic cut that separates outcomes from intentions and precludes any direct path towards an 'other side' of words and images" (82). Tieck's critique of Enlightenment rationality and its instrumentalization of the arts does not presume to provide any clear message that the audience can take home and cherish. Instead, *Die verkehrte Welt* multiplies connections and disconnections, as Rancière puts it, through its multiplication of theatrical levels. This hyper-theatricality further coincides with the idea of aesthetic experience complicating notions of an "other side" of the theater.

The emancipated spectators are also queer subjects insofar as they do not fit in to the categories provided by the social structures that they find themselves in.[28] Irony allows them, as Schlegel points out, to speak a language that, to the uninitiated, normal listener, sounds rational and harmless, but to the similarly minded audience member or reader, the queer subject offers a critical vantage point from which to view the world. Tieck's play invites us to assume the role of the queer subject, the eccentric who is faced with charges of narcissism and inflated self-importance. To consider the play from almost any other perspective would mean engaging with and thereby conceding to the polemics and regulations of the Enlightenment. Indeed, the inverted world cannot be seen as inverted from within. One must find an eccentric point from which to observe it in order to see the

---

umkehren" (183). The reversal that Lehmann refers to here is that same destabilization of roles that Tieck's play performs.

[28] The connection between Rancière's thought and queer theory has been examined from multiple perspectives in a special issue of *borderlands e-journal*. For an overview of the various essays see Chambers and O'Rourke's introductory article "Jacques Rancière on the Shores of Queer Theory."

relationships as inverted in the first place. This distance from the world is not the safe one that protects the Enlightened spectator of the sublime. In fact, it is not an actual distance at all, in the sense that it cannot be measured. Instead, it is a distance that is collapsed by theatrical reflection and Romantic irony, as the play-within-the-play-within-the-play-within-the-play actually cuts through layers of spectatorial safety. And to be sure, Hegel was right, overcoming this distance and assuming this queer subject position does involve putting the entire content of your subjectivity at risk of being eliminated—a risk that E.T.A. Hoffmann presents extravagantly in his novella *Prinzessin Brambilla*.[29]

---

[29] Tieck's work could also be discussed in terms of the threatening loss of identity that his figures are faced with. Jeanne Benay brings this issue to a point: "Le théâtre de Tieck n'est que la transposition de sa vision du monde et de l'homme, vision encore enracinée dans l'univers baroque où la vie est un songe, oú la réalité est une illusion. Mais cette vision est aussi une vision d'avenir où s'arrête aux apparences, sans chercher plus loin, et où l'homme perd son identité" (565). In the following chapter I will focus more on the loss of identity and how it relates to bourgeois subjectivity in the inverted worlds of Hoffmann's *Prinzessin Brambilla*.

Act 2: Inverted Identity Disorder: Perverse Symptoms and Cures in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Prinzessin Brambilla*

> "Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst
> Das Rettende auch."
> —"Patmos," Hölderlin (350)

> "The *pharmakon* always penetrates like a liquid."
> —"Plato's Pharmacy," Jacques Derrida (152)

The inherent critique of the Enlightenment and the reign of reason is a trademark of German Romanticism. While Tieck's approach trades in allegorical figures of rationality and absurdity (e.g., Apollo and the fool), E.T.A. Hoffmann's 1821 novella, *Prinzessin Brambilla*, enmeshes inversion with psychological questions of the self and subjectivity through a representation of a personal identity crisis and its treatment.[1] The crisis certainly has social and epistemological implications, and as such speaks to a critique of Enlightenment values as well, but inversion appears in *Prinzessin Brambilla* as decidedly more of an operation of the psyche. The novella presents a psychological paradox, suggesting a process of individual development and improvement, at the same time that it depicts inversion as the cause of the protagonist's identity trouble. Hoffmann does not resolve this paradox, but rather indicates that there is something inverted and disordered at the core of bourgeois normativity. Before giving ourselves over to the inversions in the text, a discussion of the work demands at least a basic outline of the plot and its characters in order to avoid undue confusion—for, to be sure, *Prinzessin Brambilla* relies on confusion as a mode of narration, so there will be plenty of it to come regardless of how well we sort out the details at the start.[2] The novella takes place in Rome during carnival.[3] The protagonist Giglio Fava is a tragic actor known around town for his lack of talent on stage. His female counterpart and ultimately his main love interest is Giacinta Soardi, a seamstress employed by a certain Meister Bescapi. Giglio becomes part of an intricate plan put into action by Signor Celionati, a charlatan famous for his spectacular

---

[1] Detlef Kremer's analysis of *Prinzessin Brambilla* fundamentally informs the analysis here and lays the groundwork for examining inversion as a central element in the text. See especially Detlef Kremer, "Literarischer Karneval: Groteske Motive in E.T.A. Hoffmanns Prinzessin Brambilla."

[2] The oft-quoted reference to the story by Heinrich Heine should not go unmentioned here: Heine: "Aber die Prinzessin Brambilla ist eine gar köstliche Schöne, und wem diese durch ihre Wunderlichkeit nicht den Kopf schwindlicht macht, der hat gar keinen Kopf" (qtd. in Scheffel 125). See also Weder (80), Steigerwald (137), and Hiepko (73).

[3] Gerhard Kaiser lays out the connections between Goethe's *Römisches Carneval* and Hoffmann's text. Basically Kaiser shows that Goethe's text is an attempt to present the chaos of Roman carnival within the classicist aesthetic, whereas Hoffmann's text is an attempt to present carnival in a carnevalesque mode (232).

appearances. The plan, as we find out only later in the story, is meant to improve and educate Giglio as an actor. Celionati brings about Giglio's transformation by orchestrating a conspiracy that involves all of Rome in order to convince Giglio that he is not himself but the Assyrian prince Cornelio Chiapperi. Parallel to Giglio's self-searching, Giacinta is also implicated in a similar plot, though it unfolds mostly in the background.[4] Both Giglio and Giacinta believe that they are destined to be the new lovers of Princess Brambilla and Prince Chiapperi. Giglio falls in love with the princess and is constantly trying to track her down amid the chaos of carnival. Giacinta is meanwhile convinced that the prince is her one true love. A significant aspect of the plot development is their concurrent realization that they are actually destined for each other.[5] Indeed, the story concludes with a scene of seeming domestic bliss on the anniversary of Giglio's identity crisis.

The novella is told by a self-reflective narrator, who not only inserts passages that comment on how the storytelling might be affecting its readers, but also tells us about differences between the "original" text and the one he is retelling. In addition to this narrator prone to meta-reflection, other characters in the novella are aware of their existence within a fictional text entitled "Prinzessin Brambilla." The various levels of fiction at play include several stories-within-stories, most prominently "die wunderbare *Geschichte von dem Könige Ophioch und der Königin Liris*" (817).[6] And the preface, the chapter headings, and the engravings further complicate a straight reading of the story.[7] The book is full of competing voices, stories, and source material, all of which are equally subject to inversions. It is also full of holes, which do as much to structure the text as these other elements. Many of the gaps in the text are explicitly marked as missing. They are not framed as authorial omissions but rather as missing portions of the original source material. The tensions between absence and presence, mediation and immediacy, carry over into the trouble with identity.

As a disorder of identity, inversion in *Prinzessin Brambilla* sets the self asunder in terms of both the philosophical and psychological self. At the same time, it is also the condition of possibility for self-consciousness. In this sense, inversion figures as part of

---

4   Michael Scheffel is one of the few scholars who brings Giacinta's development into the spotlight. See his chapter "Narrative Fiktion und die Verheißung der Erfüllung unendlicher Sehnsucht – E. T. A. Hoffmann: *Prinzessin Brambilla. Ein Capriccio nach Jakob Callot* (1820)" (121-53).

5   Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs emphasizes the double inversion and reflection that draws both Giglio and Giacinta into this game of identity confusion (407).

6   Strohschneider-Kohrs delineates five levels of fiction/reality (370-73).

7   I will address the engravings in detail below. For the other paratexts, see Alexander Schlutz, who focuses in particular on the preface as a programmatic paratext that provides a hermeneutic guide for the novella's play with irony. For more on the chapter headings, see Till Dembeck's "(Paratextual) Framing and the Work of Art: E.T.A. Hoffmann's Prinzessin Brambilla."

the cure to the identity disorder that it causes. This double inversion finds expression in the novella's complex layering, concealing, and revealing of media, which destabilizes phantasies of bourgeois selfhood and basically says, "Get over yourself."[8]

Inversion as a Pathological Condition

Prinzessin Brambilla tells the story of one poor actor's struggle with mental derangement. It becomes clear early that Giglio suffers from mental problems. In the first chapter, he tells Giacinta of his disturbing vivid dreams that already seem to be comingling with reality. He is then overcome with several fits of rage in chapter 2 that result in him receiving (not by choice!) a soothing bloodletting. From that point on, Giglio becomes all the more tangled up in confusing himself with Prince Chiapperi. By chapter 7, he has fully assumed the noble alter-ego. At the height of Giglio's madness—he no longer recognizes himself as Giglio—Signor Celionati presents a full diagnosis of his condition. The diagnostic scene takes place in a café full of German artists, where Celionati often holds forth and where, earlier in chapter 3, he tells the story-within-the-story of Ophioch and Liris.[9] True to his fashion as a *Marktschreier*, Celionati gathers a crowd and begins with a shocking revelation: "'Der junge Mann leidet nämlich an dem chronischen Dualismus.' 'Wie,' riefen alle durcheinander lachend, 'wie? was sagt Ihr, Meister Celionati, chronischen Dualismus? – Ist das erhört?'" (893).[10] But not everyone is as shocked and awed by this apparently baffling terminology. The German painter Reinhold, Celionati's main interlocutor at the Caffè greco, dispels the air of scientific mumbo jumbo with a down-to-earth explanation: "Ich glaube, daß Ihr, Meister Celionati, mit Eurem chronischen Dualismus nichts anders meint, als jene seltsame Narrheit, in der das eigene Ich sich mit sich selbst entzweit, worüber denn die eigne Persönlichkeit sich nicht mehr festhalten kann" (894).[11] However, in the world of *Prinzessin Brambilla*, straightforward, prosaic descriptions are not adequate.

---

8   A special thanks to Richard Block for this formulation.
9   This tale is central to the novella and does appear sequentially before this second scene in the Caffè greco. I will discuss the tale of Ophioch and Liris momentarily. But if the order of my argument seems illogical, it is rather due to the fact that the cure begins well before the diagnosis of Giglio's condition. Thus, we might consider the placement of the tale and this scene of diagnosis as another inversion in the text.
10   The connection to Goethe's famous characterization of the novella genre from his conversations with Eckermann as centered around an "unerhörte Begebenheit" seems to reverberate here (Eckermann, letter from 29 January 1827, 220-21). By extension, chronic dualism is one such unheard-of event and thus a structuring principle for the novella.
11   The connection to Fichte's *Ich=Ich* already jumps out of the text here. I will explore this connection in more detail below.

Celionati proceeds with his own explanation of Giglio's mental state, which takes the form of a fairytale-esque story. The episode of the double crown prince is meant to illustrate "chronic dualism" to Celionati's lay audience, both within the text and beyond. The tale comes from Lichtenberg's essay "Daß du auf dem Blocksberge wärst. Ein Traum wie viele Träume," in which Lichtenberg tells of conjoined twins who always think the exact opposite of each other.[12] Celionati tells the crowd, "War der eine Prinz traurig, so war der andere lustig; wollte der eine sitzen, so wollte der andere laufen, genug – nie stimmten ihre Neigungen überein" (895). The double prince appears here as an incorporation of an inverted world à la Hegel, in which opposing pairs are constantly vying for a stable position.[13] Moreover, the double prince is caught in a conflict between body and soul. Celionati continues:

> Und dabei konnte man durchaus nicht behaupten, der eine sei dieser, der andere jener bestimmten Gemütsart; denn in dem Widerspiel eines ewigen Wechsels schien eine Natur hinüberzugehen in die andre, welches wohl daher kommen mußte, daß sich, nächst dem körperlichen Zusammenwachsen, auch ein geistiges offenbarte, das eben den größten Zwiespalt verursachte. – Sie dachten nämlich in die Quere, so daß keiner jemals recht wußte, ob er das, was er gedacht, auch wirklich selbst gedacht, oder sein Zwilling; und heißt das nicht Konfusion, so gibt es keine. (895)

This passage reveals the conflicted double identity of the prince; or rather it demonstrates how the double prince does not have a specific, autonomous disposition (*Gemütsart*). That is to say, the two bodies are not unique individuals with their own separate qualities. In addition to the double physical bodies, the prince also has a conjoined double soul/spirit. And this spiritual conjunction undoes individual identity and produces an indeterminacy, making it impossible for either of the conjoined twins to know if they are ever thinking autonomously or only ever in opposition to the other. Hoffmann calls this type of oppositional double thinking "in die Quere denken." In fact, the phrase itself is doubled, as the chapter heading preempts the whole story with the words "Chronischer Dualismus und der Doppelprinz, der in die Quere dachte." (886). The reader is thus already aware that there is something queer about this double prince and, by extension, something queer about chronic dualism before the precise terms of the diagnosis are made clear.

It quickly becomes apparent that "chronic dualism" and queerness (or "in der Quere sein") are fairly inseparable as the two pervade the scene in the Caffè greco. The discordant, divided, and transgressive disposition of the double prince is embodied in Giglio and his single body that houses perpetually conflicted desires and thoughts.

---

12   See DKV commentary, 1173.
13   Refer to the *Vorspiel* of this dissertation for an elaboration on Hegel's presentation of the inverted world.

Celionati's explanation ends with the statement that the cause of Giglio's ailment, the "materia peccans" (895), is that he has a double prince lodged in his body. This inverted being inside of Giglio prevents him, as Celionati concludes, from sorting himself out. The troubled actor has to clarify this illustrative anecdote, which risks being understood in entirely literal terms. Giglio, appearing here as Prince Chiapperi, does not actually have a conjoined twin living inside him, he tells everyone after Celionati leaves; the story was "pure allegory." The afflicted figure himself then offers yet another rendition of chronic dualism. "Es muß sich etwas in meinem Augenspiegel verrückt haben; denn ich sehe leider meistens alles verkehrt" (896). In order to dispel the risk of understanding the story of the double prince the wrong way, Giglio provides a very literal and concrete diagnosis of his condition. His identity crisis seems to be nothing more than a vision problem; he does not see straight. While the immediate meaning of the sentence implies that he sees the world in reverse as in a mirror, it is obvious by this point that "verkehrt" has broader implications when it comes to chronic dualism.

Three explanations hover around the term chronic dualism: Reinhold's clarification that it refers to a divided self, Celionati's illustration of transgressive/queer thinking (*in die Quere*), and Giglio's clarification that it is simply inverted vision. All three apply to Giglio's case, even if their consecutive appearance implies that each explanation corrects the previous one. Giglio is experiencing a split that renders it impossible to hold on to a core sense of self or, indeed, to gain any insight into himself. His inverted vision is a perverted perspective that distorts all that he sees, making it impossible to distinguish between serious and funny things, as Giglio himself says, but also between real and imaginary, fairytale and carnival, and self and other.

If, by the end of *Prinzessin Brambilla*, Giglio appears to have been cured of this identity dis-order, it would nevertheless be short-sighted to consider the novella a prescriptive tale about how to become better and more complete individuals by pursuing comedy and play-acting.[14] Instead, the novella favors a healthy mistrust of easy cures and quaint endings. For if Giglio's pathological state is characterized as a lack of ironic self-awareness, how does attaining that level of reflection actually do more to destabilize a sense of individual, bourgeois subjectivity? How does the theater serve as a site for the sort of ironic inversion needed to achieve self-awareness? What does it mean when the theater no longer remains in its place but instead extends beyond the raised stage? And

---

14 Frederick Burwick's recent article on "Play-Acting in Hoffmann's *Prinzessin Brambilla*" emphasizes this kind of prescriptive reading that suggests a universal lesson about the importance of play-acting in dealing with mental problems. Burwick's article does provide an incredibly detailed study of Hoffmann's interplay with the psychological discourses of his time; however, the article seems to take *Prinzessin Brambilla* at face value that might actually weaken an argument about the importance of play-acting and irony in the text.

how do our positions as readers implicate us in the curative process consisting of so many different inversions?

The Many Faces of Inversion

Giglio's "chronic dualism" is entangled in so many inversions that the prognosis and treatment are hard to identify. While his symptoms are presented through Celionati's spectacular display of specialized knowledge at the café, the details of his cure, such as when it starts and begins, are not clearly marked. Indeed, the notion that Giglio is undergoing a salubrious transformation only becomes apparent after the fact. Only at the very end, do Giglio and the reader figure out that the whole ordeal was part of his *Bildung* all along.[15] *Bildung* should be understood here as a curative and corrective process that not only shapes individual subjects according to certain cultural standards, but also contributes to healing subjects who have become afflicted with defects and disorders of the self. Gilgio's cure thus leads down the path of a *Bildungsroman* plot, tracing his development from deranged and disorder to re-arranged and re-ordered.

To be sure, the German *Bildungsroman* par excellence, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre,* also involves a secret society hiding in the shadows and guiding the protagonist every step of the way. But the hidden conspirators in Giglio's tale of becoming tend to bring him to the edge of madness rather than supplying him with new and enriching challenges.[16] The differences between the two texts are certainly numerous, and elaborating them is not necessary to see that the most important distinction between these two tales of becoming a full bourgeois subject lies in Giglio's going insane, while Wilhelm's sanity remains rather all too intact.[17] For in the topsy-turvy world of carnival, *Bildung* does not follow a consistent path upwards toward becoming a "public person" with a larger sphere of influence[18]; rather it involves loops, doubling, and many

---

[15] The claim that the novella is connected to the *Bildungsroman* tradition has been contested by Gerhard Neumann, who presents it as less a *Bildungsroman* with an over-arching development of artistic character than a series of experimental scenes that demonstrate the early phase of testing out romantic/bourgeois love in which erotic desire and companionate coupledom combine.

[16] Alexander Schlutz refers to the critical position that Hoffmann's novella takes vis-à-vis Goethe's work (420n6).

[17] Neumann significantly cites the connection between *Wilhelm Meister* and *Prinzessin Brambilla*. He argues that though the opening scene of Hoffmann's text has similarities to Goethe's, it is not a *Bildungsroman* but "das experimentell bearbeitete Szenario einer Wahrnehmungskrise zwischen Liebenden" (25). This distinction, however, does not dismiss the possible reading of *Prinzessin Brambilla* as a parody of *Wilhelm Meister*, which would make the novella something of an anti-*Bildungsroman*.

[18] From book 5, chapter 3 in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*: "Ich habe nun einmal gerade zu jener harmonischen Ausbildung meiner Natur, die mir meine Geburt versagt, eine unwiderstehliche Neigung. Ich habe, seit ich Dich verlassen, durch Leibesübung viel gewonnen; ich habe viel von meiner

encounters with inversion. But how, precisely, are we to understand *Bildung* as part of the cure to chronic dualism?[19] Or to put it another way, to what extent is Giglio's *Bildung* itself a process of inversion and not, as with Wilhelm Meister, a process of continual self-improvement?

In the story of King Ophioch and Queen Liris, recounted by Celionati in chapter 3, inversion plays a definitive role. The story figures into an argument between Celionati and Reinhold about the difference between Italian and German humor. As with the tale of the double crown prince, Celionati uses this story to illustrate a point. What precisely that point might be is not as explicitly laid out as it is in the diagnosis of Giglio's chronic dualism. King Ophioch is the ruler of the country *Urdargarten*. He and Queen Liris, queen of the neighboring realm of *Hirdargarten*, are opposites. Whereas Ophioch is a melancholic king, Liris is full of superficial laughter. Their oppositional dispositions are cast as evidence for their suitability for one another: "Da man im Land Hirdargarten […] eben so wenig einen Grund dieser Lustigkeit anzugeben wußte, als im Lande Urdargarten den Grund von König Ophiochs Traurigkeit, so schienen schon deshalb beide königliche Seelen für einander geschaffen" (819). But marriage alone proves ineffective in curing the king of his sadness. Only after gazing together into the reflective surface of the *Urdarquelle* do Ophioch and Liris shed their emotional states of stasis that keep them from seeing each other:

> Als sie nun aber in der unendlichen Tiefe den blauen glänzenden Himmel, die Büsche, die Bäume, die Blumen, die ganze Natur, ihr eignes Ich in verkehrter Abspiegelung erschauten, da war es, als rollten dunkle Schleier auf, eine neue herrliche Welt voll Leben und Lust wurde klar vor ihren Augen und mit der Erkenntnis dieser Welt entzündete sich ein Entzücken in ihrem Innern, das sie nie gekannt, nie geahnet. (824)

The waters of the *Urdarquelle* have formidable powers with surface and depth seemingly infinite. Heaven and earth are contained in the reflective surface. Looking into the water means seeing everything as inverted. In fact, looking into the depths actually means looking high into the sky. As the gaze shifts to the foliage around the lake, it takes a strong metaphysical turn: "Die ganze Natur" appears inverted. The experience of seeing nature in its entirety as inverted, including their own selves, kindles an intense pleasure in the

---

gewöhnlichen Verlegenheit abgelegt und stelle mich so ziemlich dar. Ebenso habe ich meine Sprache und Stimme ausgebildet, und ich darf ohne Eitelkeit sagen, daß ich in Gesellschaften nicht mißfalle. Nun leugne ich Dir nicht, daß mein Trieb täglich unüberwindlicher wird, eine öffentliche Person zu sein und in einem weitern Kreise zu gefallen und zu wirken" (292-93).

19   Schlutz argues that the "process of healing" that Giglio undergoes is parallel to the process of reading and "reflective mediation"; thus, the reader also undergoes healing (419). Schlutz's acute reading of the relationship between reader and the curative process, however, seems to indulge the fantasy of curative laughter to such a degree that it risks taking the irony out of what is essentially an ironic project.

couple that goes hand in hand with knowledge. With this new knowledge of the inverted world and self, the king and queen undergo a transformation that dissolves their previously rigid personality traits. The royal couple is cured of their imbalanced humors through the encounter with the brave, new inverted world that they see in the water's surface. Their imbalance might also be understood as another form of chronic dualism, but one that occurs between two physically separate bodies. Like the double prince, the two were conjoined in emotional opposition: the one always melancholic, the other always laughing. Through inverted reflection they overcome this prior state of oppositional inversion and are able to feel the same thing.

The inverted reflection in the *Urdarquelle* returns at the end of the novella as the ultimate cure for Giglio and Giacinta. In chapter 8, the "real" world recedes, and Giglio and Giacinta appear completely as Prince Cornelio Chiapperi and Princess Brambilla. The fairytale world has taken over. Magicians abound, creating lakes and flower gardens out of thin air. Giglio and Giacinta, now as prince and princess, gaze into the lake:

> Doch wie sie sich in dem See erblickten, da *erkannten* sie sich erst, schauten einander an, brachen in ein Lachen aus, das aber nach seiner wunderbaren Art nur jenem Lachen Königs Ophioch's und der Königin Liris zu vergleichen war, und fielen dann im höchsten Entzücken einander in die Arme. (906)

The magical scene ends with a jump in the narration to the one-year anniversary of this reflective moment. On the anniversary, Giglio and Giacinta appear as a happy couple, both comic actors who now perform together on stage. They are just returning home from an evening on the boards and shower each other with compliments for their performances. Indeed, the anniversary of their double inversion seems to be responsible for their especially propitious night: "Ahndest du nicht, in welchen verhängnisvollen Stunden die besondere Begeisterung uns erfaßte? Erinnerst du dich nicht, daß es heute gerade ein Jahr her ist, da wir in den herrlichen hellen Urdarsee schauten und uns erkannten?" (908), Giacinta asks Giglio. Only now does it become clear what sort of ordeal the two were put through and why. The gaze into the lake brought the two together into blissful coupledom, but more than that, the encounter with the inverted world has made the two of them successful comic actors, who are now sensitive to irony, the basis of true humor, according to the novella.

To be sure, inversion is also directly related to irony in Hoffmann's capriccio through mechanisms of reflection, distortion, and comedy. Though the inverted image figures into the story-within-the-story as the means of resolving the opposition between the melancholy king and the sanguine queen, it is not immediately obvious how that inverted world relates to the frame narrative and the debate between Celionati and Reinhold. The gaze into the *Urdarquelle* causes laughter, which is key to bringing about the new self-

awareness in both king and queen.[20] And yet, the connection to German versus Italian understandings of humor requires more interpretive work. Back in the café, Reinhold provides a brief exegesis:

> Aber, hab' ich Euch recht verstanden, so ist die Urdarquelle […] nichts anders, als was wir Deutschen Humor nennen, die wunderbare, aus der tiefsten Anschauung der Natur geborne Kraft des Gedankens, seinen eigenen ironischen Doppeltgänger [sic] zu machen, an dessen seltsamlichen Faxen er die seinigen und […] die Faxen des ganzen Seins hienieden erkennt und sich daran ergetzt – (826)

Reinhold's interpretation seems plausible given the fact that the prior discussion revolved around the idea that the German *Scherz* is founded on the fundamental principle of humor itself, namely irony, in contrast to mere slapstick and other imitative forms of Italian hilarity (813). Reinhold, thus, casts the story as evidence that Celionati (an Italian) actually does have deeper insight into the ironic essence of humor. The inverted reflection in the water allows for a special state of self-consciousness and unique perception of nature and the world. And this perception of the world through the inverted and inverting reflection means creating ironic doppelgangers. In other words, the inverted reflection creates an ironic distance in self-perception—and this ironic split can either lead to a newfound love of the world, as with Ophioch and Liris, or to the pathological condition known as "chronic dualism," as with Giglio. In both cases, inversion is at the source, figuratively and literally. Inversion causes Giglio's identity trouble as well as Ophioch and Liris' relationship troubles; but inversion is also at the *Quelle*, the wellspring.

Encountering Doubles: Psychological and Philosophical Inversions

The encounters with inverted reflections in the *Urdarquelle* are only one aspect of inversion's role in Giglio's treatment or *Bildung*. This fond memory a year after their carnival ordeal emphasizes the most literal moment of inversion, when Giglio and Giacinta finally find each other at the edge of the reflective pool, but following the typical structure of a *Bildungsroman*, the change in the protagonists comes about only after they have gone through a series of formative experiences. An epiphany at the wellspring alone is not enough. Giglio has multiple encounters with doppelgangers over the course of the novella that also contribute to his treatment. He must defeat these doubles in order to escape himself, to get over himself. These conflicts between multiple selves draw expressly from the psychological discourse of the early-nineteenth century, which

---

[20] Henri Bergson's essay on laughter addresses inversion as a fairly minor source for laughter (119). It is secondary, for example, to repetition, a more central force in his argumentation.

Hoffmann further relates to the language of German idealism.[21] The parameters of these other discourses in *Prinzessin Brambilla* create a framework through which inversion takes on further implications for conceptualizing the self, irony, and well-being.

German is the language of psycho-pathological and philosophical explanations. Hence, while all other spoken language is presumed to be Italian, Celionati uses German to explain his case to the audience in Caffè greco: "Damit Euch aber das, was ich spreche, gar nicht geniert, werde ich in der Sprache reden, die eigentlich nur für diese Dinge paßt, die Euch und Eure Krankheit betreffen" (891). The German medium allows Giglio's dilemma to resonate with early nineteenth-century philosophical debates. Giglio's development involves securing a self (*Ich*) by overcoming his alter egos. These doppelgangers might be best understood as manifestations of Giglio's not-selves (*Nicht-Ich*), calling to mind Fichte's positing of the self in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Fichte assigns a fundamental role to self-positing, self-negating, and self-synthesizing in his treatment of scientific knowledge. The syllogisms structuring the "Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre" culminate in the following formulation: "*Ich setze im Ich dem teilbaren Ich ein teilbares Nicht-Ich entgegen*" (84).[22] The dense sentence contains *in nuce* the multiplication and negation of selves that Giglio faces. Fichte sets up an encounter between multiple divisible selves and a divisible not-self that Hoffmann's text plays out to its (il)logical end.

The language of German idealism appears throughout *Prinzessin Brambilla*, but one passage in particular echoes this language with acuity. In the final chapter, the magician Ruffiamonte reads a poem that functions as an invocation ritual in the elaborate transformation of the palace in Rome into the kingdom of *Urdar*. The verses begin in Italy and move ever closer to the *Urdarquelle*'s watery depths. En route, Fichte's *Ich* and *Nicht-Ich* make an appearance:

> [...]
> Der Genius mag aus dem Ich gebären
> Das Nicht-Ich, mag die eigne Brust zerspalten,

---

[21] See Burwick for an extensive discussion of the various psychological texts that Hoffmann weaves into his literary fictions.

[22] Fichte's "Anstoß," this encounter between the self and not-self that is also an encounter between subjectivity and the material (objective world) has also been the subject of ironic inversions in Heine's humorous presentation of German philosophy in *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*: "Die Wissenschaftslehre beginnt mit einer abstrakten Formel (Ich = Ich), sie erschafft die Welt hervor aus der Tiefe des Geistes, sie fügt die zersetzten Theile wieder zusammen, sie macht den Weg der Abstrakzion zurück, bis sie zur Erscheinungswelt gelangt. [...] Das Ich soll über seine intellektuelle Handlungen Betrachtungen anstellen während er denkt, während er allmählig warm und wärmer und endlich gar wird" (93). For more on Fichte, inversion, and irony see the *Vorspiel* to this work. See also my discussion below of Bärbel Frischmann's important study on Hoffmann and romantic irony.

> Den Schmerz des Seins in hohe Lust verkehren.
> Das Land, die Stadt, die Welt, das Ich – gefunden
> Ist alles nun. [...] (904)

The divided self has come around from the pain of existence to the pleasure of inversion. Pain and pleasure form an inverted pair here, like that of the self and not-self, so that the stability implied in the second stanza, with its claim that "everything has been found," must be understood as a recognition of the impossibility of securing a singular, stable self. To be sure, these lines appear at the moment the text is most distant from reality—or rather at the moment when sorting out the real world from the fantastic world is utterly impossible.

Hoffmann takes the problem of establishing a stable self out of the domain of the absolute I (which is Fichte's main concern) and brings it into a psychological-literary framework. The narrator interrupts the main events of the plot in chapter 4 with a look into Giglio's inner thoughts. This is not a case of indirect speech but rather a deviation from the plot into a metafictional realm: "Selten vermögen Autoren es über sich, dem Leser zu verschweigen, was sie bei diesem oder jenem Stadium, in das ihre Helden treten, denken" (830). From this distanced position, the narrator continues to explain that Giglio is currently undergoing some severe identity confusion and cites both philosophical and psychological authorities, including Immanuel David Mauchart's book from the turn of the nineteenth century *Allgemeines Repertorium für empirische Psychologie*. He then mimics the "psychologist's" writing:

> "Nach allem," fährt der Psycholog dann fort, "was wir bis jetzt von dem Giglio Fava vernommen, leidet derselbe an einem Zustande, der dem des Rausches völlig zu vergleichen, gewissermaßen an einer geistigen Trunkenheit, erzeugt durch die nervenreizende Kraft gewisser exzentrischer Vorstellungen von seinem Ich, und da nun vorzüglich Schauspieler sehr geneigt sind, sich auf diese Art zu berauschen, so – u. s. w." (831)

Hoffmann's parroting of this scientific language need not be understood as a mockery constituting a wholesale dismissal of science, its sub-disciplines, or its close relative philosophy. Instead, psychology is recognizable here as the science that deals with identity crises and other eccentric concepts of the self. Well before Freud's explanation of how doppelgangers and the uncanny relate to the unconscious and repressed desires (albeit famously using Hoffmann's works in his explanation), Hoffmann presents psychology as interested in scientifically explaining (away) fantastic machinations of the self.[23] Hoffmann builds a bridge between philosophy and psychology, or at least makes clear that the two scientific (*wissenschaftlich*) areas were never that far apart in the first

---

[23]   Burwick points out the interplay between Hoffmann's writings and psychological works both before, during, and after the author's time, including Freud's works, of course (402).

place. In this same scene, the narrator gives extended commentary on Giglio's interior state, in which Giglio connects his state to the language of German idealism:

> "Hoho," dachte Giglio, "nur mein Ich ist Schuld daran, daß ich meine Braut, die Prinzessin, nicht sehe; ich kann mein Ich nicht durchschauen und mein verdammtes Ich will mir zu Leibe mit gefährlicher Waffe, aber ich spiele und tanze es zu Tod und dann bin ich erst ich, und die Prinzessin ist mein!" – (831)

Giglio recognizes that his own self is getting between his desire and the object of his desire. In order to obtain what he desires, he must eliminate his self. His self-diagnosis reads like a prefiguration of the repressive mechanisms of the super-ego and unites Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, the narrator's parodic portrayal of psychology, and a spectacular display of Giglio's lacking self-awareness.[24]

A complex critique of the self emerges in *Prinzessin Brambilla* that connects German idealism, romantic irony, and concepts of identity. The interplay of these elements undoes notions of the self that rely upon a stable subject as a basic unit. Bärbel Frischmann offers an in-depth exploration of the affinities between Fichte's concept of the self and Giglio's becoming. Her article "Personale Identität und Ironie: E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Prinzessin Brambilla*, Fichtes Philosophie und Friedrich Schlegels Ironie," emphasizes the importance of "personal identity" around 1800, both for philosophers and literary authors alike. Frischmann's argument establishes a relationship between Fichte's self (as the basis for consciousness) and Schlegel's portrayal of irony (as the necessary precondition for becoming an artist or poet). With this connection in place, it becomes clear how Giglio is implicated in a process of gaining self-awareness through irony: "Giglio ist ein Schauspieler, dem ein reflektiertes Verständnis seiner Persönlichkeit fehlt" (104). Giglio must learn to reflect upon himself in order to gain his own personal identity. Reflection, understood as ironic reflection, can only be attained through multiple confrontations between Giglio and his other selves. Frischmann characterizes these encounters as the result of a split between body and soul:

> Erstens ist das Ich, die personale Identität, als integrative Einheit von Körper und Geist zu verstehen. Die Zerrüttung dieser Relation führt zur Tollheit, zu einer gestörten Identität. Zweitens ist es Aufgabe des geistig-psychisch-leiblichen Prozesses der Identitätsformung, die personale Identität aus einer Vielheit von fiktiven Identitätsvorstellungen immer wieder neu herzustellen und zu stabilisieren. (112)

---

[24] Freud's description of the tensions between ego, id, and super-ego also involves working out conflicts between inner and outer, real and psychical worlds: "Während das Ich wesentlich Repräsentant der Außenwelt, der Realität ist, tritt ihm das Über-Ich als Anwalt der Innenwelt, des Es, gegenüber. Konflikte zwischen Ich und Ideal werden, darauf sind wir nun vorbereitet, in letzter Linie den Gegensatz von Real und Psychisch, Außenwelt und Innenwelt, widerspiegeln" (303).

The process of identity formation, which requires eliminating multiple other selves, must take place again and again. At the apogee of Giglio's madness, his body is so far detached from his soul that he does not recognize himself as Giglio. But this state of detachment is, at the same time, necessary in enabling the grand inversion in chapter 8, when he finally gazes into the *Urdarquelle*. It would seem that finding one's self becomes possible only once one has completely detached body and soul to the point of utter unrecognizability and then submits oneself to an inverted world order.

This battle with and in the self, which is supposed to result in self-consciousness and a refined personal identity, consistently falls under the sign of the inverted world. While Fichte does not use the term specifically, one of his most important readers does in reference to the self in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. As discussed earlier in the *Vorspiel*, Novalis' treatment of how the absolute I becomes an empirical I in his *Fichte-Studien* situates reflection as the primary motor for this shift. [25] Reflection, for Novalis, is the starting point on a path that leads through an inverted world in which the self comes into conflict with itself. The reflective tension of the inverted-world order appears as a problem of mediation in Novalis' text: "Der Widerstreit ist, als Widerstreit, blos im mittelbaren Ich und gerade deswegen nothwendig, weil es kein Widerstreit ursprünglich ist" ([sic] 32). The struggle takes place in the mediated self of empirical experience, not in the original, absolute self. Only in this inverted order does the mediated self become something to be reckoned with: "Man nehme nur auf den Ordo inversus des mittelbaren Ich Rücksicht – denn dis [sic] ist eigentlich der Grund des Widerspruchs" (32). The mediated I to which Novalis refers is the empirical self, the self of experience versus the *a priori*, ideational I. Manfred Frank frames Novalis' extrapolations on Fichte's absolute I as an inverted image: "Auslöser von Novalis' Gedankenexperiment ist eine Besinnung auf die ursprüngliche Wortdeutung von 'Reflexion'. 'Reflexion' heißt ja Spiegelung, und alles Gespiegelte ist seitenverkehrt" (253). Following Frank's reading of Novalis, a reflection of the reflection is necessary in order to return the inverted relationships back to order: "Eine reflektierte Reflexion wendet die Verkehrung der Verhältnisse wieder um und stellt so die Ordnung wieder her, die ihnen vor der ersten Spiegelung zukam" (254). Although reflection, inversion, and mediation clearly intermingle and overlap in this process of securing the self, the question remains as to whether the reflection of the reflection can actually re-establish any lasting order or even a stable subject position.

---

[25]   Dalia Nassar gives an overview of the contested status of the *Fichte-Studien* and their ascribed role in unlocking aspects of German romantic philosophy (19-38).

Mediations of the Self

The proliferation of selves in *Prinzessin Brambilla* might then be best understood as so many mediated reflections of Giglio's self, while the fictive selves that he must overcome might be conceived of as bad copies of an original that is itself in need of improvement. If we take the *Nicht-Ich* as a negative copy of the *Ich* and the conflict that results between the copy and the original as belonging to an inverted order (*ordo inversus*), then the gaps and discrepancies between the levels of mediation become an extension of Giglio's process of gaining ironic self-awareness. It follows, then, that authenticity would be a central problem in this configuration of conflicting media. To be sure, the original text of *Prinzessin Brambilla* is itself not originary. It is based on a different original, in a different medium: the engravings of Jacques Callot. So while Giglio is struggling with mediated images of himself, the text redeploys these struggles by staging its own mediality.

Various authorities in the text repeatedly draw attention to it being an incomplete medium that deviates from the original engravings by Jacques Callot. Though the actual inclusion of the images in the printed work has been a matter of debate in its reception history, it seems irrefutable that the images ought to appear next to the text.[26] A glimpse at the editor's foreword (written by Hoffmann as well) seems convincing enough, as it presents a sort of instruction manual for the book. The editor provides cautionary advice to the reader who might be expecting some serious work of literature. Instead, he tells the reader to abandon any aspirations of seriousness.

> Den geneigten Leser, der etwa willig und bereit sein sollte, auf einige Stunden dem Ernst zu entsagen und sich dem kecken launischen Spiel eines vielleicht manchmal zu frechen Spuckgeistes [sic] zu überlassen, bittet aber der Herausgeber demütiglich, doch ja die Basis des Ganzen, nämlich Callot's fantastisch karikierte Blätter nicht aus dem Auge zu verlieren. (769)

With Callot's fantastic caricatures in mind, it should come as no surprise that the novella is full of flights of fancy and saucy playfulness. A dissatisfied reader, the editor suggests, might even blame the images more than the author who translated them into textual form. In giving the engravings such an important status in the paratextual framework, Hoffmann makes them a structural necessity and, concurrently, a problem for the entire novella.

The relationship between text and image, original and copy, is an extension of the inverted and inverting encounters that shape *Prinzessin Brambilla*.[27] Hoffmann picked

---

[26] See Steinecke and Allroggen's commentary on the question as to whether or not including the images is fundamentally necessary or just decorative in the DKV edition (1150).

[27] Olaf Schmidt provides a thoroughly researched discussion of image-text relations. Schmidt's thesis is that the image-text relation that *Prinzessin Brambilla* engages in and creates depends on a reflexive and reflective relationship between text and image that plays out in the plot and also in the intermedial structure of the novella. The question as to which has the stronger formative influence over the other

eight images from Callot's series of 24 engravings, entitled *Balli di Sfessania*. These images were then reworked by Carl Friedrich Thiele. While Thiele's engravings differ from the originals in several respects, they are most significantly mirror images of Callot's. Thiele switched left and right in his renditions, causing the reversal of the original to be more than just a result of the transfer from the printing plate to the paper. This inversion is thematized in the story, for example, in chapter 6, during the ultimate battle between Giglio and his doppelganger. The text takes time to explain why the two battling figures have their swords in their left hands (879). The connection between this inverted mirror image and the reflective surface of the *Urdar* spring lies close at hand.[28] Within the fairytale allegory, the inverted reflecting pool carries over to the inverted images of the original Callot engravings. In this sense, looking at the images parallels looking into the *Urdarquelle*, and the reader metonymically assumes the role of the protagonists, who gaze into the inverted world in the surface of the lake.

In addition to the inversions in and between image and text, the two media also interfere with one another when it comes to gaps. There are holes in the text that the narrator can only fill with speculation. Between Giglio's conversation on "chronic dualism" with Celionati in the Caffè greco and the final battle between Giglio and one of his other selves (here it is Pantalon and Giglio is dressed as the *moro blanco*) before Giglio fully assumes the role of the prince, the narrator reports: "In dem höchst merkwürdigen Originalcapriccio, dem der Erzähler genau nacharbeitet, befindet sich hier eine Lücke" (876-77). The narrator fills in as best he can what might possibly have happened in this narrative gap.[29] But even when the narration resumes, it is only a close approximation: "Die fernere Fortsetzung lautet ungefähr wie folgt" (877). This is another reminder of the "Originalcapriccio" supposedly underlying Hoffmann's text.[30] That original is neither completely intact, nor is it even clear what form the original has or had. It seems to be a document that does not fully take shape in any particular medium. These indications of incompleteness do not bring the narration to an end, but the final sentence of the novella does point to an apparently insurmountable gap:

---

is relativized through a give and take of the text lending new meaning and importance to the images and the images providing a "source" and "basis" for figures in the text.

[28] Steinecke and Allroggen's commentary in the DKV edition makes this link: "Eine Erklärung dafür könnte die Entsprechung zu der Grundthematik des Mythos vom Urdarbrunnen sein, in dem sich alles 'verkehrt' spiegelt" (1149).

