

Performing with Narrating: The Theatrical Adaptation of Novels on the Contemporary German Stage

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Zusammenfassung

Romanadaption ist zu einem sehr bemerkenswerten Phänomen auf der gegenwärtigen deutschen Bühne geworden. Obwohl Romanadaption nicht ganz neu für das Theater ist, zeichnen sie sich durch die außergewöhnliche Reichweite, Quantität und Qualität im einundzwanzigsten Jahrhundert aus. Viel wichtiger ist, dass viele prominente Theater und Regisseure in diese Welle involviert sind, und einige hervorragende Adaptionen sind zum Bestandteil des Repertoires geworden.

Für eine wissenschaftliche Untersuchung dieses Themas konzentriere ich, mich auf einige zentrale grundlegende Forschungsfelder, um die Entwicklungen und Redefinitionen fundamentaler Konzepte, einschließlich epischer, adaptiver und narrativer Konzepte, zu klären; dabei versuche ich auch zeitgenössische Konzepten und Ästhetik zu berücksichtigen.

Romanadaption steht der traditionellen Trennung von "dramatisch" und "episch" entgegen, ist aber aus der Perspektive des modernen Theaters nicht unantastbar. Die von Peter Szondi definierte "Episierung" und das von Bertolt Brecht geförderte "Epische Theater" haben beide ästhetische Affinitäten zur Romanadaption. Dann betrachte ich die gegenwärtige wissenschaftliche Überlegung über Adaption und den damit verbundenen theoretischen Hintergrund.

Außerdem diskutiere ich moderne Erzähltheorie, z. B. die strukturalistische Narratologie und die *speech-act* Theorie, beide haben erhebliche Auswirkungen auf die Performanzforschung und die zeitgenössische Theaterwissenschaft. Das Konzept *Erzählen* bezieht sich mit der theatralischen Ästhetik auf vielfältige Ebenen: einerseits ist die erzählende Methode zu einem gewöhnlichen theatralischen Ausdruck geworden; auf der anderen Seite wurde dem Erzählen schon neue

Bedeutung gegeben und es wurde mit einer offeneren Struktur erweitert. Neben dem theoretischen Beitrag bieten Narratologieforschung auch eine ganze Reihe von systematischen Analysewerkzeugen, und es gibt ausgereifte Untersuchungen zum Thema der Anwendung von narratologischen Methoden im theaterwissenschaftlichen Bereich.

In den Fallstudien möchte ich verschiedene gegenwärtige Romanadaptionen aus mehreren wichtigen Aspekten, d.h. episch, adaptive und narrative, untersuchen. Bei der Forschung habe ich einige Frage zuerst zu bestellen, z. B., wie diese Adaptionen neues Erzählen auf der Bühne etablierten, wie der erzählende Text selbst und die ästhetische Intention des Schöpfers in der Adaption funktioniert, und wie erzählende Elemente unter gegenwärtiger Ästhetik wirken. Insgesamt ist das wichtigste Thema meiner Forschung die Auseinandersetzung über "performing with narrating", also wie das neue Erzählen im Falle der Romanadaption auf der Bühne konstruiert wird.

Im Allgemeinen sollte eine Romanadaption nicht als etwas absolut Neues für das Theater angesehen werden, weder von den historischen Inszenierungspraktiken noch von der Perspektive eines umfassenderen Verständnisses des Adaptioniskonzepts in der Theatergeschichte. Doch heute erweist es sich in Bezug auf Quantität, Popularität und multiple ästhetische Tendenzen immer noch als etwas Anderes. Jeder adaptive Ansatz spiegelt die zeitgenössische Theaterästhetik auf unterschiedliche Weise wider; und für die gegenwärtige deutsche Bühne wäre es nicht fremd, einer freieren Haltung gegenüber dem literarischen Text und der freieren Konstruktion des Erzählens zu begegnen, die das Erbe des epischen Theaters und die Entwicklung des postdramatischen Theaters mit einschließt.

Ich wähle vier Adaptionen aus, auf die ich mich konzentriere, und im Allgemeinen liegt mein Interesse in der Erforschung von Transformationen in Genre, Text, Medium und Kontext.

Buddenbrooks (2005) von Stephan Kimmig und John von Düffel sowie *Der Idiot* (2016) von Mathias Hartmann zeigen unter den ausgewählten Inszenierungen eine offensichtliche Rekonstruktion einer dramatischen Struktur aus dem episodischen Material des originalen Romans, lassen aber auch zugleich eine klare epische Behandlung und andere Techniken, die an eine "postdramatische" Ästhetik erinnern, auf der Bühne erkennen. Im Gegensatz dazu gehören *Der Prozess* (2008) von Andreas Kriegenburg und *Der Idiot* (2002) von Frank Castorf definitiv zu einem postdramatischen Ansatz, der sich vor allem in ihren Einstellungen zum Text, insbesondere in ihren Verlagerungen der erzählten Welt im originalen Roman zeigt.

In einem sehr vereinfachten Sinn ist die Romanadaptation eine Rückkehr zum dramatischen Theater, aber bei näherer Betrachtung werden wir feststellen, dass das Konzept sowohl in Bezug auf die Dramatik als auch auf das Erzählen bereits geändert wurde. Erzählen, als eine Ansammlung vieler ästhetischer Konzepte, vermischt sich mit dem Konzept *Perform*, und beide konstruieren die generellen Ausdrucksmethoden und ästhetischen Neigungen der Romanadaptation im gegenwärtigen deutschen Theater.

Contents

PART I. Theatrical Novel Adaptation in Practice and Theory	1
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Chapter 1. Introduction: The Novel on the Stage.....	1
Chapter 2. Review: Researches Past and Present	13
2.1. Source Studies and Comparative Studies	13
2.2. New Narrative Aesthetics	19
2.3. Specific Studies on Theatrical Novel Adaptation	28
PART II. THEORIZING	40
Chapter 3. Concepts and Theories about “Epic” versus “Dramatic”.....	42
3.1. Classical Dichotomy: Epic and Dramatic	45
3.2. Epic Theater in a Modern Sense	53
3.3. Summary	57
Chapter 4. Adaptation Studies	57
4.1. Definition(s) of Adaptation	58
4.2. Text Transformation in Literature Studies	62
4.2.1. On the Materiality of Artwork	62
4.2.2. On the Temporal–Spatial Relation in the Narration	65
4.3. Novel Adaptation in Film Studies	68
4.4. Adaptation as Adaptation: Contemporary Studies	71
4.5. Summary	76
Chapter 5. Narrative Studies	78
5.1. Definition(s) of Narrative	79
5.2. Structuralist Narratology	83
5.3. Speech-Act Theory and Performative Narration	89
5.3.1. “How to Do Things with Words”	90
5.3.2. “Narrative as Performance”	94
5.4. Narratology in Theater Studies	102

5.5. Retrospection and Methodology 107

PART III. Case Studies 109

Chapter 6. Buddenbrooks Rewritten. Adaptation by Stephan Kimmig and John von Döffel in Thalia Theater Hamburg 2005..... 111

6.1. Text Reduction: On Characters and Backgrounds 113

6.2. Theater in the Epic 116

6.2.1. Theater as a Theme 119

6.2.2. Theatricalization in the Narration 124

6.3. Figures under Pressure 135

6.3.1. Father and Son: Unbalanced Conflict 138

6.3.2. Christian Buddenbrook as Clown 142

6.3.3. Tony Buddenbrook: From Comic to Tragic 148

6.4. The World in Buddenbrooks 152

Chapter 7. Visuality and Narration: Der Prozess by Andreas Kriegenburg (2008) 155

7.1. Text Selection and Reorganization 157

7.2. Visuality: Body and Stage Images 161

7.3. Physical Comedy as Model 171

7.4. Stylized Narration 179

7.5. Conclusion 188

Chapter 8. Staging Dostojewskij's Der Idiot. A Comparative Study: Matthias Hartmann (2016) and Frank Castorf (2002) 190

8.1. Dramatic Approach: Matthias Hartmann's Der Idiot in 2016 192

8.1.1. Transformation to a Dramatic Structure 194

8.1.2. Episierung within the dramatic structure 199

8.1.3. Myschkin as Idiot, Saint, Epileptic and Jesus Christ 212

8.2. Der Idiot in Berlin: A Post-dramatic Adaptation by Frank Castorf (2002)	226
8.2.1 Neustadt: Rebuilding a Performing Space	227
8.2.2. Fragmentary Structure and Collage Art	230
8.2.3. Myschkin in Neustadt	232
8.2.4. What's NEW in Der Idiot?	236
Chapter 9. Epilogue	240
Bibliography	245
Acknowledgements	259

PART I. Theatrical Novel Adaptation in Practice and Theory

Chapter 1. Introduction: The Novel on the Stage

In recent years, the theatrical adaptation of novels has become a remarkable phenomenon on the German stage, and has engaged with hundreds of different kinds of novels; more importantly, many prominent theaters and directors have involved themselves in this wave of adaptation, and some productions have become part of the repertoire. In 2008 one of the most influential theater magazines in Germany, *Theater Heute*, devoted an issue to the subject with the title “Dramatischer Nachwuchs: Thomas Mann, Kafka, Dostojewski, Camus, Koeppen, Kehlmann, Roche — Romane erobern die Bühne”¹, which provided a close examination of certain productions and their creators along with the economic and political foundations of this phenomenon. In some academic works, German scholars have used the term *Neues Erzähltheater*² (new narrative theater) to refer to theatrical adaptations from narrative literature, including novels, short stories, biography, epic, etc.

This new narrative theater has been noted in the last ten years for its unprecedented range, quantity and quality. In Germany alone, dramatic productions in public theaters have involved more than 60 novels, and this does not include different versions of the same original text, or those of countless private theaters, as well as contemporary operas, musicals and dance productions that are based on novels. Clearly, there is a certain amount of popular literature being adapted, such as

¹ *Theater Heute*, November 2008, pp. 4–15.

² See Andreas Enghart, “Neues Erzähltheater” in *Das Theater der Gegenwart*, München: 2013, pp. 119–121.

novels by Agatha Christie and Stephen King; but the selection of original texts has concentrated mainly on those widely accepted as classical works. Of these, Franz Kafka is perhaps one of the favorites of the theater makers; his famous novella *Die Verwandlung* and all three of his novels, *Der Prozess*, *Das Schloss* and *Amerika*, have already been staged many more times. Thomas Mann is another very well-loved novelist, and adaptations of his works could form a long list, with examples including *Buddenbrooks*, *Der Zauberberg*, *Doktor Faustus*, *Joseph und seine Brüder*, *Felix Krull* and so on. *Dämonen (Demons)* by Fjodor Dostojewskij was brought to the stage by the prominent director Frank Castorf in 1999, and this brilliant early production stimulated creative desires for adaptation. Those novels chosen by the German theaters are mostly, of course, written in German, especially those of the classical writers of the twentieth century. Moreover, Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann, who have both been mentioned before, as well as Robert Musil, Heinrich Mann, Max Frisch and others, have all been presented on the stage more than once. Generally, however, adaptation of work on the German stage has not been limited to a certain time, place or language, but has given a comprehensive consideration to world literature.

Film-based work is also an important branch of new narrative theater, and one of the most significant figures is Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Because of his early stage experience, his films were at first closely related to his dramatic work, and recently some theater directors have tried to reverse this process by putting his films on stage once again. Thomas Ostermeier was responsible for one very impressive theatrical adaptation of *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* in 2007, which received an invitation to the *Festival d'Avignon* and still has a place in the programs of German theaters. A recent production adapted from Fassbinder's film is *Warum läuft Herr R. Amok*, which is also a widely praised work and received an invitation to the *Berliner Theatertreffen* in 2015. Other types of narrative work also have a place on the stage, for example, the two Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and

the *Odyssey*, the narrative poem *Orlando Furioso* by Renaissance poet Ludovico Ariosto,³ and several biographical and non-fiction works, have all been the subjects of theatrical productions.

However, theatrical adaptation from narrative work is not entirely new, but has precedents in history. Such early adaptations, although they deviated from the mainstream of text selection in their own time, shared many common aesthetic inclinations with other contemporary theatrical work. At latest from the nineteenth century, plays based on novels began to be popular on the European stage, and their direct impetus was the widespread Romantic aesthetic, one of whose manifestos was to break up the traditional inviolable boundaries between genres, including even the oldest division between epic and drama. One of the most famous adaptations at that time was based on *Der gestiefelte Kater* by German Romanticist Ludwig Tieck, whose script was also rewritten by the novelist himself. In the 1950s Franz Kafka's *Der Prozess* (*The Trial*) and *Das Schloss* (*The Castle*) were performed on the Paris stage, and this may be the earliest modern adaptation; André Gide wrote a play based on *Der Prozess*,⁴ and this adapted version is still used or consulted for new adaptations in German theater today.⁵ But it would be farfetched to conclude that those early sporadic experiments had any direct connection with today's adaptations. A common factor may be mentioned here in advance: regardless of temporal and spatial distinctions, or differences in content and form, the theatrical adaptation still shows a similar aesthetic inclination to other contemporary theatrical works. It is the theater that shapes how the novel is presented onstage, but not, at least not only, the novel itself that determines the approach. Both of

³ See "Orlando Furioso. Verstand vom Mond" in *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 41/1970, p. 235.

⁴ André Gide has actually written the play *The Trial* (1947) together with Jean-Louis Barrault, who is a great French actor, director and mime artist. See *The Trial: A Dramatization Based on Kafka's Novel* by André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault, translated by Leon Katz, New York: Schocken Books, 4th Edition, 1963.

⁵ See "Fall K. in Dunkeln" in *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 25/1950, p. 40. This review shows that Gide's dramatization was premiered on the German stage as early as the 50s, in Berlin-Steglitzer Schloßparktheater.

the 1950s adaptations of Kafka's novels mentioned above were deeply colored by the common preference for absurdism and existentialism, and it is highly likely that this *zeitgeist* is exactly what made Franz Kafka one of the earliest novelists to be introduced to the stage.

In the 1960s and 70s, the newly emerging fields of performance studies and theatre anthropology led to one of the most remarkable “turns” in the discipline of theater studies. The energy of theater resulting from “liveness,” “body” and “interaction” was now considered more important than the traditional dramaturgy or text (language). Literary adaptation was no longer the main focus of this period, but each was still characterized by a distinctive theatrical aesthetic. British director Peter Brook adapted the ancient Indian epic *The Mahabharata*, a performance that lasted up to nine hours and was first staged in an open quarry; and the German director Klaus Michael Grüber also chose an unusual spot, the *Berlin Olympia-Station*, to stage his adaptive work called *Winterreise*, which was based on Friedrich Hölderlin's epistolary novel *Hyperion*.⁶ The *zeitgeist* of the revolutionary theater aesthetic is clearly reflected by this renewed recognition of the importance of performative space and also by the preference for narrative rather than dramatic texts.

Unsurprisingly many recent adaptive works have featured in the contemporary theatrical aesthetics of Germany, which Hans-Thies Lehmann has termed this *Postdramatisches Theater* (post-dramatic theater). These aesthetics developed from the 1980s and were a reaction against the deep-rooted belief in the “dramatic,” and through demolishing constructive elements like “plot” and “character” and rejecting retrospective reception of theater, a new generation of theater artists now proclaims that the power of theater should and can only be produced and released in the here

⁶ See “Hölderlin in Olympia-Stadion. SPIEGEL-Redakteur Hellmuth Karasek über Grübers ,Winterreise” in *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 50/1977, pp. 256–259. And also “Blumen über dem Eisfeld. Klaus Michael Grüber inszeniert im Olympiastadion Bilder deutschen Wahns” by Rolf Michaelis in *Die Zeit*, Nr. 51–16, December 1977, pp. 43–44.

and now, the very moment when the show is enacted. Theater is about performance rather than being determined by literary text. It is seldom possible to identify a story or personae in the post-dramatic theater, because all these concepts are based on literary criteria, which are necessary to construct a good drama. With respect to narrativity, it is precisely the literary concepts that are abandoned by post-dramatic theater and are replaced by on-going events, with incidents happening on the stage before the audience. This fundamental recognition of narrative and emphasis on the concept of “theatrical” other than the “dramatic” are the very material that has brought forth most contemporary theatrical works, no matter what text they have employed or what present approaches they have chosen.

However, post-dramatic theater did not emerge all of a sudden, but is a ripe fruit from the rich soil of the new theatrical aesthetics of the twentieth century. A series of new ideas and terms was introduced, such as performance aesthetics, environmental theater, physical theater and so on, which totally altered the creative field and critical criteria; and specific to German theater, a relatively deep tradition contributed much to the establishment of contemporary aesthetics, namely *Episches Theater* (epic theater). As a specific term, epic theater may refer, on one hand, to a Brechtian concept, a particular theatrical form in contrast with classical Aristotelian doctrine; on the other it is related to a more universal inclination in modern drama, which Peter Szondi terms *Episierung* (epic tendency). Epic theater requires that actors keep a distance from incidents that happen onstage, in order to make the audience experience a sudden or abrupt transformation between objective narrative texts and interacting dialogues. Consequently, action, or plot, which in traditional drama is considered an absolute and close-related incident on the stage, is now presented as a narrated and relativized scene. In the same way, dialogue, which once occupied the undoubtable center of drama, has declined to one element in the narrated space. The absoluteness

of the stage, once the most important characteristic of the “dramatic,” has been decomposed, and the thousand year-long frontier between two ancient genres, *Epic* and *Drama*, has also been diluted to a vague trace. In contemporary German theater, the legitimate existence of narrative methods has been broadly confirmed.

In this new narrative theater, the setting of the narrator’s role is coordinated with its relativized stage form; although the presence of a narrator is nothing new in drama history, and a monologue or speaking “aside” temporarily outside the *dramatis personae* is also not rare, the aesthetic discrepancies behind the seemingly similar representations are still very distinctive. The role of the narrator in traditional drama has never been seen as a unique representation that has an independent importance on the stage, but merely as a supplement to the dramatic dialogues or entertainment to the audience. Nowadays, on the other hand, the narrator is actually one of the themes of the representation. One character is shared by more than one presenter, or one presenter plays more than one character; neither is redundant to the artistic intention, but this is meant to separate the narrative space on the stage (or this is at least one of the intentions) for the purpose of breaking up the wholeness of dramatic incidents. And the narrator can also be merged into the *dramatis personae*, so this role expresses on one hand the relative point of view of an outsider, but also involves the whole picture of the dramatic process. Another typical situation is the rejection of character, as well as the rejection of language in a “pure” performative theater. There is no characteristic monologue or dialogue on this particular stage; on the contrary, the self-reflective and self-referential text itself becomes the protagonist. In this extreme situation there will be no need to discuss the “out of character” phenomenon, when there is no real character act on the stage. However, to clarify in advance, this approach might be excluded from the range of this discussion, for the topic under discussion is the new manner of narration, and this focuses on text

transformation and is more or less based on the contemporary theatrical aesthetic, which means it differs from the traditional representation of the use of literary texts but has not yet given up the attempt to narrate.

As a general aesthetic tendency, post-dramatic theater represents the stream of *Retheatralisierung* and *Entliterarisierung* of the last century, which aims to enthrone the supremacy of *mise-en-scène* and scenography over the basic dramatic concepts like imitation, plot, character, conflict, dialogue and so on. As a specific phenomenon, even though post-dramatic theater has undergone a progressive development, it actually prospers along with the whole revolutionary culture of the 1960s and 70s, which is not just reflected on the stage. By the end of the last millennium, discussions about “*Krise des Dramas*” reappeared in Germany and the new generation of playwrights, such as Marius von Mayenburg, Dea Loher and Roland Schimmelpfennig, stand for a different trend. Unlike the anti-dramatic position of their predecessors like Heiner Müller or Elfriede Jelinek, younger writers have made efforts to establish a renewed dramatic theater. This rise of this new drama writing, however, is not directly related to the thriving of novel adaptation; both represent a new tendency to return to the narrative. Some scholars refer to this as “*Neuer Realismus*”, and this new realism “sucht der programmatischen Auflösung aller traditionellen dramatischen Formen und der Verabschiedung der dramatischen ‚Repräsentation‘ mit einer originellen Regeneration des erzählenden Figuren- und Dialogtheaters zu begegnen.”⁷ Of course, in any case this would not be a simple restoration of classical dramatic form, but a pursuit of new narrative forms with revision and absorption of the post-dramatic aesthetic.

⁷ “‘Postdramatischer Theater’ oder ‘neuer Realismus’? Drama und Theater der neunziger Jahre.” in *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, 1994, pp. 1080–1120.

In fact, most adaptations from narrative works have shown to some extent a rejection of, or dissatisfaction with, the extreme post-dramatic aesthetic. What is performed and narrated on the stage has connections with story in the common sense, either distinct or vague; and under new aesthetics, there may still have been convincing characters demonstrating action and psychological situations with meanings, and these might face, or participate in, serial stage events, which might be refreshed with new definitions. New narrative theater attempts to rebuild the long-lasting appetite for narration within the unavoidable contemporary theatrical aesthetic, or more importantly, to make narration, which is traditionally presented as a whole, compatible with our fragmented postmodern culture.

Humans have a natural appetite for new things, and we all like new stories, but for the theater, a noticeable merit is that in the thousands of years of the history of this art, most of the stories performed are those which have been performed again and again on the stage. Athenian audiences in the fifth century BC knew in detail what would happen in a tragedy titled with the name of a famous hero or heroine, just like today when we watch a production adapted from great novels, which are familiar to a certain section of the public. So, the freshness of a story has never been the standard for narration on the stage, and in a wider sense, adaptation could be considered a basic creative procedure in drama and theater history.

The question that should be asked is, from where the theatrical energy, or tension/power/interests, is produced. Traditional dramaturgy is actually a craft aimed at constructing a so-called “illusion,” whereby audiences will concentrate on the ingenious dramatic conflict that occupies their sympathies. They are willingly forced to involve themselves in the happenings onstage and immerse themselves in them; in other words, to watch is also to feel. Therefore, dramatic techniques that are aimed at strengthening the illusionary effect are also a

search for tension, and what differs in contemporary theater is that the mechanics of producing tension have been replaced. In the arsenal of contemporary theater, we can find a series of major concepts like *situation*, *liveness*, *body*, *presence* and so on, which are meant to evoke direct reactions from the audience. They turn the attention of audiences to the abrupt moments of narration, to the fractures exposed by constructions based on verisimilitude, to the performative action of a character being shaped and dismantled, and to the very location of occurrence being made and interpreted.

No matter what the purpose of reinterpretation is or what consideration has been given to practical matters, the unavoidable process in the adaptation is the selection of the text, abridged to a reasonable length that is adjusted to the natural limits of live performance. The most common duration for a single production is about 2 to 3 hours, which may have scientific grounding in the condition of the average human being, but this is certainly not sufficient for the presentation of an entire novel, so a shortened version is in most instances required. Yet there is still an exception. In the mid 1980s, the Royal Shakespeare Company presented *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, a novel by Charles Dickens, and this show lasted more than ten hours — not in one single night but divided into several parts — in order to achieve the presentation of the entire novel. This kind of approach is very seldom used in contemporary adaptations worldwide, and it might not be highly praised in German theater, since complete loyalty to the original text is not necessarily seen as an achievement, but stands in direct opposition to theatrical interpretation.

As mentioned above, selection from a text is actually the main approach, and contemporary theater artists will choose to make many alterations, for example, the amalgamation of several characters, the reduction of the number of plots, the rearrangement of certain scenes and so on. One traditional sub-genre of the novel, *Generationenroman* (generation novel) or *Familienroman*

(family novel) provides a very good angle to examine. A theatrical adaptation of *Buddenbrooks* in 2005⁸ shows one way to deal with the time span in the original novel, which depicts the ups and downs of generations of a family and almost the entire lives of several main characters. In Thomas Mann's novel, the flow of time itself is one major theme and key to the plot arrangement; but it might be too long and too trivial for the stage, whether from the artistic or practical perspective. In this theatrical production, we find that the childhood and youth of major roles are deleted, and only a few dramatic scenes in the lives of adults are presented. A typical epic timeline has been reduced to a typical dramatic condensed time point. This kind of approach will be discussed further, specifically in the later chapters.

Similar alteration can also be found in the deletion of spatial settings. *Hiob*, written by the Jewish German writer Joseph Roth (1894–1939) in 1930, depicts the vicissitudes of life in a Jewish family in eastern Europe at a turbulent period, and this certainly includes a wide range of time and changes of space. In 2008, director Johan Simons presented this novel in *Münchner Kammerspiele* with the same title, and he chose to compress the original shift of locations, from eastern Europe to America, into one stable scene; in the whole of this production, the audiences will notice that there will be no change of scenery, as if all the characters, even in their different stages of life were still in the same circumstance. This is a good example of how selection of the text, if considered from the point of view of the practical limits of performance, can still be unchanged in terms of certain aesthetic intentions and specific prevailing interpretations.

There are still some works, especially in modern literature, that appear to be compatible under any circumstances with the stage, whether considered from the point of view of a common understanding of “drama” or from that of new interests focused on “performance.” When we read

⁸ Premiered in Thalia Theater Hamburg, dramatized by John von Düffel and directed by Stephan Kimmig.

a modern masterpiece like *Der Zauberberg*, it will be disappointing if we only see the actions or plots or the most frequent theme in the classical German novel, the maturation of a youth. This novel is untypical in that it does depict the growth of its hero, but not through things that have happened in his life and not through what he will encounter in the wider world; what really matters in this novel is his spiritual growth within himself. In contemporary theater the greatest obstacle for adapting this kind of modern and contemporary work lies not in how they should be “dramatized”, but in visualizing. Fundamental revolutions have happened onstage, but theater is still, for the first place and in many senses, a visual art. This might be the reason why the director Stefan Bachmann opts for an extreme reduction of the spatial condition in *Der Zauberberg* which originally includes almost no displacement and places almost all its characters within a relatively isolated and static environment. In Bachmann’s adaptation, all actors, except one who acts as the major character, Hans Castorp, are wrapped in sleeping bags and lie down towards the audiences in a line from the very beginning until the end, and only few could move freely on the stage throughout the entire show. It might be very interesting to explore the performative approaches inspired by the original work, which might also refresh the old question of the faithfulness of adaptation, even though literal faithfulness to the original has been long abandoned in the contemporary German theater.

Obviously, certain sorts of reduction and alteration in the adaptation are unavoidable, but more importantly, this is needed for both practical and aesthetic reasons. Some stage designs, along with other artistic arrangements in dramaturgy and acting, prove that the literary text cannot be used only as a guidebook but must be the fountain of inspiration, which breeds and stimulates a new artwork adapted from an old one. A theatrical adaptation of *Der Prozess* in 2008, premiered in *Münchner Kammerspiele* and directed by Andreas Kriegenburg, belongs to one of those

extraordinary cases. The adaptation of *Der Prozess* follows its original chronological sequence; characteristic dialogues and narrative texts are also mainly preserved. But in dealing with Franz Kafka's work, a faithfulness of adaptation that is purely to the "factual" might eventually be anything but faithful. Andreas Kriegenburg rightly chose to create an unrealistic stage to show the metaphoric and symbolic world in Kafka's novel; a large turntable which occupied most of the audience's view, could be seen as bearing a resemblance to the mythic and unreasonable external force depicted by the author, which is visualized through the restricted and unnatural body movements of characters on the disc that seem to defy gravity. It will be interesting to go further on the subject of the collaboration of reservation and renovation in the adaptation.

Chapter 2. Review: Researches Past and Present

2.1. Source Studies and Comparative Studies

In traditional literary studies discussion of adaptation has long existed in a wider sense. For instance, source studies, a common method in the research and commentaries on classical dramas, can actually be seen as a preliminary form of adaptation theory. It will not be too difficult to find that almost all classical dramas are based on pre-existing materials; therefore all of those theatrical performances are adaptations and, unsurprisingly, there are fertile discussions on this subject. But what needs to be clarified in advance is that, unless the focus is on the artistic work as a whole, i.e., a novel, the target of source studies is only the source, which means a series of raw materials, such as historic records, myths or fairy tales; and the text that is analyzed in source studies is also only written literature, and does not include performance. Nevertheless, I would still like to begin my review from this perspective to provide a more comprehensive overview of relevant studies, because, in the field of literature studies, source studies have actually developed their own patterns and methodologies, which are relevant to the subject of theatrical novel adaptation.

A representative case from the source studies is Shakespeare. Scholars have long noticed the adaptive characteristic of Shakespeare's plays, and nowadays studies on his multiple sources have produced many exhaustive critical edition and series.⁹ Now it is widely known that Shakespeare frequently consulted Holinshed's *Chronicles* in his historical plays, and his Italian-based plays

⁹ There are several long-running annotated editions of Shakespeare for research or common reading, such as *The Arden Shakespeare*, Bantam Classics (Shakespeare), *The New Cambridge Shakespeare*, *The Oxford Shakespeare*, *Folger Shakespeare Library* and so on.

have origins in some contemporary Italian short stories; in the case of his early comic works, ancient Roman comedies have had a significant influence.¹⁰ In fact, from the research results from traditional source studies, it does not seem far-fetched to conclude that most of Shakespeare's great dramas are adaptations in the broader sense.

Generally speaking, traditional source studies emphasize more how playwrights inherit and change original materials, especially in terms of characters and plot. Obviously, such textual clarifications are quite preliminary and limited only to the literary side, and commentators discuss specific treatments in scripts more from the angle of dramatic effects, sometimes with reference to the conventions of contemporary theater. Taking Shakespearean plays as an example once again, in the *Arden Shakespeare*, an extremely comprehensive annotated version that tends to mark every detail of both in the literary text and contemporary staging, when discussing the differences between Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and its historical sources, the commentator mentions that "Shakespeare suppresses these facts [of the laws of succession] partly because he wished for dramatic reasons to accentuate Macbeth's guilt and to minimize any excuses he might have had [...]"¹¹ which shows an understanding of the discrepancy between literary and historical texts as a result of the pursuit of dramatic purpose.

Even when concentrating only on the literary text, commentators still admit that Shakespeare's adaptive approach is naturally embedded with theatrical considerations. Shakespeare might select and organize his materials because of the practical needs of stage, including both visual and dramatic effects, which is routine in respect to genre and medium transformation, and in the beginning of the study of adaptation, it is generally sensible to explore

¹⁰ For a general study of Shakespeare's sources, see Kenneth Muir's *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*, London: 2005.

¹¹ Preface in *Macbeth* from *The Arden Shakespeare* series, 1957, p. xiii.

the adaptive relations between source (original texts) and representation (stage performance). Moreover, traditional source studies have also already noticed the specific treatments of time and space in adaptation, because in any case, the stage version always presents different temporal–spatial relations and structures in contrast with the written text; and this topic is still emphasized in the modern studies.

In fact, the general approach in comparative source studies can also be found in modern adaptation studies. For instance, English literature scholar Max Bluestone has reached a conclusion about the common focuses in comparative study, and lists “the increases and decreases in the numbers of characters, the nomenclature of characters and settings, the concealment or revelation of sources, the retention or omission of source scenes, verbal indebtedness to source language, including especially relations between speech and exposition in the two genres, and the presence of inconsistencies adducible to adaptation.” Most of these remain relevant to modern considerations about adaptation. Bluestone describes the dramatic transformation of the original sources in Elizabethan England, saying that it “exploits the symbolic value of the gesturing figure of the actor, with his properties and costumes, and thus intensifies the individuality of the character he represents. And into the relatively static narratives of the available prose fiction sources it infuses a sense of change by imitating and manipulating the flow of space and time. And it modifies, retains, or omits certain parts of the moral substance of the sources, often without an identifiable relation to formal considerations”¹². This also seems to be familiar in common considerations made when adapting narrative literature nowadays.

Yet traditional source studies, as Bluestone notices, usually “reveal only specific differences and similarities between sources and plays” and “tend to ignore adaptation as a general movement

¹² Max Bluestone, *From Story to Stage: The Dramatic Adaptation of Prose Fiction in the Period of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, 1974, p. 27.

from one genre to another.” He also points out that “even scrupulously close comparisons between sources and plays end finally in observations so diverse as to obscure the general nature of dramatic adaptation of prose fiction.” Bluestone calls for new concepts of adaptation, even though his thoughts are still more about literature, arguing for a need to “accept for certain fundamental formal differences between the two genres of prose fiction and play, between the reader’s mode of perception of a story and the audience’s mode of perception of a play on a stage.” Furthermore, Bluestone explores a methodological approach in his research by clarifying two terms, *constructs* (amalgam of words) and *percepts* (ingredients perceivable by the senses), as the fundamental difference between plays and sources; in short, he argues that the selection of words/texts is in accordance with specific expressions, through which they can be, or can be better, perceived. Bluestone might justify adaptation from the angle of perception in the routine of traditional effect theory about artwork.

Beyond simple speculation on the literary source, a deeper comparison, namely text transformation between theater and literature, begins with exploration of the specific qualities and effects of each medium. In research into theatrical adaptations from English novels, German scholar Sylvia M. Patsch argues that the three major genres in Europe literature — lyric, epic and drama — have close correspondents in the “vorherrschenden Erfahrungsmodi im Leben des Einzelne,” which inspire understanding of different adaptive approaches from the perspective of different expectations. Specifically, Patsch’s topic is actually about how writers transform their own narrative works into dramas, and she argues that “die Schreibenden selbst haben auch in Zeiten absoluter Formfreiheit immer weder zu den drei Gattungen gefunden. Änderungen waren

und sind als Modifizierungen zu verstehen.“¹³ In this creative process, it might be straightforward to show how the characteristics of genre or medium are involved in recreation.¹⁴

For instance, when novelist Iris Murdoch (1919–1999) compares two genres, the novel and drama, she focuses more on their inner and concrete generic features. In her opinion, what differentiates novels from drama, other than form, is their inner notions, which means that both genres represent different principles of spiritual construction. Murdoch then points out that the dominating conflict of the novel is actually between the individual as a single personal consciousness and the individual as part of society, or in other words, the conflict in drama is between different individuals, but in the novel it is between the individual and society. This differs from comparisons between sources and effects. Murdoch’s opinion, although also from a comparative angle, shows an interest particularly in the advantages and disadvantages of both representative forms. The novel, no doubt, has the advantage of comprehensive depiction; it is therefore more compatible with a longer time span and a larger scale of spatial alterations, along with other dynamic settings, as many critics and scholars have also pointed out.¹⁵ More deeply, Iris Murdoch emphasizes that almost everything in the depicted world of the novel, no matter whether individual or with wider social references, is mediated, especially in the modern novel, and this feature is much more significant for the artistic exposition and configuration of the novel.

¹³ Sylvia M. Patsch, *Vom Buch zur Bühne. Dramatisierungen englischer Romane durch ihre Autoren. Eine Studie zum Verhältnis zweier literarischer Gattungen*, Innsbruck: 1980, p. 12.

¹⁴ In the process of genre transformation, new expressions in adaptation are actually a result of different mediums, and this very materiality influences deeply the reception—similar arguments can be traced back to G. E. Lessing’s *Laokoon*, which will be discussed in detail later.

¹⁵ The comprehensive range of the novel can be traced back to Aristotle’s analysis of the genre of epic, and actually the difference in depicting capability is one of the central distinctions between epic and drama, which is thoroughly discussed in the theorizing part. And in the theories of the modern novel, the comprehensive range and depiction of the totality are also considered a major feature of the novel, see *The Theory of Novel* by Georg Lukács, 1971.

It is the sentimentality, she argues, that determines the important subjective characteristics of the expression of the modern novel, and which is also the very nature of modern drama. To be narrated means to be subjectivized, commented on and shared.

Orthodox fidelity criticism has in the past criticized theatrical adaptation, often in abusive terms, such as “parasitism,” “violation,” “betrayal,” “vulgarization,” “vampirism” or “cannibalization,”¹⁶ which, obviously, ignores the aesthetic development of the adaptive process, and also, as many literary source studies have proven, contradicts the facts of the history of theater. It is not rare to invoke the argument that adaptive work was once dominant in theater in order to justify stage adaptation. Today nobody would question Shakespeare’s originality; it is also recognized that most of his works are adaptations, as the comparative source study proves. In associating traditional source studies with the perspective of theater studies, it accumulates a number of cases to show that adaptation has played a decisive role in the history of theatre; as one scholar has pointed out “theater history emerges as a process of adaptation and selection in the face of changed circumstances and as the survival of dramatic texts due to their theatrical materializations and interpretations. The precarious nature of the dramatic text as one that requires a plurimedial adaptation in order to fulfill its potential, and the ephemeral nature of any theatre performance, which must suffice itself while it is also one stone in the mosaic of a play’s reception history, give significance to each single performance, each ritualistic combination of ‘repetition with variation.’”¹⁷ Yet, in terms of the modern understanding of adaptation, there are still some clarification that need to be made. Contemporary theorist Linda Hutcheon’s redefinition of

¹⁶ Monika Pietrzak-Franger and Eckart Voigts-Virchow, “Staging the Palimpsest: An Introduction to Adaptation and Appropriation in Performance” in *Adaptations — Performing across Media and Genres*, edited by Monika Pietrzak-Franger and Eckart Voigts-Virchow, Trier: 2009, p. 5.

¹⁷ Lucia Krämer, “Theatre History as Adaptation: Nicholas Wright’s *Cressida* (2000)” in *Adaptations—Performing across Media and Genres*, Trier: 2000, p. 41.

adaptation opens up a new spectrum of adaptation studies, which I will discuss in detail in the next chapter. Hutcheon understands adaptation as translation and interpretation, and argues that reception is implied within the act of interpretation. Her theory is quite influential in contemporary adaptation studies and I will explore her definition in my further research.

2.2. New Narrative Aesthetics

Contemporary German theater is famous for its continuous experiments with the new aesthetic, or “radical” aesthetic. Regarding narration, this “radical” tendency means basically the abandonment of telling a story, and the contemporary theater aesthetic does indeed make efforts to redefine the “narrative” concept. At the beginning of her work *Performing Stories*, German theater scholar Nina Tecklenburg demonstrates unambiguously that performance can also be “narrative” in a wider sense, by which she means “radikal,” and more specifically, she argues that “Radikal deswegen, weil das Erzählen hier an den Ausgangspunkt einer experimentellen Theater- und Performancepraxis gestellt wurde, die gemeinhin als ‚postdramatisch‘ bezeichnet wird und deren primäres Anliegen mit Sicherheit eine *nicht* ist, nämlich eine Geschichte zu erzählen.”¹⁸

Nina Tecklenburg’s study is about “in den narrativen Aufführungformaten der Nullerjahre nicht einfach nur Geschichte erzählt werden, sondern dass das Erzählen — bewusst oder unbewusst — in seinen situativen Effekten, Vollzugsmechanismen und kulturellen wie sozialen Funktionen zum Thema gemacht wird,” and she also lists a series of preconditions for her arguments, which include “der Revision einer Konzeptualisierung des Erzählens im Theater” and “einer Um-Konnotierung des Erzählens in Bezug auf das Theater.” Moreover, Tecklenburg

¹⁸ Nina Tecklenburg, *Performing Stories. Erzählen in Theater und Performance*, Bielefeld: 2014, p. 12.

emphasizes prerequisite concepts such as “Ent-Dramatisierung,” “Ent-Episierung” and “Neupositionierung des Erzählen im Kontext von Aufführungstheorie und kulturwissenschaftlicher Performativitätstheorie.”¹⁹ Tecklenburg makes a comprehensive exploration of post-dramatic narration on the German stage, which, as I would like to argue later, has a direct connection with the theatrical aesthetic in novel adaptation.

In the history of aesthetic and poetic theories, as Tecklenburg mentions, “narration” and “performance” have been seen as a pair of dichotomic concepts, and even in general contemporary understanding, when “performance” is promoted in the post-dramatic theater, “narration,” in contrast, is considered as belonging to the separate field of drama. Tecklenburg argues that this generally accepted notion of narration is intended for the exposition of illusionary theater, which has been long discarded and proved invalid by contemporary aesthetic; but unfortunately, relics of old narrative conception still thrives. Tecklenburg argues, aside from the dramatic-centered concept of narration, there should be, from the perspective of performance and post-dramatic theater, a redefinition of narration, so she asks for a renewed thinking, called “Erzählen als Performance” (narration as performance), which aims to rebuild narrative studies from the angle of performance.²⁰

In terms of elucidating the notion of “narration as performance,” Tecklenburg illustrates a series of traits from narrative post-dramatic performances, such as “Aufführungen werden zu Ereignissen eines Spiels mit unterschiedlichsten narrativen Mustern, Stoffen und Erzählmedien (Sprache, Bild, Geste).” In addition, the audience can participate “als Figuren in Rollenspielen”

¹⁹ Ibid., 12.

²⁰ On the comprehensive discussion about narrative performance theory, see also in 5.3.2 “Narrative as Performance”.

and interact “eine Involvierung der Zuschauerinnen/ Teilnehmerinnen in narrative Prozess.”²¹ The idea of “participation” or “interaction” stands at the very center of the new narrative conception, according to Tecklenburg, and the whole narrative process should be open and participatory and “in Szene gesetzt”; what matters more for a narration is any real situation. From this new perspective, narration without “purpose” (*telos*) is possible.

Regarding new expressive methods, Bertolt Brecht’s manifesto of epic theater has wider influences, beyond this specific theatrical movement; in fact, the aesthetic of epic theater has been widely accepted in contemporary narrative theater, which is proved also in Nina Tecklenburg’s arguments. She traces back the classical differentiation between *diegesis* (narration) and *mimesis* (imitation) and the genre division of “epic” and “dramatic”, and then relates them to the dramatic theory of Manfred Pfister about “dramatische Sprechsituation” and “plurimedialer Text,”²² — with all of these theories, she constructs a new approach to analyzing the narrative onstage.

Therefore, the need for a redefinition of narrative would appear unavoidable in this case. For Tecklenburg, the narration means “jene kulturelle Praktik, mittels derer Menschen versuchen, vergangene, zukünftige und potentielle Handlungen und Ereignisse fassbar zu machen.”²³ She clearly maintains the importance of time, which connects the happening and produces the “Konfigurationsvorgang.” From this aspect, traditional temporal-causal relationships could be replaced by the process that displays itself through its medium and for its audience. With the help of a series of concepts of “Mit-Erzählen,” “Zwischengeschehen” and “aktueller Zusammenspiel,” Tecklenburg generates the idea of “Spannung,” which is important for the dramatic theory in

²¹ Tecklenburg 2014, pp. 21–22.

²² Ibid., 65. See also in Manfred Pfister’s *Das Drama*, München: 2001, p. 104.

²³ Tecklenburg 2014, p. 37.

constructing the emotional reaction of the audience²⁴ into the perceptive model of theatrical narration. “Ein Erzählen, an sich’ gibt es nicht;”²⁵ she actually rejects a closed perspective which concentrates solely on the narration itself and argues that the dynamic of narration on the stage brings the narrative to life.

It is of course not an entirely new idea to refuse to take the narrative text as a closed whole; in fact, understanding the text as multiple-layered and inter-reacting system is widely accepted in the contemporary humanities. Tecklenburg also cites Gérard Genette’s classification of *histoire* (Geschichte, story), *discours* (Erzählung, narration) and *narration* (Erzählakt, narrative act) as the foundation of her theoretical exploration. Genette clearly divides the operation of narration (making) and the structures and practices that make the narration (doing), which parallels Tecklenburg’s argument about the process of narration. In addition, Tecklenburg is also inspired by the language philosopher John L. Austin’s famous work *How to Do Things with Words*, which has even more significance in the analysis of narrative and performative. Tecklenburg finds that the function of language has similarities to narrative performance, which she describes as an approach of “how to do things with stories.”²⁶

Nina Tecklenburg’s work provides insightful theoretical approaches to reconsidering the possible range of narration on the stage. She disagrees with the traditional opposition between narration and performance, and from the perspective of narratology, linguistics and performance studies, she asserts a new definition of narration, which takes narration as an act of narration, namely, a performance. Besides the theoretical foundation and expansion, Tecklenburg also

²⁴ See Hans-Thies Lehmann’s criticism on classical dramaturgy in “Ist Spannung spanned?” in *Postdramatisches Theater*, pp. 48–51; he also discusses a new kind of *Spannung*-model with the pursuit of Spektakel in today’s popular culture. See “Spannung und Moral” in *Tragödie und dramatisches Theater*, pp. 279–281.

²⁵ Tecklenburg 2014, p. 39.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

intends to clarify specific aspects of narrative theater in detail. Her analysis of temporal elements, plotting, materiality within a given space, fiction versus life and the world, and performed events (*Ereignis*)²⁷ considered in terms of performance energy, are all vital for the consideration of the narrative theater.

Claudia Breger's *An Aesthetics of Narrative Performance: Transnational Theater, Literature, and Film in Contemporary Germany* is another study of the new narrative aesthetic in contemporary theater. As Tecklenburg points out, Breger at first mentions the contemporary vehement promotion of the performance concept, which especially suggests aesthetic and ideological distinctions between performance and narrative. Narrative, as has been said, is a way of ordering and evaluating the world; therefore it is closely associated with a number of obsolete and centralized concepts, including "plot," "character," "story," "representation" and so on; nowadays, the aesthetics of postmodernism has "enthroned the opposition between narrative and performance by theorizing performance through its emphasis on space and the present rather than

²⁷ See Hans-Thies Lehmann, "Ereignis/Situation" in *Postdramatisches Theater*, here pp. 178–184; Erika Fischer-Lichte, "'Präsenz' und 'Repräsentation'" in *Ästhetik des Performativen*, here pp. 255–261. For philosophical background, the term *Ereignis* appears in Martin Heidegger's later work about language philosophy, which is not easily summarized. In *The Heidegger Dictionary* by Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Ereignis* is explained as the "appropriating event", which is the "central theme of Heidegger's later philosophy" and "the relation of all relations", because, "far from being subsequent to its relata, it opens-and-appropriates historical being and Dasein to one another, thereby first bringing them into their own." Moreover, "this appropriating event can be experienced-not produced or explained-in the way that the saga, the essence of language, affords being (the presence and absence of beings) to mortals. The saga thus allows human beings to come into their own so long as they are first silent in order to listen and answer to it. In this relation of the saga to its speakers, the saga and the speakers (mortals) need each other, though the speakers are speakers only by virtue of first listening to the saga (what the language says). In this process, language appropriates speakers to it, those who respond appropriately to it. The distinctiveness of language thus resides in the appropriating event. Indeed, the appropriating event (*Ereignis*) itself is 'telling' (*sagend*) even where, in the positionality of modern technology, language is reduced to formalizable, computable information. Clarifying a remark made over a decade earlier, Heidegger concludes that language is the house of being because language, as the saga, belongs to the appropriating event." (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 117) See also Martin Heidegger's own writing, *Das Ereignis in Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe* (71), edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2009.

history.”²⁸ Yet this typical approach has met a challenge. As Breger writes, “critics have announced that the cultural reign of performative subversion...has come to its end, and narrative has returned onto the stage of contemporary Western culture. At the latest, the forces of more or less authoritative telling and ethically motivated coherence building have gained a newly hegemonic status,” and she also mentions that a “move beyond postmodernism certainly was proclaimed already in the nineties.”²⁹ On the other hand, narrative has never actually faded out of the theoretical scope of Postmodernism, and many theorists see narration as “a tool of critical reflexivity vis-à-vis the comforts of ideological cohesion,”³⁰ which has had a great impact on the development of narratology since the 1990s, as Breger demonstrates.

Rather than concentrating on providing detailed explanations of both concepts (narrative and performative), Breger is more interested in their theoretical models. For performance, which is thought to be against the tranny of language and the illusion of theater, Breger reveals that what must be appreciated is actually the authentic quality of performance, which is theoretically constructed as the “production of presence” and “a metaphor for the vicissitudes of representation”; similarly, narrative “has been defined both through the criterion of mediation (*diegesis*, as opposed to *mimesis*) and as a mode of mimetic world-making that renders mediation invisible.”³¹ Breger maintains that both qualities cluster in the techniques of narrative performance, which means that from the angle of narratology, “we can distinguish scenic (highly mimetic, presumably immediate) narrative and theatricalized narrative (narrative that dramatized

²⁸ Claudia Breger, *An Aesthetics of Narrative Performance: Transnational Theater, Literature, and Film in Contemporary Germany*, Columbus: 2012, p. 2.

²⁹ Breger 2012, p. 4.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 8.

the process of narrative mediation),” and from the angle of performance studies, we can also see “techniques of (narrative) ‘presencing’ or presentification” and “(narrative) theatricalization, whereby the brackets aim to account for the strength of antinarrative motifs in performance studies.”³²

Breger then concludes her approach as “a set of conceptual tools specific enough to allow fine-tuning interpretations beyond standard recipes while also heterogeneous and inclusive enough to facilitate adequate, multifaceted responses to very different works”; in her opinion, as this so-called narrative/performance contradiction is actually a debate between digression and concentration, these “more flexible aesthetics” will help to move beyond “the dichotomy of ‘identical-critical performance’ vs. ‘identity-building narrative’” and eventually also beyond “the associated vocabularies of ‘subversion vs. affirmation.’”³³

In an attempt to rejuvenate the concept of *mimesis* in recent scholarship, Breger finds imprints from “post/modernist critiques of representation,” which primarily means a rereading of Aristotle. She finds that in Paul Ricoeur’s explanation, the *mimesis* from Aristotle “has been conceptualized as an active process of (re)configuration, which includes a moment of ‘break’ with ‘preexisting reality,’ or even, as an ‘artificial and illusionary projection of a semiotic structure’”.³⁴ Breger then argues that this understanding is actually very close to the concept of *performance* in the sense of John L. Austin’s speech-act theory. According to Breger, to re-conceptualize *mimesis* as a process of active reconfiguration, is crucial for avoiding the sacrifice of the productive aspects of representation in the name of anti-narrative postmodernist “purism”. In addition, both Ricoeur and Austin’s theories have deep influences in performance studies, the former providing a

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 9.

³⁴ Ibid., 16.

phenomenological understanding of narration that can adapt to dynamic configuration, and the latter enlightening the performative side of language through taking utterance as an action.

Besides, in the field of narratology, especially in relation to Gérard Genette, Breger also notices that when Genette turns to Plato's foundational distinction between two mimetic modes, he speaks of "everything that creeps into narrative along with dialogue, thereby making narrative impure — that is, mixed"; in short, "narrative is almost always a mixed genre."³⁵ In addition, Breger also recalls the "German narratological tradition from Käte Friedmann to Franz Karl Stanzel" to verify her argument that oral telling always comes with narrative discourse. In other words, performative elements are rooted deeply in narration, and vice versa. Theatricalization in narration, Breger argues, "develops a range of possibilities for ironic, bivocal, and other forms of indirect representation that actively question, and reconfigure, narrative authority."³⁶

Generally, Breger follows the theoretical approach of contemporary German scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte, who has made a significant contribution to performativity from the perspective of theater studies. As Breger understands it, Fischer-Lichte has constructed a new aesthetics of performance based on the "specific materiality" and "phenomenal being" of each part on the stage, and Breger believes that this "specification of (onstage) 'presencing'" is a "crucial element of contemporary aesthetics." However, Breger still holds with her claim that "even intentionally decontextualizing and desemanticizing techniques do not altogether escape the processes of representation and configuration they bracket",³⁷ as she argues that the performative act operates in an aesthetic experience that is actually within "the social script or cultural narrative."³⁸

³⁵ Ibid., 13.

³⁶ Ibid., 21. Cf. 5.3.2 "Narrative as Performance" and 5.4 "Narratology in Theater Studies"

³⁷ Breger 2012, p. 29.

³⁸ Ibid., 33.

