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THEATER AGAINST THE TURN:
ACTING DIALECTICS AT FRANK CASTORF'S VOLKSBÜHNE

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Die ungelösten Antagonismen der Realität kehren wieder in den Kunstwerken als die immanenten Probleme ihrer Form. Das, nicht der Einschuß gegenständlicher Momente, definiert das Verhältnis der Kunst zur Gesellschaft.

—Theodor W. Adorno

(Henry fällt von der Bühne ins Publikum, schreit:) Zu viel Schwung in der Szene!

— Henry Hübchen

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores acting in productions directed by Frank Castorf at the Berlin Volksbühne between 1990 and 1994. Castorf's directorial style has transformed German theater, and continues to have notable influence on European directors today. Until now, however, scholars and critics have attended primarily to the directorial and dramaturgical innovations of these productions, and less to their "actorial" ones. This dissertation not only views acting as the mainstay of "the Castorf style." It also argues that Castorf's theater represents a paradigm shift in acting more broadly.

Each chapter takes one stage production as the starting point for an investigation into the operations and effects of "Castorfian acting." Chapter One takes *ROBBERS* [*RÄUBER*] to illustrate how these performances are created in rehearsal. Using archival material and interviews, I draw a picture of Castorf's rehearsal room as a site of "agonistic" interaction between actor, director, and text that inscribes itself in the actors' performances as a liminal ontology. Chapter Two shifts from the standpoint of production to that of reception to demonstrate how acting contributes to the Volksbühne's institutional image as a "disruptive factor" in the public sphere. I show how actors in *Clockwork Orange* perform this "disruption," and how this exposes and animates conflict between actor, audience, and city. Chapter Three demonstrates how the critical work of Castorf's theater occurs in the performances through techniques of dissociative splitting that enable actors to (re)present multiple characters at once. In *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* [*Pension Schöller/ Die Schlacht*], the actors map constellations of people, events, and attitudes from German history that implicate the country's theater "stars" in the cultural production of totalitarian ideology. The dissertation concludes with a brief reflection on the role of video in Castorf's theater and in my own research.

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FOREWORD

This project began twelve years ago in 2006 when I first stumbled upon the Volksbühne. At the age of twenty, I had never heard of Frank Castorf, Sophie Rois, or even of this theater, despite my professional aspirations to become a theater maker myself. It was only by chance that I ended up at Castorf's legendary production of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* [*Der Idiot*] in the equally legendary *New City* [*Neustadt*]—Bert Neumann's immersive cityscape set design.[1] The *Neustadt* occupied the entire space (stage and audience alike) with skyscrapers and bungalows made from plywood and Plexiglas, with shipping containers, and scaffolding all awash in the crude pink and red glare of flickering neon signs. Where the audience entered, the regular seating had been torn out, and replaced with a steep wooden rake that served as a makeshift audience walkway. There, my figurative stumble *upon* the Volksbühne promptly became a literal one *over* and *into* it. Whether it was the rapture of aesthetic disorientation or just the lack of security rails, my first "trip" to the Volksbühne landed me on crutches for the next three weeks.

During that time, my swollen foot figured as a cipher of the mental soreness I endured from that initial exposure to Castorf's theater. Admittedly, it wasn't *physical* suffering that drove me out the door at intermission… The production made no sense! Sure, my German skills could have been better, but it seemed unlikely that a clearer understanding of the dialogue would have answered my very basic questions: Why were all the actors screaming? Where were the quiet moments of emotional truth? Were those real cigarettes they were smoking? When would it all be over? These questions raced around my mind as I hobbled around Berlin; yet, whether by

[1] *Der Idiot*, Fyodor Dostoevsky, directed by Frank Castorf, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, October 15, 2002.

force of curiosity or just plain masochism, I found myself night after night back at Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz to take in more of those deeply unpleasant and perplexing performances.

Little did I know that this compulsion to return to the Volksbühne would stick with me for the next decade. Once back in the United States, I applied for a Fulbright to support a yearlong directing internship under René Pollesch. After just one production, however, the theater sent me to work with another director in need of an assistant who could read sheet music. Over the next year, I bounced from production to production, working in sound, video, dramaturgy, and so on. Eventually, the dramaturgs started to give me more tasks. At first, these were little jobs like checking over English translations, and typing up cue sheets. Later they would assign me larger responsibilities, including curating a performance series, authoring first-person texts for the monthly program, and even performing on stage as "the voice of capitalism." At the end of it all, the one year I had planned to spend at the Volksbühne turned into five.

Although I never officially worked on a Castorf production, he generously let me sit in on several rehearsals not only at the Volksbühne, but also at theaters in Paris, Munich, Vienna, and Moscow. Equally if not more important, however, was the time spent in the *Kantine* (the Volksbühne's cafeteria), conversing with the staff and ensemble, some of whom have worked at the theater since the Besson days of the 1970s. They showed me the essential role of collaboration and critique—even if oh so hierarchical—in the production of this unfamiliar kind of theater.

I hope this dissertation will serve as a kind of user's manual, providing the reader with the tools to make sense of not only acting in Castorf's theater, but of acting in German theater more generally. Since the 1990s, Castorf's theater has become a kind of "establishment" for German theater aesthetics, having been taken up and taken apart by two generations of theater

makers already. From René Pollesch's (b. 1962) discourse theater to Ersan Mondtag's (b. 1987) protracted party-performances, one would be hard pressed to find a German (or German-speaking) director today, who has not been directly influenced by Castorf's theater or its actors.

I especially hope this study will reach American theater makers. Like myself at the time, most theater students in the United States have never heard of Frank Castorf. In fact, many of our *working* theater makers have not. Back in 2002, John Rouse gave some reasons for this cultural blind spot in his review of Castorf's *The Insulted and Humiliated* [*Erniedrigte und Beleidigte*], which he aptly titled "The Volksbühne as an Un-American Institution."

> Mostly dance companies come on tour in the States from Germany, Pina Bausch and Sasha Waltz, for example, and our dance scene is not as conservative as is American theater. But in the US there is simply no equivalent for that which makes the work of the Volksbühne as a public institution so exciting and influential, and it would be a challenge for anyone to even imagine such a theater in our country.[2]

Remarkably, just one year later, this very production traveled to Rouse's home city of Los Angeles. The invitation did not come from one of L.A.'s major theaters like the Mark Taper Forum or the Geffen, however. Instead it came from UCLA.[3] Even today, this university-sponsored tour marks the only presentation of Castorf's work in the United States. This is just one example of the academy's essential role in giving American audiences access to contemporary international theater, something that our commercial institutions simply cannot afford to do. In these uncertain times, I hope my dissertation can become one more example of

[2] „Aus Deutschland kommen höchstens Tanzcompagnies auf Tournee in die Staaten, Pina Bausch und Sasha Waltz zum Beispiel, und unsere Tanzszene ist auch nicht so konservativ wie das amerikanische Theater. Aber in den USA gibt es einfach kein Äquivalent für das, was die Arbeit der Volksbühne als öffentliche Institution so aufregend und einflussreich macht, und es fiele einem schon schwer, sich ein solches Theater bei uns auch nur vorzustellen." John Rouse, „Somewhere over the rainbow: Die Volksbühne als unamerikanische Anstalt – eine amerikanische Würdigung," *Theater der Zeit*, trans., Thomas Irmer, 10/2002, 16.

[3] The Volksbühne's tour to Los Angeles was part of UCLA Live curated by David Sefton (2000-2010). In 2010, Sefton left UCLA to take over the Adelaide Festival in Australia. Since his departure, the Volksbühne has had no further invitations to the United States, leaving the total number of appearances in the country at two. (The other was the Volksbühne's 2005 production of *Ivanov* directed by Dimiter Gotscheff).

how academic work can open up pathways for engagement with theater from beyond one's own national borders.

INTRODUCTION
ACTING DIALECTICS

This is a dissertation about acting presented in the form of three close readings of plays directed by Frank Castorf at the Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz. Under Castorf's management from 1992-2017, the Volksbühne became one of the most prominent theaters in Germany—and arguably on the continent—as the country transformed from a divided nation to a unified state at the center of a unified Europe. For Berlin audiences, the Volksbühne provided a platform for debates about domestic political issues. For international audiences, it became the flagship of a new theatrical avant-garde independent of the local issues informing its artistic experimentation. This combination of local and global intervention captures how "Castorf's theater"—both in the sense of the Volksbühne and in the sense of the productions he directed there—reshaped the aesthetic and institutional parameters of late twentieth and early twenty-first century theater.

As critic Peter Kümmel writes in a 2017 retrospective, Castorf's theater bears a characteristic "directorial style [that has] changed German theater."[1] Indeed, today many of Europe's leading stage directors have engaged with Castorf's practices, not to mention the many directors who have explicitly set themselves *against* Castorf, which also indicates a kind of influence. Until now, however, scholars and critics have focused on the directorial and dramaturgical innovations of Castorf's theater, and less to its "actorial" ones. I aim to address this lacuna here.

This dissertation not only views acting as the mainstay of "the Castorf style," it also argues that Castorf's theater represents a paradigm shift in acting more broadly. "Hysterical,"

[1] Peter Kümmel, „Soll nach 25 Jahren schon Schluss sein?" *Die Zeit,* 12/2015, March 19, 2015. https://www.zeit.de/2015/12/frank-castorf-volksbuehne-berlin-theaterdirektor (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

"schizophrenic," and "uninhibited" are just some of the adjectives that have been used to describe these idiosyncratic performances. The New York Times, for example, introduced the Volksbühne to Anglo-American audiences with the following opening description:

> Under [Castorf's] direction, actors ignored huge portions of the classical texts they performed, stripped naked, screamed their lines for the duration of five-hour productions, got drunk onstage, dropped out of character, conducted private fights, tossed paint at their public, saw a third of the audience walk out as they spoke two lines at an excruciatingly slow pace, may or may not have induced a theatergoer to drink urine, threw potato salad, immersed themselves in water, recited newspaper reports of Hitler's last peacetime birthday party, told bad jokes, called the audience East German sellouts and appeared to but did not kill a mouse.[2]

This portrayal foregrounds the precarity of acting in Castorf's theater. Actors are "stripped naked," forced to scream for hours on end, and pushed into conditions of real physical risk. But why? What work does this peculiar and almost certainly hazardous kind of acting do? Is it meant to elicit a certain audience response? Or perhaps to question the relationship between theater and reality more broadly? Does this acting have a tradition? What is at stake here?

Figure 0.1 Herbert Fritsch in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* (Castorf, 1994) (Photo: Wolfgang Gregor)

[2] Sally McGrane, "Outrageousness, Herr Director, Is a Tough Act to Follow," *New York Times*, January 14, 2007. https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/14/theater/14sall.html (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

To begin to answer these questions, this introduction aims to shed light on the historical context, philosophical concepts, and representational figures informing this mode of acting. I begin with an overview of the two main discursive paradigms that lay claim to Castorf's theater: *Regietheater* and "postdramatic theater." I then provide an account of how unification politics led to Castorf's appointment, and the institutional continuities and discontinuities that appointment implied. The next section explores the influence of Bertolt Brecht on Castorf's theater, specifically with regard to the relationship between a tradition of dialectical acting, and what I am calling Castorfian "acting dialectics." I conclude with an overview of the subsequent chapters.

But before I address these points, I would first like to contextualize the acting in Castorf's theater in relation to the figure of the *Wende* as a way to access its dialectical work. A *Wende* or a "turn" can signify the movement from one historical period to another, for instance, "the turn of the century" [*Jahrhundertwende*]. Preceded by a definite article, *die Wende* designates the period between 1989 and 1990 when Germany transitioned from a divided nation to "one unified state" [*einem vereinigten Staat*]. Even though the legal term for this was in fact an "accession" [*Beitritt*] of the eastern German Democratic Republic (GDR) into the western Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and not a "unification" [*Vereinigung*] (or even a "re-unification" [*Wiedervereinigung*] as some have suggested), the political rhetoric surrounding these events rendered "the turn" [*die Wende*] as a synonym for "unification."[3] In this way, *die Wende* is not

[3] Willy Brandt, „Rede von Willy Brandt am 10. November 1989 vor dem Rathaus Schöneberg," November 10, 1989, *World News*. https://wn.com/mobile/rede_von_willy_brandt_am_10_november_1989_2 (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

just any turn. It implies a "turn toward unity" against which, I argue, Castorf and his actors situate themselves.[4]

The noun *Wende* can also be rendered as a verb by adding an –n [*wenden*]. In the reflexive form [*sich wenden*], "to turn" becomes the more dialogical "to turn oneself toward." For instance, *sich an jemanden wenden* not only means "to turn oneself toward someone," but also "to ask someone for help" or "to address oneself to someone." The shift from one mode of address to another resembles the long-established technique actors, directors, and playwrights have used to calibrate the relationship between the audience and the stage. Bertolt Brecht, for example, characterizes the actor's change of address from the fictional world of the play to the audience as a "full turn" [*volle Wendung*].[5]

A *Wende* can also signify a paradigm shift or a "turning point." The term "acting dialectics," which I use to designate this shift, is resolutely ambiguous, as are the practices it signifies. The perpetual reorientation of the actor's mode of address produces an ambiguity in his or her performance that deflects the spectator's ability to identify the actor with a coherent subject position, with a single *who*.

It is the work of this dissertation to show how acting in Castorf's theater represents the locus where a turn *against* [*sich gegen wenden*] or *from beneath*, that is, where a sub-version of unity is performed. The overlapping and fluctuating roles these actors assume can range from the dramatic characters found in the original script to relevant historical figures to the actor him- or herself. They can even take the form of logics, political attitudes, and the stuff of discourse that

[4] Despite the rhetoric of "unification," East and West Germany were not united on equal terms. Instead, East Germany became part of the West German state.

[5] Bertolt Brecht, „Kurze Beschreibung einer neuen Technik der Schauspielkunst, die einen Verfremdungseffekt hervorbringt," *Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* (*GkA*), eds., Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei, and Klaus-Betleft Müller, vol. 22.2, (Berlin, Weimar, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 644.

never come to rest in a single unity. In this way, the actor's subversion of representational stability produces what Adorno calls the "dizzying" or "disorienting" [*Schwindelerrengende*] force of dialectics.[6] With the help of video recordings, I guide the reader through these performances, pointing out how the actors pass from one standpoint into another without any clear indication of where one begins and another ends. Moreover, my readings explore how these acting techniques avail themselves of the intrinsic tensions of (re)presentation in performance in order to expose and animate correlating tensions in reality. As such, acting in Castorf's theater is not only ambiguous. It is also "agonistic."[7]

The ambiguous quality of this acting lends the actor dialectical form, evoking the fluctuating and insurmountable blind spot of materialism. Different philosophers have given this property different names: Slavoj Zizek calls it the "parallax gap"; Theodor Adorno calls it the "non-identical."[8] Fundamentally, these terms point to the incompleteness integral to a materialist picture of reality. This is not to say that the materialist has a broken (or ambiguous) picture of

[6] „Dialektik, die nicht länger an die Identität ‚geheftet' ist, provoziert, wo nicht den Einwand des Bodenlosen, der an seiner faschistischen Früchten zu erkennen ist, den des Schwindelerregenden." Adorno, Theodor W., *Negative Dialektik*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed., Rolf Tiedemann, vol. 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015), 42.

[7] I use the term *agon* to distinguish the ambiguous tensions underlying Castorf's theater from the more hostile, unambiguous force of "antagonism." The term *agonism* comes out of the framework of agonistic pluralism as developed by political theorist Chantal Mouffe. Agonistic pluralism proposes an "agonistic" public sphere of contestation that productively mobilizes "passion" as an alternative to the consensus-based politics of neo-liberalism as promoted by thinkers like Francis Fukuyama. Although Mouffe herself has not entertained links between agonistics and theater, the etymological roots of her key term have theatrical origins. An ancient Greek noun meaning "struggle," the term *agon* refers to various kinds of public contests, including music, athletics, and theater. Christopher Balme's 2014 book *The Theatrical Public Sphere* adopts Mouffe's concept to argue that certain theaters gained relevance in the public sphere insofar as they provided "agonistic" spaces for debate. Although Balme's arguments about the agonistic operations of global theater differ starkly from my more local arguments about the Volksbühne, his engagement with Mouffe's term is helpful for my thinking about the relationship between Castorf's theater and society. See: Christopher Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 9; Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political: Thinking in Action* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005).

[8] „Wahrhaft ist ohne Nichtidentisches keine Identität, während diese, als Totale, bei ihm doch den ontologischen Vorrang an sich reißt." Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, 126; Slavoj Zizek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 7 & 20.

reality, but that for a materialist, the whole picture of the world is precisely whole through the recognition of its lacking, that is, of the whole's *hole*.

Even after German unification officially ended, the Volksbühne's turn against unity carried on for another twenty-five years.[9] In 2015, it was unexpectedly thrown back into the limelight after a press leak announced that the mayor would replace Castorf with then director of the Tate Modern, Chris Dercon. The handing over of the Volksbühne to a curator from the commercial art world with more experience in fundraising than in theater management sparked public outcry.[10]

Beyond the noise of pseudo-artistic *Aktionen* and professional opportunism that accompanied this crisis, it also prompted a productive conversation about the role of actors in Germany's public theaters.[11] This coincided with a related debate about the differences between an "actor" (someone who portrays someone else), and a "performer" (someone who portrays themselves), and the relevance of that question for the art form's future.[12] Though not its primary

[9] „Wenn wir an der Volksbühne etwas hassen, ist es der Konsens. Gegen diese Gier nach Übereinstimmung kann sich auch der Konflikt mit dem Zuschauer richten, den man mit dem uralten Medium des Theaters manchmal verstören kann." Frank Castorf qtd. in: Peter Laudenbach, „Gespräch mit Frank Castorf – ‚Wenn wir an der Volksbühne etwas hassen, ist es der Konsens,'" *tip berlin*, July 28, 2017. https://www.tip-berlin.de/gespraech-mit-frank-castorf-wenn-wir-an-der-volksbuehne-etwas-hassen-ist-es-der-konsens/ (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

[10] Simon Strauss, „Wer beansprucht als nächstes Platz?" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 28, 2017. http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/besetzung-der-berliner-volksbuehne-aktion-mensch-15221139.html (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018); Brandon Woolf, "Frank Castorf's Art of Institutional Dis/avowal: A Volksbühne Elegy," *Theatre Survey*, 59:2 (May 2018), 249-264.

[11] Holger Syme, "A Theatre without Actors," *Theatre Survey*, 59.2 (May 2018); Christine Wahl, „Was der Abgang von Sophie Rois bedeutet," *Der Tagesspiegel*, December 11, 2017. https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/berliner-volksbuehne-was-der-abgang-von-sophie-rois-bedeutet/20691922.html (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

[12] Erika Fischer-Lichte provides the following concise formula(tion) as a definition of acting: "Actor A impersonates role X while S is watching," in Erika Fischer-Lichte, "A szinház nyelve," *Pro PHILosophia*, 1, no. 1 (1995), 25-45. In recent years, a handful of German theaters have begun casting "performers" in lieu of "actors." In this context, an actor is a person trained to create characters using his or her body, voice, and interpretive faculties. While casting practices have long taken the actor's individual characteristics into consideration—specifically gender, race, age, and physical "type"—whether or not an actor has shared a lived experience with his role has been of little to no importance. Instead, the actor "(re)presents" [*darstellen*] (Fischer-Lichte) or "shows" [*zeigen*] (Brecht). In this way, any actor should be capable of playing any

focus, this study shows how acting in Castorf's theater occurs around the tangency of acting and performance. On stage, Volksbühne actors (re)present hybrid forms, reflexively gesturing toward the performativity immanent to their representational activities. By way of these reflections, I hope to recover acting as a meaningful site of conceptual engagement beyond this one case study.

DISCURSIVE PARADIGMS

Scholarship on Castorf's theater has been framed by two main discursive paradigms: *Regietheater* and postdramatic theater. Both emerged out of West German academic contexts in the second half of the twentieth century as ways to explain perceived changes in the relationship between text and staging occurring at the time.[13] In the following, I briefly review these paradigms, and show how questions of acting expose the limitations of their conceptual frameworks.

character regardless of how similar to or different from him- or herself it may be. Indeed, this is the very measure of the actor's skill. The essential quality of a "performer" is that his or her own lived experience overlaps with that of the dramatic character in a way that invests the staging with new meaning through his or her radical identification. Cf. Kevin Rittberger, „Wider die Advokaten der Alternativslosigkeit," *nachtkritik.de*, November 17, 2016; Bernard Stegemann, „Achtung, echte Menschen!" *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 2, 2017. These actor-performer debates in Germany resemble debates taking place in the United States on the question of representation and identity in film casting. Cf. Aziz Ansari, "Aziz Ansari on Acting, Race and Hollywood," *New York Times*, November 10, 2015; Tom Brook, "When White Actors Play Other Races," British Broadcasting Corporation, October 6, 2015.

[13] As with Berlin's theaters, unification had a significant impact on the institutional politics of theater studies in the city. For example, the Humboldt University's *Theaterwissenschaft* program—a unique curriculum that combined theory and practice, and which Frank Castorf attended—has been almost entirely dismantled in the interest of consolidating Berlin's theater studies "scene" at the Free University in former West Berlin. Cf. Ute Bergien, and Miriam M. Beul, „Schmoren im eigenen Saft. Ein Beitrag ehemaliger Studenten zur Debatte um die Theaterwissenschaft," *Berliner Zeitung*, July 10, 2000; Ernst Schumacher, „Das gebrochene Monopol der Bühne. Ein Beitrag zur Debatte über die Theaterwissenschaft der Humboldt-Universität," *Berliner Zeitung*, June 28, 2000.

Regie is the German term for "directing," although *Regietheater* is generally translated as "director's theater."[14] This term implies a practice of theater production whereby the director is considered to be the production's "author" (as opposed to the playwright) based on the high degree of directorial interpretation. Often, however, it merely offers a pejorative catchall for clichéd notions of an authoritarian director "destroying" canonical plays. Despite the fuzziness of this concept, a significant amount of Anglo-American scholarship upholds this director-centered view of German theater, and organizes its thinking about theater around questions of directorial invention alone. Even though German stage directors do enjoy greater artistic license than their Anglo-American counterparts, one should not underrate the contribution designers, dramaturgs, and actors can make to any director's mark. The "Castorf style," for one, is unthinkable without his regular collaborators, especially his actors.

Some scholars have already written nuanced accounts about the conceptual shortcomings of the term *Regietheater* by drawing attention to the kinds of complex critical work that directing performs.[15] For example, Peter M. Boenisch points out how *Regietheater* posits bogus oppositions between writer and director or between text and staging. Not wanting to dispose of the idea of *Regie* as essential work in theater production, however, he proposes instead an understanding of *Regie* (and thus *Regietheater*) as a "dialectic 'style of thinking.'"[16] Boenisch

[14] Peter Boenisch points out how *Regietheater* translates literally as "direction theater" despite the fact that it is often translated as "director's theater." For more on the terminological *dissensus* surrounding *Regie* see: Peter M. Boenisch, *Directing Scenes and Senses: The thinking of Regie* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2015), 1-2.
[15] Cf. Fredric Jameson, "Regietheater, or Eurotrash," *New Left Review,* 64, July-August 2010; David J. Levin, *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2007); Anne Midgette, "An Advocate of Action to Set the Tone of Opera," *The Washington Post*, July 6, 2008. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/04/AR2008070400858.html (last accessed Aug. 8, 2018).
[16] Boenisch, *Directing Scenes and Senses*, 8.

uses Castorf as one of a handful of case studies to show how *Regie* can perform a "dialectic mediation of both the playtext and of the material and ideological conditions of our reality."[17]

Postdramatic theater is the second paradigm that lays claim to Castorf. Hans-Thies Lehmann's 1999 study, *Postdramatic Theater* [*Postdramatisches Theater*] suggests a new genre of theater that moves beyond text-based drama, which Lehmann posits as the historical norm.[18] This undoes the disciplinary hierarchies of "dramatic theater," setting equivalences between each discrete "part" to influence the meaning of the whole.[19] Since 1999, postdramatic theater has become one of, if not *the* dominant conceptual framework for German theater in the 1990s. Although Lehmann explicitly distinguishes it from *Regietheater*,[20] he too defines postdramatic theater on the basis of a perceived change in the relationship between text and staging, positing dubious oppositions between "text," "space," "time," "body," and "media" that disavow theater's essential interdisciplinary entanglements.