[29] Oliver Kohn makes the connection between this narrative hole and questions of identity and non-identity: "Der Hoffmann'sche Text inszeniert sich damit als eine Nachahmung und Übertragung, die ihre Identität in der Übereinstimmung mit der Nicht-Identität des 'Originalcapriccios' findet" (23).

[30] For an extensive discussion of the capriccio tradition, see Reinhold Grimm's "From Callot to Butor. E.T.A. Hoffmann and the Tradition of the Capriccio." Grimm situates Hoffmann as at once origin and peak of the tradition in the German-speaking context.

> Hier versiegt plötzlich die Quelle, aus der, o geneigter Leser! der Herausgeber dieser Blätter geschöpft hat. […] Es ist auch zu vermuten, daß an demselben Abende sowohl, als nachher, mit dem beglückten Schauspielerpaar, […] sich noch manches Wunderbare zugetragen haben wird. Meister Callot wäre der Einzige, der darüber fernere Auskunft geben könnte. (912)

The end of the story implies that there is more information to be had and that it might be found by delving back into the wellspring of images created by Callot. The concluding lines create a strange paradox: there is more to be had, but the narrator's (or editor's) source has been shut off.

The text, thus, sends the reader in search of more source material in the end. And should readers undertake that pursuit, they would quickly find the other images Hoffmann did not include in the novella. The exclusion of the other 16 images has been noted by Ricarda Schmidt in the following terms: "Hoffmann's distance from the Bakhtinian position is to be clearly seen in his choice of the eight etchings from the twenty-four plates by Callot which formed the basis of this tale: all the obscene images have been left out" (62).[31] While the omission of these images does mean, as Schmidt claims, that the text establishes a distance between its world and the grotesque carnivalesque that Bakhtin describes, their exclusion is accompanied by this concluding invitation to look into the gaps, to go find precisely these images, which found no place on the pages of the text.[32] By not subjecting these other images to the processes of mediation that the 8 selected images underwent (i.e., Thiele's etchings → the holey original capriccio → the narrator/editor's rendition of that original), they are paradoxically more immediate in their absence than the replicas present in the book. Uncovering the source, opening up the flow of the wellspring means bringing up the other images in the *Balli* series. And in that subterranean watery realm, there are images more obscene, more sexualized, and more grotesque than the rather polite, courtly images that float on the surface of the novella.

Penetrating Selves and Perverted Cures

So far we have seen how inversion appears as both symptom and cure in *Prinzessin Brambilla* and how it is at work in the intermedial play of the novella, such that the readers, too, find themselves gazing into various inverted images, both textual and

---

[31]   Ricarda Schmidt makes note of several scholars who discuss this lack of grotesque images in Hoffmann's selection, among others she mentions Gerhard Kaiser's "Hoffmanns *Prinzessin Brambilla* als Antwort auf Goethes *Römisches Karnival*" and Detlef Kremer's article "Literarischer Karneval" (62).

[32]   This sort of exclusion of the grotesque is markedly different from what Thomas Cramer claims is a lack of the grotesque in the novella due to its failure to present a fully differentiated two-world system, something that the grotesque requires as part of its negotiation of higher and lower states, according to him (97).

pictorial. The source for all these inverted images is simultaneously a wellspring (like the *Urdarquelle* that produces the inverted reflecting pool) and the source material of Callot's engravings. The narrator implores the reader at the end to seek out even more inverted images. In other words, his injunction sends us down another passage into the inverted world. This quest for origins and completeness is doomed from the beginning, for what sort of completeness is possible in the retelling of a tale based on only a few select images that overtly submerges its full source material in the watery depths of a fairytale lake? Set amidst the tensions between ailment and cure, copy and original, image and text, the gap at the end of *Prinzessin Brambilla* begs to be filled with something that can withstand high amounts of ambivalence and paradox. Whatever might fill this gap and hold together the world and texture of *Prinzessin Brambilla* must also be seen as part of the treatment that the novella depicts.

Many of the inverted and inverting elements in Hoffmann's text call to mind that famous cure that is also poison, discussed by Plato and many others over the centuries. The *pharmakon* shares the double nature of inversion, especially when it comes to stories of pathology, treatment, and transformation; it thus provides a potential stopgap for thinking through the holes in Hoffmann's text. Like the *pharmakon*, inversion challenges the primacy of the original and introduces instability into stabilizing systems. This dual nature is nowhere more apparent than in Derrida's discussion of the *pharmakon* as writing. The instability surfaces in Socrates' denunciation of writing and championing of *logos*, as Derrida argues. Writing stands in opposition to the true spoken word of *logos*:

> This errant democrat [i.e., writing], wandering like a desire or like a signifier freed from *logos,* this individual who is not even perverse in a regular way, who is ready to do anything, to lend himself to anyone, who gives himself equally to all pleasures, to all activities, […] this adventurer, like the one in the *Phaedrus*, simulates everything at random and is really nothing. (145)

As such, writing is a perversion of *logos*, a bad copy, the evil doppelganger of the truth and true knowledge, even as this distinction proves to be more of a heuristic, since, in the end, all speech reveals itself as reliant upon writing. Still, if we extend Derrida's analogy to the novella, then we might understand Giglio as a bad copy from the beginning, a lousy actor who is no good at imitating. The proliferation of bad copies of the original bad copier (Giglio) is a homeopathic strategy, as the *pharmakon* is administered as more of the same—in this case, the poison and the cure are the copying/reflective (re)productions of inversions. Moreover, becoming nothing, like the adventurer in *Phaedrus* according to

Derrida, is precisely what Giglio is learning to do: Developing into a good actor who can play any part means shedding one's sense of individual self in order to assume any role.[33]

A further connection between the *pharmakon* and the course of Giglio's treatment can be found in his overly affected mode of acting, which draws attention to the same mechanisms of imitation that writing employs. Derrida's presentation equates the *pharmakon*, among other things, to a specific type of writing condemned by Socrates. The opposition between *logos* and the *grapheme* in *Phaedrus* goes beyond the tension between the spoken word and writing (149). This type of writing is the writing of the spilled seed. Socrates gives preference to "the fertile trace over the sterile trace, for a seed that engenders because it is planted inside over a seed scattered wastefully outside: at the risk of *dissemination*" (149).[34] The double nature of the *pharmakon* can be found here as well: capable of both serious fertilization and excessive spillage. Derrida elaborates the analogy in terms of a difference between the "sensible farmer" and the "Sunday gardener" (150). The bad kind of writing is mere amusement (*divertissement*), scattering seeds for purely decorative purposes. And yet, later Derrida suggests that this division does not hold, for the *pharmakon* is always both, and as such also presents an identity crisis:

> It [writing] rolls this way and that like someone who has lost his way, who doesn't know where he is going, having strayed from the correct path, the right direction, the rule of rectitude, the norm; but also like someone who has lost his rights, an outlaw, a pervert, a bad seed, a vagrant, an adventurer, a bum. Wandering the streets, he doesn't even know who he is, what his identity—if he has one—might be, what his name is, what his father's name is. (143)

Derrida's depiction again coincides with the image of Giglio. Giglio as writing embodied careens through the streets of Rome not knowing if he is Giglio, the prince, or some other doppelganger. "Chronic dualism" is another name for this state of confusion, and overcoming it requires straightening out the course of writing, using the *pharmakon* for good and truth, and abandoning the excessive, melodramatic (*pathetisch*) ways of the bad actor/copier. In other words, Giglio must spread his seed as the sensible farmer and not as the Sunday gardener. But that would imply that these two forms of spreading seeds

---

[33] Kohn makes this point elegantly: "Hoffmanns Akteur Giglio Fava verkörpert, indem er sich vom paradigmatisch schlechten zum guten Schauspieler entwickelt, genau den Übergang von der Person, die etwas *ist* – und darum nichts zu zeigen und darzustellen hat – zu einer Person, die schlechthin *nichts* ist – und darum alles darzustellen vermag" (31).

[34] Martin Roussel develops an approach to *Prinzessin Brambilla* that also draws from Derridian concepts, especially the connection between distraction and text/writing: "Zerstreuung ist der Grund der in der Erzählung erzogenen Bilder. Spur dieser exzentrischen Bewegung ist die Schrift, Bündelungsfigur aber Hoffmanns Figur des 'geneigten Lesers,' dessen exzentrische Lektüreposition in den Text hineingenommen ist" (62). Roussel's argument revolves around the absent presence of the reader, who enables the text's eccentricity. He further makes connections between distraction and dissemination in order to illustrate the potential deconstruction of reading that the text performs (63-64).

could ultimately be distinguished from each other. Such a distinction, however, remains as impossible as differentiating the two aspects of the *pharmakon*.

If *Prinzessin Brambilla* were a mere *Bildungsroman* à la *Wilhelm Meister*, it would promote development along a Socratic and dialectical path. In this vein, Giglio's transformation into a productive member of society would involve surpassing an inverted state and returning to the right (and righteous) path.[35] This process would seem to demand leaving behind inversion all together. Indeed, when the narrator tells us in the end that the source is sealed up (the wellspring has run dry), it also means that the *pharmakon* has been successfully contained. Inversions, for better or for worse, can no longer spill over into everyday life. Yet Giglio's rehabilitation as an actor, his shift from melodrama to comedy, is contingent on achieving ironic self-awareness. In this sense, irony cannot be understood as a completely incalculable element in the semantic systems of everyday life, but instead as something to be mastered. The question is, of course, whether irony as inversion can be mastered or if, on the contrary, it forever eschews attempts at being mastered and rendered calculable and, therefore, remains a constant threat even when all seems to be forgiven, cured, and sealed off.

The end of Prinzessin Brambilla does not suffice itself with a happy scene of bourgeois coupledom between Giglio and Giacinta.[36] At the last possible moment, the narrator points towards the excess beyond the text and sends us looking for more inverted images. Should we take up his invitation we might find something like this:

---

[35] To be sure, Giglio's cure means becoming productive. Kohn points out that the problem with Giglio's acting is precisely that it is unproductive: "Unter dem Aspekt der Nachahmung betrachtet, handelt es sich in allen Fällen jedoch um die Klage über den gleichen darstellerischen Mangel: Die unproduktive Nachäffung bestehender Formen und Redensarten, Mimesis als bloßes Nachmachen und Nachahmen statt als Darstellung" (27). His problem, thus, is that he is just reproducing lines without any added (aesthetic) value. His reproduction is masturbatory and, as we will see, perverse.

[36] This is where my reading of the ending diverges from Paul de Man's, who otherwise portrays the final scene in terms of "pure parody" ("The Rhetoric of Temporality" 218). However, de Man then emphasizes the finality of the narrator's closing lines. According to him, the very moment in Hoffmann's novella when irony seems to have cured all is the moment when "invention immediately runs dry." I would counter that invention does not actually run dry but instead has to find deeper, more perverse sources of irony, and thus the final gesture in the text is an indication of the sexualized underbelly of irony that makes everything a potential sexual innuendo—as de Man notes elsewhere in "The Concept of Irony" in reference to the danger that the sexual content of Schlegel's *Lucinde* poses to philosophy as well as texts and signification in general.

Cap. Babeo.   Cucuba.

This image from Callot's *Balli di Sfessania* was not included in Hoffmann's selection. It is one of the extra images that Master Callot might share with the reader who takes up the narrator's suggestion to ask him for more details. It depicts a scene between two men in which the Cucuba figure poses invitingly for Captain Babeo's penetrating phallus of a sword. This example is just one of four engravings that show two male figures in postures of pre-penetration, in which one figure presents his backside to his counterpart who has an erect phallus poised to thrust. The motif of male penetration stands at one end of the spectrum of images in the series. On the other end are the four docile images of a man and a woman, the sexual content of which is nowhere as explicit, if one can even speak of them as having such content in the first place. All four are included in *Prinzessin Brambilla*. Between these two extremes are the rest of the images of male figures dancing, playing with swords, and otherwise posing flamboyantly for each other. The four male couples that Hoffmann does present in the novella are certainly the most harmless, leaving a rather broad range of possibilities for filling the gap at the end of the text. However, the fact that the scenes of playing at penetration mark such a clear and diametrical opposition to the scenes of the man and the woman suggests that there is something particularly volatile in these absent images.

The absence of this image might be understood in the context of Giglio's rehabilitation and the containment of inversion as the absolute unspeakable, unrepresentable act: a depiction of two Sunday gardeners (the "bad" kind of writing) preparing to perform a comic rendition of spilling the seed. Even with the image before our very eyes, the act of male-male penetration is only ever hinted at in this excessively grotesque performance. That is to say, the etching itself presents the act of penetration as an impossible act, as an act to be played at (never to be actually committed), as part of a comic spectacle. Hoffmann's textual representation of the male-male battle scene in the Corso brings to the fore the intimacy and affection that two men in combat might share:

> Die Kämpfer umarmten sich wiederum und heulten und schluchzten ungemein vor Rührung über die Herrlichkeit ihres Beginnens und fielen sich grimmig an. […] Mit vermehrter Liebe blickten sich die Kämpfer an, jeder hatte den andern als rühmlich und tapfer erprobt. Sie umarmten sich, weinten, und hoch flammte die Glut des erneuerten Zweikampfs. (879)

Of course, this intimacy can only be performed as part of a comic spectacle. Rather than ending in anal penetration and the wasteful spilling of the seed, the encounter results in a defeat of the doppelganger, bringing Giglio one step closer to his final cure by destroying another fictive self.[37] The battle ends with a fatal blow: Giglio is struck by his opponent's sword, and his body is carried off. And the crowd goes wild with laughter. The path to the cure is a comic and not an erotic one—or rather the erotic must be rendered comic.[38] The encounters with doubles thus appear as comic substitutes that maintain the repression of explicit eroticism in the text. Slapstick replaces intimacy in these matches between *Ich* and *Nicht-Ich*. Meanwhile, the affection between the self and its double appears as part of Giglio's transformation. These scenes, thus, can also be read as corrective moments, in which Giglio is disciplined—or better yet, given a dose of the *pharmakon* to help straighten him out and come one step closer to becoming a (re)productive member of society. The pairing at the end of the novella represents an acceptable doubling/coupling: a pair of comedians united in marriage and both free of melodramatic tendencies.

The Theater Inverted and Inversion Spilled

As an instantiation of the *pharmakon*, the inverted world of carnival cannot be contained. Seeping into other realms, contaminating them with a confusion of identity, it permeates the world of the theater, where no one should be too much themself. It is a site of fermentation for the affliction known as chronic dualism. It is at the source of the very element in which the kingdom of *Urdar* swims. According to Derrida, "The *pharmakon* always penetrates like a liquid; it is absorbed, drunk, introduced into the inside, which it first marks with the hardness of the type, soon to invade it and inundate it with its

---

[37]   Gerhard Neumann makes the bold claim that Hoffmann's text is a unique and powerful moment in the history of the subject: "Hoffmann unternimmt damit in seinem singulären Text […] den Versuch, den heikelsten Punkt in der Identitätsgeschichte des Subjekts, der sich in der Literatur finden läßt, 'wissenspoetisch' zu bearbeiten: nämlich den Moment in jener Erkennungsszene zwischen Liebenden, in der sich Blick und Traum, Objektwahrnehmung und Phantasie, Reales und Imaginäres zu überkreuzen beginnen und sich die duale Konfiguration – als Begehrensensemble zwischen Mann und Frau – verdoppelt; also sinnliche Erfahrung und Begehrensbild auseinanderspringen, ein chiastisches Quartett imaginärer 'Wahlverwandschaft' sich einstellt" (46). Neumann's extends the doubling and synthesizing of the desiring man and woman that takes place in *Prinzessin Brambilla* to the criss-crossings of desire that structure Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*, with the important difference in *Prinzessin Brambilla* being that the quartet of lovers is actually only a duet.

[38]   Here again I tend to put emphasis on the theatrical transformation of Giglio's character in contrast to Neumann's argument that puts the erotic relationship at the center of the text (Neumann 41-42).

medicine, its brew, its drink, its potion, its poison" (152). Moreover, in this watery element binary terms and positions lose their ground: "In liquid, opposites are more easily mixed. Liquid is the element of the *pharmakon*. And water, pure liquidity, is most easily and dangerously penetrated then corrupted by the *pharmakon*, with which it mixes and immediately unites" (152). Derrida connects this liquid to ink, the liquid used for writing. In writing as well, opposed terms risk being dissolved, diluted, and even deluded. This characterization of the *pharmakon* is all the more germane given that Hoffmann's text presents the theater in particular as a wellspring of inversion, out of which or in which these images appear.

The theater provides an open space for all sorts of acts in *Prinzessin Brambilla* and is particularly inviting of inversion, but it is also a site where inversions become especially complicated. Before the great epiphany experienced by the two lovers, Celionati, appearing as Bastianello di Pistoja, whose palace is the site of the fantastical finale, tells Giglio and Giacinta about the mirror of the theater:

> In der kleinen Welt, das Theater genannt, sollte nämlich ein Paar gefunden werden, das nicht allein von wahrer Fantasie, von wahrem Humor im Innern beseelt, sondern auch im Stande wäre, diese Stimmung des Gemüts objektiv, wie in einem Spiegel, zu erkennen und sie *so* ins äußere Leben treten zu lassen, daß sie auf die große Welt, in der jene kleine Welt eingeschlossen, wirke, wie ein mächtiger Zauber. (910)

Celionati employs the figure of *theatrum mundi* to emphasize that the comic duo is meant to perform on the stage of the little world so that the audience sees the connection to the big world outside the theater. From this perspective, we can better contemplate the inner dispositions of the figures, perceive them more objectively, Celionati tells us, as objects in a mirror. At this point in the novella, we know this is no scientific, detached objectivity. In the inverted world, objects in the mirror are more twisted than they appear. Just to be sure, he extends this relationship explicitly to the main body of water in the novella. "So sollte, wenn ihr wollt, wenigstens in gewisser Art das Theater den Urdarbronnen vorstellen, in den die Leute kucken können" (910). Thus, looking into the wellspring equates to watching a play, which, in turn, means seeing the world as inverted. The circularity leading back to inversion attests to the paradoxical nature of the *pharmakon* as both antidote and poison and to the problem of curing chronic dualism through contorting inversions of the self.

By the end of the story, it seems that Giglio has mastered the art of imitation and secured his position as a productive member of society, as someone capable of planting the fruitful seeds of his labors and not just spilling them willy-nilly. But that position comes about only through his achieving success as a comic actor, a position that is perhaps more often associated with aesthetic concerns and superfluity. Giglio secures a

productive identity as someone devoted to the flowery, aesthetic non-productivity of the theater, an obviously contradictory position given the supposed unproductivity of the Sunday gardener. In this respect, the status of theater and imitation is far from unambiguous. The tension between performing a role and being a person, between wearing a mask and presenting oneself as authentic, does not get resolved in the final scene. As Olaf Schmidt points out, the novella (as a capriccio) refuses to provide the means for a definitive interpretation of its contents. "Das Capriccio selbst praktiziert durch abwechselnde Fiktionalisierung und Defiktionalisierung eine Identitätsverweigerung, die es dem Leser unmöglich macht, sie interpretatorisch zu fixieren" (54). By evoking its own fictional character, the capriccio de-fictionalizes itself, thereby resisting the establishment of a stable meaning, as if by exposing itself as *fix-tion* it renounces the standard conceit of fiction to secure meaning because it provides a closed system of signs. This interpretive impasse makes the novella impossible to simply decode, an increasingly formidable task given the overlapping and intertwining relationships between the *pharmakon*, inversion, theater, and irony. Moreover, Giglio's transformation from a bad imitator to an authentic comedian depends on the repression and suppression of certain forms of inversion that exceed the narrative and medial limits of the novella. As the novella indicates these limits and sends readers looking into the holes of the story, it also presents an *Identitätsverweigerung* in both its content (Giglio's experiences) and its form (the *mise en abîme* of the text into itself), so that Hoffmann cannot be said to leave any sense of actually attaining even the illusory tranquility and bliss that looms in the last scene. It has become impossible to differentiate between theater and reality on all levels of mediation. We cannot know if we are drinking the antidote or the poison.

While Giglio's identity disorder leads all of Rome to undertake a curative (and punitive) course of action on his behalf, the theater provides a sanctioned space in which *Identitätsverweigerung* does not lead to such invasive measures. In the theater, it is okay to not be yourself—indeed, being too much yourself is fatal in the theater. Giglio has to get over himself in order to succeed as an actor (something that Wilhelm Meister never does). Hoffmann's text extends this openness of identity to the reader as well by breaking down the boundary between theater world and real world, a process integrally connected to the rituals of carnival. Olaf Schmidt makes this connection between the text's engagement with the carnivalesque and an all-pervasive theatricality:

> Die Callotschen Kupferstiche eröffnen dem Leser die "umgestülpte Welt" des Karnevals. Karneval ist, wie Bachtin schreibt, "ein Schauspiel ohne Rampe, ohne Polarisierung der Teilnehmer in Aktive und Zuschauer. Im Karneval sind alle Teilnehmer aktiv, ist jedermann handelnde Person." (58)

The embedded quote from Bakhtin's *Literatur und Karneval: Zur Romantheorie und Lachkultur* (1985) emphasizes the mutable and fluctuating subjectivity of the carnivalesque and sets it up as a theatrical relationship, in which spectators and actors are no longer distinguished by their active or passive roles in the event.[39] The etchings are the gateway to a different type of theater, one that we have seen in Tieck's play, a theater without a raised stage ("ohne Rampe"), in which the refusal of identity extends into the audience.

Reading Pharmakon

Prinzessin Brambilla's deployment of inversion complicates notions of an authentic subjectivity, even as (or especially as) inversion appears as a fundamental part of the process of subjection. The watery images in Hoffmann's novella refract identity and subjectivity. Inversion inheres in both as a queer sort of thinking (*in die Quere denken*) that can never be fully purged. It is also cause, symptom, and cure to Giglio's identity disorder. At most the perverse origin of the self can be covered up and sealed off, while on the surface we are given a scene of bourgeois married life to carry off into the sunset. But in thinking inversion as *pharmakon*, it becomes clear that this final scene is another grand illusion built upon a holey foundation, which is not a faulty one but rather the only possible basis for such a quaint scene.

Hoffmann creates an inverted *ordo inversus*, doubling the inverted order of a disordered self that feigns at bringing the self back around to a true and authentic identity, even as it exposes that identity as illusory, necessary, potentially desirable, and always deferred. If in the end the novella tells a fairly straightforward tale of Giglio Fava's laborious transformation from two-bit tragedian to top-notch comedian, that path is riddled with diversions, distractions, and interruptions. The text's multiple plot twists together with its twisted content and form make it abnormal, a bit deranged and disorderly, confused and confusing. So while the final scene seems to present a picture of the perfect bourgeois artist couple, it might be best understood as the seal that covers the watery depths of the wellspring. Giglio and Giacinta appear to have mastered irony and by extension humor, but the price of productive reproduction is the renunciation of the

---

[39]   Gesa von Essen presents Hoffmann's text as a grotesque subversion of the order of division between bodies and inner/outer domains. She emphasizes the subversive potential in the carnival tradition and turns to Bakhtin's description of the grotesque body to highlight how Hoffmann's capriccio negotiates the eccentric self and excessive corporality: "Wie nämlich Körper auseinandergenommen und wieder zusammengesetzt werden, […] so wird auch Giglio durch Masken, Spiegelfiguren und Traumbilder in seiner Abgegrenztheit als Individuum deshalb aufgelöst und entfächert, um sich von den falschen und hohlen Rollen seines Lebens zu 'reinigen' und sein wahres Ich zu erkennen" (68).

inverted world. That is to say, they have achieved a sort of irony that might be acceptable to Hegel and even Kierkegaard: Their comic stance is no longer threatened by the abysmal reflection of romantic irony that empties everything of meaning, including and especially the subject. But as it becomes clear that inversion surpasses the text and its figures, it makes little sense to yoke together the compulsory schooling of Giglio with a general lesson about how to engage with inversion in productive and aesthetically pleasing ways. Instead, inversion is a holey operation. The gaps in the narrative are both product and precondition of inversion. They hold open the space necessary for inversions to take place, while the inversions themselves engender more gaps and draw attention to the space between oppositional pairs. As Hoffmann's novella transgresses its own multiple levels of mediation and fictionality, it encourages readers to question their position over and against the text, over and against its images and gaps. And yet it never presumes to provide a guide to personal improvement. The machinations of inversion become all the more suspicious in Hoffmann's writing, where inversion is so intricately woven into our perception of the differences between sane and insane, self and other, make-believe and real, as well as healthy and sick. What appears in *Prinzessin Brambilla* as a subterranean wellspring of perverse and inverted images takes on decidedly linguistic implications in Georg Büchner's *Leonce und Lena*, in which the theatrical enables speech acts that further call subjectivity into crisis.

Act 3: Revolutionary Fools and Theatrical Signification in Büchner's *Leonce und Lena*

Georg Büchner's *Leonce und Lena* offers another stage upon which we might rethink inversion and how it relates to theatricality and the possibility of revolutionary action. Before getting into the logistics and illogic of inversion in the play, I would like to open with some preliminary comments on the prologue. In doing so, I am building on an established practice in scholarship on *Leonce und Lena* that treats the prologue as encapsulating indications of all the major themes in the text—in very condensed form. Here is the entire prologue:

> Alfieri 'E la fama?'
> Gozzi 'E la fame?' (103)

The mini-dialogue has served as a point of departure for a variety of analytical arguments; for example, Hans Hiebel hones in on the opening lines as evidence of the dramatic class conflict, which he argues is a determinant factor in this work: "[Büchner] erzählt vom Glanz ('fama') einer feudalen Liebes- und Krönungsgeschichte und macht doch – undeutlich – deutlich, daß diese auf dem Elend ('fame') einer abhängigen Klasse beruht" (130).[1] In addition to plunging us into ideological conflicts, the prologue also establishes some of the formal strategies that Büchner uses, most notably his use of citation/quotation or what Arnd Beise calls Büchner's "Zitatismus".[2] Indeed, the lines have been traced back to George Sand's *Lettres d'un voyageur* (1834),[3] and, thus, Büchner begins his comedy with a citation, borrowing someone else's language to set the stage. As the prologue takes on multiple valences depending on the claim a given scholar is making, it appears as a *Projektionsfläche* for various interpretive and theoretical standpoints from Marxist critiques of class consciousness to poetological analyses of Büchner's literary strategies. It might even serve as a segue to a discussion of the text's genesis: it was composed for a writing contest that could have brought both fame and money (for food) if Büchner had succeeded in meeting the deadline, which he missed twice. But as part of an examination

---

[1] The tension between a materialist versus idealist or proletariat versus aristocratic world-view that inheres in the juxtaposition of fame and famine has also drawn the attention of other Büchner scholars. See, for example, Ho-Ill Im, who also uses the prologue/epitaph to begin his argument, which claims that both King Peter (rationalism) and Leonce (idealism) are guided by false ideologies. He emphasizes the materialist quality of the fame/fama quote (68).

[2] Beise is drawing from Walter Hinderer's claim in *Büchner - Kommentar zum dichterischen Werk*, which emphasizes the use of quotation and allusions in the play. See Hinderer 133. Patrick Fortmann does precisely this and connects the prologue with a strategy of citation: "Das Zitatprogramm, das Gegensätzliches nebeneinander stellt und Hochtrabendes in Profanes münden lässt, deutet schon die dialogische 'Vorrede' zum Lustspiel an" (67).

[3] Gerhard P. Knapp traces this connection through Ingo Fellrath, who linked it to George Sand's *Lettres d'un voyageur* from 1834 (Knapp 157).

of the work for its potential as a source for thinking about identity and inversion in the nineteenth century, I want to focus instead on how the prologue plays with language on a material, aural level.

Büchner draws attention to vowels throughout *Leonce und Lena*, and in the prologue, the shift between the "a" in *fama* and "e" in *fame* already echoes the shift in the eponymous names. Right away, we are keyed into the idea that there is something queer about vowels. They are slippery. They are shifty. And they can make all the difference between ideal aspirations towards aesthetic greatness and simply scraping by with barely enough money to eat, which is to say, words make a difference even, or especially, on the most basic level of the letters used to spell them.[4] The vowel play at the start of the play (actually before the start) indicates that language is a material substance with a force that exceeds the mere signifying process based on a correlation between signifier and signified.

If we return to the content of the prologue, we might also acknowledge something additive about the two inquisitive statements in light of this excess. Instead of reading the lines as if Alfieri were saying, "But what about fame and glory? Shouldn't that be the single, highest goal in life?"; and Gozzi responding, "That's all fine and well, but how are you going to make enough money to eat in the meantime" (which tends to be the common understanding of these lines)—what if instead, the emphasis were on the "e" that repeats here? Is there a way to think of going hungry as not being the logical extension of pursuing artistic fame? Instead of seeing Gozzi's line as a defeatist retort, the two lines taken together might rather pose an actual question: How can one pursue fame *and* not have to worry about starving? Perhaps by establishing a different understanding of what constitutes work in the first place through the figure of Valerio and his relationship to language.[5] Valerio appears as a solution to the dilemma of *fame* and *fama* in so far as he brings about an inverted world through language that is only hinted at in the prologue. Moreover, Valerio's role as a stage-director within the play invites a closer look at how his relationship to the theater disrupts the conventional order of things. I present Valerio

---

[4]   Lee Edelman's article "I'm Not There: The Absence of Theory" takes up the question of what difference an iota can make within current debates on the role of theory. In true deconstructionist fashion, he narrows in on a single letter, the letter "i", in order to reiterate the critical intellectual work that theory does. He starts with Barbara Johnson's discussion of de Man's vowel play with Archie Bunker and ends with an analysis of the Bob Dylan biopic *I'm Not There*.

[5]   Christopher Daase characterizes Valerio's relationship to language as one based on an ability to turn meanings around: "Valerio gelingt es, indem er einen Begriff von Leonce aufgreift und ihn geschickt verwandelt, verfälscht und neu verwendet, die Situation zu deuten und seine eigene Position darin zu bestimmen" (383). Moreover, Valerio's use of language shows that his mode of action is through speech (ibid.).

as an inverted revolutionary, who brings out the theatrical aspect of language as part of his subversion of the status quo.[6]

Büchner's three-act play follows a rather conventional comic plot line: A young man and a young woman are destined for marital bliss and nothing can get in their way, not even themselves. Prince Leonce from the Kingdom of Popo is betrothed to Princess Lena from the Kingdom of Pipi. The two have never met, and neither is wild about an arranged marriage. King Peter, Leonce's father, is, however, determined to get his son married and pass off all of his royal responsibilities so that he might devote his time to philosophical reflection. Both royal children decide independently of one another to flee: Leonce, south to Italy; Lena, into nature – both end up in the same place. Act II shows how the two meet on foreign soil, still unaware of who the other is, and Leonce's sudden desire to now marry this stranger. Valerio, his companion/servant/jester, promises to help in return for being appointed minister once Leonce is happily married. In act III, they return to the Kingdom of Popo on the very day originally set for the wedding festivities as per King Peter's decree. Valerio presents Leonce and Lena as two automatons, who stand in for the actual prince and princess in the wedding ceremony. The play concludes with a grand revelation scene and Valerio's parting proclamation of a new world free from the strain of labor—an inverted world hailed forth by a fool.

There is a lot of debate concerning the ending of *Leonce und Lena*, and that debate is just as instructive as the various uses of the prologue when it comes to supporting different arguments. Some scholars claim that the play concludes with a happy ending, although this claim is often implicit. Beise, however, does explicitly argue for the happiness to be found in the final scene. He acknowledges that there is a real danger that everything might go sour. But, he says, this danger is averted: "Nur einen Moment lang blitzt die Gefahr auf, dass das neue Regime dem alten gleichen könnte und das alte Lied wie auf einer 'Drehorgel' schier unendlich wiederholt wird" ("'Die Leute vertragen es nicht'" 27). The threat appears here as the infinite return of the same—a perpetuation of the status quo ad infinitum. Beise claims that the danger is avoided when Lena shakes her head "no" in response to Leonce's question after the ceremony as to whether they should found a theater. Beise sees her "no" as negating the entire theatrical reproduction and the other propositions that Leonce has just made. That is a very powerful head shake and a

---

[6]   Carsten Rohde claims that *Leonce und Lena* is full of moments that speak to the inverted world motif, but his argument that this inverted world is a perverted version of the world, an unjust world in which the few rich oppress the poor masses, fails to account for the volatility that the figure introduces into the language of the play: "Sie [different moments in Büchner's work] sind verschiedene Umgangsweisen mit und Reaktionen auf ein Grundgefühl des Zeitgenossen und Autors Georg Büchner: das eines pervertierten Weltzustandes, in welchem die Dinge auf dem Kopf stehen, Unrecht statt Gerechtigkeit herrscht, die vielen Armen die wenigen Reichen füttern, das mögliche Humane der realen Unmenschlichkeit unterliegt" (164).

gracious reading of Lena's agency. Other scholars tend to see the ending as more ambiguous. Burghard Dedner relativizes the happy end and the utopian visions imparted by Leonce and Valerio, claiming that they are not to be taken seriously (177). And Hiebel goes so far as to call into question Lena's compliance and supposed happiness with her marriage to Leonce. Though Hiebel's questioning of Lena's true feelings is rather misogynistic, as if she were a victim of bad romance novels (138)—he at least destabilizes the idea of silent contentment. The humor of it all is meant to remind us to not get sentimental about it: "Der Ernst der Empfindung Lenas wie Leonces scheint zudem dementiert zu werden durch die Automaten-Szene und die skatologischen Reichsnamen 'Popo' und 'Pipi'" (139). In the end, love proves to be part of a predetermined necessity and not at all an act of free will or authentic emotions, which according to Hiebel would be the basis for a truly happy end (ibid).[7] Jan Thorn-Prikker also presents this version of the failed happy end. He points out that the two lovers who fell in love when they were not their noble, aristocratic selves realize that fate, and not free will, has triumphed. Thorn-Prikker calls it a happy end turned on its head (101), thereby emphasizing the inverted world connotations at the end. This point of contention about the happy end and its inverted world order illustrates a certain level of undecidability inherent in the play, best understood as a literary strategy of Büchner's.

Inverted Relations

One way to think about the inverted world of *Leonce und Lena* would be to look for relationships that read as abnormal or even as being at conflict with accepted forms of togetherness and companionship. In this sense, we might examine the relationship between Leonce and Valerio and the extent to which it deviates from more common configurations of male-male relating. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's presentation of homosociality opens up an interpretive avenue through which to examine relationships between men that are not necessarily mediated through violence or the trade in women, but which instead appear as part of a continuum of desire.[8] Of course, many homosocial relationships do fall back on these other modes, which, as Sedgwick shows in

---

[7] Knapp's rejection of the happy end also extends to a denial of a hopeful message for the lower class (173). Guido Rings compares Büchner's aristocratic ending with Shakespeare's and claims that Büchner exposes the "Lächerlichkeit" of the aristocratic happy end (123). For more happy end naysayers, see Volker Dörr, "'Melancholische Schweinsohren' und 'schändlichste Verwirrung': Zu Georg Büchners 'Lustspiel' *Leonce und Lena*."

[8] Sedgwick explains how this continuum tends to be marked by disruptions in *Between Men*. These disruptions appear at moments when the intimacy between men in homosocial relationships must be clearly distinguished from sexual desire. See in particular Sedgwick's chapter on "Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles" (21-27).

Epistemology of the Closet, contrast with certain ways of conceiving same-sex desire, such as the "trope of inversion" (89). Sedgwick's framework, however, allows us to think about how men relate to each other without immediately imposing contemporary schemas of same-sex desire and living. But this approach is not an effort to preserve or regain some fabled, historical authenticity. To be sure, her aim is not so much to completely avoid misnomers and anachronisms, rather she emphasizes that scholars need not project literary "outings" onto characters, exposing them as secretly being gay. In other words, Sedgwick proposes suspending contemporary schemas for thinking of relationality in order to make room for other configurations. I am not at all concerned with showing that Valerio and Leonce have a homosexual relationship. With Sedgwick's treatment of homosocial relationships as an initial framework, I am interested in highlighting the non-normative potential that inheres in how Büchner's characters interact. Is there something perverse if not sub-verse about Valerio and Leonce's relationship? Does their mutual desire fall outside of acceptable forms of male-male relationships?

There is actually little evidence in the text that social conventions stand in the way of the companionship between Valerio and Leonce. Valerio is Leonce's servant but also his friend.[9] He has access to Leonce's most private places, always popping up when the prince appears to be alone. They also daydream about a shared future:

> LEONCE Valerio! Valerio! Wir müssen was Anderes treiben. Rate!
>
> VALERIO Ach, die Wissenschaft, die Wissenschaft! Wir wollen Gelehrte werden! A priori! oder a posteriori? (1.3, 116)[…] So wollen wir Helden werden! […] So wollen wir Genies werden […] So wollen wir nützliche Mitglieder der Gesellschaft werden […] So wollen wir zum Teufel gehen!

As the scene continues with Valerio making other suggestions as to what the two could become together and Leonce rejecting each one, Leonce finally comes up with his own plan: "Wir gehen nach Italien" (1.3, 117). A suggestion like this is loaded with erotic connotations, as Italy figured again and again as a site of sexualized and aesthetic desire in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in German literature.[10] Moreover, this planning

---

9.   The implications of codifying this relationship as a friendship could lead to an historical analysis of nineteenth-century partnerships informed by the work of Niklas Luhmann in *Liebe als Passion*. Such an analysis might focus on the shifts between the intimacy and love in friendship or marriage, which Luhmann locates as a development of the previous century: "Das ganze 18. Jahrhundert durchzieht diese Bemühung, den Code für Intimität von Liebe auf 'innige' Freundschaft umzustellen. Dieser Versuch schließt auch die ersten Ansätze zur Intimisierung der Ehe ein – nicht auf Basis von Liebe, sondern auf der Basis von Freundschaft, die durch Liebe nur induziert werde" (102-103). Luhmann often points out that the different status of love, intimacy, marriage, and friendship is closely connected to class and social standing.

10.   For a thorough discussion of this relationship between Germany and Italy, see Richard Block's *The Spell of Italy*. The country to the south is also the land of *Il Papa*, where Popo and Pipi are not compelled to be themselves.

session all takes place in the wake of the king's decree that Leonce is to be married. That means that the prince and his servant-companion are explicitly running away from a politically and socially sanctioned union between a man and a woman.[11] And even if it is only once they are across the border that Leonce finds the proper object of his desire, when they encounter Lena and her governess, the relationship between the two men is never threatened. Nothing seems improper. As friends, they pose no challenge to the status quo—and even less so as master and servant. Moreover, Valerio is instrumental in securing the trade in women through his ploy in act III with the automaton wedding. In this light, the relationship between the two male figures appears to be rather conventional with Valerio as the playful lubricant the helps Pipi and Popo come together.

Other instances of abnormality seem even more remote from deviant sexual desire. As court jester, Valerio is not bound to the same rules of conduct as the *Hofmeister*, *Landrat*, or *Schulmeister*, or other figures in the service of the royal family. Whereas Leonce mocks his tutor in the opening scenes and plays the fool himself, he banters with Valerio. Valerio attains a level of intimacy and autonomy through his fool status that no other character enjoys. In fact, he quickly pushes Leonce to his wits' end with his nonsense: "Halt's Maul mit deinem Lied," he tells Valerio, "man könnte darüber ein Narr werden" (1.1, 107). Valerio surpasses Leonce in his foolishness even to the point of driving other people insane.

As a fool, Valerio need not adhere to the same conventions as other characters, and his behavior stands out as particularly extravagant.[12] He is a figure of consumption and indulgence. He is drunk when he first appears, and he constantly talks about eating and drinking. In a later scene, his eating habits also annoy Leonce. If the relationship between the fool and carnival were not already a staple of the carnivalesque tradition,[13] it becomes unavoidable in his grotesque gluttony. Moreover, Valerio appears to be out of joint in time, eating whenever it pleases him, sleeping at odd hours. In this respect, Valerio aligns with the festival temporality of carnival when official time is put on pause. And Valerio also vehemently opposes work: "Keine Schwiele schändet meine Hände, der Boden hat noch keinen Tropfen von meiner Stirne getrunken, ich bin noch Jungfrau in der Arbeit"

---

[11] Marcus Deufert makes clear that Valerio's council is a comfort to Leonce: "Im Gespräch mit Valerio überwindet er seine melancholische Passivität und treibt zur gemeinsamen Flucht nach Italien" (156). In this sense, Valerio helps Leonce turn himself around and overcome melancholy passivity.

[12] For more on Valerio as fool, see Leslie Mac Ewen's *The Narren-Motifs in the Works of Georg Büchner* and Nancy Lukens' *Büchner's Valerio and the Theatrical Fool Tradition*.

[13] Bakhtin obviously has a lot to say about the fool and folly in *Rabelais and His World.* For example, "Folly is, of course, deeply ambivalent. It has the negative element of debasement and destruction (the only vestige now is the use of 'fool' as a pejorative) and the positive element of renewal and truth. Folly is the opposite of wisdom—inverted wisdom, inverted truth" (260).

(1.1, 107). While scholars certainly debate the status of idleness in the play,[14] it remains clear that Valerio has no truck with a calendar based on work, production, and earning money. As a carnivalesque figure, Valerio appears outside normal, official relationships.

The inverted world always depends on a sense of the status quo. Establishing that baseline is necessary to make inversion legible. One way to identify the status quo is through the characters' complaints and wishes, which show *ex negativo* how things are otherwise. In Leonce's opening lines with the *Hofmeister*, we learn that the world he lives in is all too normal. Aberrations are rare, and to fill the vast plainness of existence Leonce devises meaningless tasks, fool's work: spitting on a stone 365 times, counting grains of sand. As he jibes his tutor, like Hamlet mocking Polonius with his "words, words, words" (*Hamlet* 2.2), he expresses desire for change, for more people to see things topsy-turvy: "Dann – habe ich nachzudenken, wie es wohl angehn mag, daß ich mir auf den Kopf sehe. Oh, wer sich einmal auf den Kopf sehen könnte!" (1.1, 105).[15] As with Hamlet, it is difficult to discern where Leonce's mockery of the tutor starts and stops—is this a serious wish or just another foolish remark like the ones about spitting on the stone and counting grains of sand? Once the tutor is gone, we see another side of Leonce. He is still jocular, but his desire for change comes across as more sincere: "Oh, wer einmal jemand anders sein könnte! Nur 'ne Minute lang" (1.1, 106). He does not seem content in his idleness, even if he is melodramatic about it. If nothing else, the status quo for Leonce is marked by idleness, immobility, and boredom—in other words, non-(re)productive labor.