Of course, Breger notices that this attitude of “radical antinarrativity” is not just an academic manifestation that only appears in the theoretical work of Erika Fischer-Lichte or Hans-Thies Lehmann; on the contrary, academic tendencies reflect exactly the mainstream aesthetic of the contemporary German stage, which has been summarized by Lehmann as *Postdramatisches Theater*. One significant feature of post-dramatic theater, as Lehmann argues, is an intentional rejection of plot, character, dialogue and other concepts associated with narration, or to put it more simply, the post-dramatic aesthetic defines itself through its distance from dramatic narration.³⁹

From an analysis of the epic techniques, which are widely accepted in contemporary German theater, Breger finds that many experimental productions⁴⁰ make efforts to evoke collective or individual affects in artistic performance (presence); and interestingly, despite all passive attitudes towards narrative, she notices that through “including small narrative genres (anecdotes, jokes, etc.), by arranging materials in a certain way, or by using epic forms of commentary”,⁴¹ the sense of narrative never fades away on the stage. In discussing the new trend of narrative that is returning to German theater and has been thriving since about the 1990s, Breger pays much attention to the notion of “reality,” which in her opinion has actually inherited its distinction from “realism” from the pre-postmodernist political theater.⁴² Thus Breger declares that this new trend of narrative theater, which she understands as “new aesthetics of proximity [to the reality],” can avoid

³⁹ See Hans-Thies Lehmann’s relevant discussion in *Postdramatisches Theater*, such as “Betriebsgeheimnisse des dramatischen Theaters” (pp. 20–22) and “Mimesis von Handlung” (pp. 54–56), esp. “Narration” (pp. 196–198).

⁴⁰ Breger engages the diaspora aesthetics in contemporary German theater with the discussion on narrative effects, she mentions some productions like *This is Not About Sadness* by Olumide Popoola, a Nigerian German artist; *I Am My Own Wife* by Doug Wright, a successful Broadway musical that was performed in Berlin in 2008; and also Rene Pollesch’s *Der Leopard von Singapur*, *Telefavela* and *Plusfiliale*. pp. 135–226.

⁴¹ Ibid., 136.

⁴² Ibid., 228.

“necessarily being motivated by the radical antinarrativity of twentieth century quests for presence.”⁴³

In summary, Claudia Breger demonstrates that the diverging divisions of narrative and performance are alien to actual features with their respective notions; yet these conceptual divergences are still helpful in mapping the aesthetics of narrative performance. In Breger’s theory, two categories of techniques are distinguished from the respective angles of narratology and performance theory: “on the one hand, those [techniques] of scenic (= highly mimetic, presumably immediate) narrative and theatricalized narrative (=narrative that dramatizes the process of narrative mediation); on the other hand, those [techniques] of (implicitly narrative, or mimetic) presencing and presentification, and (implicitly or explicitly narrative, or diegetic) theatricalization.”⁴⁴ More briefly, to conclude, Breger maintains that presence-oriented and narration-oriented techniques are intertwined with the shaping of the aesthetics of narrative theater, and also show a distance from the aesthetic of postmodernism by, at least partly, a positive attitude to the authoritative narration, whose meaning, or effect, is related directly to the social context.

2.3. Specific Studies on Theatrical Novel Adaptation

In the most specific sense, it is not particularly common to find studies that basically concentrate only on theatrical novel adaptation, and a better way to locate academic discussion might be to expand its domain to narrative studies in principle and to adaptation studies in general, as with other areas that I have discussed, even though there are still few academic works that focus

⁴³ Ibid., 265.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 269.

on this subject, which are very important in that they open the way to theorizing. In the English-speaking world, Michael Anthony Ingham has produced comprehensive research in his book *The Prose Fiction Stage Adaptation as Social Allegory in Contemporary British Drama: Staging Fictions*, which depicts the phenomenon of novel adaptation on the British stage around the 1980s and 90s.

Not surprisingly, Ingham emphasizes from the beginning that trans-medium, genre transformation and adaptation have always been common in the history of Western drama, and the position of adapters has not been deprived of originality and creativity.⁴⁵ Specifically, Ingham traces back the process of the novel's rise into a respected art form between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century, and he argues that its present predominance indicates also the rise of realistic expression. At the same time, theater is undergoing a process of decline, which might be blamed on its disadvantage in depicting psychological sophistication and complex social reality.⁴⁶

Modern novel adaptation on the British stage, according to Ingham, proliferated in the 1980s and is marked by the Royal Shakespeare Company's successful production *Nicholas Nickleby*, which "both consciously and sub-consciously assimilated adaptation and theatrical methodology of the preceding decade, the novel as vehicle for modern stage plays achieved wider recognition and popularity." Ingham partly stands by the opinion of another scholar Peter Reynolds in explaining the flourishing of adaptation: both agree that economic and public factors are not negligible. According to Ingham, Reynold thinks that "by choosing a play based on an existing text (usually though not always a well-known one) something of the risk involved in

⁴⁵ Ingham explains that "Sophocles' Theban Plays were based on the earlier now lost trilogy of Aeschylus. The York and Coventry cycles of mystery plays constituted a dynamic and hugely influential popular medieval theatrical form, based on biblical stories. Shakespeare's plays were indebted to Holinshed's chronicles as well as to other contemporary writers." In *The Prose Fiction Stage Adaptation as Social Allegory in Contemporary British Drama: Staging Fictions*, 2004, p. 1

⁴⁶ See also Peter Szondi, "Die Krise des Dramas" in *Theorie des modernen Dramas*.

commissioning new writing for the stage could be removed, or at least moderated. If the text to be adapted was a novel, especially one already established as popular fiction or with a place in the literary canon, then, to an extent, a potential audience might be supposed always to exist, one that might be curious enough to see the novel familiar in their mind's eye animated in live performance."⁴⁷ Perhaps in part because of its popularity, the director of *Nicholas Nickleby*, David Edgar, admits in his essay "Adapting Nickleby" (1988) that this project began by confronting the prejudices against transformation. According to Edgar, at that time, adapters were not yet considered creators, they were "still viewed as mere technicians" who did nothing but transport other people's work into a different medium. Director Edgar himself, naturally, opposes such criticism and asserts the view that the stage adaptation of a novel should be seen as "an ordinary play researched from a single source."⁴⁸

This case might show, as Ingham points out, that although it is true that economic and public factors play an important role in novel adaptation, it might still be a new disguise for an old prejudice against adaptation, if an artistic phenomenon is simply ascribed to all external judgments. In his analysis of social context for the emergence of new adaptive work, Ingham insists on the necessity of aesthetic considerations, which he refers to in his title as "social allegory," which indicates his dual perspectives on this subject.

Regarding different attitudes to sources, Ingham clarifies two categories: *dramatization* and *adaptation*,⁴⁹ and he explains that "the former's relationship with the source is, usually deliberately

⁴⁷ Peter Reynolds, "Introduction" in *Novel Images*, edited by Peter Reynolds, London: Routledge, 1993, here pp. 4–5.

⁴⁸ Ingham 2004, p. 12. See also David Edgar's interview in *The Stage*, 30 Nov 1995, p. 143. And similar approach could find in the former discussion about traditional source studies, see in 2.1 "Source Studies & Comparative Studies."

⁴⁹ These two terms actually bear no fundamental distinction in the German academic field, *Dramatisierung* and *Adaptation*, when referring to text transformation from novel to theater, are almost identical; in a wider

dependent and imitative, whilst the latter utilizes and follows the source plot, but retains a considerable measure of autonomy.”⁵⁰ It is clear that the criterion of fidelity has already been taken as invalid and a freer attitude towards adaptation has also been accepted. It is not convincing and satisfying to copy a work pedantically into another medium; moreover it is impossible in practice; in fact, to discover the different relationships between original and adaptive work, as in Ingham’s paradigm, it is a better and more practical approach. The Problem is that the line between “imitation” and “autonomy” is somewhat vague, which also implies that the method of imitation is less independent,⁵¹ and finally, it might return to the old approach of comparative studies, only differing in the result of judgments. Therefore, Ingham turns to the new construction from modern narratology and other relevant theories, such as the Russian Formalists’ division of *szujet* (plot) and *fabula* (underlying fable) in the narrative structure. Like many contemporary adaptive studies, Ingham begins his exploration of the complex relations between texts with the classification of different levels within a text.

In addition, in Ingham’s opinion, the concept of “intertextuality,” since it involves text transformation, should be included in adaptation studies. He argues that “with an adaptation that process is further complicated by the subtleties of distinction between actual parent text and the imaginative reconstruction of it by the transformation artist or team. Thus, the relationship between the novel and any given performance of an adaptation, or even an intended literal dramatization,

sense, *Dramatisierung* can be taken as one type of *Adaptation*. Yet Ingham understands both terms as implying different adaptive approaches, which is also rare in the English-speaking world.

⁵⁰ Ingham 2004, p. 14.

⁵¹ This argument is actually problematic if reviewing the modern development of imitation theory, see René Gerald’s *Mimesis and Theory. Essays on Literature and Criticism, 1953-2005*, edited by Robert Doran, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008; *Mimesis: Kultur, Kunst, Gesellschaft* by Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, Berlin: Rowohlt, 1992; Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis. Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, Tübingen: Francke, 2001

is necessarily more oblique than the straight play text-performance text relationship.”⁵² Ingham considers theatrical novel adaptation to be a “double transfer process” because its transformation happens on the level of both written text and medium, and as a result, multiple factors in different texts and genres will be intertwined in transformative associations. From this perspective, Ingham argues that the intrinsic elements of artistic work, such as “form, content, tradition and convention,” should be synthesized in the “context of contemporary cultural production and reception”, which means, criticism about contemporary adaptation is not just about a lineage of text transportation from one place to another, but is also incarnated in the contemporary aesthetic and social environment. It is evident that Ingham follows the cultural theorist Raymond Williams’ notion of “structure of feeling” to establish a measurement of adaptation from the perspective of reception. Raymond Williams defines his “structure of feeling” as “the continuity of experience from a particular work, through its particular form, to its recognition as a general form, and then the relation of this form to a period,”⁵³ from which it can be deduced that adaptation should attempt to reproduce a similar “reaction” or “relation” with original work.⁵⁴

What Ingham suggests could be seen as an eclectic approach, which calls for a freer and more contemporary understanding. At the same time, he feels reluctant to demolish the specific characteristic from the original text. This attitude of reconstruction of the reception seems to be more compatible with modern works, as Ingham takes Samuel Beckett’s narrative texts as an

⁵² Ingham 2004, p. 15.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 20. See also Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 17.

⁵⁴ See also G. E. Lessing’s relevant discussion in 4.2.

example.⁵⁵ He maintains that the diversity of methods of expression is quite productive and creative for the novel adaptation.

On the other hand, Ingham refers in particular to Emile Zola's dramatization of his own novels as a "failure". He proclaims plainly that Zola essentially "lacked a sense of theatricality," and "Zola's attempt to almost literally stage the novel was inevitably doomed."⁵⁶ What is depreciated by Ingham is the lack of "independent structure of feeling" in Zola's theatrical work, and to make matters worse, the author "imported the narrative of the novel into the drama...without sufficient thought to aesthetic integration," and the "novel's content and technique were simply grafted on to the play form without granting the product the autonomy of a distinct and uniquely theatrical representation."⁵⁷ In short, according to Ingham, the reason for Zola's failure on the stage is that he tries to establish a one to one correspondence between his novel and dramatization, or more precisely, it is exactly his fidelity to his own novel that does damage to his dramatic endeavors.

In contrast with Zola's naturalistic approach, Ingham finds another pole in the fidelity relation axis in Bertolt Brecht's epic experimentation. In the 1920s, Brecht worked in collaboration with Erwin Piscator and created some theatrical novel adaptations, such as *The Good Soldier Schweik*, which was exactly in accordance with his anti-Aristotelian aesthetic. Ingham considers his plays to be "ideally appropriate for the implementation of Zola's wistful longing for a theatre

⁵⁵ "[...] to adapt Beckett fiction radically and imaginatively, as has occasionally been done in the form of dance drama for example, would seem challenging but, arguably at least, aesthetically valid. More literal dramatization, by contrast, given the highly prescriptive and specific nature of Beckett's stage directions for his dramatic work, appears less defensible." (Ingham 2004, p. 16).

⁵⁶ Ingham 2004, p. 36.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 33.

that could range as freely as the novel in portraying events and characters without naturalistic spatial-temporal restriction.”⁵⁸

As a revolutionary figure in the history of modern theater, Brecht’s adaptations are, like his other works, tinged with his personal style and “shows scant respect for the source and modifies at will.”⁵⁹ The discrepancies between Brecht’s free adaptation and contemporary British staging, as Ingham mentions, are displayed mostly in attitudes towards source. Ingham points out that even though much of contemporary British adaptation is influenced by Brecht’s aesthetic and technical innovations, “none of it has achieved quite the same level of radicalism in transforming the source.” For Brecht, what only matters is his own work. He has “no further interest in the source writer or use for his text once the material is assimilated into his own piece;”⁶⁰ but for most modern British adaptors, the original text will be taken into account: “David Edgar, Christopher Hampton, Timberlake Wertenbaker and other latter-day adaptors, by contrast, engage in a dialogue with the source fiction from which the new play emerges as a critique or a take on the novel from a contemporary perspective... However in Brecht’s empirical dialectic the revaluation is purely in the context of the target culture, rather than in the creation of resonances between source and target cultures, a feature that characterizes the contemporary adaptation movement.”⁶¹

Ingham’s judgement shows very clearly the differences in aesthetics and theatrical situations between Britain and Germany. Even when he criticizes Zola’s over-scrupulous attitude towards an original novel, it seems still to be acceptable from the point of view of the aesthetics of

⁵⁸ Ibid., 39.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 52.

⁶¹ Ibid.

contemporary German theater, when we examine his description of Zola's style of staging.⁶² Moreover, what Ingham disapproves of, such as "the accretion of authorial detail and the detached observation and irony,"⁶³ is in fact very common and widely accepted in narrative theater in Germany nowadays. In his opposite paradigm, Brecht's epic approach, Ingham sees too much radicalism in comparison with British novel adaptation, yet the Brechtian epic approach has become almost normal on the German stage. In Zola's case, Ingham actually supports "dramatic" rather than "narrative"; and in Brecht's case, he considers this more from the point of view of fidelity, rather than an equal relation between original text and adaptation.

As well as Ingham's study on British adaptation there is, fortunately, still other academic work that refers to the contemporary German theater, and among this, Birte Lipinski's book *Romane auf der Bühne. Form und Funktion von Dramatisierungen im deutschsprachigen Gegenwartstheater* might be the most comprehensive. Not only does it introduce historical and current situations of novel adaptation in practice and also in the academic field, but Lipinski also gives thoughtful consideration to relevant theoretical establishments and analyses of different theatrical adaptations from multiple perspectives. Lipinski demonstrates at the very beginning that she aims to analyze "ob Romandramatisierung spezifische Darstellungsformen entwickeln und ob und inwiefern ihre Form durch den Gattungsformen werden kontextualisiert und dabei in ihrer Funktion innerhalb der Gegenwartsdramatik und im Gegenwartstheater bestimmt"⁶⁴, which clearly

⁶² Descriptions of Zola's adaptations from Ingham: "Zola's dramatic transposition unsuccessfully attempts to convey the sexual richness of the novel's lengthy descriptive passages through dialogue," "subservient to its raw material as well as to the naturalist theory, instead of as an autonomous theatrical word that has its own inner compulsion and impetus" (p. 31) and "while in his novels the dialogue succeeds in reproducing the way people really spoke, it is not sustained (on the stage)." (Ingham 2004, p. 34)

⁶³ Ingham 2004, p. 31.

⁶⁴ Birte Lipinski, *Romane auf der Bühne. Form und Funktion von Dramatisierungen im deutschsprachigen Gegenwartstheater*, Tübingen: 2014, p. 1.

shows that her academic interests are in the specific theatrical expression in respect of genre transformation and contemporary theater aesthetics.

It has already been mentioned many times that the adaptation of narrative text is not a new phenomenon in European theater, but as Lipinski points out, contemporary adaptations have obvious advantages in the quantities of production and research. Referring to the original material, contemporary German theater prefers those “komplexe Romane aus den letzten 250 Jahren, die man zu den einflussreichsten und bekanntesten Werken der deutschen Literatur zählen darf,”⁶⁵ Lipinski suggests that there is a “*kanonisch*” inclination for adaptation, which, however, is definitely not a mark of a certain style, such as a conservative attitude towards text, especially in contemporary theater.

Romandramatisierung, the original term Lipinski uses, means dramatization of novel, which basically overlaps with the meaning of adaptation in her work.⁶⁶ As she explains, *Romandramatisierung* means “in intertextueller Beziehung zu einem Roman und übernimmt wesentliche Inhalte aus diesem.”⁶⁷ In fact, Lipinski maintains that this term implies the importance of the literary original text, on which she expresses very clearly: “Dramatisierungen verstehe ich als eine besondere Form der Rezeption und Interpretation von Literature, die ihrerseits produktiv sind.”⁶⁸

Evidently, Lipinski considers the term *Romandramatisierung* to imply an intertextual relationship by nature. She then clarifies and categorizes several types of relationships, which include, 1) “Dramatisierung als Wiederholung: Identität und Differenz,” 2) “Dramatisierung als

⁶⁵ Lipinski 2014, p. 8.

⁶⁶ As formerly explained, the English scholar Ingham has provided classifications of both terms of *dramatization/Dramatisierung* and *adaptation/Adaptation*, but Lipinski uses them identically.

⁶⁷ Lipinski 2014, p. 19.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

Gattungswechsel: epische und dramatische Strukturmerkmale,” 3) “Dramatisierung und Alteritätsverhältnis: historische und kulturelle Nähe und Distanz.” Therefore, she introduces her major concepts of *Wiederholung* (repetition), *Original* (original) and *Kopie* (copy). Specifically, she is interested in the role of *Zitat* (quotation) in the reconstruction of meaning, which is related to the repetitive and rewritten qualities of modern culture, and also a frequently appearing expressive technique in contemporary theater. Furthermore, *Wiederholung* develops along with the culture itself, which exists widely in literature and art, as Lipinski terms it, “der Mythos wäre ohne Wiederholung undenkbar.”⁶⁹ As a reproductive act, *Wiederholung* exists as a remembrance of literary tradition, and also a revitalization in the present. Furthermore, the act of *Wiederholung* influences not just the potential for production, but also the horizon of reception. Lipinski argues that the question of whether the audience can identify the original work or not — and to what extent and in what sense the audience can “receive” the new work — are related to concepts like *Identität* und *Differenz*, which represent opposite approaches of *Wiederholung*, yet all of them have already been embedded in the process of production.

On the topic of *Gattungswechsel*, Lipinski engages with the long-existing discussion of epic and dramatic, and asks specifically, “sind die notwendigen Veränderungen beim Gattungswechsel immer strukturellformaler Art?” or “auch inhaltliche Transpositionen nötig?” or “inwieweit bringen strukturelle Veränderungen auch Bedeutungsverschiebungen und Neuwertungen mit sich?”⁷⁰ Lipinski thinks that the theory of genre would be a useful instrument for analysis, even though it gives the impression of hierarchic, closed and ahistorical attitudes. She suggests that genres be understood as construction and reception elements, as *Systemreferenz* and *Leseweise*;

⁶⁹ Ibid., 37.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 44.

especially in the case of novel adaptation, she maintains that it is necessary to perceive “die unterschiedlichen Darstellungsstärke und somit inhaltlichen Schwerpunkte in Drama und Epik, die vielfach zu inhaltlichen Bestimmungen der Gattungen geführt haben, resultieren aus diesen medialen Unterschieden.”⁷¹ Even now, both genres have changed a lot in terms of definitions and conventions and have become more and more free. Lipinski argues that they still have a *Medienkriterium* function, which determines the role of genre theory in adaptation.⁷² Another theoretical approach may be structuralist narratology. Genette defines the transition of genres as *Transmodalisierung*⁷³ which always contains semantic alteration and therefore content transposition, and in his opinion, a whole reproductive work might be impossible in terms of transition of genre.

“Für die Romandramatisierung sind mehr als 100 Jahre zeitliche Distanz zum Prätext nicht ungewöhnlich,”⁷⁴ as Lipinski notices the contemporary preference in text selection, she also points out the very important fact that there has always been a great gap between our world and the original narrated space. Does it matter? Lipinski believes so, since this unavoidable distance will in any case appear along with text transformation, as she argues, “durch eine Umdeutung, die in der historischen Fremdheit des Romans begründet liegen kann.”⁷⁵ Here Lipinski promotes a focus on cultural discrepancies and textual alterations, for which a development in reception is clearly shown; as well as concentrating only on the completed production, Lipinski thinks adaptation

⁷¹ Ibid., 37.

⁷² On medium and genre theory, see G. E. Lessing’s discussion in 4.2.

⁷³ Lipinski 2014, p. 57.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 63. As has been listed in the introduction, a great amount of adaptations are based on those works which nowadays we may category as “modern classics,” such as Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, and maybe earlier writer Fjodor Dostojewskij. All of them lived in the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth century, and most of their important works were written almost 100 years ago.

⁷⁵ Lipinski 2014, p. 64.

studies have the advantage of analyzing a text historically, “Adaptation wie Romandramatisierungen werden als die Sichtbarmachung eines solchen Aktualisierungs- und Verbildlichungsprozesses lesbar; sie zeigen in einem konkreten Produkt, was Jauß hier bildsprachlich fassen muss, weil es im Lesevorgang innerhalb der, Black-box’ Rezipient und somit unsichtbar bleibt.”⁷⁶ Aiming to find out “was im Text fremd erscheint”⁷⁷ through adaptation, Lipinski introduces the terms of *Chronotopos* and *Dialogizität* from Michail M. Bakhtin, who understands the subjective horizon of intertextual relations and asserts that a process of reception is always involved in production.

Lipinski defines her own approach as “*vergleichende Analyse*.” Indeed, her method does have similarities to traditional comparative studies that are based on source studies and genre theory; but comparisons are also made with new aspects, as she herself explains: “auf die Wiederholung in der Intertextualität, den Gattungswechsel und den damit vorbereiteten Medienwechsel sowie das Alteritätsverhältnis zwischen Prätext und Folgetext.”⁷⁸ Besides, Lipinski’s arguments are based mostly on narratology and relevant drama theories, which are not as close to the performative and post-dramatic approach. In her concrete analysis of several specific works, Lipinski values the wholeness and depth of original novels, and takes the novel as an identified unity to be performed, rather than just as an indifferent text to be used. Yet even Lipinski’s theoretical establishments are, in general, text-concentrated and narrative-oriented. In her specific analysis of the contemporary adaptive practice, she still demonstrates how it might be adapted to the performative aspects of theatrical productions. Besides, Lipinski’s research, on both

⁷⁶ Ibid., 72.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 74.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 110.

theoretical construction and performance analysis, shows a quite inspiring way to continue, and as will be shown later, my study will, in many ways, benefit from her approach.

PART II. THEORIZING

“I have never understood why the question of adapting a novel for stage should be a matter of controversy at all. To talk of it as some sort of heresy is to ignore the very origin of the theater...Dramatizing a novel has always been done and always will be. The task is to find the new medium to do justice to the novel. The thing read is not the thing done.”

—— Erwin Piscator

This quotation comes from one of the early revolutionaries in German theater of the twentieth century, Erwin Piscator, who spoke about the adaptation of novels when he was still promoting *Episches Theater*; in Piscator’s opinion, it would be possible to find an appropriate way of using the methods and aesthetics from epic theater, to adapt novels as voluminous even as, for example, *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy.⁷⁹

Of course, nowadays there is no “controversy” at all about adapting a novel for the stage. Although criticism still exists, there is no great need to defend or justify the general principle of novel adaptation any more. It might once have been so. I would like to begin the theoretical exploration from precisely this dichotomy which is probably the oldest in aesthetics: the opposition between “dramatic” (mimesis) and “epic” (diegesis). Other arguments that Piscator mentions in his brief statement, include the epic way to treat the novel onstage, conceptions of adaptation (especially from the perspective of theater history) and relevant transformation in the process of adapting, all of which relate directly to my research. In this section, I would like to examine the theatrical adaptation of novels and narrative texts from the angles of “epic,” “adaptation” and “narrative.”

⁷⁹ Maria Ley-Piscator, *The Piscator Experiment: The Political Theater*, 1967, pp. 9–10.

Chapter 3. Concepts and Theories about “Epic” versus “Dramatic”

The distinction between narrative and performative arts is rooted very deeply in Western culture, and it has been formed through the differentiation of two major classical genres, epic and dramatic literature. Since ancient Greek times, there have been relatively mature theories and rules

for both genres, which have profoundly influenced thought on literature and art ever since.⁸⁰ In modern thought, genres, along with their “codes,” are more accepted as historical and hermeneutic phenomena, which are always in the process of adjustment and revision rather than existing as fixed patterns.

Nowadays there is no longer any need to follow such sets of dogma in either the creative or academic fields, yet it is still valuable to explore the course of artistic minds through these sophisticated generic concepts, which illustrate the evolution of aesthetic thought and directly underlie the theoretical starting point for the phenomenon we are concerned with. Before speculating on the transformation of text, it is still necessary to discover the reason why certain rules were originally made, how they are changing and for what reason they are unsuitable for modern times.

The word “epic” is derived from the Greek *epikos*; in Latin it is *epicus* and in German *Epos*; according to the standard definition, an epic is a certain type of lengthy narration, which relates to heroic deeds and significant events that happen in different times and places. Drama, on the other hand, in terms of its classical meaning, is the representation of one single deed within a short time and space. However, the generic classifications have never been solid in practice, and in fact epic

⁸⁰ “Genre” basically means “kind” and in specific sense refers to “a style or category of art, music, or literature.” (OED) In the history of literature and art, genre is always an intangible taxonomy which implies a continuous unstable conceptualizing process. The earliest systematic definitions of each genre are provided by Plato and Aristotle. Even though they use different terms to refer to their generic thoughts, the basic generic distinction is actually made in the differentiation of epic poetry, dramatic poetry and lyric poetry. Each term has been varied and developed greatly in two thousand years, and what still remains is the basic categorization of consciousness in the aesthetic experience of the public. In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye argues that the changeable genre concepts exactly reflect the model of our perception. We rely on a certain hypnosis to comprehend the artistic work; therefore genre theory actually indicates an order/system of perception. Besides, fruitful thoughts on genre in history allow much more focus on literary and artistic conventions, contemporary aesthetics, social backgrounds and so on. On modern genre studies, see also Gérard Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992; Amy J. Devitt, “A Theory of Genre” in *Writing Genres*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004. pp. 1–32; Nick Lacey, *Narrative and Genre: Key Words in Media Studies*, Basingstoke [u.a.]: Macmillan, 2000.

treatments are always an important narrative technique in the dramatic text and performance. Especially on the modern stage, a tendency which is defined by Peter Szondi as *Episierung*, indicates a more fundamental revolution in terms of the aesthetics.

As Peter Szondi has already argued in *Theorie des modernen Dramas* (1956), after the destruction of absoluteness and unity in drama, modern drama has inclined to an epic turn. Peter Szondi lists the generic elements of drama from the Renaissance to modern times, and emphasizes that all the concepts of this particular genre “drama” have originated from its belief in absoluteness and unity. In Szondi’s words: “Alle dramatische Thematik formulierte sich in dieser Sphäre des ‘Zwischen’.”⁸¹ The absolute dominance of dialogue, the purely relational dramatic plot, the absence of the writer’s voice, the isolated relationship between stage and audience, the invisibleness of the actors themselves, and the presentness and wholeness of time and space — all can be traced back to a strong inclination which requires that everything related to theater should be only within the world onstage.

And the epic, which stands in opposition to drama, is endowed with entirely opposite merits, in contrast with the dramatic definitions mentioned above. As the two oldest genres, they have, in fact, been defined by each other from the very beginning, and their concepts are intertwined and imply possibilities of future merging. Peter Szondi argued that the process had begun in the late nineteenth century in the domain of dramatic literary text. For comprehensive speculation on the changing concepts of epic and dramatic, we should look back to their origins and examine what is at their core.

⁸¹ Peter Szondi, *Theorie des modernen Dramas*, from *Peter Szondi Schriften. Band I*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011, p. 16.

3.1. Classical Dichotomy: *Epic* and *Dramatic*

Plato's dialogues are, no doubt, unavoidable when we search for the origins of the generic concepts, for he makes, or at least summarizes the popular opinions of his time, the fundamental division between narration (*diegesis*) and imitation (*mimesis*). In narrating "the poet is speaking in his own person"; and in imitating, the poet produces an "assimilation of himself to another". One major ancient Greek lyric form, dithyramb, belongs to the narrative type, tragedy and comedy to imitative; meanwhile epic is a combination of narrative and imitative types. So, in dramatic texts, the poet never speaks directly, which is not at all the case with narrative texts. In addition, by *imitation* Plato actually refers to impersonation or performance,⁸² and since empathetic emotions will be strong and even uncontrollable, especially in the theater, the dramatic performance is the most "harmful" art in his judgement. Plato did not go further in his genre analysis, but a clear line between narrative and performative (imitative) arts was established, and the very reason for this distinction is their different speech acts, which gives rise to almost all the arguments and debates in this field.⁸³

From the perspective of theater studies, Plato makes a fundamental distinction between performative and narrative arts, namely their immediacy. He also mentions that direct imitation (performative, namely drama) and indirect imitation (narrative, namely epic) have discrepancies in their methods of representation, and at the core of their difference is seeing. Whether the

⁸² For the studies on performative elements in Plato's *mimesis* concept, see "'Mimesis' between Poetics and Rhetoric: Performance Culture and Civic Education in Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle" by Ekaterina V. Haskins in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Summer, 2000), pp. 7–33; John Gould, "Plato and Performance" in *Apeiron*, 25(4), 1992, pp. 13–26; Gregory Nagy, *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁸³ See the discussions in *Republic*, Book 3.

audience sees what is depicted action or not might have a decisive influence on representative forms.

Aristotle may disagree with Plato in many respects, but they do at least share a single conception of generic poetics: drama is a pure imitative art and epic a mixed one. Unlike in the case of Plato's vague description of imitation, Aristotle makes imitation the cornerstone of his whole systematic poetic theory by defining tragedy, comedy and epic into three categories of imitation, the medium, the objects and the manner or mode of imitation. Both drama and epic are imitations of "men in action" (object) in the medium of "rhyme, language and harmony," but they are differentiated in the mode of imitation, since dramatists imitate "by direct enactment of all roles" and epic poets can speak "in an invariable narrative voice." As to poets like Homer, one "can represent the same objects by combining narrative with direct personation."⁸⁴

It is necessary to highlight how these two different forms of speech shape the forms of epic and drama. As Aristotle defines the poetry, which includes epic, tragedy and comedy, as an imitation of action, the plot stands at the center of all these genres. The question then arises of what kind of plot is suitable for each genre, or more specifically, of the nature of each genre, as defined by Aristotle, and what choice writers should and should not make when they deal with plots. Aristotle has made his requirements on tragedy very clear: "As to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form and employs a single meter, the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it. It will differ in structure from historical compositions,

⁸⁴ Aristotle, *Poetics*, Chapter 3, 1448a21-24.

which of necessity present not a single action, but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be.”⁸⁵

In short, a perfect tragic plot should be a single and unified one. Aristotle emphasizes that, “the imitation is one when the object imitated is one, so the plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed.”⁸⁶ Epic poetry, on the other hand, imitates multiple actions, which cover a large scale of time and space.

The term “episodic”, which Aristotle uses here, refers to how episodes or acts in a plot “succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence.”⁸⁷ This is certainly not in keeping with the nature of tragedy but is suitable for epic. Unlike tragedy, which imitates one single action, epic may have less unity, which makes a multiplicity of plots possible. And unlike in tragedy, in which every constituent should be tightly linked, the epic might extend itself with longer episodes. Aristotle does mention the advantages of epic in its enlarged narrative dimensions, even though he claims that, “of all plots and actions the episodic are worst.”⁸⁸ From the different definitions of plot and structure, it is logical to deduce that unities of time and space are also required in tragedy. Tragedy “cannot imitate several lines of actions carried on at one and the same time,” and must confine itself to “the action on the stage and the part taken by the players,” but epic poetry, “owing to the narrative form,” can present “many events simultaneously.”⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Ibid., Chapter 23, 1459a17–25.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Chapter 8, 1451a32–34.

⁸⁷ Ibid., Chapter 9, 1451b35.

⁸⁸ Ibid., Chapter 9, 1451b33–34.

⁸⁹ Ibid., Chapter 24, 1459b17–23.

Aristotle's *Poetics* is for original purposes not a dramatic theory in the modern academic sense, but actually a practical guidebook for poets (playwrights), and perhaps also a guidebook for Greeks to understand tragedy.⁹⁰ When Aristotle suggests what should be written and what should not be, his main consideration may be to help his listeners to achieve success on the stage. Aristotle warns dramatic poets severely that they should not make tragedy resemble an epic by clarifying the distinction. First of all there is a need to concentrate on the unity of plot, as well as to avoid the "episodic". The episodes in epic poetry might conduce "to grandeur of effect, to diverting the mind of the hearer, and relieving the story with varying episodes," but this is exactly what "makes tragedies fail on the stage."⁹¹ His arguments, fair to say, are not based on intellectual or aesthetic guidelines, but on the practical needs of the stage. Besides, whatever Aristotle's original intention was, the earliest systematic theory of drama was actually made for the theater.

The detailed classical rules of drama therefore come from its very nature of "to perform". Because drama is for the stage, it is better to present everything as active and plain before the eyes of the audience, such as in a single plot acted by one hero happening in one time and one space. Epic is in the fortunate position of not being witnessed, so as a narrative form it can escape the strict principles of unities and possibilities and endure a wider scope. Epic is loosely organized, and is by nature episodic.

It can be concluded that Greek philosophers define drama in terms of the restrictions of the stage, and take epic as a more tolerant genre for the magnitude of narrating. Apparently both definitions are far from stable and there have been evolutions in both genres, but it appears that

⁹⁰ See Stephan Halliwell's introduction on Aristotle's *Poetics*: "The *Poetics*, like virtually all the extant works of Aristotle, represents something in the nature of teaching materials or 'lecture notes,' produced not as a text for private reading by anyone interested, but for instructional use in an educational context", from *Aristotle XXIII* in The Loeb Classical Library series (LCL199), edited and translated by Stephan Halliwell, 1995, p. 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Chapter 24, 1459b29–33.

drama has stuck more closely to the series of regulations, such as unities of plot, time and space, the dominance of a character's dialogues and presentness, etc. On one hand these are originally reflections of the practical conditions of the stage for poetic thought; on the other it is a reminder that new theoretical explorations may be made when the condition or concept of the stage has been altered.

Yet at most time in the history of western theater, the dominant Aristotelian drama limits itself to literary text and aesthetic principles, which have actually become a great burden for the stage. Long considered the opposite of drama, epic has become a weapon for revolution on the stage. Both epic and drama are storytelling art forms but on almost every level of storytelling they are different. It is precisely these differences that shape their own generic concepts.

Epic itself is also a vague description, whose explanations change all the time. They are in fact more confusing than those of drama. Tzvetan Todorov once wrote, "Epic is that which is incarnated by Homer's *Iliad*."⁹² Indeed, like Aristotle, he defines drama more from a practical point of view, and the structural and thematic merits of epic also seem more like a summary of ancient texts than a predetermined pattern. Some literary studies argue that the classical epic poetics are for the most part an analysis of the *Iliad*, including distinguishing features of narrative form, great magnitude with multiple episodes, heroic deeds and war-oriented themes.⁹³ The *Odyssey* was once seen as having an alternative origin, but aside from specific differences in terms of themes and characters, its narratives are still a gradually developing process that endures a larger capacity of time and space.

⁹² Tzvetan Todorov, *Genres in Discourse*, translated by Catherine Porter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 24.

⁹³ Cf. *The Greek Epic Cycle and its Ancient Reception: A Companion*, edited by Marco Fantuzzi and Christos Tsagalis, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

From a classical perspective, epic, like drama, is still a closed form with plot unity. Nevertheless, unlike drama, it depicts action within a wider scope, which allows more freedom in the narration. This freedom may show up at two levels; one is what is told and the other how it is told. The first level deals with the thematic aspects. With regard to epic's episodic nature and therefore its magnitude, the epic may contain more "unrealistic" (or illogical), and less tightly related, events in comparison with drama. Even though, in ancient times, both epic and dramatic works were based on historical or legendary events. Aristotle and the later Aristotelian scholars still emphasize that drama chooses and organizes its materials according to the possibilities rather than necessities, and depicts what could have happened but not what actually happened; on the other hand, epic organizes historical events in an exhaustive way. At the same time, epic has enough room for magic and comic materials, as Aristotle also mentions.

Because of its wholeness of depiction, epic poetry has more freedom of material selection. Therefore, as Goethe saw, the center of epic narration is not about "*was*" (what) but "*wie*" (how), which is more significant in the representation of epic. The large capacity of materials eventually endows specific narrative techniques to the epic. Here we can go from "what is told" (material, content) to "how it is told" (selective).

In his letter to Schiller, Goethe provided an insightful view of the very core of epic, which is its past-ness (*Vergangenheit*). From this point of view Goethe clarifies the difference between epic and drama:

"Der Epiker und Dramatiker sind beyde den allgemeinen poetischen Gesetzen unterworfen, besonders dem Gesetze der Einheit und dem Gesetze der Entfaltung, ferner behandeln sie beide ähnliche Gegenstände, und können beyde alle Arten von Motiven brauchen, ihr großer wesentlicher Unterschied beruht aber darinn dass der Epiker die

Begebenheit als vollkommen vergangen vorträgt und der Dramatiker sie als vollkommen gegenwärtig darstellt.”⁹⁴

Instead of events in the present happening before the eyes of audiences, the epic demonstrates events that have happened in the past. Schiller once pointed out these two different receptions: “Die dramatische Handlung bewegt sich vor mir, um die epische bewege ich mich selbst, und sie scheint gleichsam stille zu stehen.” In the same letter he continues to argue that, “die Dichtkunst, als solche, macht alles sinnlich gegenwärtig und so nöthigt sie auch den Epischen Dichter das Geschehene zu vergegenwärtigen, nur dass der Charakter des Vergangenseyns nicht verwischt werden darf.”⁹⁵ He has a thorough understanding of how *Vergangenheit* is displayed in epic, and specifically how the *Vergangenheit* of a story might expose itself to the reader, and what concrete differences this will make to the narrative. The answer might be the exposition.

Schiller pointed out the “Zufälligkeit des Anfangs und des Endes”⁹⁶ of epic poems. Goethe also noticed the “Retardierende” technique in epic narration to create tension, and also “eine Haupteigenschaft des epischen Gedichts ist dass es immer vor und zurück geht, daher sind alle retardierende Motive episch.”⁹⁷ Flashback or foretelling, intentional time and space shifts and so on, are legitimate in the epic narration. As Goethe clarifies, “Das epische Gedicht stellt vorzüglich persönlich beschränkte Thätigkeit, die Tragödie persönlich beschränktes Leiden vor. Das epische Gedicht den außer sich wirkenden Menschen, Schlachten, Reisen, jede Art von Unternehmung die eine gewisse sinnliche Breite fordert; die Tragödie den nach innen geführten Menschen, und die

⁹⁴ Friedrich Schiller / Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Der Briefwechsel. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, Bd. I. Text, edited by Norbert Tellers with the assistance from Georg Kurscheidt, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2009, p. 535.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 541.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 378.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 375.

Handlungen der ächten Tragödie bedürfen daher nur wenig Raums.”⁹⁸ Goethe argues that the so-called epic range of narration is actually a result of its thematic nature; epic depicts the heroic deeds that occur in the wider world; therefore, it demands a freer setting of time and space; on the other hand, tragedy deals more with people, or with inter-people relations, and this is the reason for its limited space.

So dramatic representation has the advantage of immediacy for perception, yet it also constrains the expressive methods; those limits no longer exist in epic, and since there is a loss of immediacy, to enjoy epic poetry there is a need for more positive imagination and more specific sympathy. At the same time, the magnitude of epic allows indirect and more complex narration, which eventually creates a distance from narrated events and a capability to conclude comments and quotations. It is precisely this original long magnitude and indirect representation that give epic the capacity for time-space setting and direct expressions of opinion, which it has been possible to develop much more in the modern genre of the novel.⁹⁹ In Goethe and Schiller’s discussion, they put forward their thinking on suitable materials for modern drama, and both are aware that all the topics they are interested in, including the characteristics of drama and epic, the generic divisions between drama and epic and the efforts to expand dramatic contents, cannot be isolated from reconsideration of modern drama, especially the approaching revolution in its content and form. Peter Szondi may have inherited this discussion in his *Theorie des modernen*

⁹⁸ Ibid., 538.

⁹⁹ For studies on the relationship between epic and novel, see Georg Lukács, “The Epic and the Novel” in *The Theory of Novel*, translated by Anna Bostock, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1971, pp. 56–69; Michail M. Bachtin, “Epos und Roman. Zur Methodologie der Romanforschung” in *Formen der Zeit im Roman. Untersuchungen zur historischen Poetik*, edited by Edward Kowalski and Michael Wegners, translated by Michael Dewey, Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1989, pp. 210–251; Hans Robert Jauss, “Epos und Roman — eine vergleichende Betrachtung an Texten des XII. Jahrhunderts” in *Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur. Gesammelte Aufsätze 1956–1976*, München: Fink, 1977, pp. 310–326.

Dramas, and have developed it into a structural theoretical exploration of how the modern dramatic form has been adapted to the modern materials, which he defined as *Episierung*, the epic tendency of the modern drama. With respect to theater history, a similar and even more revolutionary inclination towards epic treatments would be promoted by Bertolt Brecht under the manifesto of “epic theater”, which fundamentally influences the aesthetics of the contemporary stage and lays the theoretical cornerstone for narrative theater.

3.2. *Epic Theater in a Modern Sense*

As Peter Szondi has argued, there are multiple cases and models that refer to the epic treatments in modern drama, and Brechtian epic theater is certainly not the only one and may not even be the earliest; yet, it still has unparalleled significance in theoretical exploration, besides its achievements in literary work and on the stage.

Episierung is a description of an existing phenomenon, yet “Epic Theater,” as a specific modern term proposed and practiced mainly by Bertolt Brecht, is consciously proclaimed as a new artistic approach and stands unambiguously opposed to Aristotelian Theater. In short, Epic Theater is literally Non-Aristotelian Theater, a strong rejection of the classic dramatic form. Bertolt Brecht made the difference quite clear:¹⁰⁰

Dramatische Oper	Epische Oper
handelnd	erzählend

¹⁰⁰ Bertolt Brecht, “Anmerkungen zur Oper ‘Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny’” in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 17, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967, p. 1009f.

verwickelt den Zuschauer in eine Bühnenaktion	macht den Zuschauer zum Betrachter
verbraucht seine Aktivität	weckt seine Aktivität
ermöglicht ihm Gefühle	erzwingt von ihm Entscheidungen
Erlebnis	Weltbild
Der Zuschauer wird in etwas hineinversetzt	- er wird gegenübergesetzt
Suggestion	Argument
Die Empfindung wird konserviert	- bis zu Erkenntnissen getrieben
Der Zuschauer steht mittendrin, miterlebt	Der Zuschauer steht gegenüber, studiert
Der Menschen als bekannt vorausgesetzt	Der Mensch ist Gegenstand der Untersuchung
Der unveränderliche Mensch	Der veränderliche und der verändernde Mensch
Spannung auf den Ausgang	Spannung auf der Gang
Eine Szene für die andere	Jede Szene für sich
Wachstum	Montage
Geschehen linear	in Kurven
Evolutionäre Zwangsläufigkeit	Sprünge

Der Mensch ist Fixum	Der Mensch als Prozeß
Das Denken bestimmt das Sein	Das gesellschaftliche Sein bestimmt das Denken
Gefühl	Ratio

This chart shows many fundamental discrepancies between dramatic (Aristotelian) and epic (Non-Aristotelian) theaters, in Bertolt Brecht's opinion, and this has undoubted importance for the establishment of his new theatrical conceptions. Brecht's arguments, as shown above, concentrate not only on the level of narrative technique or textual structure, but also on speculation about the changing modern world and therefore about changes in modern people. The modern experience cannot be integrated into a rational dramatic structure, and considering the characteristics of the epic tendency, it is actually an effort to promote a new theatrical form as an answer for the modern world.¹⁰¹

Modern culture is reflective, as Georg Lukács has pointed out. It is an age of comment and quotation, in short, of thought and criticism.¹⁰² So the novel has become a representative literary genre of this age, a modern variation of the epic, which, in contrast to the performative arts, leaves enough room for the recipients. Walter Benjamin describes the mental situation when one reads a

¹⁰¹ To practitioners like Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht himself, the epic theater movement goes along with their distinctive political stand, which is also their response to their society and time through establishing a political theater. Yet considering the relevance to my topic, I would like to discuss the epic theater more from the aesthetic side.

¹⁰² See Georg Lukács' "The Problems of a Philosophy of the History of Forms" and "Verse and Prose as a Means of Expression" in *The Theory of Novel*, 1971, pp. 40–55.

novel as “relaxation”, which clearly shows the opposite atmosphere to that of watching a theatrical performance.¹⁰³ The modern need for reflective thinking finds suitable material in the narrative arts. As is argued above, the limitations created for time, space and plot in classic drama are actually a coordination with the practical theatrical situation, and are adapted to their contemporary aesthetics and needs; therefore, as the outer conditions are changed, it is reasonable to conceive a new form of theater, and those which were once thought inappropriate for stage may be reconsidered.

The theater, which used to be a place for representing dramatic events, can now be thought of as a forum for comment or for the narration of those events. The progress of an action, or the plot, once stood at in the center of the stage, and was itself the performed subject; now it is accepted as a narrated object within a frame of narration, presented in the same way as events might be presented in narrative forms, no matter whether a traditional epic or a modern novel. Within an epic or a novel, there is no hierarchical grading between subjective and objective narrations, which is quite unlike the dominant role that dialogue once took on the stage; but in this new epic theatrical form, what is presented on the stage is homogenous, or narrated. Just like in the modern novel, the narrative itself becomes one of the major focuses in the art of the novel, and the aesthetic of epic theater also particularly emphasizes narration as a strong power to change the traditional pattern of stage.

¹⁰³ Walter Benjamin, “What is Epic Theater” in *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn, edited and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, New York: Schocken Books, 2007, pp. 147–154.

3.3. Summary

Tracing back how theatrical expression has evolved in the twentieth century, it is not difficult to discover a close relation to the tendency that Peter Szondi calls *Episierung*. As mentioned above, the center of the stage, once the domain of plot and dramatic dialogue, has been collapsed and divided by multiple theatrical techniques. Despite the literary revolution that has happened in the traditional dramatic form, which is what Szondi's thesis is mainly about, the epic tendency has also infected theatrical expression very deeply, including acting, directing, stage design, etc. In short, after ridding itself of the yoke of naturalistic or realistic representation, each element of the stage presents its own properties and constructs a diverse theatrical world. In this way a commentary, or retrospective, theater may be built.

Therefore the need for new literary material is also understandable. The literary revolution of the twentieth century has influenced the stage deeply, but the practical interplay is certainly more complex in its consideration of the realization of new expression. In both intellectual and practical spheres, epic theater has undertaken wide explorations, and to some extent it has invented the epic techniques for the stage. Both the epic tendency in modern drama and epic theater as a specific term have made efforts to overcome the totality of theater, including the totality of dramatic text and stage expression. A narrative distance has therefore become the very center of the epic technique, and the new narration is inclined naturally to subjectivity and commentary. In the further theoretical exploration and performance analysis, it will be presented more clearly that the epic treatment has been the basic characteristic of contemporary narrative theater.

Chapter 4. Adaptation Studies

In general usage, the term “adaptation” describes the remaking of artistic work from one form to another, which always implies a change of medium, such as the film adaptations of literature and my topic here, the theatrical adaptations of novels. Even from this very rough understanding, two basic features of adaptation are evident: one is medium transformation, and the other is the underlying prerequisite of the separate existence of “original” (earlier) and “adaptive” (later) works. Both of these are central topics in the history of adaptation studies and there have been many extensive and thoughtful discussions on the theorizing of adaptation.¹⁰⁴ In this chapter, I would like to examine some modern (re-)definitions of adaptation, and the historical developments of this term in contemporary research.

4.1. Definition(s) of Adaptation

The word “adaptation” may suggest how people will think about the remade work today. Obviously, it hints that the reproduced work should be “adapted” from a former one, namely the original. But when we trace back the history of literature and arts, it is difficult to locate a clear division between adaptation and original work. The textual lineage is not linear but net-like, and this is stressed by the structuralists in the concept of “intertextuality.”¹⁰⁵ No matter whether it is a principle of cultural construction or a phenomenon in literature and the arts, adaptation is actually nothing new. In ancient times and the in Middle Ages, as well as in the early modern period, rather

¹⁰⁴ For an overview of the history of adaptation studies, see Mireia Aragay, “Reflection to Refraction: Adaptation Studies Then and Now” in *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship*, edited by Mireia Aragay, New York: Rodopi, 2005, pp. 11–36.

¹⁰⁵ “Intertextuality” has been widely accepted as the theoretical cornerstone of contemporary adaptation studies. Linda Hutcheon is representative in redefining the adaptation through the concept of intertextuality (her theory will be thoroughly discussed later). See also Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), especially her introduction, pp. 1–14.

than working on completely new materials, it was more common for playwrights to rewrite well-known stories for their contemporaries from history or legend, often repeatedly. Multiple versions existed laterally, not vertically. This is one reason why temporal and hierarchical judgement of the adaptation and original would be inaccurate, since adaptive processes were quite common in the creation and the so called “origin” also emerges from the net of texts.

Besides, regardless of the early and general approach of adaptation, and specifically of adaptation of the novel for contemporary theater, the process of text transformation will be much more complicated because it is widely accepted that the original text is not an untouchable wholeness and the reorganization of diverse sources appears quite frequently on the stage. Therefore, in contemporary theater aesthetics, adaptation would be better defined as a transformation process within distinctive systems of symbols, texts and meanings, rather than as repetition or duplication of the homogenous core.

This new perspective is actually rooted in the theoretical development of the late decades of the last century, which have fundamentally altered views on subjectivity, text and culture. Thanks to theorists like Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva, there is nowadays a consensus in humanities that text should be understood as a dynamic and cultural production.¹⁰⁶ Contemporary studies on adaptation are closely based on these reconsiderations of adaptive work: first, an adaptive work is not considered always to be an imperfect copy, and therefore always an inferior version of the original; secondly, adaptation refers to a product but

¹⁰⁶ See a collection of articles from Foucault, Barthes, de Man etc., *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, edited by Robert J. C. Young, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981. Cf. Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text” in *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900–2000*, edited by Dorothy J. Hale, Oxford: Blackwell, 2006, pp. 235–241; Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, edited by Leon Roudiez, translated by Thomas Gora and Alice Jardine, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

also to a process, and the latter is in fact more important. Linda Hutcheon, one of the most influential contemporary adaptation theorists, has given a comprehensive definition of adaptation:

1) as a formal entity or product, an adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular word or works.

2) as a process of creation, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation.

3) from the perspective of its process of reception, adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (as adaptations) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation.¹⁰⁷

In short, as Linda Hutcheon concludes, adaptation can be described as “an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works”, “a creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging,” or “an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work.”¹⁰⁸ Her position forms the basis of my argument and I would like to analyze the novel’s theatrical adaptation from this perspective.

Before making a theoretical move towards contemporary theory, I prefer firstly to give a brief retrospective on the general approach of traditional thoughts on adaptation. As earlier parts have illustrated,¹⁰⁹ comparative research on textual lineage was once the mainstream of traditional adaptation studies, which take the text as a solid and static whole and define a clear boundary between original and secondary work. And since adaptation always involves media transformation, thoughts on classical generic poetics are also relevant, as generic natures and limitations occupy a

¹⁰⁷ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. 2.1.Source Studies & Comparative Studies.

large scale of classical aesthetics. In addition, now that hierarchic judgements of adaptation have been vanquished from contemporary understanding of intertextual relations, comparative textual studies and generic considerations also indicate a way of getting closer to media transformation in the process of adaptation.

It may be recognized in retrospect that as early as in Aristotle's *Poetics*, some points about adaptation were already touched on. When Aristotle explains the different extents and expectations of epic (*diegesis*) and tragedy (*mimesis*), his research methods actually approach one of the central questions about adaptation, namely how great the differences will be when different genres deal with similar materials; therefore the *Poetics* could be taken as a practical approach to beginning to understand adaptation in genre studies. In fact, as has already been mentioned, *genre* refers to a certain kind of artistic media system with certain determinations and regulations and adaptation is also, primarily, a media transformation. Genre itself might be taken as a symbol system defined by certain rules, so in a transformation process, old features from the original or former work will be reconstructed in a new symbol structure. Within this adaptive/transformational process, the way of understanding an artwork has been altered; or in another sense, it is precisely the altered way of understanding that changes the means of expression. Moreover, some topics in traditional generic poetics are still not meaningless for the examination of adaptation, such as the purposes and limits of genre, the advantages and disadvantages of representation in a particular genre, and therefore the discussions of the validity and availability of a particular genre. The integration of adaptation theory and generic poetics can also be found in early works, and the most widely read among these may be *Laokoon* by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. I have decided to begin my study with several major important topics that arise from this important work.