Lehmann's explicit separation of *Regietheater* from postdramatic theater in combination with his inclusion of Castorf in the latter suggests a confusion about what Castorf's theater is actually up to. At the same time, Lehmann also appears to de-contextualize (and thus de-politicize) Castorf's theater when he claims that German unification did not inform the paradigm shifts that postdramatic theater represents.[21] While it seems likely that the artistic contributions of Robert Wilson, William Forsythe, the Wooster Group or any of the other scores of artists Lehmann subsumes into his "postdramatic panorama" are not attributable to German political

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[17] Boenisch, *Directing Scenes and Senses*, 184.
[18] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1999), 21.
[19] "A continuous principle of postdramatic theater is the de-hierarchization of the means of theatrical production." [„Ein durchgängiges Prinzip des postdramatischen Theaters ist die Enthierarchisierung der Theatermittel."] *Ibid.,* 146.
[20] *Ibid.*, 83-84.
[21] „Erst recht ist das Fehlurteil zu meiden, die Theaterphänomene der 1990er Jahre wären etwa direkt oder indirekt von der politischen Umwälzung um 1989, der ‚Wende', hervorgerufen worden." *Ibid.,* 33.

events, unification is an indispensable factor in Castorf's case; and to the extent that this theater has had significant influence on other artists also in Lehmann's panorama, it seems worthwhile (and even necessary) to reevaluate the role of unification in the formation of Castorf's aesthetics.[22]

THE INSTITUTIONAL TURN

In Berlin, German unification led to a comprehensive restructuring of two theater landscapes into one. In 1991, the city's public theaters numbered a whopping eighteen, seven of which were located in the former West, and eleven in the East.[23] In light of the financial toll this would have taken on the newly unified city's coffers, the municipal parliament decided to make cuts—a delicate undertaking given the sense of economic and political victimization unification caused on either side of the city.[24] This lent cultural institutions a great deal of symbolic weight, meaning that any decision that would skew the balance of institutions affiliated with either East or West was sure to incite disagreement. The city urgently needed a balanced vision for its public theaters.

To this end, the Berlin Senator for Culture, Ulrich Roloff-Momin, assembled a committee of experts led by the cultural powerbroker Ivan Nagel to draft a formal recommendation to the city senate.[25] The committee's proposal describes the future of Berlin's theaters as not only a

[22] These artists include: René Pollesch, Leander Haußmann, and Stefan Pucher. Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater*, 24-25.
[23] All figures quoted from Ivan Nagel, „Zur Zukunft der Berliner Theater: Gutachten an den Senat von Berlin," *Schriften zum Theater* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), 128. For a comprehensive account of the Berlin theater debates after 1989 see: Sabine Zolchow, "The Island of Berlin," *Theatre in the Berlin Republic: German Drama Since Reunification*, ed., Denise Varney (Berlin etc.: Peter Lang, 2008), 55-80.
[24] For more on the negative consequences of unification see: Konrad H. Jarausch, *Das Ende der Zuversicht: Die siebzige Jahre als Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); Andreas Huyssen, "Nation, Race, and Immigration: German Identities after Unification," *Discourse*, vol. 16, no. 3 (Spring, 1994), 6-28.
[25] Ivan Nagel was a Hungarian-born theater critic, who had worked in the upper management of West German public theaters in Munich, Hamburg, and Stuttgart (and who incidentally studied philosophy in Frankfurt under

municipal issue, but a national—potentially even a European—one. Robust investment in public theater, they write, could restore Berlin to its historic standing not only as the capital of a unified German state, but as the "capital of European theater."[26]

One of the cornerstones of the committee's proposal was the city's second-largest public stage, the Volksbühne-East.[27] The proposal recommended that Castorf be appointed artistic manager, and that this theater be turned around with a new institutional mission to address Germany's internal tensions. As the city unified politically, geographically, and culturally, the Volksbühne was slated to engage with residual tensions between East and West that unification had not necessarily resolved, but merely unfixed from their geographic coordinates. Envisioned by the committee as a site of resistance against the smooth integration of Berlin's Eastern institutions into the West, the Volksbühne would push back against unification under its new leadership. It would turn against "the turn."

Although this moment in Berlin theater history is frequently characterized as a kind of rupture, the concrete recommendations the proposal makes for the Volksbühne feature two noteworthy continuities. First, they seek to retain significant parts of the theater's GDR legacy. Secondly, they justify giving the Volksbühne to Castorf and his troupe on the basis of values grounded in Germany's enlightenment theater tradition. In the following, I expand on these two

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Adorno). The other committee members included: Henning Rischbieter, the founder of *Theater heute*; Michael Merschmeier, a novelist and critic for *Theater heute*; and Friedrich Dieckmann, an essayist, dramaturg, and the committee's sole East German representative. Cf. Zolchow, "The Island of Berlin," 77. For another English-language account see (with caution regarding some details): Marvin Carlson, *Theater is More Beautiful than War: German Stage Directing in the late twentieth century* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2009), 98-101.

[26] „Seit etwas hundert Jahren ist Berlin mit Paris (manchmal mit Moskau, London) die Hauptstadt des europäischen Theaters." Nagel, „Zur Zukunft der Berliner Theater," 179.

[27] At the moment of unification, both East and West Berlin each had their own Volksbühne. While they were not officially called „Volksbühne-East" or „Volksbühne-West," in the context of the post-Wall theater debates, they are frequently referred to as such.

points, the histories they represent, and briefly introduce how Castorf and his collaborators either build upon or turn against them.

The committee's proposal maintains the Volksbühne's GDR legacy first by connecting its new institutional mission to the theater's artistic profile during the 1970s with explicit reference to the East German artists working there at that time. Under artistic manager Benno Besson (1971-1978), the Volksbühne had become a cultural hub for its local audience, while also providing a rare platform for presenting international companies from both sides of the Iron Curtain.[28] A Swiss director and former Brecht protégé, Besson left the Berliner Ensemble in the mid-1960s for the Volksbühne where new, nonconformist plays by Peter Hacks, Kurt Bartel, and Heiner Müller were being produced in response to the increasing restriction of artistic expression by the Socialist Unity Party [*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*] (hereafter: SED). In 1969, Besson accepted a position in the theater's artistic administration, and in 1974, he was appointed artistic manager.

Besson recruited three other Brecht assistants from the Berliner Ensemble. These men are also named in the committee's proposal: Matthias Langhoff, Manfred Karge, and Fritz Marquardt. This collective move did not just transfer the Brechtian legacy geographically from the Schiffbauerdam to Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz; it facilitated a critical engagement with Brecht that problematized and deconstructed his work both through practices of directing (e.g.,

[28] Actor Henry Hübchen, who joined the Volksbühne ensemble under Besson and remained throughout the first decade of Castorf's tenure, remembers the rare sense of international encounter fostered by Besson at this GDR institution. "[This] was made possible at this Volksbühne by this Swiss manager, who in reality was a citizen of the world. For a GDR citizen like me, this theater was an open world. A Swiss artistic manager, who constantly travelled back and forth, and by means of his reputation lured people from West Germany and other Western countries here, who worked here as interns or as assistant directors. It was almost a European milieu." [„Das wurde aber in dieser Volksbühne durch diesen Schweizer Intendanten möglich, der ja im Grunde ein Weltbürger war. Für einen DDR-Bürger wie mich war dieses Haus wie eine offene Welt. Ein Schweizer Intendant, der ständig hin und her fuhr und durch seinen Ruf Leute aus Westdeutschland oder aus dem westlichen Ausland hierherlockte, die hier hospitierten oder Regieassistenzen machten. Das war ein fast europäisches Milieu." Hübchen qtd. in Irmer and Schmidt, *Die Bühnenrepublik* (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2003), 278-279.

Karge/Langhoff's *Die Räuber*), as well as practices of dramatic writing (e.g., new plays like *The Battle* [*Die Schlacht*] by Heiner Müller, whose relationship with the Volksbühne carried on even after Besson's departure in 1978).[29] What's more, the Besson era, its take on Brecht's legacy, and its skepticism about the East German state had a significant impact on a student in the theater department at the nearby Humboldt University. That student was Frank Castorf.[30]

The committee's recommendation to appoint Castorf as artistic manager of the Volksbühne also retains the theater's GDR legacy.

> We recommend, that the state of Berlin … give the Volksbühne am Luxemburgplatz to a young troupe, presumably with an ex-GDR core … At the moment we know of only one person we could recommend in good conscience: Frank Castorf. Once already, in the days of the GDR, he tried to make his own theater; the party secretary did not tolerate it for long.[31]

In the late GDR of the 1980s, the experimental and ambiguous quality of Castorf's theater raised the eyebrows of colleagues, audiences, and the SED.[32] In 1981, he was "reassigned" to a small theater in Anklam, a remote town near the Polish-German border where his work would, the party hoped, go unnoticed.

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[29] Dietze, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, 206-207.

[30] Castorf received a *Magister* in Theater Studies, the equivalent of a master's degree in a system without a bachelor's. The course of study at the Humboldt University's department of Theater Studies [*Theaterwissenschaft*] provided an education in philosophy, literary theory, and theater practice. Frank Castorf followed an unlikely path to his current status as one of Europe's most influential living stage directors. His decision to pursue a university course of study rather than the standard directorial training at a conservatory officially prepared him for a career as a dramaturg and not as a director. This education would contribute to his unique directorial practice, specifically his deconstructionist approach to text (see Chapter One), his dialectical view of artistic institutions (see Chapter Two), and his genealogical understanding of history (see Chapter Three). Cf. Frank Castorf, interview with Jörg Wagner und Heike Zappe, „Das hatte etwas Verwunschenes, Dornröschenmäßiges." https://www.hu-berlin.de/de/ueberblick/menschen/prominente/castorf (last accessed Aug. 8, 2018).

[31] „Wir schlagen vor, dass das Land Berlin … die Volksbühne am Luxemburgplatz einer jungen Truppe, vermutlich mit Ex-DDR-Kern… Im Augenblick kennen wir nur einen, den wir mit gutem Gewissen vorschlagen könnten: Frank Castorf. Er hat schon einmal, in DDR-Zeiten, in Anklam versucht, sein eigenes Theater zu machen; der Parteisekretär ließ es nicht lange zu." Nagel, „Zur Zukunft der Berliner Theater," 135.

[32] For more on Castorf's career in the GDR see: Tanja Bogusz, *Institution und Utopie: Ost-West Transformationen an der Berliner Volksbühne* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2007), 183-191; Carlson, *Theatre is More Beautiful than* War, 95-98; Matthew Cornish, *Performing Unification: History and Nation in German Theater after 1989* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 90-92; Robin Detje, *Provokation aus Prinzip* (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 2002) 61-143.

Instead, Castorf took advantage of the theater's geographic isolation to experiment with new methods and forms that prefigured his work at the Volksbühne, in particular, his work with actors. In Anklam, acting became the focal point of his directorial practice,[33] and he developed artistic relationships with actors Silvia Rieger, Hendrik Arnst, and Kurt Naumann, all of whom would later accompany him to Berlin.[34] And when he began to receive invitations to direct at West German theaters in the late 1980s, Castorf cast at least one of these actors in each production.[35] Additionally, actor Henry Hübchen, already member of the Volksbühne ensemble in the 1980s, traveled to Anklam to work with Castorf, anticipating what would become one of the most celebrated actor-director collaborations in German theater history.

After the SED forced Castorf out of Anklam in 1985 as punishment for his controversial staging of Brecht's *Drums in the Night* [*Trommeln in der Nacht*], he worked briefly as a freelance director before landing a position as a staff director [*Hausregisseur*] at the Deutsches Theater in 1990. There he met another leading figure of GDR theater, actor/director Alexander Lang.[36] Although never a part of the Volksbühne—and therefore unmentioned in the committee's proposal—Lang represents a noteworthy precursor to Castorf's work with actors and text. Lang's "strong belief in the active, autonomous role of the actor in the collective construction of a dramatic production" anticipates the autonomy Castorf affords his own actors

[33] Siegfried Wilzopolski, „Die Theaterästhetik Frank Castorfs. Versuch einer Darstellung anhand seiner Inszenierung ‚Räuber von Schiller' / Volksbühne Berlin 1990," in: Akademie der Künste Berlin (Academy of Arts Berlin), production documentation for *RÄUBER* 668 I.
[34] Unlike Rieger and Arnst, Hübchen was not part of the ensemble in Anklam, but already a member of the Volksbühne ensemble.
[35] These productions include: *Hamlet* at the Schauspiel Köln (1988), *Miss Sarah Sampson* at the Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel (1989), and *Aias* at the Theater Basel (1989).
[36] Born in the GDR eleven years before Castorf, Lang began his career as an actor with a two-year engagement at the Berliner Ensemble (1967-1969) before moving to the Deutsches Theater where he went on to build his directing career.

in rehearsal (see Chapter One).[37] Castorf's theater also likely owes its engagement with physical comedy traditions such as co*mmedia dell'arte* and slapstick to Lang's shift from Brechtian political "gesture" [*Gestus*] to comic irreverence.[38] In Castorf's theater, this manifests in the kinds of rapid bodily transformations of actors that I explore in Chapters One and Three.

Despite these recommendations to preserve certain aspects of the institution's East German history, the committee did not intend to preserve the Volksbühne as a "GDR legacy theater." As Ivan Nagel explains, "[The Volksbühne] is the first theater of unified Germany precisely because it is an enclosure for the uncomfortable home, for the uncanny homeland."[39] Indeed, Castorf's Volksbühne was not a refuge for disaffected former GDR citizens. The dramaturgs (e.g., Matthias Lilienthal and Carl Hegemann) hailed from the West. The staff directors (e.g., Christoph Marthaler, Christoph Schlingensief, Johann Kresnik, and later René Pollesch and Herbert Fritsch) came from Switzerland, Austria, and different regions in the FRG. Moreover, Castorf replaced a large number of the Volksbühne's company of GDR actors[40] with younger thespians from both the West (e.g., Herbert Fritsch, Marc Hosemann, Bernhard Schütz, Volker Spengler, Martin Wuttke, etc.), and from the East (e.g., Kathrin Angerer, Hendrik Arnst, Astrid Meyerfeldt, Kurt Naumann, Milan Peschel, Torsten Ranft, Silvia Rieger, Alexander Scheer, etc.), and even from countries outside of the German-speaking region (e.g., Sir Henry, Sophie Rois, Jeanette Spassova, etc.).

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[37] David Bathrick, *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press), 155.

[38] For more on Lang's approach to Brecht and use of comedy see: David Bathrick, *The Powers of Speech*, 155-158; Alexander Lang, Interview, „Für ein komödiantisches Theater: Gespräch mit Alexander Lang," *Theater der Zeit* 5 (1983), 21-25; Martin Linzer, „Alexander Lang oder: Klassik für heute. Inszenierungen am Deutschen Theater 1976-1986," *Durch den Eisernen Vorhang: Theater im geteilten Deutschland 1945 bis 1990*, ed., Henning Rischbieter (Berlin: Ullstein Buchverlag, Propyläen Verlag, 1999), 220.

[39] „Die Volksbühne ist kein Nachlass-Theater der DDR. Sie ist das erste, bislang einzige gesamtdeutsche Theater: eben weil sie ein Gehäuse des unbequemen Zuhause, der unheimlichen Heimat ist." Ivan Nagel, „Berlin, 21. April 1994. Festrede zu zwei Jubiläen—über den Augenblick," 173.

[40] Dietze, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, 215 (fn. 124).

The ambiguous institutional profile cultivated by the Volksbühne in unified Germany is perhaps best illustrated by the sign erected on top of it by chief designer Bert Neumann. The sign spells out "OST" [EAST].[41] I speak in greater detail about this sign in Chapter Two, explaining how it does not merely designate the theater's political "identity," but rather it stages the internalized *agon* produced by East Germany's integration into the West. It performs an architectural resistance to precisely the kind of institutional integration Ivan Nagel and the committee set out to accomplish. It is the brand of this theater's turn against, of its subversion.

Figure 0.2 Bert Neumann's "OST" sign (2017)
(Photo credit: Immo Bräutigam)

[41] The role of German national identity at Castorf's Volksbühne has been explored in two major works of scholarship. Antje Dietze's cultural history of the Volksbühne, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, attends to the crisis of German national identity, and Berliners' "need for identification." Likewise, Tanja Bogusz' *Institution and Utopie* interprets the Volksbühne's institutional and artistic production as a measure of Berlin's "East-West transformations" during the 1990s. These studies argue that the Volksbühne's ambiguous aesthetics mirrored a kind of cultural ambivalence toward German unification, particularly from the East German perspective.

The second point of continuity in the committee's 1991 proposal is couched in its language about the "illuminating" theater it imagined Castorf and his troupe would bring to Berlin. This endorsement of theater on the basis of its capacity to impact its audience resonates with the enlightenment ambitions at the foundation of Germany's public theater system. In the mid to late 18th century, dramatists such as Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe reimagined theater as a public institution for bourgeois moral edification. In his seminal essay, "The Theater Viewed as a Moral Institution," Schiller explains how theater's capacity to mobilize empathy [*Einfühlung*] between actor and audience can stimulate emotional identification, promoting "consensus" [*Übereinstimmung*] about moral values of understanding, tolerance, and individual sovereignty, and creating the general impression of a universal "similarity" [*Ähnlichkeit*] amongst mankind.[42] By cultivating a liberal, affective union among audience members, theater would promote the cultural unity needed to bring the German-speaking peoples together into a single, national "people" or *Volk*. The committee's vision for a new Volksbühne that will offer an "illuminating and unsettling look" [„*erhellenden und verstörenden Blick*"] at the state of the nation participates in a long tradition of mutual reinforcement between Germany's public theaters and national unification—a tradition I describe in greater detail in Chapter Two.

[42] "The national spirit of a people is what I call the similarity and *agreement* of opinions and tendencies about objects, about which another nation thinks and feels differently. Only in theater is it possible to achieve this *agreement* to a high degree … because it *unites* all standings and classes. If there were *one* main feature to all our plays, if our poets were to *agree* [*sich einigen*] and create a firm covenant for this purpose … with *one* word, if we lived it, to have a national stage, then we would too become a nation." [„Nationalgeist eines Volks nenne ich die Ähnlichkeit und *Übereinstimmung* seiner Meinungen und Neigungen bei Gegenständen, worüber eine andere Nation anders meint und empfindet. Nur der Schaubühne ist es möglich, diese *Übereinstimmung* in einem hohen Grad zu bewirken, … weil sie alle Stände und Klassen in sich *vereinigt* und den gebahntesten Weg zum Verstand und zum Herzen hat. Wenn in allen unsern Stücken *ein* Hauptzug herrschte, wenn unsre Dichter unter sich einig werden und einen festen Bund zu diesem Endzweck errichten wollten—wenn strenge Auswahl ihre Arbeiten leitete, ihr Pinsel nur Volksgegenständen sich weihte, —mit einem Wort, wenn wir es erlebten, eine Nationalbühne zu haben, so würden wir auch eine Nation."] Friedrich Schiller, „Was kann eine gute stehende Schaubühne eigentlich wirken?" *Sämtliche Werke*, ed., Wolfgang Riedel, vol. 5 (Munich: dtv, 2004), 830. Translation and italics mine. For more on Schiller, theater and identification see: Koopmann, Helmut, „Schillers Theater- und Bühnenpraxis," *Das Schiller-Handbuch*, ed., Helmut Koopmann (Stuttgart: Alfred Krönger Verlag, 1998), 233-239; and Wolfgang Riedel, „Schriften zum Theater, zur bildenden Kunst und zur Philosophie vor 1790," *Das Schiller-Handbuch*, 560-566.

Even today, the enlightenment mission lives on in Germany's heavily subsidized system as a justification of theater's public value. In 2014, the German UNESCO Commission recognized the entirety of that system as a site of "Intangible Cultural Heritage" on the grounds that these theaters function as sites of public exchange and dialogue where "players and the audience" participate in "co-designing" their "communities."[43] The utopian aspiration that theater can improve the world also illuminates the essential link between German theater and society captured by that language's word for "audience": *Publikum*, meaning "of the state," a *res publica*. It is also the same motivating factor behind another key point of reference for acting in Castorf's theater: Bertolt Brecht.

A POST-BRECHTIAN THEATER?

In order to understand the paradigm shift that acting in Castorf's theater represents, one must first understand its point of origin. In the following, I explain how Castorfian "acting dialectics" relates to Brecht's dialectical modes of acting. Admittedly, Castorf allies himself less with Brecht than with Brecht's contemporary, the Communist director and former Volksbühne artistic manager Erwin Piscator. Scholars as well tend not to reference Brecht as a significant influence on Castorf's practice. Indeed, the latter's political skepticism, resistance to didactic theater [*Lehrtheater*], and master's thesis on Ionesco (a vocal detractor of Brecht's "engaged theater") all point to a disengagement from Brecht.[44] At the same time, the fact that Castorf's

[43] N.N. "Nationwide Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage: The German Theatre and Orchestra Landscape," German Commission for UNESCO, 2015. https://www.unesco.de/en/german-theatre-and-orchestra-scene (last accessed Aug. 8, 2018).