The status quo does not look that much different through Valerio's eyes, except for the important detail that his version of normal life is everywhere threatened by labor. This is odd considering that none of the main characters in the play has to work. Yet it is the cause of no small amount of worry for Valerio, who is technically working as a servant the whole time, even if that work looks more like indulging. His primary concern is, after all, how to live his life without needing to work. This attitude is even harder to evaluate in terms of its authenticity within the fictional realm of Popo, since Valerio's language is even more foolish than Leonce's. Still, we can gather from Valerio's desires and complaints that there is a threat of having to earn money to maintain his endless consumption of food and wine. Valerio's lamentations, thus, expose the material basis within the status quo that imposes labor as a necessity.

---

[14] See Gustav Beckers' *Georg Büchners "Leonce und Lena": Ein Lustspiel der Langeweile*; Peter Mosler's *Georg Büchners Leonce und Lena: Langeweile als gesellschaftliche Bewußtseinsform*; and Patrick Primavesi's "Komisches Aussetzen: Repräsentationskritik und Spiel in Büchners 'Leonce und Lena.'"

[15] Leonce's wish echoes Lenz's desire for inversion: "Müdigkeit spürte er keine, nur war es ihm manchmal unangenehm, daß er nicht auf dem Kopf gehn konnte" (79). Lenz's growing madness contrasts with Leonce's trajectory towards assuming his father's position as (risible) philosopher-king.

With the king, we encounter a different way of knowing what is normal. The world from King Peter's perspective is completely removed from material concerns.[16] He is a parody of someone living in a realm of ideas. His main preoccupation is to find the time to think and reflect for his people. He hopes to achieve this goal by giving his power over to his son. Problems arise, however, when the material world imposes itself as a challenge to the king's word. For example, the details of getting dressed interrupt his philosophical reflections during his *levée*. And later, his royal decree is on the verge of being upended because the betrothed couple has absconded. The general impression that the king gives of the status quo is that those in power have no connection to the material reality over which they reign.[17]

Relationships to labor are a defining feature of the status quo in the world of *Leonce und Lena*. Labor remains somewhat of a conundrum when read against or with Büchner's most vehement political text, *Der Hessische Landbote*. The scholars who have argued that *Leonce und Lena* is the comic and theatrical rendition of the message in the *Landbote* provide a helpful basis for thinking about the politics of the play.[18] Yet *Leonce und Lena* does not come across as a clean and unambiguous critique of the aristocracy as a non-working class of individuals. The *Landbote* takes a clear stance against divine birthright and the taxation of farmers and the bourgeoisie, both of which maintain the lifestyles of the "Vornehmen" and ensure that they do not have to work themselves. Other scholars argue that *Leonce und Lena* marks a turn in Büchner's political views and his sense of what is possible to change through writing and what is not.[19] The role of labor takes on a

---

[16]   Theo Elm gives a comprehensive overview of the two sides of the debate between idealist readings and materialist ones. For another more polemic overview, see Jost Hermand, "Der Streit um 'Leonce und Lena.'" See also Hans Mayer's *Georg Büchner und seine Zeit* and Ho-Ill Im's "Idealismus und Materialismus in 'Leonce und Lena' von Georg Büchner in Hinblick auf Idealismuskritik."

[17]   Marx also provides insightful characterizations of the status quo and its relationship to ideology. Sedgwick paraphrases the relationship in the following terms: "In *The German Ideology*, Marx suggests that the function of ideology is to conceal contradictions in the status quo by, for instance, recasting them into a diachronic narrative of origins. Corresponding to that function, one important structure of ideology is an idealizing appeal to the outdated values of an earlier system in defense of a later system that in practice undermines the material basis of those values" (Sedgwick 14). This perspective best applies to King Peter's position as he stands for the "outdated values" of German idealism.

[18]   Marcus Deufert discusses the swell of scholarship comparing and aligning *Leonce und Lena* with the *Hessische Landbote* as two texts about the fight against oppression (161). Wolfgang Martens makes the claim that the political concerns in the *Landbote* are directly translated into the comic genre in *Leonce und Lena* (107). Hiebel puts the relationship into psychoanalytic terms: the *Landbote* is the manifest political content while *Leonce und Lena* is political only in terms of latent content (128).

[19]   This disenchantment finds expression in Büchner's so-called "Fatalismus Brief." Poschmann discusses this letter, in which Büchner expresses his frustration in his study of the French revolution, and claims that Büchner's frustration is the motivation behind his attempts to bring his political critique into literary form in more subtle ways (187). Poschmann also points out that *Dantons Tod* is often taken by conservative (anti-revolutionary) scholars as a sign of Büchner's frustration with and abdication of revolutionary ideas (188). Guido Rings makes a point of Büchner's disillusionment with political action

different dimension in the play however. As a theatrical manifestation of the *Landbote*, it would merely show the lackadaisical lives of aristocratic nobility who deserve our contempt. But as a revised view on labor, *Leonce und Lena* might be more utopian than resentful. From this perspective, the unchanging, boring status quo, which requires most people to work for the benefit of a select few, who instead of working only busy themselves with ideals, is in need of a revolution—but not one that brings everyone down to the level of peasant, rather one that frees everyone from the necessity of work. The revolutionary potential of this configuration of labor and language in *Leonce und Lena* resists basic economic notions about work, money, and material comforts.

Between the Symbolic and the Semiotic

The various inverted figurations discussed so far have provided different contexts for the inverted world of *Leonce und Lena*. Valerio's most powerful instrument of inversion is language. First of all, Valerio's means of communication are in general absurd. He enters the play in the middle of a series of non sequitur rejoinders:

> VALERIO stellt sich dicht vor den Prinzen, legt den Finger an die Nase und sieht ihn starr an Ja!
>
> LEONCE ebenso Richtig!
>
> VALERIO Haben Sie mich begriffen?
>
> LEONCE Vollkommen.
>
> VALERIO Nun, so wollen wir von etwas anderm reden. (1.1, 106)

He is intoxicated and already caught up in an empty dialogue that began in some other time and place. Traces of a theater of the absurd avant la lettre appear in the form of an exchange with no content, which is not interrupted by this lack. Leonce is, in fact, ready to return the ball—unlike Beckett's Estragon, who has to be cajoled: "Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way?" (Waiting for Godot, 12).[20] Leonce and Valerio perform as an absurdist pair, with Leonce in the uncomfortable position of still being directly linked to the world of symbolic signification, as he will eventually have to assume his father's position as king of Popo. Valerio has no such commitments, neither filial, nor

---

and his loss of hope for political change through direct action. Ring's argument suggests that Büchner then turned to literary production instead (115-116).

[20]   Indeed, the relationship between Vladimir and Estragon might be seen as an echo of the marriage of the two kingdoms of Pipi and Popo. Didi and Gogo are waiting for Godot, while Pipi and Popo await the coming of a new world order. For more on connections between Büchner and twentieth-century absurdists see Theo Elm, "Georg Büchner: Zeitgeschichte in *Leonce und Lena*" (101); and Jan Thorn-Prikker, *Revolutionär ohne Revolution: Interpretationen der Werke Georg Büchners* (99).

linguistic. He proves much more at ease in this senseless repartee than Leonce, who ultimately demands returning to reason. But it is not surprising that the play's fool should have the privileged position over and against language use: He is not bound by rules of logic or meaning—even as the other characters help demonstrate the absurdity of these aspects of the signifying process. Absurdity belongs to Valerio's repertoire, especially as it pertains to language.

The play is full of indications that there is something special about Valerio's relationship to language. He is cast as a freak by Leonce based on a very material connection to language: the letters in his name. Büchner draws attention to vowels throughout *Leonce und Lena*. As mentioned above, the shift between the "a" in *fama* and "e" in *fame* in the prologue echoes the shift in the names in the title of the play. It is clear that Büchner is occupied with connections between words beyond the merely semantic, such as the tonal qualities of letters and words, which already in the *dramatis personae* create a comic effect with the juxtaposition of "König Peter vom Reiche Popo" and "Prinzesssin Lena vom Reiche Pipi." These scatological names are all the more ridiculous because of their phonological proximity. The two kingdoms stand as realms that differ by only one vowel, like *fama* and *fame*. Before the first act even begins, a, e, i, and o appear in circulation with each other—in the title, the prologue, and the dramatis personae—occupying similar positions, creating shifts in meaning as well as connections between words based on sound. The obvious missing letter is "u," which does not appear in any explicit word play—instead, "u" appears as "V" in the name Valerio:

> LEONCE Mensch, du bist nichts als ein schlechtes Wortspiel. Du hast weder Vater noch Mutter, sondern die fünf Vokale haben dich miteinander erzeugt. (1.3, 115)

Valerio is the product of the five vowels, making his name the culminating vowel play in the text, while also making it blatantly clear that he is of unnatural birth. He is not merely a *creature de papier* and the offspring of a vowel orgy, the consonants that appear in his name are so-called liquid consonants—those consonants that can be elongated like vowels without any stops: "lllll", "rrrrr." As the climax of vowel play with almost vowel-like consonants in his name, he provides a further link to the fluid, slippery realm of the *pharmakon* with his name alone, for the *pharmakon* as Derrida puts it, "always penetrates like a liquid" (152). He is a bad play on words and letters—the very stuff that writing is made of. This fluid connection to the *pharmakon* and writing connects Valerio with that other ambiguous, inverted figure Giglio from *Prinzessin Brambilla*, though the word and letter play with Valerio's name implies an even stronger material connection to language. Whereas Giglio comes face to face with a metafictional prolepsis and has to make sense

of being a figure in a fictional work, Valerio is already at the very surface of the page, the direct offspring of letters.[21]

Valerio's relationship to language stands in opposition to the symbolic (phallologic) order that reigns over the Popo Kingdom. Julia Kristeva's theory of the signifying process helps to articulate what a revolt against the symbolic order might entail. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva presents a critique of Lacan's theory of language, in which she introduces the semiotic as a corrective to Lacan's treatment of the symbolic as the primary, patriarchal, phallologic force and his neglect of the maternal and negation of the feminine. For Kristeva, the semiotic is intrinsically connected to the maternal body as that element of language which is corporeal, visceral, rhythmic, oral/anal, and poetic. The semiotic is the repressed, unconscious (in the Freudian sense) underbelly of language that has the potential to disrupt the steady reign of the symbolic as the logical, normal, intelligible side of language. To put it even more concisely, the symbolic makes sense; the semiotic undoes it.

The debates surrounding this facet of Kristeva's work are obviously complex and far-reaching.[22] Within the scope of my argument, a brief sketch of Judith Butler's critique of Kristeva serves to contextualize some of the issues involved in Kristeva's presentation of the semiotic that are often considered problematic. Butler's biggest contention against Kristeva is that the consequences of her theorizing of the maternal lead to an essentializing of femininity that does not take into account how femininity is itself determined by a patriarchal discourse. In Butler's critique, these naturalizing and essentializing assumptions underpin Kristeva's theory of language, in which the prelinguistic, maternal body is opposed to, and yet forever subjugated by, the symbolic order.

Kristeva elaborates the changing, dialectical relationship between the two functions of the signifying process on multiple occasions. Here is a passage from *Revolution in Poetic Language* that sets up the tension in part:

---

[21] The significance of this superficiality becomes all the more pertinent when compared with other scholar's framing of the problem. Müller-Sievers' characterization of the surfaces in *Leonce und Lena* is particularly helpful for its extremity: "Zwar wird man zugeben müssen, daß fehlende Selbstreflexion zum Wesen jeder Komödie gehört, doch ist sie in *Leonce und Lena* als Verdammnis zur Oberfläche ausgeschrieben, sei dies die Oberfläche der Sprache, der Erde, oder, wie es in Leonces Wunsch, sich doch einmal auf den *Kopf* schauen zu können, auch ausgedrückt ist, die Oberfläche gar des Schädels und des Hirns" (132). What Müller-Sievers fails to note is how Valerio utilizes this superficiality to his own inverted ends as a subversive strategy.

[22] Oliver Kelly presents numerous nuanced observations regarding Kristeva's project. For example, Oliver points out a potential (and perhaps purposeful) contradiction in Kristeva's claims about the revolutionary potential of poetic language: "While she argues that the revolutionary text has an effect on the subject that is analogous to political revolution, she suggest that social revolution may have made the nineteenth-century avant-garde texts useless" (100).

> But we shall distinguish this functioning [the semiotic] from symbolic operations that depend on language as a sign system – whether the language [*langue*] is vocalized or gestural (as with deaf-mutes). The kinetic functional stage of the semiotic precedes the establishment of the sign; it is not, therefore, cognitive in the sense of being assumed by a knowing, already constituted subject. The genesis of the functions organizing the semiotic process can be accurately elucidated only within a theory of the subject that does not reduce the subject to one of understanding, but instead opens up within the subject this other scene of pre-symbolic functions. (27)

Always present in Kristeva's theory of language is an implied originary female essence prior to symbolic language, which, because it precedes it, is also outside of it. The problem with this construction is that it fails to take into account how language, and specifically the patriarchal force of the symbolic order, is responsible for establishing these terms and conditions of the maternal body and, by extension, the feminine as such. Butler asks how the symbolic might actually depend on and benefit from an understanding of the semiotic, maternal body that places it prior to and outside culture. And, moreover, how might that configuration serve as the very condition of possibility for the symbolic? It is not possible to brush away these points of criticism that Butler raises and then simply proceed to speak about the semiotic and poetic language in terms of a revolution within the realm of aesthetics. But rather than trying to uphold Kristeva's theory by letting it play out on stage with *Leonce und Lena* or showing how Butler's claims might be supported through an analysis of the play, I am instead concerned with seeing where the limits of their thinking lie and how theorizing the theatrical in Büchner's play might serve to push those limits.

The most obvious representative of the symbolic order is King Peter. As father and king, he is the patriarch in the play. Though his particular enactment of the patriarch might prove to be rather inverted, he does have an affinity for the Kristevan symbolic: the unambiguous and literal use of language that deals in fixed meanings, truth claims, and the rules of logic. Nowhere is this relationship more apparent than in the king's frequent allusions to and citations of philosophical discourse. The epitome of symbolic signifying appears in *Leonce und Lena* in the form of the syllogism.[23] The syllogism relies on the thetic, as it posits truth statements that build a logical unit. Its axiomatic quality means that it can stand alone as a valid statement, regardless of the material content of its different components and without consideration for the materiality of the language itself (its rhythm and sound, for example, which belong to the semiotic side of signification). King Peter relies on syllogisms to make sense of his world—even as he proceeds to render the world nonsensical. His dependence on logic is exaggerated. His first appearance and

---

23 Müller-Sievers presents the syllogism in Büchner's work with attention to St Just's use of language in *Dantons Tod*. Müller-Sievers' discussion does not so much call into question the power of logic (i.e., language) as it does question the politics behind the logic (118-27).

opening lines reveal gaping discrepancies between language, logic, and the material world:

> PETER *während er angekleidet wird* Der Mensch muß denken, und ich muß für meine Untertanen denken, denn sie denken nicht, sie denken nicht. (1.2, 108)

The sentence builds a syllogism with a major premise, minor premise, and a conclusion: (All) Humans must think. The king must think for his subjects. His subjects do not think. The syntax certainly reads like a syllogism, but the content is somehow off—in fact, the king exposes the absurdity of logical systems himself; though he does so in full awe and appreciation of the system, not as absurd, but as the source of truth and knowledge. In the king's mouth, causality runs backwards. A sounder version would read something like this: All humans must think. The king's subjects do not think. Therefore, the king must think for them. And yet, even this does not seem logical, and the final (perhaps more logical) conclusion of the original formulation remains unspoken: The king's subjects are not human. Still, the self-destruction of the syllogism that occurs when we pause to question each clause speaks more to a fundamental failure in logical systems than to merely the stupidity of the king. Or rather, the king's utter dependence upon logical thinking exposes logic itself as hollow.

The problem with the king's version of philosophical thought appears in the disconnect between language and the material world. This discrepancy comes to the fore in this same scene, in which the king throws around philosophical terms while his servants dress him. Articles of clothing mix with Kantian terminology, and the scene culminates in a complete breakdown of meaning and logic with the king's speech to the state council:

> PETER Meine Lieben und Getreuen, ich wollte euch hiermit kund und zu wissen tun, kund und zu wissen tun – denn, entweder verheiratet sich mein Sohn, oder nicht – (*legt den Finger an die Nase*) entweder, oder – ihr versteht mich doch? Ein Drittes gibt es nicht. Der Mensch muß denken. (*Steht eine Zeit lang sinnend.*) Wenn ich so laut rede, so weiß ich nicht, wer es eigentlich ist, ich oder ein anderer; das ängstigt mich. (*Nach langem Besinnen.*) Ich bin ich. – Was halten Sie davon, Präsident? (1.2, 109)

The premature Kierkegaardian overtones of "either, or" bring us back to the laws of logic, specifically the *Law of the Excluded Middle*: "Ein Drittes gibt es nicht." A statement is either true or false. There is no in-between. The king's follow-up to citing the laws of logic does not tell us about the lack of gray areas when it comes to marriage, for as he says either his son is getting married, or he is not. Instead of explaining his conclusion, the king jumps back to the original syllogism from before: "Der Mensch muß denken." Logic itself, as a non-human force, guides his language like a compulsive and overworked machine that produces loud, logical statements without any grounding in the material world. Or approached from the other direction, the king's attempts to produce

philosophical, logical language is constantly brought asunder by the material world. And yet, the king becomes so detached from his own language that he is not even sure he is the one producing it. To reassure himself he tries out another tried and true law of logic, the law of identity. "Ich bin ich," he says.[24] But like his other efforts to produce meaningful and effective language, this phrase remains vacuous and without consequence.

There is another side to the king's speech that is perhaps equally vacuous but decisively effective. As king he is also the law. His commands must be carried out without compromise. By royal decree, King Peter decides that his son will marry and that on the day of the marriage everyone will rejoice. But when reality begins to threaten his edict, the king has to take matters into his own hands, so to speak:

> PETER Habe ich mein königliches Wort gegeben? – Ja, ich werde meinen Beschluß sogleich ins Werk setzen, ich werde mich freuen. (*Er reibt sich die Hände.*) O, ich bin außerordentlich froh! (3.3, 129)

Logic and reality conspire against the king. When he realizes that the words alone are not carrying their weight, he has to perform himself. But he is only able to fulfil one half of the royal decree:

> PETER O, ich weiß mir vor Freude nicht zu helfen! Ich werde meinen Kammerherren rote Röcke machen lassen, ich werde einige Kadetten zu Leutnants machen, ich werde meinen Untertanen erlauben, – aber, aber, die Hochzeit? Lautet die andere Hälfte des Beschlusses nicht, daß die Hochzeit gefeiert werden sollte?
>
> PRÄSIDENT Ja, Eure Majestät.
>
> PETER Ja, wenn aber der Prinz nicht kommt und die Prinzessin auch nicht?
>
> PRÄSIDENT Ja, wenn der Prinz nicht kommt und die Prinzessin auch nicht – dann – dann –
>
> PETER Dann, dann?
>
> PRÄSIDENT Dann können sie sich eben nicht heiraten.
>
> PETER Halt, ist der Schluß logisch? Wenn – dann –. Richtig! Aber mein Wort, mein königliches Wort!

---

[24] Fortmann points out that King Peter is at risk of losing his own identity, for example, when he says he is not sure if he is speaking or someone else when he talks so loud: "Demgegenüber [Fichte and Schiller on the self] und seinen eignen Verlautbarungen zum Trotz bietet König Peter das Bild einer unfixierten, fragmentierten Person, die in ihre Bestandteile zerfällt und den Eindrücken des Augenblicks ausgeliefert ist" (148). Axel Schmidt also emphasizes the king's failure to assert himself as a rupture within the subject himself: "Sich wie König Peter in *Leonce und Lena* im Sprechen selbst zu vernehmen, stellt einen Bruch innerhalb des Subjekts dar" (92).

> PRÄSIDENT Tröste Eure Majestät sich mit andern Majestäten! Ein königliches Wort ist ein Ding
> – ein Ding – ein Ding, – das nichts ist. (3.3, 129-130)

The logical conclusion of the syllogism stands in direct contradiction to the royal word, which is itself law. The only solution seems to be to de-substantiate the king's word, to turn it into some thing that is actually no thing. The problem with the king and his relationship to language is that he does not treat his language as if it were nothing. He is deeply convinced that royal decrees immediately transform reality. A king's privilege thus depends upon the words doing the work for him—he need merely utter them. This understanding of the relationship between language and reality is perhaps not so misplaced, as we will see when it comes to the performative and theatrical aspects of language in the play. But the king's way of relating to the world based on this premise proves to be ridiculous, as he performs the failure of the symbolic order

In addition to the self-destruction of the symbolic enacted by the king, the semiotic and the theatrical contest the symbolic's reign of power in conjunction with one another. If the symbolic is the logical, legal, official language of the patriarch, the semiotic is the illogical, revolutionary, carnivalesque language of the maternal. While this binary does not hold in all cases, the division helps to better see how the semiotic is at work in *Leonce und Lena*. If we go looking for evidence of the semiotic, we might find it in those moments where the signifying process breaks down: in illogical speech, whenever communication is interrupted or punctuated by the body, and when explicit poetic language (rhyming, song, alliteration, assonance) interferes with the normal flow of speech—as is the case with Valerio's use of language. Indeed, Valerio appears as an obvious candidate for the representative of the semiotic, and not only due to the material quality of his name.

His connection to the semiotic might also be seen, for example, in his extreme orality and corporeality. He consumes wine in excess and is also an avid eater. In his second appearance on stage, he comes out from under a table in Leonce's room and is not ready for a full conversation with his master until he finishes his meal:

> VALERIO Warten Sie, wir wollen uns darüber sogleich ausführlicher unterhalten! Ich habe nur
> noch ein Stück Braten zu verzehren, das ich aus der Küche und etwas Wein, den ich von Ihrem
> Tisch gestohlen. Ich bin gleich fertig. (1.3, 113)

Apparently, Valerio was busy eating under the table while Leonce was breaking up with his girlfriend at the time, Rosetta, and holding his monologue. Valerio continues to eat during the scene, prompting Leonce's ire: "Mach fort, grunze nicht so mit deinem Rüssel, und klappre mit deinen Hauern nicht so!" (1.3, 113). Valerio provokes Leonce first with his eating habits, but the cause of the prince's annoyance quickly transfers to Valerio's

language. His chain of puns ends in a double entendre that sparks a visceral response in Leonce: "Ich habe eine große Passion, dich zu prügeln" (1.3, 113). And the verbal threat quickly turns into a physical one, albeit still accompanied by violent wordplay:

> LEONCE *geht auf ihn los* Oder du bist eine geschlagene Antwort. Denn du bekommst Prügel für deine Antwort. (1.3, 114)

Here the corporeal takes the place of the verbal and a beating becomes an answer. Leonce's body ends up bringing the conflict to an abrupt end, as he stumbles and falls when he tries to chase Valerio. Valerio uses the fall to feed even more puns:

> VALERIO (*läuft weg, Leonce stolpert und fällt*) Und Sie sind ein Beweis, der noch geführt werden muß, denn er fällt über seine eigenen Beine, die im Grund genommen selbst noch zu beweisen sind. Es sind höchst unwahrscheinliche Waden und sehr problematische Schenkel. (1.3, 114)

Valerio brings the philosophically abstract together with the material corporeal in his quips. In the course of these short scenes between the two, the offensiveness of eating loudly shifts to a different oral offense: Valerio is making bad jokes. Leonce's response shifts back again from verbal to corporeal. The word becomes flesh, as he tries to pounce on Valerio. Valerio, however, is unperturbed and continues his taunting wordplay. By the end of the scene, Leonce has literally fallen to Valerio's level, as he now finds himself on the ground, where Valerio started the scene. He has also fallen to a less symbolic and more corporeal level of signification.

At this linguistic level, though he does not produce galimatias, Valerio is not bound to the logical structures of language. He indulges in poetry, wordplay, absurdities, and song. When he breaks out into song a second time in act I, Leonce loses his patience:

> VALERIO […] Seht, Herr, ich könnte mich in eine Ecke setzen und singen vom Abend bis zum Morgen: 'Hei, da sitzt e Fleig an der Wand! Fleig an der Wand! Fleig an der Wand!' und so fort bis zum Ende meines Lebens.
>
> LEONCE Halt's Maul mit deinem Lied, man könnte darüber ein Narr werden. (1.1, 107)

Valerio might actually be able to spend the rest of his days sitting in a corner singing that little ditty. The image is intolerable for Leonce who suffers from boredom—a concept that is completely foreign to Valerio. In fact, Valerio's aversion to work might not be a mark of aristocratic snobbery or an indulgence in idleness. Valerio's refusal to work has something more radical about it, whereas Leonce's "*dolce far niente*" is a boredom that kills (as he says himself in the break-up scene with Rosetta).

The semiotic, according to Kristeva, is that aspect of the signifying process that enables and enacts revolutions. It disrupts the symbolic order allowing for new

combinations of meaning and other modes of signification all together. Valerio's alignment with the semiotic comes into focus when we consider his absurdist tendencies, his inclination to excess and orality, and his opposition to work. All of these features contribute to making Valerio a force of semiotic significance, whose very name indicates a tendency towards fluidity and sonority rather than fixedness and denotation. Still, if my goal were to perfectly line up Valerio with Kristeva's characterization of the semiotic, one key factor would be missing: Kristeva emphasizes the connection between the semiotic and the maternal (body). There is very little of the maternal to be found in *Leonce und Lena*. The lack itself is conspicuous. Leonce has no mother, and there is no talk of there ever having been a queen in the Kingdom of Popo, while Valerio is explicitly marked as having neither father nor mother. The Governess's relationship to Lena is certainly motherly, and Lena even calls her "Mutter" once. However, the maternal as a powerful signifying force, as characterized by Kristeva, does not appear in any explicit way. Moreover, the female characters appear as counter-figures to Leonce and his particularly metaphoric use of language: Rosetta, as might be expected of someone who is being dumped, does not take very well to the metaphors of death, love, and boredom that Valerio uses when ending their relationship. And while Lena seems to indulge Leonce's metaphorical and melodramatic language, she is silenced in the end. Indeed, her silence might actually be the clearest manifestation of semiotic signifying in the play—a form of resistance to the new symbolic order established by the prince.[25]

But it is not actually my goal to line up Kristeva's theory of language with Butler's criticism in order to ultimately use Büchner's play to rehabilitate the semiotic. Instead, the semiotic signifying forces in the play work against the symbolic in conjunction with a third term, which defies gender assignment. The theatrical emerges as another factor of inversion that is, like Valerio, without mother and father properly speaking—though it is perhaps capable of playing both. So while I have set up a certain affinity between Valerio and the semiotic, the point has not been to construe him as a pure embodiment of Kristeva's maternal signifying force. Rather, the semiotic, even without a strong maternal aspect—or precisely in the absence of one—prepares the way for the theatrical, which in turn exposes the absurdity but also the potency of language. The semiotic also resists standard modes of producing and maintaining meaning, while at the same time utilizing

---

[25] In Kristeva's language, we might see Lena's silence as evidence that she has entered the symbolic order, where the feminine, semiotic chora must take on surreptitious means of expression. As Toril Moi puts it in the Introduction to the *Kristeva Reader*: "Once the subject has entered into the symbolic order, the chora will be more or less successfully repressed and can be perceived only as pulsional pressure on or within symbolic language: as contradictions, meaninglessness, disruption, silences and absences. The chora, then, is a rhythmic pulsion rather than a new language. It constitutes the heterogeneous, disruptive dimension of language, that which can never be caught up in the closure of traditional linguistic theory" (13).

the stability of the symbolic order for other (aesthetic, comic) ends. But by introducing a third factor, ushered in by Valerio, the stakes of the inverted world at the end of the play take on a new dynamic, as the very terms of the revolution get called into question.

Theaters of Revolution

Valerio's revolutionary position is not an overt one. He is no Danton. And yet, his actions do add up to social and political change. The problem, however, is how to measure that change or whether it is even possible to do so. Can a figure be revolutionary even without executing a full-fledged revolt? If Valerio's revolution has much more to do with subversion from within the system and not so much a bottom-up overthrow of the *ancien régime*, does this still count as revolutionary? An investigation into the revolutionary potential of a nineteenth-century play might begin with a look at Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*. Marx's text provides a sense of how revolution was being conceptualized in this period and focuses particularly on the idea of revolution within proletariat movements. With Marx as a starting point, I would then like to refer back to Büchner to examine the revolutionary forces behind *Leonce und Lena*.

Valerio is definitely no working-class hero, capable of instigating a proletarian revolution according to Marx. But perhaps some correlations to Marx's vision of revolution can still be found in Valerio's positioning.

> Freier und Sklave, Patrizier und Plebejer, Baron und Leibeigener, Zunftbürger und Gesell, kurz Unterdrücker und Unterdrückte standen in stetem Gegensatz zueinander, führten einen ununterbrochenen, bald versteckten, bald offenen Kampf, einen Kampf, der jedesmal in einer revolutionären Umgestaltung der ganzen Gesellschaft endete oder mit dem gemeinsamen Untergang der kämpfenden Klassen. (254)

It would be difficult and perhaps altogether ludicrous to argue that Valerio is oppressed, even if he does refer to Leonce as master. He ascends to a position of power and belongs to the leisure class rather than to the proletariat. Nevertheless, his vision of the future would bring about the downfall of class conflict, namely, by instantiating a world in which labor ceases to exist. Within the parodic parameters of the play, Valerio's brave new world cannot be taken seriously as a utopian vision that he means to make manifest. To do so would require too much work. Yet, he does use his newly acquired position of power to upend the status quo, especially as far as the modes of production are concerned.

> Valerio Und ich werde Staatsminister, und es wird ein Dekret erlassen, daß, wer sich Schwielen in die Hände schafft, unter Kuratel gestellt wird; daß, wer sich krank arbeitet, kriminalistisch strafbar ist; daß jeder, der sich rühmt, sein Brot im Schweiße seines Angesichts zu essen, für verrückt und der menschlichen Gesellschaft gefährlich erklärt wird; und dann legen wir uns in

> den Schatten und bitten Gott um Makkaroni, Melonen und Feigen, um musikalische Kehlen, klassische Leiber und eine kommode Religion! (3.3, 134)

Valerio's speech brings the play to its close with the topos of the *Schlaraffenland*, where hard work is a crime and all human needs can be satisfied while sitting in the shade. While this Lotus-eater world could be an aristocratic dream of the easy life, it also suggests an equality that is perhaps more revolutionary than it seems at first. Given this, he might find sympathy with the communists after all. Marx writes, "Mit einem Wort, die Kommunisten unterstützen überall jede revolutionäre Bewegung gegen die bestehenden gesellschaftlichen und politischen Zustände" (289). Valerio's single-handed upheaval of the status quo at the end of the play can certainly be seen as something other than an entire revolutionary movement *in nuce*. Still, it does promise to undo the power relations and social structures that were previously in place. While his final decree might align well with the political action of inaction, in which sitting under the table might be understood as a premature instance of a "sit in," the more potent revolutionary force lies in Valerio's use of language prior to the very end of the play—and not in terms of the semiotic aspect of the signifying process, but rather the theatrical.[26]

Since *Leonce und Lena* belongs to the genre of drama, theatrical techniques are necessarily part of its fabric. By extension, theatrical elements that appear within the drama add to and highlight the theatricality that Büchner's text relies upon. For example, the text sets the stage for each scene with minimal stage directions: "Der Garten. Nacht und Mondschein/*Man sieht Lena, auf dem Rasen sitzend*" (124). But this basic and rather conventional staging takes on a different, exaggerated quality in scenes that overemphasize the setting. The most striking instance of an overly staged setting takes place in act I in the scene between Leonce and Rosetta. The stage directions are sparse as usual: "Ein reichgeschmückter Saal. Kerzen Brennen / *Leonce mit einigen Dienern*" (1.3, 109). But Leonce's opening words show just how overly staged this encounter with his lover is meant to be:

> Leonce Sind alle Läden geschlossen? Zündet die Kerzen an! Weg mit dem Tag! Ich will Nacht, tiefe ambrosische Nacht. Stellt die Lampen unter Krystallglocken zwischen die Oleander, daß sie wie Mädchenaugen unter den Wimpern der Blätter hervorträumen. Rückt die Rosen näher, daß der Wein wie Thautropfen auf die Kelche sprudle. Musik! Wo sind die Violinen? Wo ist die Rosetta? Fort! Alle hinaus! (*Die Diener gehen ab. Leonce streckt sich auf ein Ruhebett.*)

---

[26] The general strike might stand as the epitome of this inaction as political action. In this context, one might look to Rosa Luxemburg's discussion of the potential for a general strike as similar to Valerio's vision: "eine allgemeine Hebung des Lebensniveaus des Proletariats, des wirtschaftlichen, sozialen und intellektuellen" (114). Luxemburg looks to the general strike in Russia as a model for what can be achieved through collective inaction. Benjamin's discussion of the historical materialist concept of labor is also informative here, especially where he examines the relationship between labor and nature as portrayed by Fourier and Dietzgen. See section XI of "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" (698-99).

Rosetta, zierlich gekleidet, tritt ein. Man hört Musik aus der Ferne. (1.3, 109-110)

Leonce takes on the role of a theater director, instructing the stagehands as to how they are to arrange the props. Preparing the stage for his breakup scene, he displays his immense propensity for melodrama and clichés. Flowers, candlelight, violins—he has everything he needs for a love scene, including overwrought metaphors. In the same way that his father blindly puts his faith in the power of philosophical thinking, Leonce believes in the power of the theater. And like the king, he naively carries out actions based on his convictions and comes across as preposterous.

Leonce's belief in the theater and his enthusiasm for it are qualitatively different from Valerio's relationship to theatricality. Leonce remains forever caught up in theatrical effects. His directing does not give him any special insight into the mechanisms of the theater. He is just playing along even as he shows that he knows how to manipulate certain elements of a scene in order to heighten its affective impact. In fact, Leonce appears here more like Giglio, Hoffmann's ridiculously bad actor, before undergoing his inverted cure/education. He knows the gestures and the words but does not see the underlying principles and internal mechanism of the theater that lend it is incredible potential to bring about radical change.

At the end of the play, Leonce further exposes himself as a theater fanatic. He proposes to his bride that they build a theater together. The fact that the proposition comes in the form of a question does not actually speak to his openness to Lena's opinion. Instead, "Wollen wir ein Theater bauen?" appears to be the conclusion to Leonce's megalomaniacal speech, in which he gloats over his newly acquired power as king:

> LEONCE Nun Lena, siehst du jetzt, wie wir die Taschen voll haben, voll Puppen und Spielzeug? Was wollen wir damit anfangen? Wollen wir ihnen Schnurrbärte machen und ihnen Säbel anhängen? Oder wollen wir ihnen Fräcke anziehen, und sie infusorische Politik und Diplomatie treiben lassen und uns mit dem Mikroskop daneben setzen? Oder hast du Verlangen nach einer Drehorgel, auf der milchweiße ästhetische Spitzmäuse herumhuschen? Wollen wir ein Theater bauen? (3.3, 133)

Leonce sees his subjects as playthings that he can dress up and command as he wishes. At the very moment of his ascension to the throne, he also assumes the posture of a dictatorial director. Moreover, the new king transforms his subjects into experimental objects to be observed under the microscope. Leonce's ideas about what to do with his power as king culminate in the vision of a theater where all these actions would be possible. We might even see in his plan a prototype of experimental theater à la Bertolt Brecht: a theater in which political scenarios can be played out and observed. But Leonce's theater is not a proletarian one, let alone revolutionary. Instead, he perpetuates his father's legacy of appropriating a field for himself without fully understanding how it

works. King Peter learned the vocabulary of German idealism, but he did not learn how to think philosophically for himself. Leonce has learned how to put on a play but without having gained any insight into how theater works—and how disruptive it can be to patriarchal structures.

Revolutionizing Marriage Performatively

Even though Büchner thematizes theatrical elements throughout the play, it is Valerio's use of them in the automaton wedding in particular that shows how the theatrical complicates the tensions between the symbolic and the semiotic, between meaning and nonsense. [27] Büchner's play decidedly centers on the marriage between Leonce and Lena. The title immediately indicates their union. Each scene contributes to their coming together from Leonce breaking up with Rosetta (freeing him up for a new relationship) to the peasants on display as part of the wedding celebration. With such a single-minded plot, each character also has a direct interest in the marriage. No one wants the wedding to take place more than King Peter. It is after all his royal decree that necessitates the event: His son shall marry and all will rejoice. This early abdication of the throne is motivated by Peter's conviction that he must spend all his time "thinking for his people." Thus, marriage becomes an instrument for his extreme idealism. Leonce and Lena are both opposed to the king's decree. Neither wants to be forced to marry someone that they have never met before, do not love, and did not pick for themselves. In the face of this threat, they both take flight to Italy. When Leonce meets Lena by chance in the South, he chooses her as his wife. But since neither prince nor princess knows who the other is, the situation seems desperate. At this point, Valerio sees his chance to use the wedding for his own benefit. He makes a deal with the prince that he will help secure the marriage in exchange for being made a minister in Leonce's new royal cabinet. Leonce agrees, and they all return to the North to the Kingdom of Popo.

Everybody has stakes in the wedding. Its successful performance will bring about a shift in power from father to son, but also one from fool to minister. Unfortunately for

---

[27] Another prominent example of overt theatricality is the much discussed *Volks*-scene, in which King Peter's ministers work with the peasant population to set the scene for the wedding festivities. Fortmann refers to this scene as another example of the play-within-a-play motif that emphasizes the staginess of the wedding ceremony (150). The debate surrounding the *Volk* in the play has also raised questions about the relationship between the aristocracy and the peasants supporting them. Beise notes, for example, that the portrayal of the *Volk* is particularly ambivalent in this regard (*Einführung* 103). He goes on to caution against blanket claims concerning the revolutionary stance conveyed in the play: "Die sich als kritisch oder links verstehenden Literaturwissenschaftler griffen häufig zu einer bemerkenswerten Argumentationsfigur, um auch Leonce und Lena 'ohne jeden Abstrich' als operatives Kunstwerk im Dienst der Revolution zu retten" (108). Thomas Wohlfahrt also emphasizes the ambivalent ending in terms of social relationships (115).

Lena, the shifts in power come at the cost of her autonomy, as she is reduced to a silent figure after the ceremony, capable of only shaking her head. Lena's silence (as the specter of the semiotic) is caught up in the changes that result from Valerio's theatrical ploy to trick the king, as he disrupts the signifying processes with his automaton wedding. Valerio's plan to help Leonce involves presenting the prince and princess as automatons who can stand in for the actual prince and princess in the wedding ceremony. On the day of the wedding, Valerio appears as a sort of circus barker with his two "weltberühmten Automaten" and delivers an oration about their lifelike qualities and their budding capacity for love. The king takes the bait and, obviously following Valerio's implicit suggestion, decides that the automatons can be used for a marriage in effigy:

> PETER (*den Finger an die Nase legend*) In effigie? In effigie? Präsident, wenn man einen Menschen in effigie hängen läßt, ist das nicht eben so gut, als wenn er ordentlich gehängt würde?

> PRÄSIDENT Verzeihen, Eure Majestät, es ist noch viel besser, denn es geschieht ihm kein Leid dabei, und er wird dennoch gehängt.

> PETER Jetzt hab' ich's. Wir feiern die Hochzeit in effigie. (*Auf Leonce und Lena deutend.*) Das ist der Prinz, das ist die Prinzessin. Ich werde meinen Beschluß durchsetzen, ich werde mich freuen. Laßt die Glocken läuten, macht eure Glückwünsche zurecht! Hurtig, Herr Hofprediger! (3.3, 131-132)

The marriage in effigy allows the king to keep his word, thereby ensuring the sanctity and power of his speech. In this respect, the symbolic order is restored thanks to Valerio's ruse. At the same time, the successful ceremony ensures that Valerio will also get his wish and become a minister. But this shift in political power is secondary to the shift that Valerio brings about on a linguistic level, for if the marriage in effigy upholds the king's power by carrying out the actions that his decree called for, the ceremony is also part of a signifying economy that is too big to fail. And yet, Valerio shows that the system is flawed or at least vulnerable to subversive acts.

Valerio's plan reads like a direct contradiction of J.L. Austin's conditions for a felicitous speech act. First of all, Austin's example of a performative speech act *par excellence* is the wedding ceremony. While he does use other examples like the christening of a ship, a bet, or a baptism, the marriage ceremony appears first (5) and lends itself as *the* example of a performative speech act in recapitulations of Austin's theory. Moreover, Austin excludes actors and the theater from his considerations:

> I mean, for example, the following: a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance—a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language. All this we are excluding from consideration. (22)

Any potential performative speech act that is executed under a theatrical premise is not felicitous—it does not perform the act that it claims to because the agents involved are merely actors and not endowed with the authority or sincerity to enact the things that they say as priests, judges, or marrying automatons on stage. Büchner's play complicates that exclusion because Leonce and Lena are playing themselves incognito, while on stage they are simultaneously being played by actors. Their "Jawort" is as binding as the priest's "Amen" which seals the deal. Moreover, no one (except Valerio perhaps) recognizes the two automatons that Valerio escorts back into the kingdom of Popo as the actual prince and princess. Once the ceremony is completed and the bride and groom remove their masks, they all find out who is who and what is what. This is no standard anagnorisis— or rather it is highly exaggerated as with everything else Valerio does. The revelation of their identities does not change anything, at least not in terms of the plot. In terms of language, however, it changes everything.[28]

The wording that Austin uses in his exclusion of the theater deserves more attention. Austin is addressing the hypothetical question posed by a hypothetical critical reader— "How complete is this classification?"—when he enumerates the limits of his theory. His classification, for example, does not include acts done unintentionally or misunderstandings. These two limitations are presented in rather sober, unremarkable language, but when he starts in with the section describing the limitation of the etiolations of language, his diction conveys the threat of disease: "As *utterances* our performatives are *also* heir to certain other kinds of ill which infect *all* utterances" (21). The sickness is based on the shift in register that takes place when language is not used in earnest, as part of a play: "A performative utterance will, for example be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy" (22). This theatrical and poetic use of language is moreover "parasitic," drawing its energy from the robust source of normal language as it is used in "ordinary circumstances" (ibid.). Austin's imagery here is striking. This special species of language that is malformed and pale (like the white stalks of a plant attempting to grow in the dark towards sunlight, which is what etiolation refers to in the first place) feeds off the "normal use" of language as Austin calls it.