4.2. Text Transformation in Literature Studies

4.2.1. On the Materiality of Artwork

The most significant topic in traditional genre poetics is the definition of different literary forms and their division into their own fields, such as epic and drama, prose and poetry, etc. With these traditional themes, *Laokoon* is not especially unusual in discussing artistic categories from the perspective of media transformation; Lessing's interests are clearly declared in the subtitle, *über die Grenzen der Malerie und Poesie* (On the Limits of Painting and Poetry), which is obviously concerned with the visual and literary means of expression. Lessing is not the first scholar to determine one form through comparing two or more related categories (Aristotle did so), but his argument is still unique because he concentrates more on the materiality of artwork, which, in Lessing's opinion, plays a decisive role in creative expression and imprints itself very deeply in the narrative technique, which also influences reception, especially on the level of aesthetic experience.

With regard to the natural distinction between the media of painting and poetry, it is not very practical to value those two art forms by the same standards; one approach relies on traditional thoughts from the perspective of reception, and this began with Plato and Aristotle's work in ancient times, and now the Reception Theory, or the Reader-Response Theory, has become an important branch of contemporary literary studies.¹¹⁰ Traditionally, critical thoughts on reception have placed more emphasis on emotional influence (as Aristotle's *Katharsis* concept implies), and

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, edited by Jane P. Tompkins, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980; Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction*, London: Methuen, 1984; Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

Lessing's argument also begins from this traditional approach. Yet he also tries to demonstrate the lack of equivalence between experiences of different forms of arts, and how these experiences in turn create boundaries in arts.

Laokoon begins with a question: the character Laocoon moans and cries in Virgil's work, but in great works from the visual arts of ancient Greece, on the other hand, the image of Laocoon keeps an almost inconceivable calmness. How so? And which one is better, or more suitable, in considering Laocoon's factual situation? Instead of grading or judging which is a better imitation or a more authentic description, Lessing wonders whether each independent artwork has "fulfilled" its unique effect or not. In Lessing's opinion, each irreplaceable aesthetic experience is built from the unique material medium of each artwork, and it is precisely the materiality of the work that determines its form and content, as well as the limits of painting or poetry. So, both forms of Laocoon construct their own symbol systems, as well as their own structures and meanings upon their specific material existences, which eventually also alter the aesthetic experience. In fact, what really matters in Lessing's argument is reception, which is also the reason he emphasizes the materiality of the artwork.

The criteria and standards for reception are always changing with time and culture, and in Lessing's period, as with the thousands of years before him and the hundreds after him, the concept of mimesis is dominant, both in the practical areas of all arts and in theoretical fields. Art should imitate nature, and the standard for a perfect imitation is related to the ability to rouse aesthetic experience, namely reaction. Lessing then argues that only when the representation of artwork is

in accordance with its very material existence, can a better effect be created, so the reason for different means of expression comes from the different materials of art forms.¹¹¹

In the case of *Laocoon*, according to Lessing, the question that should be asked is how the materialities of painting and poetry influence the diverse selections of both representations. Selection is the normal process in text transformation, and different choices might reflect different intentions on the part of the creators. Nowadays it would be hard to decide which selection is better, let alone right or wrong. But as mentioned above, standards in Lessing's time were relatively stable and unitary, which means there was a conscious striving for a perfect imitation of nature. Aiming at this goal, Lessing believes that perfect imitation takes a different form in the case of certain materials. Furthermore, it is the material peculiarity that determines what expressions are suitable, and these then become the limitations of different genres. A particular artwork may have its own appearance, its concrete setting, such as time, space, extent and duration, etc., and all of these are apparently also not isolated from the material merits of the work. Lessing particularly emphasizes the significance of the time setting of a particular artwork, and then explains how the temporal factors, for example length of time, duration and sequence, have the most dominant influence on narration, which thereafter plays a fundamental role in the effect of the artwork.

¹¹¹ For Lessing's exploration of the materiality of art in *Laocoon*, see Claudia Albes, "Einleitung" (pp. 9–28, here pp. 12–14) and Heinz J. Drügh, "Präsenzen und Umwege" (pp. 181–208, here pp. 182–184) in *Darstellbarkeit: zu einem ästhetisch-philosophischen Problem um 1800*, edited by Claudia Albes and Christiane Frey, Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann, 2003; Boris Roman Gibhardt, "Schönheit und Ekel. Zu Lessings 'unklassischer'. Materialität der Künste im *Laocoon*" in *Etudes Germaniques*. 2015;70(3), pp. 393–408; Udo Bayer, *Lessings Zeichenbegriffe und Zeichenprozess im "Laocoon" und ihre Analyse nach modern Semiotik*, Doktorarbeit/Dissertation, Universität Stuttgart, 1974; Sven-Olov Wallenstein, "Space, Time, and the Arts: Rewriting the *Laocoon*" in *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 2:1, 2155, 2010.

As a point of entry to examine transformation within different media, even though it is no longer possible to take solid and undisputed criteria for granted, Lessing's approach is still inspiring: his emphasis on reception depends on the artwork's materiality, which also has an inseparable correlation with narrative forms. As the Laocoon case shows, speculation on an adaptive work might begin with concepts related to form and media, as well as its material features, which will make it possible to figure out how those features and regulations influence narrative methods. In his specific analysis of narrative techniques, Lessing pays much attention to the representation of time, and he argues that the temporal-spatial setting is related to the exterior merits of materials together with the inner structure of narration. Abstract concepts of symbol transformation in the adaptive process may now be exposed through a concrete image and approach, and this may be one of the most illuminating legacies of Lessing for adaptation studies. In modern times, Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin has also given much attention to the field of narrative arts, such as novels and epic, and much contemporary textual theory has actually developed the exploration of this relationship.

4.2.2. On the Temporal–Spatial Relation in the Narration

Today Mikhail Bakhtin is considered one of the most significant theorists in the humanities of the twentieth century, and his works on the novel study, textual theory, and dialogic studies have been extensive, as has his influence on literature studies, language philosophy and media science.¹¹² For my study, his theory about text and dialogicity is decisive, along with his study on

¹¹² On Bakhtin's reception and theoretical influences, see *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges*, edited by Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989; *Bakhtin and Culture Theory*, edited by Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd, 2nd Edition, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001; *Bakhtin and the Human Science: No Last Words*, edited by Michael Mayerfeld Bell and Michael Gardiner, London: SAGE Publications, 1998; Caryl Emerson, *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997.

the novel. Bakhtin introduces many important concepts to the humanities, and one of these I would like to investigate here is a term called *chronotopos*, which he coined by combining *chronos* (time) and *topos* (place). This term is, therefore, literally a description of a unity of time and place, and particularly how these two function together in the narration. Bakhtin discusses the way in which time and place are correspondently organized in a creative narrative unity, as in the novel:

“Im künstlerisch-literarischen Chronotopos verschmelzen räumliche und zeitliche Merkmale zu einem sinnvollen und konkreten Ganzen. Die Zeit verdichtet sich hierbei, sie zieht sich zusammen und wird auf künstlerische Weise sichtbar; der Raum gewinnt Intensität, er wird in die Bewegung der Zeit, des Sujets, der Geschichte hineingezogen. Die Merkmale der Zeit offenbaren sich im Raum, und der Raum wird von der Zeit mit Sinn erfüllt und dimensioniert.”¹¹³

In Bakhtin’s theoretical system, the concept of “Understanding” or the making of meaning is crucial, and his famous analysis of dialogue is based on the complicated relationship between each subject and its context. According to him, one meaning might be realized only from a concrete and material context which is specified by the time and space.¹¹⁴

As the above definition of *chronotopos* suggests, the making of meaning from text is an intersubjective phenomenon, which occurs between speaking subjects. Those subjects are actually built from diverse voices created in the text, and each element in the text is related to others in the same text or in a wider context in different ways, which forms a polyphonic text, and at the same time a multilayered subject. To describe the making of subjective-oriented meaning, Bakhtin

¹¹³ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Chronotopos*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2008, p. 7.

¹¹⁴ See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Toward A Philosophy of the Act*, translated by Vadim Liapunov, edited by Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993; *The Context of Bakhtin: Philosophy, Authorship, Aesthetics*, edited by David Shepherd, New York: Routledge, 2005; Deborah Hicks, “Self and Other in Bakhtin’s Early Philosophical Essays: Prelude to a Theory of Prose Consciousness” in *Mind, Culture and Activity*, Vol. 7, Iss. 3, 2000, pp. 227–242.

invents the term *chronotopos*, which can be defined as an enlargement of the concepts of time and space through an emphasis on subjective recognition, which will reflect the meaning of the text from a changing perspective. Therefore, Bakhtin rejects a monological interpretation of the text, and with the term *chronotopos* he explores the dialogical dimension of the meaning of text, which means a particular subject/voice is always present in a “dialogue” with the respective context to a certain degree.

Clearly, the idea of *chronotopos*, along with related concept such as “dialogism” and the later theory of “intertextuality,” is quite distinctive and innovative for adaptation studies, since it provides a fresh view on the relationship between different texts and a new way of stepping inside the text. It is not surprising, therefore, that Mikhail Bakhtin would later be recognized as forerunner of postmodernism, although he had no factual connection with postmodernism as an academic school. Also, unsurprisingly, it is not unusual for studies of film adaptation to cite the concept of *chronotopos*; for instance, the film study scholar Robert Stam, who has introduced Bakhtin’s language theory into film studies,¹¹⁵ tries also to associate the specific time, space and context as he analyzes the different adaptive approaches from the perspective of text transformation in film adaptation: “central to the transformational grammar of adaptation are permutations in locale, time, and language.”¹¹⁶ In most circumstances, film is a highly realistic art that demands detailed and concrete temporal and spatial settings; and Bakhtin’s concept of *chronotopos* is actually based upon this hypothesis, that a story is always in need of concrete time and space and should always construct a narrative unity that truly fits with the nature of film. Besides, film adaptation studies may also be a good example for the exploration of theatrical adaptation.

¹¹⁵ Ella Schochat and Robert Stam, “The Cinema After Babel: Language, Difference, Power” in *Screen*, Volume 26, Issue 3–4, 1 May 1985, pp. 35–58.

¹¹⁶ Robert Stam, “Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogues of Adaptation” in *Film Adaptation*, edited by James Naremore, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000, pp. 54–76, here p. 69.

4.3. Novel Adaptation in Film Studies

The adaptation of novels occupies a fairly noteworthy position in film studies, since the film industry has constantly created adaptive productions from the very beginning until today. André Bazin's article entitled "Für ein unreines Kino: Plädoyer für die Literaturverfilmung" in 1952, which calls for the legitimation and independent position of adaptation, is perhaps the first academic discussion of the literary adaptation in film. Bazin's writing concentrates mostly on plot, and he calls for a very strict loyalty to the original work by emphasizing a narrative equivalence in adaptation. In Bazin's opinion, the novel, as a genre, has become mature enough to be a model for the new medium of film; and in the meantime, film may receive very positive influences from scholarship. Moreover, Bazin also refers to economic considerations, which play a fairly important part in almost every adaptation, and it is not wrong for Bazin to believe that winning a greater audience can have a positive impact.¹¹⁷

In this early article, Bazin's argument about economic considerations and public attention/attraction should not be neglected even in the case of novel adaptation in theater, but it is evident that a complete loyalty to the original work has never prevailed, either on the stage or in the film industry. Nevertheless, Bazin's idea of taking the narrative methods of the novel as a model to follow is not totally out of date.¹¹⁸ The novel, Bazin writes, has "komplexere Figuren zur Verfügung und in Bezug auf das Verhältnis von Form und Inhalt eine Genauigkeit und Subtilität".

¹¹⁷ André Bazin, "Für ein unreines Kino-Plädoyer für die Literaturverfilmung" in *Was ist Kino? Bausteine zur Theorie des Films*, Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 1975, p. 45.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Literatur im Film: Beispiele einer Medienbeziehung*, edited by Stefan Neuhaus, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007.

He therefore promotes the closest possible adaptation for the absorption of a well-constructed composition into film, a comparatively young art form. The narrative equivalence between film and literature, which Bazin considers vital for adaptation, was inherited by many later film scholars, whether or not their opinions differed from Bazin's.¹¹⁹

Today, in contrast to Bazin's time, the perspective has widened into semiology and narratology. Film scholar Christian Metz, for instance, focuses more on frontiers other than affinities in recomposition. Metz has proposed a relatively new concept, *Konnotation* (connotation), to describe the relationship between media and meaning, which has become one of the most significant key words for adaptation studies today.¹²⁰ And there have been other scholars who have introduced semiology into adaptation studies, among them Irmela Schneider in her *Der verwandelte Text*, who has produced an extensive discussion of important concepts like narration, form, and transformation. She argues that what should really be valued in adaptation studies is how to formulate a different system of signifiers (*signifiant*).¹²¹ This approach to text transformation is not rare in today's humanities.

Robert Stam, in his *Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation*, argues that each art form is a distinctive sign system with its own purposes, and all texts are related to each other in intertextual dialogues. Exactly as Bakhtin defines the novel as a mixed form, Stam sees the film also as a hybrid one that has no genre determination in nature and therefore is open to all art forms. As well as Bazin's insistence on fidelity, Stam claims that, from the perspective of the visual nature

¹¹⁹ On how to understand the "narrative equivalent" between film and literature, see the relative discussions also in Käte Hamburger's *Narrative Basis. Die Logik der Dichtung* and George Bluestone's *Novels into Film*.

¹²⁰ See Christian Metz, *Semiotique des Films*, München: Fink, 1972.

¹²¹ See Irmela Schneider, *Der verwandelte Text. Weg zu einer Theorie der Literaturverfilmung*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1981.

of film, it is undesirable to preserve a literal fidelity to the adaptation. According to him, it is the relationship with dialogic responses that is established in adaptation, rather than the notion of fidelity, that should be given more attention.¹²²

Academic focus on film has already shifted from a concentration on fidelity to analysis of process and production of adaptation, nevertheless, a very old discussion about the compatibility of different genres, or different media, is not seen as trivial for some film makers. For example, the Austrian director Michael Haneke, who has produced many film adaptations from novels, once talked about the topic of adaptive compatibility between film and literature in an interview about his film *Die Klavierspielerin* (The Piano Teacher), which is an adaptation from Elfriede Jelinek's eponymous novel. Haneke thinks that the writer's language could not be translated into image, so what he has actually adapted is just the "story" (plot) rather than the entire novel as an artwork.¹²³ Haneke's opinion actually appears frequently in attacks on adaptation, which consider the adaptation to be a shrunken and degenerate version that can never equal the original work in its aesthetic value. Regardless, however, of all these biases, Haneke's question is actually not totally meaningless; as an artist, he understands the real formidable issues hiding behind all these academic discourses about text or symbol, and what he is wondering could be roughly summarized

¹²² "By adopting the approach to adaptation I have been suggesting, we in no way abandon our rights or responsibilities to make judgements about the value of specific film adaptations. We can — and, in my view, we should — continue to function as critics; but our statements about films based on novels or other sources need to be less moralistic, less panicked, less implicated in unacknowledged hierarchies, more rooted in contextual and intertextual history. Above all, we need to be less concerned with inchoate notions of 'fidelity' and to give more attention to dialogical responses — to readings, critiques, interpretations, and rewritings of prior material. If we can do all these things, we will produce a criticism that not only takes into account, but also welcomes, the differences among the media." Stam, "Beyond Fidelity" in *Film Adaptation*, 2000, pp. 75–76.

¹²³ "Interview. Literatur folgt einer anderen Struktur als Film" in *Fern-Sicht auf Bücher: Materialienband zu Verfilmungen österreichischer Literatur: Filmgraphie, 1945–1994*, edited by Ulrike Diethardt, Evelyn Polt-Heinzl and Christine Schmidjell, Wien: Dokumentationsstelle für Neuere Österreichische Literatur, 1995, pp. 11–22.

with two questions, 1) from the point of view of the creator, what gets adapted? 2) from the points of view of the audience, what need is there for adaptation? The question of “how” in both categories may then be further explored. This might be a good opening for studies on “adaptation as adaptation”, a phrase from the scholar Linda Hutcheon, who has made a great contribution to contemporary adaptation studies.

4.4. Adaptation as Adaptation: Contemporary Studies

What exactly does it mean to study adaptation as adaptation? First of all, of course, it is a precondition to understand the adaptation as an autonomous work rather than a secondary version; namely, adaptation has an equal position to the original work in terms of its aesthetic value. Nevertheless, adaptation still has a position in relation to an original or prior work; in other words, “not worse than” is still a comparative approach as much as “worse than.” The fundamental change could be made from the perspective of postmodern theories, especially the concept of intertextuality, which claims that text is by no means located in a network with other texts. Linda Hutcheon therefore explains that, “[...(to)] interpret an adaptation as an adaptation is, in a sense, to treat it as what Roland Barthes called, not a ‘work,’ but a ‘text,’ a plural ‘stereophony of echoes, citations, references’.”¹²⁴ From this perspective, the relationship between adaptation and the so-called “original” implies nothing about hierarchy or judgement, only a temporal question; moreover, it has undermined the wholeness of the prior work, replacing it with “text” or “reference.”

¹²⁴ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, New York: 2006, p. 6.

French structuralist Gérard Genette has used the term *palimpsest* to describe the multi-layered communication between texts. As with the production of manuscripts in the Middle Ages, text is always in the process of being remade, rewritten and reinterpreted.¹²⁵ Adaptation also shares characteristics with palimpsests in that it endows the text with double nature; one is as a product, that is normally considered a formal entity; the other a process that engages in an intertextual relationship with prior texts. “A double definition of adaptation as a product (as extensive, particular transcoding) and as a process (as creative reinterpretation and palimpsestic intertextuality) is one way to address the various dimensions of the broader phenomenon of adaptation,”¹²⁶ according to Hutcheon. From the angle of adaptation as product, Hutcheon actually parallels adaptation with translation, but a creative and extensive translation, as she terms it, “a recoding into a new set of conventions as well as signs.”¹²⁷ And in the sense of process, Hutcheon cites the traditional concept of mimesis. When Aristotle defends drama from attacks by his mentor Plato, he still accepts the general theory of mimesis; but instead of seeing the mimesis as an inferior copy, he stresses that it is actually the dynamic process that the artwork imitates or should imitate. Adaptation is no different from other creative acts; it proceeds with its own dynamic process, and in this process the adapted material can be made into its own body of work. Moreover, from the perspective of intertextuality, not only is the creation of adaptation an ongoing dialogical process; it is also a form of reception. Whatever the aesthetic approach will be, an adaptation, in the audience’s eyes, is always directly or indirectly, visibly or invisibly connected with the work that

¹²⁵ See Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, translated by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

¹²⁶ Hutcheon 2006, p. 22.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 16.

is adapted. Hutcheon refers to this precognition as “engagement,” and argues that this engagement in adaptation is extensive, and it works in different modes.

The three modes of engagement, in Hutcheon’s categories, are narrating (telling), performing (showing) and interacting; in short, three perceptive ways through language, image and action. If a text could only be perceived in terms of intertextual relations with other texts, or, in terms of its context, then the most decisive context for adaptation is that “inherited” from what is adapted, and this product of new remaking actually frames how the audience will react to this extensive alternative world. We engage in time and space, as Hutcheon argues, and what exactly gets adapted is a “*heterocosm*,” an “other world” with transformed settings and situations. To speculate on this *heterocosm*, Hutcheon lists some questions, which include several important dimensions on theorizing adaptation: What? Who? Why? How? Where? When? — “What” is about form; “who” and “why” refer to adapter; “how” relates to audience; and “where” and “when” are concerned with context.

In most cases, a change of medium is involved in the adaptation; it is the difference in form and genre that has an impact on almost every aspect of adaptation. “As creative interpretive transposition of a recognizable other work or works, adaptation is a kind of extended palimpsest and, at the same time, often a transcoding into a different set of conventions,”¹²⁸ Hutcheon’s opinion echoes Lessing’s analysis of poetry and painting. She agrees that the limitations created by the medium itself should not be easily neglected in text transformation. Furthermore, as Irving Babbitt points out, after recognizing that every art form relates very deeply to its material specificity, it is the artistic creative working that utilizes this specificity.¹²⁹ To examine medium

¹²⁸ Hutcheon 2006, p. 33.

¹²⁹ See Irving Babbitt, *The New Laokoon: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts*, Boston: Houghton, first edition in 1910, 1940.

transformation in adaptation, one of the most important issues is to consider how these specificities may be adapted to a new form, namely their transformation into a new set of regulations and symbol systems. In Hutcheon's analysis about of how audiences engage with the artwork, how the altered receptive mode is applied will be essential; for example, as she asserts, when dramatizing a novel, which means transforming expressions from print to performance, in the process of transition "from telling to showing", the emphasis should move from imaginative to actual visual perception, which may inevitably produce a certain amount of re-accentuation, distillation and reduction. However, these amendments with respect to restrictions on the stage do not necessarily lead to an inferior effect from adaptation in comparison with the prior version. Hutcheon especially clarifies several clichés about the so-called advantages and disadvantages of both genres. For example, the telling (narrative) mode, e.g. the novel, takes control of the terrain of interiority and has the flexibility to present from a point of view; on the other hand, the showing (representative) mode, e.g. performance, handles better the exteriority; in other words "the showing and interacting modes have only one tense: the present; the mode of telling alone can show relations among past, present, and future"¹³⁰; or, "only telling (in language) can do justice to such elements as ambiguity, irony, symbols, metaphors, silences, and absences; these remain "untranslatable" in the showing or interacting modes"¹³¹. All of these opinions are very typical when referring to the genre distinctions in adaptation studies, and they are also remnants of traditional genre theories and comparative studies. The questions behind these biases and clichés regarding the tension between subjectivity and materiality are relevant to the balance of authorial interpretation and participatory reaction. For instance, Hutcheon also mentions specifically the dramatization of novels. She writes

¹³⁰ Hutcheon 2006, p. 63.

¹³¹ Ibid., 68.

that, “it is precisely such elements as interior monologue, point of view, reflection, comment, and irony, along with such other issues as ambiguity and time, which have attracted the most attention in the critical and theoretical work on the move from the printed page to any form of performance and from there to the participatory.”¹³². In other words, special treatments of those parts that are traditionally seen as impractical for the stage deserve more attention in research.

The question of “who is the adapter?” is relatively easy to answer in the case of novel dramatization. The complexities and multi-media characteristics that make theatrical adaptation a collective process, involve, at the very least, the director, the dramaturg and the stage designer, not to mention the efforts of actresses and actors. Another point that needs to be remembered is that the adapter has double natures, acting as an interpreter as well as a creator, and these two roles are not contradictory. In adaptation, to interpret is to create. In considering questions like “what is the purpose of adaptation?” (why) there is generally a concern with wider culture environment, such as economic motives and political factors. Yet in each specific case, personal motivations of the adapters should still be taken into account, since these have more value from the aesthetic perspective. On the other hand, speculation on the motivation or intention of the adapter is something of a trap, as Williams K. Wimsatt has explained, because of the risk of linking the artwork and its creator, for which he uses the famous term “*intentional fallacy*.” Hutcheon argues on this subject that authorial intent, in this case the intention of the adapter, should better be understood as an intention for the audience, with the adaptation having both interpretive and creative dimensions. To make this more clear: a presumption about the audience’s knowledge of the original work does in most cases exist in the productive process, and the adapter’s interpretation is actually part of an interpretative context and takes the audience’s response into consideration. It

¹³² Ibid., 52.

may be best to understand “inter-subjectivity” or “collective creation” as an adaptive process without worrying about the existence of the creator.

The audience, as discussed in detail above, has unparalleled significance in contemporary adaptation studies. Many scholars and critics assert the meaning of audience for adaptation, but a relevant but opposite question might be: why should the audience need or enjoy adaptation? How might they get pleasure from the adaptation, or to use a more pejorative term, repetition? Of course, adaptation has never been a case of simple repetition, but instead involves remaking and enriching. As in the case of authorial intention, speculating on the expectation of adaptation should also depend on the specific pre-understandings of the audience. Hutcheon rightly points out that adaptation appeals to the “intellectual and aesthetic pleasure of understanding the interplay between works, of opening up a text’s possible meanings to intertextual echoing”¹³³. Moreover, intellectual pleasure in theatrical adaptation influences its audience; it does not differ from other types of performance, in terms of the level of the emotional, physical and psychological, and especially in terms of the presence of the performers. The same approach could also be applied to the last two aspects, “where” and “when,” which are also far from irrelevant. Adaptation is always framed in context; it never exists in a vacuum; no matter what the perspective of the general text production or the specific historical situation is, contextual elements are by no means intertwined in the process of interpretation and creation.

4.5. Summary

¹³³ Ibid., 117.

Theorizing adaptation starts always from the (re-)definition of adaptation. In the roughest sense, adaptation is always a transformation from one work to a new one, and from one genre to another, which makes concepts to do with work/text and genre/medium quite essential. In other words, contemporary recognition of adaptation develops from an open understanding of a text, which is located in the intertextual relations of the adaptation, and the evolved reception of the genre, which emphasizes the decisive role of specific materiality.

Earlier studies, even though in the fundamental sense they have been distanced from contemporary concepts, still illustrate common interests in the specific analysis. As shown above, Lessing's study is based on the emphasis of effect. As a result he pays close attention to the materiality of artwork, which relates the process of production and reception together; Bakhtin specifies the concrete setting of narrative, his term *chronotopos* marks how to get technically into the multi-layered and dynamic interactions in a text. Additionally, adaptation studies in film have developed into a fairly mature academic field that shares a fairly similar theoretical background and methodological approach to that of adaptation onstage; moreover, old questions about fidelity, as well as about the adapted object, have reappeared as film adapting has proceeded. Naturally, the answers will be different from different perspectives and new media environment.

There is no need to repeat all the new understandings of adaptation, which have been discussed in detail earlier, but as a conclusion, some significant aspects will briefly be listed here. The most revolutionary area is no doubt the redefinition of text, or the concept of intertextuality. Beginning from new understandings of text, it is possible to consider adaptation as adaptation, which means an equal treatment of creation and interpretation. In addition, through accepting the consideration of dynamic text, adaptation can also be seen as a product as well as a process, and both have been embedded in production and reception. Based on these redefinitions, research on

adaptation might be categorized into several aspects for consideration, including its form, its adapter/creator, its audience and its context. All these aspects map out the complete process in the adaptive act and make analysis of the production systematic and comprehensive.

Chapter 5. Narrative Studies

Generally speaking, narrative is universal, and the narrative act happens all the time in our daily lives. Written texts we read, advertisements we encounter, films and TV series we watch, along with even the shortest conversations we have with others, all include narrative elements. So it is natural that the concept of narrative will be defined from different perspectives, and the two major branches come firstly from the text itself and secondly from a wider cultural environment. The former takes the narrative as an art form, which is separated from the normal narrative

activities listed above; and the latter sees narrative, even when it happens in daily life, as also “performative,” and as existing only under certain conditions of culture. In this chapter I will mainly focus on clarifying both important inquiries in modern narrative studies, and considering how they might be applied in theater and adaptation.

5.1. Definition(s) of Narrative

In order to begin research on narrative, particularly theatrical narrative, the definition of narrative, or the extent to which it applies, is absolutely essential to the entire discussion. First of all, I would like to narrow down my consideration to the domain of the artistic field. Specifically, the term narrative will be taken only as an artistic form, rather than as a common constructive and interactive method in daily life. Even then, the decisive question still remains, what is narrative? Answers that consider narrative as an artistic form refer to genres like novels, drama, epic, short stories and so on. These are far from satisfactory, and this tautological explanation provides little help in the exploration of what makes an artistic work narrative.

In fact, when I assert that narrative is universal in daily life, there are at least three levels underlying in my argument: 1) an action, which makes a narration happen; 2) a procedure, verbal or gestural, which constructs the whole narration; 3) a “thing” or a story, which has regard to what the narration is about. For example, in the cases of daily life, what we define as narrative might involve one or more person. They are proceeding in a situation of narrating something about some particular events, which, of course, includes all these three levels. This classification is made by French scholar Gérard Genette. He defines the narrative using the triangle of narrative act, narrative discourse (*discours*) and story (*histoire*). He prefers to discuss the narrative from the

perspective of discourse, concentrating mostly on narrative acts and narrative discourse in the Genettian sense, rather than defining it from the angle of story.¹³⁴

Although Genette's concept and methodology might be the most influential theory in modern narratology, later studies, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, do not definitely follow his paradigm. Seymour Chatman has included several media other than purely verbal (oral or written) in the narrative studies, which Genette barely touches on. Chatman attempts to expand the contents of narrative discourse through recognition of multiple media, such as oral narration.¹³⁵ But still, he argues little about the production of narrative, which Genette mentions but also barely discusses. Another important scholar, Gerald Prince, in his *Dictionary of Narratology* (1987) still defines narrative as "the recounting ...of one or more real or fictional events communicated by one, two, or several (more or less overt) narrators to one, two or several (more or less overt) narratees."¹³⁶ Obviously his definition follows a traditional plot-concentrated approach.

But before moving to a modern understanding, namely a structuralist conception of narrative, I would like to provide a brief retrospective of discussion at the level of "story". Story, or plot¹³⁷, is traditionally understood as certain arrangements of action sequences; this is illustrated prominently in drama theory. According to Aristotle's definition, a tragedy should have a beginning, a middle and an end; in Gustav Freytag's model, a dramatic structure should have five phases including *Einleitung*, *Steigerung*, *Höhepunkt*, *Fall/Umkehr* and *Katastrophe*.¹³⁸ For

¹³⁴ See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, translated by Jane E. Lewin, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980.

¹³⁵ See Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca [u.a.]: Cornell University Press, 1978.

¹³⁶ Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, Lincoln u.a.: University of Nebraska Press, 1987, p. 58.

¹³⁷ There are distinctions in these two terms for some scholars, but I use them as if they were identical.

¹³⁸ See Gustav Freytag, *Die Technik des Dramas*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 13. Auflage (Leipzig 1922), first published in 1863, 1969.

modern theorists, even though they have already more or less abandoned a closed and strict concept of narrative, this idea, namely, that narrative is constructed by a series of actions, has never faded. For instance, Vladimir Propp, who laid the cornerstone for modern narratology, has famously categorized narrative elements in folktale into several types and functions.¹³⁹ This approach of plot analysis, considering its roots in the nature of narrative, cannot be easily ignored; but it also implies a danger of becoming dogmatic, and, more importantly, it is strongly inclined to follow a certain kind of *telos* (goal, aim) in narration. At the same time, reconsideration of the story level of narrative also has a parallel with reconsideration of the logical structure or arrangement within a narrative text, and therefore how the interplay within different parts is understood, whether the concept of wholeness is inseparable for narrative analysis, and how this wholeness is understood.

Emphasis on the character, as a counterpart of plot-concentrated theory, is another dimension in the history of drama theory.¹⁴⁰ Rather than basing narrativity on plot, this theoretical approach calls for “real” and “convincing” human figures to act in this narrated world. With respect to narrative onstage, the character-concentrated approach is especially crucial, as the cognitive process in real life, whether a character is convincing, is related first of all to visually reality, to the very existence of the human being, which is bound to a specific time and place. In aiming to portray specific characters, it is very helpful to locate concrete spatial-temporal relations, so it may be deduced that in traditional character theory, narrative is presented not just by reasoning (plotting), but also by depicting. Besides these actions, the portrayal of characters reveals that

¹³⁹ See Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, translated by Laurence Scott, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968.

¹⁴⁰ See Patrice Pavis, “The Character/Action Dialectic” in *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, translated by Christine Shantz, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998, pp. 48–49.

another major function of narrative is to foster psychological empathy and to build a fictional world that can be comprehensive.¹⁴¹

All of the above discussions naturally understand drama as a narrative text, which cannot, however, be seen as identical to traditional Western thinking.¹⁴² Modern recognition of “narrative” erases the classical distinction between *diegetic* and *mimetic*,¹⁴³ or less precisely, a clear role of narrator is no longer considered a mark for narrative text. For instance, in Genette’s narratology, although the novel occupies his central consideration, he still finds no need to exclude dramatic texts. In fact, modern narratology replaces this traditional distinction with new terms such as narrative discourse and perspective (or in Genette’s terminology, *focalization*). This shift generates different narrative elements, such as plot, narrated world and spatial-temporal setting, according to subjective choices, and more importantly, a coexisting functional system.

Fludernik has reached a conclusion about narrative, which seems comprehensive enough to form a starting point for my research; she writes, “a narrative (*Erzählung*) is a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose centre there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions (action and plot structure).”¹⁴⁴ Fludernik’s definition emphasizes especially the importance of chosen perspective on narrated world and the

¹⁴¹ For psychological studies on the narrative and character, see “Narrative Empathy” in *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts*, edited by Frederick Luis Aldama, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010, pp. 61–94; Richard J. Kemp, *Embodied Acting: Cognitive Foundations of Performance*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2010.

¹⁴² Cf. 3.1 Classical Dichotomy: Epic and Dramatic.

¹⁴³ In the traditional discussion of speech form, the distinction between *diegesis* and *mimesis* is actually from the perspective of the contents of speeches. In the *Republic*, Plato famously distinguishes both terms: *mimesis* refers to the characters’ discourse and *diegesis* to the narrative discourse of the poet. Rather than referring to *mimesis* only as the utterances of characters as Plato does, Aristotle explains it as a process of acting in the fictional world in his *Poetics*.

¹⁴⁴ Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology*, translated by Patricia Häusler-Greenfield and Monika Fludernik, New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 6.

very concrete existence of character; in short, the center of the narrative is about who, and under what circumstances, the story is told/performed.

5.2. Structuralist Narratology

Modern narratology, like most developments in the humanities that happened in the twentieth century, is deeply influenced by linguistics, which later developed into a widespread paradigm, structuralism. There are actually several French structuralists, including Claude Bremond, Julien Greimas, Tzvetan Todorov, Roland Barthes and especially Gérard Genette, who have made significant contributions to establishing a new understanding of narrative. Vladimir Propp has paved the way for this new field in his studies of folk tales, and also inspired much later research. Since then, it has been Gérard Genette, who once studied rhetoric, who has played the decisive role in the development of modern narrative studies. Discarding the traditional classification of form and content — which he inherits from Russian formalists, just like his French contemporaries — and several traditional dichotomies, such as the old distinctions of drama/epic and diegesis/mimesis, Genette takes the text as several homogenous parts and discusses narrative mainly in terms of narrative discourse, which for him is more fundamental than extrinsic features; moreover, through developing a concrete system of analysis, he gets into the inner-space of narrative and creates a technical way to approach the essential question of how narrative is organized and functions.

Genette identifies three basic layers for the modern speculation on narrative, which divides relevant thoughts into the three levels of narrative act, narrative discourse and story. His own research concentrates on narrative discourse, to which he also makes a fundamental contribution

by proposing a series of basic terminology. These new terms have refreshed the way in which narrative is understood. Genette's theory is a study about dynamic relationships. In his own words, "analysis of narrative discourse will thus be for me a study of the relationships between narrative and story, between narrative and narrating, and between story and narrating."¹⁴⁵

In Gérard Genette's theoretical arsenal, there are three major term-clusters, including *voice* (Fr. *voix*; Ger. *Genus/Stimme*), in which the story is perceived by the narrator; *tense* (Fr. *temps*; Ger. *Tempus*), in which the relationship between the time of the story and the time of the discourse is expressed; and *mode* (Fr. *mode*; Ger. *Modus*), which refers to the type of discourse used by the narrator.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Genette 1980, p. 29.

¹⁴⁶ Genette's model in detail (summarized from *Narrative Discourse*, 1980):

A. VOICE

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. person | a. Homodiegetic (first-person narrative) |
| | b. Heterodiegetic (third-person narrative) |
| 2. time of narration | a. subsequent |
| | b. simultaneous |
| | c. prior |
| | d. interpolated |
| 3. narrative level | a. extradiegetic |
| | b. (intra)diegetic |
| | c. hypodiegetic (metadiegetic) |

B. TENSE

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. order | a. anachronies (analepsis, prolepsis) |
| | b. achrony |
| 2. duration | a. ellipsis |
| | b. summary |
| | c. scene |
| | d. [stretch] |
| | e. pause |
| 3. frequency | a. singulative (1N/1S) |
| | b. iterative (1N/nS) |
| | c. [repetitive] (nN/1S) |

C. MODE

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| focalization | a. zero focalization |
| | b. focalization |
| | b1. internal focalization |
| | b2. external focalization |

Based on modern linguistic developments, Genette refuses to accept the classical poetic division between *mimesis* (direct speech, or character's voice) and *diegesis* (indirect speech, or author's voice). These two cases are identical in written narrative text, which Genette mainly concentrates on, and he actually integrates both terms into his explanation of narrator and focalization. Nevertheless, regarding theatrical narrative, what still needs to be considered is the oral narrative tradition and different representative methods other than the literary.

German narratologist Monika Fludernik has discussed this topic from the perspectives of both spoken and written language, and she argues that, speaking historically, both *mimesis* and *diegesis* might be oral arts by origin, and as a recording of oral telling, any written representations cannot escape being stylized or purified.¹⁴⁷ In other words, a written narrative text is represented with certain literary customs that shape the discourse, and speeches of *diegesis* and *mimesis* are simply different ways of representing authorial intention. Modern narratology demonstrates strongly that "voice", no matter whether it appears to emanate from characters or from the author, has no fundamental distinction on the level of "narrating," but presents different "modes" on the level of narrative discourse. This argument, which refers to all discourses, functions equally and simultaneously in narration, and ignites relevant considerations of how narrative texts should be presented on the stage.

Narratologists have tried to replace the clarifications of "voices" with several terms related to "modes"; for example, German scholar Franz Stanzel puts forward the *Erzählsituation* concept to differentiate narrative models (*Auktoriale Erzählsituation*, *Personale Erzählsituation*, *Ich-*

Besides, according to Fludernik, these three distinguishes made by Genette are the foundations of Latin grammar, in which verbs are inflected in these three ways: *voice* (active, passive), *mood* (indicative, subjunctive) and *tense* (present, past, future, etc.). (Fludernik 2009, p. 89).

¹⁴⁷ Fludernik 2009, p. 65.

Erzählsituation). This is actually a distinction between mediated and immediate narrative;¹⁴⁸ and Otto Ludwig mentions the distinction between reporting and scenic presentation (*Berichtende vs. Szenische Darstellung*).¹⁴⁹ It is not difficult to discover that the central concern in all these considerations is the basic understanding of “telling” and “showing,” which, naturally, demands a more or less controlling role of narrator. But for a scenic narrative, like drama on the stage, such narrator figures can hardly play a similar role to that played in oral and written storytellings. In theater, it seems as if any mediation no longer exists and the audience can watch the action directly from its own perspective. In short, storytelling is, in any case, reflected, but the stage presents itself directly and immediately, or at least this is how it appears. As we may deduce from the discussion above, the importance of the narrator in modern narratology is indisputable, but for a living performance which lacks a mediator, it is still necessary to ask to what extent this term narrator should be applied. In the case of contemporary German theater, there is a tendency to “narrate” or to disconnect the dramatic form on the stage, and especially in novel adaptation, this epic tendency seems to have become a consensus in actual performances. Additionally, analysis of narrative is by no means related to speculation on the narrator, no matter what its form and function.

Gérard Genette himself, of course, maps the importance of narrator(s). In his theoretical triangle of voice, tense and mode, it is the narrator(s) who control(s) the direction and perception of narrative. Putting aside, for a moment, the modern phenomenon of “epic tendency,” the dramatic text (and also the theatrical text), still does not fit perfectly with Genette’s description of the function of the narrator. In fact, although Genette has no disagreement with accepting drama as a

¹⁴⁸ See Franz K. Stanzel, *Die typischen Erzählsituationen im Roman*, Wien: Braumüller, 1965.

¹⁴⁹ See Otto Ludwig, “Formen der Erzählung” in *Ludwig: Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 6: Studien II (Zur Ethik, Ästhetik und Literatur), edited by Erich Schmidt and Adolf Stern, Leipzig 1891, pp. 1202–06.

narrative form, his major object of analysis is still the novel, especially modern novels like *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust. In all likelihood, this is the reason the narrator cannot prove equally significant in early works, and not just in dramas,¹⁵⁰ but also in some early modern narrative works like *The Canterbury Tales* or the *Decameron*, the function of whose narrators is still marginal in directing the whole narration. It is conceivable that Genette would introduce another of his crucial concepts, focalization, since, the narrator has different functions in the narrative discourse. He differentiates the narrator and focalization, which clarifies and generates the narrative text. Genette's term of "focalization" can also be roughly substituted by other popular usages, namely "perspective" or "point of view," which although they do not imply exactly the same things, contribute to a construction of a relativized narrative world.

Yet, to discuss the role of the narrator on the stage is still more complex than in the case of written narration, as in the novel, or even visualized narration, as in film. Speech marks or camera movements provide shifts of perspective, like filters or reflectors, and they can to some extent control perception. On the stage, however, especially in illusionary theater, events occur, or at least appear to, in a quasi-objective panorama. Because of the location of the performance, members of the audience actually watch a play by using their own eyes, in other words, from an outsider's perspective, rather than from the perspective of a particular narrator, or focalizer, or even author. This kind of framing, of course, does not mean the dramatic genre represents the "real" happening more authentically, but as many modern scholars point out, there is simply an illusion of reality. Besides, illusion or not, the materiality of the stage certainly has deep imprints on a dramaturgical level. Unlike when content is constructed through the shifting of voice or mode, traditional

¹⁵⁰ The role of narrator, as many scholars have noticed, although it becomes much more important through emphasis in modern narratology, has actually existed in many ancient and modern plays through different forms.

theatrical narrative methods incline to organizing the events and characters according to the principle of causality.

The disintegrating of the plot-centered dramatic model and the implanting of subjective perspective are certainly great revolutions in theater history, but this is not directly concerned with my topic here; in respect of novel adaptation, I would like to investigate what inspires the modern narratology, which, as has frequently been mentioned above, is related more closely to the written narrative text, and may provide narrative studies for the stage.

Manfred Pfister in his influential dramatic theoretical work, *Das Drama*, continues to adopt the concept of *perspective* to analyze the structure of drama; he sees the dramatic text as one constructed from various related perspectives that underlie certain kinds of intention.¹⁵¹ It may be deduced from Pfister's analysis that even though (classical form) drama has not provided an obvious narrator or focalizer, it still manages to direct the empathy of the audience through its unbalanced structure of perspective, which is obviously reflected by a constellation of major or minor characters, which are divided according to the importance of the action or event. So, from this interpretation, the question of perspective in drama returns to its oldest definition, a representation of an action. The clarification Genette has made in his theory, which could roughly be summarized as "who did it" and "who told it," might both merge together on the stage; the one who did it appearing to be the one who told it. In fact, Genette has also maintained that the various functions of narrator are mainly based on whether she/he has been involved in the major events. So, on the stage, limited perspective does exist in the form of the voice of the major character, namely the major action. In contemporary novel adaptation, one of the most frequently appearing presentations is the existence of other voices outside or parallel with the actions, which certainly

¹⁵¹ See Manfred Pfister, "Die Perspektivenstruktur dramatischer Text" in *Das Drama. Theorie und Analyse*, München: Wilhelm Fink, 11. Auflage, 2001, pp. 90–102.

have different functions in their own scenes, but if analyzed from the angle of narrative discourse, these approaches can be understood as a reversion to the dramatic control of focalization, and in some way to the near telling-based model of the novel tradition, which places more emphasis on narrating acts rather than narrated actions.

5.3. Speech-Act Theory and Performative Narration

“To tell”, “to show”, or “to narrate”, whatever phrases and techniques might be used, in most circumstances have a clear distinction from “to do” or “to perform.” Even a realistic aesthetic has lost its dominant position in theater, with contemporary theories promoting the language or discourse itself as a form of significant social power, many social or historical events are widely understood as products of certain discourses. Yet it would still be difficult to accept that there is no fundamental difference between things that are narrated and things that have really happened. Indeed, it is naive to ask “is this story true?” after watching a play, and one of the reasons for this is that most audiences would not confuse their aesthetic experience with a situation in real life. Both exist in their own domains and have boundaries for most people.

However, the development of language philosophy, especially in the field of pragmatics, might challenge this common view. This theoretical construction understands narrative as a “performing” as well as a “telling”. Therefore this may be a supplementary course for narrative studies from the perspective of narrative act (except for the commoner structuralist approach of analyzing the narrative discourse). Exploring narrative from a “performative” angle suggests that no such thing as a “pure,” solid and isolated text has ever existed, and it is kept alive in the dynamics, including the conditions, the participants, the effects and all the contextual factors.

Recognition of the performative dimension of narrative retrieves the concept of narrative from the angle of performativity.

As with the “linguistic turn,” or in perhaps a relatively narrower term the “narrative turn”,¹⁵² that swept across almost all humanities in the twentieth century, another linguistic-based academic revolution, which is referred to by some scholars as “performance turn,”¹⁵³ also deeply influences most literary and social studies, and this is the case with the narrative studies. The theoretical cornerstone for this turn might be summarized by an impressive slogan “how to do things with words,” which is actually the title of an influential book (1955/1962) written by British language philosopher John Langshaw Austin (1911–1960). Inspirations generated from Austin’s theory open a new dimension for narrative studies, which, differs from Genette’s text-oriented structural approach, addressing a wider scope over an entire situation, which makes the narration happen. In short, performative narrative theory is about the creation and reception of narrative.

5.3.1. “*How to Do Things with Words*”

Austin plainly asserts that “the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as saying something.” By dividing “saying as doing” from “just saying”, Austin introduces the term of “performative utterance,” which is

¹⁵² “‘Narrative turn,’ the reliance on the category ‘narrative’ to describe, discuss, and account for indefinitely many activities, fields, and texts, from political speeches, legal briefs, or philosophical arguments to scientific proofs, psychoanalytic sessions...by the end of the 1960s the very word “narrative” (or “story”) begins to invade a multitude of (discursive) terrains... the notion of narrative is repeatedly called upon to characterize this or that domain, practice, or object and — with the spread of anti-foundationalism, post-structuralism, and postmodernism— narrative becomes one the most common hermeneutic grids of our time.” in Gerald Prince, *Revisiting Narrativity: In Telling Performance*, p. 29.

¹⁵³ See Eric E. Peterson and Kristin M. Langellier, “The Performance Turn in Narrative Studies” in *Narrative Inquiry*, 16:1 (2006), pp. 173–180.

derived, as he says, from “perform”, and “it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action — it is not normally thought of as just saying something.”¹⁵⁴ Austin’s own famous example is about the confirmative words at the wedding; he argues that “when I say ‘I do’, I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it.” This means that, rather than a description or a statement, “performative” refers to an utterance that has certain effects under certain circumstances.

Austin understands language through its effect, and as with most valid definitions, prerequisites and limitations should be taken into consideration; in Austin’s analysis, he actually refers to the interplay between language and action. When he writes that “the uttering of the words is, indeed, usually a, or even the, leading incident in the performance of the act, the performance of which is also the object of the utterance,” what Austin really means is that the utterance could not replace, or even resemble or represent, the action, but the word itself could also create situations or react to one, and it is not just an ornament or description of a real “scene.” And the central element of making it possible is the whole circumstance. As Austin says, “We must consider the total situation in which the utterance is issued — the total speech-act.”¹⁵⁵

How should this so-called “total speech-act” be constructed? What kind of situation could sustain this performative utterance? Besides certain effects produced by certain utterances and acts, Austin also emphasizes “an accepted conventional procedure”. He thinks a procedure that includes “the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances” could produce a “certain conventional effect.”¹⁵⁶ This effect defined by Austin is actually close to an emotional communication. As he says, “[where, as often,] the procedure is designed for use by persons having

¹⁵⁴ John L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, London: Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Austin 1962, p. 52.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

certain thoughts, feelings, or intentions, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts, feelings, or intentions, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves.”¹⁵⁷ In relation to his explanation of the “performative utterance,” it is necessary to consider the requirements of accepted conventions, willing participants and serious effects, all of which work together to complete such categories of action.

From this brief description of Austin’s performative theory, it is not surprising that it would draw the attention of theater scholars. After all, the approach that Austin adopts to establish his definition of *performative* has so much in common with the reciprocal relations constructed in the process of performance.¹⁵⁸ Performative utterances are related to the circumstances constrained by certain rules, and the utterance itself is also part of the procedure for making or even altering its circumstance; likewise, to construct an effective and recognizable narrative situation, it is important to create a coherent symbolic system, which includes the language itself, and stands in the position of participating in the dynamic process of the whole of the stage action. Austin’s assertion maintains the decisive status of verbal narrative, and in the case of theatrical narrative, it would be inspiring to broaden the concepts and to consider that “words” might function as directly as logical plot and physical action. Moreover, Austin’s definition makes it possible to narrow down the objects of my discussion with respect to “effective” narration and adaptation. The recognizable and limited situations and reciprocal dynamics in the development are very important features to ensure an effective narration.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵⁸ Austin’s theory has been widely accepted in contemporary performance studies, see Erika Fischer-Lichte, “Literatur als Akt - Lesen als Akt: Zur Performativität von Texten” in her book *Performativität. Eine Einführung*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2012, here pp. 135–145; James Loxley, “Speech Acts, Fiction and Deconstruction” in *Performativity*, from the series of *The New Critical Idiom*, New York: Routledge, 2007, here pp. 62–87.

More precisely, Austin puts forward three levels of speech-acts to show the dynamism of language, which he terms “locutionary act,” “illocutionary act” and “perlocutionary act”. Austin writes, “we distinguished the locutionary act (and within it the phonetic, the phatic, and the rhetic acts) which has a meaning; the illocutionary act which has a certain force in saying something; the perlocutionary act which is the achieving of certain effects by saying something.”¹⁵⁹ To summarize roughly, the locutionary act is the performance of an utterance along with its primitive forms and all possible meanings, the illocutionary act is the pragmatic force of the utterance which is valid in certain conditions, and the perlocutionary act is the actual effect of this utterance. From a comprehensive analysis of purpose, energy and effect, Austin maintains that a performative act can be valid only from perspective of perception, which he defines as “consequence”. The illocutionary act, as “a consequence of the locutionary act,”¹⁶⁰ is particularly the performance of the act that Austin refers to,¹⁶¹ so, as he says, it is a “conventional act”.¹⁶² Here, he focuses especially on the force or energy that enable utterances to be performative, and stresses some devices of explicit performatives, including “mood,” “tone of voice,” “emphasis,” and most importantly, “the circumstances of the utterance.” Compared with Genette’s narrative terminology, what Austin concentrates on is not just how to construct a narration, but also how those techniques make it valid or effective. Based on Austin’s pioneering research, speech-act theory has nowadays developed into a fairly mature system in pragmatics and contributes much to understandings of language, truth, knowledge, perception and so on. In other words, both contemporary narrative and theater studies have made theoretical progress with the help of the speech-act theory.

¹⁵⁹ Austin 1962, p.120.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 113.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁶² Ibid., 113.

5.3.2. “*Narrative as Performance*”

Austin himself has asserted that “a performative utterance will 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,” because under those circumstances, as he understands it, the utterance is “in special ways used not seriously”, which contradicts his definition of action as to “do something”, and he therefore confines his analysis to “ordinary circumstances.”¹⁶³ No matter how Austin thinks about the relation between utterance onstage, which is “hollow or void” and “not serious” for him, and utterance in daily life, his theory inspires theoretical developments on performance and narrative studies, and it might be valid to adopt his theory on the performative function of utterance to the stage, especially when considering how narrative works along with performance. Austin’s speech-act theory concentrates on the effect of language, which may be fulfilled in given situations, through certain procedures and between multiple participants. This form has similarities to constructing narration onstage.

Narrative elements in performance, in fact, appear again and again in theater history, and are presented using choruses and messengers’ reports in Greek tragedy, as prologue and epilogue in Renaissance plays, and as direct storytelling in many oral folk arts. As narratologist Marie Maclean rightly suggests, dramatic performances are never completely isolated from telling. She emphasizes the importance of oral tradition in one of her major works, titled “*Narrative as Performance*.”