[44] In her doctoral dissertation, Katya Bargna writes in a footnote that she sees "no connection, or a thin one at best, between Brecht and Castorf." Cf. Katya Bargna ",Der Weg ist nicht zu Ende, wenn das Ziel explodiert!' Frank Castorf and the Survival of Political Theatre in the Postmodern Age," PhD diss, University of Sheffield, 2000, 58 & 84; and Frank Castorf, „Grundlinien der ‚Entwicklung' der weltanschaulich-ideologischen und künstlerisch-ästhetischen Positionen Ionescos zur Wirkichkeit," master's thesis, Humboldt Universität, 1976.

greatest artistic influences include Besson, Karge, Langhoff, Marquardt, and most notably Müller[45] suggests that his disengagement with Brecht might be, in truth, a kind of engagement. Even though these artists problematized and deconstructed Brecht, they upheld his commitment to representing characters as relational figures, highlighting contradictions, and interrupting emotional identification, commitments at the core of Castorf's theater as well.[46]

So where does Castorf's theater engage most with Brecht? In my opinion, these two have their most meaningful encounter in acting. Although Brecht invents different models of theater over the course of his career (e.g., epic theater, learning plays, dialectical theater), he is always concerned with the question of how to adequately stage or "show" the hidden realities of social relations and of power structures. To this end, he seeks to develop dialectical modes of acting that fulfill two basic tenets of Marxist thought: An understanding i) of human beings not as atomized individuals, but as an "ensemble of social relations"; and ii) of theater makers (as a substitute for "philosophers" in Marx) as figures who have the duty "not only [to] interpret the world, but to change it."[47] In response to Schiller (by way of Nietzsche), Brecht imagines *his*

[45] For more on Müller's engagement with Brecht's legacy see: David Bathrick, *The Powers of Speech*, 95-107.
[46] Admittedly, the label "post-Brechtian" could be used to describe any number of German directors working today. Brecht has had an immense influence on theater in that region. Hans-Thies Lehmann calls postdramatic theater a "post-Brechtian theater" („So kann von einem post-brechtischen Theater die Rede sein, das gerade nicht nichts mit Brecht zu schaffen hat, sondern sich von den in Brechts Werk sedimentierten Ansprüchen und Fragen an Theater betroffen weiß, aber die Antworten Brechts nicht mehr akzeptieren kann." Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater*, 31.) Likewise, several of the key figures of *Regietheater* understand themselves as part of a Brechtian tradition. Marvin Carlson underscores this connection by tracing Brecht's influence on several of Germany's leading twentieth-century directors including: Peter Stein (7, 12) Peter Zadek (31), Claus Peymann (48 68), Achim Freyer (53), Michael Thalheimer (146), Thomas Ostermeier (174) in: Carlson, *Theatre is More Beautiful Than War*.
[47] "Human essence is no abstraction inherent in each individual. In its actuality, its is the ensemble of the social relations." [„[D]as menschliche Wesen ist kein dem einzelnen Individuum innewohnendes Abstraktum. In seiner Wirklichkeit ist es das Ensemble der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse."]; "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point is to change it." [„Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden *interpretiert*; es kommt aber darauf an, sie zu *verändern*."] Theses six and eleven in: Karl Marx, „Thesen über Feuerbach," *MEW*, vol. 3 (Berlin/DDR: Dietz Verlag, 1969), 533. Translation mine.

enlightenment theater ("theater for a scientific age" [*Theater für ein wissenschaftliches Zeitalter*]) as a "studying" [*studieren*] theater as opposed to a moralizing one.[48]

Although Brecht endorses the enlightenment project in principle, he opposes the "uncritical" character of Schillerian empathy [*Einfühlung*] as the proper instrument for theater's enlightenment effects.[49] As previously mentioned, for Schiller, empathy can foster a sense of affective unity between a spectator and a character despite potential differences such as religion, nationality, or sex. Brecht on the other hand views this kind of emotional identification as coercive. Its affective force enables the artist to manipulate the spectator to feel a particular way or to form a particular opinion. To the extent that this compulsive formation of equivalences suppresses differences and contradictions, it is also anti-dialectical.[50] Still committed to the Marxist project of "changing the world," Brecht develops acting techniques that resist identification, mimesis, and catharsis, the central features of what he calls "Aristotelian theater,"[51] even if Schiller, and not Aristotle, is the true target of his critique.[52] He then creates

[48] Bertolt Brecht, „Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?" *GkA*, vol. 22.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 115.
[49] *Ibid.*, 108-109.
[50] For more on the compulsive character of enlightenment see: Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005).
[51] Brecht defines Aristotelian theater as, "Occidental drama insofar as it is an imitative (re)presentation, in which not only the artists imitate certain people, but also an imitation by the artists—and thus of the people they imitate—are generated an act of *empathy*." [„Eine Zusammenfassung unter dem Begriff aristotelisch kann für die abendländische Dramatik insoweit erfolgen, als es sich bei ihr um nachahmende Darstellungen handelt, bei denen nicht nur die Künstler bestimmte vorgestellte Menschen nachahmen, sondern auch eine Nachahmung der Künstler und damit der von ihnen nachgeahmten vorgestellten Menschen in einem Akt der *Einfühlung* erzeugt wird."] Bertolt Brecht, „§1. Über die Möglichkeiten nichtaristotelischer Dramatiken," *GkA*, vol. 22.1, 169. The German term *Einfühlung* includes the words „ein" meaning "one" and „Fühlung" meaning "contact" or "feeling," implying a unifying motion toward a single shared emotional experience. My use of the term in this dissertation refers exclusively to the understanding proposed by Bertolt Brecht as a catchall to encompass mechanisms of affective identification between actor and character or between actor and spectator. Cf. Robin Curtis, and Gertrud Koch, *Einfühlung* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2008); Edith Stein, *Zum Problem der Einfühlung* (Freiburg, Basel, Vienna: Herder, 2008).For more on the use of *Einfühlung* in rehearsal see: Bertolt Brecht, *GkA*, vol. 26, 454-455.
[52] Peter Thomson, and Glendyr Sacks, *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 188.

new techniques based on "distantiation" [*Verfremdung*] to *interrupt* empathy and facilitate theatrical modes of representation that prompt "the spectator to adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism."[53]

One of the key differences, between Brecht and Castorf is how each engages with (or disengages from) the enlightenment theater tradition. Even though Brecht disavows empathy and views the individual actions of his contradictory characters as "discontinuous," he still understands those discontinuities as contradictions that fit into a total "unity" [*Einheit*].[54] In this way, Brechtian acting clings to the notion that an individual has a kind of essential unity, over which he or she can gain total mastery and knowledge.[55] Chapter Two examines more closely how Castorf goes beyond Brecht's disavowal of the instrumental compulsions of enlightenment ideology to create a picture of the world that scenically renders our inability to gain total knowledge or mastery, while at the same time maintaining the view that art and society are essentially linked.

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[53] "It was the aim of this distantiation effect to lend the spectator a probing, critical attitude vis-à-vis the representational procedures." [„Der Zweck dieser Technik des *Verfremdungseffekts* war es, dem Zuschauer eine untersuchende, kritische Haltung gegenüber dem darzustellenden Vorgang zu verleihen."] Bertolt Brecht, „Kurze Beschreibung...," *GkA*, vol. 22.2, 641. Although the term is commonly translated as "estrangement" (or even less correctly as "alienation"), Loren Kruger has shown how "disillusion" and "de-enchantment" better capture the "intertextual resonances" embedded in Brecht's term. These terms also link distantiation to the philosophical reflections of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Walter Benjamin, and stress Brecht's engagement with the enlightenment project. See: Loren Kruger, "Heroes and Abject Bodies in Heiner Müller's Production Plays," *New German Critique*, no. 98 (Summer, 2006), 18-19. For more on critical techniques of actor preparation in Brecht's theater see: Brecht, *Aufbau einer Rolle: Laughtons Galilei*, *GkA*, vol. 25, 7-69; Brecht, „Kurze Beschreibung...," *GkA,* vol. 22.2, 647-659.

[54] John Rouse has shown how Brecht's work with actors in rehearsal focuses on inventing "gestures" [*Gestus*] that reveal the social contradictions prompting a character's actions. Quoting Brecht, he characterizes the contradictions as "dis-unities in action" that create a "discontinuous" representation of character development. Still Brecht views a character as a 'unity' that can be shown as the sum of its dis-continuous parts. „Die Einheit der Figur wird nämlich durch die Art gebildet, in der sich ihre einzelnen Eigenschaften widersprechen." Brecht, *Kleines Organon* §53, *GkA*, vol. 23, 86; John Rouse, "Brecht and the Contradictory Actor," *Theatre Journal*, vol. 36, no. 1, *The Interpretive Actor* (March, 1984), 30-31.

[55] It is on this account that Adorno objects to Brecht's theater (I take this to mean epic theater, though Adorno never specifies this) for its authoritarian view of thought, for its mandate that the audience think a certain way. Like Brecht's critique of Schiller, Adorno criticizes Brecht's theater as a coercive project: "[Brecht's theater is] intolerant to the ambiguity in which thought originates. It is authoritarian." Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 242.

As a preview of this, let me offer a short comparison. In performance, Brecht's dialectical acting assumes the form of what he calls a "double figure" [*zweifacher Gestalt*], a dialectical separation of the actor's body into two interrelated subject positions: (i) the actor and (ii) the character. Using the example of the British actor Charles Laughton during his preparation and performance of the title role in *Life of Galileo* [*Leben des Galilei*], Brecht clarifies the aesthetic operations of this double figure, and the relationship between its dialectical form, and the critical potential of Laughton's performance.

> The fact that the actor appears on stage as a double figure, as Laughton *and* as Galileo, that Laughton-as-showing does not disappear into Galileo-as-shown (which endowed this style of acting with the name "epic:) ultimately means nothing more than that the *actual*—the profane—process is no longer veiled. Laughton is actually on the stage, showing how he imagines Galileo.[56]

Here the double figure is never just Laughton or just Galileo, but always both. The two are not ontological equals, however. Laughton *shows* us Galileo, but not vice versa. What's more, he shows us "how he *imagines* Galileo." In this way, the character Galileo becomes essentially bound up with Laughton. Furthermore, beyond the individual critical "gestures" staged throughout the play, the double figure is its own temporally suspended gesture born out of the dialectical work of the actor in rehearsal.[57] Still the motion between playing *Laughton* and

[56] „Dies, daß der Schauspieler in zweifacher Gestalt auf der Bühne steht, als Laughton und als Galilei, daß der zeigende Laughton nicht verschwindet in dem gezeigten Galilei, was dieser Spielweise auch den Namen ‚die epische' gegeben hat, bedeutet schließlich nicht mehr, als daß der wirkliche, der profane Vorgang nicht mehr verschleiert wird – steht doch auf der Bühne tatsächlich Laughton und zeigt, wie er sich den Galilei denkt." Brecht, *Kleines Organon* §49, in: *GkA*, vol. 23, 83.

[57] In rehearsal, the dialectical work takes the form of a dynamic triad. What Marx represents as the encounter of (i) thesis and (ii) antithesis that leads to a critical (iii) synthesis, Brecht stages as an encounter between (i) a character and (ii) an actor that leads to a critical (iii) synthesis. The actor performs this synthesis by means of what Brecht calls the "gesture" or "gist" [*Gestus*], a moment of the staging that renders the actor's action into a critique. The triadic process does not describe the performance itself, however, but rather the rehearsal process by which an actor prepares it.

playing *Laughton showing Galileo* registers as an ontological interruption. For Brecht, this interruption represents the performance's dialectical moment.[58]

Many accounts have conceptualized acting in Castorf's theater as a reductionist version of Brecht's double figure. Whereas in Brecht the actor and character are ontologically entangled, accounts of the double figure of Castorf's theater can be clearly divided. For example, one of Castorf's dramaturgs, Carl Hegemann, attributes the distinctive quality of acting in Castorf's theater to the actor's shift from being inside of the role to being outside of it.

> It is not realism that's shown on this stage, but reality. To take an unoriginal example, the people do not pretend to be slipping on potato salad; they *actually* slip on the raked stage. When *processes* are acted, they are acted *visibly* so that they express that they are merely acting. When the actors act outside of their roles, it may belong to the director's staging, but they still have every freedom to take up their own position for or against it.[59]

Hegemann's account of acting in Castorf's theater borrows its terminology from Brecht, whose double figure too exposes the "process" [*Vorgang*] of actorial representation. The idea here is that the Castorf actor makes visible the "reality" [*Wirklichkeit*] of his representational "processes" [*Vorgänge*] just as Brecht's "unveils" the "actual process" of acting. And yet, when we look at the acting in Castorf's theater more closely, Hegemann's description seems inadequate. These actors do not appear to be moving in and out of their roles. There is surely *some kind* of ontological confusion at stake, but exactly what kind is unclear.

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[58] „[D]as Theater der Verfremdung [ist] ein Theater der Dialektik," in: Bertolt Brecht, *Arbeitsjournal*, ed., Werner Hecht, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973), 216.

[59] „Es ist kein Realismus, der gezeigt wird an dieser Bühne, sondern Realität. Die Leute, um ein plattes Beispiel zu nehmen, die spielen nicht, dass sie auf Kartoffelsalat ausrutschen, sondern sie rutschen auf der schrägen Bühne wirklich aus. Die Vorgänge werden, wenn sie gespielt sind, sichtbar gespielt, sodass man dabei sagt, ich spiele jetzt nur. Und wenn die Schauspieler aus ihren Rollen spielen, dann gehört das zwar zur Inszenierung, sie haben aber trotzdem jede Freiheit, sich da zu verhalten." Carl Hegemann qtd. in Karin Fischer, „Es war ein Theater gegen die Tendenz," *Deutschlandfunk*, June 28, 2017. http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/ende-der-aera-castorf-an-der-volksbuehne-es-war-ein-theater.691.de.html?dram:article_id=389828 (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

The following chapters show how acting in Castorf's theater destabilizes identification by perpetually reconfiguring *who* the actor (re)presents. Over the course of this study, I show where the acting techniques in Castorf's theater depart from pre-existing modes of dialectical acting to form something new; how Castorf's actors confront us with an unbounded number of subject positions as opposed to a double figure; how they *disrupt* identification with their performance, rather than *interrupting* it; and how they use techniques of *dissociation* that stage a form of critique that exceeds the conceptual framework of Brechtian *distantiation*.

CHAPTERS

Castorf's theater is notorious for its associative character. Scenes that begin in a certain time and place are transformed by the incorporation of external texts, found material, and cultural references that unfold as discursive threads connecting to other texts and scenes across the production. These associations can also be conceived of as *dissociations*. Like the nodes of a rhizome,[60] they are the moments of splitting in a dramaturgical "root-cosmos" that displays the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate phenomena and ideas.[61] This dissertation symptomatically assumes a similar form. My readings do not adhere to standard models of production analysis [*Stückanalyse*] with the aim to work out the meaning of an individual production. Instead they take each production as synecdochic part that can tell us something specific about the larger body of directorial and actorial work at stake.

Chapter One introduces Castorf's rehearsal process, specifically the role of agonistic interactions between actor, director, and text. On the basis of his 1990 adaptation of Friedrich

[60] In a section on "overabundance" [*Überfülle*], Lehmann references both the rhizome and Castorf's "style" [*Stylmerkmal*], but he does not explicitly describe Castorf's dramaturgy as rhizomatic. Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater*, 154-155.
[61] Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans., Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3-25.

Schiller's play *The Robbers* [*Die Räuber*]—a production that marks both the end of the GDR and the beginning of the Castorf era—I show how Castorf's theater takes up the "context" of its production by using material drawn not only from its historical or political moment, but also from its creative authors. Supported by archival materials and original ethnographic research, I draw a picture of Castorf's rehearsal room as a site of agonistic collaboration that inscribes itself in the actors' performances. Additionally, the chapter dedicates some time to theorizing the Castorf-*Regiebuch* (i.e., the "script" that is developed during the creation of these productions) and concludes that Castorf's rehearsals are not only sites of staging, but sites of dramatic writing as well.

In Chapter Two, I shift my analysis from the standpoint of production to that of reception, seeking to account for the relationship between Castorfian acting aesthetics and the Volksbühne's function as a public institution. I characterize this function as an enlightening "disruption" that exposes and animates conflict between actor, audience, and city. To support these claims, I explore the second performance of *Clockwork Orange* (Castorf, 1993), which was attended (and ultimately disrupted) by a group of skinheads. I then compare the different institutional responses to this incident and the political positions those responses model. This is followed by an account of the skinheads' critique of the production and the incident. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the necessity of conflictual relations of difference for the creation and maintenance of "identity."

Chapter Three demonstrates how the critical articulations of Castorf's theater emerge out of the actors' performances through techniques of dissociative splitting. These enable the actors to partially embody multiple characters at once. In *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* [*Pension Schöller/ Die Schlacht*] (Castorf, 1994) the actors' performances map out constellations

of people, events, and attitudes from German history that implicate national theater "stars" (including former Volksbühne company members) in the cultural production of totalitarian ideology. This chapter also situates the technique of dissociation within the dramaturgical tradition of Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Müller.

The dissertation ends with a brief methodological reflection on the role of video in Castorf's theater and in my analysis. On this note, I would like to end here with a short set of instructions. Since this is an argument built on the evidence of acting, my readings make extensive use of materials from the Volksbühne's audio-visual archive. Those sequences that I have chosen to consider in close detail are available for the reader's perusal in the external media folder. Please open the correspondingly labeled files in order to follow my argument, and to enjoy these unusual and fascinating performances.

CHAPTER ONE: "FROM TEXT TO CONTEXT"
AUTHORSHIP AND AGONISTICS IN *ROBBERS BY SCHILLER*

Two actors rush onto the stage, the first dressed in all black with a cocked hat, a tunic, and tights, the second in a clown hat, a black sequin jacket, and grey cut-off shorts accented with a shiny gold belt, and a hot-pink thong. The actors chase one another around the stage parrying, not with foils, but with overflowing beer steins. As his glass empties out, the first actor (in black) flees the second actor (in thong), careering downstage before coming to an abrupt halt. There is a pause. He backs up slowly, his eyes locked on the audience. The second actor, now seeing the audience as well, steals downstage to join his colleague. Their shoulders heave as they try to catch their breath. Together they silently survey the house. The first actor lifts his stein. The second refills it from his own. They drink, tossing—even spitting—the remaining contents onto the stage floor. Then, wearing an ambiguously directed look of disgust—was it the beer or the audience?—the actor in black speaks the first line of the play: "This ink-splattering *saeculum* disgusts me."[1] The two then enter into a strange choreography of skips, jumps, and turns.

This strange series of motions offers an introductory glimpse at acting in the theater of Frank Castorf. At first, it might appear somewhat perplexing, as if the very criteria by which we have been trained to judge an actor's performance had been suspended. What are these men doing? Why are they doing it? Who are they playing? Are they even "in character"?

Clip 1.1 – "Opening"[2]

[1] „Mir ekelt vor diesem tintenklecksenden Sekulum." Karl Moor's first line in I.ii of: Friedrich Schiller, *Die Räuber*, *Schiller Werke und Briefe*, ed., Gerhard Kluge, vol. 2 (Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1988), 30.
[2] All clips in Chapter One are cut from: Friedrich Schiller, *Räuber von Schiller*, directed by Frank Castorf, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Videocassette (VHS), Archive of the Akademie der Künste Berlin (Berlin Academy of the Arts), AVM Theater 33.8049.

Clip 1.1 shows the opening sequence of Castorf's directorial debut on the main stage of the Volksbühne, an "adaptation"—for lack of a better word—of Schiller's *Sturm und Drang* classic, *The Robbers* [*Die Räuber*]. Schiller's drama tells the story of a duchy divided between two brothers: the heir apparent Karl Moor, and his villainous half-brother Franz. When Franz dupes their father, the duke, into disinheriting Karl on the basis of a letter Franz has forged in his brother's name, Karl reacts by banding together with a group of disaffected stragglers to form a gang of anarchist rebels or "robbers," who reign terror upon the town. Castorf's staging calls attention to parallels between the fictional Moor duchy, the context of the play's original premiere in 1781, and the context of his version's premiere at the Volksbühne on September 22, 1990, eleven days before the dissolution of the GDR.[3]

Rehearsals for Castorf's production began on May 16, 1990, roughly half a year after the fall of the Wall, an uncertain time for Berlin's public theaters with the municipal arts budget still in flux. At the first rehearsal Castorf remarked, "I believe we are now (and I already felt this in 1988) about to come into a new era."[4] While this "new era" most likely refers to the reconfiguration of the geopolitical order set in motion by German unification and the Eastern European revolutions, Castorf could just as well have been speaking about the Volksbühne itself, which he would take over as artistic manager less than two years later.

Of the seventy-odd productions Castorf directed at the Volksbühne, *ROBBERS* has enjoyed arguably the most attention from scholars, particularly for the double duty it performs as a model

[3] In Schiller's drama, Castorf finds, "[O]ver and over again, moments … that [he believes] have importance for today." [„Es gibt immer wieder Momente, die, glaube ich, wichtig sind gerade heute."] Frank Castorf qtd. in „Bemerkungen von Frank Castorf zur Konzeption ‚RÄUBER' / Volksbühne Berlin," May 16, 1990, 8-9, in: Friedrich Schiller, *Die Räuber von Schiller*, directed by Frank Castorf, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, premiere September 22, 1990, documentation by Siegfried Wilzopolski in: Archive of the Akademie der Künste (Berlin Academy of the Arts) production documentation 668 I.

[4] „Ich glaube, daß wir jetzt (ich habe das schon 1988 gefühlt) in eine neue Zeit kommen werden." Frank Castorf, "Zur Konzeption ‚RÄUBER,'" 1 in: AdK production documentation.

of both the historical-political and the aesthetic stakes of his artistic intervention in German-language theater.[5] *ROBBERS* anticipated the aesthetic parameters of the Castorf era in its exemplary presentation of Castorf's signature directorial and dramaturgical approach: re-appropriating a canonical literary text; developing a dramaturgy based on the associative deployment of cultural objects and signifiers specific to the histories of Germany, Berlin, and the Volksbühne; and emphasizing ideological tensions previously held in relief by the Cold War's opposition of a Socialist "East" and a capitalist "West." Marvin Carlson has called the production a "clear [display of the] post-Wall Castorf" that defined the institutional character of the Volksbühne during his entire tenure as artistic manager.[6] Case in point, the production icon designed for *ROBBERS* later became the institutional logo of Castorf's Volksbühne from 1992-2017.[7]

[5] For scholarship that analyzes *ROBBERS* on the basis of its historical and/or political context see: Dietze, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, 138-167; Carlson*, Theatre is More Beautiful than War*, 98-99; and Matthew Cornish*, Performing Unification*, 101-106.
[6] Carlson, *Theatre is More Beautiful than War*, 98-99.
[7] Originally designed for the program booklet by LSD—the graphic design company run by Castorf's chief set designer Bert Neumann, Lenore Bleivernicht and Susanne Schuboth—the "Robber Wheel" [*Räuberrad*] was based on medieval road symbols used to warn travelers of the presence of bandits, or robbers, in the near vicinity. As part of Neumann's pseudo-ironic campaign to "brand" the Volksbühne as an anti-capitalist, "robber-like" institution, the Robber Wheel was printed on matchboxes and merchandise including t-shirts, tote bags, and commercial publications. In 1994, a four-meter tall metal sculpture based on Neumann's design and built by the Swiss sculptor Rainer Haußmann was erected on the small knoll in front of the theater's main entrance where it remained until the Castorf era concluded in summer of 2017. Cf. Ute Büsing, "Curtain comes down on the Castorf era," *Deutsche Welle*, June 29, 2017. https://www.dw.com/en/curtain-comes-down-on-frank-castorfs-era-at-the-volksb%C3%BChne/a-39476544 (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018)

Figure 1.1 The “Robber Wheel” printed on a matchbox (2015)
(Photo: Amy Stebbins)

Figure 1.2 The “Robber Wheel” in front of the Volksbühne (2017)
(Photo: Hauke Berheide)

This chapter seeks to account for the unusual quality of acting in Castorf’s theater through an investigation of the creative practices by which these performances are developed.

Supported by a selection of archival materials, interviews, and ethnographic research, I draw a picture of Castorf's rehearsal room as a site of variable and "agonistic" interaction between director, actor, and text that is determined by the context not only of the production's historical time and place, but also by the context of the individuals participating in its creation as well. My argument proposes that the distinctive quality of acting in Castorf's theater is in part the result of agonistic interactions between different "authors" in the rehearsal room that inscribe themselves in the actors' performances. To show this, I first review how scholars have already accounted for the ontological tensions exhibited by the performances in *ROBBERS*. I then identify four methods of text production in Castorf's rehearsals: i) oral transmission; ii) overburdening "foreign" or "outside texts" [*Fremdtexte*]; iii) the actor as author; and iv) the actor as text. I then conclude with some reflections on the implications of these practices for theater studies more broadly.

One of the driving questions of this chapter is: who is the author of "the Castorf style"? Is it Castorf? Is it the actors? Or some combination of both? In an interview, Castorf was asked if he considers himself a "collective person" [*Kollektivmensch*], that is, a director who makes artistic decisions on the basis of a creative consensus among the entire team. His answer? "No." At the same time, the description he provides of his directorial practice suggests that his artistic decisions are at the very least influenced by his collaborators.