This infectious language does not limit itself to performatives but preys on other types of speech. Thus, the etiolations of language are not only incapable of "doing" anything, they also confuse and contaminate constative utterances and cannot be held up

---

[28]   Axel Schmidt's discussion of the limits of language and subjectivity in Büchner's works provides many insights regarding how the language of the automatons disrupts signification in the play. He calls their language a "Parodie des gesellschaftlichen Sprechens" (93). Language lacks linearity and continuity, he claims, and therefore meaning loses its center (98). Schmidt does not, however, explore the implications of this decentralization of language when it comes to the performative aspect of language.

to the basic logical question: true or false? They are, according to Austin, neither performative nor constative. They are neither acts nor verifiable statements about reality. In this sense, the etiolations of language are interstitial, and Valerio demonstrates that he is a master of them. He can even bend them to make them felicitous performative acts. He orchestrates a marriage in effigy that brings the very notion of effigy into crisis and destabilizes the boundaries of "ordinary circumstances."

Valerio poses an affront to Austin's systematic exclusion of the parasitic language of the theater. He shows that this kind of language can do something. This does not mean, however, that theatrical or poetic language is any less parasitic. Instead, it requires us to rethink our attitude towards parasites—a task that Derrida undertakes on multiple occasions. Expectantly, Derrida connects Austin's parasitic language to writing: "It is as just such a 'parasite' that writing has always been treated by the philosophical tradition, and the connection in this case is by no means coincidental" ("Signature, Event, Context" 17). The extra-ordinary language that Austin excludes from his study is, as Derrida goes on to show, linked to the very condition of possibility for all utterances, namely, the iterability of language, the citational quality that Austin does not take into account because, as mere citation or mere play, the language has no illocutionary force, for it is not sincere. It is always and only ironic.29

With the theater and writing as parasites of normal language, what does it mean to treat Valerio as a parasitic figure? Valerio feeds off the aristocratic class that in turn feeds off the working class. He has thus been called a "Parasit eines Parasiten"—in discrediting, not empowering terms (Hiebel 134). This doubling of parasitic qualities is not necessarily a multiplication and, thereby, an increase in the opportunistic and exploitative nature of the aristocracy as enumerated in *Der Hessische Landbote*. Instead, Valerio's parasitism to the second degree mirrors the citational volatility of the performative as discussed by Derrida. That is to say, the citation of a citation is not necessarily more removed from some original language, but rather it might tell us more about the function of language through excessive citationality itself. Valerio's theatrical exaggeration of the performative exposes the materiality of language in a world that is apparently removed from the material relations of production, as the threat of labor only ever appears as ephemeral and not something that actually confronts any of the characters directly. At the same time, this theatrical performance of a nevertheless felicitous performative act connects Valerio's critique of material relations with a critique of language.

---

29   De Man's characterization of "the act of irony" in his essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality" comes to mind here: "It relates to its source only in terms of distance and difference and allows for no end, for no totality. Irony divides the flow of temporal experience into a past that is pure mystification and a future that remains harassed forever by a relapse within the inauthentic" (222).

Valerio's world without labor coincides with a theatrical revolution of the signifying process. At this point we might return to Kristeva's theory of language with the performative act of the marriage in place as a dynamic force that will need accounting for in the interplay between the semiotic and the symbolic. Kristeva sets up the symbolic and the semiotic as two sides of a coin. In the signifying process, the semiotic contains a wealth of potential signs and signification in circulation before the establishment of a speaking individualized autonomous subject. The signification that takes place in the semiotic is more fluid and connected to orality, in literal and figurative ways. The semiotic is the realm in which different elements of the signifying process are able to come into contact with each other before meaning is fixed. As Kristeva notes, the formation of the subject occurs as part of the shift into the symbolic. This shift does not leave the semiotic behind. Instead, the symbolic capitalizes on the fluidity of meaning in the semiotic in order to establish fixed relationships—as such, the symbolic is also parasitic. Meaning crystalizes in the symbolic. Relationships become fixed. The connection to the mother is severed, and language signifies under the patriarchy. Poetic language undoes some of the stability established through the erection of the symbolic. It does not completely do away with the symbolic, but it does allow for the volatility and instability of the semiotic to resurface: "This kind of language, through the particularity of its signifying operations, is an unsettling process—when not an outright destruction—of the identity of meaning and speaking subject" (*Desire in Language* 94). Valerio unsettles the signifying process even as he upholds the symbolic, patriarchal order, but less through the semiotic with irruptions of poetic language. Instead, Valerio's puppet wedding threatens to destroy meaning and subvert the identity of the speaking subject through a theatrical doubling of performative speech acts, in which the players play themselves in their own wedding ceremony.

The unsettling force of Valerio's theatricality can best be seen in how it relates to an "ordinary instance" of language, which is conveyed through King Peter's understanding of how language works. As we have seen, the king's language is both legislator and executive, and he appears as the felicitous performative speaker as defined by Austin. Whatever the king says is law and must be done. Royal speech is always somehow more performative than others because it is always "doing" something. By just saying something, he makes it so. But King Peter is not in control of his own language and uses this performative, executive force naively. When Valerio introduces the possibility of an automaton wedding, the king is placated because his royal word will be carried out. What King Peter does not realize is that this slippage in the signifying process comes at the cost of the sincerity and authenticity of performative speech acts. The difference between merely playing at something and actually meaning it becomes unreadable. Valerio brings

about an anagnorisis that does not reveal anything to the characters. Leonce and Lena playing Leonce and Lena are shocked to find out that the other is actually Leonce and Lena, yet the revelation does not change their status as newlyweds. The greater revelation that Valerio brings about is rather an unmasking of the symbolic order, exposing its dependence upon the theatrical. Whereas a Marxist version of revolution might entail something like a semiotic upheaval of the symbolic, Valerio's revolutionary strategy does not put the power into the hands of the oppressed, but instead questions the very nature of power in the first place.

Theatrical, Revolutionary, Inverted World

Valerio's automaton wedding inverts subjectivity through excessive theatricality. Building off of Kristeva's premise regarding poetic language, theatrical language also departs from the subjectivity enacted through the symbolic order. Individual identity within the theatrical is neither individual nor identical; instead, it is multiple and transferable. Language, too, takes on a duplicitous status, thereby making it clear why philosophers would want to keep the theater out of their perfect states (Plato) or performative systems (Austin). The theatrical appears in *Leonce und Lena* as a parasitic force akin to Austin's etiolations of language. The role of the parasite extends, according to Derrida, to the metaphorical baggage of writing. In this constellation, the parasite, writing, and theater align.[30] Meanwhile, the poetic unsettling of meaning and identity, to which Kristeva refers, comes to the fore in the figure of the parasite of parasites, Valerio, who takes up the cause of the theatrical in his automaton wedding. In so doing, he puts his own excessiveness on stage, as he presents the puppet doubles of Leonce and Lena as literal doubles. In this excess of overlapping roles, this self-identical masking, the

---

[30] Other alignments with the parasitic are imaginable here, such as Michel Serres' configuration of the parasite as a disruptive, but necessary, agent in biological, social, and communicative systems. Serres' *The Parasite* builds its argument on the semantic overlap of the word *parasite* in French. In addition to the shared English meanings of the word, referring to both a biological organism and a lazy person that profits from other people's productivity, *parasite* also means static or noise in French. Valerio certainly seems to represent this kind of polysemantic parasite, present in every system, as Serres claims (12). But to explore all the ways that Valerio fulfills or better yet complicates Serres's portrayal of the parasite would require an extensive discussion of how Serres's project disregards the groundwork laid by Derrida or even snubs it through a pointed lack of any reference to Derrida. For an example of what that comparative exploration might look like see Niran Abbas's "'The Gift Is a Given': On the Errant Ethic of Michel Serres." Abbas's mode of championing Serres attests to the complexity of comparative theoretical work. My thanks to Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf for insisting I return to Serres' text. It has reconfirmed my own conviction that Derrida's approach to language and the parasite is more appropriate to my argument in this chapter, even if Serres does show what is "qu(e)er" about the parasite: "The parasite invents something new. Since he does not eat like everyone else, he builds a new logic. He crosses the exchange, makes it into a diagonal" (35).

semiotic aspect of language coincides with the theatrical as an exaggerated moment of the grotesque. Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion of masks is instructive here:

> The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames. It contains the playful element of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and image, characteristic of the most ancient rituals and spectacles. (39)

The multiple masks that Valerio's wedding employs indicate that we are witnessing a grotesque scene, for, if we continue to take our lead from Bakhtin, he goes on to claim that the mask "reveals the essence of the grotesque" (40). The strange thing about Valerio's masks is the fact that they are masks of the very people who are wearing them. Bakhtin's characterization of the power of masks underscores how they reject "conformity to oneself," and, though the same is true in Valerio's scheme, the rejection of the self turns out to be a mask too, one that covers up the very uniformity of mask and self.

The structure of this theatrical mode makes it impossible to differentiate between playing and being and, thus, makes an infelicitous performative speech act and a felicitous one indistinguishable. Who actually has the power to pronounce someone man and wife when the priest is just playing a part, especially when he is playing the part of a priest in a masquerade wedding in which all the masks correspond to the people wearing them? A unique version of *theatrum mundi* reveals itself here, in which our sense of reality is turned upside down through the hyper-theatricalization of the ordinary. Certainly, we are dealing with a play within a play, but unlike the "play's the thing to catch the conscience of the king," there is no allegorical displacement here and no "outside" to the theatrical performance within the text. Moreover, the marriage in effigy (like an execution in effigy) is just as good as a real one, not only because the president of the king's council assures him so, but also literally and unbeknownst to the king and his court. The marriage in effigy is just as good as a real one because it is a real one: Leonce and Lena are the automatons. In other words, in the Kingdom of Popo it is not possible or even desirable to differentiate between a representation of reality and reality itself. The marriage in effigy that Valerio orchestrates capitalizes on this lack of differentiation. Moreover, this overlap of "just as good" and "real" encapsulates the unique revolutionary potential of Valerio's theatrical language, as it undoes the symbolic order of the signifying process, which relies upon logical truth and metaphysical depth in order to secure meaning.

Valerio destabilizes the king's speech as well as Austin's exclusion of the theater from his systematic portrayal of speech acts. He opens up the possibility of a performative speech act that is both felicitous and theatrical, and thus, by extension, Valerio appears as

a prefiguration of Judith Butler's power of subversive repetition. Butler relates the theatrical to the performative in her influential article "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in which she argues for the performative aspect of constative statements of being. According to Butler, the declarative sentence "I am a woman" ought to be understood as a performative act that does not rely on a fundamental, material truth of being, but rather, "if gender attributes and acts […] are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured " (528). What Austin would call a constative statement, Butler argues is actually also a performative, which she makes clear with the example of gender identity and acts. While Valerio is not dealing specifically with the theatrics of gender, he still brings about a disequilibrium that results from a lack of measure, and this lack connects the instability he brings about with the kind of incommensurability that Butler has in mind. And this disequilibrium further facilitates Valerio's ascent to power.

Valerio's successful execution of the marriage is the condition he has to meet in order to secure his place in Leonce's royal cabinet. From this position of power he will be able to issue decrees with illocutionary force. As minister, Valerio can then call forth his world without labor, a *Schlaraffenland* that is an inverted world.[31] In this world the norm becomes deviant, where working for a living is a criminal activity, and where all that we need falls from heaven. Valerio's decree insists that God deliver upon request "Makkaroni, Melonen und Feigen, [...] musikalische Kehlen, klassische Leiber und eine kommode Religion" (3.3, 134). Quickly, the magical thinking behind this official edict becomes clear. Its status as an authentic vision of a utopian society is as equally indeterminable as the authenticity of the marriage in effigy.[32] And yet, this indeterminability is part of Valerio's revolutionary revision of the status quo. While it is clear that he is opposed to work, his opposition is perhaps more a re-valuation of what counts as work. That is to say, when work is synonymous with callouses and physical exertion, Valerio is against it. The body is a vehicle for pleasure and consumption for him. At the same time, when language takes on its full theatrical-performative force, it is

---

[31] Dedner captures this relationship with reference to Grimms' dictionary: "Ein Blick in Grimms Deutsches Wörterbuch kann leicht darüber informieren, daß die Utopie von den Schlaraffen, möglicherweise die einzige echte Volksutopie, schon zu Beginn der Neuzeit umgedeutet wurde zum Warn- und Schreckbild für die arbeitsunwillige Jugend und andere 'Narren'" ("Vorbemerkung" 215). In this context, Valerio's vision becomes even more ambivalent. Is he evoking the former glory of this fantasy land or its newer connotation as a warning to the young and lazy?

[32] Daase describes this utopia explicitly as queer, using the German word "verquer": "Mit seiner verqueren 'Utopie' entzieht sich Valerio zunächst einmal selbst der Verantwortung, indem er den Begriff des 'Staatsministers' in einem Wust von Verordnungen ad absurdum führt" (391). Daase equates this exaggerated detachment from meaning as a detachment from social responsibility. I argue, however, that this detachment is part of his queer revolutionary strategy.

also "doing" something—but the work of language as a material foundation for social relations does not leave callouses and might be the only way to unite *fame* and *fama*.

Act 4: Making the Clothes that Make the Man: Class, Gender, and Cross-Dressing in Keller's *Kleider machen Leute*

At this point we have seen how inversion serves a critique of the Enlightenment, how it figures as both pathological symptom and curative salve in shaping bourgeois subjectivity, and how the theatrical itself depends upon inversion at the root of its signifying strategies. As spectacle, *pharmakon*, and source of subversive signification, inversion depends on fixed subject positions that then become increasingly confused the more complex the inversions are. Gottfried Keller's *Kleider machen Leute* (1874) seems to present a simple inversion: A poor, local tailor suddenly becomes a rich, foreign aristocrat. But this rags-to-riches story is deceptive in its simplicity. Indeed, it makes deception itself look simple and innocent. The protagonist, Wenzel Strapinski, never meant to pretend to be something he was not. At the beginning of the story, he is nothing but a victim of circumstance who gets mistaken for a Polish count upon his arrival in the town of Goldach. Can he help it if this new identity happens to suit him and brings with it compelling new advantages, including the admiration of the women? Deception is quite possibly too harsh a word, or rather, the choice as to what we should call this inversion of social class will determine how we evaluate the status of Strapinski's actions (or inactions). Is it a deception to dress in the clothes that he feels driven to wear? Is he to blame if the people of Goldach read his every action as a testament to his aristocratic nature and idiosyncratic foreignness? Perhaps. But what amount of guilt do the readers share in—both those Goldachers who read Strapinski as a foreign nobleman and us, the readers of the text? In fact, how does reading itself become a guilty act that implicates the person reading just as much as those figures who are being read?

Keller's novella *Kleider machen Leute* exposes reading as an inverting act. Beyond merely enabling the inversion of social class, reading is subject to multiple deviations in the text. From our initial reading of the title to its inverse appearance later on ("Leute machen Kleider"), we encounter inversions of both syntactical relationships as well as inversions of class and gender. These do not occur as isolated instances, but rather share a common structure. In this way, the story links inversion to reading through multiple deviations, deviations that stray from the path of the good, just, and proper. And yet, the term reading might be just as inaccurate as deception. Instead, we might say that Keller shows how *mis*reading and inversion interrelate and disrupt the order of normal life in his quaint Swiss towns of Goldach and Seldwyla. So while the final image of the successful tailor turned *marchand tailleur* and his growing family seems to imply that misreading has come to a halt, the readers outside of the text are provoked to question the placid state

of normalcy, since we have been shown again and again that whatever we are reading we are likely also misreading, be it a sentence, a dance performance, or someone's clothing.

Informing this analysis of *Kleider machen Leute* is a reflection on the connection between reading, clothing, and identity based on two works that examine these terms within the context of queer culture. The first is *Paris is Burning* from 1990, in which filmmaker Jennie Livingston famously documents the world of New York drag balls in the 1980s. This world is very much an inverted one, where the malleability of appearance (and essence) is celebrated and the identity categories that serve to stratify and segregate society outside the dance hall become the basis for a contest of "realness." The second is Marjorie Garber's seminal work *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* that presents a cultural history of cross-dressing and the significance of dress codes. The book aims to substantiate the identity of the cross-dresser as a viable subject position, as something more than just a perversion (*Verkehrung*) of a normal male or female identity of someone who dresses "appropriately." Livingston's and Garber's works frame my discussion of *Kleider machen Leute* insofar as they articulate a link between class, gender, and drag that alters how we read Wenzel Strapinski's proclivity for fine clothes and the consequences of his transgressions.

For all the criticism that *Paris is Burning* has received, the film undeniably brings up issues of gender, race, and class and how they relate to appearance and self-presentation.[1] Whether it does so through the lens of white privilege or with a certain degree of care for its filmic subjects, it nevertheless depicts a world in which certain categories of identity are emulated. They are, to be sure, not simple categories: "luscious body," "schoolboy," "town and country," and "butch queen first time in drags at a ball." Of course, these refined labels also entail performances of gender cross-dressing; or rather, they all involve performing gender whether or not the body underneath the clothes corresponds to the contest category or not. Thus, the categories "military" or "business executive" call for a certain performance of masculinity and social status that deviates from the performers' everyday identity. One of the film's main interviewees Dorian Corey comments on "executive realness":

> In real life, you can't get a job as an executive unless you have the educational background and the opportunity. Now, the fact that you are not an executive is merely because of the social standing of life. That is just pure thing. Black people have a hard time getting anywhere. And those that do are usually straight. In a ballroom, you can be anything you want. You're not really an executive, but you're looking like an executive. And therefore you're showing the straight world that I can be an executive. If I had the opportunity, I could be one because I can look like

---

[1]   Judith Butler's chapter "Gender is Burning" in *Bodies that Matter* presents aspects of this critique, focusing in particular on bell hooks' denunciation of the film. Butler is also critical of the film's racial politics as a film made by a white, middle-class woman, but she also emphasizes many other features of the film that inspire critical reflection on identity (121-41).

one. And that is like a fulfillment. Your peers, your friends are telling you, "Oh you'd make a wonderful executive."

The ballroom is decidedly not real life, and yet it becomes apparent that looking the part is just as important outside the ballroom as inside. This category transgresses the exclusionary class and race lines that control access to *the* figure of success in 1980s America. At the same time, as Dorian Corey makes clear, it involves a performance of a straight sexual identity, which is to say a certain way of doing masculine identity that conforms to normal gender roles. But the most significant phrase in this commentary for the purpose of this chapter is "I could be one because I can look like one." This rephrasing of the saying "clothes make the man" appears here within the context of a drag contest where class cross-dressing is just as much part of the show as "high fashion eveningwear."

Paris is Burning not only shows how class identity can be reappropriated and redeployed through drag, it also shifts the meaning of reading and what it means to be read. On the one hand there is a sense that the ultimate drag performance is one that can no longer be read as such. The perfect performer can leave the ballroom at the end of the night in drag without being perceived as a cross-dresser: "When they're undetectable, when they can walk out of that ballroom, into the sunlight and onto the subway, and get home and still have all their clothes and no blood running off their bodies, those are the femme realness queens." The epitome of "realness" means not being read as in drag. But reading also has a very specific meaning in the drag ball community. "To read" is a way of insulting someone by picking out flaws in their performance. Dorian Corey is careful to point out that this exchange only counts as reading when it is done between people of the same group, otherwise it is just insulting. In this sense, reading implies a critical evaluation of another person's performance of certain identity categories. "In other words, if I'm a black queen and you're a black queen, we can't call each other black queens, 'cause we're both black queens. That's not a read. That's just a fact. So then we talk about your ridiculous shape, your saggy face, your tacky clothes." In the film's explanation of reading, the main object of scrutiny seems to be female youth and beauty. But really any performance of identity that seems to transgress a "natural" order or alignment of body, inner essence, and outward appearance is subject to reading. Anyone who risks crossing gender, class, and/or race lines faces the threat of being read, both as in-group scrutiny and as being detected as a trans-person by people outside of one's community.

The discrepancy between outer appearance and inner being that dominates the plot and humor of Keller's *Kleider machen Leute* invites discussion as to the relationship between clothing, inversion, and the history of perversions associated with transgressing dress codes. Marjorie Garber provides contextualization for the history of cross-dressing in nineteenth-century Europe. While *Paris Is Burning* informs the theoretical perspective

of my textual analysis, Garber's study, *Vested Interests*, lends a backdrop that clarifies the stakes of reading Wenzel Strapinski as a cross-dresser. Garber also explicitly notes the fundamental connection between race, class, and gender in her introduction (entitled "Clothes Make the Man"!): "Category crises can and do mark displacements from the axis of *class* as well as from *race* onto the axis of gender" (17). These crises, Garber claims, can be instigated through cross-dressing. But the transgressive history of cross-dressing begins less abstractly with a chapter on European legal practices regulating clothing. Garber's history of cross-dressing first presents the "sumptuary laws" in Europe that were used to control conspicuous consumption, especially the consumption of clothing: "The medieval and Renaissance sumptuary laws […] appear to have been patriotic, economic, and conservatively class-oriented; they sought to restrict the wearing of certain furs, fabrics, and styles to members of particular social and economic classes, ranks, or 'states'" (25). Garber explains in a footnote that these laws were strictly enforced in Switzerland up through the eighteenth century, while in other European countries they had become more lax (392n4). Thus, the tale of a penniless tailor in Switzerland who dresses up in clothes that obviously exceed his social standing speaks to a history of legal practices that forbid such class mobility and changeability of attire. As with so many of Keller's stories in his *Seldwyla* cycle, the figures exist in a fictional realm somewhere between historical realism and fantastical romanticism. Within Garber's historical purview, the sumptuary laws form the basis for thinking about dress codes and injunctions against appearing other than one is (by birth), especially other than one's sex/gender. For my analysis of *Kleider machen Leute*, Garber establishes a historical setting within which class cross-dressing shares a similar transgressive (and illegal) character with gender cross-dressing. Moreover, Garber locates a potential for disrupting identity categories through drag in her history that I see in Keller's text as well.

In Keller's novella inversion and perversion intersect and intermingle; things are not what they seem and seeming appearances are connected to deviant behavior. The convergence of deviance and inversion figures most prominently when Strapinski turns away from the good path and allows himself to be mistaken (i.e., misread) for a Polish count. Contributing to this convergence is Strapinski's natural born disposition as a fancy dresser. His relationship to clothing is characterized from the very beginning by extraordinary attachments that surpass that of a normal tailor and his working material. Indeed, Keller marks this relationship with the language of pathology: Not only is it a congenital disorder, but the narrator goes to great lengths to assure us of Strapinski's inability to repress this deep-seated drive to dress up. The centrality of the debate about his guilt or innocence indicates the great threat that misunderstanding Strapinski's condition poses—even if the threat itself remains rather abstract. Still, the narrator

absolutely has to make sure that we know that Strapinski is actually a good person. As a result, Strapinski emerges as a pathological cross-dresser, who through (un)happy coincidence has become part of a grand deceptive plot.

Here is a brief synopsis of that plot: On a rainy day in November, the tailor from Seldwyla finds himself on the road to Goldach. He is leaving behind a bad working situation and not sure where things are headed. Dressed in his typical garb—a fine coat and Polish fur hat—he gets picked up by a carriage driver. When he arrives in Goldach, he is taken for a foreign nobleman right away due to his mode of transportation (the carriage, like Strapinski, shows outward signs of opulence) and is ushered into the Inn of the Scales ("Zur Waage") for a lavish meal. The scene in the inn is just one in a series in which Strapinski ends up being read as a rich aristocrat. From the inn, he is invited to join a party of men on an afternoon visit to a local aristocrat's villa. There he encounters Nettchen, the aristocrat's daughter, who becomes the primary reason he decides to stay in Goldach and live as Graf Strapinski. Things seem to be going well for him all the way up to his engagement party with Nettchen. On that day, the Goldachers and Seldwylans converge at a country estate between the two towns. The engagement festivities coincide with the Seldwylans' carnival parade, which has a double theme (written on banners leading and ending the procession): "Kleider machen Leute. Leute machen Kleider." At the estate, the Seldwylans perform a *Schautanz* that exposes Strapinski's true identity. In despair, he casts himself out into the cold winter night. Nettchen follows and rescues him from the cold. They spend the night patching things up in a peasant's cottage and then head back to Seldwyla to announce their unwavering intent to marry. Their unannounced plan, which Nettchen has concocted in private with Wenzel, is to marry and live in Seldwyla until they are so successful that all the townsfolk have become rather dependent on their services, at which point they will move back to Goldach. With only minor hurdles in their way, they succeed in all they set out to do, and the tale concludes with the narrator telling us of their ever growing family, impeccable good standing, and their enduring spite against Seldwyla.

Compulsive Behavior and Deviations from the Path

When we first encounter Strapinski on the road to Goldach in the opening passage, we quickly find out that his special attachment to clothing exceeds the professional connection he has as a maker of clothes. His unique attire and style lend him "ein edles und romantisches Aussehen" (276). More than his long flowing hair and well-trimmed moustache, it is his dark gray coat that stands out in this first scene. Strapinski's connection to his coat and the accompanying Polish fur hat proves to be rather excessive:

"Lieber wäre er verhungert, als daß er sich von seinem Radmantel und von seiner polnischen Pelzmütze getrennt hätte" (276). This is quite a strong claim, since Strapinski's hunger is also an important force in the ensuing sequence of events at the inn in Goldach. From the beginning, however, this special attachment structures Strapinski's entire life. His need to present himself in such a fine manner determines where he can live and how he is able to earn money: "Er konnte deshalb nur in größeren Städten arbeiten, wo solches nicht zu sehr auffiel" (276). And because he looks so noble, he is never able to receive alms when he travels. Already the eponymous saying begins to take on a different connotation: Clothes make the man in the sense that they shape Strapinski's very existence, not only as a tailor but also as someone with an apparently odd relationship to clothing. Strapinski has to live in towns big enough to afford him a certain degree of anonymity so that he can indulge in his cross-dressing without sticking out. Prior to his arrival in Goldach, his practice of dressing in clothes that do not match his social rank had never led to anything good. And if he was ever truly mistaken for a nobleman, it had never led to such immediate positive results in the past.

This connection to clothing provides the basis for the plot of *Kleider machen Leute*, and its necessity on the diegetic level indicates that Strapinski is a slave to fashion in a literal sense. The narrator states on multiple occasions that the destitute tailor's habit of wearing fancy clothes is not a choice but a compulsion. While at the start, the narrator tells us that this "habitus" has become a "need" (*Bedürfnis*), we later find out that it is not just a habit acquired over time. It goes deeper than that: "Sein angeborenes Bedürfnis, etwas Zierliches und Außergewöhnliches vorzustellen, wenn auch nur in der Wahl der Kleider, hatte ihn in diesen Konflikt geführt und brachte jetzt auch jene Furcht hervor" (296). His relationship to clothes and self-presentation is a congenital condition, which for the first time in his life is causing a moral dilemma. What was once a quirky trait that meant he could only live in larger towns or cities and had to go hungry from time to time turns into an elaborate, never-ending performance of class. The restrictive clause, "wenn auch nur in der Wahl der Kleider," implies that Strapinski's in-born need to present himself with pomp is limited to what should be the harmless realm of clothes. But obviously, the story depends on the "Wahl der Kleider" as being trenchant. Moreover, the phrase speaks to another complex issue, namely, whether or not Strapinski's behavior is a choice at all if it is a natural born condition. In a preemptive move, well before we have any reason to doubt Strapinski's moral rectitude, the narrator tells us that Strapinski has no ill intentions when he dresses up: "Solcher Habitus war ihm zum Bedürfnis geworden, ohne daß er etwas Schlimmes oder Betrügerisches dabei im Schilde führte" (276). The denial of ulterior motives, however, awakes suspicion, and we begin to wonder about this strange behavior and how it might indeed be considered morally reproachable.

Deviations from the path coincide with Strapinski's eccentric behavior in both literal and figurative ways. The story begins with a deviation. When a carriage overtakes Strapinski and the driver offers him a ride, Strapinski accepts, putting himself on a new course. Even though the carriage takes Strapinski in the same direction he was walking, the shift in the mode of transportation nevertheless constitutes a significant deviation. The destination reached by carriage is completely different from what it would have been if Strapinski had arrived on foot. As if defying some basic theorem of geometry, the deviation here shows that two bodies (Strapinski on foot and the carriage) moving towards the same point do not necessarily arrive at the same place. This initial deviation is not so much physical as social. The carriage in which the tailor arrives belongs to some strange count from East Switzerland and appears laden with luggage—but again this is merely a superficial appearance, for the carriage is actually empty and the luggage too, as the narrator points out. When Strapinski steps out of the carriage in Goldach, he is already wearing high-class clothes. The matching carriage helps set the scene, ensuring that his fine clothes be read as the outward signs of foreign nobility. Had he arrived in Goldach on foot, he would have probably been met with the "Verwunderung und Neugierde" that he was accustomed to—without a welcoming invitation to lunch (277). This deviation from the path propels a sequence of events that ultimately leads to bigger questions concerning moral deviation, guilt, and retribution. This first literal deviation from the footpath is all the more significant as a step down the wrong path because of the deviant behavior that is already in place, namely, Strapinski's habit of dressing up.

But Strapinski's actual deviation from the moral path is only as far away as his next trip to the toilet. Again and again, leading up to the scene at the inn in Goldach where Strapinski is treated to lunch, the narrator assures us of Strapinski's virtues. Though it is not yet certain if he is a victim of circumstance or just a lucky guy, there is no question that he never meant to deceive anyone—not at first. After he has satiated his hunger a bit, he tries to find a way out of the situation. But the escape route leads the wrong way again. A servant thinks Graf Strapinski is looking for the toilet: "Erlauben Sie gefälligst, mein Herr, ich werde Ihnen den Weg weisen!" (280). The servant directs him to the WC, and Strapinski's moral sensibilities also go down the drain. The narrator draws a direct line between his lingering in the WC with his first active lie: "Doch verwickelte er sich jetzt in die erste selbsttätige Lüge, weil er in dem verschlossenen Raume ein wenig verweilte, und er betrat hiemit den abschüssigen Weg des Bösen" (280). The association is not immediately obvious as to why this moment of waiting too long in the WC is such a decisive one, but the narrator definitely heightens the status of "the path" as a central metaphor in Wenzel's tale. Its importance presents itself from the first image of Strapinski on the road to Goldach, but in the WC, the literal path becomes a metaphorical one with

moral consequences. Strapinski's moral deviation begins in the water closet. In the precise moment, when Wenzel tries to turn the events around and extricate himself from a tricky situation, he is diverted to this *Ab-Ort*, where the only exit is unimaginable. Already the story is enforcing a relationship between inaction (lingering) and perversion that will continue to trouble Strapinski and his place in the world.

Reading, Misreading, and Getting Read

Leaving aside questions of Strapinski's agency and guilt for a moment, I would like to address the signifying economy in *Kleider machen Leute* as subject to deviation. That signification is out of joint is undeniable. To be sure, the story has attracted the attention of scholars interested in the semiotics of Goldach precisely because the text relies so heavily on erroneously interpreting outward signs.[2] As we have seen, it all begins with Strapinski's arrival in the horse-drawn carriage and the Goldachers' subsequent conviction that he is a Polish count. From the start, misreading is intertwined with Strapinski's deviations. His welcome depends upon his deviation from his path on foot as well as upon his deviant behavior of wearing clothes that do not match his rank. But Strapinski is not out to hoodwink the Goldachers. Moreover, they are just as much complicit in creating the figure of Graf Strapinski as he is. The cook and innkeeper, who observe Strapinski with great scrutiny (but little discrimination) when he arrives, contribute a great deal to the misreading of Strapinski that leads to substantiating his identity as a Polish aristocrat. They insist on treating him to an exorbitant meal in order to demonstrate the Goldachers' sense of hospitality to prominent guests. Their firm belief that they are dealing with a great foreign count distorts his every action during the meal to fit their reading of him, such that his ravenous manner of eating becomes a sign of fine etiquette and his ignorance as to which cutlery to use for which dish a sign of his good old-fashioned aristocratic upbringing. In other words, they read over Strapinski's blunders enabling him to continue his charade, even helping it gain momentum.

These misreadings can be seen as a chain of deviations that depart from a hermeneutic path along which signified and signifier line up to indicate clear, single meanings.[3] The problem of misreading surpasses Strapinski's individual subjectivity,

---

[2] Many scholars have commented on the semiotic play in this story and elsewhere in Keller's work. See for example, Rolf Selbmann's chapter "Der Herr der Zeichen. *Kleider machen Leute*" (76-81). Anne Fleig has recently discussed the semiotics of clothes in Keller's works in particular in her article "'Märtyrer seines Mantels': Gottfried Kellers Novelle 'Kleider machen Leute.'" See also Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf's discussion of the sign system in *Kleider machen Leute* (489-90) as well as Markus Steinmayr's article "Archive des Fehllesens: Zum Realismus Gottfried Kellers."

[3] Or as Erika Swales puts it, "From the start [Strapinski's] behavior and speech lose their authorial autonomy and are instead at the mercy of the interpretive community" (131).

such that the discussion of Strapinski's lack of autonomy and his deviant behavior must necessarily turn to question the role of those who are (mis)reading him. Even if Strapinski seems to bring misreading with him wherever he goes, it would not be wholly accurate to attribute this disruptive force to him as a free agent. Other figures in the story and the readers themselves are caught up in the faulty process of reading. And yet, as Strapinski and the other Goldachers come to embrace Graf Strapinski, the very difference between misreading and reading the right way becomes difficult to distinguish—misreadings transform into proper readings. The Goldachers, including Nettchen, read Strapinski as a romantic, Polish count, while Strapinski progressively does more to support their interpretation. This combined effort is, of course, also filled with other deviations within the signifying economy. For example, when Strapinski is asked to sing a song from his home country, he sings a Polish folk song that he had learned by heart at some point in the past. He delivers the song, and it is preposterously received by the great men of Goldach as a beautiful rendition of the Polish national hymn (290). Only the reader and the narrator know the actual meaning of the lyrics (Strapinski himself is ignorant to their meaning), but this added knowledge does not put us at any particular advantage over and against the figures in the story. Instead, we assist in completing a hermeneutic circle that incorporates misreading as reading.

The story demonstrates how misreading is necessary for the process of reading in the first place—a willingness to ignore the obvious gap between signified and signifier in order to gain access to trade in and exchange of signs that subsequently permits one a place at the table, so to speak. A strong example of this can be found in Melcher Böhni's, Strapinski's rival, reaction to almost seeing through the veil of the tailor's performance early on in the text. Böhni picks up on certain signs that other characters fail to notice. Strapinski is almost betrayed by his own body, when Böhni catches a glimpse of his needle-pricked fingers. In this brief encounter, he scrutinizes Strapinski but proves to be no better at reading signs than the other Goldach denizens. Like everyone else, Böhni's own imagination taints his reading. He yearns for political excitement, which colors his perception: "Der Mann dort hat mir so wunderlich zerstochene Finger, vielleicht von Praga oder Ostrolenka her!" (287). Böhni interprets Strapinski's gnarly fingers as signs of political strife, not as the result of working with pins and needles. When Böhni sees Strapinski's fingers, he draws (the reader's) attention to the "real" corporeal Strapinski, a body behind the costume. The fact that his interpretation is false, or rather in accordance with the rest of Goldach's reading, is telling in terms of the status of the body itself as bearer of true signs of a person's identity, or rather, in this context, the body's inability to tell us anything about the "naked truth" of a person's identity. Böhni still misreads Strapinski when confronted with a true sign of who he is, written into his scarred

fingertips. At the same time, this failure appears as the condition of possibility for reading itself. Were sign and signifier to perfectly contain each other, reading would not be necessary—the immediacy of perception would suffice. But *Kleider machen Leute* emphasizes again and again the necessity of both reading and misreading. There is no immediate perception, only knowledge mediated through attire and performances.

Already at their first meeting on Strapinski's first afternoon in Goldach, Böhni "reads" him in a *Paris Is Burning* sense, as a mode of pointing out flaws in another person's performance (of drag). Although Böhni is not as confrontational as the examples Venus Xtravaganza and Dorian Corey provide, he does pick apart Strapinski's self-presentation. Still, though he finds imperfections like Strapinski's fingers, he does not know how to interpret them. In order to really read Strapinski, an even more elaborate confrontation with the techniques of cross-dressing is required. This clash comes about during the great "reading" of Strapinski at the carnival/engagement celebration. The Seldwylans read Strapinski and effectively strip him of his drag. Judith Butler's presentation of the process of reading within Livingston's film articulates the threshold between artifice and the real that Keller's story also plays with:

> For "reading" means taking someone down, exposing what fails to work at the level of appearance, insulting or deriding someone. For a performance to work, then, means that a reading is no longer possible, or that a reading, an interpretation, appears to be a kind of transparent seeing, where what appears and what it means coincide. On the contrary, when what appears and how it is "read" diverge, the artifice of the performance can be read as artifice; the ideal splits off from its appropriation. But the impossibility of reading means that the artifice works, the approximation of realness appears to be achieved, the body performing and the ideal performed appear indistinguishable. (129)

Butler's description of reading means for Strapinski that as long as he is seamlessly taken for Graf Strapinski, reading has come to an end. Appearance and essence have so perfectly aligned that there is no need to evaluate or interpret the difference between them. Paradoxically, when Strapinski is totally exposed, reading also comes to an end, for his appearance and what it signifies coincide again in the moment that the supposed truth of his identity is revealed.[4] This moment of revelation hints at an end to artifice, drag, and the theatricality of Strapinski's existence. I say "hints at" because Butler's treatment of reading also makes clear that it never actually comes to an end. There are no perfect performances. The ideal is only ever re-presented imperfectly.

Indeed, the truth of Strapinski's identity is mediated in the scene of his unveiling through a highly theatrical performance, the details of which are significant in terms of how misreading, inversion, and perversion intersect and overlap. On that fateful night

---

[4]   Wolfgang Preisendanz points out an apparent agreement among scholars regarding the fundamental importance of "Sein und Schein" to Keller's works, especially as a primary humoristic device (146).

during carnival when the Goldachers and Seldwylans converge upon a country villa to celebrate Strapinski and Nettchen's engagement and carnival respectively, Strapinski comes face to face with his doppelgänger. The encounter is portrayed as part of a grand "Schautanz" that the Seldwylans put on for the Goldachers. The dance number follows the same motto as their carnival parade banners:

> Jede führte in zierlichem Gebärdenspiel den Satz "Leute machen Kleider" und dessen Umkehrung durch, indem sie erst mit Emsigkeit irgendein stattliches Kleidungsstück, einen Fürstenmantel, Priestertalar und dergleichen anzufertigen schien und sodann eine dürftige Person damit bekleidete, welche, urplötzlich umgewandelt, sich in höchstem Ansehen aufrichtete und nach dem Takte der Musik feierlich einherging. (302)

The dance performs the saying and its inversion, "Kleider machen Leute." It seems harmless at first, until Strapinski's doppelgänger appears and performs it once again. He starts out wearing clothes like the ones that Strapinski was wearing on that dreary November day when he arrived in Goldach. The doppelgänger then pulls out the tools of his trade and finishes an outfit that he then puts on. It is the same festive attire that Strapinski is wearing for his engagement party. But the performance alone does not suffice to denounce Strapinski. The doppelgänger then reveals himself as Strapinski's former master and derides him in front of all the guests. Unlike Böhni, who keeps his reading to himself, the Seldwylan master tailor cuts down Strapinski with quips that are just as below-the-belt as some of the examples of reads from *Paris is Burning*: "Kommt, Freunde, seht hier unsern sanften Schneidergesellen, der wie ein Raphael aussieht und unsern Dienstmägden, auch der Pfarrerstochter so wohl gefiel, die freilich ein bißchen übergeschnappt ist!" (304). His former boss mocks him, first literally by re-enacting Strapinski's deception, and then again by directly insulting him. His insults include commenting on Strapinski's "softness" and at the same time his attractiveness for women, which his former boss presents as somehow misplaced and a bit perverse. Strapinski gets read and outed all in one spectacular and tragic evening.

If this reading of Strapinski is meant to reveal his true identity, it too must be seen as a failed reading, for it does not fulfill its purpose. If it was meant to wreck Strapinski's life and teach him a lesson, it does the opposite. Though Strapinski no longer dresses like a Polish count, in the end he obtains both success and happiness. This brutal reading does not achieve the desired effect—at least it does not succeed in destroying Strapinski's life. Instead, it serves as a further catalyst of inversion, and the punishers (the Seldwylans) become the punished when Nettchen devises her plan for their revenge against them. The crisis also knits Nettchen and Strapinski together even more than before, and through their marriage, Strapinski undergoes a more lasting inverted transformation from rags to pseudo-nobility to riches. Still, these rather positive inversions of the protagonists'

situations are coupled with the perversions and deviations that otherwise structure the plot and shape our tailor's character and which do not always appear in such a kind light.