¹⁶³ Ibid., 22.

Marie Maclean, along with a scholar she cites frequently in this theoretical work, Shoshana Felman, make significant contributions to adopting J. L. Austin's philosophical arguments into the literary field and narrative studies. As a literary scholar, Maclean concentrates particularly on implied performativity in narrative literature, which also includes written dramatic text; furthermore, she argues that theatrical models and scenic imagination enable the dynamic of narrative, and in the nature of all narratives, there are always places for the reader/audience to be embedded, which makes the narrative at the same time performative.¹⁶⁴

Beginning by tracing back the early period of narrative forms, Maclean emphasizes that telling/narrative is, primarily, or in its deeper structure, oral telling; namely, narrative is a communicative process on the scene, which obviously has a theoretical basis in Austin's arguments. Maclean then argues that the oral telling tradition is essential for any narrative nowadays. When examining the regulations and techniques of narrative, they appear for most part to be established to strengthen the power of telling, since narrative energy will be unleashed at the highest rate in the performance and the passivity of reception should be avoided. In fact, many levels and categories discussed in modern narratology are actually reflected not just in the intricate handwork of "making," but also by implying the presence of the reader/audience and calling for their reactions. Narrative is performative by origin, in its process and in its form and nature.

It has been noted that in Austin's sense, narrative in the artistic field cannot have any serious "consequence"; therefore it cannot produce the fulfillment of a speech-act. Of course, Maclean is well aware that, "whether spoken or written, performance involves energy, and energy is neither

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction From Bunyan to Beckett*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974; Hans Robert Jauss, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982.

husbanded nor spent without consequences”,¹⁶⁵ so she meets a definite dilemma in citing Austin’s theory.

On the other hand, there is a new trend for taking an identical perspective of any textual type, explained by the words “everything is text” or “everything is narrated,” which implies that our social norms and thoughts are productions of discourse. Maclean actually understands that “between natural language and literary language, it has been abundantly demonstrated that all performatives occur in both ‘natural’ direct discourse and intertextual representation, and the latter cannot simply be dismissed as invalid and therefore of no account”, and she also recognizes that this standpoint might be extended to mean that “all discourse, by the very nature of language, is sign-base, symbolic, and therefore fabricated”, so there will be no real difference between the real and the fictional. Maclean feels somewhat unsatisfied with this homogenous viewpoint and maintains that she cannot escape a simple question, “did that really happen or is it a story?”¹⁶⁶ Indeed, all of Austin’s theory is based upon his affirmation about the real effects that can be created through language, but how can this happen in a novel or on the stage?

Maclean considers it more valid to insist that narrative performance has no contradiction to “serious” consequence (effect). In fact, Austin analyses the speech-act in consideration of all its situations, and the most significant grounds for defining a performance rely on the existence of an audience. Even in circumstances of natural language, Maclean argues, the narrative element still exists in the use of phrases like “I will relate” or “I will tell,” which refer to another “scene” outside this “real” communicative situation, whose only difference from fictional performance is the

¹⁶⁵ Marie Maclean, *Narrative as Performance: The Baudelairean Experiment*, London: Routledge, 1988, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ Maclean 1988, p. 24.

visible existence of a group of outsiders, namely, “the creation of audience.”¹⁶⁷ In a situation in which there is a speech-act, a valid consequence may be the reaction of another participant, which is equal to the reaction from the audience in a situation onstage; Maclean then asserts that a valid speech-act, in this case to a theatrical performance, might be completed not on the stage, but by the audience. Therefore, Maclean insists that the term “consequence” in an artistic performance can only make sense on the level of reception, for example, if the audience were “immune to the acts on stage”.¹⁶⁸ This is actually an invalid and unserious consequence in this situation, since there is a lack of effect.

Austin’s classification of three levels of speech-act, namely the acts of locution, illocution and perlocution, are understood separately by Maclean as purpose, energy and effect of narrative. Within this range, a speech-act should include the dynamic communication between an artistic (fictional) performance and its audience. At the same time, another communication, which happens on the stage or in the novel, is also inseparable from the narrative, since it plays a significant role in placing or setting down the purpose of this very situation. Maclean argues that in a fictional narrative performance, there are double relationships between the narrative and the audience, and she maintains that identification and distance happen simultaneously between them: “the understanding of distance is enhanced by the postulation of two orders of speech act, the actual and the narrative, while the understanding of identification becomes clearer when we establish the plot between sense, action and effect.”¹⁶⁹ Maclean sees that an audience will “depend in part on

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 25.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 30.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 32.

the conventions of the speech act for both the pleasure obtained and the interpretation arrived at.”¹⁷⁰

Therefore, under this “narrative contract,” a term defined by Maclean, which shapes the narrative as a “frame,” the conventions of representation and reception may be established. Maclean indicates that “all performance implies shared conventions, implies a contractual relationship between the performer, who undertakes to meet certain expectations, and the recipients, whether participating or passive, judge or audience... such a contractual relationship is also a necessary prerequisite to the functioning of performatives and speech acts in general”¹⁷¹ and this is also the case for theatrical performance. Applying the cognition of “narrative contract” or convention onstage is, in fact, not far from analysis of narrative techniques, which is in some ways similar to Genette’s analysis concerning focalization. However, from this theoretical approach, Maclean sees the intra-textual functions as segments contributing to the whole effect. Maclean argues that “a story should have a point,” since “narrative is subject to transactional shifts and stresses,” therefore she maintains that “this is the status of the speech acts contained within and defined by the narrative frame...a feature of narrative is that it enacts and it represents.”¹⁷² The narrative onstage, in this understanding, plays a role in making the whole speech-act, the performance, valid (effective). Her explanation, even though it resembles a disguised form of illusionary theater, still has potential for the classification of different types of adaptations on the contemporary German stage, especially for the exploration of constructing narrative under the post-dramatic aesthetic. As Maclean points out, a narrative performance may be established only through its effect, and this effect can only be realized under a certain kind of narrative contract; in

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 71.

¹⁷² Ibid., 73.

the case of adaptation, original work, even before the performance begins, has already made such a frame in a living situation, and the question that is left for artists is, whether to maintain this situation or to break it. Either will lead to different reactions and either will call for different representative techniques.

More specifically, Maclean purposes what she terms “narrative space,” which is also based on speech-act theory and related to her explanation of “narrative contract”. In Austin’s theory, certain utterances may construct certain limited serious circumstances (as a serious obligation begins with “will you marry him/her” in Austin’s own example), so, similarly, “narrative may be said to create an arena of performance”.¹⁷³ To be more specific, spatialization on the stage is no longer just a material or rational concept, but a result of “telling,” which means the oral presentation. Maclean categorizes the spatial relationships in the narrative as “deictic space,” “hypothetical space”, “concrete space”, “interspatialization” and “icon and setting”,¹⁷⁴ and she places more emphasis on the written narrative and takes theatrical performance as referring to the inner-theatricalized process in the reception of reading. Nevertheless, her arguments about the multiple possible forms of spatial references are still quite inspiring for the stage, especially for narrative performance. For example, Maclean points out that narrative spatial setting, with its subtle suggestions, metaphors and analogies, frees the audience from certain selected performance spaces and breaks the conventionalized reception of the referentiality and materiality of space. Narrative space is a mediator that opens up diverse imaginations and it strengthens the power of subjective narrative in the process of establishment. For contemporary novel adaptation, this will be more important because, not only does the novel normally take place in multiple locations, but

¹⁷³ Ibid., 110.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 110–112.

the novel has finer details and wider ranges over spaces, which, no doubt, will produce several narrative extensions as well as stage designs.

Speaking of studies of the novel, which ought naturally to be included in my adaptation studies, the idea of “narrative as performance” is actually elucidated by some forerunners in this field. Bakhtin and Propp’s studies, like Maclean’s, begin from oral tradition, the fertile soil for the modern novel, and this imaginative oral storyteller who directly faces the audience, leaves prints in a fixed written version. When Genette marks “voice” in the novel, he actually depicts the distance between a narrative and its author, a distance inherited from “telling”, from the action of narrating. In particular, narrative has more flexibility in oral telling, and different voices have almost no barrier in the process of transition from one subject to another. In drama history, concepts of “character” hint strongly at a stable voice that differs from others, but in oral performance, it is the fluid and multiple voices that make the narrative successful. And as Maclean argues, the multiple voices that intimately develop, along with the performance, may in the end strengthen the “multiplication of the focus of reception.”¹⁷⁵ For theatrical adaptation, it might be of great advantage to recognize the mutual root of oral telling both in narrative literature (epic, novels) and performative arts. Moreover, constructing a narration as an act may also be effective to connect literature and performance.

A dynamic perspective on narration makes more significant changes for creative minds in adaptation. As was argued earlier, the language onstage is no longer taken for granted as just characteristic representation of figure or narrator, but operates more on the level of performing, and the narrative discourse is also not just the production of a narrative act. Furthermore, narrative

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 7.

utterance also involves the dynamic process of reproducing. This raises questions on the authorial voice¹⁷⁶ in the narrative. How should the authorial intention be understood in a bilateral and interactive process of narrative performance? Does it still exist? Some linguistically-oriented narratologists, including Emile Benveniste, Ann Banfield and Fludernik, are reluctant to accept speech-acts as a necessary situation for all narrations, since the diffuse subject voice actually protrudes more conspicuously in modern narrative, and the author/artist's personal signature is imprinted even more strongly in modern literature/art. In her discussion about speech-act theory from the angle of narratology, Fludernik cites the concept of "implied author"¹⁷⁷ to argue that, "the narrative discourse has to be produced by someone, and when a narrator is not clearly discernible, many researchers would locate this speech act at the next higher narrative level. The 'implied author' is transformed into a persona responsible for the 'speech act' of the narration; the covert narrator is invented."¹⁷⁸ Fludernik's discussion is constructive and inspiring. Nevertheless, her question about authorial voice and the related "implied author," still recalls considerations about the identity of narrative voice, and about the existence of the assumed wholeness of the artwork itself.

There is a need to mention another approach to inquiry into questions of the creation of narration: Marie-Laure Ryan's narrative studies from the perspective of cognitive and information science (AI), which contradict the popular structuralist methods and semantic analysis of text. Ryan explores reception-related issues on the level of immersion and interactivity, and she questions the orthodox dichotomy of story/discourse through the discovery of the narrative system,

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Franz K. Stanzel, *Die typischen Erzählsituationen im Roman*, Vienna 1965.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Wayne C. Booth's argument about "the implied author" in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961, p. 138.

¹⁷⁸ Fludernik 2009, p. 65.

which is based on “fictional discourse,” yet at the same time “supported by truth-functional mimetic statements.” Ryan argues being narrative means “bringing a universe to life, and conveying to the reader the sense that at the center of this universe resides an actual world where individuals exist and where events take place.” She then points out further that “as an interpretive structure, narrativity is not a discrete category like fictionality but a model admitting various degrees of realization.” Even for the postmodern novel, Ryan still believes that it “should not be regarded as a new narrative form”, “but as the expression of a fundamentally *anti-narrate* stance: the rejection of plot as principle of textual unification,” which “does not affect the basic conditions of narrativity” but “simply turns narrativity into an optional ingredient of the genre.” This might be a possible answer to the question of authorial voice in contemporary narrative arts. In conclusion, Ryan’s theory explains narrativity as “a construction kit” that may “produce plots in many shapes, even incomplete fragments,” but the kit itself, “in its repertory of basic elements and specifications for connecting these elements, transcends the boundaries of time, culture, and genre.”¹⁷⁹

No matter whether from the angle of speech-act theory, or that of taking the oral narrative as a prototype, or taking narrativity as the functional whole, it is obvious that it differs from the structuralist paradigm. In recognizing the performative side of narrative, the horizon is opened for constructing a dynamic narrative, which is especially significant for theatrical novel adaptation.

5.4. Narratology in Theater Studies

¹⁷⁹ Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, pp. 258–267.

The following two questions might be the most frequently explored in narrative studies: 1) what makes a narrative “narrative”? 2) what constitutes a narrative? The former is about the definition and the latter its structure. As discussed frequently in the sections above, there are different approaches to defining narrative and there is actually no consensus that can be taken for granted. Regarding the narrative onstage, it would be appropriate to understand the narrative as part of an interactive and dynamic process, which identifies itself directly with specific reactions within certain situations, which are constrained in a mediated and fictional world.

This narrated world leads to the second question. The inner structure of narrative, no doubt, dominates the establishment of the narrative world in constructing situations or events. Structuralist narratology, as the most influential and innovative academic paradigm in this field, is also applied to theater studies.¹⁸⁰ Yet, it still needs to be remembered that modern narratology has deep roots in linguistics, whether from Ferdinand de Saussure or J. L. Austin; so for structuralist narratology as well as for reception-based theories, their analyzed objects, for the most part, are the literary text. One of the most important issues might therefore be, how these literary terms should be adopted in performance, in the very basic sense, which involves expanding and refreshing the definitions of several original literary terms. In fact, the redefinition of fundamental narrative terminology, such as plot, time, space, character, perspective/focalization etc., has drawn attention from theater studies, despite the fact that it has long been a part of traditional dramatic analysis. In his influential theoretical work *Das Drama*, German literary scholar Manfred Pfister

¹⁸⁰ The term “text” is quite essential to structuralist narratology, yet it is considered more from the angle of literary text. In the contemporary theatrical academic field, this term has actually been expanded to “theater text.” See Gerda Poschmann, *Der nicht mehr dramatische Theatertext. Aktuelle Bühnenstücke und ihre dramaturgische Analyse*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997; Hans-Thies Lehmann, “Theater und Text” (pp. 73–76) and “Performance Text” (pp. 145–184) in *Postdramatisches Theater*, 1999.

explores in detail the adaptation of structuralism and semiotic terms of narratology to the analysis of dramatic text.

Yet in the specific case of narrative in novel adaptation, there are still some concepts that have unique significance, such as, the role of the narrator, the speech style of narrating, and the reconsideration of the question of fidelity. The narrator's role in narrative studies, as Genette has argued, is related to the division of voices, which makes narrative a multilayered textual system. The narrator cannot be considered as identical to traditional concepts like character or *dramatis personae*, but does share some overlap, and this is correlated with the distance between the narrator and the stage events. At the same time as narrating, the narrator may be involved in the event or simply be an aloof observer, and may maintain an identity as a specific character or a temporary "aside" (*Aus-der-Rolle-fallen*). A narrator may be in character and outside character, and it is actually rare to find both functions taken by one performer in a dramatic text, and playwrights prefer to choose an outsider if they do need a narrator, such as in the prologues of Shakespeare's plays and roles like "stage manager" in some modern plays, like *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder. On the other hand, especially in contemporary theatrical adaptations from narrative texts, distinctive marks on the narrator and the character have become increasingly vague, and it seems that the narrator who is simultaneously a character does exist as a routine on the stage.¹⁸¹ Obviously, there is no obstacle on either the creation or the reception sides to accepting the performer freely getting inside and out as narrator and also as character(s).

This phenomenon has long been noticed and studied, and is also certainly not exclusive to novel adaptation; but from the perspective of narratology, the flexible role of narrator creates its specific speech style, which is equivalent to a term called "free indirect discourse" (*erlebte Rede*).

¹⁸¹ Cf. 3.1 Classical Dichotomy: Epic and Dramatic, and 3.2 Epic Theater in Modern Sense.

According to Fludernik, the “free indirect discourse” is “free” because “the introductory verbs of saying (*He claimed that...*) are dispensed with”, and “indirect” because “the utterances represented are referentially aligned and tenses shifted in accordance with the surrounding narrative discourse.”¹⁸² The reason that free indirect discourse may draw attention, is partly that more and more modern literature attempts to obscure the references within the text and mingle different voices together. In the case of theater, visual and direct marks for different characters are different identified images, which differentiate each characteristic voice and shape the performance in a “dramatic” form, or, in its traditional sense, become mimetic and objective. Just as free indirect discourse is considered one of the most remarkable innovations in the modern novel,¹⁸³ in contemporary theater, stable and unified character has also become history. Voice, which was once undoubtedly considered natural when presented in the dramatic form, has endured a reconsideration in the wake of the “epic turn,” and is no longer lucid and independent; quite the opposite, in fact. The utterance of a performer nowadays tends to possess multi-functional voices, just like free indirect discourse in narrative text, which usually has no distinctive “framing”. In fact, applying modern narratology to theater studies is actually based on the modern epic turn and its development afterwards, which opens up more paths into the theatrical text, and in terms of narrative forms, is also compatible with novel adaptation.

Approaches to how modern narratologists interpret the speech-act theory are another meaningful theoretical development, which shed light on the reception side during (and not only after) the creation procedure. To understand narrative in terms of a dynamic performative act is also to accept the performative elements imbedded in the narration, which renovates the analysis

¹⁸² Fludernik 2009, p. 67.

¹⁸³ Modern novel studies normally take a subjective angle and a subjectivized world as one of the landmarks for the modern novel, see the analysis of Gustave Flaubert in *How Fiction Works* by James Wood, London: Vintage, 2009.

of literary texts as well as enriching the possible representative methods of performance. In the first place, “narrative as performative” refers to a reciprocal relation happening on the living stage, and particularly in the case of adaptation, it calls strongly for a contemporary interpretation. In specific correspondence with novel adaptation, the setting of rules and conditions, which is vital to complete a real performative act according to J. L. Austin’s linguistic theory as well as to its later development in narrative studies, illuminates a performative approach to getting close to the situation in the original novel. The title of a theatrical adaptation, the program booklet and relevant advertisements and materials all contribute to constructing a situation, which will to some degree have something to do with the existing work, which may be recognized by the audience. This communicative process will actually happen under this pre-recognition, no matter what form the adaptation has, whether an authentic representation or a complete deconstruction of the original work.

In fact, Austin’s theory reminds us of the conditions in which communication or understanding may happen and how this makes a narrative appear. If the result is an event that makes sense, it must fulfill its initial prerequisites.

Furthermore, taking narrative as performative makes the question of fidelity a technical one. Fidelity to the original novel, as discussed many times above, no longer occupies the central attention of contemporary theater artists, and it is also not taken as an important criterion among critics or even audiences; yet, in consideration of narrative, this question is aimed not at judging this approach from an artistic perspective, but at making the narrative recognizable in respect to the reception of the nature of an adaptation. No matter in what form adaptation occurs, it will be received in reference to the original novel, which allows effective communication and reaction in the sense of narrative and adaptation; and all the relevant theatrical discussion, such as plot,

narrator, time and space etc., will make, remote or close, realistic or symbolic connections between performance and the audience.

In summary, narrative studies illuminate at least two starting points for considering the narrative on the stage. One is about what narrative is, another is how to analyze it; and to answer both basic questions, two common approaches, including structuralism and speech-act theory, have fundamentally changed this academic field in the sense of philosophy as well as methodology. Now, it is generally accepted that narrative contains several levels of functional parts and is also taken as a dynamic act. Narrative as discourse, and narrative as performative: both concepts are the cornerstone for further research into theatrical narration on the contemporary German stage.

5.5. Retrospection and Methodology

In the previous section, retrospection on the existing research has presented a spectrum that shows the feasible theoretical base, and the study of adaptation clearly follows the evolution of deeper aesthetic thoughts, which construct the general concepts and thoughts for art and culture. As former studies have shown, how a specific adaptive work is seen depends, first of all, on how adaptation is defined, or in an even wider sense, how text is defined, or work, narrative, etc. All critical approaches prove that adaptation studies move along with cultural and philosophical developments, especially in the contemporary academic research.

For a theoretical exploration on this subject, I choose to focus on several relevant basic research fields to clarify the developments and redefinitions of a series of fundamental concepts, including *epic*, *adaptive* and *narrative*; and also explore possible approaches to analysis following contemporary concepts and aesthetics. In the following case studies, I intend to apply these to speculate on several theatrical novel adaptations on the German stage.

In the theorizing part, I discuss firstly the subject of “epic”. Novel adaptation stands opposed to the traditional division of “dramatic” and “epic,” but it is far from inviolable from the perspective of modern theater. “Epic tendency” (*Episierung*) defined by Peter Szondi and “Epic Theater” promoted by Bertolt Brecht, both have aesthetic affinities with novel adaptation, and a series of so-called epic techniques has even become routine in contemporary theater.

After this general exploration, I then try to provide specific discussion of my central consideration, namely adaptation. In this part I explain the contemporary academic consideration of adaptation, and its related theoretical background. Furthermore, I hope to make clear the methodological approach that aids adaptation studies, whether from the traditional paradigm or from the contemporary, or from similar studies in other fields, such as film studies.

Finally I discuss two branches of modern narrative studies, structuralist narratology and the speech-act theory. Both have had considerable impacts on performance theory and contemporary theater studies. The narrative concept is related to theatrical aesthetics on several levels: on one hand, the narrative method has become a common theatrical expression; on the other, narrative has now been endowed with new meaning and expanded with a more open structure. Besides theoretical contributions, narrative studies also provide a whole range of tools for systematic analysis. There have been mature explorations on the subject of applying narratological methods into the field of theater studies, so through consulting existing paradigms, it should be possible to inspire the study of narrative onstage, and especially its functions in the process of novel adaptation.

Analysis of the specific works, in general, will be considered across the theoretical spectrum as detailed above, and in particular, from the perspective of epic-related theories, adaptation and narrative studies; in addition, basic speculation on theatrical expressions and novel analysis will

not be neglected. In the specific case studies, I would like to present different contemporary novel productions from the key angles of epic, adaptive and narrative, and explore how these adaptive works have established new narration on the stage. I prefer not to detail a general form or consensus among these adaptations, which has, after all, never actually existed, but to understand the specific approach of each production, for example, how the novel text itself and the adaptor/creator's choice function in the adaptation, or how each narrative element works under contemporary aesthetics. Overall, the most important topic in my research will be the exploration of "performing with narrating," namely, how the new narrative will be constructed on the stage in the case of novel adaptation.

PART III. Case Studies

In this part, four novel adaptations from the German stage since 2000 will be studied from different angles. Primary consideration will still be given to the topics from earlier theoretical explorations, which therefore continue to raise questions to do with epic tendency, narrative and adaptation. Specifically, in each case, it will be necessary to ask what kind of approach to genre and text transformation is to be followed in this adaptation, how a narration is to be reestablished under different expressive methods, and finally, how the relationship between original and adaptive texts may be understood, or extended to identify different forms of adaptation under the contemporary theatrical aesthetic.

In terms of the selection of literary text, all three novels belong to what we may define as modern classics today, and all three authors are among the most respected novelists in contemporary German theater. Chapter Six will focus on the adaptation of Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* at the Thalia Theater Hamburg in 2005, and will involve the topics of thematic and scenic transformation, its epic treatment within the dramatic structure, and also discussions of three major characters. In Chapter Seven, Andreas Kriegenburg's adaptation of Franz Kafka's *Der Prozess* will be analyzed. Considering this is basically a post-dramatic production and shows different attitudes towards the original text from the *Buddenbrooks* adaptation, discussions here will concentrate more on the surrealist stage design, physical expression and comic treatment, and it will also focus on inquiry into how a theatrical narration can be established other than through a dramatic structure. Chapter Eight is a comparative study of two adaptations of Dostojewskij's *Der Idiot*; one is the latest version by Matthias Hartmann in 2016, the other was directed by Frank Castorf in 2002, and may be the most influential one. These two are representatives of two distinctive adaptive approaches, and this will make it easier to identify specific expressions in dramatic structure or under the post-dramatic aesthetic when adapting the same original text. Finally, although it might be reasonable to suppose that it will be difficult to conclude with some general models or paradigms for all novel adaptations, it will still be possible to establish some similar methods and expressions within different approaches; and during the analysis, a generalized attempt, even if it might be far from conclusive, will also be taken into consideration.

Chapter 6. *Buddenbrooks* Rewritten. Adaptation by Stephan Kimmig and John von Düffel in Thalia Theater Hamburg 2005

When speaking of global popularity, it is hard to think of another modern German literary classic that could exceed Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks. Verfall einer Familie*. As winner of both the Nobel Prize and the book sale market, *Buddenbrooks* has been praised in the academic field and also favored by many ordinary readers all around the world. In this voluminous novel, Mann depicts the ups and downs of a merchant's family within the social panorama of northern Germany in the late nineteenth century. German literary academics have labeled *Buddenbrooks* with several literary terms, such as *Familienroman*, *Dekadenroman*, *Gesellschaftsroman*, *Kaufmannsroman*, *Schlüsselroman*, and a rather vague one, *Jahrhundertroman* — all of these, to some extent, reflect the different traits in this novel.

The first adaptation of *Buddenbrooks*, directed by Gerhard Lamprecht, was produced as early as 1923, as a silent film that lasts about 105 minutes; the second version of 1959 was from Alfred Weidenmann, and has a much longer duration and is divided into two parts; the first lasts 99 minutes and the second 107 minutes. The third, released as a television series in 1979, has an even greater duration with eleven episodes each of 60 minutes. The most recent adaptation is from

Heinrich Breloer from 2008, and this took the form of a film version lasting 150 minutes and a television version of 180 minutes. In comparison with these constant adaptations in the film industry, *Buddenbrooks* seems to be less popular on the stage. Before its adaptation in Thalia Theater Hamburg, this novel was only adapted once, in 1976 at the Theater Basel, where it was directed by Hans Hallmann with a stage script written by Tadeus Pfeifer. The Hamburg version of 2005 is actually the first theatrical adaptation of *Buddenbrooks* in Germany, and John von Düffel's stage script has also been reproduced many times under different direction. After the success of the new adaptation of *Buddenbrooks*, the script of Tadeus Pfeifer also earned a chance to be performed again: in 2009, Jarg Pataki and Viola Hasselberg remade this stage version of *Buddenbrooks* in Theater Freiburg.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, it was still the theatrical version of John von Düffel that achieved wider influence.

For the Hamburg adaptation the stage designer Katia Haß, under the direction of Stephan Kimmig, created a simple and almost empty performing space (Figure 1). In sharp contrast to the nineteenth century bourgeois atmosphere of the novel, this stage is dark and cold, with only a metal structure at the back and above. No carpets, delicate window lattices, oil paintings, velvet sofas — nothing that could act as a reminder of the normal interior decoration for a rich merchant family like the Buddenbrooks at that time. The stage design abandons the historical details of the novel, and at first sight it implies the general adaptive choice and aesthetic inclination of this adaptation, which will be analyzed in this chapter.

¹⁸⁴ See “Exkurs: *Buddenbrooks* in einer Dramatisierung von Tadeus Pfeifer (1976/77)” in *Romane auf der Bühne*, pp. 168–175.



Figure 1. Stage design in Hamburg adaptation of *Buddenbrooks* (with Thomas Buddenbrook).

6.1. Text Reduction: On Characters and Backgrounds

The first impression presented by *Buddenbrooks* is of quite a weighty novel; it contains more than 700 pages in the version of Fischer Taschenbuch; and this fact makes the duration of the Hamburg adaptation particularly astonishing, since it lasts less than three hours. Obviously, it is impossible to present most parts of the novel within such a brief time; therefore selection from

the original text and reduction of contents are unavoidable. In fact, text reduction is exactly what frequently appears and even becomes sort of a norm in novel adaptation. This has sometimes been criticized,¹⁸⁵ and was also, in fact, rejected by Thomas Mann himself before the publication of this novel.¹⁸⁶ It seems that a reductive approach creates no significant deficit in this adaptive version of *Buddenbrooks*, at least if the positive feedback from both critics and audience¹⁸⁷ as well as the multiple re-stagings all around Germany after several years of its premiere¹⁸⁸ are taken into account.

The reduced text of the adaptation reflects a narrower range of time, spatial movements and events. Thomas Mann's novel covers four generations altogether and focuses mainly on the middle generation, namely the three siblings of Thomas, Antonie and Christian Buddenbrook; and these three are also the center of the theatrical adaptation; at the same time, the early ages of the Buddenbrooks and the development of their family business, the three siblings' childhoods and youth, as well as some extensive story lines have been removed. This selection would naturally affect the social and spatial settings of the original novel.

¹⁸⁵ See Barbara Burckhardt, "Bewegungen im Kopf und Darm" in *Theater Heute*, November 2008, here pp. 6–9.

¹⁸⁶ See Ken Moulden, "Die Genese des Werkes" in *Buddenbrooks-Handbuch*, Stuttgart 1988, pp. 1–9.

¹⁸⁷ John von Düffel's version of *Buddenbrooks* has been praised by most media reports and critics. According to Birte Lipinski, there are only two negative reviews from the mainstream media: one is titled with "Da waren's nur noch drei" from Eberhard Rathgeb in *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung* (05.12.2005, Nr. 283/Seite 42), which sharply criticizes this version: "Nach drei Stunden geht's hinaus aus Quellwaldrüh. Düffel und Kimmig ist nichts Originelles eingefallen: Im engen Hamburger Kaufmannsladen hat die Seele einen schwierigen Stand. Puff, puff, die Eisenbahn." Another article "Die Buddenbrooks' im Thalia Theater. Drei Stunden lang vereiste Gefühle" is from Lien Kaspari in the newspaper *BILD*, (HH) 284 (05.12.2005), S.10. (*Romane auf der Bühne*, pp. 118–119).

¹⁸⁸ Incompletestatistics on re-stagings of John von Düffel's script: Bern, Rendsburg, München (Schauburg), Braunschweig, Bregenz (Festspiele), Darmstadt, Frankfurt, Marburg, Stuttgart (Altes Schauspielhaus), Wien (Theater in der Josefstadt), Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Dresden, Lübeck, Magdeburg, Saarbrücken, Celle, Freiburg, Heilbronn, Krefeld, Nürnberg, Regensburg, St. Gallen, Halle, Marl, Mönchengladbach.

Firstly, the scenery remains almost unchanged throughout the performance, for one consideration is that the stage design obviously rejects the naturalistic aesthetic, but is also in accordance with the distinctive features of text selection, showing a preference for inner scenes within the family and removing texts referring to spatial movements of characters in the novel. To make this novel into a family drama, another reduction is logically needed, which will fundamentally change the inner structure and the social-historical reference of *Buddenbrooks*. One of the most important motifs in all the works from Thomas Mann, the theme of *Bürgerlichkeit*, virtually disappears from this theatrical version, along with all the omitted scenes that refer to the historical-social background and descriptions of the merchant class at that time. Epic continuum in the original novel has been reorganized into a more traditional dramatic form that unites the time, space and events into a centralized structure, and in this process, some episodic texts related to history, society and mentality have to be abandoned.

Thomas Mann's inclination towards ironic style and commentary have been much discussed in the literary academic field,¹⁸⁹ and this would be presented on the stage as a narrative method. Ironical and distant commentaries are also part of the dramatic scenes in the Hamburg adaptation, and the roles of narrators are taken by, for the most part, the three protagonists themselves. Another narrator is the housemaid Lina, who tells and comments on the story as an insider and also as outsider from the family Buddenbrook; and because of her assignment as narrator, Lina is one of the few minor characters who have been kept in this adaptive version.

This brief introduction to text selection shows the adaptive approach in principle, namely, de-contextualization, character-centered dramatic form and epic treatments; in the following

¹⁸⁹ See the relevant arguments in "Humor und Ironie" (H. Koopmann) in *Thomas-Mann-Handbuch*, pp. 836–853; "Sprachliche Polyphonie: Sprachebenen und Dialekte" (Gero von Wilpert) in *Buddenbrooks-Handbuch*, pp. 145–156; "Rolle, Perspektive, Parodie" in *Der Epiker als Theatraliker: Thomas Manns Beziehungen zum Theater in seinem Leben und Werk* (Albert Ettinger), pp. 471–479.

detailed analysis, I will argue that all of these relate to each other very tightly in the construction of the Hamburg adaptation of *Buddenbrooks*.

6.2. Theater in the Epic

Literary scholars have long noticed the unique theatricality of Thomas Mann's novel, which is also a notable feature of his early work *Buddenbrooks*.¹⁹⁰ But it is important to take notice that the term *theatricality*, which often appears in literary studies on Thomas Mann and *Buddenbrooks*, is not actually identical with its usage in theater studies. The conceptual history of "theatricality" may be traced back to Antonin Artaud, who strongly attacks the tyranny of literature in the history of the European stage and proclaims the reestablishment of lost theatricality, in opposition to dramatic structure, and frees multiple expressions on the stage.¹⁹¹ Proceeding from Artaud's proposal, modern thought on "theatricality" in theater studies implies, at least partly, a full consideration of stage representation and communication, which is actually very different from the traditional concepts of "literary" or "dramatic". On the contrary, when a text is described as "theatrical" in the literary academic field, it is almost synonymous with the term "dramatic" in implying that the narration has inherent potential for stage presentation, with visualizing action,

¹⁹⁰ For relevant studies see August Obermayer's "Die Funktion von Literatur und Theater" in *Buddenbrooks-Handbuch*, H. Eilert's "Thomas Mann und das Theater" in *Thomas-Mann-Handbuch*, Anna Kinder's "Die Kollateralschäden der Gewinnmaximierung. Das Drama der Buddenbrooks" in *Ökonomie im Theater der Gegenwart. Ästhetik, Produktion, Institution*, and also a specific study on this subject, *Der Epiker als Theatraliker. Thomas Manns Beziehung zum Theater in seinem Leben und Werk* by Albert Ettinger.

¹⁹¹ In the early twentieth century, Artaud was not the only or earliest figure to make a contribution to the theoretical development of the understanding of "theatricality". For example Georg Fuchs' claim for a revolutionary and anti-illusionistic theater (*Die Revolution des Theaters*, 1907) and the Russian theater artist Nikolai Evreinov's practice and writing (*Apology for Theatricality*, 1908).

intense conflict, and rapid exchange of dialogue.¹⁹² In short, the “theatricalization” of theater implies, in the very basic sense, something non-dramatic; but when “theatricalization” is referred to in the narrative text, quite the reverse is true; it aims to emphasize its dramatic characteristics.

Therefore, the term “theatricality” in its literary sense actually refers to the highly dramatic qualities in *Buddenbrooks*, which appear to be a great advantage in the adaptation. John von Düffel has in an interview admitted that it is quite astonishing how well Thomas Mann has completed scenic writing in his novel; he mentions that “es gibt an den Wende- und Konfliktpunkten fast immer ausgeschriebene Situationen, lebendigen Dialog. Wenn Thomas Buddenbrook sich gegen seine Mutter auflehnt, weil sie wichtige Teile des Firmenvermögens der Kirche spendet, dann verwendet Mann regelrecht das antike Stilmittel der Wechselrede. Satz trifft auf Gegensatz. Diese Dialoge haben eine unglaubliche tragische Fallhöhe. Das merkt man aber erst, wenn man sie aus ihrer epischen Einbettung löst.”¹⁹³ John von Düffel believes that high theatricality in *Buddenbrooks* is so rare that he has never met it before.

There are, generally speaking, two approaches to exploring the theatrical quality of a novel: one focuses on the thematic and content level and the other on narrative techniques. The latter is related deeply to generic considerations. Both aspects have been reflected in the narration of the original novel of *Buddenbrooks* and also contribute to the adaptive selection of the Hamburg adaptation. For the thematic approach, the theme of theater is considered a depicted object in the novel, which functions as a narrative element for the whole construction; for example, *theater* could be taken as a social activity constructing plot-unity, or as an inner drive for character(s), or correspondingly as a symbolic image in opposition to the real world. In fact, *theater* as a motif is

¹⁹² See the discussion “Pure theatre or literary theatre?” in *Dictionary of the Theatre* (Pavis), entry on “theatricality,” p. 396.

¹⁹³ John von Düffel in an interview with Ortrud Gutjahr, in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, pp. 132–133.

not rare in German-speaking literature, from *Wilhelm Meister* by Johann von Goethe to *Der grüne Heinrich* by Gottfried Keller, participating in a theatrical career has actually become a tradition for the personal development of the “hero” in the *Bildungsroman*.¹⁹⁴ Theater, in this sense, represents an art life, which may fulfill one’s inwardness and come close to the essence of beauty and freedom. Under this interpretation, theater stands as a counterpart to the “real life”, namely one’s professional position and realistic achievements according to the standards of *Bürgerlichkeit*.

If it is understood as a narrative technique, the theatrical quality of the novel implies more about the so-called theatrical representative methods and structure, which are alien to the common understanding of the novel genre. Although genre conceptions about novel/epic and theater/drama¹⁹⁵ have both evolved with time, the theoretical exploration will begin from the classical or orthodox clarifications of both genres, which means, the novel is basically narrated and drama the non-mediated, while novel is episodic and drama concentrated (in the aspects of time, space and event). Peter Szondi has detailed multiple features of the *Episierung* of modern drama, including the disintegration of the *Absolutheit* of the stage (especially the absoluteness of dialogue) and its “presence” which replaces “pastness”;¹⁹⁶ on the other hand, what Szondi refers to as the features of the classical genre drama, are not just altered by epic treatment in the revolution in drama genre, but also have an impact on the narrative text. Such instances are not actually rare in the modern novel: the dialogical structure, apart from the direct expression of the narrator/author, occupies a considerable proportion of the novel; relatively few changes in time or

¹⁹⁴ See “Theater und Rollenspiel in der deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur der Modern am Beispiel Heinrich Manns und Arthur Schnitzlers” and “In der Nachfolge des *Wilhelm Meisters*: Die Tradition des ‘Theaters im Roman’” (pp. 494–519) in *Der Epiker als Theatraliker*.

¹⁹⁵ In this chapter, as will later be clarified, considering the actual usage of *theater/drama* in the field of *Buddenbrooks* study, there will be no significant distinction when I refer to either term. Also, the difference between *novel* and *epic* will be temporarily ignored. Both will be roughly considered as long narrative text.

¹⁹⁶ See Peter Szondi’s “Die Krise des Dramas” in *Theorie des modernen Dramas. 1880–1950* from *Peter Szondi Schriften* (Band I), Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011, pp. 21–68.

space, other than the characteristic coverage of the novel, are organized according to certain themes or events; and also the “messenger” setting in the ancient and classical dramas appears widely in modern novels, as in the case of *Briefroman*. In short, the theatricality of the novel may be summarized as a centralized process for the whole structure or specific constructions of certain scenes, which is opposed to the traditional episodic nature of the novel.

6.2.1. Theater as a Theme

In the case of *Buddenbrooks*, aspects of both “theater as theme” and “theatricality in narration” may be encountered: as a specific object, “theater” correlates with Thomas Mann’s major themes like *Verfall*, *Kunst*, *Dekadenz* and *Bürgerlichkeit*, and which are also decisive for portraying of characters, and specifically Thomas, Christian and Hanno Buddenbrook; as a narrative method, the novel itself is embedded with great theatrical potential in terms of dialogue, figure, space, role of narrator, etc. In terms of the whole range of this novel, the *theater* element does in fact have wider constructive influences, especially in terms of symbolic meaning, which contradicts the economic environment and bourgeois life, and is also deeply intertwined with the aesthetic inclinations of Thomas Mann.¹⁹⁷ Specifically with the Hamburg version, the theatrical

¹⁹⁷ In his essay “Versuch über das Theater”, Thomas Mann has argued that the traditional genre poetic of classical drama provides the example of “Raffinement der Technik” for novels in the sense of narrative. In this essay and also in his later works, Thomas Mann proves his preference for the aesthetics of Richard Wagner’s theater work. In *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, there is also reference to Thomas Mann’s personal opinion on the theatrical art: “Thomas Mann hatte für die medialen Eigenheiten des Theaters mehr Verständnis, als gelegentlich unterstellt wird. In dem Artikel ‘Das Theater als Tempelbude’ von 1907 entwirft er einen ‘dichterischen Character’: ‘ein Mann, edel und leidenschaftlich, aber auf irgendeine Weise gezeichnet und in seinem Gemüt eine dunkle Ausnahme unter den Regelrechten’, wobei sich diese Stigmatisierung unter anderem in einer notwendig unglücklichen Liebe ausdrücke...Thomas Mann wertet keineswegs die sinnliche theatralische Schaukunst gegenüber der geistigen epischen Wortkunst ab, im Gegenteil: ‘Symbol’ steht höher als ‘Typus’, der Dramatiker hat mit der Medialität der Bühne Möglichkeiten, die dem Romancier für immer verschlossen bleiben.” (*Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 72)

nature of the original novel has different expressive forms on the stage, particularly with reference to the portrayal of Thomas and Christian Buddenbrook, and the selection of dialogues, scenes and commentary texts.

In the novel, there is a very important moment for Thomas Buddenbrook, in which the senator, a representative of the responsibility and merchant spirit of the novel, reaches an inner discovery of his daily life. Thomas actually finds himself an actor for the others. He handles his daily cosmetic rituals just like an actor prepares his performance backstage, and he complies with all his personal habits and routines, which also resembles an actor under the mask of another fictional figure.¹⁹⁸ This self-discovery scene in the novel is presented through the inner monologue of Thomas, resembling a stream of consciousness as he repeats his morning ablutions in his washroom; Thomas stands always before the audience, in public or in private — this is the striking recognition Thomas has of himself. Yet in the Hamburg version, this personal scene has been conspicuously transformed into a dialogue, or more precisely, a monologue with a listener. This long inner self-discovery, if it was presented through a direct address to the audience, would be a normal monologue on the stage. Yet John von Düffel chooses to transform this monological passage into a dialogue. Thomas' inner monologue is presented as a self-confession to Tony, and with this transformation, Thomas still speaks with his listener and he still stands in a typical dramatic (or, dialogical) scene. Thomas can never take off his mask, never “aus der Rolle fallen,” even in his moment of self-discovery. It is more interesting and ironic to implant such a private moment, in which the protagonist finds himself an actor in his social life, into a dialogic setting with others, which causes Thomas' confession to assimilate, more or less, into a re-performing act. Moreover, if considered from the point of view of theatrical expression, part of his inner

¹⁹⁸ See this part in Zehnter Teil.I. from *Buddenbrooks. Verfall einer Familie*, pp. 614–615.

monologue is actually close to an “aside” speech.¹⁹⁹ Again, his verbal and physical expression might imply a strong awareness, consciously or unconsciously, of the presence of the audience.

This actor-awareness may also be understood as the social mask of a high-status figure like Thomas Buddenbrook. As sociologist Erving Goffmann says in his comparison of human behavior with staging, a role, namely a specific personality, is established in certain social contexts and interacting relations, and the presentation of a role is always in need of an audience.²⁰⁰ Thomas Buddenbrook must be heard and watched, which reveals the very essence of this figure: a man who has been restrained under the mask of what his family and social status ask for.

It has been mentioned that the Hamburg adaptation focuses mainly on mutual relations between major family members, which also influences the presentation of the inner conflicts of Thomas. Despite the lack of social context, there is still an improving effect from putting Thomas’s monologue into an interplay scene with Tony; moreover, after Thomas’s monologue, the scene that follows relates to the father-son relationship, in which Thomas behaves as a cold and harsh figure, who makes almost no effort to understand and communicate with his own son Hanno. He shows no tenderness or patience; the only thing he cares about is the public representation of Hanno, which of course shows his own values. These two close scenes create an interesting ironic atmosphere, and prove that Thomas is still, and always will be, Thomas, no matter what the circumstances. This is also the reason for the estrangement between father and son.

Speaking of Hanno, he is actually another major figure who presents the motif of theater in the original novel; unfortunately, this figure has been weakened greatly in the stage script of von Düffel. Hanno’s estrangement from Thomas, along with his mother Gerda’s indifference and

¹⁹⁹ Definition of “Aside” from *Dictionary of the Theatre* (Pavis): “The aside (*Beiseitesprechen*) is a form of *monologue* that in theatre becomes a direct *dialogue* with the audience.” (p. 29) See also the definition about “*Dialogisches Beiseite*” (p. 195) in *Das Drama* (Pfister).

²⁰⁰ See in Erving Goffman’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York: Doubleday, 1959.

aloofness, makes clear the opposition between art and *Bürgertum*, namely, sensuality and creativity versus a capitalistic philosophy of prosperity and success. Hanno's personal acquaintance with his close friend Kai Graf Mölln, and his interests and talents in theater and music with the support from Gerda — these depictions are not part of the theatrical production, and the what remains are for most part interactive scenes with Thomas, in which his softness contradicts strongly with his father's firmness and coldness. This sharp contrast in temperaments reflects the *Verfall* of the Buddenbrook family, even though it has been isolated from social contexts and happens only in their personal lives. The figure of Hanno has actually lost his original position as a symbol for theater, art, childhood and sensuality. Instead, he is a mere counterpart, or a shadow, of the portrayal of Thomas.

The theme of *Theater*, as shown above, seems to be related more to the inner situations of characters, apart from their occupations in society and obligations to their family; and this could not be more vividly demonstrated than in the story-line of Christian Buddenbrook. Unlike Thomas and Antonie, Christian cares less about the status and prosperity of the House of Buddenbrook. Since the family scenes occupy most of the novel and Christian seems to be constantly absent from the family, his position is naturally marginalized compared with that of both his siblings. But in the Hamburg version, the relatively minor role of Christian has highlighted a lot. Christian's personal life, namely his love affair with an actress, originally forms one of the fundamental conflicts between him and Thomas; Thomas considers it disreputable behavior and also blames Christian for idleness. In his case, therefore, the theater-motif is presented as an escape from one's professional and obligatory matters, and this indulgence could obviously not be combined with the "ordentlichen Arbeit und dem Ernst des Lebens,"²⁰¹ which Thomas admires and persists in. In the

²⁰¹ Mann, Thomas. *Buddenbrooks. Verfall einer Familie*. p. 321.

case of Christian, the theme of *Theater* does not refer to a figure performing before the audience (as with Thomas), or a field of art and beauty (as with Hanno), but to a situation of *Dekadenz* that contradicts the Protestant capitalist ethics that demand prudence and discipline.

A lack of self-discipline and interest in the family business are often depicted in the case of Christian in the novel, and are also paralleled with his fascination for theater. In this theatrical adaptation, Christian's personal activities in the theater, or more precisely with an actress, are narrated by himself and Thomas, and this forms the scenes of conflict between the brothers. Moreover, the physical expression of Christian has been exaggerated to that of a near clown, which might be a visualization of the sharp description "Affe", used to refer to Christian by his grandfather in the novel.²⁰² Naturally, this is a direct contradiction of the constrained and dignified physical expression of Thomas. In the sense of performance, Christian behaves like a comedian; and in the sense of performing act, Thomas becomes a real actor.

In conclusion, *theater* as a theme plays an active part in the portrayal of characters in the novel,²⁰³ and this has also partly been presented in the Hamburg theatrical version; in terms of text selection from the point of view of the adaptive approach, the theme of *theater* is mainly demonstrated by the characterization of Thomas and Christian from different aspects. At the same time, some wider interpretations, such as the *Theater* as a counterpart to *Bürgerwelt* in the sense of aesthetic values in the original novel, along with the reductions of texts and characters in the Hamburger adaptation, are not displayed and developed sufficiently on the stage.

²⁰² Ibid, p. 15. The original sentence is " 'N Aap is hei! Soll er nicht gleich Dichter werden, Hoffstede?" which is spoken in northern German dialect.

²⁰³ In *Epiker als Theatraliker*, Albert Ettinger links the theme of theater in *Buddenbrooks* with Thomas Mann's major topic of *Dekadenz*: "Theater-Thematik immer wieder auf die Frage nach der positiven oder negativen Bedeutung der Dekadenz gestoßen, die Affinität zum Theater hat sich, ebenso wie der Schauspieler-Typus, immer wieder als wesentliches Moment dieses Entwicklungsprozesses erwiesen. " from *Epiker als Theatraliker. Thomas Manns Beziehungen zum Theater in seinem Leben und Werk*, Frankfurt a.M:1988, p. 195.

6.2.2. Theatricalization in the Narration

As mentioned above, John von Duffel has talked about Thomas Mann's writing style in an interview. He believes that the novel *Buddenbrooks* is "selbst szenisch erzählt" from the writer himself.²⁰⁴ In fact, a similar opinion has more than once been put forward in studies of Thomas Mann's work, including *Buddenbrooks*. Literary scholars have long argued that there is inner theatricalization in Thomas Mann's prose writings, or less specifically, his novel is organized into a dialogue-dominated structure like classical drama.²⁰⁵ In *Buddenbrooks*, events are often shown through indirect speeches; in other words, they are told, retold, written or expressed in other mediated ways, rather than being directly depicted in the novel. John von Duffel has also emphasized the scenic quality of *Buddenbrooks* from the dramatic perspective:

"Eine Entdeckung war, wie szenisch Thomas Mann geschrieben hat. Die Szenen liegen zeitlich weiter auseinander, es gibt wichtige Teile, innere Monologe von Thomas Buddenbrooks zum Beispiel, Beschreibungen, etwa wenn der Konsul stirbt, die sich dem entziehen. Aber das szenische Gerüst ist da, und es ist von Thomas Mann."²⁰⁶

In other words, Thomas Mann's text would be great literary material for a theatrical adaptation, John von Duffel also finds that the original text has the "Härte und Dynamik"²⁰⁷ that a stage script needs; and there are indeed many passages quoted directly and even unchanged from the original novel, and these are still compatible with the theatrical performance. On the other

²⁰⁴ "Interview mit John von Duffel. Generation und Geld: Über die Bühnenfassung der *Buddenbrooks* nach Thomas Mann." in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 132.

²⁰⁵ See also Lipinski: "Doch auch die szenische Qualität von *Buddenbrooks* wird von Literaturwissenschaftlern hervorgehoben." (*Romane auf der Bühne*, p. 116)

²⁰⁶ John von Duffel, "Romane, Romane!" in *Theater Heute*, November 2008, p. 13.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

hand, the terms “theatrical” and “dramatic” seem to share the meaning of “acting like someone else” in terms of common utterance, which reminds us of something illusionary or artificial. As discussed before, when referring to the thematizing “theatricality” in the novel, “theater” corresponds exactly to the meanings of disguise, unreal or playful, which is not admired in the ethics of *Bürgerwelt*.

When talking about theatricalization in terms of text transformation, John von Düffel follows understandings of this term from the dramatic point of view. When he defines Thomas Mann’s writing style as “szenisch,” he actually emphasizes the conflict organized in the dialogic structure, “es (*Buddenbrooks*) gibt an den Wende-und Konfliktpunkten fast immer ausgeschriebene Situationen, lebendigen Dialog”,²⁰⁸ as he says. Moreover, John von Düffel gives an example of a quarrel scene between Thomas Buddenbrook and his mother, in which Thomas strongly opposes the fact that she spends a lot of money on the church. The dramaturg argues that in this scene Thomas Mann uses “das antike Stilmittel der Wechselrede”, in which “Satz trifft auf Gegensatz.”²⁰⁹ John von Düffel notices that such dramatic methods could be drawn out from its “epischen Einbettung” and he then declares that there are so many similar narrations in this novel that he has never found in other novels.

The importance of dialogue in genre definition of drama has been long emphasized, and it is not surprising that John von Düffel follows this tradition by labeling *Buddenbrooks* as *szenisch* in terms of dialogue, and also emphasizes the importance of making these dialogues come to life in staging. Furthermore, precisely because of the unparalleled significance of dialogue in the

²⁰⁸ “Interview mit John von Düffel. Generation und Geld: Über die Bühnenfassung der *Buddenbrooks* nach Thomas Mann.” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, page 132.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. page 132.

original novel and also in the staging, relations between characters, which might “activate” the dialogue, stand at the center of the Hamburg adaptation.

As has been said already, *Buddenbrooks* has been seen as a *Schlüsselroman* by literary scholars, which means this novel has clear or blurred relations with Thomas Mann’s own family and his personal life;²¹⁰ no matter what these relations might be, their “origins” do play a role in the creative process of the Hamburger adaptation. When John von Düffel emphasizes the *Schlüsselerlebnis* in the novel, he actually refers to the family scenes and the conflicts within the family, which will be considered as the “dramatischen Kern” of *Buddenbrooks*. As the key to the adaptation, all other subjects from the novel, such as speeches related to economic and social aspects, may be developed from these inner family scenes.²¹¹ In adapting the novel *Buddenbrooks* using an approach of dramatic transformation, it would be natural for the “Kontakt zu den Figuren und dem Konflikt einer Geschichte”²¹² to be decisive from the point of view of John von Düffel.