> The most interesting thing is the development from text to context […], because I consciously build on the contingency of how people come together. And in such a way that you can't plan anything in advance.[8]

The working process Castorf describes starts with a "text" as a point of departure for the invention of a staging that avails itself of the "context," in which it is created. That context not only includes the specific historical moment or geographic location, but the idiosyncrasies of the

[8] „Die Entwicklung vom Text zum Kontext ist das Interessante … weil ich bewußt auf die Zufälligkeit baue, wie Menschen aufeinandertreffen. Und zwar so, daß man da nichts einplanen kann." Castorf qtd. in Hans-Dieter Schütt, *Die Erotik des Verrats* (Berlin: dietz, 1996), 103.

individual participants as well. What starts as a fixed object ("text") is mediated through Castorf and his actors into a work of theater that reflects the relation between the original text and the conditions of its production ("context").

In this light, it would not be wrong to think about Schiller's text as the jumping-off point for a whole new play. This perspective is even encouraged by the slight alteration of Schiller's title from *Die Räuber* to *ROBBERS BY SCHILLER* [*RÄUBER VON SCHILLER*] (hereafter: *ROBBERS*), a gentle indication of the less than gentle alterations Castorf and his team make to Schiller's script. *ROBBERS* changes Schiller's drama both globally (that is, in terms of its total architecture or "dramaturgy") as well as locally (that is, on the level of the individual line of dialogue). For example, in Schiller's play, the curtain rises on Franz Moor's presentation of the forged letter from Karl to his father. *ROBBERS* begins instead with the second scene from Schiller's play, in which Karl Moor pooh-poohs the lofty propositions of philosophical writing with his friend Spiegelberg at a bar in Leipzig.

In his analysis of *ROBBERS*, Castorf's "academic collaborator" [*wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter*][9] Siegfried Wilzopolski includes a table that sheds light on the production's formal restructuring of Schiller's dramatic text.[10] Reproduced below, Wilzopolski's table juxtaposes the two versions of the text, displaying which parts of Schiller's original (represented by the right-hand column) have been incorporated into Castorf's adaptation (represented by the left-hand column), and in what order. For example, the table shows that Castorf's adaptation draws most

[9] The German term *wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter* typically refers to a specific academic position similar to a post-doctoral researcher. It is unusual to use this term in the context of the theater. In this case, the term suggests that Wilzopolski functioned as something like a dramaturg, but perhaps with more academic and/or research-oriented responsibilities.
[10] Siegfried Wilzopolski, *Theater des Augenblicks: Die Theaterarbeit Frank Castorfs. Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: TheaterArbeit, 1992), 246.

of its material from the first and second acts of Schiller's original, leaving out most of the fourth and fifth acts, as well as the entirety of the third.

Text Version [*Textfassung*]	Schiller
I	I/2
II	I/2
III	I/1
IV	I/1
V	I/3
VI	II/1
VII	II/2
VIII	IV/5 + II/2
IX	II/3
X	II/3
XI	II/3 + V/1 + II/2

Here I would like to call the reader's attention to Wilzopolski's nomenclature. While he labels the column on the right "Schiller," he labels the column on the left "text version" without any indication of an author. Why does Wilzopolski not label the left-hand column "Castorf"? Is he not the author of this new text? Come to think of it, to what "text"—in the sense of a written document—does this column even refer?[11]

THE *REGIEBUCH* OR THE CONTEXT-TEXT

The word *Textfassung* indicated in Wilzopolski's table signifies a manuscript known in German as the *Regiebuch*. Like the stage manager's "promptbook"[12] in Anglo-American theater,

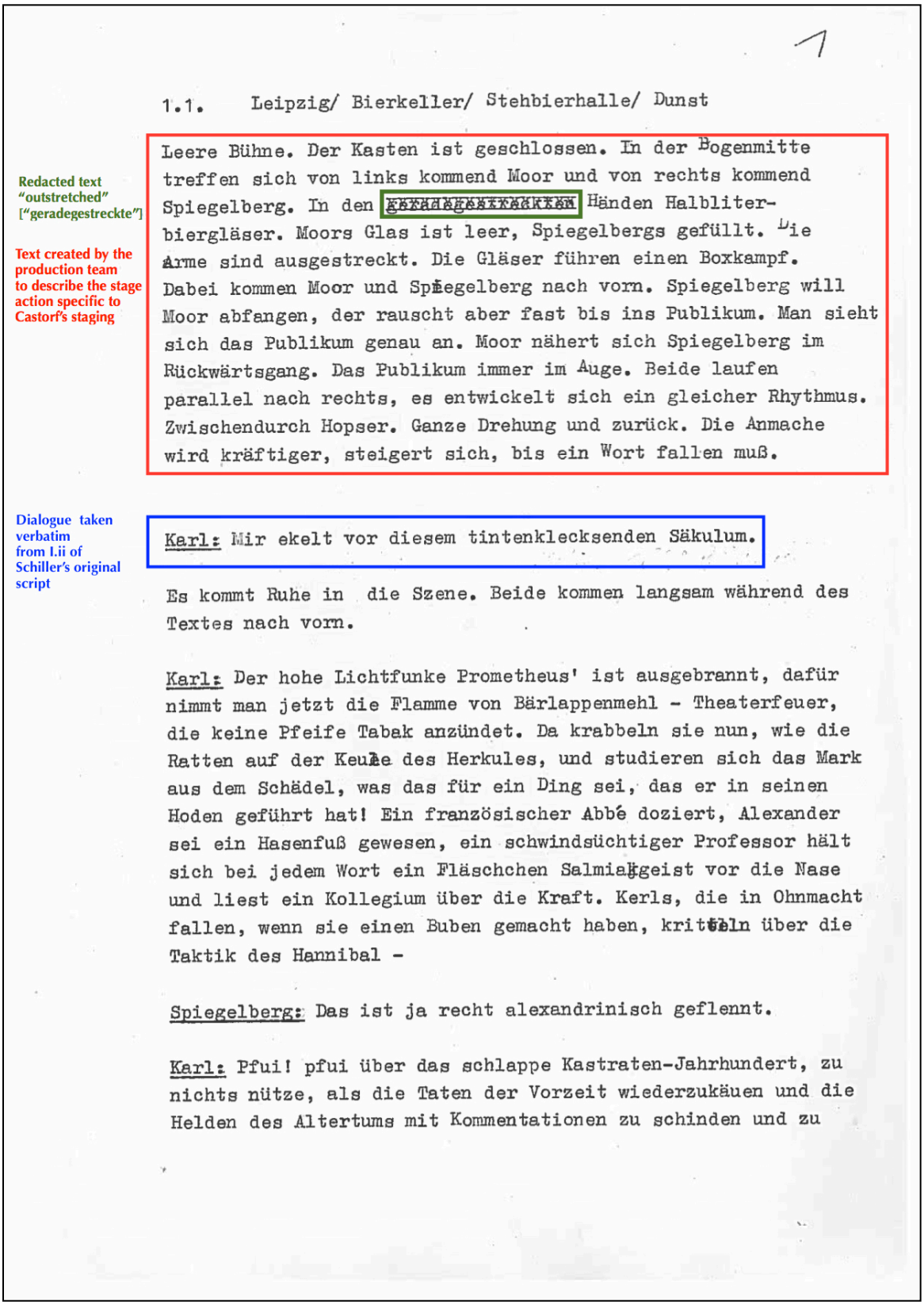
[11] A "text" need not refer exclusively to written objects. In fact, there is a significant amount of scholarship that frames performance-based objects such as theater, dance, film, or opera as "texts." For more on these discussions see: Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," *Image, Music, Text*, essays selected and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977); David J. Levin, *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 11-13.

[12] A "promptbook" can refer to two kinds of texts: i) The prompter's copy of a script marked up with the blocking, amended dialogue, and other stage business necessary for the prompter to fulfill his or her responsibilities; ii) A comprehensive version of the text marked up with all of the production's technical details for use by the stage manager. In Germany, where prompters continue to be used today, these two texts have different names: the *Soufflierbuch* is the "prompter's book," and the *Regiebuch* is the "promptbook"

Castorf's *Regiebuch* is a palimpsestic, piecemeal document containing three textual registers (e.g., spoken dialogue, stage directions, and marginalia); yet whereas a promptbook provides a written record of the staging in the form of annotations entered into the margins around a predetermined, fixed "script," Castorf's *Regiebücher* integrate the source text (i.e., *Die Räuber*) and new text developed in rehearsal together into a new document. For example, the first page of the *Regiebuch* for *ROBBERS* (Figure 1.3) includes a descriptive account of the scene from Clip 1.1 that begins with an extensive stage direction followed by Karl Moor's line from Schiller's original play. Nothing in the formatting distinguishes between the two sources, and the care with which this text is written makes itself evident in the stylistic editing, such as the removal of the word "outstretched" [*geradegestreckten*]. In this way, the *Regiebuch* assumes a form similar to that of a dramatic text, but exceeds the latter in that the *Regiebuch's* citational content and palimpsestic form provide insight into the conditions of its production.[13]

proper. For more on early English promptbooks see: N.N. *Folgerpedia*, s.v. "Promptbooks" (Washington, D.C.: Folger Library, 2014). https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/Promptbooks#Promptbooks_as_a_genre (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

[13] Although the term *Regiebuch* is regularly translated into English as "promptbook," there is a certain tradition of German theater that views the *Regiebuch* as a kind of complement to the staging. This begins with Austrian director (and former Volksbühne artistic manager) Max Reinhardt whose *Regiebücher* include not only the scenic content (i.e., dialogue and stage directions), but also images and sketches of the set and costumes. The tradition also includes Bertolt Brecht, who had worked as one of Reinhardt's early protégés, and who drew on Reinhardt's *Regiebücher* as the inspiration for his *Modellbücher*. My argument situates Castorf's *Regiebuch* in this same tradition. Today, many directors (e.g., Sebastian Baumgarten, Stefan Pucher, and René Pollesch) have developed their own *Regiebuch* practices based on Castorf's method. Cf. „Reinhardts Regiebuchkonzept," in Heinz Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte Europas*, vol. 8 (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1968), 333-335.



1

1.1. Leipzig/ Bierkeller/ Stehbierhalle/ Dunst

Leere Bühne. Der Kasten ist geschlossen. In der Bogenmitte treffen sich von links kommend Moor und von rechts kommend Spiegelberg. In den [redacted] Händen Halbliter-biergläser. Moors Glas ist leer, Spiegelbergs gefüllt. Die Arme sind ausgestreckt. Die Gläser führen einen Boxkampf. Dabei kommen Moor und Spiegelberg nach vorn. Spiegelberg will Moor abfangen, der rauscht aber fast bis ins Publikum. Man sieht sich das Publikum genau an. Moor nähert sich Spiegelberg im Rückwärtsgang. Das Publikum immer im Auge. Beide laufen parallel nach rechts, es entwickelt sich ein gleicher Rhythmus. Zwischendurch Hopser. Ganze Drehung und zurück. Die Anmache wird kräftiger, steigert sich, bis ein Wort fallen muß.

Karl: Mir ekelt vor diesem tintenklecksenden Säkulum.

Es kommt Ruhe in die Szene. Beide kommen langsam während des Textes nach vorn.

Karl: Der hohe Lichtfunke Prometheus' ist ausgebrannt, dafür nimmt man jetzt die Flamme von Bärlappenmehl - Theaterfeuer, die keine Pfeife Tabak anzündet. Da krabbeln sie nun, wie die Ratten auf der Keule des Herkules, und studieren sich das Mark aus dem Schädel, was das für ein Ding sei, das er in seinen Hoden geführt hat! Ein französischer Abbé doziert, Alexander sei ein Hasenfuß gewesen, ein schwindsüchtiger Professor hält sich bei jedem Wort ein Fläschchen Salmiakgeist vor die Nase und liest ein Kollegium über die Kraft. Kerls, die in Ohnmacht fallen, wenn sie einen Buben gemacht haben, kritteln über die Taktik des Hannibal -

Spiegelberg: Das ist ja recht alexandrinisch geflennt.

Karl: Pfui! pfui über das schlappe Kastraten-Jahrhundert, zu nichts nütze, als die Taten der Vorzeit wiederzukäuen und die Helden des Altertums mit Kommentationen zu schinden und zu

Redacted text "outstretched" ["geradegestreckte"]

Text created by the production team to describe the stage action specific to Castorf's staging

Dialogue taken verbatim from I.ii of Schiller's original script

Figure 1.3 First page of the *Regiebuch* for *ROBBERS*

Whereas a promptbook communicates blocking and technical cues for use by the stage manager, the function and intended users of a *Regiebuch* change over time. Nearly every day, new *Regiebücher* are drafted, printed, and distributed before a final version is set, typically in the hours following the dress rehearsal or in the days following the premiere. In rehearsal, the *Regiebuch* provides a record of each day's work, serving the entire team as a centralized record of what decisions have been made, while also assisting the actors as they work to memorize their lines. Once rehearsals have concluded and the production has begun, the *Regiebuch* facilitates the stage manager's supervision of the actors' entrances and exits, and coordinates the technical staff's deployment of light, video, and sound cues. Finally, depending on the status of the director, the *Regiebuch* might be preserved in an archive as a tool for scholarship.[14] In this way, the *Regiebuch* sits somewhere between the genres of dramatic literature, a courtroom transcript, and a musical score. It is at once a record of the decisions made in rehearsal, the playbook for the performance, and a textual remnant of performances that have been. It is on the basis of this multifunctional and transformative quality that I consider the *Regiebuch* an under-theorized object of theater studies, one that can guide our exploration of the entangled influences of acting, directing, and text in Castorf's theater.

Not only does the *Regiebuch*'s function transform over the course of a single rehearsal period, Castorf's methods of *Regiebuch* production have undergone their own transformation over the course of his career. Since the early 1980s, technological advancements including copy machines, word processors, and audio/visual recording devices in combination with increased funding and staff have streamlined what began as an *ad hoc* negotiation between director and actor into a seamless, hierarchical process with a clear division of labor. In the early days of

[14] Both Dietze and Cornish use the *Regiebuch* for their analyses of *ROBBERS.* It goes without saying that Castorf's *Regiebücher* have been a crucial resource for my own scholarship. Unfortunately, the daily drafts of the *Regiebuch* have not been systematically preserved.

Castorf's career, actors transcribed their own texts, often including written reminders of the mental logic behind their utterances and actions. Actor Silvia Rieger recalls how this practice began in Anklam, where Castorf would walk up to individual actors, and whisper the text "intimately into [their] ears."[15] Afterwards, the actors would sit down, and transcribe what they had done.

> We wrote it ourselves. [After the rehearsals] we would sit down, I remember, Henry [Hübchen] for himself, and me for myself, and we would write it all down. That's how you do it. And the action … [*unintelligible*] … What does it mean when I go from there to there. Or why? What does it produce?[16]

Rieger's account of the actors' writing responsibilities reflects the small ensemble size and lack of staff in Anklam.[17] This is not comparable to the more lavish resources of the Volksbühne, even as early as 1990, where transcription responsibilities fell under the purview of an assistant, who was often aided by up to two interns.[18]

During my research, I have been able to procure three versions of the *Regiebuch* to Castorf's *ROBBERS*: i) the final *Regiebuch*, which is available in the *ROBBERS* production documentation at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin; ii) the *Soufflierbuch* [prompter's book], a sister version of the *Regiebuch* maintained by the prompter, which can provide a slightly more accurate record of the final staging, particularly of any lines added at the last minute. This version is also housed in the archives of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. iii) an undated copy

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[15] Silvia Rieger (Volksbühne ensemble, 1992-present), in discussion with the author, digital recording, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, June 14, 2017, 05:13-05:50.

[16] „Wir haben das selber geschrieben. […] Danach haben wir uns ja hingesetzt, ich erinnere mich, Henry für sich, ich für mich und wir haben da aufgeschrieben alles. So macht man das. Und den Vorgang … [*unverständlich*] … Was soll das bedeuten, wenn ich gehe von dort nach dort. Oder…warum? Was löst es aus?" Rieger, June 14, 2017, 06:27-06:56.

[17] According to Rieger, the acting ensemble in Anklam consisted of six actors, frequently resulting in cafeteria and security staff having to perform on stage in Castorf's productions.

[18] Dramaturg Sabine Zielke explains how Castorf's method of transcribing the *Regiebuch* largely depended on the conditions of the particular theater where he was working. At more prominent venues like the Deutsches Theater and the Volksbühne, the larger budgets and staffs meant that specific individuals could be designated with specific *Regiebuch* tasks. Interview with Sabine Zielke, in discussion with the author, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, June 15, 2017.

of a rehearsal typoscript probably from the fourth week of rehearsal (approximately July 13, 1990), and other un-catalogued rehearsal notes generously provided by Volksbühne dramaturg Sabine Zielke, who worked as the assistant director on *ROBBERS*, and who maintained the *Regiebuch* for that production.

The Zielke typoscript reflects the piecemeal and palimpsestic process of drafting a *Regiebuch.* Figures 1.4 and 1.5 represent different drafts of the second scene of *ROBBERS*—based on the first scene of Schiller's original script (I/1)—in their probable chronological order. Figure 1.4, most likely from the first rehearsal of I/2, is a handwritten draft of the scene that includes three textual registers: i) original dialogue between Old Moor and Franz (indicated as "D.a. Moor" and "Fr." respectively); ii) stage directions developed in rehearsal (e.g., "A Marlboro pack should fly.");[19] iii) Zielke's edits and notes to herself, (e.g., "…continuing as before until p. 17a…").[20] While some lines have remained more or less unchanged from Schiller's original, others have been either added or removed from the previous page. Figure 1.5 represents a typed version of the same scene, still in development as indicated by the illegible marginalia. Even though these two versions of the same scene do not definitively tell us who authored which ideas, they visualize the processual and collective work of development from "text" (Schiller's *Die Räuber*) to "context" (Castorf's *RÄUBER*) undertaken through a daily process of rewriting by actorial experimentation.

[19] „Es muß eine Marlborogh-Schachtel (sic!) fliegen."
[20] „...weiter wie gehabt bis S. 17a…"

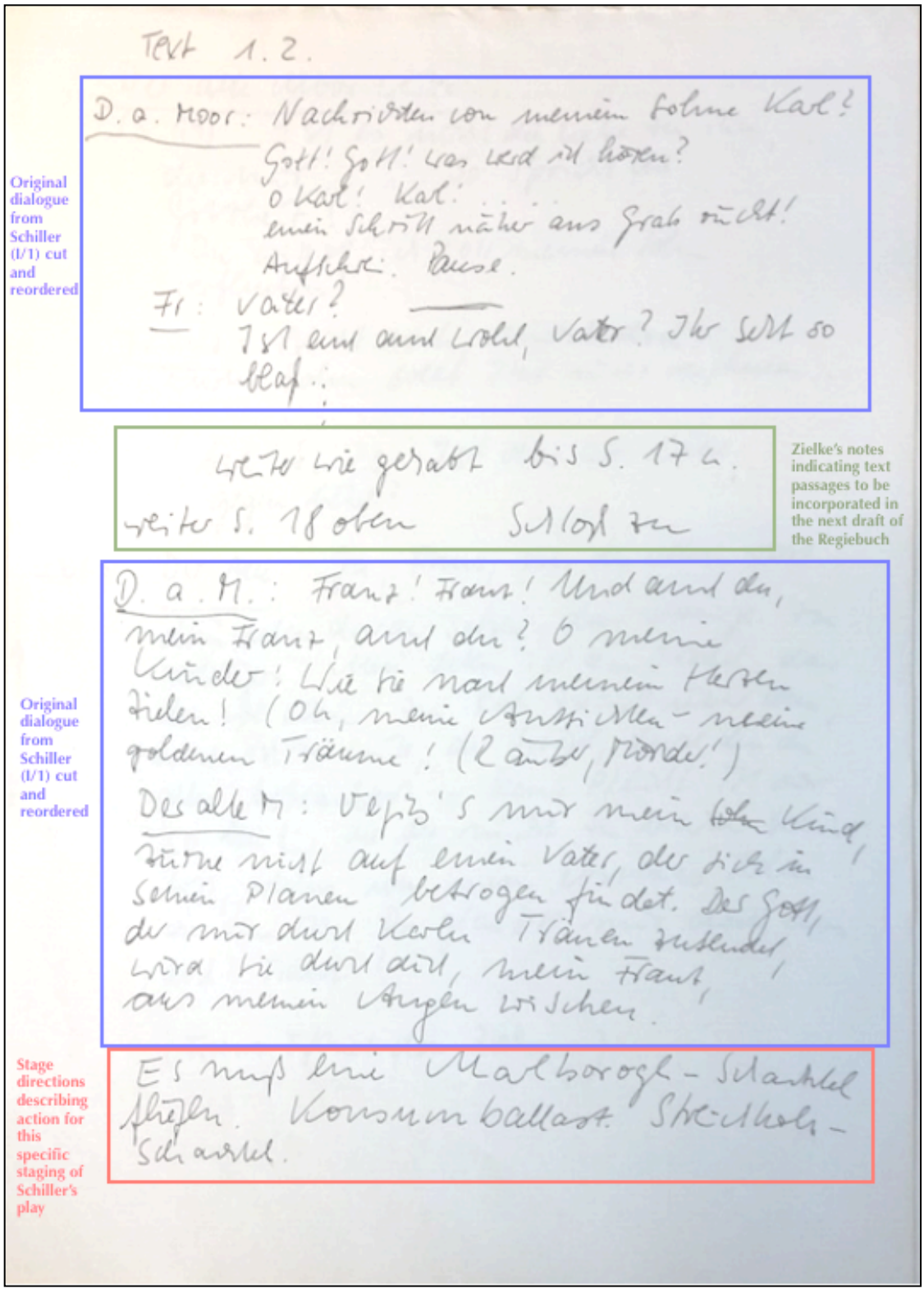

Figure 1.4 Handwritten notes from an early rehearsal of I/2

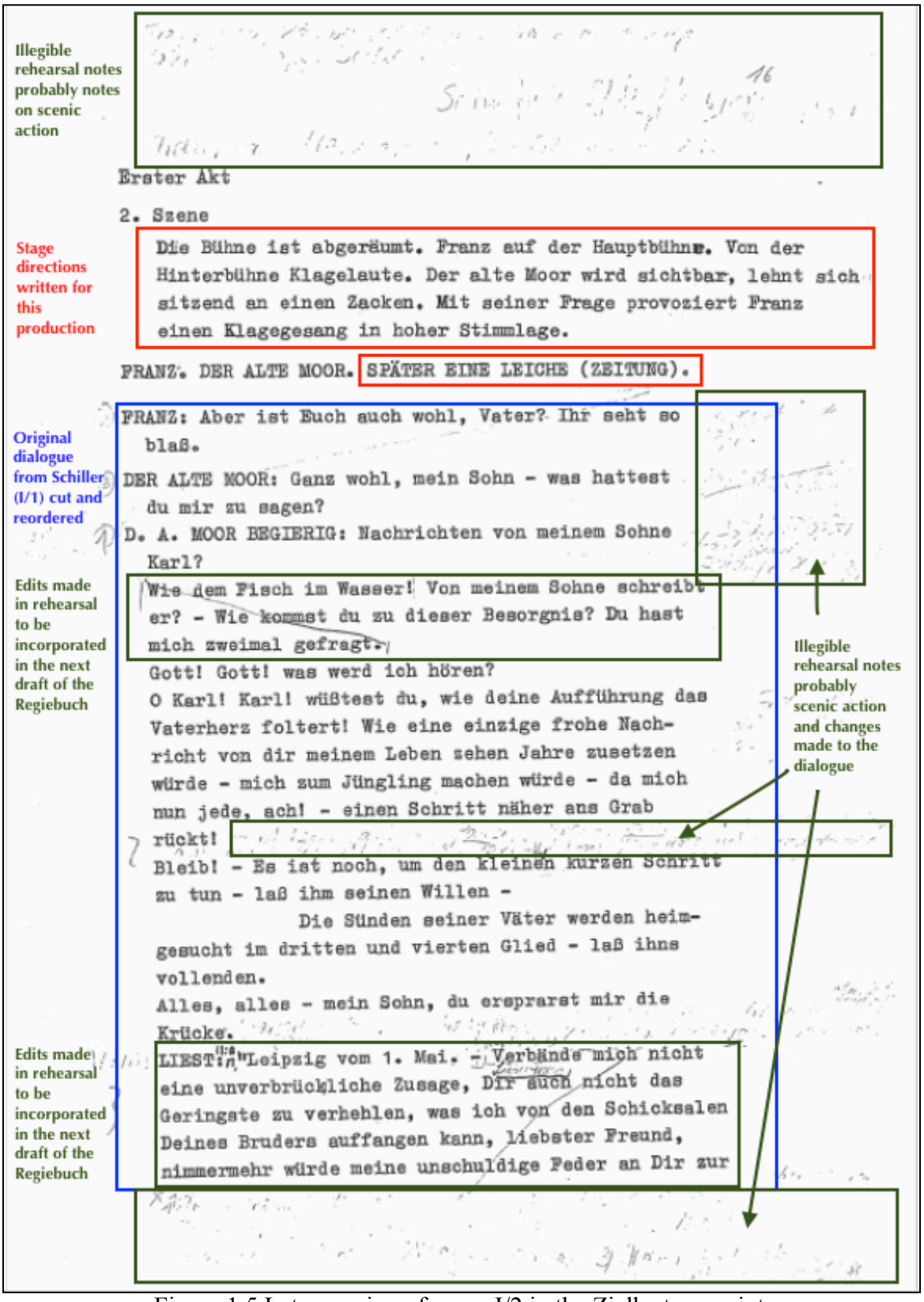

Figure 1.5 Later version of scene I/2 in the Zielke typoscript

In this chapter, the *ROBBERS Regiebuch* helps me to account for the development from *Die Räuber* to *ROBBERS,* that is, from text to context. The *Regiebuch* can help to verify the acting techniques at hand, for example, whether an actor is improvising or only appears to be. In this way, the *Regiebuch* lays claim to an aesthetic independence from Schiller's dramatic text. It is the original script to Castorf's *ROBBERS*. This begs the question: is the *ROBBERS Regiebuch* not also a dramatic text? And if so, are not the nearly one hundred unpublished Castorf *Regiebücher* fading away in the archives of the Akademie der Künste in fact a collection of unpublished twentieth and twenty-first century German plays?[21]

AUTHORIAL AGONISTICS

Like Carl Hegemann's remarks quoted in the introduction, recent scholarship has conceptualized acting in *ROBBERS* in terms of a kind of "double figure," but with the added feature of a critical tension, an agonism, between its competing authors. In *Performing Unification*, theater historian Matthew Cornish includes a handful of close readings of *ROBBERS* that depict the main acting technique as a "falling out" of character into "the actor."