Perversions of Class and Gender

Other Gottfried Keller stories might seem even more apt to a discussion of perversion and inversion in nineteenth-century literature. Frau Amrain's son easily comes to mind, who attends a costume ball in his mother's dress in *Frau Regel Amrain und ihr Jüngster*. Or one might think of the strange constellations of desire in *Die mißbrauchten Liebesbriefe*, in which transcription and deception cover up an unwitting exchange of amorous letters between two men. Still, in *Kleider machen Leute* perversion coincides with figures of inversion in dramatic ways marked by pathological overtones in the whimsical and faintly fantastic setting of Goldach and Seldwyla. Strapinski fails to follow the rules of society that regulate self-presentation. He transgresses those regulations that prohibit presenting oneself as more or other than one is, which are never as explicit as the sumptuary laws of the previous century, but nevertheless exert pressure on the Swiss citizenry to conform to norms of dress and comportment. Such written and unwritten laws shift their status once a particular set of abnormal behaviors proves to constitute the symptoms of a natural predisposition. The question of guilt must be relativized when the transgressive acts are not the product of a free, malevolent will but instead of a pathological condition. In this light, Strapinski's agency in his own story of inverted identities becomes a matter of perversity versus perversion. This distinction was used by Keller's contemporary Richard von Krafft-Ebing to sort out the difference between deviant acts to be treated as crimes and those pathological acts that might better be dealt with by psychiatric methods. For Krafft-Ebing the distinction belongs to the biological facts of pathology: "Um zwischen Krankheit (Perversion) und Laster (Perversität) unterscheiden zu können, muss auf die Gesamtpersönlichkeit des Handelnden und auf die Triebfeder seines perversen Handelns zurückgegangen werden. Darin liegt der Schlüssel der Diagnostik" (68). This difference seems to preoccupy the narrator in *Kleider machen Leute*, complicating questions of Strapinski's complicity in deceiving the Goldachers and whether this choice that is no choice ought to be understood as a perversion instead of a perversity. At the end of *Kleider machen Leute* we are left to wonder whether Strapinski has been successfully cured of his perversion, and even prior to answering that, what was the nature of his perversion in the first place? For the ultimate image of bourgeois success seems to carry with it a lingering, incurable remnant of perversion.[5]

---

[5] The scholarly debate surrounding Gottfried Keller's position vis-à-vis bourgeois ideology has unsurprisingly not come to a consensus. Uwe Seja notes the lack of consensus as something intrinsic

Kleider machen Leute presents this fascination with and performance of a different, higher class as deviant behavior by marking Strapinski as an outsider, who has abandoned his professional identity in order to assume a social rank that he has not earned. Keller's cycle of stories is replete with figures for whom profession, work, and rank serve as significant categories in establishing their sense of self. *Die drei gerechten Kammacher*, for example, is a tale of professional ambition and disappointment, in which the three combmakers are pitted against each other in a competition for the opportunity to stay by their *Meister*'s side. Or in *Der Schmied seines Glückes*, John Kabys tries to appropriate a new identity through guile only to see himself take up the humble profession of a nail smith after his scheme fails in the end. And Frau Regel Amrain's entire purpose is to ensure that her son become a respectable Swiss citizen capable of taking over the family business that was all but ruined by the lazy, fat, absent family father. In all of these tales, professional identity and economic status are center stage, while gender relationships play out as sideshows (most strikingly with the shocking scene of Amrain's son in her dress). However, the connection between the two spheres of social identity (class and gender in this case) determines the fate of the protagonists each time.

The same holds true for *Kleider machen Leute*. Strapinski's cross-dressing is not merely a matter of transgressing class boundaries; it also involves performing masculinity. Indeed, every moment of Strapinski's performance seems to merit comments about how much of a man he is. To better grasp Strapinski's dressing up as a form of class cross-dressing that is nevertheless inseparable from a certain performance of masculinity, let us look again in more detail at his debut in the inn at Goldach. At first, his appearance produces a misunderstanding, and the innkeeper and his staff share and support the mistaken impression that Strapinski is a Polish count. Their reactions to him are based on expectations of how one must treat an aristocratic, foreign guest. The innkeeper is particularly concerned about keeping up appearances for their noble guest: "Ein großer Herr, wenn er durch unsere Stadt reist, [soll] sagen können, er habe ein ordentliches Essen gefunden, obgleich er ganz unerwartet und im Winter gekommen sei!" (279). Strapinski's meal is thus also a display based on a desire to present a certain degree of economic and

---

to Keller's aesthetic program: "Keller's narratives are driven by a persistent process of inquiry, evaluation and re-evaluation that resists the ideological temptations of unique and stable viewpoints and accounts" (97). From the Marxist readings of the 1970s to more measured interpretations of the last few decades, the political and social standing of Keller's works remains open to argument. Friedrich von Hildt's 1978 study, *Gottfried Keller: Literarische Verheißung und Kritik der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft im Romanwerk*, argues that Keller underwent a transformation in his attitude towards bourgeois society from complacency to a more critical stance. Keller was supposedly never able to fully break free from the limits of bourgeois thinking: "Beides, Entwicklung und Veränderung sind dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß Kellers Denken sich nur in den Schranken der bürgerlichen Ideologie, nicht über sie hinaus bewegt" (204).

material bounty that is not completely backed by reality. As the meal progresses, both sides become more and more committed to their performances of social standing. Indeed, the double spectacle helps to convince the actual upper echelons of Goldach society that Strapinski is actually a Polish count:

> Also das sollte ein polnischer Graf sein? Den Wagen hatten sie freilich von ihrem Comptoirstuhl aus gesehen; auch wußte man nicht, ob der Wirt den Grafen oder dieser jenen bewirte; doch hatte der Wirt bis jetzt noch keine dummen Streiche gemacht; er war vielmehr als ein ziemlich schlauer Kopf bekannt, und so wurden denn die Kreise, welche die neugierigen Herren um den Fremden zogen, immer kleiner, bis sie sich zuletzt vertraulich an den gleichen Tisch setzten und sich auf gewandte Weise zu dem Gelage aus dem Stegreif einluden, indem sie ohne weiteres um eine Flasche zu würfeln begannen. (284)

This paragraph depicts the literal circle of men from "guter Häuser" who surround Strapinski, close in on him, and are soon participating in his performance themselves. In these first encounters with the people of Goldach, Strapinski's performance is based on little more than his outer appearance and the luck of his audience being overly ready to see him as an aristocrat. Without effort and without malevolent intent, Strapinski gains entrée into Goldach's community of upper class men.

Cross-dressing as merely dressing up will not sustain Strapinski's newfound status in Goldach. His performance quickly spreads to other aspects of his self-presentation. When he is invited to join the men for an outing to the country estate of a local official, his military experience comes to his aid. He accepts the offer to take the reins of a carriage and drives it on their outing. His manner in the driver's seat dispels any remaining doubts that the men might have had, and they whisper to each other, "Es ist richtig, er ist jedenfalls ein Herr" (286). At the estate, he again draws from his military service to support his performance, this time in terms of his use of language: "Strapinski wußte auch hier am besten Bescheid; denn er brauchte nur die Redensarten hervorzuholen, welche er einst in der Nähe von Offizieren und Gutsherren gehört und die ihm schon dazumal ausnehmend wohl gefallen hatten" (286). Strapinski turns out to be a master at appropriating the style, manners, and language of the aristocratic class.

Strapinski's inclusion in this circle of men continues to be both a literal problem (with actual circles of male individuals that do or do not admit Strapinski into their formation) as well as a metaphorical one. At the magistrate's estate, Strapinski finds himself on the outside of the group of men, who are busy practicing their favorite pastime, gambling:

> Mittlerweile teilte sich die Gesellschaft in zwei Partien, um das versäumte Spiel nachzuholen, da in diesem Lande keine Männer zusammen sein konnten, ohne zu spielen, wahrscheinlich aus angeborenem Tätigkeitstriebe. Strapinski, welcher die Teilnahme aus verschiedenen Gründen ablehnen mußte, wurde eingeladen zuzusehen […]. (286)

Several things are happening here at once. First, it becomes clear that Strapinski's arrival in Goldach interrupted the normal flow of events, which would have been for the men to have already gambled earlier in the day. Instead, Strapinski's arrival prevented them from their habitual course of action, meaning that he has created an aberration in the social fabric that unites the men of Goldach. Second, the natural born drives at work among the men in Goldach are different from those of the Seldwylan tailor. Strapinski's drive to present himself flamboyantly contrasts with the natural masculine drive in Goldach, where men are compelled to play/gamble together. Strapinski disrupts the masculine order of things in Goldach upon his arrival, and now within the completely male sphere he is (at first) relegated to the position of observer. Moreover, there are "various reasons" why he must abstain from playing. Some of those reasons lie close at hand: He has no money to gamble for example. But there is an implicit logic here that invites us to question Strapinski's masculinity itself. The tailor does not belong to this breed of men who are compelled to gamble whenever they assemble. His outsider status extends beyond simply coming from a different town: His masculinity is also of a different nature. One might thus conclude that Strapinski is something other than a born/natural man. But we also know that he is capable of playing the role of a (foreign) man convincingly. His performance is not achieved through his elegant costume alone but also through his ability to appropriate and redeploy masculine, military language and mannerisms.

From Passive Pervert to Active Convert? Or Just Back into the Closet?

But for all of Strapinski's successes in convincing the Goldachers and himself of his aristocratic, male identity, his use of these dress and behavior codes is depicted as abnormal and in serious need of correction. The pathological nature of Strapinski's cross-dressing appears most blatantly the instant that it proves to have been in need of correction or a cure all along.[6] The full extent of his perversion only comes out through the process of a talking-cure that Nettchen undertakes with him after he hits rock bottom on the night of their engagement party. Nettchen has just saved Strapinski from freezing to death and

---

[6]   It is surprisingly rare to find scholars who speak of this tale in terms of pathology and cure. Alan Corkhill does and refers specifically to the moment when Nettchen forbids Strapinski from further indulging in romantic flights of fancy: "However instead of being allowed to act out this fictional fantasy, Strapinski finds himself distracted from, possibly even cured of his characteristic dreaminess […] as a result of Nettchen's single-minded resolve " (40). In Corkhill's understanding, the cure involves correcting Strapinski of his own excessive relationship to a fictional romantic aesthetic, that is to say, his relationship with literary figures. The lack of discussion is perhaps all the more striking given the propensity to look towards literature as a source for case studies in the emerging fields of sexual pathology and psychoanalysis towards the end of the nineteenth century. See Anna Katharina Schaffner's *Modernism and Perversion*.

takes him to the home of a peasant woman, who leaves the two alone to have their first conversation after Strapinski's outing.[7] The scene unfolds like a prefiguration of a psychoanalytic therapy session with Nettchen as analyst and Strapinski as analysand.[8] Though she begins with harsh suspicion—"Wer sind Sie? Was wollten Sie mit mir?"— she quickly changes her tone and the direction of her questions: "Ich wünsche zu wissen, wer Sie eigentlich seien und woher Sie kommen und wohin Sie wollen?" (311). His confessional reply, which the narrator simply paraphrases, covers the events in Strapinski's life since his arrival in Goldach. Nettchen then probes deeper into the past after Strapinski explains that his plan to extricate himself from his web of lies involved committing suicide. In the face of Strapinski's outburst of suicidal emotions, Nettchen does not fling herself into a scene of mutual pathos. Instead, she asks if he has a history of deception/deviance: "Haben sie dergleichen oder ähnliche Streiche früher schon begangen und fremde Menschen angelogen, die Ihnen nichts zuleide getan?" (312). The timing of this question solidifies her role as analyst *avant la lettre*, and Strapinski's response plays into a psychoanalytic narrative of pathology that begins with childhood traumas. Upon Nettchen's persistently more specific questions, he finally looks back to the original source of his deviant behavior: "Meine Mutter…" (313). He goes on to lay out his parents' troubled relationship and explains that his mother, too, had a strong predisposition for fine clothing and manners. After disclosing his childhood past and his more recent indiscretions to Nettchen, it would seem that Strapinski has purged himself of his perverse past. Now Nettchen truly knows him. And Wenzel never again dresses up as Graf Strapinski.[9]

The talking-cure succeeds in repairing the relationship between the two lovers. It is only after going through this experience of confessing the past that the two can truly

---

[7] Perhaps one of the most interesting and extreme readings of Nettchen saving Wenzel can be found in W.G. Sebald's essay on Keller, in which he casts the scene as evidence of Keller's desire to reverse gender roles: "Und als es Nettchen zuletzt gelingt, durch tüchtiges Reiben den halbtoten Schneider wieder zum Leben zu erwecken und seine Gestalt langsam sich in die Höhe richtet, wird vollends klar, daß Kellers erotische Sehnsucht auf eine Vertauschung der von der Gesellschaft vorgeschriebenen Rollen der Geschlechter ging" (119-20).

[8] This talking-cure, however, should be treated with caution. I am not arguing here for a proscriptive interpretation that ultimately reinforces a sense of "true" identity underneath the clothes. Such an argument can, however, be found in Rüdiger Görner's "'Das Farbenwesen im Regentropfen': Gottfried Kellers Ontologie des Anscheins in *Kleider machen Leute*." Görner presents the idea that "Worte machen Leute" with language as Strapinski's new clothes and Nettchen as the catalyst for Strapinski's full development: "Nettchen will ihn zum Reden bringen, weil sie erkennt, dass nicht nur Kleider, sondern auch Worte Leute machen. Ihr Strapinski braucht 'echte' Kleider, und zu ihnen gehört ein Sprachgewand; er muß zu seiner Art Sprache finden" (187).

[9] Another aspect of Strapinski's life story that he divulges to Nettchen is his strange relationship to a young girl who uncannily resembles Nettchen. The precise link between Nettchen and the girl remains open; however, the revelation during the talking-cure reveals that there is a substitution at work in his desire for Nettchen, a displacement of a past desire, which could not be realized.

celebrate their engagement: "So feierte sie erst jetzt ihre rechte Verlobung aus tief entschlossener Seele, indem sie in süßer Leidenschaft ein Schicksal auf sich nahm und Treue hielt" (316). The rather melodramatic conclusion to this traumatic night, however, takes a sudden ironic turn. They have decided to share a common fate come what may, but Nettchen is not one for leaving things up to fate: "Doch war sie keineswegs so blöde, dieses Schicksal nicht selbst ein wenig lenken zu wollen" (316). Thus, just when it seems that Strapinski has achieved a new, healthy position as a whole individual, his better half is shown taking control of the situation. This stark juxtaposition carries with it an unsettling contrast between the active figure of Nettchen and the passive figure of Strapinski. While the talking-cure seems to alleviate his cross-dressing habits, his passivity persists along with his proclivity towards overly dramatic reactions. Nettchen must push him even further. "Keine Romane mehr!" (316), she tells him, when he starts to slip back into romantic visions of their life in some distant land. Nettchen has another plan that involves confronting their Seldwylan opponents directly—and that will require that Wenzel appear as being in control and capable of being the head of a household. So when they leave the peasant's home en route to Seldwyla to show its denizens that the carnival dance did not deter them in their resolve to marry, Strapinski appears to be learning to play his new part:

> Nachdem die Bäuerin herbeigerufen und von Wenzel, der anfing, seine neue Stellung einzunehmen, beschenkt worden war, fuhren sie ihres Weges weiter. Wenzel führte jetzt die Zügel, Nettchen lehnte sich so zufrieden an ihn, als ob er eine Kirchensäule wäre. Denn des Menschen Wille ist sein Himmelreich, und Nettchen war just vor drei Tagen volljährig geworden und konnte dem ihrigen folgen. (316)

While Strapinski takes up this stance as the man behind the reins—a stark contrast to his opening position as a passenger in someone else's carriage, but also a stance we know he can pull off convincingly—his newfound autonomy is juxtaposed with Nettchen's own independent willpower. Indeed, given the context of this carriage scene, the metaphor used here to describe Strapinski should be treated with suspicion, or rather, the metaphoricity of the statement must be taken seriously: Nettchen leans against him *as if* he were a pillar in a church. But he only *seems* to be a pillar. And as we have seen prior to this scene and as we will see after it, Nettchen is the more stable pillar, capable of propping up Strapinski in all sorts of ways.[10]

---

[10] In this sense, Nettchen is also instrumental in bringing Strapinski out of the realm of economic impotence in which aristocrats seems to circulate in Keller's world. By suppressing his lust for romantic fictions, she is carrying out a process that Gail Hart identifies as central to Keller's work and his relationship to Feuerbach's writing, namely as a disenchantment with the fictional world that she characterizes as "an almost obsessive concentration on fictions as seducers of men and women who might otherwise be contributing to a healthy economy, entering civil service, or responsibly tending the home fires" (38). The role of literature and fiction within *Die Leute von Seldwyla* appears again and

Strapinski's performance is, at this point, more than just presenting himself as a count, or as a masculine man. It also involves a display of activeness that contrasts with an otherwise pervasive passivity in his character. Strapinski's level of self-determination and autonomy fluctuate throughout the narrative. At times he is a victim of circumstance, and then he appears to make clear decisions in order to maintain his façade. After Strapinski is outed by the Seldwylans, during his suicide journey into the winter night, the narrator paints him as a mere pawn in the game of life: "Und nun war er ein Betrüger geworden dadurch, daß die Torheit der Welt ihn in einem unbewachten und sozusagen wehrlosen Augenblicke überfallen und ihn zu ihrem Spielgesellen gemacht hatte" (305). Strapinski has fallen prey to the foolishness of the world. Foolishness personified overcomes Strapinski and forces him to play. And here all types of play combine in the word "Spielgeselle": Strapinski is forced to play a role, which in turn forces him to take a gamble. He finds himself in a community where men must play—or where in order to be a man one must play games. Whereas the required "play" of men in Goldach is understood as card games, gambling, etc., Strapinski's participation in this masculine culture is based on a different type of play. Much like his performance of wealth based on games of chance, Strapinski's play of masculinity goes beyond merely joining a round of *Skat*. His every action has become part of a game: he is playing all the time. As the "Spielgeselle" to the world's foolishness, Strapinski finds himself in a game/play [*Spiel*] that he cannot escape.[11] But he is not merely a victim either. From his passive position outside the ontological circle of men who are compelled to play together, Strapinski can initiate a different sort of game, namely a *Gesellschaftsspiel* not in the sense of a parlor

---

again as troubling the normal flow of life in Switzerland. Siegfried Mews describes it in the following terms: "Die fast ausschließlich negative Funktion der Literatur in den Seldwyla-Novellen beinhaltet natürlich keinen Angriff auf die (gute) Literatur selbst, sondern richtet sich gegen die Literatur als Quelle phantastischer, maßloser, abnormer Ideen und Ansprüche der fiktiven Charaktere und stellt damit ein falsches Verhältnis zur Literatur bloß" (403). Within Hart's and Mews' framing of the metafictional dynamics of the Seldwyla cycle, it would indeed seem that Strapinski is one of these figures whose relationship to bad literature/fictions needs to be straightened out. However, if we take that version of the story at face value, we quickly run up against the paradox that a fictional text suggests that people should not buy into fictional texts so easily—the same sort of paradox we encounter if we try to draw any lessons from *Don Quixote* or *Madame Bovary* in terms of modeling our lives according to novels, which is the very thing that causes their demise. An extended reflection on Nettchen that would do the figure more justice than I am able to do here would also look at how her performance of femininity coincides with Joan Riviere's discussion of women in positions of power in "Womanliness as a Masquerade."

[11] Walther Hahn develops the importance of play in *Kleider machen Leute*, albeit in a vein of literary scholarship that still sees itself as charged with upholding aesthetic standards, asking questions as to the merits of an author's literary production. Still, Hahn provides insights about the tension between "reality" and "play" that are pertinent to my discussion of the text. For example his claim that, "The structural function of the motif of play is very evident when Keller employs it at the focal or turning point of a story as he does in *Kleider machen Leute*. In this tale events slowly but definitely move toward a climax which is depicted by Keller in the form of a play" (54).

game, but as a game that place with society and social conventions. The fact that others tend to determine what Strapinski is (or is not) does not mean that he is a mere object to these forces, and yet this passive stance to the world saturates Strapinski's character to the point that he would rather leave himself to die out in the cold rather than to face the world after being exposed as a fraud.

Strapinski's scene of despair further helps to show just how closely passivity/agency and masculinity/non-masculinity are connected. During his moment of despair, Strapinski is compared to true criminals, all of them men:

> Wenn ein Fürst Land und Leute nimmt; wenn ein Priester die Lehre seiner Kirche ohne Überzeugung verkündet, aber die Güter seiner Pfründe mit Würde verzehrt; wenn ein dünkelvoller Lehrer die Ehren und Vorteile eines hohen Lehramtes innehat und genießt, ohne von der Höhe seiner Wissenschaft den mindesten Begriff zu haben und derselben auch nur den kleinsten Vorschub zu leisten; wenn ein Künstler ohne Tugend, mit leichtfertigem Tun und leerer Gaukelei sich in Mode bringt und Brot und Ruhm der wahren Arbeit vorwegstiehlt, oder wenn ein Schwindler, der einen großen Kaufmannsnamen geerbt oder erschlichen hat, durch seine Torheiten und Gewissenlosigkeiten Tausende um ihre Ersparnisse und Notpfennige bringt: so weinen alle diese nicht über sich, sondern erfreuen sich ihres Wohlseins und bleiben nicht einen Abend ohne aufheiternde Gesellschaft und gute Freunde.
> Unser Schneider aber weinte bitterlich über sich. (305-306)

The narrator presents a series of dubious figures, most of whom are in the business of presenting themselves as something that they are not. They benefit from the disconnect between outward appearances and inner being. And they all know the advantage that comes with having a name or title that endows them with the power to exploit this disparity. The series of subordinate clauses culminates in the second grammatical half of the long sentence after the colon. These conmen and men in power have no qualms about their despotic and deceitful ways. Again, Strapinski finds himself on the outside of a group of men. Real (evil) men don't cry. Strapinski cries. Real men spend their evenings surrounded by friends. Strapinski is alone in the woods at night. Not only does the passage underscore Strapinski's exclusion from another masculine circle, it more pointedly highlights Strapinski's lack of autonomy and intent. He has no ulterior motives—save his love for Nettchen and, at the beginning, his empty stomach. And even if the narrator's point here is to emphasize Strapinski's sense of regret and remorse, the passage still situates Strapinski in a passive stance to the world: a victim of circumstance after all who can only weep and who attempts to end his life when the going gets tough. In the sequence of figures presented here Strapinski appears as an outsider among outsiders.[12]

---

[12]   Wenzel Strapinski's outsider status has been a matter of concern for scholars interested in the social critique that may or may not inhere in Keller's tales. Erika Swales highlights the limits of a critique of bourgeois ideology in Keller's writings but emphasizes how he still brings those limits to the fore: "The cycle *Die Leute von Seldwyla* not only excels at tracing the constraints within bourgeois order, but also offers an acute critique of the anarchical – a sharply realistic grasp stresses the dreary material

Throughout the text, we see Strapinski primarily engage in just two modes of taking action: fleeing the scene or going with the flow. These two modes are construed as passive through the story's emphasis on Strapinski's lack of agency from his original flight from Seldwyla to his response to being exposed as a poor tailor. This lack is underscored in the final proclamation of his innocence, when a lawyer is called in to settle the matter of Nettchen's right to marry Strapinski despite her father's objections. He successfully argues that Strapinski never actually *did* anything. It was always the actions of others that led to this case of mistaken identity:

> Was die Ereignisse in Goldach betraf, so wies der Advokat nach, daß Wenzel sich eigentlich gar nie selbst für einen Grafen ausgegeben, sondern daß ihm dieser Rang von andern gewaltsam verliehen worden; daß er schriftlich auf allen vorhandenen Belegstücken mit seinem wirklichen Namen Wenzel Strapinski ohne jede Zutat sich unterzeichnet hatte und somit kein anderes Vergehen vorlag, als daß er eine törichte Gastfreundschaft genossen hatte, die ihm nicht gewährt worden wäre, wenn er nicht in jenem Wagen angekommen wäre und jener Kutscher nicht jenen schlechten Spaß gemacht hätte. (320)

The argument puts the blame on dumb luck and the driver of the carriage, who told everyone that Strapinski was in fact Graf Strapinski. The lawyer simultaneously restores Strapinski's moral and legal standing, while reiterating his passivity.[13] An image of Strapinski is emerging that presents him as a fundamentally ambiguous character and that ambiguity appears as a source of conflict between him and the world he lives in. His passivity seems to exclude him from joining the ranks of active men, except for when he can conceal that passivity. However, that access is also only gained due to his passive stance to the world. All he has to do is show up at the right time and place wearing the clothes that he is naturally compelled to wear and suddenly he is an object of admiration and desire in Goldach. Of course, it is not as simple as this, as is often the case when inversion, perversion and identity coincide.

If we understand Strapinski's perversion to merely be his habit of dressing up and thereby transgressing lines of class identity, then the image of his life together with Nettchen at the end of the story would certainly seem to show a person who has found harmony in his outer appearance and his true identity. Strapinski no longer needs to live

conditions of outsiderdom" (39). Swales depicts Keller as decidedly critical of bourgeois structures, but the nuance in her argument is significant. Keller is no champion of the outsider, the monstrous, or the perverse. He might use outsiders as his protagonists, but their status as marginalized figures is not something that Keller naively celebrates. In this sense, the narrative trajectory of *Kleider machen Leute* does seem to follow that of the other stories in *Die Leute von Seldwyla*, in which the misguided protagonist is straightened out by the end. My analysis, however, attempts to complicate such a reading, by showing how Strapinski might actually maintain his outsider essence (his perversion) in the end, even if he is no longer readable as such.

[13] Wagner-Egelhaaf points out astutely the connection between Strapinski's passivity and his melancholy. Her analysis of *Kleider machen Leute* makes it clear that his identity as a melancholic implies a fundamental passive attitude towards the world (488).

in towns with populations large enough to afford him a degree of anonymity so that he can walk around in fabulous outfits. He is now responsible for supplying Seldwyla (and later Goldach) with all manner of clothes. He has fully assumed his role as the man that makes the clothes who make the men. And yet, evidence for another diagnosis has mounted over the course of this analysis, namely, the diagnosis that Strapinski's perversion is actually his passivity. This framing of Strapinski's abnormality does not invalidate the prior diagnosis; however, it does drastically relativize the image of bourgeois unequivocalness that we encounter as the tale concludes.[14] For what we might actually be witnessing is not a sterilized and purified bourgeois family life free of inversions, perversions, and transgressive behavior, but rather a very skilled pervert who can no longer be read as such because he has mastered a perfect performance. In this sense, Strapinski's cross-dressing persists. His flawless performance of masculinity does away with the difference between active masculinity in drag and an actual unequivocal, unified masculine identity, which is to say that he can no longer be read at all. Rather than being cured of some unnamed pathological condition through a harsh outing and a long night of confessional therapy, the traumatic events of Strapinski's engagement party teaches him the real threat of both reading and misreading—and to avoid ever having to face that threat again, the best strategy is to render reading moot by becoming an even more convincing performer.[15]

* * *

This reading of Wenzel Strapinski as a cross-dresser who masters his perversion by learning to integrate it into his everyday life implies that the text is more devious than its author would have liked. However, representing inverted relationships and worlds often

---

[14] I borrow this idea of bourgeois unequivocalness from Frank Habermann, who mentions it in his discussion of a certain tendency towards conformity in Strapinski's character that contributes to an image of the tailor as a successful convert to bourgeois subjectivity in the end: "[Strapinski] lässt sich ebenso als Repräsentation der *Notwendigkeit von Eindeutigkeit* der Zeichen für die bürgerliche Gesellschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts deuten, in der ein mehrwertiges, nicht mit sich selbst identisches Zeichen schließlich immer eindeutig identifiziert werden muss" (109). Without putting it in terms of pathology and perversion, Habermann nevertheless speaks to the problem of Strapinski's deviant status. As soon as Strapinski accepts his new identity as a count in Goldach, he is at odds with what Habermann calls the bourgeois necessity of unequivocalness. In other words, Strapinski's perversion also involves a deviation from the singularity of identity and meaning demanded by bourgeois culture.

[15] To be sure, other factors can contribute to ensuring a convincing drag performance. One might think, for example, of the emperor's performance in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale from the mid-nineteenth century. The opposition between political, active masculinity and aesthetic, passive femininity has been deftly demonstrated by Andreas Kraß's essay "Ikonographie. Der Kaiser als Queen." Kraß's presentation of the emperor's affinity to fine clothes as an effemination can easily be extended to Strapinski's proclivity for noble attire.

involves authors losing control of their figures, the boundaries of irony, and the path back to normality. Keller's tale certainly encourages a pathological reading of Strapinski, but in a straighter interpretation of the story he overcomes his pathological state. Such a happy end is hard to swallow given the story's repeated instance on the importance of appearance over essence from its title to the couple's long-term plan to stick it to the Seldwylans. *Kleider machen Leute*, instead, fuses together inverted world tropes with a pathological narrative without giving way to a crystallization of a new identity/pathology. The ending can thus be understood as the ultimate inverted world in which normal life (as regulated by social conventions and economic systems) is actually full of perversions—a perfect performance of "realness."

Unlike the other journeys through inverted worlds that we have seen thus far, *Kleider machen Leute* does not provide us with a wily and subversive fool figure who is better able to navigate through the inverted world. Instead, Strapinski's encounter with inversion is clearly out of his control. His lack of control contributes to his depiction as a deviant figure. At the same time, any encounter with the inverted world carries with it the risk of permanently confusing how we read the world. In this sense, the various stages of inversion that Strapinski undergoes require us to question notions of authenticity, truth, and health. As with Giglio's cure in *Prinzessin Brambilla*, Strapinski's transformation from a perverted transient to an upstanding citizen entails multiple inversions. Holding these different aspects together is a structure of inversion that supports different forms throughout *Kleider machen Leute* from inverted syntax to carnival parades. These inversions are often meant to undo perversions, even as they utilize the same mechanism involved in the perversions themselves. That is to say, the Seldwylans' carnival parade puts dressing up on display in order to ultimately denounce it. They make Strapinski's inverted performance legible as a perversion of social norms, while enforcing what must be understood in this context as a socially acceptable relationship to clothing, namely, that your clothes match your identity (e.g., social rank, gender, age, ethnicity). Otherwise, transgressing norms is only permitted during specific, exceptional times, such as during festivals like carnival. This temporal limit is made all the more spectacular in Keller's story when the strategy used to enforce the dress codes is itself a costume parade put on by people who make clothes by trade. Thus, *Kleider machen Leute* stages another performance of an inverted world as part of the carnival tradition, while demonstrating the dangers (for the pervert himself) of allowing that carnival flexibility to seep over into daily life.

The entire world of Keller's *Die Leute von Seldwyla* cycle depends upon a social order that leaves little room for deviance—even as deviations often constitute the peripeteia that drive Keller's plots. The fictional town of Seldwyla is an almost timeless

place, located "irgendwo in der Schweiz" as Keller tells us in the introduction to the first volume of the collection (7). Personal intrigue, rather than political or historical events, occupies the spotlight most of the time. In this highly structured and quaint setting, it comes as no surprise that aberrations pose a particularly harrowing threat.[16] On a social level, these deviations might be understood as eccentric behavior, quasi-criminal schemes, or acting upon a star-crossed desire.[17] *Kleider machen Leute* not only portrays conflicts that ensue from disrupting the social order, it also demonstrates how reading itself is subject to deviation. It presents multiple instances of misreading that add to Wenzel Strapinski's debacle. Indeed, reading signs the wrong way, as with fostering multiple possible meanings, must be corrected so that the healthy, profitable, and true state of the world might be reestablished. And yet, that concluding image of a "heile Welt" cannot be trusted, especially in a tale in which the final line emphasizes the main characters' unrelenting ill will towards the people who "read" and exposed Strapinski. Thus, the ultimate revenge of born cross-dresser would be to bring reading itself to an end—even within a medium that relies upon the self-perpetuity of reading.

Reading inversions leads to misreading, both for the figures in the story as well as for the readers outside of it. Given the prevalence of misreading throughout the novella, it is not surprising that the reader is also encouraged to misread parts of the story. To return just briefly to the most blatant example, the inverted saying, "Leute machen Kleider," if considered in passing, seem to be an untroubling aesthetic counterweight to the story's title—a nice little play on words. When the inverted version appears, it balances the carnival procession, making a circular figure that begins with the backwards expression and ends with the straight version. It all seems too perfect. Indeed, this symmetrical image is deceptive. Merely changing the order of the words does more than turn the meaning around. While the implications of "Kleider machen Leute" at least seem apparent because of the phrase's folkloric currency, "Leute machen Kleider" is not so obvious. It does not (necessarily) mean the opposite of the original saying, namely, that appearance is not everything. Likewise, "Kleider machen Leute" does not mean

---

16   Even in the introduction Keller clues us in on the narrative principle guiding the stories collected in *Die Leute von Seldwyla*: "In einer so lustigen und seltsamen Stadt kann es an allerhand seltsamen Geschichten und Lebensläufen nicht fehlen, da Müßiggang aller Laster Anfang ist. Doch nicht solche Geschichten, wie sie in dem beschriebenen Charakter von Seldwyla liegen, will ich eigentlich in diesem Büchlein erzählen, sondern einige sonderbare Abfällsel, die so zwischendurch passierten, gewissermaßen ausnahmsweise, und doch auch gerade nur zu Seldwyla vor sich gehen konnten" (10). The stories involve exceptional figures that do not share in the common character of Seldwyla and its inhabitants—and yet, the narrator also points to a paradox here: deviations are unique to the system from which they deviate. These stories could only take place (as deviations) in Seldwyla.

17   This list corresponds respectively to Frau Amrain's son's cross-dressing from *Frau Regel Amrain und ihr Jüngster*, John Kabys' attempt to usurp an inheritance in *Der Schmied seines Glückes*, and Keller's rewriting of Shakespeare's tragedy into modern-day Switzerland in *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*.

appearances can be deceiving—instead, the phrase is a proclamation of just how important appearance is in "making" a person. The fact that humans make those clothes that in turn "make" people does not actually pose a paradox. The fact that people make the clothes that make the man only means that appearances are subject to human actions, which should maybe not be downplayed. Read together the two phrases lead to the shocking revelation that "Leute machen Leute"—a radical tautology given the fact that the syntactical inversion disrupts a simple understanding of both phrases so that it becomes impossible to think of either as "normal." Moreover, with this phrase, the inversion of the words demands the reader's participation in the practice of misreading, thereby making inversion part of the interface between reader and text. And so to return to one of the many questions that opened this chapter, we might say now that Strapinski's guilt and agency are dependent upon the reader's own guilty pleasure in indulging the text's play with inversions, thereby exposing us to the same reprimand as Wenzel: "Keine Romane mehr!" is just as much directed at the readers as it is the overly imaginative tailor—and it is just as impossible for us to refrain from reading as it is for him to give up cross-dressing.

Act 5: Staged Revolutions: Theater, Law, and Desire in Arthur Schnitzler's *Der grüne Kakadu*

> "Even more suspect than that, the invert is a figure that crosses
> class barriers with equanimity to attend to his sexual needs."
> —"The Urning and His Own," Yvonne Ivory (339)

The last act of inversion in the nineteenth century that this dissertation examines is a one-act play by Arthur Schnitzler, *Der grüne Kakadu*. In many ways Schnitzler's 1898 text brings us full circle, employing many devices of theatrical inversion that we saw at work in Tieck's *Die verkehrte Welt*: plays-within-plays-within-plays, falling out of character, parabasis, and others. But here at the end of the nineteenth century the proscenium stage is nowhere to be found, and the revolution is not displaced to a mythological and fantastical Mount Parnassus; the boundaries between theater world and real world have become all the more permeable—an instability and indeterminacy like the one we find in Hoffmann's world, where carnival, the theater, and a fantastic fairytale realm merge. Schnitzler's one-act play does not, however, involve wizards or magical inverting pools. It is set in a very specific historical time and place: July 14th, 1789, Paris—the day that the Bastille was seized. The setting has strong implications for thinking about what happens when it becomes impossible to distinguish between play and (historical) reality. While this tension certainly bears on each text discussed thus far, *Der grüne Kakadu* brings to a point how theatricality serves as a catalyst for inversion with far-reaching effects when it comes to the relationship between actions and words. Again, we find a world turned up-side-down through the theatrical's power to *undo* things with words. But unlike in Büchner's rendition of language's theatrical potential with Valerio running the show, *Der grüne Kakadu* does not include a fool figure who doubles as puppet master. The theater seems to be a force of its own that surpasses the power of those characters who we might think ought to be capable of reeling it back in. And finally, Schnitzler presents yet again the power of playing a part and dressing up, along with the risks entailed in a character subjecting herself or himself to the theatrical order of things. Instead of an ambiguous happy end, Schnitzler's play closes with the outbreak of revolution.[1]

Given these corresponding elements, *Der grüne Kakadu* certainly lends itself to a concluding analysis of the inverted world in nineteenth-century German-language

---

[1] This ending is therefore the beginning of another inverted world. Walter Hinderer makes this connection apparent: "Der Anfang der Französischen Revolution, in der die Bürger gegen die Herrschaft des Adels antreten, wird mit den Saturnalien in der Wirtsstube konfrontiert, in der die 'verkehrte Welt' bereits im Spiel vorweggenommen wird" (18).

literature. Even without recourse to the earlier instances of inversion, the text presents complex and varied inversions. Social rank gets inverted along with meaning and spectator/actor positions. Then there is the grand political inversion known as the French Revolution, which erupts amidst these other inversions. In the world of *Der grüne Kakadu*, low-class actors play criminals in nightly performances for an aristocratic audience, who come to the Tavern of the Green Cockatoo for the thrill of being berated, all in the name of good fun—that is, up until the night of July 14th, when the protective boundary of "good fun" comes crashing down with historical seriousness. The revolution coincides with an inversion of *Spaß* and *Ernst* that has less to do with the transcending power of irony that Schlegel would assign such a sublation, in which the poetic valences between being jocular versus being earnest elevate our minds to a higher level of consciousness. It has more to do with disillusionment in dogmatic thinking, be it revolutionary, aesthetic, or otherwise, and there is nothing so lofty as the "Ironie der Ironie" in the play's depiction of a thoroughly theatricalized world.[2] Instead, we seem to be dealing with a more practical stance regarding the fundamental indeterminability between *Spaß* and *Ernst*. Schnitzler's earlier play, *Paracelsus*, deals with the similar confusion of playing a part and being/having a unique, stable identity. The play about a quack-doctor-hypnotist from the sixteenth century provides in just a few lines a powerfully condensed version of what is at stake in this interplay:

> Es fließen ineinander Traum und Wachen,
> Wahrheit und Lüge. Sicherheit ist nirgends.
> Wir wissen nichts von andern, nichts von uns;
> Wir spielen immer, wer es weiß ist klug. (498)

Even with their puckish overtones, the lines are more foreboding than apologetic. There is no stability. There is no self-knowledge. There is only play. Only someone who has

---

2   The reference here being to Friedrich Schlegel's essay "Über die Unverständlichkeit," in which he elaborates on different types of irony, ending with the "Ironie der Ironie": "Im allgemeinen ist das wohl die gründlichste Ironie der Ironie, daß man sie doch eben auch überdrüssig wird, wenn sie uns überall und immer wieder geboten wird. Was wir aber hier zunächst unter Ironie der Ironie verstanden wissen wollen, das entsteht auf mehr als einem Wege. Wenn man ohne Ironie von der Ironie redet, wie es soeben der Fall war; wenn man mit Ironie von einer Ironie redet, ohne zu merken, daß man sich zu eben der Zeit in einer andren viel auffallenderen Ironie befindet; wenn man nicht wieder aus der Ironie herauskommen kann, wie es in diesem Versuch über die Unverständlichkeit zu sein scheint; wenn die Ironie Manier wird, und so den Dichter gleichsam wieder ironiert; wenn man Ironie zu einem überflüssigen Taschenbuche versprochen hat, ohne seinen Vorrat vorher zu überschlagen und nun wider Willen Ironie machen muß, wie ein Schauspielkünstler der Leibschmerzen hat; wenn die Ironie wild wird, und sich gar nicht mehr regieren läßt" (369). The irony of irony as he describes it entails a treacherous spiral of irony from which one cannot escape. The self-reflexive play that Schlegel engages in here is particularly germane given that Schnitzler also portrays a world spinning out of control due to the overextension of the theatrical. But, again, Schlegel's performative irony aside, the Romantic philosopher still sees this *mise en abîme* as somehow redemptive and a source of spiritual cultivation.

grasped this fact can be considered "smart." This kind of intelligence seems to be more a survival skill rather than an added dimension of particularly poetic souls. Thus, the ironic inversion described in these lines and at work in *Der grüne Kakadu* seems significantly detached from the notions of romantic irony at the beginning of the century, while still dealing in the sort of intricate layering of meaning, identity, and contradictions that characterizes the "permanente Parekbase," as Friedrich Schlegel calls it in his *Fragment 668* (585). All of this indicates a shift in the function of inversion over the course of the century away from the lighthearted folk tradition and the ephemeral vacillations of the Romantics towards something more concrete, formidable, and historically troubling— and yet Schnitzler's play is not a tragedy but a "grotesque," a sort of appalling comedy that provokes uncomfortable laughter.

Complicating the setting and the inversions of *Der grüne Kakadu* is the relationship between identity, acts, and the law. The play's premise makes this issue particularly perplexing: The actors working at the cabaret tavern are playing criminals. What does that mean precisely? What does it require of them? Of their audience? And what does it say about "being" a criminal and "being" an actor? The tension between the personal significance of acts and their political significance becomes problematic in light of the murder at the end of the play, the authenticity of which is forever in question even while the series of events that it unleashes have dramatic consequences on a historical scale. In addition to the questions raised by this very set up, the chapter enquires into how the presence of a law enforcement representative complicates matters, especially in terms of how the law relates to theater. The characters of Grain and Gaston as well as the *Kommissär* demonstrate the primacy of theatrical performance over essential notions of authenticity and the capitulation of the law in the face of the theater gone wild. By way of conclusion, the chapter looks to theoretical notions of simulation and drag to discuss how Schnitzler's text might complicate ideas about the differences between imitation and the real thing, in ways that echo Plato's warnings about mimesis in the *polis*. *Der grüne Kakadu* does not uphold the sanctions that Plato's Socrates would have put in place, but rather demonstrates theatricality's power over politics and history.[3]

---

[3] To be sure, other interpretations of Schnitzler's work cast this capitulation of politics under the force of play as more of a cautionary tale. Carl Schorske, for example, sees the play as a warning against upper-class decadence: "Too much dedication to the life of the senses has destroyed in the upper class the power to distinguish politics from play, sexual aggression from social revolution, art from reality. Irrationality reigns supreme over the whole" (12). Schorske does not take into account in his brief analysis of *Der grüne Kakadu* that it is not only the upper class that cannot distinguish between the two. As I will claim, this very lack of distinguishing between politics and play appears more as a revolutionary opportunity than a sign of the aristocracy's detachment from reality.