The three characters in the middle generation of the Buddenbrook family, Thomas, Antonie and Christian Buddenbrook, are the protagonists of this dramatic adaptation. As a *Generationsroman*, the original novel includes four generations of this family, even though in fact only the last two generations receive sufficient focus. It is not strange that in the Hamburg version the oldest generation is not shown on the stage, and the second oldest, namely Konsul Jean and his wife, and the youngest Hanno, take just minor positions; the middle generation stands undoubtedly at the center.²¹³ John von Düffel thinks this treatment bears no discrepancy with the narration of

²¹⁰ See the “Die Figuren und ihre Vorbilder” and “Schlüsselroman?” in *Buddenbrooks-Handbuch*, pp. 15–25; and also “Das Werk-Buddenbrooks-Entstehung” in *Thomas-Mann-Handbuch*, pp. 363–368.

²¹¹ “Interview mit John von Düffel. Generation und Geld: Über die Bühnenfassung der *Buddenbrooks* nach Thomas Mann.” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p.131.

²¹² Ibid., p. 133.

²¹³ Gutjahr, Ortrud. “Die Wonnen der Bürgerlichkeit? Eine Einführung in Thomas Manns *Buddenbrooks* und John von Düffels Bühnenfassung”: “Thomas Manns vier Generationen umfassender Familienroman

the novel, because “mit diesen drei Charakteren liest und lebt man das Buch.” More importantly, Thomas Mann integrates his most important theme, *Verfall*, along with the stories of these three characters, as John von Duffel argues. This generation, “die dem Untergang dramatisch am nächsten ist”, is of course at the same time “die charakterlich und psychologisch interessanteste.”²¹⁴

With all these considerations, John von Duffel chooses to reorganize *Buddenbrooks* through the lives of three major characters, and naturally he finds much advantage in the original scenic settings, conflict situations and dialogical structure. Along with the stories of these three, major themes of the novel may be developed. As von Duffel says, “die Lebensspanne der Geschwister zu verdichten und damit auf den Zusammenhang von Generation und Geld.”²¹⁵

As one article points out, “auf den fast 800 Romanseiten wimmelt es nur so von bühnenreifen Dialogen, die John von Duffel direkt in die Bühnenfassung übernehmen konnte.”²¹⁶ Moreover, with appropriate reductions and effective utilizations of spatial conditions, the adaptation selects dialogues that are even more condensed and thematic for staging. The discussion between Tony and her parents about her first marriage, the quarrel between Thomas and Christian

mit weitläufigem Personeninventar und detailgenauen Beschreibungen ist in John von Duffels Bühnenfassung unter der Regie von Stephan Kimmig ein überschaubares, auf die Geschwister Thomas, Tony und Christian Buddenbrook konzentriertes Trauerspiel der (Groß)Bürgerlichkeit geworden, das seinen Grundkonflikt im Versuch der drei Hauptprotagonisten findet, ihre Lebensplanung am Firmenimperativ der Vermögensoptimierung zu orientieren. Das Schauspiel macht uns im straff skizzierten Entwicklungsgang der Geschwister zu Zeugen eines dreifachen Scheiterns an dieser Vorgabe. Die Reduktion auf das Spiel in einem von allen Requisiten der Bürgerlichkeit entkleideten Raum zeigt Figuren, die vom abfließenden Kapital gleich ihrem unabwendbaren Schicksal mitgerissen werden. ” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 27.

²¹⁴ “Interview mit John von Duffel. Generation und Geld: Über die Bühnenfassung der *Buddenbrooks* nach Thomas Mann.” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 136.

²¹⁵ “Interview mit John von Duffel. Generation und Geld: Über die Bühnenfassung der *Buddenbrooks* nach Thomas Mann.” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 132.

²¹⁶ Kinder, Anna. “Die Kollateralschäden der Gewinnmaximierung. Das Drama der *Buddenbrooks*.” in *Ökonomie im Theater der Gegenwart. Ästhetik, Produktion, Institution*, p. 300.

about obligations and profession, the differences between Tony and Thomas over her second divorce, and the parental attempt by Thomas to influence his son Hanno on the course of recitation are all scenes that show a direct intention to build their mutual relations and their own personalities mainly through dialogues.

As well as its dialogical structure, the theatricality of the narration of *Buddenbrooks* has still further significance for narrative methods. Later parts will deal with two specific aspects. One is about the semantics of space and the other about the change of mood in the sense of narrative theory.

In terms of spatial setting, there is already, in fact, little movement in the novel, which is concentrated mostly on inner scenes within the walls of the Buddenbrook house. The only exception is when major characters are absent, for instance Tony's brief travels to the seashore and Munich, Tony's second marriage in Munich, Thomas's stay in Amsterdam and Christian's wanderings in other European cities. Obviously, John von Düffel and Stephan Kimmig have little interest in representing these relatively minor spatial alterations in the novel. One reason is that fixed scenery is indispensable for the aesthetic of stage design. With intentional rejection of the bourgeois house decoration of the nineteenth century through contemporary settings, the whole stage to some extent indicates the mechanical, dim and vigorous atmosphere of the surroundings. Another explanation might be that Thomas Mann actually keeps the narrative space always in the inner house, for example, when the major perspective of Tony Buddenbrook²¹⁷ leaves the house

²¹⁷ See "Die Figuren und ihre Stellung im 'Verfall'" - I. Die Vertreter der Generationskette - e) Tony" from *Buddenbrooks-Handbuch* (pp. 182–184), in which Ernst Keller declares that "Tony unterscheidet sich von allen anderen Personen der Buddenbrook-Familie dadurch, dass sie von Anfang bis zu Ende des Romans zugegen ist. Ihr gehört die erste und die letzte Frage." Tony's position as a major perspective in the novel has been widely accepted in the literary studies, and John von Düffel obviously agrees with this opinion by saying "sie ist das Herz des Romans, die emotionalste, temperamentvollste Figur" in the interview. (*Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 137).

of her family in Lübeck, the narrative focalization does not follow her to another place, but remains with the family, and readers receive information about Tony through her letters; besides, anyone in the family Buddenbrook will always come back and is even destined to do so. As a novel with an epic range, *Buddenbrooks* has in fact strikingly tightened up its *Schauplatz* practically to a unity of place, almost under the old principles of classical drama. Yet there are still descriptive texts (*Nebentext*) about changes of places that would be in need for the completeness of a narration in the novel. In fact very few indications of spatial changes are made onstage, and descriptions from correspondence also largely disappear.

Correspondence in letters in the novel might be seen as playing a similar role to *Botenberichten* in the classical dramas, which expose something that has happened at a distance from on-going events. Therefore it allows more freedom in spatial movement.²¹⁸ In the novel *Buddenbrooks*, as the narrative focus never travels far from the family, information from letters provides alternative perspectives for the narration and this may be seen as another sign of the theatricality of the novel. However, the Hamburg theatrical adaptation does not restore the position of *Botenberichten* in the performance. For example, Tony Buddenbrook has suffered from her second marriage in Munich and in the novel, she writes to her family in Lübeck of her unhappy life and the unfaithfulness of her husband. Yet in this stage version, Tony's narration of her misfortune has been organized into her quarrel scene with Thomas. One-way information therefore becomes a mutual interaction in a dialogical scene, and this proves again the dramatic functions that are the first consideration for this adaptive approach.

²¹⁸ For the wide range of space settings in the origin and development of novel genre development, see a brief summary on this subject: "Anhang: Kurzer Leitfaden zur Geschichte des Romans" in *Aspekte erzählender Prosa* by Jochen Vogt, pp. 224–249. Thomas Mann, however, not only in case of *Buddenbrooks*, seems to try to centralize the location of events in his grand epic work.

“Ich kenne euch. Ich kenne euch, seit ich denken kann.” This opening line of the *Buddenbrooks* adaptation is expressed by the housemaid Lina in the family Buddenbrook, but in the novel it is Tony who speaks the first line.²¹⁹ Lina knows almost all the generations of the novel, and she is the witness of the life stories of Thomas, Tony and Christian Buddenbrook. Lina stands in the “middle” position: she is in the story of Buddenbrooks, she lives with the family; but she is not a Buddenbrook. She is the one who knows all their lives, understands all their thoughts and ethics, but is an outsider in the house. It was an excellent choice to make her a narrator of this theatrical adaptation.

As an observer and narrator, Lina stands not just outside the family Buddenbrook, but also outside the novel *Buddenbrooks*. She knows the story from the very beginning to the end, just like the audience who have read or know the novel. In the opening scene, she informs the unperformed plot with underlying current events, namely Tony’s first marriage to the merchant Bendix Grünlich: “Es war noch ganz früh, kaum sechs Uhr. Tony setzte sich an den Schreibtisch und zog das Familienbuch hervor und schrib: verlobte sich am 22. September mit Herrn Bendix Grünlich, Kaufmann zu Hamburg.”²²⁰ This is actually the first concentrated dramatic event that has happened in the novel. It lasts several chapters and, in the process, perfectly presents the characteristics and ethics of the Buddenbrook family. The adaptation condenses this plot-line into an extra-diegetic narration by Lina, which makes her, from the perspective of narratology, a sort of character with an omniscient point of view.²²¹ Her narration functions as a flash-back and comment on the whole

²¹⁹ “Was ist das. — Was — ist das...” from the Erster Teil. Chapter 1 in *Buddenbrooks*, the first line of this novel, in which the eight-year-old child Tony asks her grandmother questions with complete vitality and curiosity.

²²⁰ John von Düffel, *Buddenbrooks nach dem Roman von Thomas Mann, Bühnenfassung*. 2005, p. 16.

²²¹ See *Die typischen Erzählsituationen im Roman* from Franz K. Stanzel, who introduces Gérard Genette’s narratological model into the field of novel studies; he analyzes the “auktoriale Erzählsituation” and concludes a series features, such as omniscient narrator(s), free report on the past and future events,

story, which temporarily gives the dramatic scene an epic effect. Yet Lina is only a minor character and she does not actually make very many appearances. Her role of narrator does not give a coherent impression.

Another figure who has a stronger appearance as a narrator and commenter, is one of the protagonists, Thomas Buddenbrook. In examining the epic treatment within the dramatic scene, it is the role of Thomas that has more diverse meanings in terms of narrative discourse. As discussed in the thematic part, Thomas has proven to have a self-reflective consciousness in his speech on the *Schauspieler* role. At this point, it seems that Thomas stands as an aloof commentator on himself, as someone outside his own body speculating on his whole life. This is not the only occasion on which Thomas Buddenbrook shares a role outside his fixed position in the fictional world, and at the same time he provides both an inner- and extra-diegetic function for the whole narration.

It is said that Thomas Buddenbrook, as *Leitungsethiker* of the novel, may be the only tragic figure among the protagonists. Some literary studies even point out that he is portrayed as the fictional shadow of Thomas Mann's own father. As mentioned earlier, considering *Buddenbrooks* as a *Schlüsselsroman* is indeed one major approach that directly relates Thomas Mann's own merchant family in Lübeck to the fictional Buddenbrooks. In particular, some studies argue that his namesake character Thomas Buddenbrook is close to an ironical self portrait of the writer himself.²²² The validity of biographical interpretation is debatable, but in any case, the complexity and subtlety of the tone in which Thomas is portrayed may be comprehended.

comment and argument parts, overall accounts about other figures and so on. Relevant discussions can also be found in *Narrative Discourse* by Gérard Genette and *Der Roman* by Christoph Bode.

²²² Discussions of the origins of *Buddenbrooks* in *Thomas-Mann-Handbuch* have mentioned that "Thomas Buddenbrook ist dem Autor 'mystisch-dreifach' verwandt als 'Vater, Sprössling und Doppelgänger'" (p. 367), see also "Die Figuren und ihre Vorbilder - Thomas Buddenbrook" in *Buddenbrooks-Handbuch*, which

In the Hamburg adaptation, Thomas Buddenbrook's first line is originally an objective description in the novel: "Manchmal setzte er sich in den von Weinlaub eingehüllten Pavillon und blickte, ohne etwas zu sehen, über den Garten hin auf die Rückwand seines Hauses. Die Luft war warm und süß";²²³ in this scene, Thomas speaks in a distant narrative different from his characteristic voice, which might establish his basic tone. Sometimes he speaks like an outside narrator, as he does in the *Schauspieler*-scene, at the same time he is also the insider-commenter on the dramatic situation. Both narrative and thematic levels function in his voice. Thomas is the leader of the Buddenbrook family structure and represents the mainstream culture of capitalist virtues, so he has the right and responsibility to "guide" or "teach." His patriarchal leadership is sometimes even presented in the humiliation of other family members, including his younger sister Tony, his younger brother Christian, his son Hanno, and once even his mother. Because of his high status, Thomas has the privilege to comment, and from the perspective of narrative discourse, he is also partly a commenting figure, who has the wholeness of fictional characteristics but also is portrayed with an ironic tone. Thomas' speaking about Tony reveals her very basic nature, which is akin to a profile of her and helps the reader and the audience to obtain a better understanding: "sie kann sich halten, wie sie will, sie bleibt immer Tony Buddenbrook"; Thomas also clearly expresses his contempt for Christian, who answers with a bitter defense: "Ich bin geworden, wie ich bin...weil ich nicht werden wollte wie du. Wenn ich dich innerlich gemieden habe, so geschah es, weil ich mich vor dir hüten muss, weil dein Sein und Wesen eine Gefahr für mich ist."²²⁴ Obviously, Thomas as a commentator on an inner-diegetic level is actually a mirror of his social position and reflects the rigor principle of his social class.

mentions "zum Teil ist Thomas Buddenbrook gewiss ein Porträt von Thomas Manns Vater, von 'Papa selber,' wie Viktor Mann schrieb." (pp. 17–19)

²²³ Von Düffel, John. *Buddenbrooks nach dem Roman von Thomas Mann, Bühnenfassung*. p. 92.

²²⁴ John von Düffel, *Buddenbrooks nach dem Roman von Thomas Mann, Bühnenfassung*. p. 638.

Like Lina, and also more obviously, Thomas sometimes speaks as an omniscient narrator. In the theatrical adaptation, the death scene of old Konsul Jean Buddenbrook might be the most obvious situation showing how Thomas changes the narrative mood on an extra-diegetic level. In this scene Thomas looks as if he had “prophesied” what would happen in his family.

TOM: Ich habe heute Morgen am Hafen mit Kapitän Kloft gesprochen. Er täuscht sich nie. Es gibt bloß einen Platzregen...So eine unnatürliche Wärme...

Ein Platzregen geht nieder. Alle lauschen.

Da, plötzlich, trat dieser Moment ein...ereignete sich etwas Lautloses, Erschreckendes. Die Schwüle verdoppelt, die Atmosphäre schien einen, sich binnen einer Sekunde rapide steigernden Druck auszuüben...Und dieser unentwirrbare Druck, diese Spannung, diese wachsende Beklemmung des Organismus wäre unerträglich geworden, wenn sie den geringsten Teil eines Augenblicks länger gedauert hatte, wenn nicht auf ihrem Höhepunkt eine Abspannung, ein Überspringen stattgefunden hätte...ein kleiner, erlösender Bruch, der sich unhörbar irgendwo ereignete...wenn nicht in demselben Moment, fast ohne dass ein Tropfenfall vorhergegangen wäre, der Regen hernieder gebrochen wäre, dass das Wasser im Rinnstein schäumte und auf dem Bürgersteig hoch empor sprang.²²⁵

Lipinski in her book *Romane auf der Bühne* has suggested that Thomas changes his characteristic voice into a distant mood in this scene: “Thomas, in dieser Szene offenkundig für meteorologische Analysen zuständig, wechselt das Tempus, sodass die Beschreibung der beklemmenden Schwüle und des folgenden Platzregens zum Moment epischen Erzählens wird.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 48f.

Der Moment wird durch die Paralepse aus dem Rahmen der Diegese gehoben und bekommt so eine größere Bedeutung.”²²⁶ Except when talking about functions of narrative mood, Lipinski also argues that this retrospective attitude in his voice is actually integrated with the whole plot as a prolepsis²²⁷. In detail, “das Unwetter als Todesbote wird später Teil des Familiengesprächs und dann der Familiengeschichte werden und erscheint hier bereits im Augenblick des Geschehens als Vergangenheit.”²²⁸ According to Lipinski, this narrative treatment is presented less obviously in the novel, yet in adaptation, the dramatic scene has been greatly strengthened through specific narrative methods.

The quasi-monologue from Thomas, which is embedded in the conversation with his mother and sister, proves that the content and narrative situation of texts from the original novel have been reorganized according to the principle of dramatic time. Essentially, the linear script of John von Düffel follows the time line in the novel, yet for the sake of theatrical effect in some scenes, it still tries to break down the continuity of the plot with a freer attitude towards the sequence of text and mixture of narrative voices. A significant case might be Thomas Buddenbrook’s famous “Schopenhauer-scene,”²²⁹ which is a long inner monologue in which he contemplates his life and death. At this moment, Thomas steps out of his figure again and speaks as an omniscient narrator, whose voice appears to be that of Thomas Mann himself; meanwhile,

²²⁶ Lipinski 2014, p. 141.

²²⁷ Concepts like “Prolepsis” and “Paralepsis” are from Genette’s narrative theory; the former refers to the when the narrator knows/reports something before her/his present situation, and the latter means that the voice of narrator stands outside of, or higher than, the current situation. See *Narrative Discourse* from Genette.

²²⁸ Lipinski 2014, p. 141.

²²⁹ In Zehnter Teil, Chapter 5 of *Buddenbrooks* (pp. 642–662), Thomas Mann describes Thomas Buddenbrook reads one chapter “Über den Tod und sein Verhältnis zur Unzerstörbarkeit unseres Wesens an sich” of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* from the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. In this chapter, Thomas Buddenbrooks thinks about his own life, his ancestor, his wife and son, and most importantly and prophetically, his own death, which will happen in next few chapters.

this monologue disturbs the temporal structure of scenes and creates suspense. On the other hand, this monologue has been presented with more directness from the point of view of the materiality of the stage; at the end of this scene, Thomas falls to the ground, crawls and murmurs, which might be interpreted as a physical expression of the theme of *Verfall*, especially considering that the content of his monologue is partly about his own death.

In conclusion, the theatricality of the narration is reflected particularly in the role of Thomas. He is a character with outside and inside perspectives, and has a functional role as narrator, as well as sharing the voice of the author, who is omniscient, ironical and philosophical. And, as explained above, Thomas is a vital representative of the concept of *theater* on a thematic level. In his case, the theme of *theater* is presented as a social mask and role play. In other situations, Thomas Mann takes the theme of *theater* as a counterpart to the *Bürgerwelt*, and his most important theme of *Verfall*, or *Dekadenz*, is actually a process of *Entbürgerlichung*, which may be decomposed through art, particularly theater and music, at least in his opinion.

6.3. Figures under Pressure

In the dramatic structure of the Hamburg adaptation, the three protagonists have unparalleled importance in presenting the artistic approach of this adaptation. They are the center of the major story lines, and the conflict scenes around them or between them construct the dramatic transformation, and also, as both the writer John von Düffel and director Stephan Kimmig have mentioned, these three siblings in the middle generation of the Buddenbrook family are perfect representations of the concepts of *Generation* and *Geld*, which are thematically decisive for the adaptation.

Thomas, Antonie and Christian are born as Buddenbrooks and also determined, to different extents and in different forms, by their Buddenbrook family. Their personalities and life stories are for the most part in accordance with their positions in the family Buddenbrook, which reflects the whole atmosphere and ethics of *Bürgertum* at that time. *Bürgerlichkeit*, as one of Thomas Mann's favorite themes, shapes the very nature of this merchant family in the upper class, and the ups and downs of the Buddenbrooks are also a mirror on the whole of capitalistic society; in this adaptation, as has been mentioned several times before, stage representation leaves very little room for social and economic backgrounds and concentrates almost entirely on family scenes. John von Düffel and Stephan Kimmig choose to transform the epic range of this story to the three major figures: they are the past, present and future of this family; their positions in their family are their lives, and they are destined to decline. John von Düffel has said that the story of generations of the family Buddenbrook is also the dramatic process of *Untergang*, so a concentration on the central generation in presenting this story is "charakterlich" and at the same time "psychologisch interessanteste."²³⁰

No doubt, Thomas, Tony and Christian Buddenbrook are the most important figures in the original novel, especially Thomas and Tony. Christian's role seems to be comparatively less significant, because as a "prodigal son", he lives his life far away from his family and the local environment for most of the narrated time, and only in specific cases, such as at the death of old Konsul Jean Buddenbrook, does Christian have to return home and therefore reenter the narrative focalization; the adaptation does not change this basic setting in terms of Christian, but Christian's contradiction with his family is more significant in a conflict-centered dramatic structure, and this endows Christian naturally with a much more prominent position on the stage.

²³⁰ "Interview mit John von Düffel. Generation und Geld: Über die Bühnenumfassung der *Buddenbrooks* nach Thomas Mann" in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 136.

The novel *Buddenbrooks* is not narrated in a first person voice, or even from a third person perspective; but the narrative focalization in the novel is obvious, namely Tony Buddenbrook. As a major figure she follows, comprehends and observes almost everything in this story. In the novel, Tony speaks the first line — although in the adaptation, this is expressed by the housemaid Lina, but Tony is still the first to step to the stage. She also witnesses the last scene of the family Buddenbrook; except for her two short travels and short marriages, she stays almost all her life with her family and the readers perceive this story almost from her presence. Tony's personal life, like that of Thomas, is intensively intertwined with that of the family, and is presented in the adaptation mainly in terms of her relationship with Thomas. Yet the narrative attitude towards Tony, on the other hand, is expressed in not quite the same ironical voice as in the novel; in fact, Tony Buddenbrook, a more or less comic figure in the novel, has been presented more with tragicness in this theatrical version.

Thomas is the center of each relationship. As the oldest son in the family and controller of the family business, he is indispensable to the family scenes and also fairly vital for the theme of *Verfall*. His personality, as has been said of his nature of “actor”, receives much more exposure whether in the novel or in the adaptation. In this section, analysis of this character will turn to his relations with others, including his son Hanno, the so-called last Buddenbrook, and also Tony and Christian.

The establishment of the figures constitutes almost all of the most important elements in the Hamburg adaptation, as will be shown later. This significance reflects its dramatic structure and traditional centralized aesthetic, as the director Kimmig puts it plainly, “ich wollte eine absolute Konzentration auf die Figuren.”²³¹

²³¹ “Interview mit Stephan Kimmig. ‘...die Frage, welche bürgerlichen Werte überhaupt noch neben den ökonomischen existieren’ in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 145.

6.3.1. Father and Son: Unbalanced Conflict



Figure 2. Thomas and Hanno in the last scene of the Hamburg adaptation of *Buddenbrooks*. Source: Cover image of *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*.

This Hamburg adaptation of *Buddenbrooks* ends with Thomas and Hanno, father and son turning back to the audience, and walking together hand-in-hand towards the blackness backstage

(Figure 2). Shortly before this final moment, Thomas has declared his coming death, which is not shown directly on the stage, as well as the death scene of Hanno, which again is not shown. What is presented on stage is actually the symbolic death of Thomas Buddenbrook, the death of all he has insisted on, all he has dreamed of and all for which he has struggled for his whole life; moreover, his death is not just his own, but is also the *Verfall einer Familie*. Thomas has foreseen the demise of his own son, which implies not just that Hanno will die young and cannot take responsibility for the family, but also that the long-existing ethics and values underlying his family and class are no longer the solid meaning of life for the generation of Hanno Buddenbrook. In the novel, Hanno's death also symbolizes the final *Verfall*, which may be interpreted not only from the absence of a male heir, but also from the peculiarity of this figure; namely Hanno's artistic talent and sensible disposition contradict strongly the capitalistic values of his "real world", with what his father and his family take for granted. Therefore, when Thomas prophesies the future deaths of himself and his only son, this represents at the same time the destruction of everything to do with "Buddenbrook".

Concerning the figure Thomas, John von Döffel explains his personality and morals from his position in the family: "Thomas ist der Erstgeborene, der von Kindesbeinen an weiß, dass er die Firma übernehmen und führen muss."²³² This is the reason why, as argued above, he wears his mask and plays his role every day; his role is also his responsibility to the company and to the family, which he has taken from his birth and has never forgotten throughout almost every minute of his life. Thomas is also the "Leistungsethiker" among all the characters. As one critic points out, he represents mainstream ethic and values, which is "ein Modus der Lebensführung, der sich

²³² "Interview mit John von Döffel. Generation und Geld: Über die Bühnenfassung der *Buddenbrooks* nach Thomas Mann" in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 136.

zentral um die Gewinnmaximierung dreht und alle Lebensführungsimperative von diesem höheren Ziel ableitet”,²³³ or in the words of Max Weber, “die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus.” In short, the Buddenbrook family stands for the spirit of modern capitalism, and, unfortunately, Thomas seems to be the last believer.

As director Stephan Kimmig argues, the contemporary theme of *Bürgerlichkeit* is actually a question of money and the so called *bürgerliche Werte* cannot really exist without economic considerations. In this adaptation, the first emphasis is on “das erdrückende Korsett der ökonomischen Werte”, according to Kimmig; and in this economic relationship, “in dem sich die Figuren befinden, erzählen, über die nicht existente Möglichkeit, sich aus diesem Korsett zu befreien, über die daraus resultierende Verzweiflung.”²³⁴ The portrait of Thomas Buddenbrook, including his physical expression on the stage, is shaped by his inescapable position in the cold and stark chains of economic values; his whole life, including his education, love, marriage, social life, family relations, parental obligations, are all encircled by “Lesitungsethik der Gewinnmaximierung.”

It might therefore easily be found that Thomas is the protagonist for whom there is almost no character development; Tony knows her position more and more clearly, Christian becomes more and more confused, but Thomas, as the oldest son of the family Buddenbrook, knows who he is and who he should be from the very beginning. In the novel and in the adaptation, Thomas receives the most serious, or the most rigid, depiction; his seriousness makes him the most tragic figure of all.

²³³ Anna Kinder, “Die Kollateralschäden der Gewinnmaximierung. Das Drama der *Buddenbrooks*.” in *Ökonomie im Theater der Gegenwart. Ästhetik, Produktion, Institution*, p. 303.

²³⁴ “Interview mit Stephan Kimmig. ‘...die Frage, welche bürgerlichen Werte überhaupt noch neben den ökonomischen existieren” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 144.

Thomas Mann has described this novel as “ein vom Verfallsgedanken überschattetes Kulturgemälde” and he declares clearly that “die Keimzelle der Buddenbrooks” is the “Geschichte des sensitiven Spätlings Hanno.”²³⁵ Regrettably, Hanno does not have equal significance in the adaptation. The deleted scenes involving him include his musical and theatrical experiences under the influence of his mother Gerda, his intimate relation with his friend Kai, his school life, his sensitive characteristic and artistic talent, as well as his demise. The position of Hanno on the stage is actually as the counterpart to his father Thomas; as the only male of the youngest generation, he should be and must follow Thomas; the problem is he cannot. Hanno might be taken as the incarnation of “weakness” and sensibility, which have caused Thomas deep depression.

The visual existence of Hanno exposes strongly the contradiction between his tenderness and sensibility and the stark atmosphere of the stage, and in a thematic sense, the “Konflikt zwischen Bürgertum und Künstlertum an dieser literarischen Doppelgängerfigur des Hanno Buddenbrook”²³⁶ is dramatically presented by the father-son relationship. In a scene close to the end, the exhausted Thomas asks about Hanno’s education at school, and Hanno then recites one piece from the famous romantic poetry collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Thomas obviously has no interest in poetry but insists on correcting Hanno’s speaking, which reveals that what matters for Thomas is always public presentation and also reminds us of his self-confession of his “actor” mask. In fact, it also shows the deep reason for the estrangement between father and son. And because of the presence of Hanno as a weaker side, Thomas’ characteristic has been much exaggerated on the stage in comparison with his common disposition in the novel; throughout this scene, Thomas continues to sit on a chair, barely moving, giving brief instructions to his small,

²³⁵ Thomas Mann, “Über eigene Werk” in *Rede und Antwort* from *Gesammelte Werke* (Bd. 15), p. 10.

²³⁶ Ortrud Gutjahr, “Die Wonnen der Bürgerlichkeit?” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 42.

standing son with a cold voice, which are repeated again and again. The physical and facial expression of Thomas displays his self-centeredness, his controlling ego and his incapacity for sympathy under the mask of his self-discipline. From the positions and actions of both sides, it can also be seen that the power relations are actually what dominates in this family.

6.3.2. Christian Buddenbrook as Clown

As in the case in Thomas, the cornerstone for establishing the figure of Christian Buddenbrook, whether in the novel or in the Hamburg adaptation, is that he is the second son in a large, rich family. In fact, all of the three Buddenbrook children are strongly influenced by their birth sequence and sex in the process of growing up: the first son Thomas should be the leader; the young daughter Tony should contribute to the family status through proper marriage; what about a second son? “wenn man allerdings ein in jeder Hinsicht zweiter Sohn einer Familie Buddenbrooks ist, denn heißt es, sich anderweitig nach der Decke strecken, um von den Annehmlichkeiten auch noch seinen Teil absahnen zu können.”²³⁷ As Buddenbrooks, their life paths seem to be determined at the moment of birth. Christian, like Thomas and Tony, accepts his own position in the family very early, but unlike Thomas and Tony, his fixed position does not provide him with any certain path in life; he is like a pendulum swinging between sudden thoughts of self-determination and long habits of self-exile or even self-abandonment. In any sense, the two brothers, Thomas and Christian, construct a sharp contradiction in the constellation of figures, “einen Antagonismus, einen krassen Gegensatz.”²³⁸ In this dramatic presentation, scenes about

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

²³⁸ See the “Buddenbrooks: Theater, Schauspielertum und dekadentes Künstlertum” in *Der Epiker als Theatraliker* by Albert Ettinger, p. 148. See also the analysis about Christian in “Die Figuren und ihre Stellung in ‘Verfall’,” which is based on his figure constellational relation with Thomas: “Christian ist die

Christian mostly involve Thomas as well, and the tension and opposition between them contribute to portraying a contra-figure in Christian.

What is specific in John von Düffel's dramatic construction of the figure of Christian, is that the importance of this role has been substantially increased. As discussed before, Christian is originally only a sort of minor character in the story, and as the *Buddenbrooks Handbuch* points out, he is "ein outsider der Familie, eine Randfigur in der Abfolge der Generationen und im Familienroman."²³⁹ Yet what is also distinctive is the conspicuous status of Christian in the reception and interpretation history of *Buddenbrooks*,²⁴⁰ which seems to have been absorbed into the Hamburg version,²⁴¹ especially in terms of the range of participation and specific motifs of the characterization of Christian. He is "eine geheime Hauptfigur des Romans," as critic Walter Erhart concludes. As he points out, many interpretative approaches may be found on the figure Christian: "den Typus des Künstlers, der am entschiedensten die Gegenposition zur Kaufmannsfamilie, zu Geld und Genration, einnimmt, die Verfallsfigur schlechthin, aber auch den nicht disziplinierbaren Widerpart jeder bürgerlichen Ordnungswelt."²⁴²

The Hamburg theatrical version still follows the basic story line of the novel, which means, as an "outsider", Christian still does not participate in the daily work and life of the Buddenbrook

Parallelgestalt zu Thomas. Im Gegensatz zu diesem, dem es gelingt, eine geachtete Stellung in der Bürgerwelt zu gewinnen, bleibt Christians Leben ein ständiges Provisorium." from *Buddenbrooks-Handbuch*, p. 179.

²³⁹ *Buddenbrooks-Handbuch*, p. 21.

²⁴⁰ Ibid. See also in *Buddenbrooks. Verfall einer Familie. Kommentar*, from *Thomas Mann: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe*, 2002, p. 23.

²⁴¹ According to Lipinski, an emphasis on the figure Christian does not just frequently appear in the academic field, but is also now accepted in the film adaptation of *Buddenbrooks*. In Alfred Weidenmann's version, Christian has been shaped as a figure that has more complex psychologic mental situation, compared with his image in the novel. This adaptive approach might influence the image of Christian in the Hamburg version. (*Romane auf der Bühne*, pp. 158–159)

²⁴² Walter Erhart, "Die (Wieder-)Entdeckung des Hysterikers: Christian Buddenbrook." in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 91.

house. He is still always wandering around outside the family. Therefore, the duration of his appearance on the stage is inevitably shorter than that of Thomas and Tony, since, as mentioned before, the performing space is always located inside the house; in contrast with Thomas, his position is actually established through the conflicts and quarrels between the brothers. Christian's absence from most dramatic events and also from the stage, as Walter Erhart explains, reveals his specific characteristics in comparison with those of his brother and sister: "Abwesenheit sämtlicher Normen und Verpflichtungen, auf den offensichtlichen Verlust all dessen, was die Identität und das Selbstwertgefühl gesellschaftlicher Subjekte aufrechterhält."²⁴³ But Christian does not belong to the type of "revolutionary" figure. As Christian has explained of himself in the novel and also in the Hamburg adaptation, "dies ist so fürchterlich schwer."²⁴⁴ Christian finds life too hard, but what bothers him is not that he cannot achieve what he desires; in fact he never seriously intends to do anything; the real burden for him is to achieve what he should desire, as his elder brother Thomas does: to be a Buddenbrook.

Even his interest in theater, as discussed earlier, takes on only the vague form of chasing an actress; theater, in fact, is only a place of escape for Christian, as he makes himself very clear in a monologue:

"Was gibt es Neues am Theater? Ist eine gute Truppe dort? Was wird gespielt?

Ich kann gar nicht sagen, wie gern ich im Theater bin. Schon das Wort 'Theater' macht mich glücklich. Ich weiß nicht, ob jemand von euch dies Gefühl kennt? Ich könnte

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 92.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 94.

stundenlang stillsitzen und den geschlossenen Vorhang ansehen ... Und das Stimmen der Orchesterinstrumente! Ich würde ins Theater gehen, nur um das zu hören!”²⁴⁵

In theater, as in his real life, Christian prefers to be an outsider, a watcher. He has no intentions and makes no effort to develop a habit, as he cannot stick to the family business. In this sense, Christian is literally an audience in the theater and in his real life, which is exactly the opposite of the role of Thomas, who lives as an actor. Thomas is active, a participator, and also a genuine performer, who is serious about his social role; by contrast Christian chooses to sit aside and enjoy himself, participating only in his imagination, and unlike with Thomas's firmness of personality, Christian seems to lack distinctive personal identification.

Indeed, compared with Thomas and Tony, Christian has a vaguer and somewhat amorphous face, or as Thomas Mann describes it, “ein unselbständiger Kopf.”²⁴⁶ He has no strong inclination to anything; he makes no great mistakes and does no great harm; and he incites no great conflicts within the family, whether with his father or his brother. He does annoy Thomas because of his idleness and affair with an actress, but rather than serious irritation, Thomas' reaction seems to be just mockery. When Christian makes an apology for lack of irresponsibility, “ich wollte, ich wäre auch Kaufmann”, Thomas simply answers that “du willst jeden Tag etwas anderes.”²⁴⁷ Naturally, Christian is originally not a tragic figure like Thomas, yet in the Hamburg adaptation, the clown-like side of this figure has been highlighted; for instance, in one scene in which Christian annoys Thomas, the ridiculousness of Christian has been visualized in his entrance with a pack of colorful balloons, and this clown-like image symbolizes also his inner passiveness and emptiness.

²⁴⁵ John von Düffel, *Buddenbrooks nach dem Roman von Thomas Mann, Bühnenfassung*. p. 53.

²⁴⁶ Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks. Verfall einer Familie*, p. 267.

²⁴⁷ John von Düffel, *Buddenbrooks nach dem Roman von Thomas Mann, Bühnenfassung*. p. 4.

The inspiration for Christian as a “clown” might come from the ironic tone used by Thomas Mann in referring to this figure, but more importantly, it has its roots in reception and adaptation history. Birte Lipinski links the clown image of Christian partly to his quasi-narrator role in the Hamburg adaptation; moreover, “Christian as Clown” has in fact been long discussed in the literary academic field,²⁴⁸ which normally traces back the depiction of a “clown” type to literary tradition as well as earlier film adaptations of *Buddenbrooks*. Firstly, Lipinski mentions a transformation to clown in Christian’s closing speech, which comments on Thomas’ future death and is also the last speech of the whole performance: “dass er (Christian) in der Schlusszene den Tod beschuldigt, seinen Bruder ihm gegenüber vorgezogen zu haben, verleiht ihm hingegen Züge des Narren — ein Aspekt, der unter noch ausgeführt werden.”²⁴⁹ It is not only in this scene that hints about a clown-like Christian are found; they are frequent in the novel and in this adaptation. Moreover, the theatrical version presents a much more hysterical figure through both verbal and physical expressions. Further, Lipinski discusses the related cultural sense of the clown figure:

“Die Darstellung Christians rekuriert hier und auch im übrigen Drama auf eine lange Tradition der literarischen und später filmischen Darstellung des Wahnsinnigen, der Irrenanstalt und des Narren. Merkmal der Motivgruppe ist das Schwanken zwischen Wahn und Hellsicht, Dummheit und Weisheit, Ernst und Komik. Die Narrenfigur ist dabei lustige Figur, Parodist und bisweilen Komplize des Publikums, kann aber auch unheimliche und ernste Züge annehmen, Zerrspiegel gesellschaftlicher Missstände und

²⁴⁸ *Buddenbrooks-Handbuch* has called him as “der Bajazzo Christian” (p. 181), see also the “Haltlosigkeit und Selbsterkundung” in *Thomas-Mann-Handbuch*: “Christian ist ein Nachfahre des Unholden aus dem Bajazzo...dazu kommt seine histrionische Lust, eigene und fremde Schwäche zur Schau zu stellen, sein Hang zum Komödienspeil, zur Parodie, zum aufschneiderischen Geschichtenerzähler, zu ‘Clownerie und Blague’.” (p. 368) Another specific analysis: “Christian Buddenbrook — Komödiant und Dilettant” in *Der Epiker als Theatraliker*, pp. 148–160.

²⁴⁹ Lipinski 2014, p. 156.

damit Träger kritischer Botschaften sein. Diese Ambivalenz des Narren geht einher mit den tragikomischen Zügen der Figur.”²⁵⁰

Besides, Lipinski also mentions that the clown-like figure image of Christian Buddenbrook has already appeared in the film adaptation of Alfred Weidenmann in 1959, which establishes a re-interpretation of this figure for later works. Lipinski then argues that the Hamburg theatrical version shares more similarities with the adaptive and interpretative tradition rather than with the literary text itself,²⁵¹ and this, as Thomas’s characterization has demonstrated, is also reflected in the presentation of Tony Buddenbrook. As mentioned earlier, this refers again to the motifs of “Generation” and “Geld”.

In terms of the central adaptive themes of this version, the clown-like and tragic-comic tendency of the figure of Christian, as well as his physical illness and his self-proclaimed poor situation, accumulate under the theme of *Verfall*. As Lipinski has clearly explained, a clown stands in an abnormal position in society, which distantly reflects a morbid status from the outside perspective. But Christian is actually never really an outsider, even if he tries to be. Instead, as in the novel and the performance show, he must return again and again, and even his personal choice is much restrained by his position as a second son of the Buddenbrook family, as when he plans a marriage with an actress who is rejected by Thomas. His real position in society might be reflected in his mental situation. In the novel, Christian declares that he suffers from a kind of “nerve” problem, which in fact is never clearly explained, and on the stage it is represented only as a verbal reference rather than a physical expression. This mystery disease, as well as its implications for Christian’s stage of mind, is better understood as a symbol of the family Buddenbrook and its

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 157.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

society, and even as a prophecy “das Schicksal der Familie,” according to Christian, which is “unsichtbare Verfall der Familie.”²⁵²

6.3.3. Tony Buddenbrook: From Comic to Tragic

“Sie ist das Herz des Romans, die emotionalste, temperamentvollste Figur” is how John von Düffel explains the position of Tony Buddenbrook in this adaptation. Furthermore, he says that “einerseits ist sie die von Thomas Mann am meisten mit Ironie behandelte Figur, eine verwöhnte, naive, dünkelfhafte höhere Tochter. Andererseits ist sie der Liebling aller. Ihre Gefühlsausbrüche sind mitunter befreiende Momente in dieser Geschichte der Kontrolle.”²⁵³ The figure of Tony takes charge of the narrative focalization and provides much commentary in Thomas Mann’s novel. She is also portrayed with a sort of ironic and comic voice by the author. Yet, in the Hamburg version, this Tony Buddenbrook is presented with more tragic color on the stage.

As Viola Roggenkamp understands, Tony Buddenbrook has never been Thomas Mann’s tragic heroin, no matter how great her personal story appears. Tony’s literary forerunners, such as female figures who have had unhappy marriages in Theodor Fontane’s or Leo Tolstoy’s novels, are depicted tragically, but, even though Tony has lost her first (and also only) true love and almost been “sold” for the sake of family by her own father, and has endured two disastrous marriages, she never appears to be a pitiful figure; and on a narrative level, because of Thomas Mann’s ironic

²⁵² Walter Erhart, “Die (Wieder-)Entdeckung des Hysterikers: Christian Buddenbrook.” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 95.

²⁵³ “Interview mit John von Düffel. Generation und Geld: Über die Bühnenfassung der *Buddenbrooks* nach Thomas Mann” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 137.

voice, it feels even as if “Tonys Scheitern amüsiert.”²⁵⁴ The reason for this is Tony’s total acceptance of her position in the family, like that of Thomas and Christian; she is closer to Thomas and unlike with Christian, she is also a true believer in the central ethics of her family and feels rather obliged for her own role. As Thomas has commented, “sie kann sich halten wie sie will, sie bleibt immer Tony Buddenbrook,”²⁵⁵ Tony is defined and constrained by her family, even after she changes her surname twice; and at her core she has always been the favorite daughter of her father; as she says to Jean Buddenbrook after her first wedding day, “mein guter Papa, ich hoffe, Du bist zufrieden mit mir.”²⁵⁶

Even without Thomas Mann’s ironic narration, Tony’s vitality and youthfulness, even after all she has suffered, still make her far from a tragic character in the novel. From the very beginning of Tony’s childhood, which is not included in the Hamburg adaptation, her lively, vivacious and tough nature has already been presented; and until the final scene in the novel, Tony stands firm facing the decline of her family. In short, Tony, as her name Antonie indicates, is a character who combines both feminine endurance and manhood, and Viola Roggenkamp argues that “als die einzige Überlebenstüchtige des Hauses Buddenbrook steht Tony für vitale Weiblichkeit und erfährt eine immer wiederkehrende, leise Entwertung, ohne dadurch nachhaltig beschädigt zu werden.”²⁵⁷ Yet, as Christian’s idleness may not be taken as a rebellion, Tony’s “strong will” is also not a strong force in her own life; in fact, what Tony desires is within her bourgeois values which are inherited from her family, namely, “ihre Gier nach Vornehmheit,”²⁵⁸ and her arrogant

²⁵⁴ Viola Roggenkamp, “‘Tom, ich bin eine Gans.’ Tony Buddenbrook—die Entwertung vitaler Weiblichkeit” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 113.

²⁵⁵ John von Düffel, *Buddenbrooks nach dem Roman von Thomas Mann, Bühnenfassung*, p. 4.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁵⁷ Viola Roggenkamp, “‘Tom, ich bin eine Gans.’ Tony Buddenbrook—die Entwertung vitaler Weiblichkeit” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 128.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

self-esteem is the common ideology among her class. In a novel like *Buddenbrooks*, which has an epic range, Tony's misfortunes and life attitudes, when narrated from an omniscient perspective with ironic voice, are indeed perceived as abrasive, light-hearted and amusing, rather than in a tragic sense.

But even though Tony's failure in her pursuing is "amüsiert," her life is in no way amusing; when the narrative situation and voice have changed, her existence exposes its essence. On the stage, the original narrative perspective has been transformed within the dramatic situation, in which every figure is perceived in a single time and space; as a result, the epic distant voice that irony relies on has been for most part altered in the new circumstances.

According to Lipinski, this new narrative situation for Tony means that she partly takes the role of narrator, and in this mood, her innate girlishness has been replaced by a more serious voice; Lipinski argues that in the novel, Tony behaves always in a "kindliche Haltung" — she also confesses to her brother that "Tom, ich bin bloß eine Gans."²⁵⁹ This line is also preserved in the stage script. This is precisely one of the reasons for her "Lächerlichkeit"; when she then expresses herself as someone who introduces this scene to the whole audience, this makes "Tonys Auftritt erfolgt in Ernsthaftigkeit."²⁶⁰ To put it more plainly, Tony's real situation does not actually accord with the narrative situation created by the author. The reader needs to look through Thomas Mann's art form to discover the real events and reactions; as she is moved out of specific narrative situations, the audience will find that there should be other possibilities for understanding Tony's life. This is exactly what should be explored in the novel, according to John von Düffel:

²⁵⁹ Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks. Verfall einer Familie*, p. 367.

²⁶⁰ Lipinski 2014, pp. 134–136.

“Und wir entdeckten dann, dass das Buch gar nicht so ironisch und heiter ist, wie man es in Erinnerung hatte. Es steckt voller interessanter Grausamkeiten: am Körper der Familie, am Körper des Einzelnen. Die vielgerühmte Ironie des Buches wirkt da weniger souverän, sondern eher wie ein Schutz vor diesen Grausamkeiten.”²⁶¹

John von Düffel believes that an exploration of Tony’s real existence is what Thomas Mann is attempting with his ironic voice, and it is also an appropriate means of genre transformation from epic indirectness to dramatic direct representation, especially for the Hamburg version with its dominant dramatic structure. Interestingly, Tony’s epic expression as narrator endows her with a sense of the sublime or at least solemn, which changes the whole receptive direction of this figure, as Lipinski has also found, “die Dramatisierung ermöglicht hier einen neuen Blick auf die Figur und ihr Leid.”²⁶² Also, when Tony is successfully altered into a tragic figure, the theme of decline in this family is made more obvious, “dass es hier um die Punkte geht, wo Familie wehtut, wo es um Demütigung geht und um Zerstörung.”²⁶³

Yet this accentuation of the tragic side of Tony also weakens her vitalist role in the family. Tony’s liveness never fades away even as she reaches its family withering end. As the final figure to appear, her image is still far from tragic, at most melancholic. The theatrical version presents a different Tony in a much more serious and tragic sense, but at the cost of her other appealing characteristics. Also, with the weakening of her vitality, Tony is no longer the last figure to be presented (Thomas and Hanno are instead), which might also be a great loss for the personification of such a brilliant female figure.

²⁶¹ John von Düffel, in “Romane, Romane!” from *Theater Heute* (Nov. 2018), p. 12.

²⁶² Lipinski 2014, p. 137.

²⁶³ John von Düffel, in “Romane, Romane!” from *Theater Heute* (Nov. 2018), p. 12.

6.4. The World in *Buddenbrooks*

It is known that *Buddenbrooks* has the subtitle *Verfall einer Familie*, which indicates the two most important themes in the novel and its temporal structure of a process of decay; in the Hamburg adaptation, the process of decline — even without its beginning — has been centralized within a dramatic structure, which especially focuses on the inner scenes of the family Buddenbrook. In other words, this theatrical version may be seen as very authentic in its speculation on characters, timelines, motifs and conflicts. As John von Düffel himself declares, “Jedes Wort ist Thomas Mann.”²⁶⁴ Yet, it still seems impossible to cover everything in less than three hours. And this is true, at least, of *Bürgerlichkeit*, the most important theme for Thomas Mann, and *Entbürgerlichung*, the main content and thematic aspect in this novel, which are in fact almost absent on the stage, even when the adaptation chooses to utilize indirect and narrative methods to reflect the social and historical setting for this novel.

Thomas Mann himself has said that *Buddenbrooks* is an “als Familien-Saga verkleideter Gesellschaftsroman,”²⁶⁵ and through depictions of each generation, of their business occupations and personal choices, and through their social and business acquaintances, he intends to bring the whole of bourgeois society to the notice of readers, which means the theme of “Verfall einer Familie” is actually “Verfall einer Bürgerwelt.” In an adaptation, however, it is natural to make selections from the massive range of original text; obviously, as has been discussed so often in this

²⁶⁴ John von Düffel has quoted from “Um Geld dreht sich doch alles” by Paul Barz in *Welt am Sonntag* (27.Nov, 2005).

²⁶⁵ Thomas Mann, “Über eigene Werke” in *Rede und Antwort, Gesammelte Werke* (Bd.15), p. 10.

chapter, John von Düffel chooses to focus almost exclusively on the family scenes and interpersonal relations, therefore he actually decontextualizes this novel by taking it out of the Burger-atmosphere of northern Germany in the nineteenth century.

The director Stephan Kimmig, in his interview, explains his understanding of the theme of *Bürgerlichkeit*, which has generally economic connotations for him.²⁶⁶ In this adapted version, original themes of money, business and capitalistic ideology do not disappear, but their effective zone is limited to the family; rather than being presented as a wider representation of an entire society, these themes have been shaped as a topic or conflict for a family drama.

Nevertheless, the reduction of the text does not necessarily imply an inferior aesthetic quality. The decontextualization and dramatization of the Hamburg adaptation presents a rather different experience with its symbolic and generalized style. First of all, the very simple, cold metal and empty stage immediately encourages a reception that departs from the original nineteenth century bourgeois culture, as Stephan Kimmig explains:

“Bei diesen Metallensten könnte es sich um Zeichen für eine überdimensionierte Spielfläche handeln. Die drei Buddenbrook-Kinder leben lange mit dem schwerwiegenden Missverständnis, ihr Leben sei eine Art Spiel. Dabei handelt es sich um ein Leben voller Ordnung, das Gehorsam und Unterwerfung fordert. Darüber soll das Bühnenbild etwas erzählen.”²⁶⁷

As the long time-span of generational stories has been condensed into three major characters, depictions of social panorama in the novel are transformed into material existence on

²⁶⁶ “Interview mit Stephan Kimmig. ‘...die Frage, welche bürgerlichen Werte überhaupt noch neben den ökonomischen existieren” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 145.

²⁶⁷ “Interview mit Stephan Kimmig. ‘...die Frage, welche bürgerlichen Werte überhaupt noch neben den ökonomischen existieren” in *Buddenbrooks von und nach Thomas Mann*, p. 145.

the stage, which reflects the original rigorous atmosphere of the family and the entire society in a metaphoric way.

Lipinski in her study of this adaptation also comments that “John verzichtet darauf, den Untertitel des Romans auch für sein Drama übernehmen,”²⁶⁸ but she notices that there is still “besonderen Einfluss auf die Wahrnehmung des Verfalls im Roman haben die dort geschilderten Krankheiten und Todesfälle,”²⁶⁹ which are important themes in the interpretation of this novel. In particular, the simplistic performing space and continual voice of commentary in the performance present the *Verfall* with an obscure and somber expression. Death on the stage, unlike its presentation in the novel as normal or accidental, looms in the performance like a shadowy and ominous prophecy. From the very beginning, the housemaid Lina has already talked about death, then in a retold scene about the old Konsul’s death, Tony foresees the destiny of the family; in the end, even though the performance ends before Thomas and Hanno’s deaths, there is still a speech given by Thomas to his son about these deaths (in the novel this speech is given in the Travemünde scene with Tony). Besides, this theatrical version may not present the whole life of these three or four Buddenbrooks, but with a free narration that goes beyond what is currently happening, the Hamburg adaptation still depicts the full range of *Verfall* in its foretelling and metaphoric implications of death.

In general, the Hamburg adaptation of *Buddenbrooks* is constructed with traditional dramatic form, even though, in terms of epic treatments and stage design style, it has still clear traces of the contemporary theater aesthetic. Furthermore, this adaptation has obviously absorbed the interpretative and adaptive tradition of this great literary work. The adaptation itself quotes not

²⁶⁸ Lipinski 2014, p. 149.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 150.

only the novel text itself, but also its *Wirkungsgeschichte*. On the other hand, even though this theatrical version has achieved much from its transformation of the text and has also been a great success among audiences and critics, there are still things that might be regretted. For instance, the duration of the performance seems not to be sufficient for such wide-ranging novel, and the expressive methods appear slightly monotonous. Although it is indeed a quite mature and unified adaptation, this dramatic and authentic approach leaves too little room to produce something really unique for the stage.