> Actors fell out, or better *leapt* out, of their roles repeatedly in *Die Räuber*, a tactic Castorf cultivated even more in later productions. They provoked, irritated, and estranged the audience, producing distance between the actors and their characters, but also generating dissonance among the various stories and messages being told onstage. Castorf displaced the hierarchy of text over performance—direct address had as much authority as the fictional world of Schiller's play.[22]

Cornish conceptualizes the "role" (for all intents and purposes, the "character") as determined by the "text," and he sees the actor as a kind of free agent able to do as he or she pleases in the live

[21] It seems to me that the main difference between René Pollesch—who is considered a playwright who directs his own plays—and Castorf—who is considered a director who deconstructs the plays of others —is a question of self-marketing, and the availability of the text as a commercial product.
[22] Cornish, *Performing Unification*, 104.

moment. He then calls attention to a "dissonance" between the "character/text" and the "actor/performance," the staging of which he attributes to Castorf's invisible directorial hand. Working off of Lehmann's postdramatic paradigm, Cornish separates the scene into discreet formal "parts," positioning the character and the actor in an agonistic contest.

In *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, Antje Dietze similarly attributes the unique quality of acting in *ROBBERS* to a tension produced when the actors "fall out" of their roles into a neutral position (as themselves), from which they can "scrutinize" or "evaluate" [*überprüfen*] the events of Schiller's drama. In contrast to Cornish's postdramatic reading, she does so however within the framework of *Regietheater*.[23] Dietze describes Castorf's actors as instructional forces that help the audience to navigate "the chaos" of Castorf's oftentimes impenetrable dramaturgy.

> In the chaos of memories and interpretations, it was the actors who maintained contact with the audience, precisely because they fell out of the Schillerian roles and reflected their own situation. They examined their roles in light of contemporary questions, rather than embodying them… The actors acted out their characters' confusion and disorientation as their own in concrete situations that were intelligible for the audience, even when they were unable to follow the deconstruction of the classic play, the inserted *Fremdtexte*, and the leaps and outbursts out of the text.[24]

Also like Cornish, Dietze attributes the actors' ability to fall in and out of character to hierarchies and conflicts between the production's competing authors, in this case the actors v. the director, rather than the actors v. the text. Audience members, she argues, identify with the actors, particularly because the latter appear to have been awkwardly thrust into Castorf's dramaturgical labyrinth just as they themselves have been.

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[23] The title of Dietze's section on *RÄUBER* is, „Aufarbeitung von Vorbildern: Schillers *Räuber* und Castorfs Theaterarbeit in den Traditionen linken Regietheaters" in: Dietze, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, 106-132.

[24] „Im Chaos der Erinnerungen und Deutungen waren es die Schauspieler, die den Kontakt zum Publikum hielten—gerade dadurch, dass sie *aus den Schillerschen Rollen fielen* und ihre *eigene* Situation reflektierten. Sie überprüften ihre Rollen im Horizont gegenwärtiger Fragen, statt sie durchgängig zu verkörpern… Die Schauspieler agierten die Verwirrung und Verlorenheit der Figuren auch als ihre eigene immer wieder in konkreten Situationen aus, die für die Zuschauer verständlich waren, selbst wenn diese der Dekonstruktion des Klassikertextes und den einmontierten Fremdtexten, den Sprüngen und Ausbrüchen aus dem Text nicht folgen konnten." *Ibid*., 166-167.

To sum up, Cornish and Dietze both present acting in *ROBBERS* in terms of an actor-character opposition generated out of agonistic contests between either actor and text (for Cornish) or actor and director (for Dietze). But does this really explain the performances in Clip 1.1? Are Preusche and Naumann merely "falling out" of their roles? Or is there something else at stake?

Even though the actors in the opening sequence (Clip 1.1) address themselves both diegetically (to one another), as well as extradiegetically (to the audience), their precise identities—that is, *who* they are playing—are far more ambiguous than those of either "character" or "actor." For instance, when Preusche enters the stage, the audience is left in the dark for a considerable length of time before receiving any clue that he is playing Karl Moor. The only information to be gleaned from the staging is that a man in costume is defending himself with a glass of beer against another man in costume with a glass of beer. Slightly more information is added by the new relationship that emerges when Preusche acknowledges the audience's presence, extending the range of his possible identities into the extra-diegetic realm. Nevertheless, his exact identity—that is, the *who* the spectator ascribes to him—remains ambiguous. It is only when Preusche recites Schiller's famous line that his identity as Karl Moor comes into view at all, and even then only obliquely on account of the contradiction between the subject speaking (Karl Moor) and the subject glaring at the audience (someone able to see beyond the fourth wall). That is to say, while both character (Karl Moor) and actor (Gerd Preusche) are implied by the body on stage, the performance obstructs identification with a clear and coherent *who*. Gesture, action, and text render the body an ambiguous or even speculative object that deflects the viewer's drive to attribute his actions to a single, unified subject position. The *who* is suspended in a liminal state.

This sequence illustrates how the tensions that both Cornish and Dietze sense are not the product of a double figure, but instead emerge out of a reflexive presentation of the authorial agonistics at work between the performances' competing creators. As we know from Wilzopolski's table, the line spoken by Preusche has been taken from I/2 of Schiller's drama. Castorf's inclusion of this line not only signals to the audience that Preusche is playing the role of Karl Moor, it also quotes one of the most famous lines in German theater—not quite on the level of Hamlet's "To be or not to be," but comparable to his "Words, words, words," and in more ways than one.[25] Moor's line expresses the protagonist's contempt for philosophical writing as he enters (like Hamlet) "reading on a book," of Plutarch, which he promptly tosses away with the stage direction: "Karl V. Moor sets the book aside."[26] In Castorf's staging, however, Preusche does not have a book. Although provided with Moor's words, he is prevented from performing the text as written by Schiller. Instead, he performs it as directed by Castorf. To take this one step further: given that in German, "the book" [*das Buch*] is common shorthand for "the textbook" or "script," the absence of Schiller's stage direction from Preusche's performance stages Castorf's execution of Schiller's stage direction. It is not the actor, but the director who "sets [Schiller's] book aside." This moment of theatrical reflexivity plays upon the agonistic interactions of text, director, and actor without the latter ever explicitly "falling out" of character. For a better understanding of these reflexive gestures, let us look more closely at the production process behind the development from text to context.[27]

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[25] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed., Harold Jenkins (New York: Routledge, 1982), 277 (III.i.56) & 247 (II.ii.192).

[26] „Karl V. Moor legt das Buch weg." Schiller, *Die Räuber*, 30.

[27] When speaking about the "work" of theater—and more specifically that of actors—it is necessary to distinguish between two kinds: i) The work during the rehearsal period, both in the room (i.e., the invention of playable situations, theoretical discussions, physical trial, error, and repetition) and outside of the room (i.e., theoretical discussions, memorization of lines, and collective late-night drinking.) ii) The work of performance (i.e., the physical, mental, and psychic strain of presenting the production live on stage). Annemarie Matzke

A Castorf production starts with Castorf reading a text, for example, Schiller's *Die Räuber*—though this could also be a novel or even a film. His reading occurs through a highly idiosyncratic lens, drawing from history, politics, literature, and even his personal life to generate a host of associative dramaturgical "material." Castorf's reading forms a kind of fundamental premise that serves as the touchstone for the development of scenic material in rehearsal—not unlike Anglo-American "devised theater."

Castorf's colleagues refer to this premise as a dramaturgical or directorial "*Gerüst.*"[28] A *Gerüst* is a "framework" or "scaffolding," a figure that bears a striking resemblance to Brecht's characterization of the director as a "mechanic" or "assembler" [*Monteur*].[29] Castorf's dramaturgical *Gerüst* represents a kind of blueprint for the production that maps out how to assemble the abovementioned materials. These materials come in many forms (e.g., text, actors, and space), and determine not only how Castorf proceeds in rehearsal, but also what form the final "construction" or staging will take.

Castorf first presents his *Gerüst* to the actors at the "conceptual rehearsal" [*Konzeptionsprobe*]—the first official gathering of the cast, crew, and administrative staff.[30] The transcript of the conceptual rehearsal for *ROBBERS* reveals what materials Castorf has prepared in

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distinguishes between these two kinds of work as *praxis* and *poeisis.* Cf. Annemarie Matzke*, Arbeit am Theater: Eine Diskursgeschichte der Probe* (Bielefeld: transcript-verlag, 2012), 36.

[28] „Und Frank hatte vorher zu Hause ein Gerüst erarbeitet, was er jetzt nicht mehr macht, ja? Aber ein wirkliches, dramaturgisches—für sich—Gerüst gebaut…." Rieger, June 14, 2017, 04:46-05:15; Kathrin Angerer, "Ein Ensemble ist etwas sehr Besonders," Interview by Frank Raddatz, *Republik Castorf: Die Berliner Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz seit 1992* (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2016), 44.

[29] Bertolt Brecht, „‚Katzgraben'-Notate," *GkA*, vol. 25, 429.

[30] Depending on the director, the conceptual rehearsal can take a variety of forms, ranging from a dramatic reading of the script, to a group screening of the director's favorite television series, to a seminar-like discussion of the play's themes. Thanks to Wilzopolski, there is a transcript of Castorf's complete introductory remarks to *ROBBERS*. In the case of Castorf, the conceptual rehearsal tends to look more like a lecture. Although in recent years, the Volksbühne and other theaters have begun to make Castorf's conceptual rehearsals publicly available either as embedded URL links to audio and/or video recordings, these rehearsals have not been systematically documented. My assessment of Castorf's conceptual rehearsal is based on Wilzopolski transcript, a video of the conceptual rehearsal for *The Harry Ape*, my own firsthand observations, and interviews with Maggie Bell, Silvia Rieger, and John Nijenhuis.

advance; for instance, he prepares an overview of the production history of Schiller's play, focusing in particular on the Volksbühne's 1972 production directed by Manfred Karge and Matthias Langhoff.[31] He then launches into his own interpretation and its relation to the present moment as depicted at the beginning of this chapter. In addition to contextualizing the historical-political moment of Germany in 1990, Castorf lists four additional ways in which he intends to reflect on the contingencies of the production context, namely through "casting" [*Besetzung*], mode of acting [*Spielweise*], text [*Text*], and working method [*Arbeitsmethode*].[32] Although these categories do not exactly map onto the interactions of actor, director, and text, they can serve as categorical anchors for our exploration of them.

The next three sections of this chapter present an account (albeit incomplete) of rehearsal methods that exemplify the different methods of "context production" in Castorf's rehearsal. By "context production" I mean specifically reflexive methods of generating blocking, dialogue, and gesture. These include: i) the director's oral transmission of dialogue to the actors; ii) overburdening *Fremdtexte*; iii) the actor as author; and iv) the actor as text. Each of these methods marks a unique configuration of actor, director, and text. In each case, however, the agonistic interactions at work in these development processes make themselves sensible—as in, we can *sense* them—in the actors' performances.

FROM TEXT TO CONTEXT I: ORAL TRANSMISSION

The most common mode of context production in Castorf's rehearsal is a kind of oral transmission of the original text (Schiller's *Die Räuber*) mediated through the director to the

[31] For more on the Karge/Langhoff production of *Die Räuber* see: Dietze, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, 114-123.

[32] „Jetzt vielleicht ein paar Bemerkungen zum Text, zur Spielweise, zur Besetzung; oder Möglichkeiten, wie wir methodisch arbeiten wollen und was uns so vorschwebt." Frank Castorf, „Zur Konzeption ‚RÄUBER' / Volksbühne Berlin," 2 in: AdK production documentation.

actor. Castorf speaks the actor's lines out loud, and he or she repeats it while an assistant writes it down. Although there is no video documentation of the rehearsals for *ROBBERS*, the process of oral transmission can be observed in a recording made during a rehearsal for *Der Idiot* (Castorf, 2002).[33] In a confusion of beer, cigarettes, and piano playing, Castorf "feeds" actor Herbert Fritsch his lines, reading out directly from the copy of Dostoevsky's novel he holds in his hand. Although the music tends to drown out Castorf and Fritsch's voices, at 00:02:05 Castorf can be heard instructing Fritsch to "sit right back down."[34] He then reads directly from the book, "No, no, no, no. Today … Today one takes it for a basic right."[35] Fritsch then repeats the line, and the rehearsal moves forward.

Clip 1.2 – "Oral Transmission"

In this director-driven process, the actor's task is to do as Castorf does in word, inflection, and gesture. Yet the aim here is not precise replication. Fritsch is not Castorf's "puppet." Castorf does not demand flawless reproduction of the gestures and inflections he provides as compared to, say, American director Robert Wilson.[36] Instead, through oral transmission Castorf can communicate the "attitude" or "posture" he wishes the actor to convey. The process of oral transmission furthermore keeps the actor's interpretation of Castorf's "direction" at a playful distance insofar as Fritsch cannot engage in any extended rationalization of the text. Receiving each line one after the other has the effect that the actors do not have the time or overview necessary to construct a psychological rationale for the scene. Instead they

[33] Jan Speckenbach, *Zeitspuren oder Vermessung eines Theaters: Die Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz*. PAL, directed by Jan Speckenbach, 2004. https://vimeo.com/227943924 (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).
[34] „…gleich wiedersetzen…"
[35] „Nein, nein, nein, nein heute … heute hält man's einfach für sein gutes Recht."
[36] Robert Wilson is known for his demanding rehearsal process—generally run by his assistants—during which actors are given precise gestures, timings, and line readings that they must then commit to memory. For more on Wilson's rehearsal practice see: Ellen Halperin-Royer, "Robert Wilson and the Actor: Performing in Danton's Death," *Theatre Topics* 8, no. 1 (1998), 73-91. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/35191 (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

focus on completing a set of discrete tasks, oftentimes simply trying to remember which lines to speak, and in what order. (N.B. Castorf does not typically revisit scenes once they have been set.)

From Text to Context II: Fremdtexte and the Principle of Overburdening

The second director-driven mode of context production is the distribution of overburdening *Fremdtexte*. A *Fremdtext* is a pre-existing text that is "foreign" or "extrinsic" to the source text (e.g., *Die Räuber*).[37] In his pre-rehearsal preparation, Castorf gathers *Fremdtexte* related to the historical and conceptual themes of his dramaturgical *Gerüst*. Generally speaking, these are authored by well-known writers, although the texts themselves may not be so easily identifiable. They are incorporated into the staging (and the *Regiebuch*) in a variety of ways. Sometimes Castorf knows from the start precisely which texts he wants spoken when. At other times, he requires the critical insight of his collaborators, and the playful context of the rehearsal room to find their proper place.

In the Zielke typoscript, these *Fremdtexte* are often typed up onto unnumbered loose-leaf pieces of paper that appear to have been inserted, removed, and reinserted at multiple places in the document. There is, for instance, an unnumbered page packed between pages 16 and 17 containing six lines of text from the Book of Psalms. Alternatively, sometimes Castorf knows that a certain moment in the source text requires a dialogic intervention by an extrinsic voice, even if he is not yet certain about which precise text. In cases such as this, a *Fremdtext* might be

[37] A *Fremdtext* is "foreign" or "extrinsic" only in relation to the original source text. In the context of a Castorf production, however, a *Fremdtext* becomes an integrated part of the *Regiebuch* as well as an integrated part of the new production. This claim complicates some of Lehmann's observations about "text" in *Postdramatic Theater*. His use of the word "text" in the sense of a "script" always refers to an original "source text." He does not consider the *Regiebuch* as a text in its own right.

anticipated by the word "Text," a placeholder indicating where textual intervention is desired (see Figure 1.6).

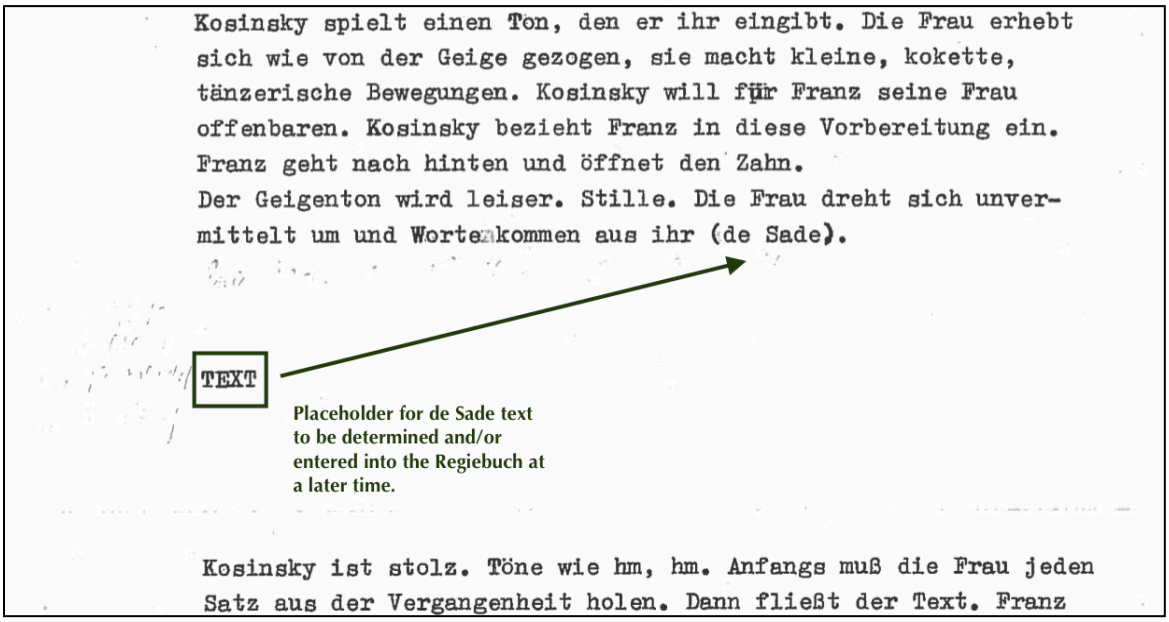

Figure 1.6. Section of a page from the Zielke typoscript

For the conceptual rehearsal, Castorf prepares certain texts and authors to be used as material for the dramaturgical *Gerüst*: "Surely this is going to be far too much text, but I want to take up Schiller's thoughts on philosophy, medicine, history, poetry (there may be other things as well) that are important to me."[38] He also speaks at length about his philosophical and dispositional admiration for the Marquis de Sade.[39] For Castorf, de Sade's writings articulate a

[38] „Sicherlich werden das viel zu viele Texte sein, aber ich möchte schon die Gedanken von Schiller aus der Philosophie, der Medizin, aus der Geschichte, auch der Lyrik (es können auch andere Sachen sein), die mir wichtig sind, aufnehmen." Castorf, „Zur Konzeption ‚RÄUBER,'" 13 in: AdK production documentation.
[39] "For me de Sade is not just a vicious pervert who tortures other people, but a humanist, who is so degenerate that he cannot go on… At a time when you can't sit down collectively and with regularity, all enlightened postulates are dishonest" [„Für mich ist de Sade nicht nur ein bösartiger Schmudelfink, der andere Menschen quält, sondern ein Humanist, der so degeneriert ist, daß er nicht mehr weiter kann. Alle aufklärerischen Postulate in einer Zeit, wo man das nicht massenhaft und kontinuierlich hinsetzen kann, sind verlogen."] Frank Castorf, „Zur Konzeption ‚RÄUBER,'" 14 in: AdK production documentation for *RÄUBER* 668 I.

radical version of the enlightenment ideology expressed by Karl Moor's rebellion against what he perceives as the dishonest rationale undergirding an oppressive power system.[40]

The Zielke typoscript contains a number of examples where the name "de Sade" stands as a placeholder for texts selected and entered into the *Regiebuch* at a later date; for example, the name appears three times on the last two pages. Here de Sade is brought into dialogue with one of the key texts of enlightenment thought, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's "Master-Bondsman Dialectic" from *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.[41] Admittedly, these pages undergo some minor revisions before the premiere.[42] Nevertheless, given that Castorf rehearses chronologically, the fact that these pages are already typed up and included in the Zielke typoscript strongly suggests that Castorf knew which texts he wanted for *ROBBERS'* final scene quite early in the development process.[43]

[40] For more on the connection Castorf draws between between enlightenment and German unification see: Wilzopolski, „Der de Sade-Komplex," *Theater des Augenblicks*, 254-262.
[41] G.W.F Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *Werke*, ed., Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 150-155.
[42] This amount of de Sade text is reduced between this version and the final performance. Furthermore, the text distribution bears little to no resemblances to these pages. The letters U, D, L, and K stand for original cast members Karin Ugowski, Susanne Düllmann, Marlies Ludwig, and Katrin Knappe.
[43] Castorf introduces his chronological rehearsal process at the conceptual rehearsal: "Actually, I would like to proceed chronologically at first." [„Ich möchte eigentlich schon chronologisch vorgehen am Anfang."] Frank Castorf, „Zur Konzeption ‚RÄUBER' / Volksbühne Berlin," 13 in: AdK production documentation for *RÄUBER* 668 I.