Multiple Identities

Der grüne Kakadu invites a reflection on what is at stake when multiple identities are the norm. There is little that is self-same in the play, and when something does seem to "be itself," it must be treated with the greatest suspicion. This state of affairs has everything to do with the play's setting in a tavern that doubles as a theater. Prospère has refashioned his old theater troupe.[4] Instead of putting on classical proscenium productions, they now play criminals before an audience of aristocrats, who come for the thrill of slumming. The premise of the play-within-a-play already means that the figures are going to be switching between theatrical and non-theatrical identities. On top of that, the night of July 14th, 1789 involves a sequence of events that demonstrates the power and danger of playing with multiple identities. To be sure, part of the entertainment for the upper-class comes from not always being able to tell the difference between acting and reality. The indeterminacy is all fun and games until on the evening of the revolution a murder takes place that even Prospère cannot sort out.

In order to facilitate a discussion of the play, it will be helpful to take a moment to lay out the structure and plot of *Der grüne Kakadu* in a bit more detail. The one-act might be divided for heuristic purposes into three parts: (1) the preparations for the evening show, (2) the arrival of the actors and audience, (3) the murder of the Herzog von Cadignan. During part one, Prospère welcomes various unexpected guests into the Tavern of the Green Cockatoo. The first guests are Grasset and his friend Lebrêt. Grasset was a member of Prospère's troupe until recently when he gave up acting for politics. He and his friend are in search of wine before joining up with other revolutionaries. The next visitor is the *Kommissär*, who has come to scope out the tavern due to concerns that it is harboring revolutionaries and since it is, in general, a house of ill repute. The *Kommissär* leaves (to return later) as Grain enters, who is seeking employment in Prospère's tavern as an actor though he has no experience acting. Grain is an actual criminal freshly released from prison, where he became acquainted with a former member of Prospère's troupe, Gaston. As Prospère and Grain discuss the latter's sordid past, the regular actors begin to arrive followed by the aristocrats. During this second part, we meet Henri, Prospère's protégé and most prized actor. He announces that he has married Léocadie, an actress at the *Comédie*, and will be leaving Paris with her to settle down in the countryside. This night is to be his last performance—and he promises it will be an unforgettable one. Among the aristocrats, there are a couple first-timers: A young nobleman Albin Chevalier

---

[4] Schnitzler's theater director obviously shares the name with Shakespeare's island sorcerer Prospero from *The Tempest*, whose manipulation of the shipwrecked crew certainly involves elements of stagecraft and directing.

de la Tremouille, who is utterly perplexed by the ambiguity of the performance, and Séverine, the Marquise, who in contrast is completely delighted by the spectacle. Mini-scenes unfold with various actors stepping into the proverbial spotlight, playing thieves, arsonists, prostitutes and pimps. Even Grain gets to tell the story of how he murdered his aunt. Finally, Henri returns and recounts the murder he claims to have committed that evening. He tells of having caught Léocadie at the theater with another man, the Duke of Cadignan, and then killing him there on the spot. The tale is not received equally by the audience and actors. Prospère himself seems to think Henri is actually confessing to a real murder. In the confusion, Prospère tells Henri that Léocadie was in fact cheating on him (another questionable contestation), so that when the Duke does enter the tavern, Henri lunges after him and stabs him. At this point, Grasset has returned to report that the Bastille was stormed and the revolution has begun. The play ends with the Marquise leading the crowd out into the streets shouting "Es lebe die Freiheit! Es lebe die Freiheit!" (551).

With the basic plot in place, it quickly becomes clear how the multiple identities of figures plunge the tavern into chaos, or rather, how the tavern itself provides room for multiple identities and chaos. To begin with, the Green Cockatoo has a double identity: tavern and theater, making the very setting not self-identical. While the stage directions describe a typical tavern with tables, lamps, and a bar with wine barrels, the first scene between Prospère, Grasset (the actor-turned-revolutionary-demagogue-philosopher), and Lebrêt (his lackey friend) reveals the identity of the space to be highly questionable. Lebrêt, who has never been to the Green Cockatoo, does not immediately grasp the duplicity and asks, "Ist hier ein Theater?" (518). Grasset begins to explain, "Beruhige dich…es ist wahr; ich habe hier gespielt denn es ist kein gewöhnliches Wirtshaus…es ist eine Verbrecherherberge…" (518). Grasset's reassignment of the tavern as a den of thieves is necessarily confusing to someone who does not know that the entire tavern hosts a theatrical spectacle in which actors play criminals for an audience of aristocrats. The clarification that the tavern is a "refuge for criminals" (*Verbrecherherberge*), remains ambiguous: Is Grasset referring to the actors playing criminals or, as a revolutionary, to the aristocrats who criminally oppress the people? The answer is, of course, both and neither, depending on who and when you ask. The combination of tavern and theater together with a site where criminals, revolutionaries, and aristocrats comingle makes the setting a hotbed for inversion: Upstanding citizens can quickly become scoundrels; aristocrats slip into revolutionary roles; and innocent actors become real criminals.

The Green Cockatoo collects even more names as the preparations for the evening continue, as when the *Kommissär* enters the tavern and interrogates Prospère as to the

precise nature of his establishment. The theater spectacle itself is under criminal suspicion. The dialogue begins with another clarification:

> KOMMISSÄR: Die Behörde will Klarheit haben, was bei Ihnen eigentlich vorgeht. Seit einigen Wochen –
>
> WIRT: Es ist ein Vergnügungslokal, Herr Kommissär, nichts weiter. (520)

Prospère emphasizes the single-use identity of the locale as merely a place for pleasure and entertainment. The *Kommissär* counters with the accusation that the tavern has another use: "Ein Schauplatz wüster Orgien" (520). Immediately, the tavern takes on an erotic charge that will carry throughout the rest of the play. But it is less the presence of prostitutes (even if they are actresses playing prostitutes—the line between the two being fairly indistinct in the play[5]) that threatens law and order in Paris. The tavern might double as a brothel, but the greater risk it poses resides in its duplicity. The *Kommissär* is right to be concerned about its potential to encourage rebellion, yet it is not so much the site's political character as it is its theatricality that gives reason to investigate. Prospère tries to calm the *Kommissär* by insisting on the innocuous nature of his tavern: "Es wird hier einfach Theater gespielt – das ist alles" (521). But, of course, that is precisely what makes the Green Cockatoo a dangerous place.

The confusion and suspicion in the first scenes establish the tavern as a site for criminal activity in multiple registers: Actors play criminals; a criminal wants to play an actor playing a criminal; and the revolutionary sentiment expressed by the actors is considered criminal. And yet, the tavern is not really a refuge for criminals, nor a meeting point for actual revolutionaries—or rather what is potentially dangerous is not the presence of "true" criminals or "true" revolutionary sentiments, but rather the fact that the space makes it impossible to differentiate between true criminals and people playing criminals. It provides a space for people to play out identity crises and is itself an ambiguous hybrid of a theater and a tavern.

In this space that is at once a theater, tavern, and site for criminal (revolutionary) activity, holding on to one's identity becomes a near impossible task.[6] Even from the beginning it proves necessary to firmly establish one's position in the Green Cockatoo. Not only does Grasset have to explain to Lêbret what sort of place the tavern is, but he

---

[5] And not just in this play—there is an entire tradition of equating actresses and prostitutes that dates back to at least the eighteenth century. The conflation was particularly common in France, as Thomas Wynn indicates in "Prostitutes and Performances in Eighteenth-Century Paris." Wynn's central piece of evidence is a prostitutes' ballet from 1741, *L'Art de foutre, ou Paris foutant*. The connection between the Tavern of the Green Cockatoo and Le Chat noir also lies close at hand (Perlmann 54).

[6] Klaus Kilian draws attention to this discrepancy between the décor and the language of the first scene. He underscores the apparent necessity the characters feel to secure their roles in the indeterminate setting (66-67).

also has to establish his new role in a place where he once answered to Prospère. Grasset reminds Prospère of their new positions: "Ich bin der Gast – du der Wirt" (516). As a guest, he expects Prospère to serve him. No longer an actor in Prospère's troupe, he is not subject to Prospère's direction. Grasset's affirmation attests to an anxiety surrounding shifting identities. But words alone do not suffice to secure his new status, even as the theatrical setting encourages the primacy of the performative over reality. In the same way that Oberon is understood by the audience to be invisible when he says, "I am invisible," so too is Grasset's line meant to be more than just descriptive, but enacts in its enunciation the differentiation of roles that Grasset wants substantiated. The alignment of identity and roles must be adjusted by language, even while language proves to be just as fickle as the Green Cockatoo itself. In fact, the special power of theatrical lines to function as performative speech acts falters in this first scene. Having renounced the theater for politics, his descriptive assertion no longer has a transformative effect. As the scene continues, Prospère's impertinence mounts. He is not acting like a deferent host. Grasset's words fail to have any affect, even though he does succeed in getting some wine. Still, by the end of the first scene it is apparent that no one's identity can be taken for granted in the tavern, especially not based on something as malleable as language. Labels for identity and the corresponding actions do not align, in this space where actions do speak louder than words.

All of this foreplay takes place before the evening entertainment commences, which is itself a theater performance. Prospère's actors, as they arrive, enter the tavern more or less in character. They are also more or less talented, and Prospère is quick to deliver criticism and advice as to how they can improve their performance. As the first aristocrats start to show up, the seasoned guests have to explain the set-up to the young, naïve Albin. His companion François tells him: "Denk doch, daß alles Spaß ist. Und dabei gibt es Orte, wo du ganz ähnliche Dinge im Ernst hören kannst" (530-31). The conceit that the abrasive and insulting behavior of Prospère and his actors is just fun and games is perpetually accompanied by the threat of authenticity. But this sort of "living theater" with no raised stage means that the audience is also complicit in the *Spaß*, or *Ernst* as the case may be, meaning that they, too, are able to slip in and out of roles, but are also all the more at risk of getting caught up in the undecidability that ensues. Whether an aristocrat or a member of the cabaret troupe, any given individual is successful as a character only to the extent that he or she can convincingly perform a role. The corollary to this parameter for acting is that as observer, a character is only protected by the veneer of "play" to the extent that they can distinguish between what belongs to the theatrical spectacle and what belongs to the off-stage world. And if the world is a stage, then what sort of protection is available if any at all?

Like the tavern itself and the majority of the characters, the murder at the end of the play invites multiple, conflicting interpretations. On a literal level, the murder is duplicitous. It occurs twice: Once in retrospect, when Henri returns to the tavern and delivers his monologue, in which he imparts the events leading up to the act of murder with the people gathered in the tavern; then again, when the Duke of Cadignan enters the tavern and Henri attacks him. Beyond this literal level, the murder is multiplied through the various ways different characters interpret it. What first is presented as a personal act of vengeance quickly takes on other meanings. The murder is at once criminal, revolutionary, erotic, and theatrical. While the significance varies, the different meanings do not mutually exclude each other, as the Green Cockatoo holds open a space in which the hermeneutic circle need not always be closed, where there is no need to enforce a singularity of meaning or bourgeois unequivocalness.

The murder's most immediate coding is as an act of jealousy, a crime of passion. Henri's declamation explicitly frames the murder as such. He tells the audience in the tavern how he accompanied Léocadie to the theater and then waited outside her dressing room only to catch her with the Duke of Cadignan:

> HENRI. […] Ich stehe vor ihrer Garderobe, ich lehne mein Ohr an die Tür und höre Flüstern. Ich kann kein Wort unterscheiden…das Flüstern verstummt…ich stoße die Tür auf…(*er brüllt wie ein wildes Tier*) – es war der Herzog von Cadignan, und ich habe ihn ermordet. – (547)

But Henri performs his role as "Verbrecher aus Leidenschaft" (545) all too well. With his monologue he manages to convince Prospère that he actually did kill the Duke, which in turn adds another level of confusion to the act, for Prospère then casts Henri as a real murderer. In the heat of the moment, Prospère divulges the supposed fact that Léocadie was actually unfaithful and that her lover was Cadignan. The theater director's reaction codes the act as criminal, while contributing to Henri's jealous fervor. Henri is so confused by Prospère's reaction that he falls out of character. To be sure, this is just one of several mistaken acts, in which characters mistake the theatrical performance for an actual (criminal in this case) act. So when the Duke does enter the tavern, Henri is ready to kill him (again) out of this newfound, second wave of jealousy. This time the audience members see the act before their eyes:

> (*Henri stürzt wie ein Wütender auf den Herzog und stößt ihm den Dolch in den Hals*.)
>
> KOMMISSÄR (*steht auf*). Das geht zu weit! –
>
> ALBIN. Er blutet!
>
> ROLLIN. Hier ist ein Mord geschehen!
>
> SÉVERINE. Der Herzog stirbt! (550)

Henri appears to have really done it this time. But even as he commits the murder in the tavern, its significance as a criminal act by a jealous husband is overwhelmed by other competing meanings.

During the second performance of murder, the act is mistaken as a revolutionary act. By the time the Duke enters the tavern, the revolution has already broken loose, and Grasset has announced the overthrow of the *ancien régime*. The revolution intervenes at the precise moment when the confusion as to whether or not Henri actually killed the Duke is causing panic. Grasset immediately believes Prospère when he tells him it is true and claims Henri as a friend of the revolution:

> GRASSET. Henri – du sollst von nun an mein Freund sein. Es lebe die Freiheit! Es lebe die Freiheit! (551)

The murder that Henri presented as an enraged act of revenge in his monologue makes him a hero in Grasset's eyes because he killed an aristocrat. The murderous act that follows in the tavern is thus already prepared as revolutionary. It becomes the sign of a new order.

Reassigned as revolutionary, the murder loses its criminal character. But the shifting connotations work in both directions. The revolution also takes on other meanings. Foremost, it gains an even stronger theatrical character by appropriating this act. The theatrical connotation of the revolution begins early in the play with Grasset, a former actor, appearing as a proud revolutionary who boasts of his own greatness on the stage of politics. Now the revolution appears to accumulate momentum inside the theater-tavern thanks to a murder that was not politically motivated, a murder that is moreover based on a theatrical act in an underground cabaret. Simultaneously, the revolutionary crowd succeeds in recasting the act so that it is no longer criminal or even personal. When Léocadie enters to find that Henri has committed murder, the tragic love scene is quickly pushed aside by a revolutionary speech:

> LÉOCADIE. Laßt mich hier herein! Ich will zu meinem Mann! (S*ie kommt nach vorne, sieht, schreit auf.*) Wer hat das getan? Henri! (*Henri schaut sie an.*)

> LÉOCADIE. Warum hast du das getan?

> HENRI. Warum?

> LÉOCADIE. Ja, ja, ich weiß warum. Meinetwegen, Nein, nein, sag' nicht meinetwegen. Soviel bin ich mein Lebtag nicht wert gewesen.

> GRASSET (*beginnt eine Rede*). Bürger von Paris, wir wollen unsern Sieg feiern. Der Zufall hat uns auf dem Weg durch die Straßen von Paris zu diesem angenehmen Wirt geführt. Es hat sich nicht schöner treffen können. Nirgends kann der Ruf: "Es lebe die Freiheit!" schöner klingen als an der Leiche eines Herzogs. (551)

In short, the revolution steals the show. [7]

While the act of murder seems to lose personal significance for Henri through the revolutionary appropriation, it only continues to gain erotic significance. Already during the retelling, the Marquise Séverine latches on to the titillating tale of passionate revenge. She wants the dirty details, "Bitte, lieber Marquis, fragen Sie den Mann, wie er seine Frau erwischt hat…oder ich frag' ihn selbst" (546). The sultry scene speaks to her more than the bloody murder, though obviously the two are fundamentally connected. Violence, sexual excitement, and revolutionary enthusiasm intertwine when Henri stabs the Duke. The Marquise appears even more stimulated and joins the crowd with her cheers of "Es lebe die Freiheit!" The Marquise then makes her exit at the head of the procession of nobles joining the revolutionary mob. She calls out to Rollin, her poet-lover, just before the closing lines of the play:

> SÉVERINE (*an der Spitze der Adeligen, dem Ausgange zu*). Rollin, warten Sie heut Nacht vor meinem Fenster. Ich werfe den Schlüssel hinunter wie neulich – wir wollen eine schöne Stunde haben – ich fühle mich angenehm erregt.
>
> (*Rufe: Es lebe die Freiheit! Es lebe Henri! Es lebe Henri*) (551)[8]

The Marquise's parting words capture the erotic potential of the revolution as it pulls her out into the streets—or she it. For Séverine, the revolution does not threaten her social position. Instead, it gets her into the mood. Leading up to this final moment, the sexual content of the play has been limited to innuendos and dramatic scenes between actors playing pimps and prostitutes, scenes in which the Marquise gladly participates. Certainly, the murder is charged with the erotic tension of a cuckold's tale, but the Marquise's open and untroubled desire emphasizes even more the interplay between violence, desire, politics, and theater. Perhaps more than any other figure, the Marquise embraces a theatricality that holds open the erotic potential of revolution. Indeed, she seems to never stop playing and thus to understand the lesson from *Paracelsus* better than any of the other characters: "Wir spielen immer, wer es weiß ist klug." Her concept of identity is itself revolutionary in various respects, but in particular because she is not bound to an extra-theatrical self-same image of herself.[9]

---

[7] See Franz Norbert Mennemeier's "Kritik der Revolution" for an extensive discussion of the way in which the final act of murder is appropriated for the political agenda of the revolutionaries (263).

[8] The final image of the Marquise leading the revolutionary procession suggests another inverted world, in which the revolution is not lead by Marianne in tatters but by an aristocratic woman. Erhard Friedrichsmeyer goes so far as to claim that processions led by women are traditionally a sign of a degraded human order (221).

[9] Herbert Singer also notes this tendency in Schnitzler's work to valorize figures who embrace theatricality: "Erst denen, die ihre Rolle, wohl wissend, was es mit ihr auf sich hat, weiterspielen, bemüht, sie mit Anstand zu Ende zu bringen oder gar mit ihren Wissen den Verblendeten zu helfen, nur denen gesteht Schnitzler Würde, ja Weisheit zu" (64).

In claiming that the representation of the Marquise might be seen as something other than sexist it must be said that Schnitzler's reputation for portraying women is highly disputed. His attitudes towards women, both as conveyed through his biography and in his writing, have been variously portrayed by scholars as ranging from misogynistic and lustful to sympathetic and emancipatory. Whereas Ruth Klüger ultimately insists that Schnitzler depicts women as unconscious (knocked-out) patients who are the victims of a male-dominated society, other scholars relativize his portrayal of women. For example, Dagmar Lorenz claims that Schnitzler is unique among male authors of his time for his presentation of men and women as equal, and for resisting the tendency to portray women as hysterical (20). Barbara Gutt's study looks to Schnitzler's correspondence with Olga Waissnix as evidence for his progressive point of view regarding women's rights. Gutt notes that women's emancipation involved breaking through the "ideological superstructure" based on the inferiority of women in legal, political, sexual, and mental capacities and that Schnitzler's writings show women doing just that (16). While the figure of the Marquise alone does not put an end to Schnitzler's contested status in terms of representing women, she does complicate the matter. Though she might break through the ideological superstructure by showing the dangers involved in taking things too seriously, renouncing pleasure, and clinging to fixed ideas, the Marquise does play her role as a thoroughly erotized woman, which seems to reinforce Schnitzler's reputation of yoking women and sexuality. Without having to resolve this debate, it is safe to say that the Marquise, for better or for worse, establishes a clear erotic connection between the murder and the revolution. The erotic connotation of the murder does not usurp it of its affective value for Henri, as the revolutionary appropriation seems to do. Instead, the erotic binds the various meanings together in ways only surpassed by the theater itself. [10]

The comingling and conflicting semantic valences surrounding the act of murder play out within a theatrical framework, or rather within several theatrical frameworks. The murder lies at the center of the indeterminacy that characterizes the Tavern of the Green Cockatoo's appeal to its aristocratic audience and its potential threat to law and order in the eyes of the *Kommissär*. It is the peripeteia that brings down the house, so to speak. When Prospère mistakes the theatrical act for a criminal one, the play loses its director and, by extension, its direction. He is supposed to provide the measure by which the tavern guests (and we readers) know where the limit of play and reality lies. The instant that he is no longer able to tell the difference, we are left to question every act as

---

[10] The debate around the possible feminist readings of Schnitzler continues. Birgit Lang makes a distinction between the women in Schnitzler's later works and his earlier portrayals. The later women are sexually liberated and do not commit suicide (239). She writes, "Although he was portraying women here as more emancipated, he also emphasized the price they had to pay for this emancipation, namely, the unhappiness they are forced to share with their alternating partners" (240).

potentially theatrical or real—even beyond the established parameters of the evening entertainment. In terms of the plot, Prospère's mistake leads directly to Henri's second performance of murder in the tavern. But his mistake must also be considered an act, and thus it is both a mistaken act and an act of mistaking, since Prospère cannot be trusted to keep the lines straight between theater and non-theater. At this point, to try to sort out what is real and what is just part of the show would be to fall for a distinction between the two that the play exposes as untenable—or to attempt to do so would be completely naïve and provincial, as the dialogue between the young nobleman Albin (who has not only never been to the Green Cockatoo but is also visiting Paris for the first time) and Rollin makes clear:

> ALBIN (*zu Rollin*). Sagen Sie mir, Herr Rollin, spielt die Marquise oder ist sie wirklich so – ich kenne mich absolut nicht aus.
>
> ROLLIN. Sein… spielen…kennen Sie den Unterschied so genau, Chevalier?
>
> ALBIN. Immerhin.
>
> ROLLIN. Ich nicht. Und was ich hier so eigentümlich finde, ist daß alle scheinbaren Unterschiede sozusagen aufgehoben sind. Wirklichkeit geht in Spiel über – Spiel in Wirklichkeit. (541)

But even if this is the obvious conceit of the theatrical space of the tavern, Prospère's mistaken act collapses whatever boundaries between play and reality were still in place. As such, the mistake itself must be considered theatrical along with every other act, including the second murder and the French revolution.

The pervasive theatricality of the murder is also evident in how Henri's performance is portrayed, namely as an elaborate and extended theatrical act. The jealous act fits into the cabaret setting as one among many staged performances and is understood as such by most of the audience members. When Henri is warming up the audience for his declamation, one seasoned nobleman remarks, "Er ist etwas theatralisch. Es ist, wie wenn er sich zu einem Monolog vorbereiten würde" (545). The comment reinforces the stagey-ness of Henri's performance. And earlier in the evening, before the guests arrive, Henri promises Prospère a performance like he has never seen before: "Für heute – für mein letztes Auftreten hab ich mir was zurechtgelegt, daß es sie alle schaudern wird… […] Und du selbst wirst sagen: So gut hat Henri nie gespielt" (529). Yet this promise and the exaggerated theatrics of the first rendition of the murder in Henri's monologue get occluded by the rush of activity at the end of the play, so that it seems that the second murder must also be on the same level of reality as the French revolution. Rather than consider the two events as an extension of Henri's grand finale, scholars often ignore this

possibility and rely on a literal interpretation of Henri's act of murder.[11] Instead of making the second act of murder a real act, the play indicates that no act is ever more or less real than any other—just more or less well-performed.

In the end, Henri's act is no longer his own. It has been claimed by the historical force of the revolution, even as that historical force proves to be subject to the even greater force of theatricality. The multiplicity of significations prevents the act from being read under any single rubric that might claim the act as a founding moment in a unique history or identity, whether personal, erotic, or national. In this sense, the inverted world of the Green Cockatoo reveals how the theatrical inversion of play and reality does not always involve a simple reversal between the two realms, in which a character might return to regular life (like Grünhelm in *Die verkehrte Welt* who is able to return to his real wife and children) once the curtain falls on stage. Instead, entering into an inverted world exposes us to the impossibility of fixing meaning and of establishing a clear relationship between acts and identities, while at the same time also opening up the endless possibilities of claiming meaning for different and potentially crossed purposes.

Acting Out Against the Law

The murder is central to the overall plot and therefore is particularly important when it comes to evaluating the inflated signifying economy of *Der grüne Kakadu*. The coinciding and conflicting meanings of the act stand for a larger, pervasive problem of attributing acts with meaning. The subplot concerning Grain and Gaston sheds light on another aspect of relating acts to identities and assigning identities based on acts. Grain, referred to as "ein Strolch," has just been released from prison and wishes to rehabilitate himself by becoming a member of Prospère's theater. The path to becoming an "anständiger Mensch" (523), leads Grain to ask Prospère for work, which means, paradoxically, the reformed criminal will earn his wages by performing the part of a criminal. Although he looks the part, Grain cannot act. His story of incest and murder bores Prospère when the ragged looking man first comes in asking for employment. Later, the other actors and guests are underwhelmed by his performance. The nobleman François criticizes him, "Der ist schwach. Das ist ein Dilettant. Ich hab' ihn noch nie gesehen" (541). Despite his failure as an actor, Grain is successful in a different sense. He actually succeeds in discarding his criminal past in his failure to perform one. Not only is he a lousy theatrical performer, but even the smallest criminal act seems to be impossible for him in this theatrical setting. When he attempts to steal an aristocrat's coin purse, Prospère

---

[11] For many, the murder stands as the sign of ultimate collapse between play and reality. For an extensive list of similar interpretations, see Reinhard Urbach's *Kommentar* (166).

catches him in the act (544). Grain is losing his criminal touch. He changes from a murderer into a bad actor incapable of convincing people that he is/was a criminal. Indeed, he seems to be turning into an honest man, making good on his claim from earlier: "Bürger Prospère, halten Sie mich für keinen Schwindler. Ich bin ein Ehrenmann. Wenn ich sage, daß ich eingesperrt war, so ist es die volle Wahrheit" (523). Though unable to convince people with his criminal role, he seems to be convincing enough as an eyewitness. He is the one who tells Prospère about having seen Léocadie with the Duke. As a witness to adultery, Grain's former reputation as a non-"anständiger Mensch" seems to be completely forgotten. What he is or was no longer implies a fixed mode of interpreting what he says, and instead his testimony is taken as the truth. In this respect, Grain's incongruous relation to acts and identity carries over into his use of language. That is to say, he can *be* an honest man and tell the truth without the burden of his past acts clouding how he is perceived by others. His testimony is taken as an honest report of facts, regardless of what sort of treachery might taint his former life before joining the theater. Contrariwise, it makes no difference that he actually murdered his aunt in this setting. This detail from his past does not come to his aid as a performer. Unless he can master the art of acting, he will not be taken for a criminal.

Both Grain and Gaston convey the embeddedness of the theatrical in the authentic as the theater instantiates itself in the world beyond the stage. Indeed, Grain is Gaston's inverted mirror image in many ways. He uses the language of inversion in talking about his relationship to Gaston: "Ich will den umgekehrten Weg machen wie Gaston. Er hat den Verbrecher gespielt und ist einer geworden – ich …" (524). Gaston was an accomplished actor in Prospère's troupe, who then decided to turn to a life of crime on the streets. His attempt to snatch a woman's purse is successful—he got the purse. But then he gets caught. Unlike Grain, whose bad theatrical performance does not get him thrown in jail, Gaston's bad performance of purse snatching does. A great actor, but a pathetic thief, Gaston succeeds where he never meant to, namely in attaining a criminal identity. Gaston and Grain present the interplay between theater and the real world as imbalanced: Just because you are an actual thief does not mean you will be any good at playing one on stage, and just because you could play a sly pickpocket in the theater does not mean that you will be able to get away with it outside of the theater. This double conclusion, however, maintains a dichotomy between real and theatrical identities, which the play does not uphold. According to Klaus Kilian the two characters are unable to negotiate the collapse of appearance and reality (69). Beyond the dialectic between imagination and reality that Kilian proposes, Grain and Gaston's failures (or successes) evince a theatrical basis for identity that does not evaluate the truth of identity according to essential being or even actual acts. In conjunction with the faltering division between

theatricality and reality, acts become contingent, making it impossible to derive a straight meaning from them. A morally bad act performed well might be the mark of either a successful criminal or a successful actor. A fake murder performed well might be performed so well that it results in the murderous actor being mistaken for a real murderer. Amidst these fluctuations in authentic speech and identity, Grain succeeds in his performance as an honest man. But the success, as well as his failure to perform his criminal identity, means that truth is only as valid as the performance that mediates it.

Acting a criminal part or being a criminal must remain two distinct categories in order for the law to correctly contain unlawful behavior. A ubiquitous theatricality risks undermining this distinction and the law's ability to enforce itself. While Grain and Gaston demonstrate this problem from the point of view of criminals/actors, the figure of the *Kommissär* shows the other side of the issue, namely, what happens when the law, too, becomes part of an inverted world. As the official representative of the law in the play, he has a unique status among the *dramatis personae*, who otherwise divide into two camps: Prospère's troupe on one side and the aristocratic audience on the other. Needless to say, the line between the two does not hold either. Still, the *Kommissär* remains outside of both groups even (and especially) as they begin to mix. This does not mean that the interlacing of theater, reality, and history spares him from the "confusion and anarchy" at the end of the play.[12] But unlike the Marquise, who might be his inverted counterpart, the *Kommissär* does not embrace either the revolution or theatricality. The murder that plays out in the tavern makes him blow his cover as just another aristocratic spectator. In this sense, he falls out of one role only to find himself completely defrocked of his actual identity. That is to say, by the time Henri attacks the Duke, the *Kommissär* has unwittingly renounced his power to enforce the law. Indeed, when the law indulges in the theater, as the *Kommissär* does in order to go undercover, it becomes difficult to see the law as anything but theatrical.[13]

The moment the *Kommissär* fails to arrest Henri, we recognize that anarchy has broken loose. He calls out, "Ich verhafte diesen Mann im Namen des Gesetzes" (551), but the name of the law has already lost its performative power. What good does a name do in this context anyway, in which titles are cast off and identities reshaped to better accommodate the evening's performance? In this historical and theatrical setting, the

---

[12] This expression is taken from Friedrichsmeyer, who writes, "Am Ende des Einakters herrscht weitgehende Verwirrung und Anarchie, sowohl innerhalb der Taverne, […], wie auch außerhalb" (210).

[13] The *Kommissär*'s role seems to have been mostly neglected in the secondary literature. Where he is mentioned it is only in passing. Kilian brushes past his entrance in a synopsis and then explicitly states that he is not important (69). Geneviève Roussel mentions the connection between the Sergeant and issues of censorship but does not elaborate on the implications (71).

Kommissär's speech can no longer alter reality.[14] To be sure, according to J.L. Austin, his speech act would be infelicitous on several accounts. He is no longer in the proper position for his arresting words to "do" anything. Moreover, the revolution suspends the rule of the law and brings the theater out into the streets. This parallel movement further complicates the conditions necessary for a felicitous speech act, especially given the fact that Austin explicitly excludes the theater from his linguistic permutations and limits his study to "ordinary circumstances" (22), as we have seen earlier in the context of *Leonce und Lena*.[15] Obviously, July 14th, 1789 in the Tavern of the Green Cockatoo is no ordinary circumstance. Performative speech acts, thus, cannot be expected to enact their usual effects. Instead, the breakdown of authoritative language attests to the potential of the theater to overpower the law and the logical systems it relies upon.

Well before his language fails, the *Kommissär* has already succumbed to the theater's suspension of ordinary circumstances. In order to gain entrance into the tavern, the *Kommissär* accepts Prospère's suggestion at the start of the play that he change into something more comfortable:

> WIRT. Ich glaube, Ihnen die beste Unterhaltung versprechen zu können, Herr Kommissär, doch würde ich mir den Rat erlauben, daß Sie Ihre Amtstracht ablegen und in Zivilkleidern hier erscheinen. Wenn man nämlich einen Kommissär in Uniform hier sähe, würde sowohl die Naivetät meiner Künstler als die Stimmung meines Publikums darunter leiden. (522)

The presence of the law in the theater appears here as an unwelcome irritation. Meanwhile, the opportunity to play dress-up seems to kindle the *Kommissär*'s narcissism and he replies "Sie haben recht, Herr Prospère, ich werde mich entfernen und als junger eleganter Mann wiederkehren" (522). Upon his return, Prospère welcomes him as a guest rather than a potential killjoy, for he now enters the tavern on theatrical terms, not juridical ones. In order to spy on the "Schauplatz wüster Orgien," the *Kommissär* becomes a participant in the performance, but thereby loses his authority as representative of the law as well as his identity, defined most clearly by his name and his uniform to the extent that "Kleider machen Leute" in the tavern in extreme ways.

When the law becomes theatrical, its power to execute decrees and punishments becomes ineffective. The *Kommissär* blends in so well that he goes unnoticed until the end, and by then it is too late for him to reclaim his lawful identity. But before the murder

---

[14] See Erika Fischer-Lichte's framing of performative speech as effecting change in the world in *Ästhetik des Performativen* (32).

[15] See my discussion of Büchner's *Leonce und Lena* in Act 3 for more extensive treatment of this issue in Austin's theory and its reception. Derrida in particular hones in on the exclusionary conditions of possibility in Austin's system to show how that which is excluded renders language possible in the first place (see his "Signature, Event, Context").

in the tavern, when Grasset enters with the revolutionaries, the *Kommissär*'s every effort to assert his identity/authority is met with incredulous and irreverent questions:

WIRT. Das Volk von Paris hat gesiegt.

KOMMISSÄR. Ruhe! – (*Man lacht.*) Ruhe! … Ich untersage die Fortsetzung der Vorstellung!

GRASSET. Wer ist der Tropf?

KOMMISSÄR. Prospère, ich mach Sie verantwortlich für alle die aufreizenden Reden –

GRASSET. Ist der Kerl verrückt? (549)

In the face of revolution, the shifts in power also mean a shift in how the law must present itself. In this case, the *Kommissär* not only finds himself on the wrong side of history, but he also subjects himself and the law that he is supposed to be representing to theatricality.

At the same time Prospère's theater-tavern provides a space for the law to expose itself as theatrical. A penal system, from police enforcement to a judge's sentence, not only requires convincing performances in order to function, it also has to perform its own authority convincingly. When the law, in the figure of the *Kommissär*, gives up its uniform/costume and joins in the interplay between theater and reality, the *Kommissär* is unequipped to counter the historical and theatrical drive of the evening's events. Embodied in the *Kommissär*, the law is put on stage and stripped of power. This development further attests to the impossibility of assigning a criminal meaning to the murder. Not only is the murder claimed by the revolution making it a heroic act, but the theatricality of it all confounds the ordinary circumstances needed by the law to lay its own claims on acts.

Simulation and Identity

The law cannot punish a fake murder for its fakeness. To do so would require the law to acknowledge its own theatricality. But perhaps therein lies the problem to begin with, namely, thinking that the law was ever something other than theatrical. The tense relationship between the law and the theater that we find in *Der grüne Kakadu* has been articulated elsewhere in more abstract terms by philosophers throughout the ages. In *The Republic* the ban of mimesis from the *polis* is aimed at preventing deception and promoting truth:

But we must remain firm in our conviction that hymns to the gods and praises of famous men are the only poetry which ought to be admitted into our State. For if you go beyond this and allow the honeyed muse to enter, either in epic or lyric verse, not law and the reason of mankind,

> which by common consent have ever been deemed best, but pleasure and pain will be the rulers in our State. (Plato's *Republic*, Book X, 607a)

Indeed, Socrates pits law and reason against pleasure and pain, logic against the erotic. While we might not be able to (or want to) exclude the possibility that Socratic irony undergirds this statement too, we can be sure that the volatility of artifice is sincere—it is either an earnest threat to the State or the logical demonstration itself presents the very danger of poetry that it pretends to denounce. In both cases, simulation is detrimental. It would also monkey wrench Austin's performative speech act theory, especially in those situations where the difference between a staged performance and an actual act under ordinary circumstances becomes blurred.

Schnitzler's use of criminal acts within a theatrical setting highlights the special threat that imitation poses to the law and provokes questions about the particular interplay between crime and simulation. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard focuses on this tension in his critique of contemporary society. He begins by noting the risks associated with simulation as opposed to mere pretending:

> Therefore, pretending, or dissimulating, leaves the principle of reality intact: the difference is always clear, it is simply masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between the "true" and the "false," the "real" and the "imaginary." (3)

With this distinction in place Baudrillard then argues that simulation has become so pervasive in capitalist society that there is indeed no more distinguishing between these opposing pairs. The interface between the law and simulation serves as a salient example in his argument. He challenges the reader to perform a fake holdup: "Organize a fake holdup. … You won't be able to do it: the network of artificial signs will become inextricably mixed up with real elements…" (20). In contrast to an actual bank robbery, a fake one threatens "the reality principle itself." As such it is even more dangerous than a real robbery. Baudrillard explains why: "It always leaves open to supposition that, above and beyond its object, *law and order themselves might be nothing but simulation*" (20). The fake holdup causes a short circuit in juridical logic. The fake robber would never be prosecuted for the act of simulation; instead the act would have to be recategorized as a criminal act punishable by law (for example, disturbing the peace). Simulation, as the basic mode of theater, remains outside the law, while the law is always literal and suspicious of theater.

Der grüne Kakadu presents a fake holdup scenario that calls into question the integrity of the law and its supposed non-theatricality. As such, Prospère's theater-tavern is all the more a threat to law and order. It is under suspicion from the start and by the end it levels the difference between acting a part and being an individual subject before the

law. The Tavern of the Green Cockatoo provides what Baudrillard calls a "field unhinged by simulation" in which acts no longer function normally:

> If one envisions the entire cycle of any act or event in a system where linear continuity and dialectical polarity no longer exist, in a field *unhinged by simulation*, all determination evaporates, every act is terminated at the end of the cycle having benefited everyone and having been scattered in all directions. (16)

Framed in this way, the act of murder's multiple meanings and appropriations might be understood as the scattering described here. Furthermore, the quote helps to see how the elimination of polarities (theater vs. reality) is connected to a disruption of linearity, which opens up the play's historical setting to anachronistic and cyclical temporalities. If individual acts and historical events are no longer part of a linear and logical system, but instead part of a theatrical and cyclical one, then the law itself would seem to be forced to "get smart" in the words of Paracelsus, which is to say, the law would have to become as playful as the Marquise, even as doing so means giving into an inverted world that is both an *ordo inversus* and *mundus perversus*.

But when the historical revolution is belied by a theatrical one, which makes the historical (and political) revolution possible in the first place, there is indeed no longer any security, and the law has been exposed as just another drag queen who is no longer running the show. At the same time, Prospère's tavern is a space for multiple drag shows: the revolution in drag, criminality in drag, passion in drag. So when the revolution infiltrates the theatrical space, the drag-revolution in the tavern becomes indistinguishable from the historical revolution, emphasizing the theatricality of revolution itself. Butler writes, "Drag brings into relief what is, after all, determined only in relation to the hyperbolic" (*Bodies That Matter*, 237). Her example is gender performativity, but we might take the theatrical revolution here as another allegorization of the "understated, taken-for-granted quality" of the status quo (in Butler's case heterosexual performativity). In Prospère's tavern politics are theatricalized and the ruling political, social, and cultural forces of the *ancien regime* that tolerate certain desires only in the form of the grotesque entertainment of a sanctioned festival/spectacle lose control. Politics seem most threatened by theater in moments when theater exposes the theatricality of politics—the same way that drag poses a threat to heterosexuality, not because drag itself is opposed to heterosexuality but because heterosexuality sees its intolerable theatrical image reflected in the drag queen.

The correspondence we accord to acts and identity cannot be maintained in a theatrical space. Because any act might be "merely acting," we lose the measure by which acts might define the parameters of identity, criminal or otherwise. An identity based entirely on theatrical acts cannot be read for psychological truth, nor kept under control

by conventional systems of meaning or interpretation. In *Der grüne Kakadu*, theatricality renders a stable identity illegible. That is not to say, however, that the tavern is a model for a utopian society, where the illegibility of identities guarantees justice for all. Illegibility is certainly not a magical formula that alleviates all social problems. Being illegible means not being taken into account, which might have its benefits but also comes with serious drawbacks. Butler's discussion of illegible persons within the context of gender identity emphasizes this ambivalence. She comments on how violent acts are not read as criminal when they are committed against individuals whose identity is illegible or who are not read as being "right":

> This is not far removed from the threat of death, or the murder itself, of transsexuals in various countries, and of gay men who read as "feminine" or gay women who read as "masculine." These crimes are not always immediately recognized as criminal acts. Sometimes they are denounced by governments and international agencies; sometimes they are not included as legible or real crimes against humanity by those very institutions. (*Undoing Gender* 34)

If you are illegible (to the law or some other authority), violent acts committed against you cannot be accounted for, and the perpetrators might not be held accountable. The violence might not be treated as a criminal act and, by extension, the perpetrators not prosecuted by the law as criminals. Still, Butler brings up elsewhere how illegibility or unintelligibility can create non-normative possibilities that fall outside of the "matrices of intelligibility" (*Gender Trouble* 17). Illegible identities require and, thus, produce spaces that are meant to be free from surveillance and policing, even as those spaces are shaped by the threats that necessitate them.

In the Tavern of the Green Cockatoo, illegibility and theatricality sustain each other and enable revolutionary change. Where theatricality reigns, boundaries between politics and desire collapse, but also between politics and play and between play and desire. These shifting boundaries are directly related to the inversions that structure the tavern space. But that space ultimately cannot be contained within the tavern. As the play's subtitle suggests ("Groteske in einem Akt"), we are dealing with something "grotesque." There is debate about what Schnitzler's genre description means exactly,[16] but in the context of this chapter, the grotesque evokes an indeterminacy between inside and outside that is reflected in the expansion of the theatrical space of the theater out into the streets. The connection to Bakhtin's characterization of the grotesque lies close at hand, in which he emphasizes the transgressions inherent to all things grotesque and festive:

---

[16] See, for example, Kilian's discussion of the genre description in his chapter "Schnitzlers 'historische' Groteske" (66-72). See also Holger Sandig's *Deutsche Dramaturgie des Grotesken um die Jahrhundertwende* (144-46).

> This downward movement is also inherent in all forms of popular-festive merriment and grotesque realms. Down, inside out, vice versa, upside down, such is the direction of all these movements. All of them thrust down, turn over, push headfirst, transfer top to bottom, and bottom to top, both in the literal sense of space and in the metaphorical meaning of the image. (370)

Der grüne Kakadu demonstrates this downward and inverting motion with the revolutionary power (or threat) of the grotesque play spilling out into the streets. Official culture with its hierarchies and power structures collapse.