Chapter 7. Visuality and Narration: *Der Prozess* by Andreas Kriegenburg (2008)

Franz Kafka's novel *Der Prozess* has already been adapted many times in the cinema and theater. Among these adaptations, a recent theatrical production by director Andreas Kriegenburg, which premiered in 2008 at the *Münchner Kammerspiele* and was invited to the *Berlin Theatertreffen* in the following year, is worthy of notice for its particular expression in presenting Kafka's grotesque and surreal world.

Der Prozess is one of only three novels by Franz Kafka, and was written in about 1914 to 1915 and published posthumously in 1925 with the help of his friend Max Brod. Franz Kafka never completed this novel, and the most familiar version today is actually edited and rearranged by Brod. To meet a variety of demands, the “*kritische Ausgabe*” has already been available for the public since the 1990s, and it has restored the original arrangement of the incomplete novel and left Kafka's scattered fragments untouched,²⁷⁰ instead of inserting them into the novel to create a pretense of a complete chronological sequence. Yet the Brod edition is still more influential. Undoubtedly, Brod's work has contributed much to the readability of the novel and made it easier for casual readers to access. Almost all adaptations of *Der Prozess*, whether film or theater, are based upon Brod's edition, and Andreas Kriegenburg's version is also no exception.

This novel begins with the protagonist, a bank officer Josef K., who finds himself arrested for an unidentified crime in his own apartment on a normal morning. K. is not taken away, however, but allowed to maintain his normal life and still has his relative personal freedom, except that he must wait for juristic instruction from a department in charge. K. chooses not to wait lazily for the deliberation, but tries his best to find a way out. He continually strives to make clear his

²⁷⁰ These fragments include “B.'s Freundin,” “Staatsanwalt,” “Zu Elsa,” “Kampf mit dem Direktor-Stellvertreter,” “Das Haus” and “Fahrt zur Mutter.” Max Brod has inserted them into different chapters according to the correlation of contents, but not all fragments can find an obvious position in the novel. See in *Der Proceß. Kritische Ausgabe* by Franz Kafka, edited by Malcolm Pasley, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschebuch Verlag, 1993.

present situation and seeks help from various people, but all in vain. At last, he seems to accept his fate peacefully when his execution comes upon him. He dies without any dignity or explanation, simply “wie ein Hund,” as the last line in *Der Prozess* puts it. From the first arrest to the final execution, neither Josef K. himself nor the reader finds a realistic and reasonable reason for his misfortune, and everything related to his so-called trial seems to proceed in the dark, with no further explanation from Kafka.

Der Prozess has received many attempts at adaptation for the theater or film, and it has also been well-received beyond the German-speaking world. As early as the 1950s, this novel was transformed into dramatic form by André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault, creating a popular literary base for future performances. Another outstanding and influential adaptation is Orson Welles’s film *The Trial* from 1962. There have also been countless theatrical adaptations of *Der Prozess*. In 2014, Claus Peymann directed a new adaptation in the Berliner Ensemble, and even in the last year, Philip Glass created an operatic version of *The Trial* for the Royal Opera House in London. Furthermore, *Der Prozess* will be a useful example for exploration of questions relevant to novel adaptation.

7.1. Text Selection and Reorganization

It generally appears that in novel adaptation, as earlier chapters have discussed, a reduction of the original text is almost unavoidable, even for a relatively short novel like *Der Prozess*. Reduction in the adaptive process cannot simply be categorized as a process of deletion, since each text selection reflects a particular interpretative choice and adaptive approach; it is by those

intentions that a new theatrical text may be reorganized from the selection of text.²⁷¹ In this adaptation, Kriegenburg follows the chronological sequence of the novel, specifically the popular version edited by Max Brod, and makes, for the most part, no fundamental changes or additions to the selected text. There is also almost no direct reference to the contemporary world, which is still a fairly popular approach to the staging of classic works on the German stage.²⁷² Furthermore, the implied social criticism, especially of the juridical system, which is considered one of the major themes in Kafka's *Der Prozess* according to literary studies,²⁷³ is also not the focus of this adaptation.

Epic treatments, as the common expression in contemporary theater, are certainly widely used in Kriegenburg's adaptation, for instance, the choral staging.²⁷⁴ In some situations, speeches which originally belong to one figure (in most cases, Josef K.), are spoken by different performers, namely the "chorus". Yet on other occasions, those performers might play other roles or unified roles. This approach deconstructs the independence of texts and breaks up signified meanings, which obviously reflects the general post-dramatic aesthetic of this adaptation. Moreover, the choral speeches might tear apart the integrity of characters, and in Kriegenburg's adaptation, one of the most prominent features is precisely the intentional destruction of a character with a specific personality. Characteristic speech indicates one's identity, personal disposition or psychological depth; in any case, if a subjective mark were shared by collective groups without character, each

²⁷¹ See Gerda Poschmann's clarification of "Theatertext" and "Drama" in *Der nicht mehr dramatische Theatertext*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997.

²⁷² See "Zwischen Historizität und Aktualität: Klassiker-Inszenierungen im 20. Jahrhundert" in *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters* by Erika Fischer-Lichte, Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 2. Auflage, 1999, pp. 373–375.

²⁷³ See Ulf Abraham's "Kafka und Recht/Justiz" in *Kafka-Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, edited by Bettina von Jagow, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008, pp. 212–223.

²⁷⁴ On chorische Inszenierung, see *Der Chor im Theater des 20. Jahrhunderts: Typologie des theatralen Mittels Chor* by Detlev Baur, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999. And also entry "Chor" in *Metzler Lexikon Theatertheorie*, pp. 50–52.

figure would lose its identified personality, in other words, the breaking down of the illusion of *dramatis personae*. Characters would be transformed into narrated objects.

As with the chorus in ancient Greek tragedy, if several performers share a single voice, they tend to be integrated into a collective one, as if they speak as one. In these circumstances, the distinction between different types of narrative speeches seems to be irrelevant, since the narrative voice and focalization cannot be identified. Also there are hardly indications of the classification of different narrative situations, and monologue or dialogue do not in fact exist any more. Speeches are in the first place just words, just the material existence of texts.

Moreover, from the perspective of the acoustic effect of a performance, multiple “text-speakers” have transformed the speeches with certain significations to audible and merely “superficial” signifiers. The conversation between Josef K. and his watchmen sounds like a delicately designed concert that is made up not of music but of voices; in other words, the performers are not trying to argue an issue related to the scene, but integrating together like a chorus.

In addition, speeches spoken on the stage are not only taken from dialogues or monologues in the novel, but also from narrative and descriptive parts. The performance uses a variety of texts, which, for example, convey changes of location, time or plot as well as the thoughts of some of the figures and descriptions of behavior etc.; these, like other epic techniques, might be seen as stage instructions to be openly announced, with the aim of breaking out of the absoluteness of the stage and creating a narrative atmosphere.

In contemporary theater, *Episierung* has already been a popular inclination, especially in adapting the novel, an original narrative genre, to a narrative theater. This typical epic approach underlies the basic attitude to original text of Kriegenburg’s adaptation, as has been briefly

mentioned above, yet there is still a subtle question to be clarified. First of all, even though this adaptation follows the original chronological sequence and preserves most of the events in the novel, it is obvious that the composition of the text has become more and more irrelevant, and in the case of the specific narrative voice has been turned into choral expression. Notwithstanding this, the general artistic tendency in Kriegenburg's adaptation is not simply to discard the intertextual relations within Kafka's novel, and rather than using the literary text indifferently, the whole structure still preserves the essence of the original novel in different forms. Kriegenburg does not wish to restore the dramatic scenes in Kafka's work, yet he prefers not to present fragmentary texts. Selection of the edition might be a relevant illustration. As has been mentioned earlier, this adaptation is based on the Max Brod edition, with its popularized completeness, rather than a fragmentary original manuscript. The former is certainly more recognizable to most audiences, which cannot generally be ignored by theater makers and are even more valuable in the case of novel adaptation. Generally, under the basic post-dramatic approach, Kriegenburg's adaptation still shows an insistence on the recognizable possibility in the original novel.

Therefore, the transformation of the text and the intertextual relations in this adaptation will be more complex than under the "authentic" approach. A totally authentic attitude to the original text is hardly a positive evaluation nowadays; on the contrary, reinterpretation and reorganization have been proved to be much more powerful in presenting the essence of the masterpiece in literature. Andreas Kriegenburg's *Der Prozess* is a useful example for adaptation in contemporary theatrical aesthetics, and it demonstrates multiple expressive methods related to the original text. In short, the adapted version is not a duplicate of the novel, but inspired by the novel in its narrative construction, physical expression, symbolic establishment and many other aspects.

7.2. Visuality: Body and Stage Images

In accordance with the collective role assignment, there are no distinctive differences among performers in their appearances (Figure 3). From the beginning, all performers appear in black suits, all with greased and straightened hair, a narrow moustache and slightly white painted faces. They are all Josef K., and they are also Josef K.'s watchmen. None of them have specific or personal visual characteristics.



Figure 3. Appearances of performers and stage design in Kriegenburg's adaptation of *Der Prozess*. Source: Screenshot.

Instead of focusing on social realities in Kafka's time, this adaptation, however, is presented by comic-like performers in a surreal setting. What attracts the audience at first sight must be a large oblique wooden turntable that occupies more than half the stage. Furniture, including a desk, a dining table, a bed and some chairs, are fixed upon the surface of a turntable, and it can be deduced from this that this space is arranged as a living room, which is also the opening scene in Kafka's novel. But the audience may identify from the other side the inhospitable nature of this situation, because the performers can only creep and climb upon the turntable; they are always stumbling; their bodies and movements are unnatural and uncomfortable.

In the second half, almost all the furniture has been emptied and the large turntable begins to rotate (Figure 4); a performer, who temporarily takes the role of Josef K., stays upon it and tries his very best to hold on. Six other performers slide in the "wheel". Later, they lie down exhausted, and crumple like embryos on the continuously rotating disc. In the last scene, after other performers bend over to stab Josef K., his dead body is left on the slowly rising turntable, fixed, lengthways, forming a picture like a pupil (Figure 5a and 5b).

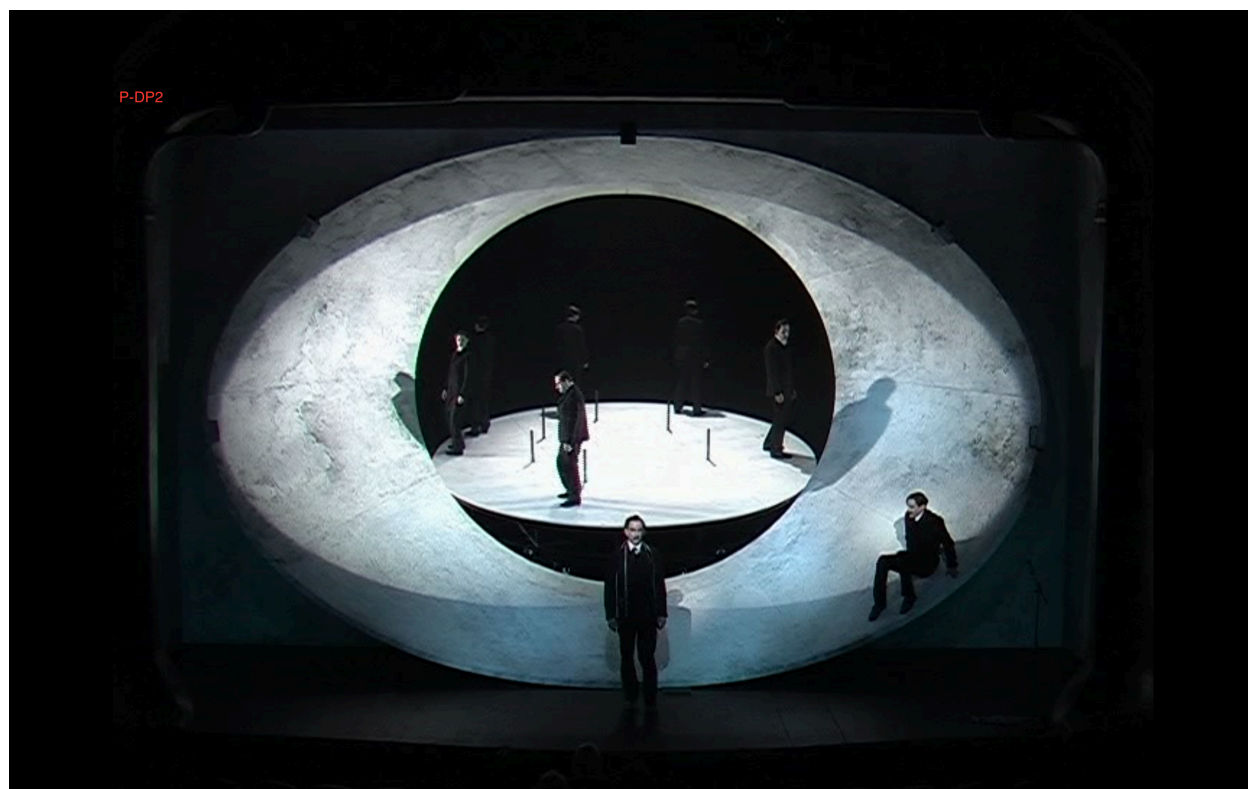
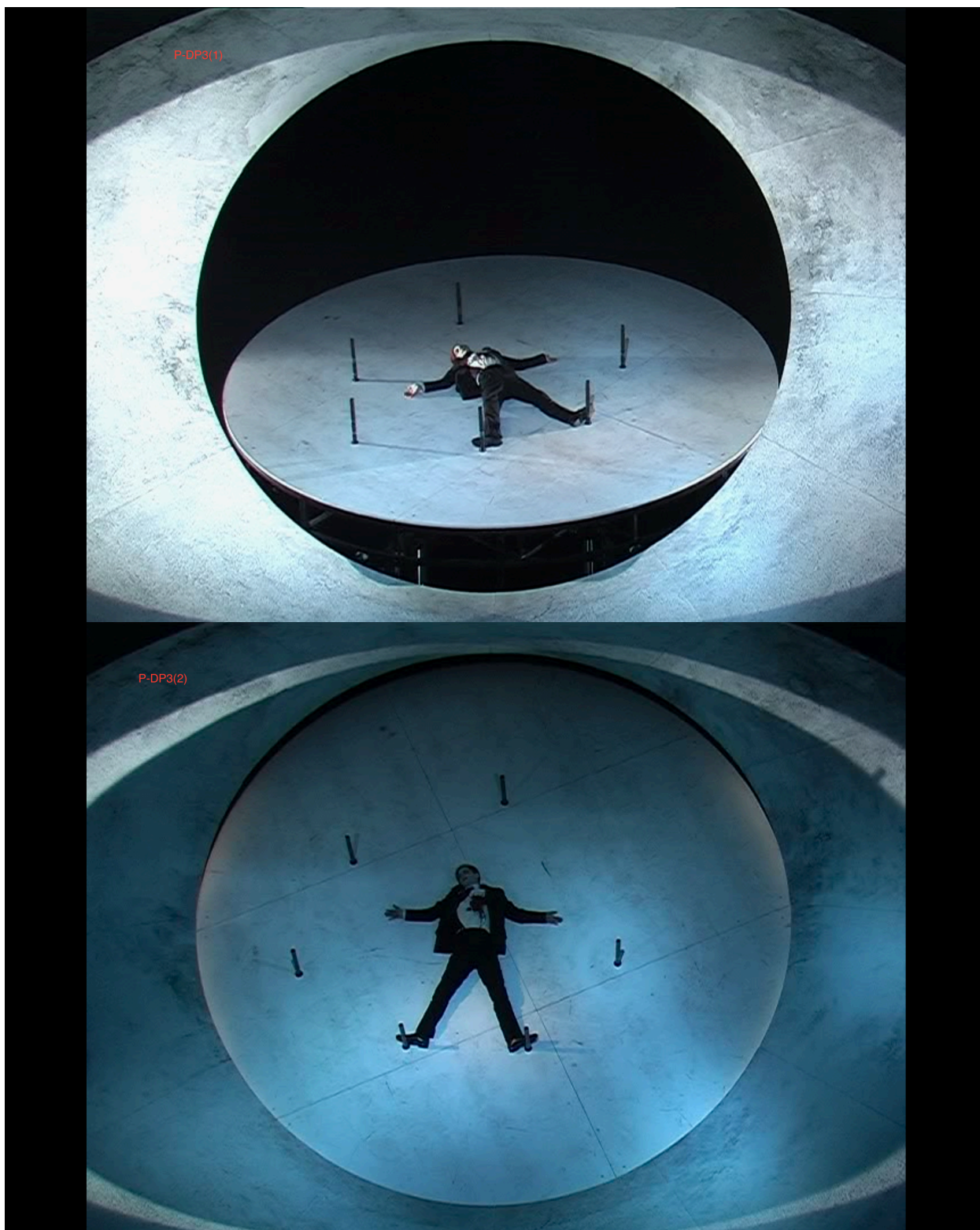


Figure 4. Changed stage in the second half of the *Der Prozess* adaptation. Source: Screenshot.

Figure 5a (above) and 5b (below). Body and stage image in the last scene of *Der Prozess* adaptation. Source: Screenshots.



This brief description shows that physical expression in *Der Prozess* is rigorously restricted under these unusual spatial conditions. The movement of a body rarely appears free and natural;

performers cannot move within the space at will but have to submit to the specific position in which they have settled. The most significant restrictive condition on the stage is the large turntable. This movable disk may be laid horizontally, obliquely or even vertically, and in all circumstances the performers must all adjust to the particular spatial conditions. Their bodies can behave only within the limited possibilities allowed by the restricted space. When moving around on the disc, the performers no doubt submit themselves to the physical law of gravity, so they always require some additional action to avoid slipping down. At the same time, they still have to fulfill the necessary movements for the sake of performance. Obviously, performers will face great difficulties and their bodies will seem to curl, or even twist. The furniture fixed on the disc, such as beds and chairs, may be used as support if performers try to move, so these objects will enforce new restrictions on movements and give new shape on the body, which gives the whole process a similarity to acrobatics.

In fact, the relationship between body and space can only be visualized in terms of the relationship between body and object in space. And the interplay between body and object already has in imminence implying many spatial restrictions, such as distance and direction, which determines the possibilities and appearances of the relevant movements. Objects in the space will actually indicate how an action may be disassembled and how it is organized into a series of minor actions. More striking visually is that to present the performer's body in a very limited situation, at the same time, the disassembling process may be shown more vividly. In our daily life, normal action usually proceeds smoothly without interruption, but in a vertical situation, every simple tiny movement will meet great challenges, and it can only be accomplished with the help of other objects, not to mention that there will naturally be many breaks in the whole process. But with regard to the visual effect of the theater, it is those unwilling stops and breaks that give a temporary

freeze-frame to every tiny action, and those images construct, in the serial time of movement, a whole uninterrupted picture.

The physical tension, constructed by “dropping” by natural force and “holding” consciously, presents a conflict directly before the eyes. It shows that tension and conflict can be produced without traditional dramatic scenes, in which causality and verbal expression dominate; in this adaptation, dramatic setting is replaced with visual effect, which may originate from simple physical action. Additionally, an advantage of creating a spectacular visual effect is that physical tension may also produce plentiful connotations in reference to other visual arts and Kafka’s works itself, which will be discussed later on.

As well as constructing an intense performing area, the stage design in *Der Prozess* also portrays a visually impressive physical composition, which is seen particularly in the turntable. When the disc stands up obliquely or vertically, the performing area is no longer in a position parallel to the audience’s sight. The depth of stage has almost disappeared, and it is no longer suitable for horizontal viewing by the audience;²⁷⁵ in fact, the stage stands before the eyes like a screen, or a painting hanging in a gallery; therefore all the details in this picture come into sight. The most eye-catching picture may be a scene taking shape in the second part, when all the furniture on the turntable has been removed and there are only a few posts left behind for holding onto. The performers at some point begin to move between and through these posts (Figure 6). One by one they leave the turntable and exit, until only one final performer remains, along with the body, and the rotating turntable, which constructs a moving picture like a dial with its indicator (Figure 7).

²⁷⁵ By “horizontal” I mean the ground the performers act on. The most common stage nowadays naturally has a depth of field, and the whole performing area will be watched from the sight of the audience. But the stage does not in fact intrinsically or historically have depth.



Figure 6. Movements of performers in the adaptation of *Der Prozess*. Source: Screenshot.

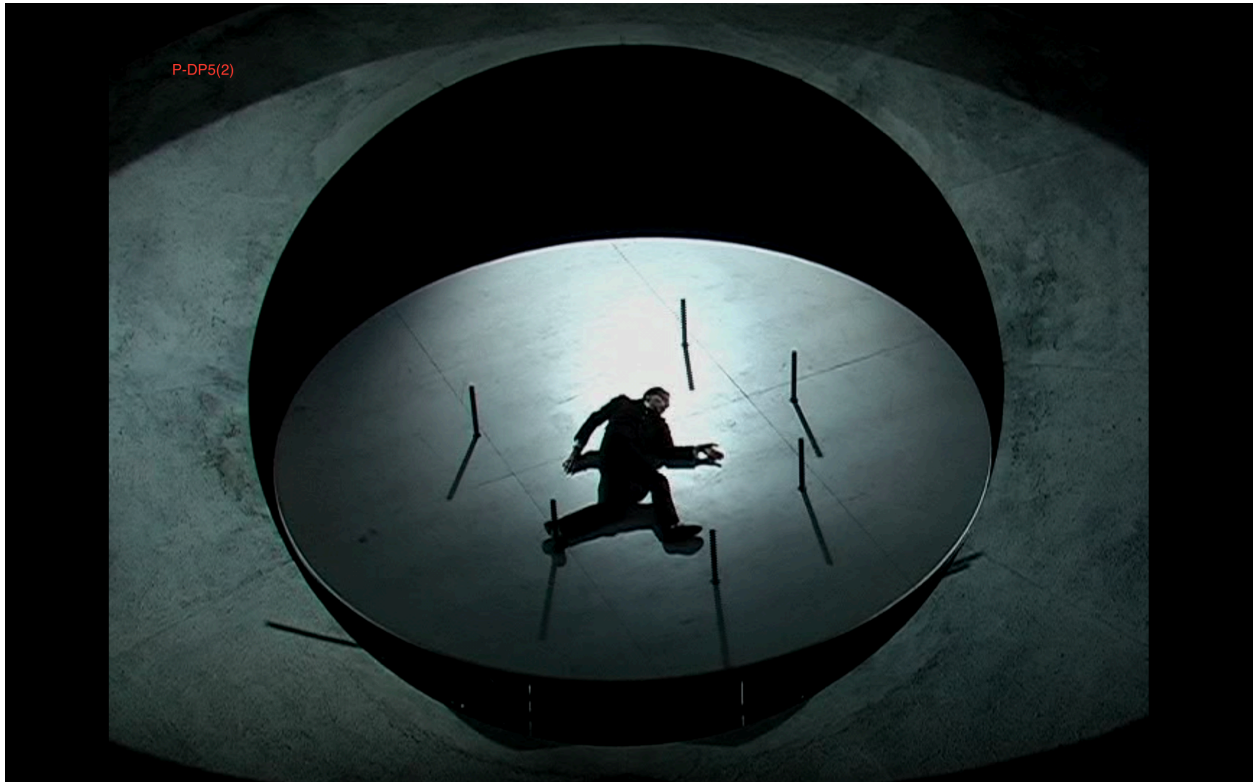


Figure 7. Image of the final performer in the adaptation of *Der Prozess*. Source: Screenshot.

Art history scholar John Berger has analyzed how we see pictures and what kind of ethics of aesthetic underlie our sights. Oil painting, for example, is normally placed directly opposite the viewer's sight (a "face to face" spatial relation); therefore all things within a frame are constructed for the consideration of the angle of viewing. He argues that certain ways of looking were quite vital for painting techniques and in essence shaped the composition. As a result, how something

was painted reflected how it was looked at. “It (oil painting) reduced everything to the quality of objects... All reality was mechanically measured by its materiality...A painting could speak to the soul — by the way of what it referred to, but never by the way it envisaged. Oil painting conveyed a vision of total exteriority.”²⁷⁶

The materiality and exteriority of visual arts, according to John Berger, expose their essence as a commodity and as a possession to some social classes. Regardless of his social analysis of the artistic work, what is more important is that Berger discusses the relationship between the materiality of objects and the reality depicted. As the painting occupies a position that meets the sight, it actually presents itself as an object to be watched and to be possessed. Therefore, the position emphasizes the distance between the artwork and its audience by taking the sights of the audience into account. Or from Berger’s social critical viewpoint, intentionally meeting the needs of watching marks the essence of the artwork as a commodity. Unlike in the case of visual arts, the stage traditionally assumes a “natural” angle of sight, namely the audience is set to watch the stage as they watch any horizontal object in daily life. So, when part of the performative area in *Der Prozess* “stands” up and composes itself as a picture for viewing, it makes itself tangible as material existence. As well as its strong visual impression, the unique stage also emphasizes itself as a fictional world that has a distance from the ground and should not be “naturally” watched as usual. In this sense, the visual expression contributes to establishing the narration.

Restricted spatial conditions do not only aim to create tensions to grasp the audience’s attention, but also to shape the body into a visual image. In silent film, especially in Buster Keaton’s work, the image of body is constructed by an aesthetic of mechanism and automatism. Namely one single action is simplified and decomposed into a series of mechanistic and automatic

²⁷⁶ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972. p. 87

steps, or pauses. Mechanized body movement on the screen actually indicates a remarkable transformation in aesthetics. Concentration on the human body marks the unique characteristic of Western art, and at most times in history the body has been the most important object in visual arts and no doubt stands at the center of attention. Similarly, its equivalence in performative arts might be the dominance of the human image from the perspective of the audience, and in literature the importance of character in classical poetics. Because of the importance of human body image, revolutionary expressions in art history will be shown, in part, as the body's retreat from the center and the depiction of a distorted body. Likewise, the expression of body is also a declaration of a certain stylistic approach in performative arts.

Mechanized body formation may not be new in the history of performative arts, but this new way of viewing makes something different. In cinema, the view of the audience is vertical to the erect screen, which is the same angle and vision as when we look at a picture hanging before us, but the audience in the theater shares almost the same line of view as the performer(s) onstage, which is a decisive distinction between these two ways of viewing, and creates a wide difference in visual design. In these new circumstances, visuality, under concentrated sight, is the major consideration for some scenes in performance.

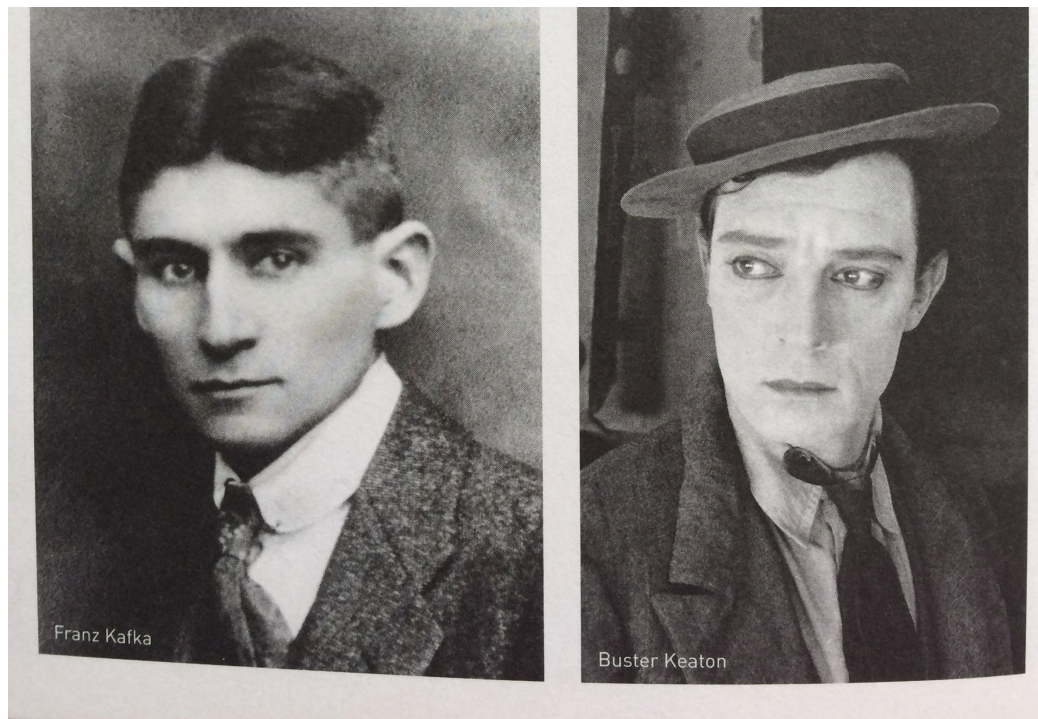
Mechanisms in bodily movement are traditionally one of the foundations of physical comedy, and this is widely used in farce, pantomime, puppet play and so on. Furthermore, the mechanism of bodily movement is always depicted according to the principle of geometric composition from a panoramic angle. Out of many expressions, one of the most common is the symmetry principle. In some scenery in silent film, especially in the productions of Buster Keaton, the human body is presented as a constituent element in the shaping of the whole picture, which

still follows the symmetry principle together with other non-living objects. Keaton's work is thought to be rooted deeply in traditional physical comedy.

In the case of Andreas Kriegenburg's production, there are many similarities in terms of the functions and aesthetics of the specific treatment of the human body. When the body was deprived of its autonomy, almost like a pile of clay, molded by various substances in outer space, it was presented equally together with its background (space) within a whole picture; and in this living and moving picture, the body, or the performer herself/himself, is not highlighted as dominant on the stage, but as constituting a subordinate part. The body seems to be close to sculpture, or, considering which plays a movable role in the whole composition, closer to a kinetic constellation. In terms of visual expression, it would be even more impressive for the uncommon presentation of body, to some extent, also to demonstrate that the human body in a picture is always, with a certain intension, designed to be watched. This kind of approach chooses to expose the artistic intension, and makes clear the division between bodily movement in common situations and behavior in daily life. In short, this unnatural human image reflects an image of the world, which artists want to depict.

7.3. Physical Comedy as Model

Figure 8. Photos of Franz Kafka and Buster Keaton. Source: Program of Andreas Kriegenburg's adaptation of *Der Prozess* in Münchner Kammerspiele.



In the program of the Kriegenburg version of *Der Prozess*, a photo of Buster Keaton is printed beside Franz Kafka's (Figure 8), and it seems that there are some similarities in facial expression and suggested personal temperament. Director Andreas Kriegenburg also once revealed in an interview that Buster Keaton, one of the greatest artists in the time of silent film, was one of the "Vorbilder" (models) for his personal preference for comic materials.²⁷⁷ As a representative of the modern physical comedy, Keaton intertwined his famous gags in narration, and also presented extraordinary visual compositions.

²⁷⁷ "Buster Keaton zählt er zu seinen Vorbildern, eigentlich inszeniert er gern komödiantische Stoffe". <<http://www.morgenpost.de/kultur/berlin-kultur/article122690894/Regisseur-Kriegenburg-macht-sich-mit-Aus-der-Zeit-fallen-rar.html>>

Comedy and the comic²⁷⁸ are two terms closely related yet not identical, and both have a very wide range of terminological usage. Comedy is an ancient genre, and throughout its long development and expansion, it has accumulated various forms and varying definitions: to produce laughter, to depict the common people and their common life, to imply a story with a happy ending. Outside the genre of poetics, comedy and the comic may simply refer to certain specific tones and effects, including the hilarious, funny, sarcastic, surprising, unbelievable and so on. Yet in this chapter, in addition, comic will also be treated as a certain narrative tone, which is directly correlated to the effect of performance.

Physical comedy, as we recognize today, has deep roots in the history of performative arts. Although comedy, as a genre, as it is traditionally considered, does not differ much in its circumstances from tragedy, in terms of its verbal art and its concentration on plot, it might still be deduced from its lines and plots that physical expression is indispensable in producing a comic effect. In any exploration of comedy, it will not be difficult to ascertain that it is actually physical comedy that dominates folk arts in any time or place as the most popular and understandable comic technique. Naturally there are many forms and variations in this very old performative art and it might be prudent to speculate on varied expressions that are differentiated by time and place. However, for practical reasons, we prefer to define “physical comedy” as a term with particular connotations, which refers to a folk performance tradition in Western theater history, and may, for the most part, be traced back to the Italian “*Commedia dell’arte*” that prevailed in the 16th and 17th centuries, which laid the foundation for routine physical presentations of acrobatics, pantomimes, clowning and so on.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ See “Komik” in *Komik. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, edited by Uwe Wirth, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2017, pp. 1–6.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., see “Comedia/Kabarett/Comedy/Vaudeville,” pp. 210–220.

Producing laughter, at any rate, is a distinctive trait of most comedies and comic-like performances; moreover, the study of laughter occupies a very important position in modern thought and covers a broad range of research fields, not least philosophy, psychology, psychoanalysis and narratology.²⁸⁰ One of the most popular current understandings of laughter refers to its position in a particular cultural context, which associates laughter with taboos, restrictions, discrimination and so on; and the history of comedy also shows, that attacking and criticizing socio-cultural norms is frequently used to make people laugh. From Aristophanes to stand-up comedians today, there are many performances that prove that a transgressive attitude plays a fairly decisive role in comic effect.

Similarly, physical comedy, whose tools are not language, still reflects the psychology of laughter. Humiliation and danger are far away from welcome and funny materials in our daily lives today, but under certain circumstances and with designed expressions, those elements may be given new functions and produce a hilarious effect. There may be deeper cultural and psychological explanations for this mental inclination, yet it is better to focus on the aesthetic side and to understand how certain physical expressions can produce comic effects. Any joke, even if it is not “told” in words, has a “tone,” or, a narrative situation; physical comedy is not exceptional, and its effect is always built on a tension between body and space. For instance, one important sub-genre in physical comedy, *Slapstick* — which etymologically implies an origin in physical violence — has developed a whole “grammar” to construct dynamic scenes and upon which to create the comic effect. In a performance of slapstick, the body of the performer might undergo a process of falling down, getting dirty, receiving a slap, tripping over obstacles, or performing a stunt, and most actions will be presented under unnatural spatial conditions. Therefore, bodies are

²⁸⁰ On the the topic of laughter, see Sigmund Freud, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten*.

distorted. Similar approaches to creating dynamic narration and comic effects with the body and space are still common and popular in comedy today.

Old physical comedy, including slapstick and many other folk performative arts, inspired artists in the area of silent film. As mentioned above, narrative tension and comic effects may be produced from interplays between body and space under certain restrictions; and with the advantage of new technology and media, presentations of the body may have more possibilities.

One of the most frequently appearing comic scenes in silent films is the interaction between the body and gravity, which may not be an original discovery of silent film, but this new medium provided favorable conditions. This kind of gag is normally created using a fast and direct dramatic twist, and its comic effect may arise from a last-minute sudden “saving” with the help of some sort of object in a supposed fall. Mostly, there will be an indispensable element at the beginning, which presents a “feeble” body helplessly reliant on certain stable objects. Film scholars have also noted this phenomenon in the past:

“It wasn't just that the early cinematic clowns were prone to falling over; slapstick was about the stylized physicality of the fall itself. It was always about the body's response to events, but a response which necessarily exceeded realist conventions by approaching a kind of abstraction that was achieved through graphic qualities, choreography, editing, and rhythm. Both Keaton and Chaplin were virtuoso physical performers for whom the body was a material force, reducible neither to psychology nor pure conceptuality. It did not express, it demonstrated bounce, tension, liquidity, gravity, flight, and so on, in a manner that exceeded the economy of cause and effect that was, at least in the case of Keaton, the limit of his narrative capacity.”²⁸¹

²⁸¹ Sylvian Du Pasquier and Norman Silverstein. “Buster Keaton’s Gags” in *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol.3, No.2 (04.1973), pp. 269–291.

Moreover, such a scene is extendable, because it hints very strongly at subsequent events. The uncertainty and lack of security of the situation might naturally provoke deductions about how actors will get out of their present danger and return to balance, and to the solid ground. Afterwards, actors will meet difficulties in achieving a rebalance leading them to a certain end, so the whole experience may be accompanied by thrilling or hilarious emotions. Finally, no matter whether the initial intention is achieved or not, the suspense effect will have been established through purely physical movement.

Normally, those old physical comedies, like slapstick, are only loosely organized, and Buster Keaton is a distinguished forerunner in reorganizing them into a narrative structure. Film scholars have stressed the growing demands for narrative at that time in Hollywood when Buster Keaton started his cinematic career. As one scholar has argued, “Keaton himself claimed to reconcile the opposition between the aesthetics of comedy and the aesthetics of narrative by limiting the digressive and excessive potential of the former and respecting the rule of the latter.”²⁸² Integrating slapstick and narrative means a reconciliation and balance between “the anarchy of pure pleasure” and “the desire for meaning”. But as argued before, a successful narration may also be based on physical movements under certain objective restrictions, in the same manner as was adopted by Buster Keaton in his films.

Therefore, the operation of narrative, as was argued before, may also be understood outside the storytelling norms and techniques. In fact, there are plentiful possibilities. Buster Keaton’s case shows one way in which a narration may be widened if advantage is taken of old physical comedy. It now seems that speculation on comic narration is of necessity, and not coincidental, and this

²⁸² Lisa Trahair. “Short-Circuiting the Dialect: Narrative and Slapstick in the Cinema of Buster Keaton” in *Narrative*, Vol.10, No.3 (10.2002), pp. 307–325.

topic has drawn the attention of French structuralists and post-structuralists in the twentieth century.

Georges Bataille once divided the production of meaning into the two categories of restricted economy and general economy. Restricted economy is adapted to production and expenditure for the return of profit. It is an economy of exchange of meaning and established dialectic. General economy is, on the other hand, an economy of waste, of expenditure without return, of sacrifice, of destruction, without reserve. Bataille conceived the comic as a sovereign operation of general economy — an operation that destroys meaning in an economy of waste and expenditure without return. From the new perspective provided by Bataille's models, if slapstick is compared with narration, their distinctions lie mainly in the production of meaning. A film scholar once argued, "Slapstick is centrifugal while narrative is centripetal."²⁸³ Slapstick is a form of violence, of excess and by nature non-narrative intrusion and redundancy. Narrative, on the contrary, is organized according to causal principle that is built on the comprehensible relationship between investment and profit to produce meaning.

However, Bataille also argues that these two economies should not be understood as binary opposites. Regarding slapstick and narration, what may link them together is the qualities that these two share: movement, or action; to some extent, movement is the primitive sense of action. As Peter Brook has proposed, the new concept of theater may start from a new understanding of an act; in his famous declaration, "a man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged",²⁸⁴ the traditional concept of "act" is actually occurred by a simple movement, and simply through bodily movement.

²⁸³ Donald Crafton. "Pie and Chase: Gag, Spectacle, and Narrative in Slapstick Comedy" in *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, 1994.

²⁸⁴ Peter Brook. *The Empty Space*. New York: Touchstone, 1996 (First Edition 1968), p. 7.

According to Brook, a theatrical performance may happen in its relationship to the space and audience. As can be seen in physical comedy, what has been realized in a scene is indeed only established from body and space, from movements that follow a certain kind of physical logic.

Buster Keaton's films, in particular, are almost all choreographed with the aim of producing a comic connotation. As many of his forerunners and contemporary film artists have also found, the body presented with an unnatural shape and movements and behaving in an unnatural way may have great comic potential. Unlike classic comedy, this kind of comic scene is produced from body language rather than from sophisticated plot settings or elaborate word games. But there is more to "telling" a joke than to painting a picture. No matter what the language is, whether German or Chinese or hands and legs, a comic scene may only be established from a certain narration.

In Keaton's cinematic world, what is fundamental for a gag is to complete a narration with the body; and this completed narration functions with its own laws. Keaton's comic scenes are always based upon the total surrender of the body to the object or the outside world. The body in Keaton's film is always in different kinds of unwilling states, such as weightlessness, suspension in mid-air, hiding or becoming stiffened etc.; it seems that the body has no autonomy but has given out its own form of shaping to some certain objects outside itself. Keaton's gags exist within this world, which is flat and constructed by some geometric rules serving for the advantage of views, but not for naturalistic realism. Keaton's great comedy can only happen in this geometric world, in which the gag is created within a frame marked by circles, angles and parallel lines. He gives the joke a body, a pure visual form. To some extent, Buster Keaton has created direct visual realism, which is entirely based on the physical laws of the common real world, and at the same time also entirely constructed from the particular semantic system of his cinematic world.

Something is funny because it is real, it is real because the audience can watch it with their own eyes. But this reality does not refer in any way to what would or should have happened in a real world. Moreover, it makes no reference to what could happen in a world of possibility. It has already happened in certain spatial situations, and it may be identified as real, for it holds no contradiction with our world and follows physical principles. In other words, it is real logic that makes a surreal world.

7.4. Stylized Narration

From its origin and development, comedy has always been a genre with a wide range, and it is undeniable that much comedy is related deeply to the structure of narrative. Inspired by a normal narrative process and by the features of physical movement, we can gain a more specific comprehension of the narration in *Der Prozess*.

Correlations between the adaptation of *Der Prozess* and earlier comic works are not too hard to find. Specifically, techniques for building a “gag”, which prevail in the silent films, especially in Keaton’s works, also play a part in the stage presentation of *Der Prozess*. Roughly speaking, both of them take advantage of the visual effect of flat composition and produce a tense comic scene with specific body movements. And each shapes a surreal world with realistic techniques. But they are differences in their representations, which reveal their different creative aesthetics and also the aesthetics of different times and genres. From a comparison with Buster Keaton’s films according to their similarities and discrepancies, we might gain a better understanding of the narration in *Der Prozess*.

Speaking of the irresistible effects that gravity works on the body, both the film and the theater construct their own visual expressions and comic scenes partly upon them, but what differs in *Der Prozess* is that emotions like surprise or excitement, which are vital in silent films, are for most part neglected. Only the tension arising from the physical mechanism remains. The performers try not to return to a balanced horizontal surface, but accept their particular spatial situation and struggle to adapt to the physical law of gravity. For the films of Buster Keaton, which are still within the framework of classical narration, a story proceeds naturally to a comforting end, and a dramatic conflict leads naturally to a resolution. But such a scene, with a stable end, seems no longer to be adaptable to the contemporary theater, or at least not to be compatible with the theatrical expression in *Der Prozess*.

Another notable distinction is also exposed in the different purposes of the action design. There are plenty of verbal descriptions of processes standing apart from actions in *Der Prozess*, rather than concrete physical representations; or else both of these exist together, which means the performer completes an action along with a narration at the same time as the action. Such phenomena are quite impossible in Buster Keaton's films. No action is just told, everything is directly presented by the physical action. "Showing, not Telling" — a basic rule of classical narration, and a solid criterion for dividing good or bad narrative technique. This differentiation, used to define narration, marks two opposite aesthetics. Even though both of them have inherited a similar comic tradition and applied quite similar expressions, their artistic world still has a few things in common.

In the earlier analysis, it has been mentioned that physical action in Keaton's films actually contributes to the plotline in constructing dramatic tension and comic effect, which is the same function shared by some physical movements in *Der Prozess*. However, action in Keaton's film,

as in other works that follow classical narrative norms, is transparent, and the absoluteness that Peter Szondi defines as dominant on the stage also dominates the screen. Andreas Kriegenburg's theatrical adaptation, on the other hand, shows a way of maintaining direct physical exhibition but at the same time, being estranged from it, or telling it.

Therefore, two kinds of action exist together in *Der Prozess*. One is for "telling" and the other for "showing". The action in the sense of plot, which is what the former assumes, is written in the novel and linked by causality. It is read aloud by the performers on the stage, rather than performed. In the case of "showing", the part that is exhibited, although in some way it is related to the actions that performers narrate and the world that this production is intended to depict, is intertwined more with stage design and choreography, so in each freeze-frame picture, visual expression has predominance over storytelling.

The comic structure of *Der Prozess* also has a closer affinity with earlier, or more vulgar, slapstick, rather than with well-organized and story-oriented classical comedy, including comic silent film of the golden age of Hollywood. As already argued, comic elements may have been absorbed into the causality principle under classical narration, which may on the one hand be considered a sophisticated and intellectualized development for the genre, but from another perspective is also a great loss of its own independence, a loss of certain aesthetic characteristics including a redundancy of narration.

With reference to the opposite directions of narrative and slapstick, it has already been argued that the incompatibility may be reconciled through physical movement. Along with its violence and physical inclinations, slapstick can also be understood as a kind of stylization in the narration. At the same time, it is as an elemental de-composition of the narration.

On the stage of *Der Prozess*, except for the large turntable on the stage, what else may impress the audience at first sight? One possible answer may be the faces of the performers. Their faces painted white and with very dark eye lines and eye shadows, which are in sharp contrast to the performers' faces. This might be a reference to clown cosmetics, which function like a mask, indicating a fictional situation on the stage in separation from the common world, therefore creating a distance from the character's portrayal with a realistic background and psychological depth. Clowning involves producing laughter, which arises from a distortion and abjection of reality, and it usually starts with unusual cosmetics and costumes that would not normally appear in daily life. The role of clown, which is not traditionally a major part in the story, effects the plot very little and acts like a supplementary, or even redundant, element. A clown is the outsider in the story, the outsider in the real world, who has lost his personal importance and at the same time has been conferred the privilege of speculating and commenting freely.

In *Der Prozess*, the world onstage corresponds to what is depicted in Kafka's novel, so from the very beginning, the appearance of clown-like performers has already set up an aloof narrative tone in this adaptation. Clowning, in these circumstances, creates a narrative distance from the original novel, whose artistic intension is far from arousing sympathy or expressing opinion.

So, there are two sides to the clowning in *Der Prozess*. One is the "cold" and distant attitude of the original novel; the other is the hilarious, flamboyant and amusing expression of making people laugh. They are not contradictory. Only when the whole atmosphere is made so different from normal life, with the aim of making the audience indifferent to what is abnormal, can the laughter be more effectively produced. It is not a coincidence that most comic effects are related

very closely to humiliation, especially physical humiliation. The significant inclination to adopt humiliation as a way of provoking laughter may be part of one sub-genre of comedy, slapstick.

The term slapstick is said to refer originally to the sound made by clowns using paddles to beat each other. It is now a comic form that is “generally understood as physical humor of a robust and hyperbolized nature where stunts, acrobatics, pain, and violence are standard features.”²⁸⁵ When we examine the broad genre of comedy, insult, humiliation and pain appear frequently in different forms; and particularly in the case of slapstick, the most distinguishing feature is the physical violence aimed particularly at producing visual effects. When directly presented or even emphasized on the stage, physical violence might produce the quickest and strongest effect in the audience, but it can also cause disgust and repulsion, although this rarely happens on the stage in physical comedy, such as clowning and slapstick. A possible explanation lies in the non-narrative structure of slapstick. Originally slapstick was presented as entertainment for the audience in the opening or intermission, and was separated from the main part of the performance and isolated from continuity of plot and character. The logic of the story had no importance here, and, as has been discussed in such detail above, the logic of bodily movement is what really matters. Slapstick is always about movement, about back and forth in pure physical action. Within, this superficial image of body affects the reaction of the audience, rather than the psychological situation of the character. What the audience sees is not, actually, living flesh with feelings that can be shared, but just material being manipulated. Slapstick performers, like clowns, undergo a de-vitalizing transformation, which calls for, and naturally results in, a non-sympathetic resonance, and therefore a kind of laughter that is basically without guilt can be produced.

²⁸⁵ Andrew Stott. *Comedy*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Keaton's films, however, as is typical of Hollywood comic silent films, did involve a narrative structure, although he inherited this extensively from folk slapstick. A more widely accepted definition of comedy, which refers to a story with a happy ending, could also be adopted for this popular cinematic genre. Having an ending means that a story is complete, an entire narrative structure that accords with social norms, with no obvious intention to provoke sympathy. However, comedy also has an inclination towards digression from classical narration, even in the golden ages of silent film, which it is not difficult to discover in the works of Charles Chaplin and Fritz Lang, as well as in Buster Keaton's.

Buster Keaton's personal reputation as a comedian was built mostly from his distinctive expression of deadpan humor, as his nickname "great stone face" has already suggested. Within the framework of a well-constructed story, Keaton, in his films, appears rather stoical towards what happens to him, even things that might appear quite unfortunate or dangerous. He reacts to his situation and tries to resolve it, of course, but appears quite aloof and indifferent in most of his attitudes. Keaton's humor makes the narrative tone cold, distant and stylized, and at the same time the whole narrative structure remains untouched. Classical narration and physical comedy function together in Buster Keaton's work, genially creating an easily understandable story without compelling the audience to empathize.

Rather like Buster Keaton, who stands aside as if an outsider in his own misfortunes in the story, Franz Kafka writes of his deep feelings of shame and humiliation in a distant or even humorous tone. *Metamorphosis* or deformation, generally recognized as one of the most frequently adapted motifs in Kafka's works, is actually an incarnation of humiliation, both physical and emotional. Animal-like human images and behaviors, a gloomy atmosphere and unreasonable incidents, all contribute to shape a grotesque world, which is sometimes described as "kafkasque".

We may find many autobiographical connections to explain Kafka's description, but in talking of narration, an abnormal world stands directly opposed to emotional involvement and blunts the senses towards violence and humiliation. Sympathy is substituted for an objective or even cold attitude. It is not strange that clowns and slapstick performers provoke laughter by conscious isolation from universal human feelings of sympathy with the help of a whole variety of means. The mechanism related to narrative tone, physical expression and comic effect in combination is nothing new, but it has been developed into something fairly mature in the history of comic-oriented performances, and this is exactly what we find again in Buster Keaton's films and Franz Kafka's narrative works, as well as in Andreas Kriegenburg's adaptation.

The so-called "kafkaesque"²⁸⁶ atmosphere describes a surreal world depicted with a tone of estrangement, which creates a sort of mixed and ambiguous comic effect. Kafka's indifferent attitude is strongly embodied by his treatment of the human image. Identical to the protagonist in Buster Keaton's film, Kafka's Josef K., along with other similar principals, finds himself falling into an uncontrollable circumstance, and will make his best efforts to get out of his miseries, and in this process he shows a definite positive attitude and unshakeable determination. But this has nothing in common with the struggle of a tragic hero. Any tone of dignity is far from Kafka's narration, and he has removed the solid base for sublimation, rather than caricature and abstraction. Perhaps more like a variation on Sisyphus, who has lost the possibility of climbing but is chased by a malicious nature and can only wander around an inescapable plain. A picture like this is beyond reality, but Kafka portrays this picture in a calm and normal way, which in fact makes the whole atmosphere more grotesque.

²⁸⁶ See "Kafkaesk" in *Kafka-Handbuch: in zwei Bänder / 2. Das Werk und seine Wirkung*, edited by Hartmut Binder, Stuttgart: Kröner, 1979, pp. 881–888.

However, that comic effect produced in Kafka's work, is still far from the simple and pure joyfulness of slapstick, but instills more of a sense of ambiguity. The reader or audience cannot simply laugh with ease and will instead react uncertainly. In short, Kafka's distanced narrative tone makes possible a comic effect by breaking up an empathetic environment, but his grotesque depiction, almost conversely, is very distant from a purely comic genre, so the comic effect has already been defamiliarized and distanced. Such a mixture of results also appeared in some of Buster Keaton's films, but this functions in completely the opposite way. Keaton's narrative structure owes more to traditional slapstick, and as a consequence his work produces more experiences other than an effect of hilarity. Keaton's roles always portray members of lower classes in situations that are normally unlucky and involve struggles for survival and love. Such considerations, normally and logically, may move easily to other emotional responses, as well as pure laughter. In addition, Keaton himself is a small man, so his size gives an impression of weakness and vulnerability, which might increase feelings of sympathy. As Franz Kafka moderates sympathy with his narrative tone, Buster Keaton also strengthens it with narration; both of them realize success in part by maintaining a comic effect.

With regard to Andreas Krigenburg's theatrical adaptation, an ambiguous approach can also be perceived. As has been mentioned above, this adaptive work is framed within the narrative chronology of the novel and relativizes the original text through different methods, which is actually not rare on the contemporary German stage. Physical comedy and its visual impression, as methods that construct the new narration, have also been discussed, and with their origin in slapstick and affinity with Buster Keaton's films, physical elements may on the one hand be used as narrative tools, and on the other also be a source of comic effect. The importance of the comic, or more specifically, of ambiguous comic feeling, no matter whether for the sake of enriching

theatrical narration or following the original atmosphere of the novel, is never neglected in this adaptation.