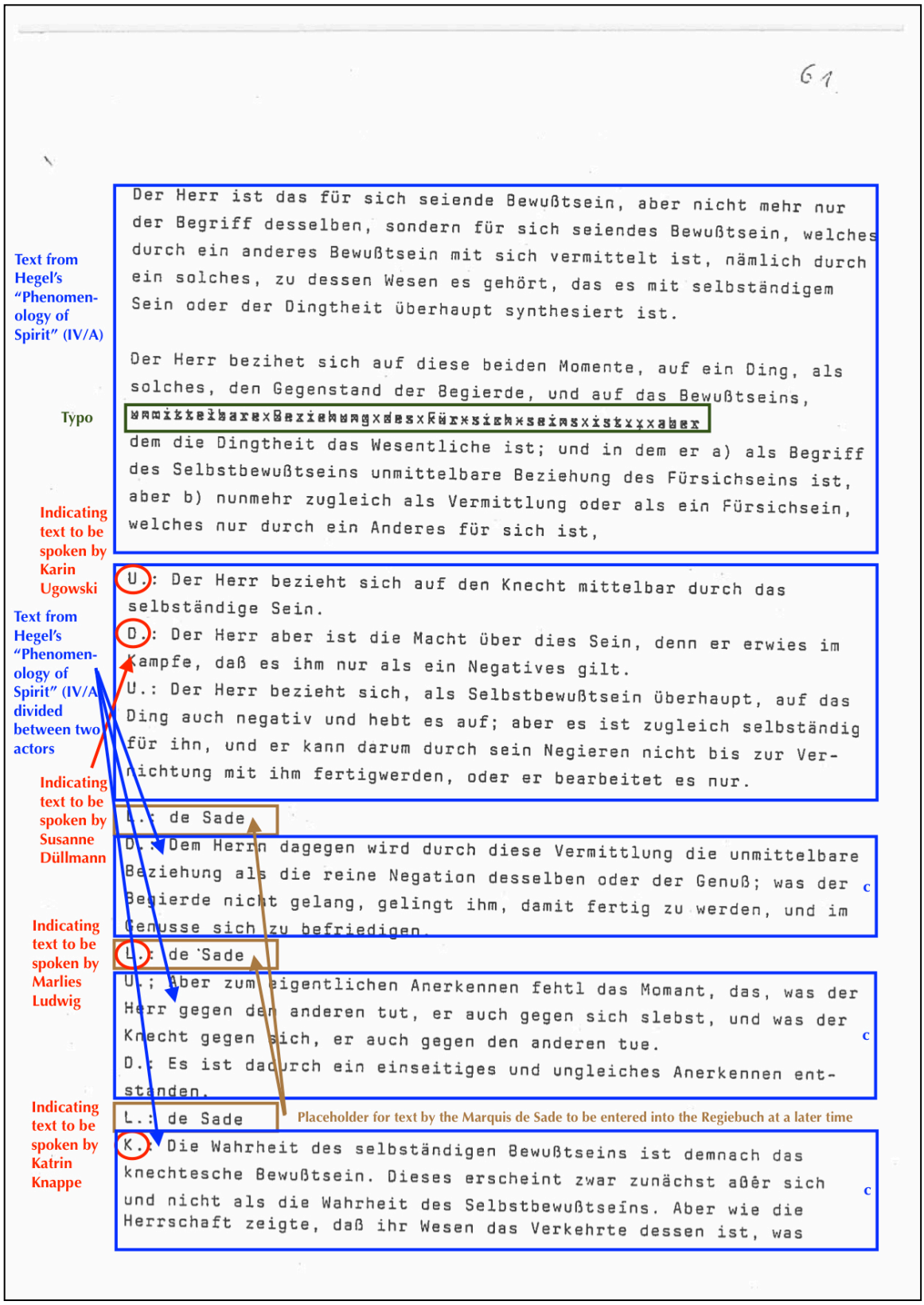

Figure 1.7 The penultimate page of the Zielke typoscript

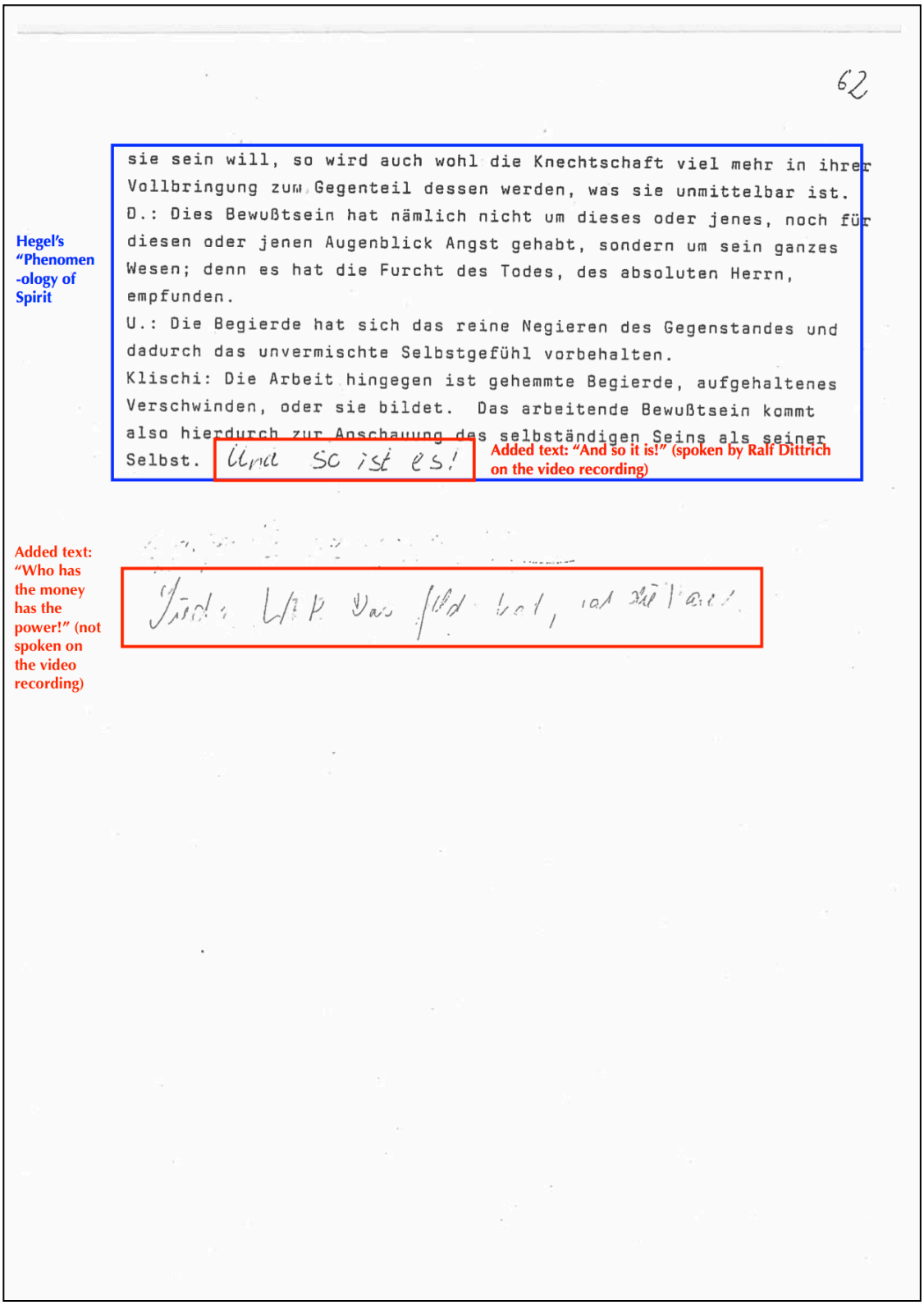

Figure 1.8 Final page of the Zielke typoscript

In the final version of this scene as shown on the video recording, the text is distributed among the three "Trudies" and Justine, characters drawn from Grimms' Fairy Tales and the Marquis de Sade's eponymous novel, whom the audience has already encountered in multiple previous scenes. Accompanied by Herr Korbes—another character borrowed from Grimms' Fairy Tales—the troupe crosses down center, and sits on the raised part of the stage with their legs dangling over the edge like punks loitering on a public bench. One of them (Katrin Knappe) carries a bottle of *Rotkäppchen*, East German "champagne." Suddenly, the lights go out. The actors register the cue, and find themselves alone in a small pool of light. Then, one of the Trudies (Susanne Düllmann) begins to recite Hegel's text. Verbalizing this tongue-twisting monolith of German enlightenment theory at top speed for over thirty seconds, she is eventually relieved of the textual burden by Marlies Ludwig, who takes over the text, splitting Hegel's thinking into a dialogue. Eventually, Knappe succeeds in popping open the champagne, and the Hegel text is quickly wrapped up. At this point, Justine (Astrid Meyerfeldt) enters with an obscene passage from de Sade's *120 Years of Sodom*. This single text lasts over 90 seconds despite Meyerfeldt's speedy delivery. Her vulgar utterances are met with laughter and even some scattered applause from audience members impressed by her "mastery" of the text.

Clip 1.3 – "Fremdtexte"

The tension staged here between text and actor registers two relationships that resemble the master-bondsman dialectic being described. On the level of content, De Sade's obscene prose collides with Hegel's conceptual wordplay in an oblique allusion to the power relationship between the Western "master" and the Eastern "bondsman" in unified Germany, made explicit by the cuing of a song by the lefty rocker Rio Reiser directly after this sequence. On the level of

form, Castorf's assignment of these excessive texts to individual actors alerts the spectator to the equally imbalanced power relation between Castorf and his actors. He puts Meyerfeldt to work.

Imposing excessive text passages on actors is a regular feature of Castorf's directorial practice. Critic Frank Raddatz calls this "the principle of overburdening" [*das Prinzip der Überforderung*], to which he attributes the "completely distinctive effect" of acting in Castorf's theater during an interview with Castorf's chief designer, Bert Neumann.[44] Neumann agrees with Raddatz, and emphasizes the "exhaustion" [*Erschöpfung*] Castorf's actors suffer as a result. He describes how by overburdening the actors, Castorf forces them to "cross a threshold" [*bestimmte Grenzen überschreitet*], suggesting that, in performance, the actors enter a kind of "limit situation" [*Grenzsituation*], an uncommon circumstance or encounter that unsettles one's everyday sense of being in the world. To be sure, harm is part and parcel of the acting in a Castorf production. Beyond the excessive texts, these actors frequently endure acute physical harm including laryngitis, broken limbs, torn ligaments, and knocked-out teeth.[45]

Unlike theater based in illusory aesthetics, however, the actors' struggle against textual excess in Castorf's theater does not aim to conceal the labor of memorization, but to make it visible instead. This is heightened by the presence of a prompter, who sits in either the first row of the audience or in the wings of the stage, ready to help should the actor's memory fail her. The prompter's presence altogether changes the stakes of acting by eliminating the sense of risk normally produced by the possibility that an actor might forget his or her lines. Prompters are not unique to Castorf's theater, but a standard position at most German theaters. (The prompter is also an integral part of the rehearsal process, attending each rehearsal seated between the director

[44] Bert Neumann, „Das Projekt Volksbühne," Interviewed by Frank Raddatz, *Republik Castorf*, 28.
[45] During my time working at the Volksbühne, I can remember several torn muscles, two broken arms (both belonging to one actor), two broken legs, one broken rib, one knocked-out tooth, and countless cases of pulled ligaments and laryngitis. Unfortunately, I cannot verify these examples.

and the playing space, feeding the actors their lines.)[46] What *is* unique, however, is the attention Castorf's theater pays the prompter in performance. His actors are generally uninhibited in their use of this safety net. Even in the middle of a scene, they will run off into the wings, bringing the *Soufflierbuch* back with them on stage, a gesture tied to the production of extemporaneity explored later in this chapter. The most extreme case of this I have witnessed was in 2017 at Castorf's final Volksbühne production, an adaptation of Dostoevsky's novel *A Faint Heart* [*Ein Schwaches Herz*] as pictured in Figure 1.9.[47]

[46] To this end, the prompter keeps the *Soufflierbuch*, a sister version of the *Regiebuch,* as already mentioned. A counterpart to the assistant director, the prompter is responsible for upholding the integrity of the written text, by making sure that the actors speak their lines correctly once those lines have been set. It warrants mentioning that prompters are also almost always women. For more on the gendering of labor in German theater see: Susan Vahabzadeh, „Intendanten sind männlich, Souffleusen weiblich," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 29, 2016. http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/studie-zu-frauen-in-kultur-und-medien-intendanten-sind-maennlich-souffleusen-weiblich-1.3055106 (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

[47] When lead actor Hendrik Arnst fell ill one day before the premiere, actor Daniel Zillmann had twenty-four hours to learn the four and a half hour play. The solution Castorf and his team found for this seemingly impossible situation was to have the prompter (Elisabeth Zumpe) accompany Zillmann around the stage at all times. A petite woman in her 20s, Zumpe semi-audibly fed the text to the considerably larger Zillmann, who then transformed her whispers using his signature histrionic delivery. (N.B. In 2017, the image of a permanently present prompter was already familiar to Volksbühne audiences from the theater of René Pollesch, who already ten years earlier had expanded on Castorf's exposure of the prompter by putting prompter Tina Pfurr on stage for the entirety of several plays.) For more on Pollesch and Castorf's visible prompter see: Katharina Ludwig, „Souffleuse im Rampenlicht," *Der Tagesspiegel*, July 2, 2010. https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/stadtleben/volksbuehne-souffleuse-im-rampenlicht/1873250.html (last accessed Aug. 8, 2018).

Figure 1.9 Prompter Elisabeth Zumpe with the *Soufflierbuch* standing to the left of actor Daniel Zillmann in *A Faint Heart* (2017). (Photo credit Thomas Aurin)

The physical and mental pressure textual excess puts on actors, as in the de Sade-Hegel sequence, reflexively stages the agonistic interaction of actor, director, and text, reinforcing Castorf's reputation as a cliché of the volatile "director-tyrant" [*Regietyrann*] of *Regietheater*. This behavior is the subject of a 2017 German television report "Castorf and Rage," a portion of which shows 28 year-old actor Jasna Fritzi Bauer in a late-stage rehearsal for Castorf's adaptation of Friedrich Hebbel's *Judith* (premiere: January 20, 2017). In the clip, Bauer is reciting her lines when Castorf aggressively cuts her off.[48]

Clip 1.4 – "State of Exception"

Castorf's temper tantrum is incited by his dissatisfaction with the discrepancy Bauer's delivery creates between herself (e.g., in voice, body, and attitude) and the text. Castorf alleges that the way she directs her gaze at her scene partner (theater legend Birgit Minichmeyer)

[48] *Frank Castorf und die Wut: Zum Abschied an der Volksbühne*, written by Thomas Irmer, Berlin: ZDF (May 17, 2017), 01:14-01:22. https://www.zdf.de/kultur/filme-dokus-kabarett/frank-castorf-und-die-wut-100.html (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

produces a qualitative asymmetry between Hebbel's "monolithic" texts and Bauer's "mouse brain."[49] Castorf defends this kind of treatment as a necessary means to push his actors to a heightened state he refers to as a "state of exception of theater labor" [*Ausnahmezustand von Theaterarbeit*], a justification that his public has largely accepted.[50] Even the ZDF reporter narrating the above video prefaces the clip by legitimizing Castorf's behavior as a necessary means of "inciting actors like Sophie Rois, Henry Hübchen, or Martin Wuttke into peak performance."[51]

In this framework, Castorf imagines himself as a Freudian father figure, whom the actors must overcome. The idea of patricide as the foundational act of creating a performance does not come from Castorf, however, but from one of his most important dramaturgical role models, Heiner Müller. In response to Castorf's 1996 "adaptation" of his play *The Battle*, Müller wrote: "Without patricide nothing can happen at all in theater."[52] The idea of the actors needing to reach a "state of exception" in performance also correlates with Castorf's "anti-democratic" vision of art. On several occasions, Castorf has distinguished his artistic practice from directors known for

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[49] There is not room here to address Castorf's representation of women, statements on women directors, and general treatment of women, a subject that garnered public attention in the wake of the #MeToo movement. Cf. Frank Castorf, interview with Christine Dössel, „Es ist so wie mit einer Liebe, die vorbei ist," *Süddeutsche* Zeitung, June 28, 2018. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/frank-castorf-im-interview-es-ist-so-wie-mit-einer-liebe-die-vorbei-ist-1.4033924?reduced=true (last accessed Aug. 8, 2018); Felizitas Stilleke, „Eine Antwort auf sexistische Äußerungen von Frank Castorf," *Welt*, July 4, 2018. https://www.welt.de/kultur/theater/article178746588/Offener-Brief-Eine-Antwort-auf-sexistische-Aeusserungen-von-Frank-Castorf.html (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

[50] Castorf qtd. in: „Es ist kein Zufall, dass jetzt alles in Berlin Englisch aussehen soll," Interviewed by Raddatz, *Republik Castorf*, 342. The word *Ausnahmezustand* (translated as a "state of exception") describes a paradoxical moment when the law overrides itself in order to maintain itself. In German political theory, the term is bound up with the political violence of authoritarian regimes. Cf. Carl Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen*, (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2002); Georgio Agamben, *State of Exception,* trans., Kevin Attell (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[51] „Seine Schreiattaken haben Schauspieler wie Sophie Rois, Henry Hübchen, oder Martin Wüttke zu höchstleistung angespornt." *Frank Castorf und die Wut,* May 17, 2017.

[52] „Ohne Vatermord passiert doch überhaupt nichts am Theater," Heiner Müller, *Werke*, vol. 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008), 790. Müller uses this precise phrase in response to Castorf's use of his texts in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* (the focus of Chapter Three) in: Andres Müry, „Ohne Vatermord passiert nichts," *FOCUS Magazin*, no. 40, September 30, 1995. https://www.focus.de/auto/neuheiten/kultur-ohne-vatermord-passiert-nichts_aid_155589.html (last accessed Aug. 8, 2018).

their open, democratic processes, such as Peter Stein whose experimentation with collaborative models of artistic production became a "political" quality of his renowned theater at the Schaubühne that was marketable to liberal sentiments.[53] It is likely this sense of being a "collective-person" [*Kollektivmensch*] that Castorf wants to disavow in the interview quoted earlier in this chapter.

Among the unpublished texts housed at the theater archive of the Akademie der Künste is an essay by Wilzopolski on acting in Castorf's theater based on the work of *ROBBERS.* Wilzopolski describes the acting as a kind of "theater-internal play" [*theaterinternen Spiel*] that positions "[the actor's] experience of him- or herself center stage; the process of finding oneself becomes a pre-condition for [this special] quality."[54] As Neumann and Castorf each suggest with their references to "crossing thresholds" and "the state of exception," Wilzopolski describes how through "theater-internal play" these actors come up against their own individual physical and mental limitations. In this regard, the strenuous verbalization of overburdening *Fremdtexte* alerts us to the powerplay that took place in rehearsal. The text becomes a platform, on which the agonistic interaction of actor and director plays out. It evokes the presence of the director, and registers the extrinsically determined quality of the actor's performance.

The attention these *Fremdtexte* calls to the director's power over the actors also makes the viewer mindful of the actor's individual labor. This draws a distinction between the actor's own subject position and the meaning of the text he or she is reciting. Out of this staging of the actor's capitulation there emerges a sense of the actor's ontological separateness from both text and director. By staging the limits of the actor's agency, a sense of his or her autonomy emerges.

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[53] For a summary of Peter Stein's career see: Carlson, *Theater is More Beautiful than War,* 4-25.

[54] „Selbsterfahrung der künstlerisch Produzierenden im Zentrum; der Prozess der Selbstfindung wird zu einer Qualitätsvoraussetzung." Wilzopolski, „Die Theaterästhetik Frank Castorfs," 1 in: AdK production documentation for *RÄUBER* 668 I.

In the next section, I show how the actor's autonomy can also become its own independent site of context production.

FROM TEXT TO CONTEXT III: THE ACTOR AS AUTHOR

The autonomy of the actor is a key concept in the theater of Frank Castorf as demonstrated by the third mode of context production, a set of practices that require the actor to develop the text and scenic action of his or her own performance. "The most important thing [in Castorf's theater] is that all actors take responsibility," says Volksbühne actor Bernhard Schütz.[55] Actor Kathrin Angerer views this actorial responsibility as a secondary *Gerüst* that the actors develop separately from—yet in relation to—Castorf's dramaturgical one.

> You don't play a role or develop a character from scene to scene; rather, aside from the text, there are other themes and thoughts available, in which enough points exist that have something to do with yourself such that a quite personal *Gerüst* arises next to the *Gerüst* of the staging, Frank's *Gerüst*. That is the emphatic element, the motor. The two frameworks join together more and more. In that process something organic emerges. You're always moving along multiple tracks. That is the freedom. … Freedom can only emerge, because there is another ground beyond the text, there is another *Gerüst* at hand.[56]

Angerer's account of the actorial *Gerüst* echoes descriptions of acting in Castorf's theater as especially "free." Frank Raddatz for one characterizes Castorf's actors' performances by "the great freedom dominating the stage [that] leaps out at your eye. […] The actors' possibilities at

[55] Bernhard Schütz qtd. in „Das wichtigste, ist, dass alle Schauspieler Verantwortung übernehmen," Interviewed by Frank Raddatz, *Republik Castorf*, 208.