The inverted world of *Der grüne Kakadu* does more than merely flip theater and reality. The suspension of the law does not result in a sublation of theatrical acts and real identity to further secure identity on a higher level of consciousness, as the Hegelian passage through the inverted world might. In the tavern, identity is stripped of metaphysical truth (a quality perhaps gained through the opacity of metaphysics itself) and theatrical superficiality establishes the parameters for playing with identity. Meanwhile, history marches on without authentic purpose: the Marquise leads the revolutionary crowd, now mixed with aristocrats, to the guillotines. The theatrics that enable history in the first place, and the actors who subvert it, leave history (and the law) exposed to its own theatrical basis. The inverted world of *Der grüne Kakadu* is a place where theatricality relativizes the weight of history, where actions and words do not align in simple ways, and where politics and aesthetics vie for establishing the dominant interpretive framework.

Whereas the literary inversions in other texts tend to render the erotic aspects of inversion in more subtle tones, Schnitzler's depiction of the Parisian cabaret tavern is bursting with sexual tension. Although same-sex desire appears only as a titillating detail, the indiscriminate erotic force of the theater comes to the fore. At the same time, and with this sexual cathexis at the surface, the relationship between desire, actions, and identity takes on dimensions that relate directly to questions about criminal identities and acts in Germany and Austria around 1900. Indeed, Schnitzler's staging of a theatrical revolution subverts a system of identity formation that relies upon acts that constitute an individual identity. Whereas an essentialist logic, the likes of which one might find in the theories of Cesare Lombroso or Otto Weininger,[17] might conflate criminal acts with an innate criminal identity, a conflation which confuses cause and effect by treating acts as symptoms of a deficient essence that is, in turn, also the result of these acts, the theater dissociates them. Anyone might commit any act, more or less successfully depending on their talent as a performer and regardless of some natural, inborn predestination. Their "true" identity neither assures that their performance will be convincing nor does it serve

---

[17] For a critical discussion of these two writers, their various overlaps, and divergences, see Nancy Harrowitz's essay "Weininger and Lombroso: A Question of Influence."

as stable grounds for an actor to fall back on should their performance fail. The relationship between criminalized acts and criminal or pathological identities is particularly vexed within the medico-juridical discourse on homosexual identity around 1900, in which a certain faction attempted to promote a homosexual identity as the justification for homosexual acts. This "new species" of homosexual was bound to his acts not through freewill, which would make the act a crime punishable by law, but through biological drives. The alleged split between homosexual acts and identities that existed before the nineteenth century was not, as David Halperin has shown, a complete divorcing of acts from identity.[18] The unique development in the nineteenth century was that identity became a political and legal shield. Schnitzler fractures the shield of identity at a time when it was not even firmly established as a societal norm—not out of some grudge against sexual identities (he did after all sign Magnus Hirschfeld's famous petition to abolish paragraph 175), but perhaps rather out of a suspicion against systems that rely too heavily upon a singularity of meaning and a 1:1 relationship between acts and identity, that is to say, systems that ignore the theatrical.

---

[18]   See his essay "Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality."

Epilogue: The Irony of It All

There is a complex set of relationships governing the practice of assigning identities based on actions. A discussion of these relationships might begin with Foucault's famous portrayal of the shift between isolated acts (of sexual perversion) and an entire identity (of the sexual pervert, i.e., the homosexual), for which certain acts are constitutive. In the history of homosexuality this shift was a juridical strategy that relied on a stable subject position capable of subsuming so many essential qualities, like desire and sexual drives. This strategy meant de-criminalizing individual acts of sexual transgression because they ought to be understood as the natural extension of a pre-ordained structure of desire. The basic concept demands a configuration of how acts relate to identity, such that certain acts are forgivable because they are products of a natural, congenital condition (read, identity). When this relationship gets tampered with the entire logic behind the strategy becomes compromised. We have seen examples of this throughout the dissertation, in particular in Act 5 with *Der grüne Kakadu*. While Schnitzler's play does not involve homosexual acts and inverts, other criminal acts and a cast of actors playing criminals suffice to bring the determinate relationship between acts and identity into a state of confusion. The ontology of criminality that the play undertakes (and dismantles) is also a reflection on the power of the theater to de-substantiate identities. When the border between playing and reality collapses, the status of criminal or actor, aristocrat or bourgeoisie, prostitute or wife similarly undergoes dedifferentiation to the point that no single act seems capable of defining a person in unequivocal terms. This dedifferentiation is intolerable to systems that require associating discrete acts with individuals in order to constitute identities—such as within the domain of sexual pathology.

Without further ado, here is that highly controversial passage from Foucault's *History of Sexuality Volume 1* about the shift in the nineteenth century from discrete, transgressive acts to the emergence of a species called the homosexual:

> As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage […]. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (43)

This claim has been the source of many historical and theoretical critiques.[1] David Halperin engages with Foucault's statement on multiple occasions. His essay "Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality" highlights historical instances of identities from Antiquity and the Renaissance based on same-sex desire that relativize Foucault's historical framework. Halperin's multivalent critique of Foucault looks to how

---

[1]   See for example in the German context Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, Philippe Weber, and Yvonne Ivory.

the reception of Foucault's claim has created significant blind spots in scholars' (and others') thinking about the relationship between identities and acts with regards to sexuality. Still, in his critique Halperin does not deny the fact that there are significant changes going on in the timeframe that Foucault refers to:

> One symptom of that transformation, as a number of researchers (both before and after Foucault) have pointed out, is that something new happens to the various relations among sexual roles, sexual object-choices, sexual categories, sexual behaviors, and sexual identities in bourgeois Europe between the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. (96)

Given this acknowledgment, it makes sense to examine the "various relations" from different perspectives without trying to maintain some claim as to the origins of sexual identity itself.

The history of inversion in sexual pathology and the other history sketched out in this dissertation are far from being completely separate or opposed to one another. We have seen again and again how the literary history of inverted worlds contains elements of pathology, perversion, and regression. At the same time, as the homosexual invert is taking shape, inversion does not lose any of its destabilizing potential. And indeed that is the irony of it all. The fact that this particular figure should serve as (one of) the namesake(s) of the nineteenth and twentieth-century homosexual is remarkable given inversion's overwhelming propensity for upsetting systems. And yet, as mentioned in the *Vorspiel* and Act 1 especially, the force of inversion was harnessed repeatedly to serve higher, more orderly goals, like those associated with Enlightenment reason. Those attempts that take inversion too seriously and ignore its affinity to irony are ultimately doomed to topple like Scaramuz's reign over Parnassus. If you try to base something as fundamental as an identity on something as two-sided as inversion, then you had better be able to account for that duplicity in your system.

This Epilogue looks at sexological texts from the nineteenth century and early-twentieth century—from the period during which homosexual identity was supposedly becoming a species—and demonstrates how these texts were implementing inversion to negotiate the relationship between acts and identity that, though not new, was certainly highly contested at the time. The end of the nineteenth century, as the end of this transformative process, is a particularly complex moment in the history of the reification of sexual identities as they come under the purview of medical experts and become objects of entire scientific disciplines. Still, the placement of this historical development should not be seen as the logical conclusion to the ahistory told here. The epilogue performs a final inversion in which, though chronologically in line with the sequence of literary texts, identity trumps acts. What unfolds under the pretense of scientific and social progress, however, ought not in the context of this study be seen as the culmination of

inversion as a mode of being. Instead, the epilogue recalls this other more linear history as a final point of contrast. So while the substantiation and reification of the invert might figure as the last act in the nineteenth-century history of inversion, it is not the last chapter.

A History of Sexual Inversion

While the big-name German philosophers were creating systems that included inversion as a distinct deviation from the norm, other German thinkers in the nineteenth century were making cases for inversion as a normal and natural state. These thinkers were involved in legal and medical debates surrounding same-sex desire. Of course, the dominant discourse was geared towards pathologizing same-sex desire, acts, and identity, which was perhaps seen as sort of a relief for same-sex desiring persons, considering the label of a psychological, pathological condition could potentially shield them from punishments for "acts against nature." I would like to focus on the so-called forefather of the homosexual emancipation movement Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, who unlike some of his "normal" contemporaries did not think that same-sex desire was a pathological condition, nor that it should be treated as a crime. Instead Ulrichs proposed that man-to-man and woman-to-woman love and desire is natural and, therefore, normal. Ulrichs' writings on same-sex desire use inversion to explain this natural and normal constitution of what he called "Urninge."

A hallmark of the sexual science discourse in the nineteenth century and beyond is the idea that certain sexual acts are natural (e.g., between a man and a woman, with procreation as the goal, etc.). Perversions deviate from nature's course, which otherwise aims at human reproduction. In the inverted world of sexual desires natural relations get turned on their head, as in Hegel's inverted world, where nature is backwards and essence and appearance do not align. Ulrichs' strategy against the criminal prosecution of same-sex desire and sexual acts between men involved changing the idea of what was natural and thereby what was normal. His argument in a nutshell: We Urninge are just like you Dioninge (his name for men who desire women) but just a little different. Ulrichs claims that Urninge have men's bodies with women's souls. This female soul directs its desire towards masculine bodies. The Dioning has a man's body and a man's soul, and that soul desires women. Thus, Ulrichs asks his (male) Dioninge audience to consider the desire that they feel towards women as an emotional drive shared by all human beings, and that the difference between them and Urninge is a difference in trajectory, not a difference in kind. In other words, they share a basic form of desiring others and the fact that the Urning

directs his desire to men and not women should at least be imaginable for the Dioninge, if not tolerable.[2]

Ulrichs' argument depends on a split between body and soul, between external appearance and inner essence that we have seen throughout nineteenth-century texts but which certainly predates German idealism. This split enables Ulrichs' version of inversion: "Sunt mihi barba maris, artus, corpusque virile: his inclusa quidem: sed sum maneoque puella."[3] Ulrichs' goal is to convince his Dioninge audience that the Urning is a creature of nature and that there is nothing perverse or unnatural about this inverted being. Sexual desire or "Geschlechtsliebe," as Ulrichs calls it, is created by God and therefore natural regardless of its directionality. He characterizes his opponents' point of view thusly in a letter to his sister from 1862:

> Du antwortest, weil die uranische Neigung eine "verkehrte, unnatürliche oder sündliche" sei. Allein das Empfinden einer Neigung ist niemals sündlich, nur das sich-ihr-hingeben und das ins-Werk-setzen. Das ins Werk setzen der uranischen Neigung aber soll ja erst deshalb sündlich sein, weil die uranische Neigung "verkehrt oder widernatürlich" sein soll. ("Vier Briefe" 47)

Here "verkehrt" appears to have the narrow connotation of perverse and is part of a chain of signifiers—perverse, unnatural, sinful, contrary to nature—that indicate deviation and abnormality. To counter this position, Ulrichs says that these men in power are using a false measure to judge man-to-man love. The Urninge are not normal "men" at all and thus should not be treated as such: "Sind wir aber überall nicht Männer im gewöhnlichen Begriff, so habt Ihr auch kein Recht, den Massstab gewöhnlicher Männer *uns aufzuzwängen*!" (47). The Urninge belong to a third sex and thus cannot be held up to the same measure used to judge men (or women) for their (supposedly perverse) acts. As members of a third sex they constitute a new set of norms specific to this biological status.

Ulrichs' theory of desire nevertheless employs a logic of "opposites attract" that also echoes the literal and scientific polarities found in Hegel's inverted world. This polarity guides the Urning's desire as well. In an epigraph from *Inclusa* (volume two in the twelve-

---

[2]   Klaus Müller states explicitly that Ulrichs' conception of same-sex desire set a trend: "Seine berühmte Formel von der 'weiblichen Seele in einem männlichen Körper' nahm ein dominantes Erklärungsmuster der 'Homosexualität' vorweg: der Uranismus wurde mit einer Verkehrung der Geschlechterrollen erklärt" (24).

[3]   "Have I a masculine beard and manly limbs and body; Yes, confined by these: but I am and remain a woman" (*Inclusa* 67). Translation Huber C. Kennedy ("The 'Third Sex' Theory" 7). The Swiss author Heinrich Hössli predates Ulrichs and draws upon what is actually a long tradition of inversion model explanations. He writes on Wolfgang Menzel, who refers to the "rabbinical doctrine of the soul" in 1834. This doctrine explains, for example, that the souls of women can end up in the bodies of men thus making women repulsive to these cross-souled beings. For more on the history and prevalence of this doctrine see Robert Tobin's "Early Nineteenth-Century Sexual Radicalism: Heinrich Hössli and the Liberals of His Day."

volume work), Ulrichs includes some lines of verse written by Numa Numantius, his pseudonym:

> Ich bin ein Nordpol,
> Der den Nordpol seufzend zurückscheucht:
> Gleichwohl zu ihm hin
> Nordpol zu Nordpol,
> Unerforscht
> Doch unwiderstehlich, gezogen (24)

What is immediately striking here is the contradiction between the poetic polarities and the elaboration of magnetic theories of desire in Ulrichs' prose that immediately follows this short poem. In the verse, the north pole is attracted to another north pole, while at the same time being repelled. Yet, in the end, the pull is irresistible. The natural forces behind desire guide the Urning and are not a matter of criminal choice. The union between an Urning and another male body is an act of nature: "In seinen Armen fühlen wir voll und ganz die magnetische Durchströmung. Wir fühlen unseren Körper durchströmt von einer belebenden, nervenstärkenden, wunderbaren Lebenskraft. Wir fühlen uns wie neu geboren" (20). The magnetic flow that courses through the Urning's body when in the arms of another man coincides with this other magnetic force that overcomes natural laws of repulsion. Ulrichs' solution is to locate the cause of desire within the soul and to assign the soul the natural charge that would make it attracted to its natural opposite:

> Die Analogie der Magnetnadel trifft zu, nicht nur für euere, sondern auch für unsere Liebe. An Magnetnadeln, wenn sie schweben und leicht beweglich hangen, wird der ungleiche Pol zu einem ungleichen Pol durch eine unsichtbare Naturkraft sichtbar hingezogen. (25)

The analogy nevertheless requires more elaboration, for Urninge are not men through and through; they are more similar to women: "Männer sind uns darum nur scheinbar gleiche, in Wahrheit ungleiche Pole, Weiber gleiche Pole" (25). Already inversion seems to be wreaking havoc on Ulrichs system. Urninge are not men, but they are attracted to men. Dioninge have men's bodies and men's souls. They are repulsed by other men. An Urning could thus either be attracted to a Dioning or another Urning: the former always ending in unrequited love, the latter implying that having the same gendered souls is not a hindrance to attraction.

Ulrichs' inverted characterization of Urninge provides a paradigm for rethinking same-sex desire in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century. The idea of a feminine inside and masculine outside in turn draws upon concepts of inversion from philosophical discourses—discourses with which Ulrichs engages directly, for example, in his discussion of Schopenhauer's comments on sexual drives and same-sex desire as well as, of course, Plato's *Symposium*. But in contrast to the philosophical appropriations of

inversion, and for that matter other later sexological appropriations, Ulrichs does not portray inversion as a mere phase of development that must be overcome, nor as a psychopathological perversion. Instead, the Urning is a creature of nature just like men who desire women and women who desire men. Ulrichs argues for a normalization of same-sex desire that means decriminalizing same-sex sexual acts and (most radically) to do so without the label of mental illness or perversion.

Later sexual scientists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Sigmund Freud and even Magnus Hirschfeld generally accepted the inverted model of same-sex desire. However, their arguments against the criminalization of same-sex sexual acts were supported by a psychological medical discourse of abnormality. For example, Krafft-Ebing's famous book *Psychopathia sexualis* clearly labels same-sex love as an anomaly (46). The normal sexuality of an individual does not lead to same-sex love: "Ist die sexuelle Entwicklung eine normale, ungestörte, so gestaltet sich ein bestimmter, dem Geschlecht entsprechender Charakter. Es entstehen bestimmte Neigungen, Reaktionen im Verkehr mit Personen des anderen Geschlechts" (225). Normal sexual development involves an individual coming into their proper sexual identity and desiring the opposite sex. For Krafft-Ebing, same-sex desire is a sign of degeneration—a slipping back to primitive times when gender difference was not so clearly marked. His "contrary sexual feelings" are not only contrary in the sense of inverted and misdirected, but also contrary to normal progress, that is, the progress of European civilization, deeply set in a discourse of racial superiority.

As with Ulrichs, the inversion that Krafft-Ebing situates at the heart of contrary sexual feelings depends on a pervasive logic of gender opposition. Gender/sex difference is after all a biological fact for Krafft-Ebing, and any deviation from biological fact is a perversion, even if the deviation is not in the first place sexual:

> Ich erinnere bloss an Männer mit Faible für weibliche Beschäftigung (Stickerei, Toiletten u. dgl.), an Weiber mit Faible für männlichen Sport (ohne allen Erziehungseinfluss) und in beiden Fällen mit bedeutender Geschicklichkeit für gegensätzliche und auffallendem Ungeschick für eigentlich dem Geschlecht zukommende Beschäftigung. (35)

This anecdotal passage functions as part of Krafft-Ebing's argument about the primitive bisexuality (having both male and female traits) of humans. It also happens to bring us back to the *Bilderbogen* and the specific panel from "Die verkehrte Welt" (ca. 1860) of a boy knitting:

Der Knabe strickt.

In Krafft-Ebing's evolutionary view, the more advanced a species is, the more differentiated their sexual types are—a boy interested in knitting, embroidery, or primping indicates regression. Even if, as the passage here is meant to show, a "pure" male or female type is rare, the inverted preferences and practices that Krafft-Ebing enumerates are obviously contrary to the natural, normal, healthy order of things.

Krafft-Ebing is committed to making psychiatric medicine the domain that governs sexual abnormalities, at least when it comes to what he classifies as perversions.[4] According to him, the Urning suffers from a mental affliction that makes him incapable of resisting sexual contact with other men. Philippe Weber indicates in his book *Der Trieb zum Erzählen* what is at stake in this medical logic: "Die Berechnung der Zurechnungsfähigkeit operierte mit dem pathologischen Trieb als eine Kraft, die mit einer bestimmten Stärke die Patienten zu sexuellen Handlungen mit Personen des eigenen Geschlechts drängte" (151). The medicalization and pathologization of sexual drives led to a shift in disciplinary spheres. Weber later states that sexual pathology installed its own new and more efficient technologies of power behind the back of the legal system, so to speak (171). Ulrichs' and Krafft-Ebing's arguments give shape to a new non-criminal identity that is compelled by an inner desire to satisfy his sexual instinct through sexual acts with other men. But Ulrichs' autonomous Urning suddenly becomes subject to the

---

[4] As mentioned in Act 4 in the discussion of Keller's *Kleider machen Leute*, Krafft-Ebing's categorization and diagnosis of sexual pathology depends on his differentiation between perversion and perversity: Perversion is a sickness that falls under the purview of medical diagnosis and treatment. Perversity is a vice (*ein Laster*) that merits criminal punishment. In order for a sexologist, medical doctor, or court to differentiate between perversion and perversity, they must take into account a person's entire personality and examine the inner motivation behind their actions. The details of the perverse act itself are of little to no consequence in terms of the clinical study of sexual perversion.

expert knowledge of psychiatrists and doctors in Krafft-Ebing's system, in which it is up to those experts to determine (before a court of law) whether the defendant's actions are criminal or merely a symptom of his (mental) illness. The guilty defendant thus becomes either a criminal or a patient.

Even the more sympathetic members of the psychological-medical community, such as Freud and Hirschfeld, labelled inverts as abnormal. According to Freud, inversion is a fundamental feature of all sexuality. Sexual drives displace objects of desire and cause shifts in social orders: "Das Höchste und das Niedrigste hängen in der Sexualität überall am innigsten an einander ('Vom Himmel durch die Welt zur Hölle')" (*Drei Abhandlungen* 21). With the highest and lowest—or the most noble and the most base— things being so close, inversion is never far away, nor perversion. Indeed, the quote from Goethe's *Faust I,* indicates that the fall from heaven is precisely such a case of perversion, a straying from the path of the high, good, and noble that results in not being able to sort out which way is up and which is down.

The world of sexual drives, like the dream world, is ruled by the unconscious and is therefore prone to all sorts of twists and turns. In his *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, Freud reiterates his ideas on the unconscious mechanisms that become apparent in dreams. Inversion is one of the main mechanisms and it reveals itself particularly in the semantics of dreams. Freud refers to primal words (*Urworte*) that connote two opposed meanings, for example, "*sacer*" meaning both holy and defiled (*Vorlesungen* 170). These words reflect the semantic dizziness that structures dreams: "Solche Umkehrungen, wie sie hier am einzelnen Wort genommen werden, kommen durch die Traumarbeit in verschiedener Weise zustande" (171). In dreams, not only can words carrying both their normal meaning and their opposite, but images and figures, too, might represent their inverse. Even a sequence of events might better be understood as running in reverse: "Außerdem finden sich in Träumen Umkehrungen der Situation, der Beziehung zwischen zwei Personen, also wie in der 'verkehrten Welt'" (171). Freud further extends this direct reference to the inverted world tradition with the example of a hare hunting the hunter in a dream. Thus, a chain of signifiers comes into focus—rather cyclical than linear—that links together specific "inverted world" images from *Bilderbögen* to the logic of dreams to the structure of the unconscious to sexual drives to sexual deviations to the invert.

In Freud's famous letter to the mother of a homosexual, he certainly seems more accepting of homosexuality than Krafft-Ebing, and yet homosexuality remains an abnormality: "Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function produced by a certain arrest of sexual development"

("Letter" 787). And though he clearly states that the criminal prosecution of homosexuality is cruel, heterosexuality remains explicitly normal: "By asking me if I can help, you mean, I suppose, if I can abolish homosexuality and make normal heterosexuality take its place. The answer is, in a general way, we cannot promise to achieve it." Normal heterosexuality is a goal to achieve. Homosexuality is perhaps a normal phase in development, but to linger there is not normal. In this light, Freud's version of inversion also aligns with Hegel's inverted world. Both portray inversion as part of the development of self-consciousness, but inverted desire like inverted perception belong to a stage of development to be overcome. Still another similarity might be—if we take Freud's statement literally—that normal heterosexuality is something to achieve but attaining it is not something that can be promised. Heterosexuality like absolute knowledge is the ultimate goal for the normal subject, who must overcome the inverted world as a phase in his sexual and socio-historical development. And yet attaining that goal is forever deferred and never guaranteed.

Magnus Hirschfeld's monograph *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* from 1914 also operates within a basic gender inversion model. Yet by 1914, inversion is already being treated as a historical term, one that is fading into the past as other more scientifically specific terms gain currency.[5] In Hirschfeld's review of terminology, he situates "inversion" within the French context and cites Jean-Martin Charcot, Valentin Magnan, and Julian Chevalier as responsible for the shift from the term "sodomie" to "l'inversion" (27). Hirschfeld himself uses the terms "homosexuell," "konträre Sexualempfindung," and "Uranismus." Still, even without naming it as such, the structure of gender inversion inheres in Hirschfeld's explanations of homosexuality throughout his career. But inversion is no longer predominantly spiritual; it is now chemical and hormonal.

Instead of entering into the details of the male and female hormonal excretions theory, I would like to focus on two innovations in Hirschfeld's study of homosexuality: the first involves a distinction between gender and sexuality that complicates the gender inversion model of sexual identity, and the other involves the relationship between acts and identity. Hirschfeld notes that effeminate men and masculine women are not necessarily homosexuals:

> Heute wissen wir aber auf Grund genauerer Materialkenntnis, daß hier ein fundamentaler Irrtum vorlag, indem zwar die verschiedenen Zwischenformen gemischt, vorkommen können, es aber *durchaus nicht immer* zutrifft, daß Effeminierte und Viragines, Weibmänner und Mannweiber,

---

[5]   At the same time, it should be noted that "inversion" remained a common term for homosexuality well into the twentieth century. For example, the collection of scientific essays *Sexual Inversion: The Multiple Roots of Homosexuality* from 1965 continues to use inversion alongside other terms for same-sex desire (Marmor).

> geschweige den Androgyne, homosexuell sind, so wenig wie die Homosexuellen stets effeminiert oder die homosexuellen Frauen virilisiert sein brauchen. (30)

Hirschfeld's "Zwischenstufen" theory makes room for more variations in gender and sexual identity. This new knowledge based on "material findings" contradicts Krafft-Ebing, who saw these deviations as merely variations in a generalized homosexual instinct. The innovation here means thinking of the sexed body as detached from sexual object-choice—though within the hormonal theories that Hirschfeld later describes, the sexual instinct has a corporeal origin caused by inverted male or female glands. This distinction marks a shift in theories of gender and sexuality that were otherwise grounded on the proper alignment of a specific gendered object-choice with a specific gendered identity of the desiring subject. An inverted gender identity does not necessarily correspond to an inverted object-choice in Hirschfeld's system.

Another important distinction that Hirschfeld makes is between being a homosexual and sexual acts between people of the same sex. The idea that someone can commit a homosexual act without *being* a homosexual is not new—indeed this idea is what people seem to associate with Foucault's portrayal of the world of sexuality prior to the "creation" of the homosexual as a species. Hirschfeld makes clear that the reverse is also possible:

> Es kann also jemand, der niemals einen homosexuellen Geschlechtsverkehr gehabt hat, homosexuell sein, wenn er sich nur in seelisch-sinnlicher Liebe zu Personen des gleichen Geschlechts hingezogen fühlt. (32-33)

One possible consequence of this evacuation of acts from homosexual identity (or rather the elimination of acts from the diagnostic method of identifying homosexuals) is that a person can more easily be accused of being a homosexual without substantial material evidence, contributing to the close association between blackmail and homosexuality that was rampant around 1900.[6] While Ulrichs argued for a homosexual identity in the form of a third sex in order to claim that homosexual acts were natural and therefore legal, and while Krafft-Ebing argued for the pathological mental condition of homosexuals in order to establish their "Unzurechnungsfähigkeit" and their lack of free (criminal) will when it comes to committing homosexual acts, Hirschfeld goes a step farther and claims that it is possible to identify homosexuals based solely on their internal desires. The claim might seem to be historically important in establishing a universal homosexual identity that exists with or without the pressure of legal sanctions. However, it also makes it simple to accuse someone of being a homosexual. Of course, "being" homosexual was not itself a crime—only the acts were punishable.

---

[6]   For more on this connection between homosexuality and blackmail, see Karl Kraus "Der Fahl Riehl."

In the works of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Richard von Krafft-Ebing, inversion serves as both the basis for and a stumbling block to their theories of desire. Ulrichs' way of relating identity and acts to one another especially contrasts with later notions of homosexuality, namely, in the pathological understanding of homosexuality, where acts function as symptoms. Sigmund Freud and Magnus Hirschfeld, as two of the most influential figures writing on same-sex desire around 1900, demonstrate in their writings how this new species of *Homo sapiens* was developing into the full-fledged deviant identity of the invert.

As a legal strategy, the formation of the homosexual as a perverse identity was not as beneficial to the defendants as Ulrichs might have hoped. Securing an individual the identity of an invert did not protect him from public scrutiny, once he was brought to court. Expert witnesses like Magnus Hirschfeld would later be called in to testify against the defendants, supporting the prosecution's accusations with professional testimony about the person's inverted, perverted character and medical condition. Indeed, a person might *be* a homosexual without ever having actually committed a homosexual act, and determining that being was in the hands of medical professionals. The invert's acts were no longer the primary concern.

To understand Foucault's statement about the speciation of the homosexual as intended to plant the origins of sexual identity in the nineteenth century reduces his argument to a mere factoid and fails to take into account the larger discursive shift that was taking place. Efforts to decriminalize same-sex sexual acts implemented identity as a strategy to counter the language of the law. It was not as if sexual identities did not exist prior to the coinage of the word "invert" or "homosexual," rather identity now appears as an available structure that the law must take into account. In order to shape an identity that was formidable enough to counter the logic of the law, scientific reasoning was necessary—even as what counted as scientific evidence might include references to literary figures. By the end of the nineteenth century the invert stands as a scientifically proven individual. He or she can be medically examined, psychologically analyzed, physiologically dissected, and in the end legally categorized as a pervert.

Sexual acts committed between two men remained illegal in Germany until 1994. However, these acts were no longer criminal in the same way that an act of theft or assault is. They were the results of uncontrollable, natural, albeit perverse drives. The scientification of the inverted world that began with Hegel's *Phänomenologie* would come to make a space for the further scientification and subsequent pathologization of inversion as the basis for a homosexual identity—meant to stand before the law and medical institutions and be regulated by them. The wild abstractions that were still possible in 1807 do not persist over the course of one hundred years. Inversion is no

longer an abstraction in consciousness' development, but an identifiable, classifiable sexual deviation, variably curable, variably congenital, variably degenerate, but almost always abnormal—even when nature's deviations are understood as natural and even part of God's plan.

The contours of the invert's psyche were so well-established that the identity-type appears in full bloom in Proust's *Sodome et Gomorrhe*. Proust's narrator presents "l'inverti" in a multifaceted, extended description that reads like a zoological (or botanical) field study, explaining the habits, characteristics, and mannerisms of the invert.[7] In elaborating upon a sub-species of invert, Proust adds to the taxinomical tone of his description with metaphors of flora and fauna:

> Les ruses les plus extraordinaires que la nature a inventées pour forcer les insectes à assurer la fécondation des fleurs, qui, sans eux, ne pourraient pas l'être parce que la fleur mâle y est trop éloignée de la fleur femelle, ou qui, si c'est le vent qui doit assurer le transport du pollen, le rend bien plus facile à détacher de la fleur mâle, bien plus aisé à attraper au passage de la fleur femelle, en supprimant la sécrétion du nectar, qui n'est plus utile puisqu'il n'y a pas d'insectes à attirer, et même l'éclat des corolles qui les attirent, et, pour que la fleur soit réservée au pollen qu'il faut, qui ne peut fructifier qu'en elle, lui fait sécréter une liqueur qui l'immunise contre les autres pollens—ne me semblaient pas plus merveilleuses que l'existence de la sous-variété d'invertis destinée à assurer les plaisirs de l'amour à l'inverti devenant vieux: les hommes qui sont attirés non par tous les hommes, mais—par un phénomène de correspondance et d'harmonie comparable à ceux qui règlent la fécondation des fleurs hétérostylées trimorphes, comme le *Lythrum salicoria*—seulement par les hommes beaucoup plus âgés qu'eux. (41)

This special breed of invert not only carries in him a feminine core, but it also seems that age too is subject to inversion. To be sure, Proust's invert desires along the same lines established by the German sexologists: The invert has a man's body but with a female core. Proust's invert is, however, exposed to a cruel paradox: His desire will never be fulfilled because he desires a "real" man, not other inverts:

> Enfin, l'inversion elle-même, venant de ce que l'inverti se rapproche trop de la femme pour pouvoir avoir des rapports utiles avec elle, se rattache par là à une loi plus haute qui fait que tant de fleurs hermaphrodites restent infécondes, c'est-à-dire à la stérilité de l'auto-fécondation. Il est vrai que les invertis à la recherche d'un mâle se contentent souvent d'un inverti aussi efféminé qu'eux. Mais il suffit qu'ils n'appartiennent pas au sexe féminin, dont ils ont en eux un embryon dont ils ne peuvent se servir, ce qui arrive à tant de fleurs hermaphrodites et même à certains animaux hermaphrodites, comme l'escargot, qui ne peuvent être fécondés par eux-mêmes, mais peuvent l'être par d'autres hermaphrodites. (42-43)

Proust's literary portrayal of the invert's desire exposes multiple contradictions inherent to models of inverted desire, illuminating an aspect of the scientific explanations that

---

[7]   Proust's representation of homosexuality has obviously drawn the attention of gay-lesbian and queer scholars for some time. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's discussion in *Epistemology of the Closet* has become somewhat of a canonical queer reading of Proust's portrayal. For a critical discussion of Proust's queer academic reception, see Volker Woltersdorff's "Prousts *queering*: Homosexualisierung der Literatur statt homosexueller Geständnisliteratur."

might otherwise remain carefully shrouded in a hermetic logic. Not only is Proust's invert riddled with contradictions, he also has a certain affinity to irony, an awareness of the conflicting forces that structure his own pathologic identity. The invert is compared to a Shakespearean comic hero—specifically, a female character disguised as a young boy, who must ultimately disappoint the women who have fallen for him:

> Le jeune homme que nous venons d'essayer de peindre était si évidemment une femme, que les femmes qui le regardaient avec désir étaient vouées (à moins d'un goût particulier) au même désappointement que celles qui, dans les comédies de Shakespeare, sont déçues par une jeune fille déguisée qui se fait passer pour un adolescent. (32-33)

The theatricality of the invert clearly marks Proust's portrayal as well. While his description draws from various scientific discourses, including sexual pathology, he also incorporates other elements of inversion that a strictly medical or juridical understanding of this sub-species of human being would otherwise exclude.

The invert's affinity to playing a part, wearing masks, and having to perform as other than one is have a special place in the history of inversion and inverts. Ulrichs' description of the Urning touches upon these aspects. Because of social pressures and persecution, the Urning is forced to assume roles that allow him to maintain his secret attractions. With a man's body, he is able to play a Dioning, who is attracted to women. But this act is just as theatrical as a woman who plays a man on stage: "Den Mann spielen wir nur. Wir spielen ihn, wie auf dem Theater Weiber ihn spielen, oder wie der in Paris aufgewachsene Deutsche den Franzosen spielt, oder der in Deutschland aufgewachsene Jude den Deutschen" (*Inclusa* 13). Sexual identity, national identity, and "ethnic"/religious identity are set up here as mere theatrics—or rather, theatrics are, like Proust's fabulously complex flowers, a means of survival for the Urning.[8] Certainly, Ulrichs' greater purpose is to create a social and legal space for Urninge so that they are not forced to wear masks. However, the sentence from *Inclusa* engenders a complex tension. On the one hand, it seems to de-essentialize these identity categories by claiming that it is possible for a German to pass as a Frenchman, a Jew to pass as German, and an Urning as a Dioning. On the other hand, and more fundamental to his overall argument, he posits an essential core, a soul, that ultimately defines an individual's true self. This configuration calls into

---

[8] For a fascinating analysis of the perverse pollinations in Proust see Teresa Hiergeist's "Sexualpathologie und Leserbeteiligung in *À la recherche du temps perdu*." Hiergeist builds her argument around a mutual relationship of pleasure between text and reader that lends further erotic aspects to the practice of "reading." For her discussion of the pollinating flowers, see in particular 244-46. One might also think of Oskar Panizza's "Das Verbrechen in Tavistock-Square," in which the young policeman Jonathan discovers "self-pollinating" flowers in the park at night. The short prose piece plays with the absurd situation at the time involving the censors, when the sin that dare not speak its name could not indeed be spoken or written. Jonathan thus cannot report what he saw to his commanding officer without breaking the law—hence his use of flowery language.

question the notion of an internal, spiritual essence, especially given the perplexing polar relationships between body, soul, and desire that we encounter in explanations of sexual desire. What function does the soul still have in terms of being an object of desire? And what other attributes belong to the soul: Germanness? Jewishness? And how do these other attributes relate to the magnetic forces of desire? At the same time, the invert's use of theatrical methods amplifies the power of superficiality and appearances—not as a new externalized essence, but rather as a keen awareness of irony and the mechanisms involved in negotiating the play between inside and outside, knowing and not knowing and between what is said/written and what is meant, between acts and identity.

Queer ouverture

How ironic then that the pathologized homosexual should become the inheritor of the name "invert." There is very little ironic flare to be found in Krafft-Ebing's contrary sexual feelings. And though there is a tragic irony to the fact that Hirschfeld's scientific study of homosexuality would qualify him as an expert witness for the prosecution, it is a different sort of irony than the one that reigns over the literary inverted worlds of the nineteenth century. But the tradition of inversion does not simply diverge down two paths: the one leading to double-entendres and aesthetic refinement and the other to the continued persecution of homosexuals through the Nazi regime up to the abolishment of paragraph 175. That is to say, though the "invert" seems to have been stripped of his gay apparel and subjected to the regulations of a medico-juridical system, a certain affinity persists between the invert as homosexual and the invert as ironist. For all of its problematic premises, Susan Sontag's "Notes on Camp" brings this association to a point:

> 51. The peculiar relation between Camp taste and homosexuality has to be explained. While it's not true that Camp taste *is* homosexual taste, there is no doubt a peculiar affinity and overlap. Not all liberals are Jews, but Jews have shown a peculiar affinity for liberal and reformist causes. So, not all homosexuals have Camp taste. But homosexuals, by and large, constitute the vanguard—and the most articulate audience—of Camp. (The analogy is not frivolously chosen. Jews and homosexuals are the outstanding creative minorities in contemporary urban culture. Creative, that is, in the truest sense: they are creators of sensibilities. The two pioneering forces of modern sensibility are Jewish moral seriousness and homosexual aestheticism and irony.) (290)

Sontag's analogy between homosexuals and Jews is explicitly not arbitrary, though she does not refer to Proust's conflation of the two—a comparison that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick critically discusses in detail in *The Epistemology of the Closet*. But to stick with Sontag for now, the purposefulness of this juxtaposition that she insists upon culminates in the last sentence, in which Sontag succinctly refers to the connection between

homosexuals, aesthetics, and irony. Camp, thus, appears to be the ironic invert's legacy. Indeed, there is something of a Camp aesthetic that runs throughout the literary history presented in this study. While that coalition of aesthetics, inversion, and deviant desires might be used to constitute a new identitarian history (one that, like Sontag's, reinscribes the invert within a system of congenital determinism and essential meanings), I suggest instead that the link between irony and inversion speaks to an anti-identitarian tradition that is perhaps best described today as "queer."

If the world of inverts in the nineteenth century tends to lose its utopian flare and carnevalesque charm, it is quite possibly due to the appropriation of inversion by the medico-social discourse on sexual pathology. Homosexuality, like the inverted world, was no longer a temporary suspension of "normal" relations, but a pathological permanent state of identity. In order to secure this identity, the alterity of inversion needed to be circumscribed and bolstered against indeterminacy and multiple meanings. In other words, the discourse of sexual pathology (and the early homosexual emancipation movement for that matter) had to eliminate irony from its project. Hegel would be proud. The stages of inversion we have encountered tell another story however, in which irony and duplicity thrive, in which sexuality and philosophy form a grotesque pair, and in which history and theater coincide. And even if this ahistory of queer identity involves looking askance and entering into inverted worlds where same-sex desire is not the main attraction, it relies upon a shared past of inversion and explores the breadth of that past before "der Invertierte" was harnessed by other discourses in order to carve out a legalized subjectivity. This is not to say that Karl Heinrich Ulrichs' goals were misplaced. The lingering question is, nevertheless, what is the cost of legalizing those once sinful acts. They may no longer be criminal, but the individuals who would practice them become all the more tractable.

My study has focused on the theater as a site of inversion and the tension between acts and identity that the theatrical tends to relax and reshape, but there are any number of other approaches to the history and contemporary continuation of queer subjectivities that might also lead to further critical questions about other stages of inversion. Lee Edelman, for example, foregrounds negativity and the death drive in his book *No Future*:

> If the fate of the queer is to figure the fate that cuts the thread of futurity, if the jouissance, the corrosive enjoyment, intrinsic to queer (non)identity annihilates the fetishistic jouissance that works to *consolidate* identity by allowing reality to coagulate around its ritual reproduction, then the only oppositional status to which our queerness could ever lead would depend on our taking seriously the place of the death drive we're called on to figure. (30)

Edelman's position is, like Sontag's, celebratory of a certain minority perspective. Instead of championing aesthetic taste, he posits a radical negativity that queers might perform

as a mode of non-compliance with the consolidation of identities. Again, the similarities between twentieth-century queer positions of self-shattering and nineteenth-century notions about ironic subjectivity stand out. For Edelman, the (negative) potential behind queerness is its capacity to disrupt social structures that otherwise enforce a certain degree of *Gleichschaltung*, thereby eliminating difference in violent ways. José Muñoz calls this other mode of relating to systems based on a singularity of identity "disidentification" and sees it as a way to counter dominant ideology. To return to Muñoz's presentation of the concept from the Prologue, "Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology" (11). The three modes that Muñoz is referring to belong to Michel Pêcheux's classification of 1) identification, 2) counter-identification, and 3) disidentification. Muñoz brings disidentification into a queer context, in which the stakes of identity are especially high for people of color in a larger social structure that demands individuals to identify with (or as) a catalogue of potential identity markers. By extension identification means buying into a system that is fundamentally disadvantageous to those minority identities we are compelled to choose for ourselves. This third mode offers an alternative to either directly collaborating through identification or indirectly supporting the system through the negation made possible by counter-identification (which draws support from the oppositional binaries that dominant ideology eagerly provides). Disidentification means not playing along in the identity game. It means exaggerating the performance of identity to the point that the basic premises no longer make sense. In this way disidentification operates similarly to inversion when the latter is more than just a mere reversal of two opposed positions. A simple inversion would be a counter-identification, in which the child takes on the role of the parent or a man identifies as a woman. The theatrical inversions of the nineteenth century call into question the premises of a simple inversion through the complex relationships underlying the spectator position vis-à-vis the stage world. Indeed, Muñoz also speaks to how disidentification challenges common viewing practices, such that viewing is not merely a passive, receptive activity, but also brings about change in the way that certain identities are represented (29).

Muñoz characterization of disidentification might be thought together with Jacques Rancière's discussion of emancipated spectatorship. Rancière, too, proposes a third way of approaching the relationship between spectator and spectacle, one that questions the nature of that division: "There remains a third way that aims not to amplify effects, but to problematize the cause-effect relationship itself and the set of presuppositions that sustain the logic of stultification" (22). Rancière contrasts this third way with a first that would just enlarge the artistic spectacle and production to re-establish the *Gesamtkunstwerk* on

an even larger scale and a second that takes into account the divide between viewer and show but only to the extent that that division can be exploited to create a more spectacular show.[9] To render the analogy between Muñoz's and Rancière's three-fold categorization more explicit: Playing along with identification means keeping with the status quo and making more of the same—keeping sacred the "ritual of reproduction" that Edelman mentions. Identification is a big show for an undifferentiated audience. A counter-identification makes use of the division between various roles, but does not question the division itself—an audience member joins the action on stage but is sent back to her seat after she has played her part, a mere accessory. The third way enables a radical rethinking of identity, dominant ideology, and knowledge. Indeed, Rancière's opponent is not dominant ideology (at least he does not name it so here) but "stultification," that mode of knowing that depends upon the limitless distance between the knowledgeable teacher and the ignorant pupil. The third way for Muñoz and Rancière leads to an inverted world that is not just a (remedial) stage of development but a valid and critical position from which we might observe the world—not passively, but also not actively, and also not from a sublime distance, but also not complicit in the normal workings of the world.[10] This mode of observation and critical reflection is something else, something queer, *verkehrt*.