What director Kriegenburg first sets before the eyes of the audience, as explained before, is the faces and costumes of performers bearing the expressions of clowns, which suggests the basic narrative tone of the production. Physical expressions, such as the way they function in slapstick, involve the construction of a cold comic style; furthermore, as I have already suggested, they play a functional role in the whole narration rather than being a pure supplement.

In one scene in *Der Prozess*, a female performer stands still on a long cloth, then circles and moves round while other male performers slowly draw the cloth under her feet (Figure 9); the whole picture resembles an open music box — in fact, background music at the time is also the common melody from a music box — and in terms of visual effect, the physical presentation of this female performer is quite close to that of a puppet usually fixed on it. Such puppet-like physical expression is not rare in the performance, which along with other mechanical movements, form together a grotesque and surreal aesthetic. As an imitation of the human image, puppets, on the level of symbol and metaphor, can be understood to establish an unrealistic narrative tone with just a superficial verisimilitude. Clowns could be seen as puppets, a tool to deliver physical expression aiming to make people laugh; so can a slapstick performer. And in a kafkaesque world, the characteristic portrayal has already lost the depth that is taken by caricature and abstraction; if there were a physical language into which Kafka's depiction could be "translated", puppet-like and mechanical body movement would be a very appropriate choice



Figure 9. A female performer in *Der Prozess* adaptation. Source: Screenshot.

7.5. Conclusion

During his lifetime, Franz Kafka never wrote any dramatic text or participated in any theatrical activities, except that there is evidence showing that he had acquaintances with artists of a Yiddish ensemble in Prague.²⁸⁷ It may be a great loss that he did not write for stage. After all, the scenic quality shown in his novels and short stories is quite extraordinary. Fortunately, today the boundary between genres has become in some ways irrelevant, and the great theatrical potential buried in Franz Kafka's work might provide a perfect match for contemporary narrative theater. Franz Kafka's narration in, for example, *Der Prozess*, contains in general a tone of distant objectivism, a world with abstract but also detailed depictions, an atmosphere mixing humor and the somber, and in concrete terms, the highly metaphorical scenes are constructed by powerful and plentiful physical movements, and dialogues are always very logically organized in unreasonable situations. All these ambiguous and paradoxical effects coexist in the novel itself.

Andreas Kriegenburg's adaptation finds a contemporary means of expression in an outstanding theatrical production and at the same time achieves a great "fidelity" to the original novel. Although the question of fidelity is no longer considered decisive for the valuation of a theatrical adaptation, to know and to discover original work is in any case inspiring for the creative process and leaves strong traces on the stage presentation, and Kriegenburg's version, because it is realized through the post-dramatic approach, rids itself of the shackles of text, and shows a way into Kafka's world. The stage design and performance style, as argued above, act in the same way as the general epic tendency and common expressions of narrativized technique, which share much with the contemporary post-dramatic aesthetic.

²⁸⁷ In 1911 Franz Kafka met Yiddish actor Jizchak Löwy, who was in Prague at that time and introduced Yiddish theater and culture to Kafka. It is said that Löwy and his Yiddish ensemble had great influence on Kafka's mind and this was eventually reflected in his work, for example the gloomy humor in a Yiddish folk play and animal-like descriptions and stage presentations.

Although based on the post-dramatic aesthetic, this adaptation of *Der Prozess* still, to an extent, “completes” its narration through a comic-like expression. Inclining far more to physical comedy, especially to slapstick and Buster Keaton’s unique variation, the performance presents a highly stylized narration, rather than a simple copy of the scenes that the novel depicts. Visually and structurally, this adaptive version parallels the grotesque atmosphere that the novel also provides.

Chapter 8. Staging Dostojewskij's *Der Idiot*. A Comparative Study: Matthias Hartmann (2016) and Frank Castorf (2002)

Fjodor Dostojewskij²⁸⁸ is nowadays one of the most beloved foreign writers on the German stage.²⁸⁹ Most of his important works, which are also masterpieces of world literature, have been brought to the stage more than once, including *Erniedrigte und Beleidigte* (*Humiliated and Insulted*), *Schuld und Sühne* (sometimes translated as *Verbrechen und Strafe*; in English *Crime and Punishment*), *Die Dämonen* (*Demons, The Devils or The Possessed*), *Die Brüder Karamasow* (*The Brothers Karamazov*) as well as *Der Idiot* (*The Idiot*), and several famous novellas, such as *Der Spieler* (*The Gambler*) and *Die Wirtin* (*The Landlady*). As with the two writers discussed above, Dostojewskij’s works have had a prominent role in contemporary novel adaptation, considering their astonishing quantity and quality; besides, the large numbers of Dostojewskij

²⁸⁸ In English, Fyodor Dostoyevsky; all Russian names in this chapter will be written using the German spelling, in order to provide a correspondence with the written and performative German texts which will be discussed.

²⁸⁹ An article “Schuld und Bühne” about Dostojewski adaptation in *Theater Heute* (03.2016) by Peter Michalzik has called German theater as “vom Dostojewski-begeisterten deutschen Theater” (pp. 22-24). See also Bernhard Doppler’s conclusion in the newspaper *Der Standard* (17.01.2016) : “Inzwischen gehört er in Deutschland zu den meistgespielten Theaterautoren: Fjodor Michailowitsch Dostojewski. Adaptionen seiner umfangreichen Romane für die Bühne haben in dieser Spielzeit bereits die Dramen von Henrik Ibsen und Anton Tschechow überholt.”

adaptations naturally present multiple approaches, which provide very useful cases to consider the different narrative constructions in the adaptation.

When speaking of the theatrical adaptation of Dostojewskij's work in Germany, Frank Castorf is unavoidable. One of the most distinguished and influential directors on the contemporary stage, and also the forerunner of the current tide of novel adaptations, he presented *Die Dämonen* in 1999. During his long period of leading Volksbühne Berlin, Castorf has directed every work mentioned above, and this includes almost all of Dostojewskij's principle achievements. But his adaptive work can hardly be seen as representative of the common approach in adaptation, and academic explorations of Frank Castorf's productions actually focus more on his revolutionary theatrical aesthetics in general.²⁹⁰ Nevertheless, it is exactly because of his unique theatrical aesthetic and the massive scale of his adaptations of Dostojewskij, that his exemplary influence has been shown in later Dostojewskij-adaptations and his name is so often mentioned by many critics of later adaptive works.²⁹¹ In respect of his pioneering and influential position, Castorf's Dostojewskij adaptations are always taken as comparative cases to shed light on other works.

²⁹⁰ See Castorf's own declaration in "Nicht Realismus, sondern Realität: Frank Castorf spricht über seine Arbeit" from *Politik und Verbrechen: Einbruch der Realität*, edited by Carl Hegemann, Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2002, pp. 71–79. See also "Wege durch die Vierte Wand: Momente der Reflexivität. Ein Gespräch mit Ulrich Matthes (Schauspieler) und Jan Speckenbach (Videokünstler und VJ in Inszenierung von Frank Castorf)" in *Wege der Wahrnehmung: Authentizität, Reflexivität und Aufmerksamkeit im zeitgenössischen Theater*, edited by Erika Fischer-Lichte, Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2006, pp. 72–85. Erika Fischer-Lichte also talks about Castorf's mediated expression on the stage in "Reality and Fiction in Contemporary Theatre" in the journal *Theatre Research International*, Vol. 33, 01 March 2008, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 84–96.

²⁹¹ See also the report in *Theater Heute* (06.2016) about an adaptation of *Die Brüder Karamasow* from Martin Laberenz in Schauspiel Hannover: "...der (Laberenz) mit den *Brüder Karamasow* bereits seinen fünften Dostojewski auf die Bühne bringt und damit tollkühn in Castorfs Fußstapfen tritt, inszeniert eine gesplante Welt: auf der Drehbühne kreist ein Tribühnengestell, das selbst an ein Theater erinnert und in russischen Buchstaben mit CITY, Stadt, beschriftet ist; in der Verlängerung der Rampe hat Bühnenbilder Volker Hintermeier das gewaltige Kruzifix mit Jesus und Neon-Halo sowie einen Altar mit Kerzen untergebracht... diesen Riss durch Dostojewskis und vielleicht ja auch unsere Welt spiegeln die Kosten von Aino Laberenz mit ihrem Mix aus historisch-folkloristischem Zitat und Gegenwart." (p. 60)

In the case of *Der Idiot*, besides Castorf's work, there have been at least three versions since 2000, including Karin Henkel's adaptation in Cologne in 2012 and Stephan Kimmig's version in Frankfurt in 2013, the latest of these was premiered in Staatsschauspielhaus Dresden in January 2016, and was directed by Matthias Hartmann, the former Intendant at the Burgtheater in Vienna. Although it is common to find comparisons of the adaptations of *Der Idiot* by both Hartmann and Castorf in reviews of Matthias Hartmann's version, it is still, in every sense — whether from the perspective of general artistic principle, or that of inner structure, or media expression — far from Castorf's version in Volksbühne Berlin in 2002. It would not be excessive to describe both productions as standing at the two ends of an aesthetic "axis".

8.1. Dramatic Approach: Matthias Hartmann's *Der Idiot* in 2016

The general approach of the Hamburg *Buddenbrooks* adaptation, as discussed in detail in a previous chapter, was to condense the original grand narration into a centralized dramatic structure, which was constructed from the conflicts between major characters and normally expressed through dialogues. It is obvious that the traditional methods of conflict tension and character depiction still occupy the center of this type of narrative theater; meanwhile, epic methods also exist within the dramatic structure; for instance the characters can freely step in and out of the present narration. As a widely accepted contemporary aesthetic, epic techniques on the stage nowadays will barely produce a confusing or shocking effect and cannot be seen as an avant-garde trend, but actually function as a normal discourse in the narrative theater.²⁹²

²⁹² See discussion on epic tendency in the chapter on *Episierung*. Many academic works have discussed or mentioned the generality of epic expression in contemporary theater. Here are some recent examples: in

Another important feature of the Hamburg adaptation is that the stage script takes much advantage from the strong scenic inclination of Thomas Mann's novel; it is not a coincidence that there is an even more significant similar attempt in the adaptation of *Der Prozess*, as discussed in the previous chapter, and Kriegenburg's version presents stage images in parallel with the novel in a symbolic sense. Moreover, this adaptation formulates a certain kind of physical comic form which is closely related to the ironic and distant narrative tone of the original novel.²⁹³ A brief conclusion on the above cases can be reached: on a very basic level, adaptation replaces literary narrative techniques with scenic and visual methods, and during the adaptive process, the original narrative discourse and narrated themes still exist on the stage with different forms.

Nevertheless, it might still be too difficult to summarize a common pattern for contemporary novel adaptation, considering the specificity of each novel, and diverse attitudes towards texts and certain adaptive approaches based on different aesthetics. Nevertheless, if only in the specific case of the subject of narrative construction, it will be possible to find more similarities, or routines, and therefore it will also be more straightforward to establish the specific features of each adaptation. Matthias Hartmann's *Der Idiot*, in the first place, shares approaches that have been discussed in detail in former chapters, and also shows its own narrative choices which are based on specific artistic intentions and the original characteristics of the novel.

Studien zur Ästhetik des Gegenwartstheaters (edited by Christian W. Thomsen, Heidelberg 1985, p. 47) and Hanna Klessinger's *Postdramatik* (Berlin 2015, p. 11), both argue that Episierung, as a modern narrative method of subjectivity, goes forward along with post-dramatic theater; and Klessinger emphasizes in specific that "Episierung meint hier Narrativierung...indem Dialog und dramatischer Konflikt (zwischen den Instanzen des Textes und der Aufführung) ein grundlegendes Merkmal..." (p. 10).

²⁹³ See Chapter 7 about *Der Prozess* directed by Andreas Kriegenburg.

8.1.1. Transformation to a Dramatic Structure

As with almost every novel adaptation, Hartmann's first step in his version of *Der Idiot* is to make a large-scale text reduction of the original novel, which is more than 900 pages long in its German translation.²⁹⁴ But in comparison with the Hamburg version of *Buddenbrooks*, Hartmann's adaptation preserves more scenes onstage and follows the linear sequence of events which are almost totally identical to those of Dostojewskij's novel; the reason for this may be that *Der Idiot* has a longer duration (almost four hours; *Buddenbrooks* is only two and a half), which is more practical for the presentation of the original expanse of the novel, and the different arrangements also refer to the specific structure of each novel: *Buddenbrooks* depicts the stories of several generations over a long period, yet *Der Idiot* has a concentrated dramatic core. Matthias Hartmann takes this dramatic structure as a basic form for his adaptation, so in the sense of narrative sequence (the level of *fabula* or story),²⁹⁵ this follows the original novel very tightly.

Classical drama theory tends to divide the structure of drama (or the story/plot level for a narrative)²⁹⁶ into several stages, which reflects the tight and centripetal inclination of traditional drama genre, especially when compared to the episodic and relatively loose interrelated nature of a novel. However, the exposition of Dostojewskij's *Der Idiot* seems to be rather close to the principles of classical tragedy, which are based on causality and rationality, and it is therefore constructed as an accumulating and strengthening process that inevitably goes on to the last

²⁹⁴ German translation of *Der Idiot* in this chapter refers to the version by Swetlana Geier, Fischer Verlag, Auflage 5, 2009.

²⁹⁵ See the discussion about Genette's theory in Chapter Five, "Narrative Theory".

²⁹⁶ See the discussion referring to the narrative concept in Chapter Five, "Narrative Theory".

catastrophe.²⁹⁷ At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist Fürst (Prince) Myschkin takes a train back to St. Petersburg from Switzerland; on this journey, he makes acquaintance with another major figure, the millionaire Parfjon Rogoschin, and through their conversation, Myschkin is informed for the first time of the famous beauty Nastassja Filippowna, whom Rogoschin is pursuing. After arriving, Fürst Myschkin, who has no money and no lodging, goes to visit his distant relative Lisaweta Jepantschina, the wife of General Jepantschin; during this visit, Myschkin arranges to settle at the family of Ganja Iwolgin, the secretary of General Jepantschin and also the possible fiancé of Nastassja Filippowna. Furthermore, during this first visit, Myschkin meets the entire family in the house of Jepantschin, in particular another important female figure, the general's youngest daughter Aglaja, and he even immediately becomes involved in the complex relations between Aglaja, Ganja and Nastassja Filippowna. Afterwards, following the perspective of Myschkin, the space of events shifts to the house of Ganja Iwolgin, and here a conflict is about to burst between the family members over Ganja's possible marriage with Nastassja; at the same time Nastassja steps in, and then a group of people arrives with Rogoschin. In these fast-developing scenes, Dostojewskij introduces almost all his major figures, as well as their characteristics and relationships, and most importantly, the central conflict over Nastassja's marriage, which will push the story to a climax in the scene of Nastassja's birthday party, in which Nastassja throws one

²⁹⁷ The concept of tragic or dramatic underlies the classical dramaturgy of tragedy, and the philosophical exploration of tragical structure may be traced back to Hegel's aesthetic theory. Hans-Thies Lehmann in his book *Tragödie und dramatisches Theater* understands the Hegelian tragic theory as "Konfliktmodell": "Das Tragische gilt als Qualifizierung einer bestimmten Art von Konflikten" (p. 84) and "die Konzentration auf die Handlung als das konstitutive Element des Tragischen als Konfliktstruktur wurde Allgemeingut. Die klassische Gestalt der Konflikttheorie finden wir bei Hegel, dessen Begriff der Handlung daher hier genauer erläutert werden soll—ist doch die Prävalenz des Handlungsbegriffs eines der problematischsten Erbstücke der tradierten hegelianisierenden Auffassung des Tragischen." (p. 91) In short, both the tragic/dramatic concept and classical plot/character-centered theory are in accordance with the rational ideology, whereupon it develops detailed dramaturgical a theory to direct or regulate the construction of tragedy in European drama history from Renaissance until about nineteenth century.

million roubles into the fire and finally leaves with Rogoschin. At this point, the most dramatic event of the novel so far is presented, as Fürst Myschkin tells Ganja prophetically at the very beginning of this tragedy that “heiraten würde er (Rogoschin) sie (Nastassja), denke ich, am liebsten gleich morgen; er würde sie heiraten, aber eine Woche später ihr die Kehle durchschneiden.”²⁹⁸ In conclusion, the beginning, development and end of this rather dramatic event, which occupies more than a quarter of the novel, happens in just one day of narrated time.

Dostojewskij’s novel actually presents a fairly spectacular and shocking opening scene, yet in the later three parts of *Der Idiot*, he slows down the narrative rhythm and turns to a more episodic narration that covers a wider range of time, space and psychological depth of character. But in Matthias Hartmann’s adaptation, dramatic structure dominates the whole performance, and this concentrates almost entirely on the opening dramatic scene in the novel. The climactic scene of Nastassja burning the banknotes in her birthday party (Figure 10), which marks the end of the first part of the original novel,

Figure 10. Scene of Nastassja’s birthday party in the Dresden adaptation of *Der Idiot*, 2016.

²⁹⁸ *Der Idiot. Fassung für die Inszenierung von Matthias Hartmann am Staatsschauspiel Dresden nach der Übersetzung von S. Geier*, p. 36.



is performed just before the second intermission,²⁹⁹ which means that in a production with a duration of about four hours, there is only less than one hour left for the remaining three quarters of the novel. In terms of the entire narration, although truly significant and impressive, the drama over the competition for Nastassja can never be seen as the only concentration in the novel, yet

²⁹⁹ According to the stage script, there are altogether 29 scenes and 2 intermissions. The first intermission begins after scene 12 and the second one scene 18, which is the “Geldverbrennung” scene of Nastassja. List of all scenes:

1. Der epileptische Anfall; 2. Tozkij und der Deal; 3. Die Zugfahrt; 4. Der Haus Jepantschin; 5. Diener-Szene; 6. Schriftprobe und Porträt Nastassja; 7. Salon-Szene / Eselgeschichte; 8. Gang zum Schaffott / Gespräch über Glück / Marie-Erzählung; 9. Ganja gibt dem Fürsten einen Brief; 10. Ganjas Brief an Aglaja; 11. Zurück im Salon Jepantschin; 12. Straßenszene / Auf dem Weg zu Iwolgins. (1. Pause)
13. Das Hause Iwolgin; 14. Nastassja bei den Iwolgins / Bologneserhündchen; 15. Auftritt Gruppe Rogoschin; 16. Grüner Junge Monolog; 16a. petit chevalier; 17. Nastassja Filippownas Geburtstag; 18. Geldverbrennung. (2. Pause)
19. Was inzwischen geschah; 20. Rogoschins Hause; 21. Mordszene; 22. Sommerfrische; 23. Das Verhör mit der Generalin Jepantschina; 24. Parkbank-Szene; 25. Quartett; 26. Solo-Wahn; 27. Nastassja Filippownas Hochzeit; 28. Die zwei Männer mit der toten Braut; 29. Myschkin-Epilog.

obviously this plot section achieves much greater importance in Hartmann's adaptation. From the perspective of scenic presentation, it is understandable that Hartmann would choose to focus on one of Dostojewskij's most famous and dramatic scenes. There is indeed much advantage in its reception, even if it proves to be rather sluggish afterwards: almost all critics have mentioned the dominant dramatic structure in the adaptation of Hartmann, and some of them notice that, "die Aufführung verliert nach der zweiten Pause an Tempo und Intensität"³⁰⁰ — this is exact by the point in time at which Nastassja's drama has happened.

A condensed dramatic structure, of course, might be better for scenic construction and easier for most audiences to comprehend, and some critics even point out that it is "unterhaltsam" and close to a "Operetta."³⁰¹ Speculating on this adaptive approach, the certain choice of text does provide a clear attitude towards the original novel, which in a wider spectrum mirrors a general approach to contemporary novel adaptation. What disappears along with most of the novel is the panorama of social life in St. Petersburg; the basic motivation of this story is actually about class and capital, as one character Ganja Iwolgin says, "Habe ich erst Geld, dann werde ich ein im höchsten Grade origineller Mensch sein."³⁰² His values are shared by most figures in the novel, which makes the whole story culturally imaginable. A similar approach can also be found in the Hamburg adaptation of *Buddenbrooks*, and although the writer John von Düffel and the director Stephan Kimmig have both emphasized class and capital as major themes in Thomas Mann's work, the concrete historical and social background is still vague on the stage, except when it is expressed with reference to a character's speeches. Without doubt, considerations of the practical limitations

³⁰⁰ Rainer Kasselt. "Der gute Mensch von Sankt Petersburg" in *Sächsischen Zeitung*, 18.01.2016.

³⁰¹ See Wieland Schwanebeck's "Narr unter Narren" in *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 18. Jan. 2016; Bernhard Doppler's "Der Idiot: Sarkastische Seifenoperette" in *Der Standard*, 17. Jan. 2016; and Peter Laudenbach's "Er ist wieder da" in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17. Jan. 2016.

³⁰² *Der Idiot. Fassung für die Inszenierung von Matthias Hartmann am Staatsschauspiel Dresden nach der Übersetzung von S. Geier*, p. 72.

of stage are not marginal, and when compared with film adaptation according to the same literary material, the normal approach shows a greater focus on historical setting. But the decisive element is still located in aesthetic intention; specifically, it is the dramatic structure, which the whole adaptation revolves around, that makes other text material irrelevant, or at least less important. The Dresden adaptation takes the scene of conflict, which is already quite mature in the original text, as explained above, as the principle narrative center of the whole performance, which is similar to the former case: the Hamburg version of *Buddenbrooks* concentrates on the major figures and the conflicts between them, and this is also a simplified process in genre transformation from novel to drama, or to “purification” of the grand and episodic material into a well-organized dramatic structure.

There will be gains and losses in this process, and specifically in *Der Idiot*, such a straightforward exposition also faces a danger of presenting just a summary of the plot. More regretfully, the image of Myschkin appears to have lost most of his particularity as an extraordinary figure in Dostojewskij’s work and also in world literature, which does inevitably make this theatrical interpretation too superficial. The question of the image of Myschkin will be discussed in a later part, and now it will be better to continue to consider the dramatic structure of Hartmann’s version. It might, at least, not be satisfactory to stick to the classical dramatic structure when adapting *Der Idiot*, and Hartmann does actually incline towards applying several epic narrative methods and integrates them within the main dramatic structure, in which a renewed narrative situation is established.

8.1.2. *Episierung* within the dramatic structure

The dramaturg Janine Ortiz has stated that Matthias Hartmann works directly with the novel rather than with stage script in rehearsals of *Der Idiot*; and the director explains that he is interested more in the “telling” and “narrating” side of a performance: “Erzählen ist älter als Spielen”, he says, when he traces back “die vielleicht archaischste Form von Theater”, and we might assume an image of an oral storytelling performed around a bonfire. Hartmann’s basic adaptive method is exactly and literally “to tell”. In fact the narrating and performing are presented as “telling” very frequently in this adaptation. Many critics in the media have already pointed out that there is still a strong epic tendency, even when it is limited by such a tightly organized dramatic form, and this is exactly Hartmann’s emphasis in the narrative: “Im epischen Duktus zu erzählen, wirkt komischerweise authentischer, als eine Situation zu spielen...Ich schätze diese Form der Kommunikation, denn sie spricht den Zuseher direkt an, er fühlt sich gemeint...Natürlich ist die Inszenierung ein Hybrid, wir springen immer wieder in die wörtliche Rede und ins szenische Spiel; aber es soll niemand verwirrt werden, man muss von Anfang an klar machen, dass der Grundduktus ‚Erzählen‘ ist.”³⁰³ Indeed, common epic techniques like extra-diegetic narrators and shifts of focalization are quite apparent in this adaptation.

The Dresden version of *Der Idiot* begins and ends with two monologues from Myschkin, or the performer as Myschkin: in the prologue the performer explains “der epileptische Anfall” of Myschkin, and in epilogue he narrates the final situation of Myschkin; both are objective depictions from an objective narrator, except for his presentation in a first-person voice. Such indirect voices, which function as a report or comment, are the most frequently appearing speeches in the many pseudo-dialogical situations in *Der Idiot*. As well as the performer of Myschkin

³⁰³ [Program] “Wie ein Schneeball im Feuer. Regisseur Matthias Hartmann im Gespräch mit Janine Ortiz” in *Der Idiot nach dem Roman von Fjodor M. Dostojewskij*, Dresden: Staatsschauspiel Dresden, 2016, pp. 25–26.

speaking of the situation of his role in the prologue and epilogue, there are countless self-referential speeches also given by different figures and in most cases, they directly refer to their own names. Tozkij introduces himself like a comedian standing before his audience: “Afanassij Iwanowitsch Tozkij, ein Mann von Welt, mit besten Konnexionen und außerordentlichem Vermögen kam auf einen alten Wunsch zurück — nämlich zu heiraten.”³⁰⁴; the performer of Nastassja (not just the figure) expresses herself as this character and also as a narrator in one reply in a dialogical speech:

“...Dass sie aber gekommen sei, um ihm diese Ehe zu untersagen, rein aus Bosheit, nur weil sie es wolle, und dass es, folglich, zu geschehen habe, und wenn auch nur, um mich nach Herzenslust über dich zu amüsieren, weil jetzt auch ich mich endlich einmal amüsieren möchte.’ Da ihr nicht mehr teuer war, und sie sich selbst am wenigsten, war Nastassja Filippowna imstande, sich selbst zugrunde zu richten...”³⁰⁵

As has been said before, speeches, such as depictions, introductions, reports, comments and so on, which are originally quoted from the non-characteristic narration of an auctorial narrator (not necessarily Dostojewskij himself), are often expressed by a referenced figure herself/himself and frequently use the figure’s name as an obvious indicator. Yet, the act of narrative in this adaptation is presented not as a direct communication with the audience, as with post-dramatic expression in similar situations or performances in the form of stand-up comedy. This specific expression in the Dresden version partly breaks down the wholeness of dialogue, which traditionally dominates the stage, but it does not stand outside this very dramatic situation. In other

³⁰⁴ *Der Idiot. Fassung für die Inszenierung von Matthias Hartmann am Staatsschauspiel Dresden nach der Übersetzung von S. Geier*, p. 4.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

words, it is neither a *de facto* communication with the audience nor a conversation between figures, but a supplementary explanation or commentary within a dramatic scene. Just as the omniscient voice often intrudes in a dialogical or multi-logical scene of the novel, the Hartmann version makes each figure play as an omniscient narrator³⁰⁶ in turn, and in most situations, their speeches refer to themselves. Matthias Hartmann finds a way to integrate the epic/narrative/diegetic speech into a dramatic structure and makes the dialogue epic rather than characteristic.

“Das Geschenk beim Theater ist, dass sich Menschen in einem Saal versammeln, die durch den schönen Schein getäuscht werden *wollen*. Wir haben den Realismusanspruch des Films gar nicht nötig, der zusammenbricht, sobald man einen kleinen Fehler entdeckt. Auf der Bühne ist die Grundbehauptung ohnehin: ich spiele für euch.”³⁰⁷ As previously explained, Hartmann chooses to bring the narrative text to the stage in the form of an oral telling situation — of course with the new condition of contemporary aesthetic — but there is still much to be clarified, because “to tell” tells very little about the specific forms and expressions. In the earlier analysis of the performative origin of oral telling, the narrator normally expresses from an outsider’s perspective but is also permitted to get into inner-diegetic or first person narration at any time without making any

³⁰⁶ The narrative tone of the whole novel is presented in a third person voice, that is sometimes even visible. For instance, before the first meeting between Myschkin and family Jephantschin, Dostojewskij writes that “vielleicht nimmt die Eindrücklichkeit unserer Erzählung keinen sonderlichen Schaden, wenn wir an dieser Stelle unterbrechen und einige Erläuterungen einfügen, um diejenigen Beziehungen und Umstände klar und deutlich darzulegen, in denen wir die Familie des Generals Jepantschin zu Beginn unserer Geschichte antreffen.” (*Der Idiot*, translated by Swetlana Geier, Frankfurt am Main 2009, p. 56) About the relevant academic studies about narrator in Dostojewskij’s work, see Sarah J. Young’s *Dostojewsky’s The Idiot and the Ethical Foundation of Narrative: Reading, Narrating, Scripting*, the writer argues about the relations between narrator’s role, point of view and the whole narration (conclusion in pp. 183–184, London: Anthem Press, 2004.); see also in Rudolf Neuhäuser’s *Fjodor M. Dostojewskij. Leben - Werk - Wirkung*, in which the discussion is expanded to speculation on the writer and narrator and argues about the multiple functions of Dostojewskij’s narrator (pp.131–143, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2013).

³⁰⁷ [Program] “Wie ein Schneeball im Feuer. Regisseur Matthias Hartmann im Gespräch mit Janine Ortiz” in *Der Idiot nach dem Roman von Fjodor M. Dostojewskij*, p. 26.

specific announcement. Furthermore, the free shifts of narrative perspective also lead to a rather grand scale of time and space.³⁰⁸ As has been argued, oral telling develops with performative expression and is also at the root of the epic tradition. Matthias Hartmann's choice of text transformation, as shown by quotes from his interview, is actually an attempt to construct a similar situation, in which the features of epic expression may be performed alongside dramatic events.

To illustrate how oral telling techniques influence the dialogical situation, one of the most explicit examples may be the first encounter of Myschkin and Rogoschin on the train to St. Petersburg, along with another minor figure, Lebedjew; it is also necessary to mention that Nastassja Filippowna is in this scene as well, even though she does not actually share the fictional space with other performers on the stage. Firstly Myschkin, Rogoschin and other passengers have to crowd within a narrow space in the corner of the stage — in Johannes Schütz's design, the whole stage is divided into several long and narrow rectangular spaces with moving walls, and when all those walls are pulled back, the stage becomes wide and empty. In this scene, the center of the stage has been emptied out and only the side wall is pulled to the front, so all the performers have to make conversation in this narrow space with almost no possibility of movement. Because of the live acoustic effects, the audience will know that this scene refers to a running train. The major figure, Fürst Myschkin, although he has already entered in the prologue scene, makes his first real appearance as a dramatic figure. In the novel, the narrator introduces Myschkin both from an omniscient perspective and also before the eyes of others; in the performance, free transformation of narrative perspectives has been kept within a dialogical situation, which means other performers are simultaneously expressing their observations of Myschkin, although these descriptions are actually their inner speeches in the novel; at the same time, the sound of the trains is heard

³⁰⁸ See the former discussion about "oral telling" in 5.3.2. "Narrative as Performance".

alongside this narrative and the dialogical scene, which marks an inner-diegetic mode even with an isolated voice:

...ding...dong...

PL³⁰⁹ (Lebedjew) Sein Gegenüber war in einen ziemlich weiten, ärmellosen und dicken Mantel mit riesiger Kapuze gehüllt, wie sie oft von Reisenden im Winter getragen werden, irgendwo im fernen Ausland, in der Schweiz zum Beispiel oder in Norditalien.

.....

CE (Rogoschin) Seine Augen waren groß, blau und aufmerksam; ihr Blick war sanft, aber auch schwer.

PL (Lebedjew) mit jenem merkwürdigen Ausdruck, an dem manche Menschen sofort den Epileptiker erkennen.³¹⁰

And then the actor of Rogoschin turns to speak as Rogoschin:

CE (Rogoschin) „Kalt?“

AK (Myschkin) „Sehr. Ich hatte vergessen, dass es bei uns so kalt ist.“

CE (Rogoschin) „Sie kommen aus dem Ausland?“

AK (Myschkin) „Ja, aus der Schweiz.“³¹¹

³⁰⁹ In the stage script, the character's name is marked with performer's name.

³¹⁰ *Der Idiot. Fassung für die Inszenierung von Matthias Hartmann am Staatsschauspiel Dresden nach der Übersetzung von S. Geier*, p. 10.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

After a short conversation, there is a return to the narrative speech:

PL (Lebedjew) Die Unterhaltung kam in Gang. Die Bereitwilligkeit des blonden jungen Mannes, auf sämtliche Fragen seines dunklen Nachbarn einzugehen, war erstaunlich und völlig arglos, obwohl manche herablassend, deplatziert und müßig waren. Unter anderem (...*ding...dong...*) ließ sich entnehmen, dass er krankheitshalber über vier Jahre im Ausland gelebt hatte.³¹²

It is obvious that the performer here speaks the role neither as Lebedjew himself nor from the perspective of Lebedjew, but in the voice of an omniscient narrator who is outside this concrete situation. In fact, the performer of Lebedjew will then introduce his own role from a narrative voice, and even though he has entered the stage for a while and already made several replies, there are only a few lines that are speeches in the role of Lebedjew:

PL (Lebedjew) „Wahr und wahrhaftig!“ mischte sich ein Mitreisender ins Gespräch, der neben ihm saß und ein in seinem Amt verkrusteter subalternen Beamter sein mochte, schlecht gekleidet, etwa vierzig Jahre alt, mit roter Nase und einem Gesicht voller Mitesser mit Katzbuckelnder Dienstefrigkeit, unterwürfigem Lächeln und dünner Trinkerstimme. „Wahr und wahrhaftig, die ziehen alle russische Kraft zu sich ins Ausland herüber.“³¹³

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid., p. 12.

Still in this train-scene, which includes multiple expressions of combinations of narrative and dramatic discourses, Rogoschin's recollection of Nastassja Fillipowna, which is originally a long narration in a first-person voice, is performed in a flash-back, in which the performer of Nastassja steps into the center of the stage and speaks with Rogoschin; in fact, their short dialogue has already happened in the past, and she does not exist in this particular time and space, but in Rogoschin's narration.

CE (Rogoschin) „Als ich damals Nastassja Fillipowna aus ihrer Equipage steigen sah, traf's mich wie ein Blitz....Ich trete einfach bei ihr in den Salon ein, sie erscheint. Ich gab ihr das Kästchen, sie machte auf, guckte, lächelte:

YS (Nastassja) „Herr Rogoschin, meinen Dank für diese liebenswürdige Aufmerksamkeit“,

CE (Rogoschin) sagte sie, verneigte sich und ging. Ich wollt', ehrlich, damals sofort ins Wasser gehen statt nach Hause, dacht' aber: „Jetzt is' doch alles egal!' un' ging wie 'n Verdammt heim.³¹⁴

It seems to be better to comprehend this scene as a collective telling rather than a dramatic dialogue. A similar scene is also presented in General Jepantschin's study, in which Myschkin happens to see the portrait of Nastassja during the conversation between the general and Ganja. In the original novel, Myschkin is deeply impressed by the image of Nastassja; on the other hand, in this adaptation, Myschkin and the other two watch an empty wood frame while the real Nastassja appears onstage, although the performer, again, does not speak in the character's voice.

³¹⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

Auftritt Yohanna (Nastassja).

HH (General Jepantschin) Es gab da das allerseltsamste und allerunglaublichste Gerücht, dass sogar General Jepantschin in einem ehrwürdigen Alter, bei seinem ausgezeichneten Verstand Nastassja Filippowna nicht habe widerstehen können.

RE (Ganja Iwolgin) Es war allgemein bekannt, dass der General, mein Mann, Nastassja Filippowna zu ihrem Geburtstag einen Perlenschmuck zugedacht und dafür eine ungeheure Summe ausgegeben hatte, von diesem Geschenk erwartete er sich sehr viel.

YS (Nastassja Filippowna) Übrigens weiß man ja, dass ein Mann, der in übermäßiger Leidenschaft entbrennt, zumal wenn er schon ein gewisses Alter erreicht hat, völlig mit Blindheit geschlagen und bereit ist, auch dort eine Hoffnung zu nähren, wo nicht die geringste zu finden ist; mehr noch, er verliert den Verstand und benimmt sich wie ein törichtes Kind.³¹⁵

.....

AK (Myschkin) „Das ist also Nastassja Filippowna? Sie ist ja unglaublich schön!”

(souffliert den Text an Nastassja Filippowna) es ist das Portrait einer in der Tat ungewöhnlich schönen Frau. Sie hat sich in einem schwarzen Seidenkleid von außerordentlich einfachem und elegantem Schnitt photographieren lassen; das Haar, dem Anschein nach dunkelblond, ist ganz schlicht aufgesteckt; die Augen sind dunkel, tief, die

³¹⁵ Ibid., p. 31.

Stirn nachdenklich: der Ausdruck des Gesichts leidenschaftlich und irgendwie hochmütig.

Es ist ein wenig mager, vielleicht auch blaß...³¹⁶

In the novel, before Nastassja Fillipowna's first entrance, she has always, in fact, been talked about by others, and she has already made a deep impression to readers before she is involved in the actions. Hartmann's treatment may also be seen as a narrative method of foreshadowing, to keep her in the audience's sights.

The juxtaposition of figures in different times and spaces occurs more than once on the stage, for example in the scene of Myschkin delivering Ganja's letter to Aglaja; Ganja's writing, Aglaja's thinking and Myschkin's actions are simultaneously presented in a shared space:

KL (Ganja) Heute wird sich mein Schicksal entscheiden...Sagen Sie mir nur:
Bricht mit allem,

LH (Aglaja) Dieser Mann will mich glauben machen, dass das Wort ‚Brechen Sie
mit allem‘ mich nicht kompromittieren würde.

...

KL (Ganja) Aber auf Ihr Wort hin werde ich meine Armut wieder bejahen und
meine hoffnungslose Lage mit Freunden ertragen.

LH (Aglaja) Er will, dass ich ihm statt Geld die Hoffnung auf mich gebe. Und
was das früher einmal ausgesprochene Wort betrifft, von dem er schreibt, es habe Licht
in sein Leben gebracht, so ist das eine unverschämte Lüge.

...

³¹⁶ Ibid., p. 33.

KL (Ganja) Zürnen Sie nicht dem Mut eines Ertrinkenden bei seinem letzten Versuch, sich vor dem Untergang zu retten.

LH (Aglaja) Aber er ist dreist und schamlos:

KL (Ganja) G.I.

LH (Aglaja) Genug davon: nehmen Sie diesen Brief und geben Sie ihn ihm zurück, wenn sie unser Haus verlassen haben, selbstverständlich. Nicht früher.

AK (Myschkin) „Und was darf ich ihm als Antwort sagen?...“

LH (Aglaja) „Nichts, versteht sich. Das ist die Beste Antwort.“³¹⁷

Besides the narrative speeches inlaid into dialogical scenes, there are still other forms of extra-diegetic expression, especially in the cases of jumps in some plots in the novel or the simple provision of a summary of what has happened (but not been performed). These are normally presented either before or after intermissions. For instance, the last line before the first intermission is said by the figure Ganja: “‘Ich bitte um Entschuldigung, Fürst!’ Sie standen unmittelbar vor Ganjas Haus. Nach der Pause sind wir dann bei mir zu Hause,”³¹⁸ which addresses the audience directly but in the words of the character; and after the intermission, it is still Ganja who opens the second part of this performance, saying that “während der Pause sind wir in den dritten Stock gegangen. Das ist unsere Mietwohnung. Sie besteht aus sechs ooooooder siiiiiieben Zimmmmmmmern.”³¹⁹ He turns the extra-diegesis back to the scene onstage. For the second intermission it takes a little longer to provide a summary, because the adaptation removes many

³¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 50–51.

³¹⁸ Ibid., p. 56.

³¹⁹ Ibid., p. 57.

depictions of events that have happened after Nastassja's elopement with Rogoschin. Still, in the end of the second part, a minor figure (who is the same performer as Aglaja) forecasts "aber was dann geschieht — das erfahren Sie nach einer ganz kurzen Pause von 10 Minuten,"³²⁰ then the figure Aglaja opens the final part by wondering "was während der Pause geschah?"³²¹ Afterwards, several figures come forward together to tell the audience the unperformed events.

Many critics have mentioned the comic quality of Hartmann's adaptation, and their attitudes are actually quite different. The comic effect of this adaptation is for most part seen in the narrative speeches, when a performer is out of character and speaks like an outsider, referring to her/his own situation on the stage, this "known"/"unknown" contrast may give a comic effect to the narrative. A very good example could be found in a scene of Ganja's house. At this moment Nastassja steps in and meets his family; the conversation between Nastassja and Ganja's father, General Iwolgin, functions almost entirely for the sake of provoking laughter:

JM (General Iwolgin) „Ja, ja. Seit der Geschichte mit dem Bologneserhündchen bin ich nicht mehr derselbe.“

YS (Nastassja Fillipowna) „Mit einem Bologneserhündchen? Was für eine Geschichte?“

CB (Warwara Iwolgin) Diese Geschichte ist leider gestrichen.

JM (General Iwolgin) „Wieso wußte ich das nicht? Ich bleibe bis zum Schluss.“

(Textimpro beim Abgang) ³²²

³²⁰ Ibid., p. 87.

³²¹ Ibid., p.88.

³²² Ibid., p.65.

It is this character's last line, obviously, that aims to produce a comic effect through epic treatment in a dramatic scene.³²³ Using the duality of the actor's role, and addressing the audience directly, is a common technique for comedy, and also a feature of epic theater. As the examples above illustrate, Hartmann's adaptation has presented many characteristics of epic theater: "...epische Momente [sind] schon mit den Anfängen des europäischen Theaters in der antiken griechischen Tragödie und Komödie verknüpft: Die mit den einzelnen Szenen (Episoden) abwechselnden Chorpässagen ebenso wie Prolog, Epilog, Botenberichte oder Vorhersagen erweitern den raumzeitlichen Kontext der aufgeführten Handlung, stellen sie in einen größeren Rahmen [...]"³²⁴ Besides, multiple expressions in the narrator's voice can also be found in epic theater: "epic theatre undertakes to rediscover and underscore the intervention of a narrator, i.e. a *point of view* on the *fabula* and the staging."³²⁵ All these narrative methods in epic theater are fundamental to the form and structure of Hartmann's adaptation, which obviously aims to dissolve the boundary between character and narrator, between the performer and her/his fictional figure, and a comic and distant effect also accompanies these epic treatments.

In *Der Idiot*, Dostojewskij's writing style, or the narrator's tone, is basically ironic, and sometimes amusing, even when the story itself is not particularly amusing; on the other hand, the narrator's tone is not necessarily a "tool" or "carrier" for the theme and content of a work, especially in the novels of Dostojewskij, which are famous for their "polyphony", in the

³²³ For discussion of comic and epic theater, see Helmut Arntzen's "Komödie und episches Theater (1969/71)" in *Wesen und Formen des komischen in Drama*, edited by Reinhold Grimm and Klaus L. Berghahn. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975, pp. 471–456.

³²⁴ Patrick Primavesi. "Episches Theater" in *Metzler Lexikon Theatertheorie*, edited by Erika Fischer-Lichte, Doris Kolesch and Matthais Warstat. Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2005, p. 90.

³²⁵ Patrice Pavis. "Epic Theatre" in *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, translated by Christine Shantz, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998, p. 129.

terminology of Bakhtin. Hartmann's treatment emphasizes the role of the narrator more than other narrative characteristics in Dostojewskij's novel, and through the techniques of epic theater, along with Johannes Schütz's abstract and simplistic stage design, the adaptation is presented as narrative theater with a distant and comic effect. But as the novel is more than a narrative voice, the staging of epic theater also aims to answer for the actual and social, especially political, problems with the help of the greater capacity of epic genre; so, from this perspective, Hartmann's epic treatment has only preserved the narrative technique and laughter. In fact, criticism of this adaptation focuses mostly on the entertaining style and the rather superficial narrative structure. Additionally, serious intellectual inquiry and deep psychological depiction are quite decisive in Dostojewskij's work.

8.1.3. Myshkin as Idiot, Saint, Epileptic and Jesus Christ

Fürst Lew Nikolajewitsch Myshkin, who is referred to in the title as the "Idiot," stands at the very center of the novel in terms of narrative, intellectual or symbolic. It is Dostojewskij's intention that he should also be a unique figure among others. In a letter to his niece Sofia Ivanova, Dostojewskij talks about his current work, *Der Idiot*, and he writes that "there is only one positively good man in the world — Christ, ... I recall that of the good figures in Christian literature, the most perfect is Don Quixote. But he is good only because at the same time he is ridiculous...One feels compassion for the ridiculous man who does not know his own worth as a good man, and consequently sympathy is invoked in the reader. This awakening of compassion is the secret of humor...In my novel there is nothing of this sort, positively nothing, and hence I am terribly afraid that I shall be entirely unsuccessful."³²⁶ It may be deduced that in Dostojewskij's conception, his

³²⁶ R. P. Blackmur. "The Idiot: A Rage of Goodness" In *Eleven Essays in the European Novel*. New York: A Harbinger Book, 1964, p. 154.

Myschkin is a figure who is full of goodness but not at all ridiculous. Therefore, unlike with the ironic attitudes throughout the whole novel, there is much more seriousness in the narrative tone on Myschkin.

Hartmann's adaptation creates a basic atmosphere of easiness, and this is also overwhelmed by long, distant speeches, which intentionally make the character's portrayal fragmentary. Among these, the only exception might be the shaping of Fürst Myschkin. The voice of other figures in Hartmann's adaptation is a mixture of inter- and extra-diegesis, but Myschkin's voice is never out of character and preserves his absoluteness within the dialogue, except in the prologue and epilogue. For the most part, he does not take the role of narrator or commentator in a dramatic scene, which, as argued above, is actually the major form of narrative voice. Moreover, Myschkin is also the observer of all events onstage, so he stays in the audience's sights from the very beginning to the end; which follows the setting of the narrative focalization in the original novel: the sequence of events depends on the spatial movements of Fürst Myschkin. In fact, the basic narrative pattern bears other similarities to the novel. Even though he is the most important character, and despite his mention in the title, Dostojewskij's *Der Idiot* is not narrated from the perspective of Myschkin; it is the omniscient narrator who controls the voice and mood of the narration, not the focalizer Myschkin. The stage adaptation follows this original pattern, and Myschkin is always part of events rather than providing narration about events. He watches and reacts always as the fictional figure Myschkin as a whole.

Therefore, the portrayal of the figure of Myschkin is in terms of his relationship with others, and in his speeches he speaks as part of concrete dramatic events; on the other hand, the narrative speeches are presented with a gesture addressing the audience. Considering that Myschkin's depiction relies on the interplay between characters, it certainly indicates a traditional method of

portrayal, as with the similar approach of the Hamburg version of *Buddenbrooks*, which also emphasizes the interaction and constellation of figures. Director Hartmann understands the figure of Myschkin in the first place as “Fremder”. He points out that Dostojewskij intentionally sets “seine Hauptfigur außerhalb der Gesellschaft zu positionieren,” which means Myschkin “in einem Zustand der Krankheit und damit sogar teilweise außerhalb seiner selbst.”³²⁷ The meaning of the figure of Myschkin to Dostojewskij is related much more deeply to his philosophical, religious and aesthetic thoughts, but with a concentration only on plot and characteristic portrayal, the image of Myschkin is established along with the whole picture of the society of St. Petersburg at his time, and Dostojewskij identifies him exactly through this sharp contradiction with the norms and values of society. The slavic literature scholar Birgit Harreß has concluded that one of the generalities of Dostojewskij’s heroes is “die Unabhängigkeit von Geld,” which is related to the fact that money always functions as a major motive behind the central conflicts or events in his novels.³²⁸ The depiction of Myschkin also involves countless calculations and contemplations about capital, class and status, which are deep grounds for the marital problems on the surface.

Because of the simplification of social-historical backgrounds and the minimalist stage design, the Dresden adaptation does not have enough room, in comparison with the grand range of the novel, to show the uniqueness of Fürst Myschkin from the panorama of society. In the Hamburg adaptation of *Buddenbrooks*, Stephan Kimmig and John von Düffel, who also choose the approach of generalizing the concrete background of the original novel, portray major figures with a series conflicts and changes within their family, which has also received positive feedback. But in the case of *Der Idiot*, there is almost no personal motivation or character development of

³²⁷ [Program] “Wie ein Schneeball im Feuer. Regisseur Matthias Hartmann im Gespräch mit Janine Ortiz” in *Der Idiot nach dem Roman von Fjodor M. Dostojewskij*, p. 24.

³²⁸ Birgit Harreß. *Mensch und Welt in Dostoevskijs Werk. Ein Beitrag zur poetischen Anthropologie Neuauflage*. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2014, pp. 232–233.

the major figure Myschkin, as Matthias Hartmann is quite clearly aware. Dostojewskij has called his Myschkin a “wahrhaft vollkommenen und schönen Menschen”, as Hartmann conceives, he is also an “idealistische, mit höchstmöglicher Reinheit ausgestattete Figur”.³²⁹ It can hardly be an advantage for a dramatic presentation that there is almost no development in characterization. From the first appearance, Myschkin is what he is. He is already a complete, established figure, regardless of the perspective of character shaping or any spiritual sense. Yet in any sense, Myschkin is not actually the type of figure that develops, and his most important merit cannot be understood through his living world, as Birgit Harreß argues, his meaning is to deny: “Die Weigerung der Helden, der äußeren Sinngebung zu entsprechen, ist ein Aufruhr gegen die ‚Welt‘ So sanft Fürst Myschkin ist, so unbeirrt setzt er der ‚Welt‘ die Wahrheit entgegen.”³³⁰ The strangeness of this figure actually arises not from his social life or from dramatic events, but in a spiritual and symbolic sense.

In Hartmann’s understanding, the highly idealistic quality of Myschkin is not just alien to his own time and space, but also to us. He explains that “seine (Myschkin’s) völlig gewaltfrei und wahrhaftige Kommunikation wirft die Menschen auf sich selbst zurück und erzeugt eine Art Katharsis. Wir erkennen die Schizophrenie unserer Existenz, die sich zwischen den höchsten Ansprüchen an eine gesellschaftliche und moralische Ordnung einerseits und dem Drang, doch lieber fünf gerade sein zu lassen, bewegt. Indem die Menschen mit Myschkin konfrontiert sind, wird ihnen das vergegenwärtigt.” So Myschkin’s uniqueness and isolation are not depicted by contrast with the original social background, which has only minor importance on the stage anyway, but in terms of his differentness in general, no matter in what time and space. In most

³²⁹ [Program] “Wie ein Schneeball im Feuer. Regisseur Matthias Hartmann im Gespräch mit Janine Ortiz” in *Der Idiot nach dem Roman von Fjodor M. Dostojewskij*, p. 24.

³³⁰ Harreß 2014, p. 263.

dramatic scenes in the adaptation, Myschkin looks like an innocent and kind-hearted intruder, like a clean mirror on a snobbish society of his time and of ours. But this Myschkin image cannot satisfy, especially for anyone who has read the novel, but it is still the case that Hartmann's version makes attempts to explore the symbolic meaning of this figure beyond the dramatic surface.

As discussed above, unlike with the common narrative presentation of other figures, the protagonist Myschkin maintains a dramatic wholeness in most scenes of the performance; yet in some rare cases, Myschkin does narrate; the difference is that he still speaks as his own character rather than temporarily speaking in the voice of an omniscient narrator. In his first meeting with the general's wife Lisaweta Jepantschina and their three daughters Alexandra, Adelaida and Aglaja, Myschkin tells a story about a Swiss girl named Marie while directly facing the auditorium. It needs to be remembered that when adapting such a voluminous novel, the time is actually limited even with a duration of almost four hours; nevertheless, the director still allows quite a long time for Myschkin to recall his memory, which basically has no direct connection with the present situation and barely influences future events. Aside from pure dramatic considerations, this storytelling scene does have great significance for the intellectual and symbolic interpretation of the figure of Myschkin. One literary critic has argued that this story exists to allow Myschkin to become "dramatically credible within the limit of Dostoevsky's declared intention"³³¹ from the perspective of novel analysis, and "Dostoevsky's declared intention" (so-called) is from one perspective, to create a "wahrhaft vollkommenen und schönen Menschen" in Dostojewskij's own words, but more importantly, this echos Myschkin's nickname "Fürst Christus" in the novel. The Jesus-like characterization of Fürst Myschkin has long been discussed in the literary academic

³³¹ Blackmur 1964, p. 145.

field,³³² and the Dresden adaptation obviously bears a similar intention to stress the symbolic meaning of the figure, which may be shown in the academic article included in the program and the physical “quotation” from a painting of Hans Holbein (which will be analyzed later). Furthermore, this storytelling scene is the earliest that specifically deals with Myschkin’s symbolic image and the “Jesus” theme in his characterization.