[56] „Man spielt keine Rolle oder entwickelt eine Figur von Szene zu Szene, sondern neben dem Text sind noch andere Themen und Gedanken vorhanden, in denen genug Punkte existieren, die etwas mit einem zu tun haben, so dass ein ganz persönliches Gerüst neben dem Gerüst der Inszenierung, dem Gerüst von Frank, entsteht. Das ist das Emphatische, der Motor. Die beiden Gerüste verbinden sich immer mehr miteinander. Dabei entsteht etwas Organisches. Man fährt immer mehrgleisig. Das ist die Freiheit… Die Freiheit kann nur entstehen, weil neben dem Text noch ein weiterer Boden, ein anderes Gerüst vorhanden ist." Angerer qtd. in „Ein Ensemble...," 44.

the Volksbühne seem limitless."[57] In fact, this idea of "freedom" figures so prominently in the reception of Castorf's theater, that it has become a hallmark for the entire Volksbühne project. Critic Rüdiger Schaper has called Castorf's Volksbühne "a school of freedom" ["eine Schule der Freiheit].[58] Director Ersan Mondtag has said that the most important principle he learned as a Volksbühne intern was the principle of "freedom."[59] The recurrent use of the words "free" and "freedom" across Castorf reception reflects the shared observation that these performances indeed exhibit some indefinable quality. To my mind, "freedom" figures only as a cliché, however, a placeholder to facilitate description of this tangible but elusive quality of acting.[60]

The most frequently cited example of this actorial "freedom" is Henry Hübchen's performance of Franz Moor's soliloquy in *ROBBERS*.[61] A key moment in Schiller's play, Franz's

[57] „Als Zuschauer springt einem die große Freiheit ins Auge, die auf der Bühne herrscht. […] Für den Zuschauer scheinen die Möglichkeiten der Schauspieler an der Volksbühne grenzenlos." Raddatz qtd in: „Ein Ensemble...," 44.
[58] Rüdiger Schaper, „Extrem und sehr unbequem," *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 30, 2017.
[59] Christine Wahl, „Ich würde gern die Schaubühne übernehmen," *Der Tagesspiegel*, May 6, 2017. In reference to Mondtag's interview, Lily Kelting of the expat Berlin magazine *Exberliner* writes, "Watching *Faust*, you start to understand what people mean when they say Castorf taught them about freedom – the piece is as loose and associative as ever, but this time, it feels less like self-assured, thrown-together bullshit and more like free jazz." Lily Kelting, "We'll always have Paris," *Exberliner*, May 10, 2017. http://www.exberliner.com/whats-on/stage/frank-castorf-faust/ (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).
[60] In an unpublished text included in the *ROBBERS* production documentation, set designer Bert Neumann describes his "freedom" as Castorf's designer. "The set designer's freedom is (for me, essential) an advantage in the collaboration with director Frank Castorf. There is no restrictive conceptualization; the set design is much more a part of the cast – it exists with the actors (and they then inside it) in its singularity and radical subjectivity of an individual with a biography." [„Die Freiheit des Bühnenbildners ist ein (für mich wesentlicher) Vorteil der Zusammenarbeit mit dem Regisseur Frank Castorf. Es gibt keine einengende Konzeption, vielmehr ist das Bühnenbild ein Teil der Besetzung – es existiert mit den Darstellern (und diese dann in ihm) in seiner Eigenart und radikalen Subjektivität eines Individuums mit eigener Biographie."] The most pertinent remark Neumann makes with regard to my argument is that he uses the autonomy of the actors as a measure of his own freedom as set designer. Like "the actors," Neumann is not restricted by an overbearing director. At the same time, he articulates a secondary function of design in this working process. Insofar as the design "exists with the actors (and they then inside it)," an exchange of influence occurs. The design, like the actors, is at once both autonomous and determined by the other materials, that is, its context. Qtd. in: Bert Neumann. „Zum Bühnenbild: Der autonome Raum," in AdK production documentation.
[61] A misconception of improvisation as a kind of "freedom" has informed a great deal of Castorf reception. For example, one critic writes, "The excellent actors drive [Castorf] forward, fall more and more out of the role—play-act themselves free…" [„Die großartigen Schauspieler treiben ihn voran, fallen immer öfter aus der Rolle—spielen sich frei…."] Katja Weise, „‚Der haarige Affe': Premiere am Schauspielhaus," NDR, Hamburg, February 19, 2018. https://www.ndr.de/kultur/Der-haarige-Affe-Premiere-in-Hamburg,affe476.html

soliloquy establishes his jealousy of his brother, setting up the drama's central conflict. Franz laments the injustice of his birth; by no fault of his own, he is both the second-born (meaning no inheritance), and unattractive (meaning no love).[62]

Hübchen's performance features small textual interventions into Schiller's original script that reimagine Franz's soliloquy as a series of dialogues by adding interlocutors into Schiller's scene; for example a white mouse, to which Hübchen addresses the first part of his monologue. As Hübchen grows increasingly exasperated, he packs the mouse away into a paper bag, and addresses himself to the heavens as he collapses in despair. In response, "Herr Korbes" unexpectedly enters up out of the floor to allay Franz's scorn.[63] In the original, Moor thinks to himself: "No, no! I do [my mother] an injustice. Did she not give us the spirit of innovation?"[64] In Castorf's version, Herr Korbes speaks a modified version of these lines: "No, no, *Franz*, *you* do her an injustice. Did she not give *you* the spirit of innovation?"[65] The absurdity of this dialogue prompts audience laughter, which Hübchen uses as a cue to turn to the audience and address himself directly to his viewers.

At this moment, Hübchen's acting begins to transform. His accent abruptly switches to the Berlin dialect, *Berlinerisch*.[66] The concurrence of Schiller's text, and Hübchen's *actual*

(accessed Aug. 8, 2018). The same conflation of freedom and improvisation provides the conceptual foundation of Sam Wasson, *Improv Nation: How we made a great American Art* (New York City, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2017).

[62] Hegemann too conflates the idea of freedom with an actor moving beyond a scripted text in his description of Castorf's actors as autonomous agents endowed with "every *freedom* to take up their own position when they act outside of their roles" See: p. 23.

[63] Herr Korbes is a character from Grimms' Fairytales. Cf. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "Herr Korbes" in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 7th ed., (Berlin, 1985), no. 41.

[64] „Nein! Nein! Ich tue ihr Unrecht. Gab sie uns doch Erfindungsgeist mit?"

[65] „Nein, nein, Franz, du tust ihr Unrecht! Gab sie dir nicht Erfindungsgeist mit?" Italics mine.

[66] This change of dialect occurs at the line "Those who can swim, swim! The klutzes can go ahead and sink." „Schwümme wer schwümmen kann. Wer zu plump ist geh' unta." Other examples of archetypal *Berlinerisch* diction in his monologue include: „Ooch ihr!" meaning „auch ihr" or "you too"; „Flitzpiepen," a local form of insult, and „Freundschaft" meaning "friendship," but which Berliners (and East Germans more generally) can use to mean "truce." The Volksbühne core audience was familiar enough with Hübchen (who joined the

accent generates an ambiguous ontology that refers to both Hübchen and Franz, but is never distinctly one or the other. Then with the line, "Get off your asses!"[67] Hübchen departs entirely from Schiller's text, and begins to engage in what looks like a disparagement of the audience, a *Publikumsbeschimpfung*.[68]

Clip 1.5 – "Publikumsbeschimpfung"

Hübchen's turn toward the audience has been interpreted by critics and scholars as: i) an indication that he has begun to play himself; and ii) an indication that he is improvising.[69] Even though Hübchen's use of direct address and Berlin dialect evoke "Henry Hübchen" the actor, the "I" he speaks remains ambiguous. Lines such as, "Come on, say that you like me," make sense as spoken by both Franz and Hübchen.[70] Moreover, the inclusion of new text that explicitly voices anti-East German sentiment in 1990 (e.g., "Forty years opportunistically snoring away, and then you want to have everything!") evokes other subjects beyond either actor or character. Together the combination of Schiller's text, new text, and Hübchen's shifting mode of address constitute an elusive set of competing subject positions.

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ensemble in 1974) to know his actual accent. Furthermore, his television, film, and musical appearances garnered him popularity beyond the theater. In fact, Hübchen's star status cultivated a kind of public persona independent of the roles he performed. This persona was reinforced by the repetition of specific behaviors, actions, and techniques across various Castorf productions that include: slapstick humor, use of his natural Berlin dialect, and abrupt musical performance.

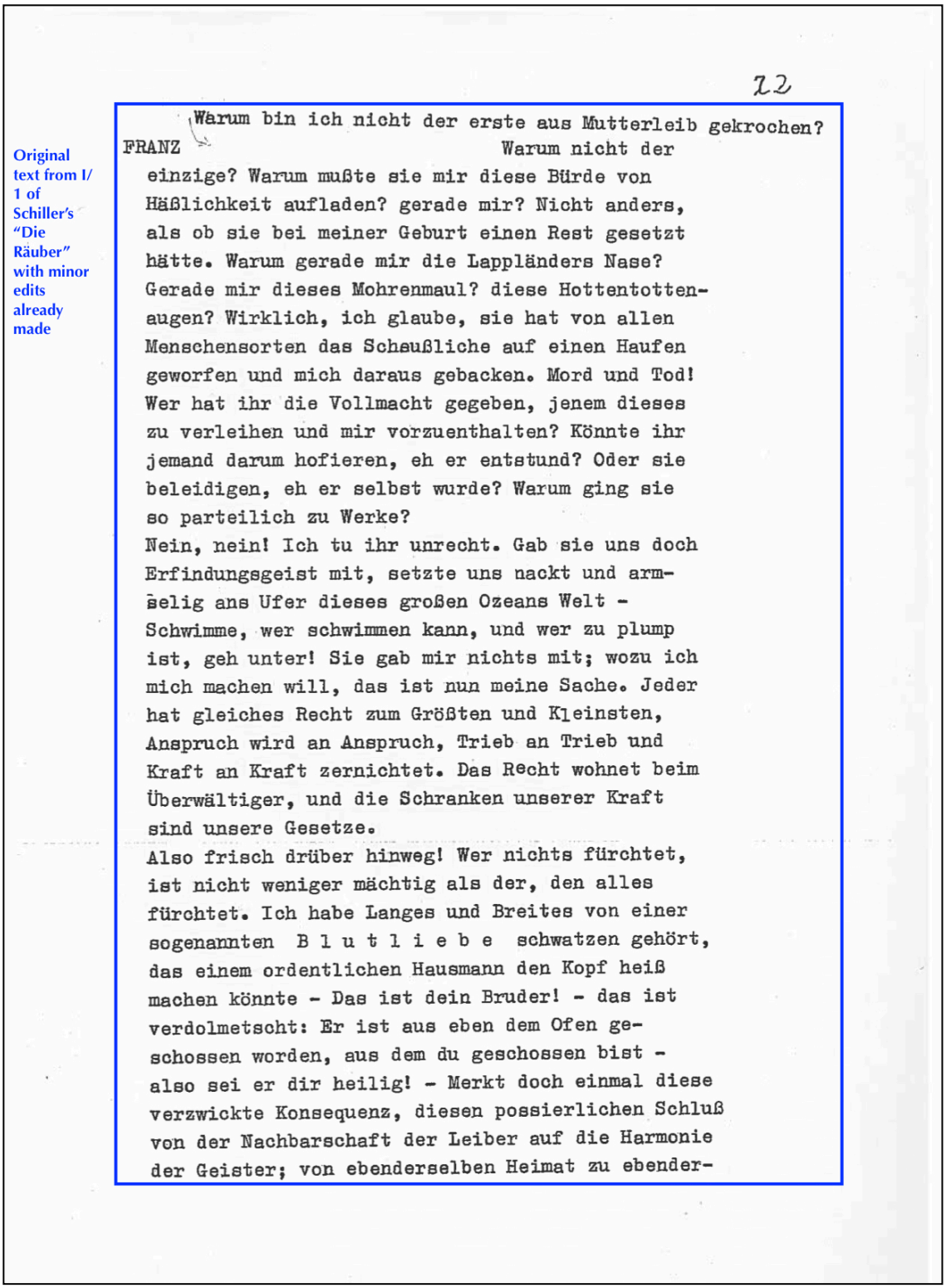
[67] „Hebt den Arsch hoch!"

[68] A *Publikumsbeschimpfung* is a "complaint" or "complaining against the audience." The term gained new meaning in German theater parlance in the mid-1960s with the premiere of dramatist Peter Handke's play of the same name. A *Publikumsbeschimpfung* distinguishes itself from other kinds of monologues in that it stages critique not only by means of direct address like Brechtian *Verfremdung*, but it stages a critique *of the audience.* Hübchen's use of direct address to the audience in Castorf productions can perform a critical register similar to a *Publikumsbeschimpfung*, but it is often delivered in an ironic, playful tone that renders the earnestness of the complaint ambiguous. Cf. Peter Handke, *Publikumsbeschimpfung und andere Sprechstücke* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1966).

[69] Cornish describes Hübchen's monologue as "partially improvised" in: Cornish, *Performing Unification,* 104; Carlson includes "improvised and inserted material, direct addresses and other confrontations with the audience" among their constitutive parts in: Carlson, *Theatre is More Beautiful than War,* 99. Ute Büsing praises the actors for masterfully "improvising their parts" in: Büsing, "Curtain comes down …," June 29, 2017.

[70] „Komm, sag, dass du mich lieb hast."

Additionally, critics and scholars often describe this moment in Hübchen's performance as improvised; yet a comparison of the *Regiebuch* (Figures 1.14 & 1.15) and the video recording reveals how scripted the acting actually is. Beginning with, "Get up! Get off your asses!" everything Hübchen says is fixed in the text, even the reconciliation with a specific audience member. The only discrepancy between video and text is the subsequent passage when Hübchen speaks in Franz's voice, lamenting his fate as an eternal "villain" [*Bösewicht*] trapped by Schiller since 1780; yet the artful timing and precision of Hübchen's delivery suggests, at least to me, that this was not the first time he spoke those lines, but rather that since the premiere, he had incorporated these new lines into his subsequent performances.



22

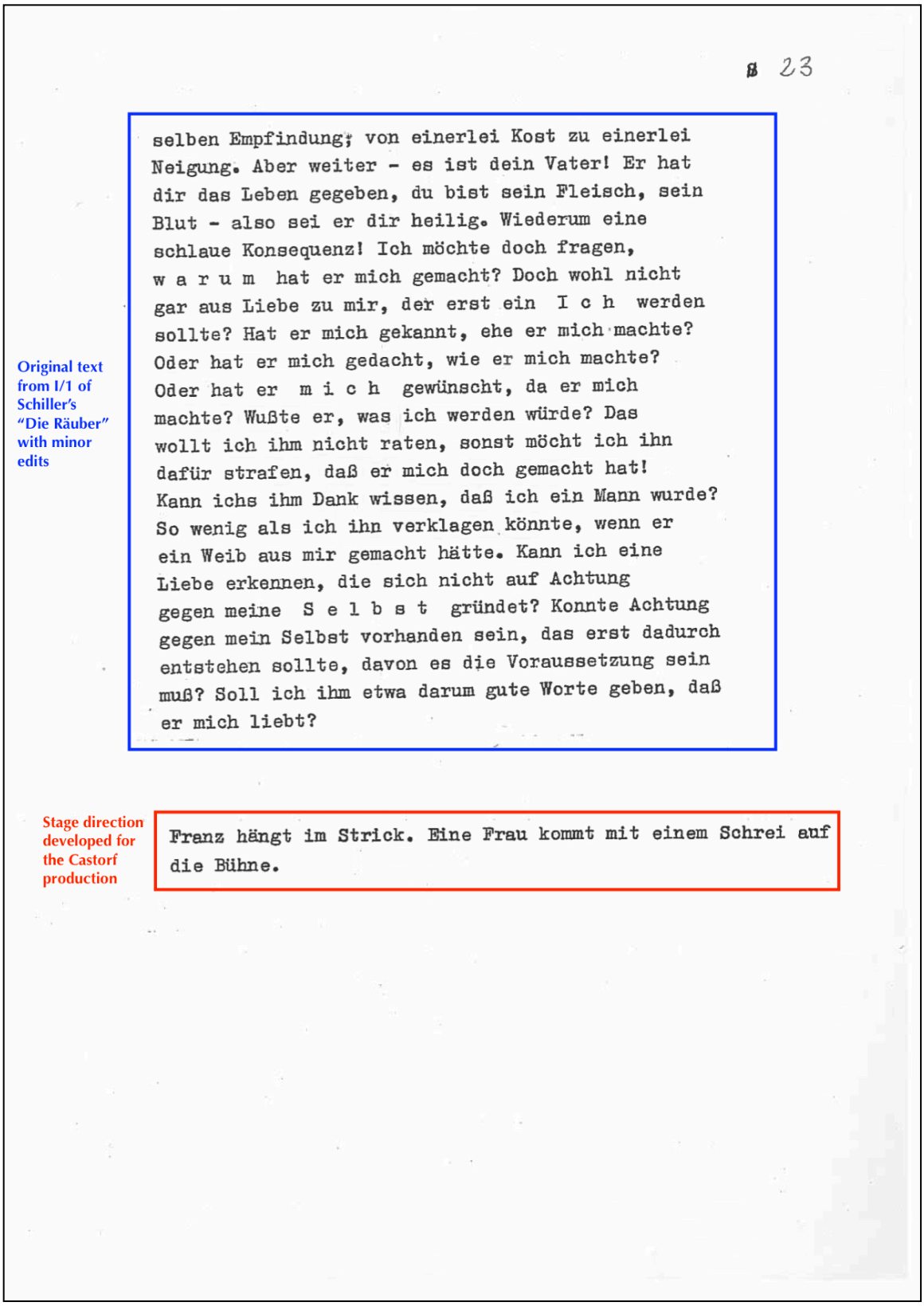
FRANZ Warum bin ich nicht der erste aus Mutterleib gekrochen? Warum nicht der einzige? Warum mußte sie mir diese Bürde von Häßlichkeit aufladen? gerade mir? Nicht anders, als ob sie bei meiner Geburt einen Rest gesetzt hätte. Warum gerade mir die Lappländers Nase? Gerade mir dieses Mohrenmaul? diese Hottentotten-augen? Wirklich, ich glaube, sie hat von allen Menschensorten das Scheußliche auf einen Haufen geworfen und mich daraus gebacken. Mord und Tod! Wer hat ihr die Vollmacht gegeben, jenem dieses zu verleihen und mir vorzuenthalten? Könnte ihr jemand darum hofieren, eh er entstund? Oder sie beleidigen, eh er selbst wurde? Warum ging sie so parteilich zu Werke?

Nein, nein! Ich tu ihr unrecht. Gab sie uns doch Erfindungsgeist mit, setzte uns nackt und arm-selig ans Ufer dieses großen Ozeans Welt - Schwimme, wer schwimmen kann, und wer zu plump ist, geh unter! Sie gab mir nichts mit; wozu ich mich machen will, das ist nun meine Sache. Jeder hat gleiches Recht zum Größten und Kleinsten, Anspruch wird an Anspruch, Trieb an Trieb und Kraft an Kraft zernichtet. Das Recht wohnet beim Überwältiger, und die Schranken unserer Kraft sind unsere Gesetze.

Also frisch drüber hinweg! Wer nichts fürchtet, ist nicht weniger mächtig als der, den alles fürchtet. Ich habe Langes und Breites von einer sogenannten B l u t l i e b e schwatzen gehört, das einem ordentlichen Hausmann den Kopf heiß machen könnte - Das ist dein Bruder! - das ist verdolmetscht: Er ist aus eben dem Ofen ge-schossen worden, aus dem du geschossen bist - also sei er dir heilig! - Merkt doch einmal diese verzwickte Konsequenz, diesen possierlichen Schluß von der Nachbarschaft der Leiber auf die Harmonie der Geister; von ebenderselben Heimat zu ebender-

Original text from I/1 of Schiller's "Die Räuber" with minor edits already made

Figure 1.10 Franz Moor's Monologue (1/2) in the Zielke Typoscript (provided by: Sabine Zielke)



Original text from I/1 of Schiller's "Die Räuber" with minor edits

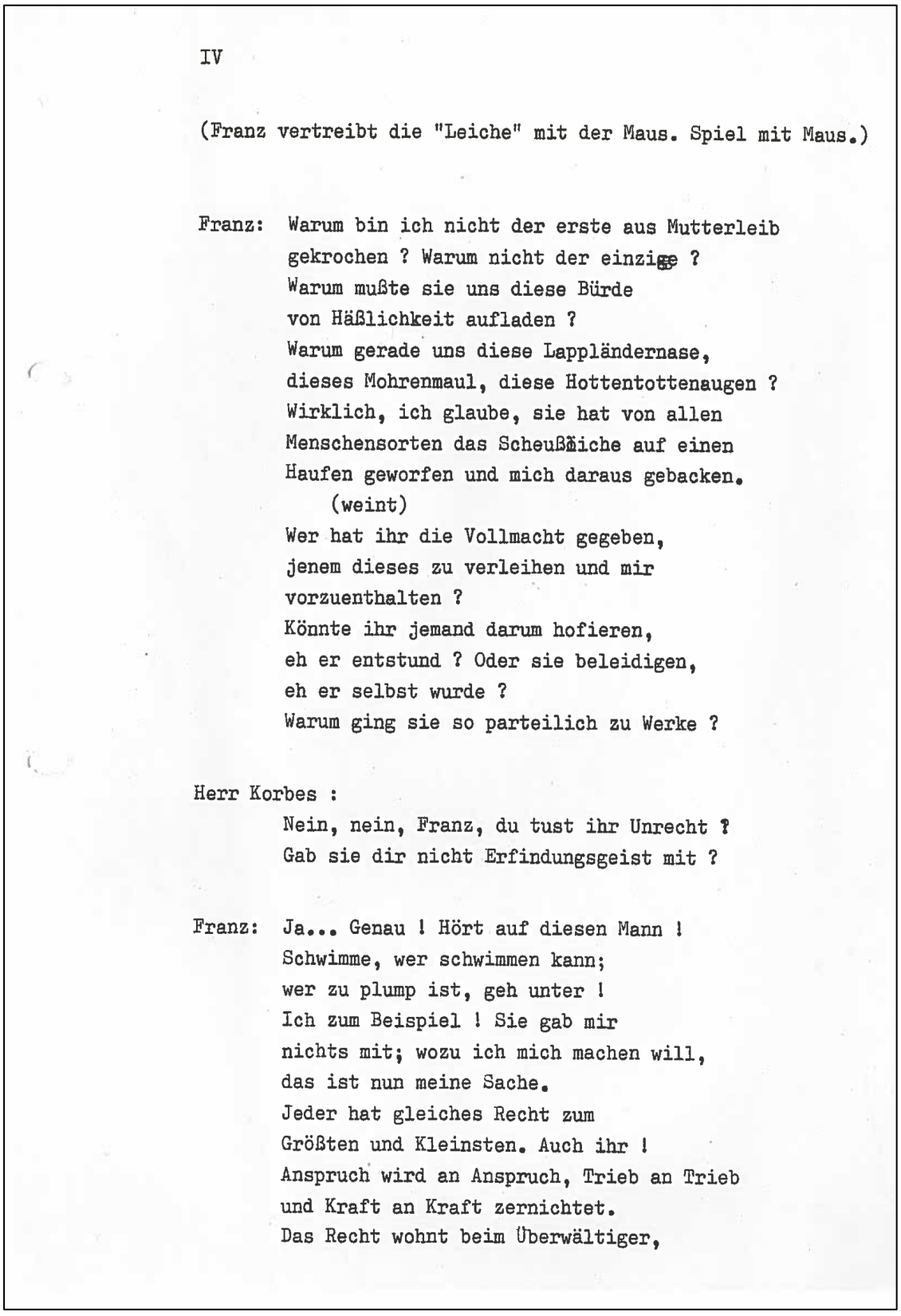
S 23

selben Empfindung; von einerlei Kost zu einerlei Neigung. Aber weiter - es ist dein Vater! Er hat dir das Leben gegeben, du bist sein Fleisch, sein Blut - also sei er dir heilig. Wiederum eine schlaue Konsequenz! Ich möchte doch fragen, w a r u m hat er mich gemacht? Doch wohl nicht gar aus Liebe zu mir, der erst ein I c h werden sollte? Hat er mich gekannt, ehe er mich machte? Oder hat er mich gedacht, wie er mich machte? Oder hat er m i c h gewünscht, da er mich machte? Wußte er, was ich werden würde? Das wollt ich ihm nicht raten, sonst möcht ich ihn dafür strafen, daß er mich doch gemacht hat! Kann ichs ihm Dank wissen, daß ich ein Mann wurde? So wenig als ich ihn verklagen könnte, wenn er ein Weib aus mir gemacht hätte. Kann ich eine Liebe erkennen, die sich nicht auf Achtung gegen meine S e l b s t gründet? Konnte Achtung gegen mein Selbst vorhanden sein, das erst dadurch entstehen sollte, davon es die Voraussetzung sein muß? Soll ich ihm etwa darum gute Worte geben, daß er mich liebt?

Stage direction developed for the Castorf production

Franz hängt im Strick. Eine Frau kommt mit einem Schrei auf die Bühne.