The theatrical does not guarantee the revelation of a third way, even with its affiliations to the performative force of language. The relation between spectator and stage can and does remain unproblematic in many cases. But the theatrical can also open up new and radical ways of thinking and doing identity—and this potential comes out in the works of the authors examined here. Inversion is one mechanism that the theater might use to initiate a critical reflection on the structure of identity and the seductive reification of subjectivity involved therein. While I would be reluctant to construe the central figures of the literary analyses—Grünhelm, Giglio, Valerio, Wenzel, Prospère—as radical and revolutionary protagonists in the history of inversion, they do present extraordinary methods of dealing with inversion, identity, and acts. This study has focused on how five textual moments suggest a different history of inversion, one that does not end with Freud's *Invertierte* or Proust's *l'inverti*. Instead, that history is still being written and is in need of more and varied approaches. Further research on the inverted worlds of the

---

[9] This exploitation is perhaps another form of parasitism and, as such, subject to the incessant displacements of the parasite as described by Michel Serres: "In the system, noise and message exchange roles according to the position of the observer and the action of the actor, but they are transformed into one another as well as a function of time and of the system. They make order or disorder" (66).

[10] And in this sense, the third way should not be thought of as the completion of a dialectical movement. The final position is not a harmonious synthesis but rather disjunctive and intractable. The post-structuralist and post-colonial draw to thirds is perhaps most apparent in third space theory as developed by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*.

nineteenth century might take a more author-based approach that would look more broadly at the works of Tieck, Hoffmann, Büchner, Keller, Schnitzler, or other authors for evidence of inverted relationships in their works and how they support or diffuse the claims made here about *Verkehrung*. And though the inverted world has a particular cultural resonance in Germany, further work need not restrict itself to the German-speaking world and should certainly include more voices from women writers and other underrepresented authors. Another expansive project might take up the history of sexology and examine inversion models in both canonical and non-canonical works of *Sexualpathologie* in more detail. And still another possibility would be to refocus the readings developed here in such a way that highlights even more the (queer) structures of desire that always seem to course through inverted worlds. My study has opted for more of a *Stichprobe* approach that favors metonymy over metaphor—another coupling that would provide a fruitful basis for the further study of the literary history of the inverted world.

The coinciding semantic fields that connect inversion, perversion, and *die verkehrte Welt* in the nineteenth century provide a point of departure for an alternative history of queer identity. This history tells of a theatrical tradition of identity that repeatedly destabilizes the congruent tradition of reifying identities in the name of science and/or justice. This study is not a history of homosexuality, nor an analysis of same-sex desire in literary texts—to confuse it for such a work would be to do injustice to the project of queer studies and lesbian and gay studies that must not lose touch with the sexual materiality of its categories of analysis. The literary history written here decontextualizes "queer" from its inverted and perverted setting, only to ask in the end: What is it that remains *verkehrt* in both the history of the invert-homosexual and that of the ironist from the inverted world? And what sort of "oppositional status" is still available for queers in light of this history and its extension into the twentieth and twenty-first century? How does the history of the inverted world help us to critically examine the current normalization of queer identities and desires? What sort of inverted acts are still possible—still capable of creating the sort of unrest that we see in the stages of inversion throughout the nineteenth century?

Works Cited by Sections

Prologue: Inverted Worlds and Queer Methods & *Vorspiel*: Philosophical Inversions

Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005.

Althusser, Louis. "On the Materialist Dialectic: On the Unevenness of Origins." In *For Marx*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Verso, 2005. 161-218.

Aschheim, Steven E. *In Times of Crisis: Essays on European Culture, Germans, and Jews*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2001.

Babcock, Barbara A. Introduction. *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*. Ed. Barbara Babcock. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978. 13-36.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World* (1965). Trans. Hélène Iswolsky. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1968.

Block, Richard. "Second Reads: Althusser Reading Marx Reading Hegel." *boundary 2* 22.1 (1995): 211-33.

Brentano, Clemens. *Gockel, Hinkel, Gackeleia*. Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1973.

Bong, Jörg. *Texttaumel: Poetologische Inversionen von "Spätaufklärung" und "Frühromantik" bei Ludwig Tieck*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2000.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso, 2004.

– – –. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.

– – –. *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France.* New York: Columbia UP, 1987.

Castagna, Luigi, and Gregor Vogt-Spira. *Pervertere – Ästhetik der Verkehrung: Literatur und Kultur neronischer Zeit und ihre Rezeption*. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, Vol. 151. Munich: K.G. Saur, 2002.

Cicero. *De Oratore I, II.* Trans. E.W. Sutton. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1968.

Cohler, Deborah. *Citizen, Invert, Queer: Lesbianism and War in Early Twentieth-Century Britain*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010.

Conley, Thomas M. *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990.

Curtius, Ernst Robert. *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*. 1948. Tübingen: Francke, 1993.

De Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.

Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm. 16 Vols. Leipzig 1854-1961. 9 April 2014. <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/>.

Donaldson, Ian. *The World Upside Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1970.

Edelman, Lee. *Homographesis*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Fichte, Johann G. *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*. Hamburg: Meiner, 1997.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *Ästhetik des Performativen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004.

Flay, Joseph C. "Hegel's 'Inverted World.'" *The Review of Metaphysics* 23 (1970): 662-78.

Foot, Philippa. "Nietzsche: The Revaluation of Values." In *Oxford Readings in Philosophy: Nietzsche*. Ed. John Richardson and Brian Leiter. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. 210-21.

Freud, Sigmund. *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*. 1905. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2005.

Frank, Manfred and Gerhard Kurz. "Ordo inversus: Zu einer Reflexionsfigur bei Novalis, Hölderlin, Kleist und Kafka." In *Geist und Zeichen: Festschrift für Arthur Henkel*. Ed. Herbert Anton, Bernhard Gajek, and Peter Pfaff. Heidelberg: Winter, 1977. 75-97.

Frank, Manfred. *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik: Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Hegels Dialektik: Fünf hermeneutische Studien*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1971.

Grabowsky, Norbert. *Die verkehrte Geschlechtsempfindung oder die mannmännliche und weibweibliche Liebe*. Leipzig: Spohr, 1894.

Glassbrenner, Adolf. *Die verkehrte Welt*. 1855. Berlin: Otto Janke, 1873.

Gray, Richard T. *Stations of the Divided Subject: Contestation and Ideological Legitimation in German Bourgeois Literature, 1770-1914*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995.

Grimmelshausen, Hans Jakob Christoph. *Die verkehrte Welt*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1973.

Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1998.

– – –. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke UP, 2011.

Halperin, David M. *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002.

Hamacher, Werner. "The Second of Inversion: Movements of a Figure through Celan's Poetry." In *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*. Trans. Peter Fenves. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1996.

Hegel, G.W.F. *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Hamburg: Meiner, 2006.

Heine, Heinrich. "Verkehrte Welt." 1821. In *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Ed. Manfred Windfuhr. Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe, 1973.

Helmich, Hans-Joachim. *"Verkehrte Welt" als Grundgedanke des Marxschen Werkes: Ein Beitrag zum Problem des Zusammenhanges des Marxschen Denkens*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1980.

Hub, Ludwig. "Die verkehrte Welt." *Der Sammler: Ein Blatt zur Unterhaltung und Belebung* 10.12 (1841): 52. 20 June 2015. <http://book.google.de>.

Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York: NYU Press, 1996.

Johnstone, Japhet. "Unthinking Divisions: Gender between the Social and the Literary?" In *Literatur Macht Gesellschaft: Neue Beiträge zur theoretischen Modellierung des Verhältnisses von Literatur und Gesellschaft*. Ed.Nikolas Buck et al. Heidelberg: Winter, 2015. 101-120.

Kant, Immanuel. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Hamburg: Meiner, 1990.

Kenner, Hedwig. *Das Phänomen der verkehrten Welt in der griechisch-römischen Antike*. Klagenfurt: Rudolf Habelt, 1970.

Kleist, Heinrich von. *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*. Ed. Helmut Sembdner. Vol. 2. Munich: Carl Hanser 1984.

König. Johann Ulrich. *Die verkehrte Welt.* Hamburg, 1725.

Kraß, Andreas. "Queer lesen: Literaturgeschichte und Queer Theory." In *Gender Studies: Wissenschaftstheorien und Gesellschaftskritik*. Ed. Therese Frey Steffen, Caroline Rosenthal, and Anke Väth. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004. 233-48.

Kunzle, David. "World Upside Down: The Iconography of a European Broadsheet Type." In *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*. Ed. Barbara Babcock. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978. 39-94.

Kuper, Michael. *Zur Semiotik der Inversion: Verkehrte Welt und Lachkultur im 16. Jahrhundert*. Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 1993.

Large, Duncan. "A Note on the Term 'Umwerthung.'" *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 39 (2010): 5-11.

Lausberg, Heinrich. *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990.

Lendle, Otto. Rev. of *Das Phänomen der verkehrten Welt in der griechischrömischen Antike* by Hedwig Kenner. *Gnomon* 45.1 (1973): 73-78.

Marx, Karl. *Deutsche Ideologie (1845/46)*. In *Die Frühschriften*. Stuttgart: Kröner, 1953. 339-485.

– – –. *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*. Stuttgart: Kröner, 1957.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinn." In *Werke in drei Bänden*. Vol. 3. Munich: Carl Hanser, 1954. 309-22.

– – –. *Zur Genealogie der Moral: Eine Streitschrift*. In *Werke in drei Bänden*. Vol. 2. Munich: Carl Hanser, 1954. 762-900.

Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg). "Philosophische Studien 1795/96 (Fichte-Studien)." *Das philosophisch-theoretische Werk*. Ed. Hans-Joachim Mähl. Vol. 2. Munich: Carl Hanser, 1978. 7-210.

Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria.* Vol. 3. Trans. H.E. Butler. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1976.

Rehbock, Helmut. "Inversion". *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*. Ed. Gert Ueding. Vol. 4. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998. 587-592.

Röcke, Werner. "Das verkehrte Fest. Soziale Normen und Karneval in der Literatur des Spätmittelalters." *Neohelicon* 17.1 (1990): 202-31.

Rohy, Valerie. "Ahistorical." *GLQ* 12:1 (2006): 61-83.

Schirmer, Alfred, ed. *Die sprichwörtlichen Redensarten im deutschen Volksmund nach Sinn und Ursprung erläutert*. Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1954.

Stekel, Wilhelm. *Onanie und Homosexualität: Die homosexuelle Parapathie*. Berlin: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1921.

Thomas, Calvin. "On Being Post-Normal: Heterosexuality after Queer Theory." In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory*. Ed. Noreen Giffney and Michael O'Rourke. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009. 17-32.

"verse, n." *OED Online*. Oxford UP, June 2015. 24 July 2015. <http://www.oed.org>.

Verene, Donald Phillip. *Hegel's Recollection*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1985.

Walker, Giselle, and E. S. Leedham-Green, ed. *Identity*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2010.

Weber, Samuel. *Theatricality as Medium*. New York: Fordham UP, 2004.

Weder, Christine. "Ein medizinisch-literarisches Symptom: zum Schwindel bei E.T.A. Hoffmann." *Hoffmann Jahrbuch* 19 (2002): 76-95.

Weise, Christian. *Von der verkehrten Welt*. 1683. In *Sämtliche Werke: Lustspiele III*. Ed. John D. Lindberg. Vol 12.1. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986.

Act 1: Inverted Spectatorship as Critique of Enlightenment in Tieck's *Die verkehrte Welt*

Adorno, Theodor W. and Max Horkheimer. *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2000.

Arntzen, Helmut. *Die ernste Komödie: Das deutsch Lustspiel von Lessing bis Kleist*. Munich: Nymphenburger, 1968.

Behrmann, Alfred. "Wiederherstellung der Komödie aus dem Theater: Zu Tiecks 'historischem Schauspiel' *Die verkehrte Welt*." *Euphorion* 79 (1985): 139-81.

Benay, Jeanne. "Le théâtre de Ludwig Tieck: tradition et révolution." *Revue d'Allemagne* 12 (1980): 547-66.

Bong, Jörg, *Texttaumel: Poetologische Inversionen von "Spätaufklärung" und "Frühromantik" bei Ludwig Tieck*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2000.

Chambers, Samuel and Michael O'Rourke. "Jacques Rancière on the Shores of Queer Theory." *borderlands e-journal* 8.2 (2009): 1-19. 23 August 2015. <http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol8no2_2009/chambersorourke_intro.htm>.

Durst, Uwe. "Realitätssystemisch einfache und komplexe Varianten der Spiel-im-Spiel-Struktur." *Neohelicon* 37 (2010): 489-507.

Frank, Manfred. *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik: Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989.

Galaski, Lisa. "Romantische Ironie in Tiecks *Verkehrter Welt*: Zum Verständnis einer artistischen Theaterkomödie aus der Berliner Frühromantik." *Recherches Germaniques* 14 (1984): 23-57.

Garff, Joakim. *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*. Princeton UP, 2013.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Faust: Eine Tragödie*. In *Faust: Texte*. Ed. Albrecht Schöne. Frankfurt am Main: DKV, 1994.

Haym, Rudolf. *Die romantische Schule: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Geistes*. 1870. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Vorlesung über die Ästhetik I*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.

Holtei, Karl von, ed. *Briefe an Ludwig Tieck*. Breslau: Trewendt, 1864.

Kant, Immanuel. "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" In *Immanuel Kants Werke: Schriften von 1783–1788*. Ed. Artur Buchenau and Ernst Cassirer. Vol. 4. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer 1913. 167–76.

– – –. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates*. Trans. Lee M. Capel. London: Collins, 1966.

– – –. *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*. Trans. Alastair Hannay. London: Penguin, 1992.

– – –. *Fear and Trembling. Repetition.* Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna V. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1983.

– – –. *Om Begrebet Ironi med stadigt Hensn til Socrates*. In *Søren Kierkegaard: Samled Værker*. Vol. 1. Ed. A.B. Drachmann and J.L. Heiberg. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1962. 59-331.

– – –. *Über den Begriff der Ironie mit ständiger Rücksicht auf Sokrates*. Trans. Emanuel Hirsch. Düsseldorf: Eugen Diederichs, 1961.

Köpke, Rudolf. *Ludwig Tieck: Erinnerung aus dem Leben des Dichters nach dessen mündlichen und schriftlichen Mitteilungen*. Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1855.

Landfester, Ulrike. "'...die Zeit selbst ist thöricht geworden...': Ludwig Tiecks Komödie Der gestiefelte Kater (1797) in der Tradition des Spiel im Spiel-Dramas." In *Ludwig Tieck: Literaturprogramm und Lebensinszenierung im Kontext seiner Zeit*. Ed. Walter Schmitz. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997. 101-33.

Larson, Kenneth E. "The Origins of the 'Schlegel-Tieck' Shakespeare in the 1820s." *The German Quarterly* 60.1 (1987): 19-37.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatisches Theater*. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1999.

Münz, Walter. Afterword. *Die Verkehrte Welt*. By Ludwig Tieck. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996. 159-91.

Münz, Walter, ed. *Die verkehrte Welt: Ein historisches Schauspiel in fünf Aufzügen*. By Ludwig Tieck. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996.

Ophälders, Markus. "Ironie bei Tieck und Solger." In *Ludwig Tieck: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*. Ed. Claudia Stockinger and Stefan Scherer. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011. 365-76.

Pestalozzi, Karl. *Die verkehrte Welt*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1964.

Petzold, Ruth. "Das Spiel spielt sich selbst: Ludwig Tiecks *Verkehrte Welt*." In *Das Denken der Sprache und die Performanz des Literarischen um 1800*. Ed. Stephan Jaeger and Stefan Willer. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000. 171-89.

Pikulik, Lothar. *Frühromantik: Epoche – Werke – Wirkung*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1992.

Pöggeler, Otto. *Hegels Kritik der Romantik*. Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität, 1956.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Trans. Gregroy Elliott. London: Verso, 2011.

Ribbat, Ernst. *Ludwig Tieck: Studien zur Konzeption und Praxis romantischer Poesie*. Regensburg: Athenäum, 1978.

Schlegel, Friedrich. *Fragmente*. In *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*. Ed. Ernst Behler et al. Vol. 2. Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958.

Strohschneider-Kohrs, Ingrid. *Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1960.

Szondi, Peter. "Friedrich Schlegel und die romantische Ironie. Mit einer Beilage über Tiecks Komödien." In *Schriften*. Vol. 2. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2011. 11-31.

Tieck, Ludwig. *Die verkehrte Welt: Ein historisches Schauspiel in fünf Aufzügen*. In *Ludwig Tieck: Phantasus. Schriften in zwölf Bänden*. Ed. Manfred Frank. Vol. 6. Frankfurt am Main: DKV, 1985. 567-660.

Verene, Donald Phillip. *Hegel's Recollection*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1985.

– – –. *The History of Philosophy: A Reader's Guide*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2008.

Wagner-Egelhaaf, Martina. "Sirenengesänge. Mythos und Medialität der weiblichen Stimme." In *Mythen in Kunst und Literatur: Tradition und kulturelle Repräsentation*. Ed. Annette Simonis and Linda Simonis. Cologne: Böhlau 2004. 383-403

Weimar, Klaus. "Limited poem unlimited – Tiecks verkehrtes Welttheater." In *Germanistik und Komparatistik*. Ed. Hendrik Birus. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995. 144-59

Weise, Christian. *Von der verkehrten Welt*. 1683. In *Sämtliche Werke: Lustpiele III*. Ed. John D. Lindberg. Vol 12.1. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986.

Zeydel, Edwin H. *Ludwig Tieck the German Romanticist: A Critical Study*. 1935. New York: Georg Olms, 1971.

Act 2: Inverted Identity Disorder: Perverse Symptoms and Cures in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Prinzessin Brambilla*

Bergson, Henri. *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*. Trans. Cloudesley Brererton and Fred Rothwell. New York: MacMillan, 1914.

Burwick, Frederick. "Play-Acting in Hoffmann's *Prinzessin Brambilla*." *Comparative Literature* 66.4 (2014): 399-419.

Cramer, Thomas. *Das Groteske bei E.T.A. Hoffmann*. Munich: Fink, 1966.

De Man, Paul. "The Concept of Irony." *Aesthetic Ideology*. Ed. Andrzej Warminski. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996. 163-84.

– – –. "The Rhetoric of Temporality." *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996. 187-228.

Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.

Dembeck, Till. "(Paratextual) Framing and the Work of Art: E.T.A. Hoffmann's Prinzessin Brambilla." In *Framing Borders in Literature and Other Media*. Ed. Werner Wolf and Walter Bernhart. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006. 263-93.

Eckermann, Johann Peter. *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*. Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1885.

Essen, Gesa von. "Die Subversion der Wohlabgegrenztheit – das Exzentrische in E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Prinzessin Brambilla*." In *Das Subversive in der Literatur: Die Literatur als das Subversive*. Ed. Karol Sauerland. Torún: University Mikolaja Kopernika, 1998. 49-68.

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. "Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre." In *Schriften zur Wissenschaftslehre. Werke*. Ed. Wilhelm G. Jacobs. Vol. 1. Frankfurt am Main: DKV, 1997. 65-97.

Frank, Manfred. *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik: Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989.

Freud, Sigmund. *Das Ich und das Es*. 1923. In *Sigmund Freud: Studienausgabe*. Ed. Alexander Mitscherlich, Angel Richard, and James Strachey. Vol. 3. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2000. 275-330.

Frischmann, Bärbel. "Personale Identität und Ironie: E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Prinzessin Brambilla*, Fichtes Philosophie und Friedrich Schlegels Ironie." *Colloquia Germanica* 38 (2005): 93-122.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. In *Werke: Romane und Novellen II*. Vol. 7. Munich: Beck, 1998.

Grimm, Reinhold. "From Callot to Butor: E.T.A. Hoffmann and the Tradition of the Capriccio." *MLN* 93.3 (1978): 399-415.

Heine, Heinrich. *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*. In *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*. Ed. Manfred Windfuhr. Vol. 8.1. Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe, 1979. 9-252.

Hiepko, Andreas. "Der Schwindel des Karnevals: Zu E.T.A. Hoffmans Capriccio *Prinzessin Brambilla*." In *Schwindelerfahrungen: Zur kulturhistorischen Diagnose eines vieldeutigen Symptoms*. Ed. Rolf-Peter Janz, Fabian Stoermer, and Andreas Hiepko. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003. 73-82.

Hoffmann, E.T.A. *Nachtstücke: Klein Zaches; Prinzessin Brambilla; Werke 1816-1820*. Ed. Gerhard Allroggen and Hartmut Steinecke. Frankfurt am Main: DKV, 2009.

Hölderlin, Friedrich. "Patmos." In *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe: Gedichte*. Vol. 1. Frankfurt am Main: DKV, 1992. 350-56.

Kaiser, Gerhard R. "E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Prinzessin Brambilla* als Antwort auf Goethes *Römisches Carneval*. Eine Lektüre im Lichte Baudelaires." In *Italienbeziehungen des klassischen Weimar*. Ed. Klaus Manger. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997. 215-42.

Kohn, Oliver. "Das Paradox über den Schauspieler: Mimesis, Ironie, Wahnsinn in *Prinzessin Brambilla*." *E.T.A. Hoffmann Jahrbuch* 19 (2011): 21-40.

Kremer, Detlef. "Literarischer Karneval: Groteske Motive in E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Prinzessin Brambilla*." In *E.T.A. Hoffmann: Neue Wege der Forschung*. Ed. Hartmut Steinecke. Darmstadt: WBG, 2006. 171-91.

Nassar, Dalia. *The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German Romantic Philosophy, 1795-1804*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2014.

Neumann, Gerhard. "E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Prinzessin Brambilla* als Entwurf einer 'Wissenspoetik': Wissenschaft – Theater – Literatur." In *Romantische Wissenspoetik: Die Künste und die Wissenschaften um 1800*. Ed. Gabriele Brandstetter and Gerhard Neumann. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004. 15-48.

Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg). "Philosophische Studien 1795/96 (Fichte-Studien)." In *Das philosophisch-theoretische Werk*. Ed. Hans-Joachim Mähl. Vol. 2. Munich: Carl Hanser, 1978. 7-210.

Scheffel, Michael. *Formen selbstreflexiven Erzählens: Eine Typologie und sechs exemplarische Analysen*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997.

Schmidt, Olaf. "'Die Wundernadel des Meisters' – Zum Bild-Text-Verhältnis in E.T.A. Hoffmanns Capriccio *Prinzessin Brambilla*." *E.T.A. Hoffmann Jahrbuch* 7 (1999): 50-62.

Schmidt, Ricarda. "Male Foibles, Female Critique and Narrative Capriciousness: On the Function of Gender in Conceptions of Art and Subjectivity in E.T.A. Hoffmann." In *From Goethe to Gide: Feminism, Aesthetics and the French and German Literary Canon 1770-1936*. Ed. Mary Orr and Lesley Sharpe. Exeter: University of Exeter, 2005. 49-64.

Schlutz, Alexander. "The Mirror of Laughter: Mediation, Self-Reflection, and Healing in E.T.A. Hoffman's *Princess Brambilla*." *European Romantic Review* 22.3 (2011): 415-22.

Steigerwald, Jörn. *Die fantastische Bildlichkeit der Stadt: Zur Begründung der literarischen Fantastik im Werk E.T.A. Hoffmanns*. Würzburg: Könighausen & Neumann, 2001.

Strohschneider-Kohrs, Ingrid. *Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1960.

Roussel, Martin. "Das exzentrische Ich: Einbildungskraft und Zerstreuung in E.T.A. Hoffmanns *Prinzessin Brambilla*." *E.T.A. Hoffmann Jahrbuch* 18 (2010): 59-77.

Act 3: Revolutionary Fools and Theatrical Signification in Büchner's *Leonce und Lena*

Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1984.

Beckers, Gustav. *Georg Büchners "Leonce und Lena": Ein Lustspiel der Langeweile*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1961.

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot: A Tragicomedy in Two Acts*. London: Faber and Faber, 1956.

Beise, Arnd. *Einführung in das Werk Georg Büchners*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010.

Beise, Arnd. "'Die Leute vertragen es nicht, dass man sich als Narr produziert': Georg Büchners Lustspiel *Leonce und Lena*." *Der Deutschunterricht* 6 (2002): 24-33.

Benjamin, Walter. "Über den Begriff der Geschichte." In *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 1.2. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974. 698-99.

Block, Richard. *The Spell of Italy: Vacation, Magic, and the Attraction of Goethe*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2006.

Büchner, Georg. *Leonce und Lena*. In *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*. Vol. 1. Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1967. 103-34.

Büchner, Georg. *Lenz*. In *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*. Vol. 1. Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1967. 77-101.

– – –. *Leonce und Lena: Verstreute Stücke*. In *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*. Vol. 1. Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1967. 135- 42.

Butler, Judith. "The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva." *Hypatia* 3.3 (1989): 104-118.

– – –. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (1988): 519-31.

Daase, Christopher. "'Da leugne einer die Vorsehung': Zur komischen Bedeutung der Valerio-Figur in *Leonce und Lena*." In *Referate. Zweites Internationales Georg Büchner Symposium 1987*. Ed. Burghard Dedner and Günter Oesterle. Frankfurt am Main: Hain, 1990. 379-98.

Dedner, Burghard. "Bildsysteme und Gattungsunterschiede in *Leonce und Lena, Dantons Tod* und *Lenz*." In *Georg Büchner, Leonce und Lena: Kritische Studienausgabe*. Ed. Burghard Dedner. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1987. 157-218.

– – –. "Vorbemerkung." In *Georg Büchner, Leonce und Lena: Kritische Studienausgabe*. Ed. Burghard Dedner. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1987. 1-6.

De Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. Mineapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983.

Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.

– – –. "Signature, Event, Context." In *Limited Inc.* Trans. Alan Bass. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1977.

Deufert, Marcus. "Lustspiel der verkehrten Welt – Bemerkung zur Konfiguration von Georg Büchners *Leonce und Lena*." In *Die dramatische Konfiguration*. Ed. Karl Konrad Polheim. Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997. 147-65.

Dörr, Volker. "'Melancholische Schweinsohren' und 'schändlichste Verwirrung': Zu Georg Büchners 'Lustspiel' *Leonce und Lena*." *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 77.1 (2003): 380-406.

Edelman, Lee. "I'm Not There: The Absence of Theory," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 21.1 (2009): 149-60.

Elm, Theo. "Georg Büchner: Zeitgeschichte in *Leonce und Lena*." In *Das verschlafene 19. Jahrhundert? Zur deutschen Literatur zwischen Klassik und Moderne*. Ed. Hans-Jörg Knobloch and Helmut Koopmann. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005. 93-101.

Engels, Friedrich and Karl Marx. *Das Kommunistische Manifest: Einführung, Text, Kommentar*. Ed. Gareth Stedman Jones. Munich: Beck, 2012.

Fortmann, Patrick. *Autopsie von Revolution und Restauration: Georg Büchner und die politische Imagination*. Freiburg: Rombach, 2013.

Hermand, Jost. "Der Streit um 'Leonce und Lena.'" *Georg Büchner Jahrbuch* 3 (1983): 98-117.

Hiebel, Hans H. "Das Lächeln der Sphinx – Das Phantom des Überbaus und die Aussparung der Basis: Leerstellen in Büchners *Leonce und Lena*." *Georg Büchner Jahrbuch* 7 (1988/9): 126-43.

Hinderer, Walter. *Büchner-Kommentar zum dichterischen Werk*. Munich: Winkler, 1977.

Im, Ho-Ill. "Idealismus und Materialismus in 'Leonce und Lena' von Georg Büchner in Hinblick auf Idealismuskritik." *Togil-munhak: Koreanische Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 36.2 (1995): 45-68.

Kelly, Oliver. *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993.

Knapp, Gerhard P. *Georg Büchner*. 3rd ed. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000.

Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language*. In *The Portable Kristeva*. Ed. Kelly Oliver. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. 27-92.

– – –. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia UP, 1984.

Luhmann, Niklas. *Liebe als Passion: Zur Codierung von Intimität*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998.

Lukens, Nancy. *Büchner's Valerio and the Theatrical Fool Tradition*. Stuttgart: Heinz, 1977.

Luxemburg, Rosa. "Massenstreik, Partei und Gewerkschaften." In *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 2. Berlin: Dietz, 1972. 92-170.

Mac Ewen, Leslie. *The Narren-Motifs in the Works of Georg Büchner*. Bern: Lang, 1968.

Martens, Wolfgang. "Leonce und Lena." In *Die deutsche Komödie: Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*. Düsseldorf: Bagel, 1977. 145-59.

Mayer, Hans. *Georg Büchner und seine Zeit*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972.

Moi, Toril. Introduction. In *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia UP, 1986. 1-22.

Mosler, Peter. *Georg Büchners Leonce und Lena: Langeweile als gesellschaftliche Bewußtseinsform*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1974.

Müller-Sievers, Helmut. *Desorientierung: Anatomie und Dichtung bei Georg Büchner*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003.

Poschmann, Henri. *Georg Büchner: Dichtung der Revolution und Revolution der Dichtung*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1983.

Primavesi, Patrick. "Komisches Aussetzen: Repräsentationskritik und Spiel in Büchners 'Leonce und Lena.'" In *Komik: Ästhetik, Theorien, Strategien*. Ed. Hilde Haider-Pregler. Vienna: Böhlau, 2006. 168-78.

Rings, Guido. "Georg Büchners 'Leonce und Lena': Ein Exemplum subversiver Kunst in einer spätabsolutistischen Gesellschaft." *Germanic Notes and Reviews* 31.2 (2000): 113-34.

Rohde, Carsten. "Pervertiertes Dasein: Über die Vereinbarkeit des Unvereinbaren im Werk Georg Büchners." *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 56.4 (2006): 161-84.

Ruckhäberle, Hans-Joachim. "*Leonce und Lena*: Zu Automat und Utopie." *Georg Büchner Jahrbuch* 3 (1983): 138-46.

Schmidt, Axel. *Tropen der Kunst: Zur Bildlichkeit der Poetik bei Georg Büchner*. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 1991.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.

– – –. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990.

Serres, Michel. *The Parasite*. Trans. Lawrence R. Schehr. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007.

Thorn-Prikker, Jan. *Revolutionär ohne Revolution: Interpretationen der Werke Georg Büchners*. Stuttgart: Cotta, 1978.

Wohlfahrt, Thomas. "Georg Büchners Lustspiel 'Leonce und Lena': Kunstform und Gehalt." In *Studien zu Georg Büchner*. Ed. Hans-Georg Werner. Berlin: Aufbau, 1988.

Act 4: Making the Clothes that Make the Man: Class, Gender, and Cross-Dressing in Keller's *Kleider machen Leute*

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Corkhill, Alan. "Good Fortune Maketh the Man? Notions of 'Glück' in the *Seldwyla* Novellas." In *Gottfried Keller "Die Leute von Seldwyla": Kritische Studien – Critical Essays*. Ed. Hans-Joachim Hahn and Uwe Seja. Bern: Peter Lang, 2007. 25-45.

Fleig, Anne. "'Märtyrer seines Mantels': Gottfried Kellers Novelle 'Kleider machen Leute.'" *Der Deutschunterricht* 4 (2008): 31-41.

Garber, Marjorie. *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

Görner, Rüdiger. "'Das Farbenwesen im Regentropfen': Gottfried Kellers Ontologie des Anscheins in *Kleider machen Leute*." In *Gottfried Keller "Die Leute von Seldwyla": Kritische Studien – Critical Essays*. Ed. Hans-Joachim Hahn and Uwe Seja. Bern: Peter Lang, 2007. 173-91.

Habermann, Frank. "Zeichen machen Leute: Semiose und Glück in Gottfried Kellers *Kleider machen Leute*." In *Glück paradox: Moderne Literatur und Medienkultur – theoretisch gelesen*. Ed. Anja Gerigk. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010. 89-114.

Hahn, Walther. "The Motif of Play in Gottfried Keller's *Novellen*." *The German Quarterly* 34.1 (1961): 50-57.

Hart, Gail K. *Readers and Their Fictions in the Novels and Novellas of Gottfried Keller*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1989.

Hildt, Friedrich von. *Gottfried Keller: Literarische Verheißung und Kritik der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft im Romanwerk*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1978.

Keller, Gottfried. *Die Leute von Seldwyla, Gesammelte Gedichte*. Munich: Winkler, 1961.

Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. *Psychopathia sexualis: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der konträren Sexualempfindung.* 9th edition. Stuttgart: Enke, 1894.

Kraß, Andreas. "Ikonographie: Der Kaiser als Queen." In *Des Kaisers neue Kleider: Über das Imaginäre politischer Herrschaft, Texte - Bilder – Lektüren*. Ed. Thomas Frank et al. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 2002. 171-86.

Mews, Siegfried. "Zur Funktion der Literatur in Kellers *Die Leute von Seldwyla*." *German Quarterly* 43.3 (1970): 394-405.

Paris Is Burning. Dir. Jennie Livingston. Miramax Films. 1990.

Preisendanz, Wolfgang. *Humor als dichterische Einbildungskraft: Studien zur Erzählkunst des poetischen Realismus*. Munich: Fink, 1976.

Riviere, Joan. "Womanliness as a Masquerade." In *The Inner World and Joan Riviere: Collected Papers 1929–1958*. Ed. Athol Hughes. London: Carnac Books, 1991. 90-101.

Schaffner, Anna Katharina. *Modernism and Perversion: Sexual Deviance in Sexology and Literature, 1850-1930*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Sebald, W.G. "Her kommt der Tod die Zeit geht hin: Anmerkungen zu Gottfried Keller." In *Logis in einem Landhaus: Über Gottfried Keller, Johann Peter Hebel, Robert Walser und andere.* Munich: Carl Hanser, 1998. 95-126.

Seja, Uwe. "*Seldwyla* – A Microeconomic Inquiry." In *Gottfried Keller "Die Leute von Seldwyla"*: *Kritische Studien – Critical Essays*. Ed. Hans-Joachim Hahn and Uwe Seja. Bern: Peter Lang, 2007. 93-116.

Selbmann, Rolf. *Gottfried Keller: Romane und Erzählungen*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2001.

Steinmayr, Markus. "Archive des Fehllesens: Zum Realismus Gottfried Kellers." In *Gesetz – Ironie: Festschrift für Manfred Schneider*. Ed. Rüdiger Campe and Michael Niehaus. Heidelberg: Synchron, 2004. 167-78.

Swales, Erika. *The Poetics of Skepticism: Gottfried Keller and* Die Leute von Seldwyla. Providence, RI: Berg, 1994.

Wagner-Egelhaaf, Martina. *Die Melancholie der Literatur*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997.

Act 5: Staged Revolutions: Theater, Law, and Desire in Arthur Schnitzler's *Der grüne Kakadu*

Austin, J.L. *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. 1981. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1994.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.

− − −. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (1988): 519-31.

− − −. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *Ästhetik des Performativen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004.

Friedrichsmeyer, Erhard. "Schnitzlers 'Der grüne Kakadu.'" *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 88. 2 (1969): 209-28.

Geitner, Ursula, and Findeisen, Britta, ed. *Schauspielerinnen: Der theatralische Eintritt der Frau in der Moderne*. Bielefeld: Haux, 1988.

Gutt, Barbara. *Emanzipation bei Arthur Schnitzler*. Berlin: Volker Spiess, 1978.

Halperin, David M. "Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality." *Representations* 63 (1998): 93-120.

Harrowitz, Nancy A. "Weininger and Lombroso: A Question of Influence." In *Jews and Gender: Responses to Otto Weininger*. Ed. Harrowitz, Nancy A. and Barbara Hyams. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1995. 72-90.

Hinderer, Walter. "Der Aufstand der Marionetten: Zu Arthur Schnitzlers Groteske *Der grüne Kakadu*." *Zeitgenossenschaft: Zur deutschsprachigen Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1987.

Ivory, Yvonne. "The Urning and His Own: Individualism and the Fin-de-Siècle Invert." *German Studies Review* 26.2 (2003): 333-52.

Kilian, Klaus. *Die Komödien Arthur Schnitzlers: Sozialer Rollenzwang und kritische Ethik*. Düsseldorf: Bettelsmann, 1972.

Klüger, Ruth. *Schnitzlers Damen, Weiber, Mädeln, Frauen*. Vienna: Picus, 2000.

Lang, Birgit. "The Viennese Legacy of Casanova: The Late Erotic Writings of Arthur Schnitzler and Franz Blei." *Interwar Vienna: Culture between Tradition and Modernity*. Ed. Deborah Holmes and Lisa Silverman. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009. 224-45.

Lorenz, Dagmar C. G. Introduction. *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003. 1-24.

Mennemeier, Franz Norbert. "Kritik der Revolution im Medium der neueren deutschen Komödie." *Das Wagnis der Moderne: Festschrift für Marianne Kesting*. Ed. Paul Gerhard Klussmann, et al. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993. 261-278.

Perlmann, Michaela L. *Arthur Schnitzler*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987.

Plato. *The Republic: The Complete and Unabridged Jowett Translation*. New York: Vintage Classics, 1991.

Roussel, Geneviève. "Arthur Schnitzler et la Révolution: *Le perroquet vert*, prologue en forme de grotesque." *Germanica* 6 (1989): 71-86.

Sandig, Holger. *Deutsche Dramaturgie des Grotesken um die Jahrhundertwende*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1980.

Schlegel, Friedrich. *Philosophische Lehrjahre I. Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*. Ed. Ernst Behler. Vol. 18.2. Munich: Schöningh, 1963.

– – – . "Über die Unverständlichkeit." *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*. Ed. Hans Eichner. Vol. 2. Munich: Schöningh, 1967. 363-73.

Schnitzler, Arthur. *Der grüne Kakadu. Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1962. 515-52.

– – –. *Paracelsus. Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1962. 465-514.

Schorske, Carl E. *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*. New York: Knopf, 1980.

Singer, Herbert. "Arthur Schnitzler: *Der grüne Kakadu*." In *Das deutsche Lustspiel II*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969.

Urbach, Reinhard. *Schnitzler Kommentar zu den erzählenden Schriften und dramatischen Werken.* Munich: Winkler, 1974.

Wynn, Thomas. "Prostitutes and Performances in Eighteenth-Century Paris." In *Prostitution and Eighteenth-Century Culture Sex, Commerce and Morality*. Ed. Ann Lewis. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011. 87-97.

Epilogue: The Irony of It All

Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality. Vol. 1: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Freud, Sigmund. *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*. 1905. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2005.

– – – . "Letter to an American mother" *American Journal of Psychiatry* 107 (1951): 787.

– – – . *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 1999.

Halperin, David. "Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality." *Representations* 63 (1998): 93-120.

Hergemöller, Bernd-Ulrich. "Von der 'stummen Sünde' zum 'Verschwinden der Homosexualität': Zuschreibungen und Identitäten." In *Die Geschichte der Homosexualitäten und die schwule Identität an der Jahrtausendwende*. Ed. Wolfram Setz. Berlin: rosa Winkel 2002. 13-41.

Hiergeist, Teresa. "Sexualpathologie und Leserbeteiligung in *À la recherche du temps perdu*." In *Crimes of Passion: Representationen der Sexualpathologie im frühen 20. Jahrhundert*. Eds. Oliver Böni and Japhet Johnstone. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015. 231-51.

Hirschfeld, Magnus. *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes*. 1914. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984.

Ivory, Yvonne. "The Urning and His Own. Individualism and the Fin-de-Siècle Invert." *German Studies Review* 26.2 (2003): 333-52.

Kennedy, Hubert C. Forward. *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mannmännliche Liebe*. Berlin: rosa Winkel, 1994. 9-18.

– – – . "The 'Third Sex' Theory of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs." In *Historical Perspectives on Homosexuality*. Ed. Salvatore J. Licata. New York: Haworth Press, 1981. 103-11.

Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. *Psychopathia sexualis*. 14th ed. Munich: Mathes & Seitz, 1984.

Kraus, Karl. "Der Fahl Riehl." *Grimassen. Ausgewählte Werke: 1902-1914*. Vol. 1. Munich: Langen and Müller, 1971. 73-93.

Marmor, Judd, ed. *Sexual Inversion: The Multiple Roots of Homosexuality*. New York: Basic Books, 1965.

Müller, Klaus. *Aber in meinem Herzen sprach eine Stimme so laut: Homosexuelle Autobiographien und medizinische Pathographien im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*. Berlin: rosa Winkel, 1991.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999.

Panizza, Oskar. "Verbrechen in Tavistock-Square." In *Die Menschenfabrik und andere Erzählungen*. Berlin: Buchverlag Der Morgen, 1984. 171-84.

Proust, Marcel. *À la recherce du temps perdu. Sodome et Gomorrhe*. Vol. 9. Paris: Gallimard, 1949.

Serres, Michel. *The Parasite*. Trans. Lawrence R. Schehr. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007.

Sontag, Susan. *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1966.

Tobin, Robert. "Early Nineteenth-Century Sexual Radicalism: Heinrich Hössli and the Liberals of His Day." In *After the History of Sexuality*. Ed. Scott Spector, Helmut Puff, and Dagmar Herzog. New York: Berghahn Books, 2012. 76-93.

Ulrichs, Karl Heinrich. *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mannmännliche Liebe. I. Vindex. II. Inclusa. III. Vindicta. IV. Formatrix. V. Ara spei.* Berlin: rosa Winkel, 1994.

– – – . "Vier Briefe aus: *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen.* Band 1 (1899)." In *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mannmännliche Liebe. I. Vindex. II. Inclusa. III. Vindicta. IV. Formatrix. V. Ara spei.* Berlin: rosa Winkel, 1994.

Weber, Philippe. *Der Trieb zum Erzählen: Sexualpathologie und Homosexualität.* Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008.

Woltersdorff, Volker. "Prousts *queering*: Homosexualisierung der Literatur statt homsexueller Geständnisliteratur." In *Sehen Lesen Begehren: Homosexualität in französischer Literatur und Kultur.* Ed. Dirk Naguschewski and Sabine Schrader. Berlin: Walter Frey, 2001. 83-104.