Myschkin’s story about himself and the Swiss girl Marie will sometimes be linked with the fable of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene,³³³ since there can be found some similarities in the figure’s constellation: the girl has run away with a seducer but then been abandoned. Therefore she is despised by the local church and her neighbors as a sinner; only this young foreigner Myschkin has nothing against her. Moreover, he successfully leads the children to accept and like Marie until the end of her life. Jesus has kissed Mary Magdalen, and so Myschkin, in the case of Marie: “Ich hatte mir gewünscht, für Marie etwas zu tun. Ich traf Marie vor dem Dorf auf einem abgelegenen Pfad. Hier gab ich ihr meine letzten acht Franken, dann küßte ich sie und sagte, dass ich sie nicht deshalb küßte, weil ich in sie verliebt wäre, sondern weil sie mir leid täte und weil ich sie von Anfang an nicht für schuldig, sondern nur für bedauernswert gehalten hätte.” But they are witnessed by the children, and at this time they are still against Mary so they throw stones at her — which is reminiscent of the famous quotation of Jesus in the scene in which a woman is caught

³³² See Lisa Knapp, “Myshkin Through a Murky Glass, Guessingly” in *Dostoevsky’s The Idiot: A Critical Companion*, edited by Lisa Knapp, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998, pp. 191–218. Actually there is a great number of books and articles that emphasize or mention the subject of Myschkin/Jesus relation. Here are a few examples: Sarah J. Young, “Dostoevskii’s *Idiot* and the Epistle of James” in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (Jul., 2003), pp. 401–420; Robert Hollander, “The Apocalyptic Framework of Dostoevsky’s ‘The Idiot’ ” in *Mosaic*, Vol. 7, Iss.2, (Jan 1, 1974), pp.123; Romano Guardini and Francis X. Quinn, “Dostoyevsky’s *Idiot*, A Symbol Of Christ” in *Cross Currents*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (FALL 1956), pp. 359–382

³³³ See the former notes about the studies referring to Myschkin as Jesus. The pairing comparison between Myschkin/Marie and Jesus Christ/Mary Magdalen is always referred to in the symbolic exploration of Myschkin.

in adultery. Myschkin then tries to talk back these children. At first, he has already made clear that “in der Schweiz war ich die ganze Zeit mit Kindern, nur mit Kindern. Kinder können die Seele gesund machen” — as Jesus has said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the children — and with Myschkin’s explanation of Marie’s miserable situation, “Sie [the children] hörten mir neugierig zu und zeigten bald Mitleid mit Marie”. Sadly, Marie suffers from tuberculosis, which eventually kills her. Yet she is happy in the end in the company of children. “Dank den Kindern, ich versichere es Ihnen, war sie, als sie starb, beinahe glücklich. Dank den Kindern vergaß sie ihr schwarzes Unheil, als hätte sie von ihnen Vergebung erhalten, denn sie hielt sich bis zum letzten Atemzug für eine große Verbrecherin.”³³⁴ After the narration of Marie and the children, Myschkin continues to renounce his doctor, Schneider, who has called him a child who never grows up, and he confirms this; in the adaptation these texts have been deleted, but they are still expressed in a later conversation of Lisaweta Jepantschina, who calls herself and Myschkin “Kind.”³³⁵ As well as the the “child” theme, the closing speech after this long story involves Myschkin identifying himself as “Idiot”: “Alle halten mich aus irgendeinem Grund für einen Idioten, ich war ja tatsächlich einmal krank, so krank, dass ich damals wie ein Idiot war; aber wie soll ich jetzt ein Idiot sein, da ich doch selbst weiß, dass man mich für einen Idioten hält!? Ich trete ein und denke: ‚Da, sie halten mich für einen Idioten, dabei bin ich bei vollem Verstand, sie aber kommen nicht darauf.‘”³³⁶ The longest monologue in the whole performance ends with this thematic announcement.

³³⁴ *Der Idiot. Fassung für die Inszenierung von Matthias Hartmann am Staatsschauspiel Dresden nach der Übersetzung von S. Geier*, pp. 44-46.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Both in the novel and in the stage script, the portrayal of Myschkin inclines closely to the image of Jesus Christ, and the thoughts on Christianity are actually prevalent in almost all the important novels of Dostojewskij. Matthias Hartmann certainly notices the importance of the religious and symbolic meanings of the figure of Myschkin and in the whole work, even though the performance gives little presentation of the religious content, and he chooses to echo the theme through narrative and visual expressions. As illustrated above, the performance keeps Myschkin's Marie-story in sight, which connects him with a Jesus-like image, with his total goodness and innocence, and also with his illness — Dostojewskij portrays the theme of combining physical illness with symbolic healing of spiritual salvation. Furthermore, the program for the Dresden adaptation includes an article which discusses the theme of "Leib und Seele" in the novel *Der Idiot*, which shows the interpretative base for the visual representation of Myschkin's illness and symbolic reference.

In the third (last) part of the performance, Myschkin comes to visit Rogoschin in his house, which is shown as almost an empty stage in gloomy light. Under this inauspicious atmosphere, both of them feel the coming fate of Nastassaja and themselves; and the symbolic reference will be much more distinctive after they exchange crucifixes. Then Myschkin begins to feel, or almost "see" in the sense of a "seer", the catastrophe that makes him suddenly have an epileptic seizure and fall down. At the same time he mentions a painting from Holbein, which originally hangs in Rogoschin's house but is not presented visually on the stage:

"Eines anderen Seele ist dunkel. Und auch die russische Seele ist dunkel; für sehr viele dunkel....Ja, meine Krankheit ist wieder im Anzug, ohne Zweifel; vielleicht werde ich noch heute einen Anfall bekommen. Und — ja, und ich wünschte mir, jetzt Rogoschin

zu begegnen, ihn bei der Hand zu nehmen und mit ihm zusammen — Mein Herz ist rein; bin ich denn Rogoschin Nebenbuhler? Aber dieser seltsame Bild von Holbein — Schon wieder diese Augen! — Mein Kopf...”³³⁷

Then, prophetically, Rogoschin seizes a knife from Myschkin’s hand, although Myschkin weakly objects: “Parfjon, ich glaube es nicht!” — but he has to allow it. At the end of the murder scene, “Der Fürst bekommt einen Anfall.”³³⁸ (Figure 11)

³³⁷ *Der Idiot. Fassung für die Inszenierung von Matthias Hartmann am Staatsschauspiel Dresden nach der Übersetzung von S. Geier*, p. 95.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

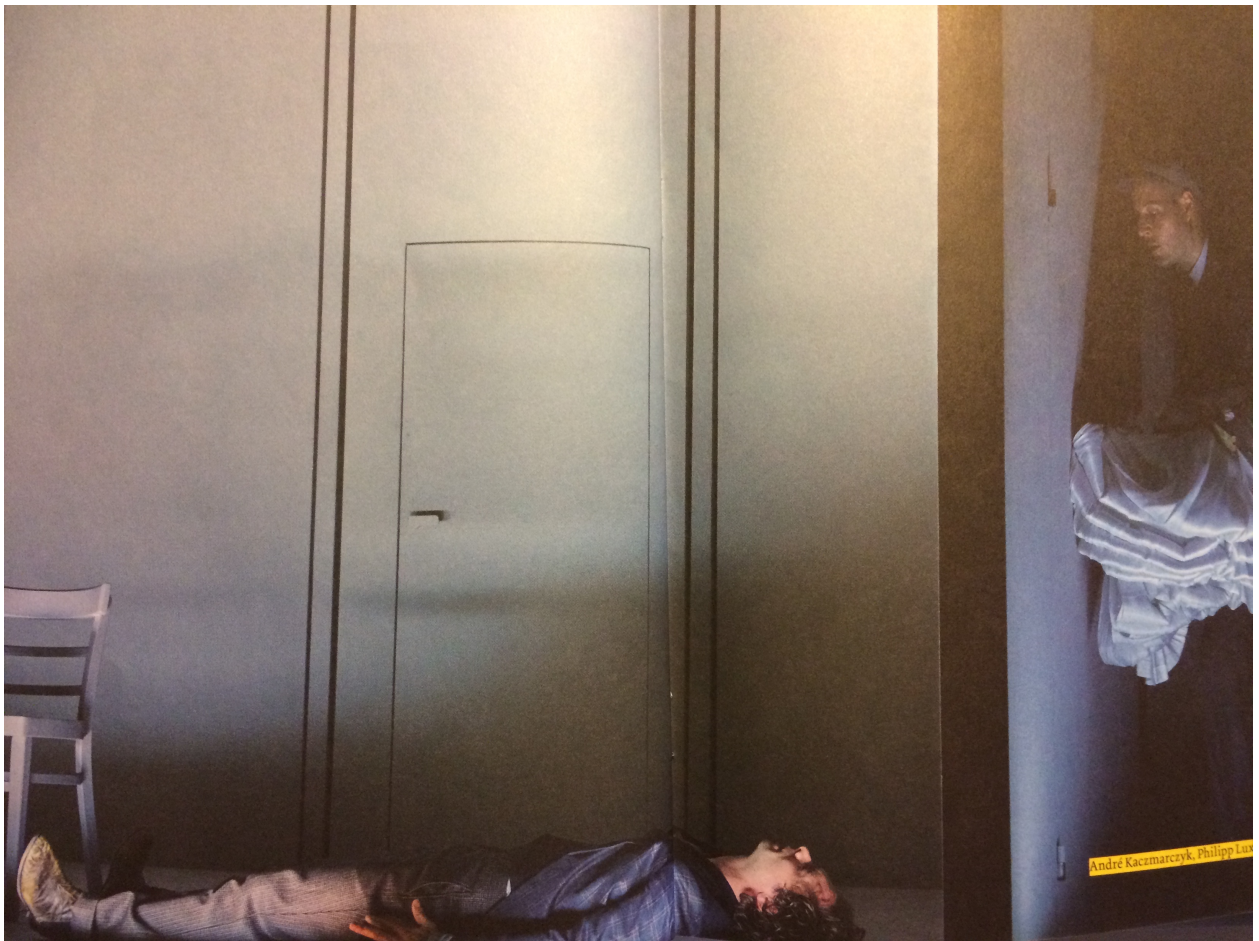


Figure 11. Physical expression of Myschkin in Dresden adaptation of *Der Idiot*. Source: Program.

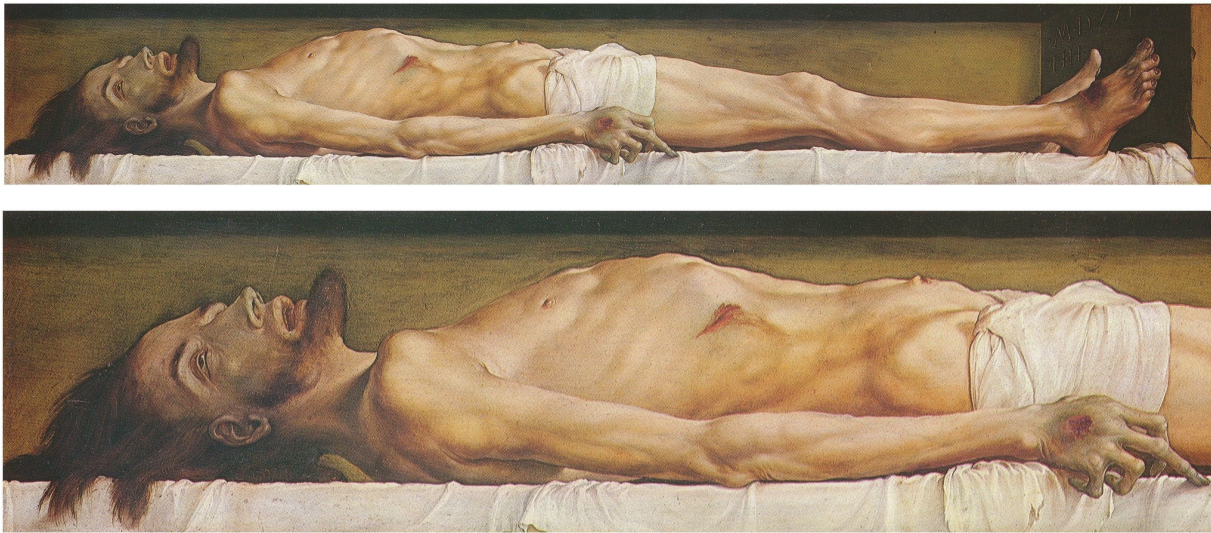


Figure 12. Oil painting *Der Leichnam Christi im Grabe* by Hans Holbein, and a detail (below)

This painting called *Der Leichnam Christi im Grabe* (1521) from Hans Holbein d.J. (Figure 12), functions allegorically in the novel in conjunction with the major theme of “das Leiden an Leib,”³³⁹ which is imitated by the epileptic Myschkin in his physical expression (Figure 11). In the article that is included in the program, the author Birgit Harreß points out that “die leibliche Komponente ein zentrales Motiv in Dostojewskij’s zweitem großen Roman *Der Idiot*” and the “Leib-Seele-Frage” were also a major interest for the writer. In the epilepsy scene, the adaptation directly presents Myschkin’s physical existence alongside symbolic interpretation, and there is also a most impressive image that indicates Myschkin as a “christusähnlich” figure throughout the whole performance. As Harreß explains, “das Bild zeigt weder Sterben noch Auferstehung,

³³⁹ Birgit Harreß, “Der verwesende Leib in Dostojewskis *Idiot*. Leib im Spannungsfeld von Vergänglichkeit und Ewigkeit” in *Leib und Leiblichkeit als Krisenfeld in Psychopathologie, Philosophie, Theologie und Kunst. Ansätze zu einer interdisziplinären Anthropologie von Entsprechen und Verantworten*, edited by Hermes Andreas Kick and Wolfram Schmitt. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2015, p. 135.

sondern das Reich des Todes, das Jesus umfängt” and “der Körper ist von den erlittenen Qualen so gezeichnet, dass nichts auf ein Weiterleben hinzuweisen scheint.”³⁴⁰ The performer of Myschkin is not just an imitation of the pose of Jesus after death in Holbein’s painting, but his action in falling to the ground after an epileptic seizure, as well as his physical and visual pain, construct a signifying indicator, or a quotation, to the bodily and almost everlasting suffering in the painting that Dostojewskij mentions.³⁴¹

It is impressive to combine the symbol (an allegory of the death and suffering of Jesus Christ) with the act in drama (Myschkin suffering from epilepsy) on the stage, and it also has unparalleled advantages in presenting abstract interpretation with visual images in the process of dramatic events. But it is still regrettable that the symbolic presentation, such as the performer Myschkin’s imitation of the dead Jesus, seems to be isolated on the stage, a very rare moment in the whole performance. In other words, this single symbol has no extension and cannot construct effective semantic relations with other expressions on the stage. For instance, Holbein’s painting in Dostojewskij’s novel actually relates to the overall aesthetic and intellectual construction, which makes a single quotation from Myschkin into a symbolic exploration of the whole work; therefore in literary studies, this image may be understood as a depiction of a deteriorating body of Jesus, or as referring to a necessary process before the resurrection in Christian belief.³⁴² But except for very few verbal and visual expressions, this major theme lacks development in the structure and leaves

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ See the analysis on “Gestische Zeichen” and “Proxemische Zeichen” in *Semiotik des Theaters, Band 1. Das System der theatralischen Zeichen*, by Erika Fischer-Lichte, Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2007, pp. 60–93.

³⁴² See “Das Leiden am Leib” by Birgit Harreß in program: “Was Holbein in seiner Darstellung aber ebenso ausdrückt, ist das Wunder der Auferstehung. Jesus muss leiden wie ein normaler Mensch, damit sein Opfergang einen Sinn hat. Der gepeinigte Leib spiegelt den Zustand der Welt, überragt ihn jedoch in seiner Schönheit. Das verstehen die meisten Figuren allerdings ebenso wenig wie das Wirken des Fürsten.” (p. 23)

little impression. Myschkin's spiritual sense, as the social-historical setting of the original novel, is in fact only referred to on the stage rather than being thematic performed; basically, he is for the most part an innocent and kind-hearted major figure in this drama.

But is this sufficient to present such a great literary figure as Fürst Myschkin? Many critics are doubtful. As one critic points out, the illness and religion experience are quite central to the figure of Myschkin, which makes him "so schillernd, gleichzeitig verführerisch und unheimlich,"³⁴³ in other words, Myschkin should have been an attractive idealistic hero, but unfortunately, "André Kaczmarczyk (the actor) bleibt als Fürst Myschkin ein liebenswürdiger, schüchtern-naiver Idiot, der in einer Gesellschaft voller derber Theaterspießer wie in einer Operette geraten ist: Ehen, in denen man es sich schrullig arrangiert hat, Töchter, die verheiratet werden müssen, ältere Playboys, alkoholsüchtige Rentner, Kammerdiener und Offiziere, begehrte Frauen von zweifelhaftem Ruf – und ein erotisches Verlangen, das Begehren mit Hass und Rache mischt."³⁴⁴ In other words, the whole novel has been shrunk to a skeleton plot, and the figure of Myschkin has lost its depth at the same time, a feature of "Operetta".

Generally, the light and even entertaining portraying of Myschkin's character is not exceptional, since this is Hartmann's approach to the whole adaptation. The basic dramatic structure and wide-ranging narrative methods altogether make this adaptation a fairly sophisticated scenic retelling of the *fabula* level of the original novel, but as result some losses are suffered in terms of aesthetic values, as a critical article in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* puts it, "der Regisseur erzählt

³⁴³ See Peter Laudenbach's article "Er ist wieder da. Der einst geschasste Burgtheater-Intendant Matthias Hartmann inszeniert in Dresden Dostojewskis *Der Idiot* als munteren Reigen von Beziehungswirrnissen" in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (17.01.2016): "Die Zentralfigur Myschkin ist, wie ihr Autor, Epileptiker. Seine Anfälle und Wahnzustände verklärt Dostojewski zur religiösen Erfahrung. Dass dieser reine Tor frei von berechnenden Egoismen und animalischen Treiben ist, macht ihn so schillernd, gleichzeitig verführerisch und unheimlich."

³⁴⁴ Bernhard Doppler, *Der Standard*, 17.01.2016.

den Plot, ohne sich auf schwindelerregende Abgründe einzulassen.”³⁴⁵ Some even harshly mention that director Hartmann prefers to produce “nette Unterhaltungskunst” rather than search for “Tiefsinn” in this work, “in Dresden macht er aus Dostojewskijs Kolossaltragödie eine Salonkomödie, die nie klüger sein will als die bösen Geschichten, die ihre Figuren erzählen.”³⁴⁶ Of course, there is still a relatively friendly attitude towards Hartmann’s approach: “Dostojewskijs schwerer, mit Religionsfragen ringender Romanwälzer also bei Hartmann als locker-leichtes, niveauvolles Theateramüsement — mehr nicht. Warum auch nicht.”³⁴⁷

What also frequently appears in reviews is a comparison with, or at least a mention of, a former model, Frank Castorf’s adaptation in 2002. In a review from *Nachtkritik*, the critic compares André Kacymrczyk with Martin Wuttke’s Berlin Myschkin:

“Wie schon Martin Wuttke 2002 bei Frank Castorf an der Berliner Volksbühne, so gibt auch der schmale und jungenhafte André Kacymrczyk in Dresden den Myschkin nicht als auratisch leuchtendes Wesen. Sondern (etwas monoton) als eine in sich gekehrte Figur, die mit stillem Staunen und offener Freundlichkeit, ganz ohne Arg und Intrigenlust, aber mit ehrlicher Bescheidenheit den Menschen begegnet. Einen solchen Menschen können die anderen, die dem Geld und einem durch Abstammung oder Funktion bestimmtem Status nachjagen, nur abwehrend als Idioten ansehen. Der laut Walter Benjamins ein ‚Gravitieren aller Dinge und Menschen gegen den Einen hin‘ verursacht.”³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Peter Laudenbach, “Er ist wieder da. Der einst geschasste Burgtheater-Intendant Matthias Hartmann inszeniert in Dresden Dostojewskis *Der Idiot* als munteren Reigen von Beziehungswirrnissen” in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (17.01.2016).

³⁴⁶ Wolfgang Höbel, “Glück in Absturz. Matthias Hartmann, vor zwei Jahren als Chef der Wiener Burg entlassen, inszeniert in Dresden Dostojewskis *Der Idiot*,” in *Der Spiegel*, 04.2016, p. 123.

³⁴⁷ Bernhard Doppler, *Der Standard*, 17.01.2016.

³⁴⁸ Hartmut Krug, “Den ehrlichen, leidenden Menschen erkennen. *Der Idiot* — Matthias Hartmann sucht am Staatsschauspiel Dresden in Dostojewskis Roman nach der glückhaften Harmonie des Leidens” see in https://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12022:der-idiot-matthias-hartmann-dresden&catid=38:die-nachtkritik-k&Itemid=40, 16. Januar 2016

Both contemporary images of Myschkin are deprived of his divine aura. But Hartmann's version is still intended to present Myschkin as a dramatic character in the traditional sense of wholeness and absoluteness, and he is still a character in Dostojewskij's world. Castorf's Myschkin, on the other hand, has nothing to do with this category, and his adaptation of *Der Idiot* in Volksbühne has a completely different aesthetic framework. On the partly empty stage of the Dresden version, the story in the novel is rather reported as in epic theater than played, and the performers continually change voices between retellings and dialogues. Therefore in the process of narrating, Dostojewskij's gloomy figures have lost their touchable directness and the whole adaptation feels enjoyable and harmless. But Castorf's staging of *Der Idiot*, which to some extent has a much more indirect expression, tries to represent the feverish and constricting atmosphere of Dostojewskij's novel. The context is totally reset, and a non-linear and scattered narrative is established, many rewritten lines or quotations from other sources are accumulated; most fundamentally, the spaces and perspectives are also quite unusual, which definitely alters the narration in terms of dramatic conceptions.

8.2. *Der Idiot* in Berlin: A Post-dramatic Adaptation by Frank Castorf (2002)

Frank Castorf's *Die Dämonen* from 1999 is a pioneering work of contemporary adaptation, and has been presented in both film and theater versions. During his more than twenty years as Intendant in Volksbühne Berlin, Castorf has produced almost all the great novels of Dostojewskij, including *Erniedrigte und Beleidigte* (2001), *Schuld und Sühne* (2005), *Die Brüder Karamasow* (2015) as well as *Der Idiot* in 2002. Additionally, several novellas of Dostojewskij have also been

brought to the stage by Castorf, such as *Der Spieler* (2011), *Die Wirtin* (2012), *Das schwarze Herz* (2017) and *Bobok* (2017). Even after he left Volksbühne, his first work was, again, an adaptation of Dostojewskij's *Die fremde Frau und der Mann unter dem Bett* in Schauspielhaus Zürich.

As one of the most revolutionary contemporary theatrical artists, Frank Castorf's personal style and creative originality have been much more studied.³⁴⁹ For a specific study of the adaptation and narration, there are two major topics requiring particular attention in Castorf's *Der Idiot*: first of all, as a post-dramatic production,³⁵⁰ how this adaptive work relates to the Dostojewskij's novel; secondly, how this post-dramatic work should be understood and analyzed from a narrative angle. In speculating on this work, it will be necessary to reconsider existing concepts. Obviously, the aesthetic of Castorf's *Der Idiot* raises questions about the general understanding of adaptation and narration, and even about the definition of theater — and in the first place, from the perspective of defining a performative space, this is closely intertwined with the construction of narration in this work.

8.2.1 *Neustadt*: Rebuilding a Performing Space

³⁴⁹ See former notes about studies about Castorf's theatrical aesthetics.

³⁵⁰ Hans-Thies Lehmann has listed some characteristics of post-dramatic theater: "Beispielweise Fragmentierung der Narration, Stil-Heterogenität, hypernaturalistische, groteske und neoexpressionistische Elemente, die fürs postdramatische Theater typisch..." and "das 'postmoderne Theater' seit 1970 durch eine lange und eindrucksvolle Liste von Merkmalen zu charakterisieren versuchen: Ambiguität, feiert Kunst als Fiktion, feiert Theater als Prozeß, Diskontinuität, Heterogenität, Nicht-Textualität, Pluralismus, mehrere Codes, Subversion, alle Örtlichkeiten, Perversion, Akteur als Thema und Hauptfigur, Deformation, Text nur Basismaterial, Dekonstruktion, Text gilt als autoritär und archaisch, Performance als Drittes zwischen Drama und Theater, anti-mimetisch, widersteht Interpretation. Das postmoderne Theater sei ohne Diskurs, dafür herrsche Meditation, Gestualität, Rythmus, Ton." from *Postdramatisches Theater*, Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 6. Auflage, 2015, pp. 26–27.

The initial impressive reaction to Castorf's adaptation of *Der Idiot* was to his approach of extreme de-contextualization of Dostojewskij's novel. It has been pointed out that, with respect to many limitations caused by genre transformation and practical conditions, there is normally only a minimal representation of the original social-historical context in contemporary theatrical novel adaptation, which is always reflected in a simplification of the plot and character constellation as well as in stage design, as with the adaptive approach in Hartmann's *Der Idiot* and also the Hamburg version of *Buddenbrooks*. In the post-dramatic approach of Kriegenburg's *Der Prozess*, we see an unusual stage device, along with other expressions, which aims to create a symbolic system, which can be taken as a metaphor in parallel with Franz Kafka's grotesque world. But Castorf's "stage," along with the whole context in which he sets this story, is much more radical, because there is no longer a "stage" in the normal sense. He transplants all the figures, scenes and themes from Dostojewskij's novel into his new "Romantic World," which is neither a simplified nor a metaphorical version, but literally the real world itself. The stage designer Bert Neumann has built a new city space for staging; in other words, the theater is everywhere in this artificial city with the movement of camera. The generally-accepted idea of stage and scene has been abandoned, as has the common division of stage and auditorium: the audiences are *in* a city-theater, but they must watch the living performance only from a live broadcast.

This theatrical space, "Neustadt," which the neon lamp shows as "Las Vegas," consists of a bar, a supermarket, a hairdresser's salon and a three-storey hotel called "Romantic World" in the center — all of these are much closer to a contemporary street view of Berlin rather than Dostojewskij's St.Petersburg of the late nineteenth century. Neumann also used this space for Rene Pollesch's film adaptation *24 Stunden Sind Kein Tag. Escape from New York*, which lasts literally 24 hours, and the director Pollesch presents this in his remarkable artistic style of "faking" reality.

In terms of stage design, both performances intentionally present a self-exposing attitude to authenticity through daily reality. The aesthetic of *Neustadt* can hardly be taken as an approach of verisimilitude, which is defined as part of the theoretical system of realism; on the contrary, as Castorf himself has explained, “Der Ausgangspunkt ist nicht ein literarischer oder literaturwissenschaftlicher Begriff von Realismus, sondern ein einfacher Begriff von Realität und auch von Verständlichkeit.”³⁵¹ To understand the concept of *Neustadt* is to take the stage as a common, real thing, whose reality is its material existence.

Yet it is not only part of the spatial condition of this performance. Audiences in this performing space will not encounter a direct representation in their accustomed position; on the contrary, they are also part of *Neustadt* with all its realistic settings and performers. Meanwhile they can only watch the performance through the movements of cameras, which means from pre-set angles and ranges. Castorf explains that he and Bert Neumann chose to replace the transparent perspective of theater with “Idee der Hermetik”, and they find it amazing that, “die Konvention des Theaters, dass man alles sehen und verstehen soll, damit gebrochen wird.”³⁵² As with replacing referential realism with daily reality, here again, Castorf abandons the transparent directness of the stage and presents only mediated, selected and partial perspectives.

How reality is constructed and perceived, as the stage design in the first place proves, is a continual an important theme in Castorf’s production, and this is also expressed in the figure Fürst Myschkin with a question in the performance: “wie kann man gegen die Wirklichkeit ankommen?” To some extent, all expressive methods in this performance may be understood as attempts to understand the making and experience the reality through an imitative process: except that

³⁵¹ Frank Castorf, “Nicht Realismus, sondern Realität: Frank Castorf spricht über seine Arbeit” in *Politik und Verbrechen: Einbruch der Realität*, p.75.

³⁵² Ibid., p.77.

performance is happening in a 1:1 built place of “Neustadt”; the mediated reality also determines the limitations of reception — through cameras and screens, the live broadcasting replaces the direct physical presence of theater. Alterations to the performing space and media provide more freedom for Castorf to reinterpret *Der Idiot* with his speciality of collage art; indeed, this adaptation is to some extent a mixture (not a transfer) from literature, theater, film, music, pop culture, street views and even pornography. His approach to the adaptation belongs to the most complicated categories, since textual relations are neither a lucid translation nor an obscure metaphor, but create an extensive world which refers to the original one in parody.³⁵³ A parody functions as a converted, twisted or opposite mirror to the object being parodied, which means that it is formed within an intertextual relationship. The “secondary” and independent new product arises from a matrix of original “ones”, and reorganizes the old elements for its own purposes. Still, the parodical approach allows the possibility for something to be recognizable, and therefore it would be better to understand Castorf’s adaptation from the angle of parody, since he takes many of his sources from original work to construct his new performing room. Yet, to some extent, it resembles, if loosely, Dostojewskij’s novel.

8.2.2. Fragmentary Structure and Collage Art

A conflict-centered dramatic structure has framed Hartmann’s *Der Idiot* adaptation, and even endowed it with a large-scale epic treatment, but it still maintains a high degree of faithfulness

³⁵³ The term “Parodie” is explained by Uwe Wirth as “...die Parodie darauf gründet, dass sie den Stil der Vorlage imitiert und das Thema transformiert: etwa indem eine ›hohe‹ heroische Geschichte durch eine ›niedrige‹, anti-heroische Geschichte ersetzt wird – unter Beibehaltung des ›hohen Tons‹, so dass eine Fallhöhe entsteht, die (und damit kommt dann auch hier wieder die Wirkungsdimension ins Spiel) eine komische Inkongruenz impliziert.” in *Komik. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, edited by Uwe Wirth, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler Verlag, 2017, p. 26.

to the original work, considering the reproducing of causal relations and the (basic) wholeness of the characters. Castorf's approach is quite the opposite. Even though the temporal sequence is still basically identical to that of the major events in the novel — at the beginning Myschkin steps into a new society from the outside, he then makes the acquaintance of other characters and becomes involved in conflicts about Nastassaja; and the final tragedy (the murder of Nastassaja) happens in Rogoschin's house — but the principle of constructing is not based on causality, which means that connections between scenes are not mutually dependent and linear; in fact, Castorf presents fragments of the story, which have only maintained a similar surface to original events but lack of their inner logic. This adaptation barely provides explanation or transition for shifts in scenes to aid understanding. The cutting and editing of pictures do not by any means construct a dramatic process. For instance, at the very beginning, the series of meetings of Myschkin and others is intensely interrelated, and, as has already been discussed, this also proves highly dramatic in the novel *Der Idiot*. Yet in Castorf's version, these scenes are simply pieced together in a temporal sense, and one scene jumps to another without logical explanation: Myschkin meets Ganja, then the general, then his family, and then they eat together, during the meal Myschkin reads Ganja's letter to Aglaja but there has been no information about how the letter appeared and what its purpose is.

As Castorf has said, a "Kamerabild" is just a "Kamerabild," and it should not be organized again. He also explains that what he sees in a picture is just "einen Ausschnitt eines Menschen."³⁵⁴ This is proved in the portrayal of characters. In fact, because of the comparatively long duration (it lasts more than six hours) and the wider availability of space, Castorf's version preserves more figures from Dostojewskij's original story, such as Ippolit, who is deleted in Hartmann's version;

³⁵⁴ Castorf, Frank. "Nicht Realismus, sondern Realität: Frank Castorf spricht über seine Arbeit" in *Politik und Verbrechen: Einbruch der Realität*, p. 77.

but this does little to affect the lack of interplay between figures in the performance. Specifically, the actions of figures are not closely interlinked with events, nor do the relations between them provoke the typical conflicts that might push the story forward. In short, the two most important elements for traditional narrative, namely plot and character, are quite feeble because of underlying relations and interplays. Scenes, events and figures in Castorf's adaptation are all fragmentary, yet they are also not wholly isolated; instead of causal relations and a centralized dramatic structure, the director organizes his materials into a series of motifs and also connects them with each other in more complicated semantic relations.

8.2.3. Myschkin in *Neustadt*

The tender and kindhearted figure of the young man Fürst Myschkin is not an exceptionally formidable physical presence, which he actually ought to be, considering his symptoms of epilepsy. Myschkin's first appearance has been transformed to a new situation. Rather than going back to St. Petersburg in a third-class seat on a train, in this performance he sits in a small car with Rogoschin and Lebedjew on his way to a bar called "Las Vegas"; but even when placed in an alien context, the core of the figure Myschkin has actually been presented more closely to Dostojewskij's hero in terms of physiological depth. As shown in the quote above, Myschkin has told a story about himself and the Swiss girl Marie, and this long narration has also been preserved in Castorf's version. Specifically, the director pays more attention to Myschkin's association with children. As an "idiot" and because of his kindness, he seems to be identical to the portrait of this Fürst Christus. Castorf chooses not just to let Myschkin be referred to as a child, but actually to make Myschkin live with several children. This Myschkin shares a little room with children and

eats with them several times in the performance. These scenes are not directly presented in the novel, only from Myschkin's narration about his past. In Castorf's adaptation, this originally narrated story is brought forward as a representation of presence, which thematically recalls Myschkin's character, and also condenses this figure's past and present together in the new situation of "Neustadt."

The most impressive representation of Myschkin comes at the end of the performance. In these scenes, Castorf juxtaposes the symbolic and religious interpretations of Myschkin with his physical existence. As mentioned earlier, in the scene with the murder of Nastassaja, Myschkin has seen Holbein's painting *Der Leichnam Christi im Grabe* in Rogoschin's house, which reminds him of his first viewing of this painting in Basel and subsequent doubt about his Christian belief; these thoughts of Myschkin are actually based on Dostojewskij's personal experience. He is deeply shocked at the traces of decay on the corpse of Jesus Christ in Holbein's depiction, since it hints strongly at an absolute death without resurrection and at the absolute earthiness of human beings. Dostojewskij mentions this painting again in his last great novel *Die Brüder Karamasow*, in which he seems to put forward a different viewpoint on religious belief through the voice of a character; nevertheless, it is sure that Holbein's painting stands in a unique position in the writer's mind —

and also in Castorf's understanding: in his adaptation of *Die Brüder Karamasow*, Castorf uses again the display of Holbein's painting (Figure 13).

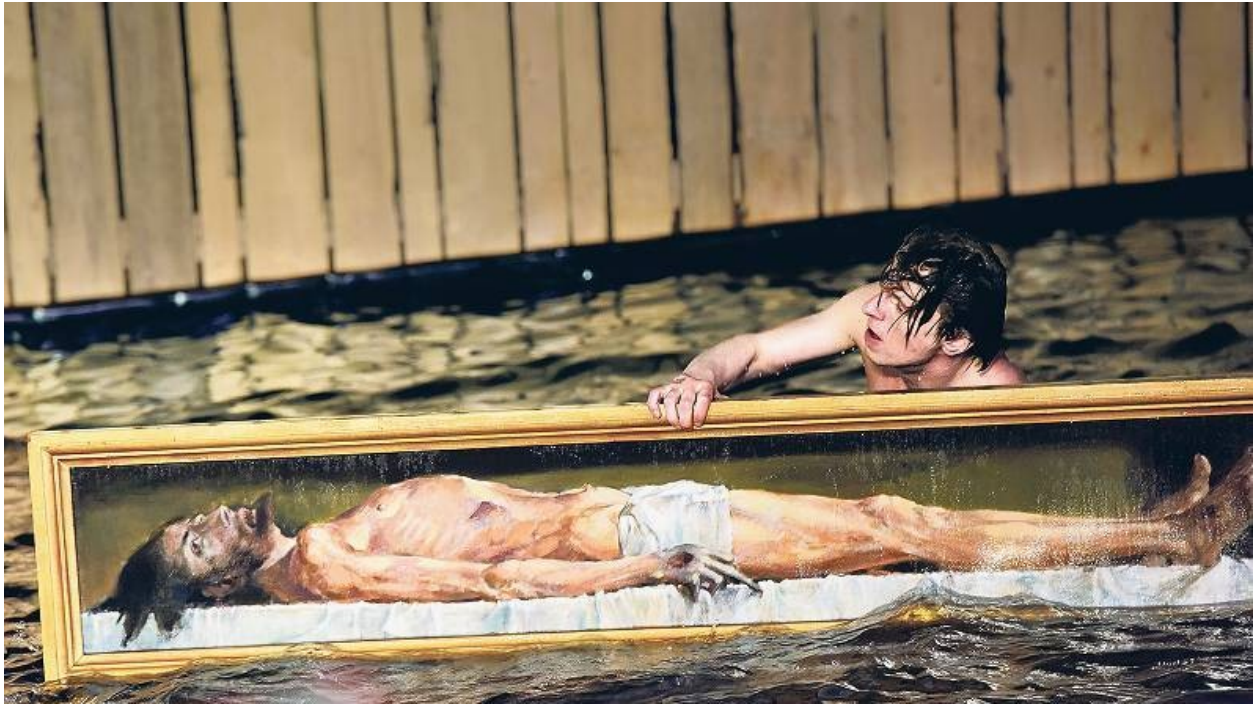


Figure 13. *Der Leichnam Christi im Grabe* in Castorf's adaptation of *Die Brüder Karamasow*, Volksbühne Berlin, 2015.

In *Der Idiot*, this painting, along with the setting of the murder scene, is associated with death and decay. In Castorf's version, Rogoschin's room is just big enough to put a bed in, and in this very scene, he and Myschkin are lying on this bed with the wrapped body of Nastassaja between them, and Holbein's painting is hung on the side wall (Figure 14).



Figure 14. Myschkin (right), Rogoschin (left), Nastassaja's body (middle) and Holbein's painting (on the wall) in Castorf's adaptation of *Der Idiot*. Source: Screenshot.

Under this painting, Rogoschin and Myschkin smoke and play cards behind Nastassaja's body, and in the end, both of them move the body together into the wild, which is the same scene as in their first appearance in the car. After burying Nastassaja, with enthusiastic crying and running to the nearby neon lighting of "Romantic World" (Figure 15), Myschkin has an epileptic seizure and

crawls on the ground. This becomes quite earthly and animal-like in the end, but is also a reference



to the symbolic meaning of Fürst Myschkin.

Figure 15. Wild scenes after the burying of Nastassaja in Castorf's adaptation of *Der Idiot*. Source: Screenshot.

8.2.4. What's NEW in *Der Idiot*?

All adaptations are transformed texts with new sign systems; and in the specific case of narrative, a process of transformation involves the levels of narrated story, narrative discourse and narrating act. In the case of the story level, the original conflict-centered structure has been split into fragments in Castorf's adaptation, which, along with newly-added modern elements, are collaged into a series of new representations of modern daily life. This altered narrative structure

brings forward a new sign system, which is related to the original novel as references or as quotations. For instance, the original Russian bourgeois society has been replaced with cubic buildings that are visually undistinguishable: big shop windows, a messy bar and a shabby tent are placed in front; furthermore, the interior of the building is crowded with beds, a tank, chairs etc., which emphasizes the great distance between the two textual systems. Yet there are still obvious or ambiguous references to the novel in this new method. The construction of the center building is an example. It actually provides a convenient way of exposing the inner lives of each room from the orderly and uncovered windows, and this is also a frequent aspect of the film scenery, which presents a panorama with multiple simultaneous minor actions; Castorf takes advantage of the spatial conditions to indicate the psychology and personality of characters by a change of focus: a voyeuristic possibility through those windows (Figure 16).³⁵⁵ For example, Ganja Iwolgin, an ambitious utilitarian from Dostojewskij's depiction, steals glances at general Jepantschin's house with a telescope at her window. Besides, Castorf also presents some references on a meta-narrative level, which directly illustrate the "East-ness" of this Russian novel from the point of view of a normal German audience; in some scenes, three Jepantschin girls, Adelaida, Alexandra and Aglaja, speak Russian with each other and their facial features are also closer to those of an eastern European female.³⁵⁶ At times, it may be in order to highlight the eastern spectacle that we find,

³⁵⁵ See James Donald's "The City, The Cinema: Modern Spaces" in *Visual Culture*, edited by Chris Jenks, London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 77–90.

³⁵⁶ *Der Idiot. Frank Castorfs Stückfassung nach Dostojewskij In der Neustadt von Bert Neumann*, Berlin: Synwolt Verlag, 2003, pp. 133–134.

with some far more “eastern” symbols, such as Chinese characters on the window and lanterns inside, as well as wallpaper with Japanese traditional art in the bedroom.



Figure 16. Display through windows in Castorf’s adaptation of *Der Idiot*. Source: Screenshot.

Besides, “East” as a symbol might also imply the wild and sexual representations in the performance, such as the first meeting between Myschkin and the Jepantschin family. In this scene, the original atmosphere has been completely subverted, and the easiness of conversation is presented as physical collision and also has ambiguous sexual implications. Adelaida, Alexandra and Aglaja Jepantschina are dressed in a vulgar and pompous style, and they are even practicing pole dancing before the eyes of their mother Lisaweta; the half-naked Myschkin lies down on the floor and watches these girls at first. Then he is physically attacked, although not very vigorously,

by the girls. In this somewhat violent scene with noisy rock music, all performers play their roles in an unusually “sincere” way by loyally speaking their dialogical lines from the original novel. When this half naked Myschkin pays a compliment, “Sie sind eine außerordentliche Schönheit”, to Aglaja in front of the bar, as if they were part of the upper-class of St. Petersburg in the nineteenth century, the contradictory effect is based entirely on a pre-cognition of the novel by the audience. A similar occasion is the party in Nastassaja’s house, which is presented as almost an unconcealed orgy. Indeed, intense physical expression appears throughout the performance, sometimes with gestures of the performers even tending to resemble those of animals, such as crawling, howling, curling up and so on. This establishes a distinct difference from daily social norms, in comparison with the general expressions of Dostojewskij’s time. But more deeply, the novel actually depicts a violent society: intrigue, lies, cheating, snobbery, indifference, avarice, egoism, hedonism and the cult of money and status, not to mention the entirely carnal passion represented in Rogoschin; in short, this decent upper-class circle is actually no different from a jungle society, and is driven by the same instincts, desires and impulses. Castorf uncovers the ostensible decency of this story through direct violence, sexual display, and unnatural gestures, but also uses the subtitle “GIER” in the video recording as an obvious announcement.

Aside from inner social dynamics, Castorf also understands Dostojewskij’s work as a profound psychological record of human nature. He has previously talked of Dostojewskij’s psychological insight in an interview about another adaptation: “...ein Mensch nicht mit dem einfachen Affekt der Rache, der Wut und des Hasses reagiert, sondern damit, dass er die Bestrafung, die Ungerechtigkeit, die Demütigung annimmt und akzeptiert”, and he also quotes the opinion of Dostojewskij himself: “Die Demütigung ist die schrecklichste aller menschlichen

Kräfte”;³⁵⁷ and this is actually reflected in the adaptation of *Der Idiot* through its fierce atmosphere and intensive physical expression. For instance, at the very beginning of this performance, there has already been a loud cry of “Scham! Scham!” several times.

About the obvious preference on textual selection, Castorf has explained that the “Komplexität” that he finds in the novel is rare in classical drama. In his favorite of Dostojewskij’s works, as well as in other great novels, such as those of Bulgakow (Castorf has also adapted *Der Meister und Margarita*), Castorf believes that “die literarische Struktur dieses Romans entspricht für mich der Komplexität der Zeit oder der politischen Wirklichkeit.”³⁵⁸ What interests him is exactly this grand depiction of range in the novel, which stands in opposition to the structure of a well-organized classical drama, and the specific approach of the adaptation of *Der Idiot* shows also the rejection of a unified organizational and interpretative system.

Chapter 9. Epilogue

³⁵⁷ “Frank Castorf über Dostojewski, Vaudeville und die schreckliche Kraft der Demütigung” In *Schauspielhaus Zürich-Journal* #12, Zürich: Schauspielhaus Zürich, 2017, pp. 14–17.

³⁵⁸ Castorf, Frank. “Nicht Realismus, sondern Realität: Frank Castorf spricht über seine Arbeit” in *Politik und Verbrechen: Einbruch der Realität*, p. 71.

In the above speculations on theory and practice, I have located the recent (twenty-first century) flourishing of novel adaptation on the German stage in the traditions of aesthetic thinking and also the contemporary theoretical spectrum, which embodies redefinitions of several concepts in contemporary aesthetics. In general, novel adaptation should not be considered as something absolutely new in the theater, whether in terms of the actual staging practices or in terms of the perspective of a broader comprehension of the adaptation concept in theater history; yet nowadays it still proves to be different in terms of quantity, wider popularity and multiple aesthetic tendencies. As I have emphasized at the very beginning, each adaptive approach actually echoes contemporary theatrical aesthetics in different ways; and for the contemporary German stage, it will not be unusual to meet a freer attitude towards the literary text and a freer construction of narration, which is part of the inheritance of epic theater and the development of post-dramatic theater. In the theoretical part, I discuss three relevant theoretical sections to examine the phenomenon of novel adaptation performed on the contemporary stage, which includes the classical dichotomy of epic and dramatic, adaptation studies in literature, film and its development under the widespread intellectual revolution of the twentieth century in the humanities, as well as the narrative studies that have emerged from the theoretical soil of structuralism and linguistic philosophy.

Starting from these three fields, I have chosen four adaptations to focus on, and in general, my interests lie in the exploration of transformations in genre, text, medium, and context. Among the selections, *Buddenbrooks* (2005) by Stephan Kimmig and John von Düffel as well as *Der Idiot* (2016) by Mathias Hartmann present an obvious reconstruction of a dramatic structure from the episodic material of the original novel; at the same time, a clear epic treatment and other techniques, reminiscent of “post-dramatic” aesthetics, can also be identified on the stage. On the

other hand, *Der Prozess* (2008) by Andreas Kriegenburg and another *Der Idiot* (2002) by Frank Castorf belong clearly to a post-dramatic approach, which is reflected most significantly in their attitudes towards text, and especially in their relocation of the narrated world in the original novel. It is not necessary to repeat details of these productions here, which have already occupied the main part of my study. In the end I would like instead to mention briefly the parallel directions of novel adaptation and the wider landscape of narrative theater and *Gegenwartsdramatik* (contemporary dramatic literature).

Since almost the beginning of this century, a rejuvenation of “drama” and “narrative” in contemporary theater has become apparent in the academic field, and this is reflected by more studies on “dramatic” theater or, more precisely, by a redefinition of the concept of “dramatic”. First of all, it is worth mentioning Gerda Poschmann’s study on *Theatertext*³⁵⁹ from the perspective of dramaturgical analysis; in her work *Der nicht mehr dramatische Theatertext*, instead of ignoring the traditional dramatic concepts (e.g. plot, character, dialogue), Poschmann suggests a broader view of “text”, that literary analysis methods should be adopted, in brief, to relocate all these concepts originally based on literary dramatic text into a new field of *Theatertext*, and, in Poschmann’s own words, “kritisch zu nutzen”.³⁶⁰ Poschmann’s understanding of the “dramatic” is not totally identical to the anti-dramatic attitude implied in Hans-Thies Lehmann’s influential term “post-dramatic theater”. Nevertheless, it still proves that the dramatic conception adopted in contemporary theater studies (and also in the creative field) can never be a simple restoration.

³⁵⁹ Bayerdöfer thinks this term “unterstreicht die literarisch-sprachliche Bindung, legt aber nicht auf gattungshistorisch, d.h. auf Dramenpoetik eingestellte literarische Muster fest” in his “Vom Drama zum Theatertext? Unmaßgebliches zur Einführung,” from *Vom Drama zum Theatertext? Zur Situation der Dramatik in Ländern Mitteleuropas*, edited by Hans-Peter Bayerdöfer, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2007, pp. 1-14, here p. 5.

³⁶⁰ Gerda Poschmann, *Der nicht mehr dramatische Theatertext. Aktuelle Bühnenstücke und ihre dramatische Analyse*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1997, p. 88.

Instead, it is innately based on prevailing contemporary thoughts. Still, in the study on *Gegenwartsdramatik*, Birgit Hass holds a comparatively more traditional position than Poschmann. As the title of her work suggests, she makes a “Plädoyer für ein dramatisches Drama.”³⁶¹ Hass’s coining “dramatisches Drama,” which sounds a little prolix, reflects her observation on the literature of contemporary drama (from the last decade of the twentieth century) mainly in Europe, and she also attempts to differentiate another kind of dramatic writing (with representatives like Dea Loher and Roland Schimmelpfennig) from the general anti-dramatic tendency. At the center of Hass’s arguments may be an emphasis on a return to a more realistic dramatic situation and also a reconstruction of the human image, which has long been presented as flattened and fragmented in post-dramatic theater. Not coincidentally, an inclination to dramatic theater implies a specific call for a return to “real” character, and similar voices can be heard from Nikolaus Frei and Danijela Kapusta.³⁶² As their observations have proved, the figure, as well as its context, stands at the very center of the renaissance of the “dramatic” on the contemporary stage. All these arguments also reflect the general aesthetic inclination of contemporary dramatic literature, which implies, on the one hand, a closer regard to dramatic concepts than those of former generation(s), and on the other hand, that altered preconceptions of text and theater underlie any case of academic studies as well as creative writing.

In fact, this merging process is also shown very clearly in novel adaptation, as my earlier analysis has argued many times. In any case, narrative theater, as one type of contemporary drama literature, is related directly to novel adaptation.³⁶³ For instance, John von Düffel, a major adaptor

³⁶¹ See Birgit Hass, *Plädoyer für ein dramatisches Drama*, Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2007.

³⁶² Cf. Nikolaus Frei, *Die Rückkehr der Helden*, Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2007. and Danijela Kapusta, *Personentransformation. Zur Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion der Person im deutschen Theater der Jahrtausendwende*, München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2011.

³⁶³ Cf. Kapusta, “Das Erzähltheater” in *Personentransformation*, München 2011, p. 97.

in the field of theatrical novel adaptation and also a playwright for the Hamburger version of *Buddenbrooks* (2005), is actually also a representative for *Erzähltheater* on the contemporary stage; before stepping into the field of adaptation, von Düffel had written for the stage for many years and also made clear aesthetic arguments for his insistence on dramatic concepts and the depiction of reality.³⁶⁴ His idea echoes Thomas Ostermeier's manifesto on "neuer Realismus,"³⁶⁵ and both have made artistic achievements in support of this aesthetic stream in contemporary German theater.

Whether advocating for or against the dramatic/narrative, nowadays it is actually absurd to stand at one extreme, given all the revolutions that have already taken place in the theater. The dominance of the literary text has ended, and the closed dramatic form has been opened and non-linguistic expressions on the stage have already attained their importance in aesthetic minds. The adaptation of the novel may be seen in many cases as a reconstruction of "drama" with epic treatments. Nevertheless, as has been proved by the general aesthetic tendency in contemporary dramatic literature, it functions upon many common expressive methods, which were avant-garde or revolutionary but nowadays are seen as normal, or even close to being conventions of the stage. Examples are not also hard to find in the earlier analysis of each production, such as collective figures or multiple voices in one figure, or a simpler and more generalized stage design replacing historical accuracy; all of these have been discussed throughout and there is no need to repeat them here.

In a very simplified sense, novel adaptation is indeed a return to dramatic theater, and it accompanies the stream of contemporary drama writing and new narrative theater; but with closer

³⁶⁴ John von Düffel. "Neue Texte braucht das Land. Programmlosigkeit und Perspektiven — Zur Lage der neuen deutschen Dramatik" in *Theater der Zeit*, 10/2000, pp. 16-18.

³⁶⁵ Thomas Ostermeier. "Das Theater im Zeitalter seiner Beschleunigung" in *Theater der Zeit*, 7,8/1999, pp. 10-15.

speculation, we will find that concepts of the dramatic, as well as of the narrative, have already changed. As has been reflected in studies of contemporary dramatic theater, the coexistence of old and new aesthetic concepts may be seen as a normal situation in contemporary theater.³⁶⁶ *Narrating*, as a cluster of many aesthetic concepts, has been intertwined with another conceptual cluster, *Performing*, and both construct together the general expressive methods and aesthetic inclinations of novel adaptation in the contemporary German theater.

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³⁶⁶ Cf. Kapusta, *Personentransformation*, München 2011, p. 8.

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