Figure 1.11 Franz Moor's Monologue (2/2) in the Zielke Typoscript (provided by: Sabine Zielke)



IV

(Franz vertreibt die "Leiche" mit der Maus. Spiel mit Maus.)

Franz: Warum bin ich nicht der erste aus Mutterleib
gekrochen ? Warum nicht der einzige ?
Warum mußte sie uns diese Bürde
von Häßlichkeit aufladen ?
Warum gerade uns diese Lappländernase,
dieses Mohrenmaul, diese Hottentottenaugen ?
Wirklich, ich glaube, sie hat von allen
Menschensorten das Scheußliche auf einen
Haufen geworfen und mich daraus gebacken.
(weint)
Wer hat ihr die Vollmacht gegeben,
jenem dieses zu verleihen und mir
vorzuenthalten ?
Könnte ihr jemand darum hofieren,
eh er entstund ? Oder sie beleidigen,
eh er selbst wurde ?
Warum ging sie so parteilich zu Werke ?

Herr Korbes :
Nein, nein, Franz, du tust ihr Unrecht ?
Gab sie dir nicht Erfindungsgeist mit ?

Franz: Ja... Genau ! Hört auf diesen Mann !
Schwimme, wer schwimmen kann;
wer zu plump ist, geh unter !
Ich zum Beispiel ! Sie gab mir
nichts mit; wozu ich mich machen will,
das ist nun meine Sache.
Jeder hat gleiches Recht zum
Größten und Kleinsten. Auch ihr !
Anspruch wird an Anspruch, Trieb an Trieb
und Kraft an Kraft zernichtet.
Das Recht wohnt beim Überwältiger,

Figure 1.12 *Regiebuch* (1/2) for Franz Moor's (Henry Hübchen) opening (provided by: Sabine Zielke)

und die Schrankensunserer Kraft
sind unsere Gesetze.
Also: frisch darüber hinweg !
Wer nichts fürchtet, ist nicht weniger
mächtig als der, den alles fürchtet !

Auf ! Hebt den Arsch hoch !
Na los ! Na, was ist ?
Vierzig Jahre opportunistisch rumschnarchen,
und jetzt alles haben wollen !
Na, ist doch wahr ! Wirklich !
Vierzig Jahre hier opportunistisch rum-
schnarchen, und dann alles haben wollen !
Nein, dich mein ich nicht.
Du bist selbständig.
Aber die anderen Flitzpiepen hier !
Zum Kotzen !

(ev. Wortgefecht m. Publikum
oder Ähnliches)

Ihr Kadettfahrer, ihr !

Herr Korbes:
Franz !

Franz: Das war vielleicht ein bißchen dick, oder ?
Ich hab doch bloß Spaß gemacht.
Freundschaft !
Komm, sag, daß du mich lieb hast.
Bitte, komm, sag, daß du mich lieb hast.
Bitte !
Aber trotzdem !
Ich habe zum Beispiel Langes und Breites
von einer sogenannten Blutliebe gehört.
Das ist dein Bruder ! - das ist verdolmetscht:
Er ist aus eben dem Ofen geschossen worden,
aus dem du geschossen bist -
also sei er dir heilig !
Merkt einmal diese verzwickte Konsequenz,

Figure 1.13 *Regiebuch* (2/2) for Franz Moor's (Henry Hübchen) opening monologue (provided by: Sabine Zielke)

In the entire monologue there is only one moment when Hübchen could improvise, namely halfway down page 27 of the *Regiebuch*: "Possible word-fencing with audience or similar" (see Figure 1.13).[71] This kind of opt-in improvisation appears across Castorf's theater as a technique intended specifically for use in the case of audience intervention, as I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Two.[72] Yet beyond these kinds of controlled opportunities for audience provocation, bona fide improvisation does not take place on the video recording, and it is inaccurate to characterize the monologue as "improvised," even if it was only *developed out of* improvisation.

Although improvisation is intended to be deployed here only as a corrective measure, extemporaneous play—that is, responding to unanticipated events—is nevertheless a critical feature of acting in Castorf's theater. For example, in *ROBBERS* there is a large amount of what I would call "ad libbing."[73] Although actual instances of *ad libbing* can be difficult to account for insofar as they tend to evade documentation, it says something about the frequency of *ad libbing* in Castorf's theater that it occurred within the first five minutes of the premiere performance of *ROBBERS,* which critic Benjamin Henrichs fortunately included in his review:

[71] „(ev. Wortgefecht m. Publikum oder Ähnliches)."
[72] Should an audience member begin to heckle Hübchen, he can take advantage of the scenic elasticity afforded by the script to extemporaneously respond to the offending person without impacting the play's broader architecture. Mark Podlasiak has documented a case when one spectator cried out, "What is this shit?" in: Marek Podlasiak, „Die Wende und ihre Folgen dargestellt von Castorfs Volksbühne," in: W. Huntemann, *Engagierte Literatur in Wendezeiten* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), 149–167.
[73] In contrast to "improvisation"—a series of unprepared actions and/or utterances that constitute their own dramaturgical syntax—"ad libbing" designates an extemporaneous interjection or action into an otherwise pre-determined scenic structure. For example, ad libbing generally serves as a means for an actor to correct an error without perceptibly departing from the script.

> On the bare, proscenium stage, Herr Karl Moor (Gerd Preusche) and Herr Moritz Spiegelberg (Kurt Naumann) deliver up a duel for fun—yet in their hands, they do not have swords, but steins (i.e. German beer mugs). One broke immediately: "Moritz, I need a new glass!" cries Herr Karl—and gets a new one from the props manager coming in from backstage.[74]

Without his glass, Preusche can no longer carry out the staging as set in rehearsal. To solve this problem, he invents a line of dialogue, and waits for a props manager to bring him a replacement. The ambiguous address of Preusche's line creates a humorous confusion of the diegetic and extradiegetic registers. It is at once a request to the fictional character "Moritz (Spiegelberg)," and to the props manager as well (yet another example of the actor's liminal ontology). That said, although *ad libbing* may occur more frequently in Castorf's theater, it is not unique to it. *Ad libbing* is a necessity of nearly all stage acting. In Castorf's theater it simply happens more frequently, and is not considered a failure, but an instrinsic and fascinating aspect of actorial play.

In addition to Castorf's tolerance, or rather, encouragement of extemporaneous play in unanticipated circumstances, his theater also scripts moments that create the semblance of extemporaneity by scripting a character's "falling out" of his or her own subject position. For example, directly after the opening sequence presented in Clip 1.1, Preusche and Naumann recite a dialogue from I/2 of Schiller's play. Intermittently, Preusche will say something (not authored by Schiller) that suggests Moor has lost his train of thought, or forgotten his lines. "Where was I?" he asks.[75] The scene concludes with Schiller's original and (in 1990) remarkably prescient text: "…and Germany will become a republic that will make Rome and Sparta look like

[74] „Im kahlen Bühnenkasten liefern sich Herr Karl Moor (Gerd Preusche) und Herr Moritz Spiegelberg (Kurt Naumann) zum Spaß ein Duell – in ihren Händen haben sie aber nicht den Degen, sondern den Bierkrug. Einer zerbricht sogleich. ‚Moritz, ich brauche ein neues Glas!' ruft der Herr Karl – und holt sich ein neues beim Requisiteur, aus der Kulisse." Benjamin Henrichs, „Deutsche Demokratische Räuber," *Die Zeit*, September 28, 1990.

[75] „Wo sind wir stehen geblieben?"

nunneries."[76] In this production, a pause is added after Schiller's line, followed by a new line of dialogue: "Ugh… what am I talking about?"[77]

Nearly identical interpolations take place twice more over the course of the production. First in a devised scene during which the robbers read an East German party newspaper, one of the robbers asks with exasperation, "What am I reading here?"[78] Then again during one of Karl Moor's most sentimental monologues, he laments, "I no longer have a father! I no longer have love!" before Preusche abruptly breaks from Schiller's text, repeating the same interjection as before: "Ugh! What am I talking about?"[79] As in the case of Hübchen's soliloquy, these theatrical ruptures in a character's subject position invest the performance with a semblance of extemporaneity despite the fact that these texts are entirely scripted.

Clip 1.6 – "Ad Lib"

Although improvisation is not a regular fixture of the final performances in Castorf's theater, it does constitute a regular technique for the production of text and scenic material in Castorf's rehearsals. For example, Hübchen used improvisation to develop his performance of Franz's soliloquy as he recalls in a radio interview nearly twenty-eight years later. Hübchen recounts how Castorf and he developed the text together in rehearsal, mostly through improvisation; but at a certain point he ran out of ideas. According to Hübchen, he said to Castorf, "I need text here," and Castorf replied, "Yeah, yeah, I'll get it to you." But by the time the dress rehearsal came, Hübchen still had no text, so he threw in some "gibberish," a sound that

[76] „…und aus Deutschland soll eine Republik werden, gegen die Rom und Sparta Nonnenklöster sein sollte." Schiller, *Die Räuber*, 32.
[77] „Ach Mensch… was rede ich denn hier?"
[78] „Was les' ich denn hier?" Zielke Typoscript, 14.
[79] „Ich hab' keinen Vater mehr! Ich habe keine Liebe mehr! … Mensch! Was red' ich denn hier!" Castorf, *ROBBERS Regiebuch*, 67.

resembles something between nagging and vomiting. After that, he nonchalantly says, "And it stayed that way."[80]

Castorf's failure (or refusal?) to provide his actors with text is not an anomaly, but a regular method of prompting the actors to take responsibility for their own text by abdicating his directorial responsibilities. This negligence has been known to incite combative exchanges between Castorf and his actors; for example in a rehearsal for *Die Nibelungen: Born Bad* (Castorf, 1995) Castorf, Rieger, and Sophie Rois dispute whose responsibility it is to make the scene "work":

> Rieger: [You] don't make progress, so we don't make progress.
> Castorf: I don't care. I'm not the one standing on the stage in the end. So, what can be done with that stair-thing? I don't know.
> (Silence)
> ….
> Castorf: Don't we have a rag [we could use] for a curtain back there?
> (Assistant leaves, gets two stagehands. They hang a curtain at the end of the stairs)
> Rieger: That looks too contrived to me.
> ….
> Rois: It's all shit, really.[81]

[80] In a 2018 radio interview, Henry Hübchen tells the story behind the creation of this monologue: „Yeah and then this monologue is over, and then we had the feeling it still needed to keep going. [Franz] had more to say, to the audience too, and then we [Castorf and Hübchen] said a few more sentences to the audience, and, essentially, it was shortly after the *Wende*, you know, and well, where now great freedom was there. 'Everyone can be what he wants to be.' 'Everyone can self-actualize.' Except the audience, those Easterners always sitting down there, I started insulting them. It wasn't even mean. I insulted them for being 'Kadett drivers' and not being strong enough, and they just needed to pull themselves together. And then, I ran out of ideas. But it needed something else. More for the scene. And then at some point somebody… the director said to me… I said, 'I need text here.' 'Yeah, yeah, I'll get it to you.' The day of the dress rehearsal came, and I still didn't have any text. And then, out of anger, made some gibberish 'ahooa-aahooaboobooa-ahooaboo.' Just threw something up, and then it stayed that way." [„Ja, und denn ist dieser Monolog zu Ende und denn hatten wa immer noch das Jefühl, es müsste weiter gehen. Also der hat noch was zu sagen auch ans Publikum und denn haben wa paar Sätze ans Publikum gesagt und im Grunde jenommen, es war ja kurz nach der Wende, also wo jetzt die große Freiheit da war, jeder kann werden, was er will, jeder kann sich vawirklichen. Bloß die im Publikum da, diese Ostler, die da unten immer saßen, die habe ich dann angefangen zu beschimpfen. War gar nicht mal schlecht, ja, hab' ich se als 'Kadettfahrer' beschimpft und als die ‚kein Mumm ha'm' und die einfach ‚sich mal zusamm'reißen solln' un' so, dann fiel mir aber nüscht mehr ein. Und das brauchte noch, mehr, also für die Szene. Und denn hat mir, irgendwer… der Regisseur… hat m(ir)… ich hab jesagt, ich brauche noch Text. ‚Ja ja geb' ich Dir.' Der Tach der Generalprobe kam, un' ich hatt' immer noch keen' Text. Und denn hab' ich aus Wut irjndso'n Kauderwelsch, ähm, einfach nur so hint'n rangehang'n, also gar keine ‚ahüa-aahüabübüa-ahüabü'. Also einfach nur irjendwas 'rausgekotzt und det blieb denn so."] Hübchen qtd. in: „Die geniale Stelle: Henry Hübchen über Castorfs ‚Räuber' an der Volksbühne," ARD, Feb. 17, 2018.

In this tense interaction, the actors exhibit a high degree of control over what they perform, and even share their opinions on issues that typically fall within the domain of the director, such as the set design. At the same time, Castorf shirks his directorial responsibilities, acting indifferent to what the actors decide to do on stage.

A similar situation occurs between Hübchen and Castorf in a rehearsal for *Rheinische Rebellen* in 1992. This comic banter (in thick Berlin dialect no less) performs a parodistic turn on the combative confrontation in Castorf's rehearsal with Rieger and Rois.

> Henry Hübchen: I think you should direct less.
> Frank Castorf: Across the street there are now something like *Creativity Classes*—can't we buy someone there? You all need to do something yourselves. Not always wait until I say something. I don't want to do that right now. Ah well. Something will occur to me. You can also wait 'til I say: "And now back to stage left!"[82]

It should be mentioned, however, that Hübchen is a special case among Castorf's actors. His reputation as a "Volksbühne star" preceded Castorf's appointment as artistic manager by over a decade. In fact, it was Hübchen who first approached Castorf about working together, travelling from Berlin to Anklam to appear in Castorf's production of *Nora* (1985).[83] By the time Hübchen retired from the Volksbühne, the two had collaborated on fourteen productions. Today Hübchen remains etched in public memory as *the* actor who "embodied the theater of Frank Castorf…

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[81] „Rieger: [Du] kommst nicht weiter auch wir kommen nicht weiter. Castorf: Mir ist das ja egal. Ich stehe nachher nicht auf der Bühne. Also, was macht man da in diesem Treppending? Ich weiß es nicht. (Schweigen) Castorf: Haben wir dahinten einen Lappen als Vorhang? (Assistentin geht raus, holt zwei Bühnenarbeiter. Die befestigen am Ende der Treppe einen Vorhang) Rieger: Mir ist das zu ausgedacht. [….] Rois: Es ist alles Scheiße, wirklich." Jürgen Balitzki, *Castorf der Eisenhändler: Theater zwischen Kartoffelsalat und Stahlgewitter* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1995), 121.

[82] „Henry Hübchen: Ick finde, du solltest weniger inszenieren. Frank Castorf: Gibt doch drüben jetzt so *Kreativitätskurse* – kann man da nich jemanden einkoofen? Ihr müsste och selber mal was machen. Nich immer warten, bis ick wat sage. Ick hab dazu jetzt keene Lust. Na ja. Mir fällt schon wieder wat ein. Könnt och warten, bis ick sage: ‚Jetzt wieder links!'" Annika Krump, *Tagebuch einer Praktikantin: Berlin Volksbühne 1992/93*, (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2015), 22.

[83] *Nora*, Henrik Ibsen, dir. Frank Castorf, Theater Anklam, Feb. 16, 1985.

Hübchen was the locomotive, Castorf the conductor."[84] In point of fact, the two men were jointly awarded the 2000 Berlin Theater Prize [*Theaterpreis Berlin*], a testament to public and critical recognition of Hübchen's indispensable role in Castorf's directorial *oeuvre*.

FROM TEXT TO CONTEXT IV: THE ACTOR AS TEXT

In addition to these practices that invite (or force) the actors to author their own lines, Castorf's actors also create text out of their own biographical material. For example, in *ROBBERS*, Castorf casts veteran Volksbühne actor Winfried Wagner in the role of Old Moor. By 1990, Wagner had already been an ensemble member for 27 years; but beyond his age, Wagner shares a more specific biographical similarity with Schiller's character. At the time, Wagner was serving as one of three interim artistic managers of the Volksbühne following the termination of artistic manager Fritz Rödel's contract (1978-1990).[85] As with other examples I have shown in this chapter, Wagner's performance implicitly signals its plurality without explicitly drawing a bifurcating line between actor and character. The biographical resemblance between Wagner as a transitional leader, and Old Moor as a duke on the verge of being deposed becomes a kind of in-joke that splits the meaning of scenes like the one depicted in Figure 1.14, which shows the murder of Old Moor (Wagner) by Franz (Hübchen). Were Wagner to be recast, the scene would not mean the same thing. In Chapter Three, I address the critical potential of this actorial splitting in greater detail. For now, I want merely to show how text (whether as dialogue or in the form of scenic action) is often created on the basis of the specific actor performing it. In this way,

[84] „Hübchen war der Schauspieler, der das Frank-Castorf-Theater verkörperte… Hübchen war die Lokomotive, Castorf der Lokführer; oder so ähnlich." Rüdiger Schaper, „Spiel ohne Grenzen. Henry Hübchen zum 70. Geburstag," *Der Tagesspiegel*, February 20, 2017. https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/henry-huebchen-zum-70-spiele-ohne-grenzen/19413004.html (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).
[85] Dietze, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, 211.

Castorf's theater not only reflects its historical and geographical context, but its *actorial* context as well.

Figure. 1.14. Franz (Hübchen) suffocates Old Moor (Wagner) with a red flag
(Photo: PAL Screenshot)

One way in which Castorf often uses his actors' biographies as textual material (in the form of stage directions) is by staging references to his actors' previous performances. For example, just after the murder pictured in Figure 1.14, Karl Moor (Gerd Preusche) enters, pulls the large red flag out from under Old Moor's (Wagner's) corpse, and waves it over the stage (see Figure 1.15). Although this gesture makes scenic sense in the context of this production, it also reenacts a gesture from Preusche's performance in another production, namely Castorf's 1986 version of Heiner Müller's *The Construction Site* [*Der Bau*] at the Schauspielhaus Karl-Marx-Stadt (see Figure 1.16).[86] This diachronic gesture momentarily renders Preusche's presence on stage into a

[86] For more on Castorf's production of *The Construction Site* see: Loren Kruger, *Post-Imperial Brecht* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 119; Martin Linzer, „Bau-Arbeit," *Theater der Zeit*, 11 (1986), 2.

personalized archive of his professional history. It also stages an intertext that sheds light on the critical function of actors in the development from text to context at the foundation of Castorf's theater.

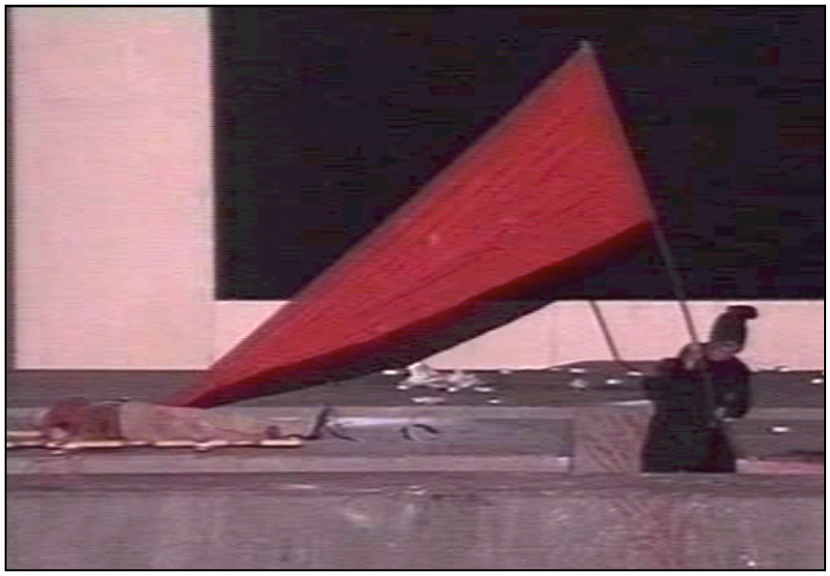

Figure 1.15 Preusche in *Robbers* at the Volksbühne (1990)
(Photo: PAL Screenshot)

Figure 1.16 Preusche as Barka in *The Construction Site* (1986)
(Image not reproduced due to copyright)

Even Hübchen's *Publikumsbeschimpfung* in *ROBBERS* (Clip 1.5) eventually became material for similar diachronic gestures in several Castorf productions over the next 27 years. In *Hauptmann's Weavers* [*Hauptmanns Weber*] (Castorf, 1997), Hübchen remained on stage during the intermission harassing various members of the audience, asking for instance whether they had travelled to the theater via public transit or in a BMW. In an even more acute case, Hübchen re-performs Franz Moor's soliloquy in Castorf's 2001 adaptation of Dostoevsky's *Humiliated and Insulted* [*Erniedrigte und Beleidigte*] as a double memory of both Hübchen's character Prince Piotr Alexandrowitsch Valkovsky—who informs us just before that he has "also performed Schiller"—and Hübchen himself.

Clip 1.7—"Actor as Text"

In fact, the individual personalities of the Volksbühne's acting ensemble are so critical to the production of meaning in Castorf's theater that the actors regularly figure as intertextual signifiers. For example, more than a decade after Hübchen's departure from the Volksbühne, he returned to the stage in Castorf's 2014 production of Ibsen's *The Master Builder* [*Baumeister Solness*] in the form of twenty life-size puppets. Initially, Hübchen had agreed to return to the theater for this single production. However, for unknown reasons, he eventually backed out of the project, but only after the prop shop had already built twenty Hübchen lookalikes. In the end, Hübchen left, and the puppets remained, functioning as Hübchen surrogates against which the other actors—specifically veteran ensemble member Kathrin Angerer—could vent their frustrations about Hübchen's absence, and their general desire to return "to the old days" of the Volksbühne in the 1990s. As a puppet—that is, a mere prop—Hübchen is reified, turned into a thing, into *actual* material.

Figure 1.17 A pile of Henry Hübchen puppets on the set of *The Master Builder* (2014) (Photo: Thomas Aurin)

Across these different examples—*Robbers, Hauptmann's Weavers, The Insulted and Humiliated,* and *The Master Builder*—those aspects of Hübchen's biography used in the production derive from his public persona (e.g., his dialect, his unique physical skills, and his professional history), not from his private experiences.[87] Hübchen does not claim to exhibit authentic feelings. The material is never confessional. It is never private. In this way, Hübchen—and Castorf's actors more generally—are not "performers" according to the definition of the recent actor-performer debates in Germany. They are not playing "themselves." They are more similar to what Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein calls "attractions"—fascinating, "aggressive" objects whose appearance grabs our attention and conjures our fantasy.[88] Their "reality" as actors

[87] For more on the use of personal experience for actor preparation see: Brecht, *GkA*, vol. 26, 454-455; Constantin Stanislavsky, *The Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York and London: Routledge, 1989). For Brecht see: p. 21, fn. 53.

[88] "An attraction (in relation to the theatre) is any aggressive aspect of the theatre; that is, any element of the theatre that subjects the spectator to a sensual or psychological impact, experimentally regulated and

qua actors shimmers through their performances with no moment of clear ontological rupture, for example, by shifting their mode of address.[89] The actor is always already in the performance, as is also Castorf, and as is also Schiller. These authors compete with one another over the "I" of the performance, producing an unwieldy subject out of the contradictions between itself and itself.

THEATER "WORK"

In this chapter, I have sought to provide an account of acting in Castorf's theater that attributes its ambiguous quality to the agonistic interactions of director, actor, and text. Using Castorf's description of his rehearsal practice as a "development from text to context," I illustrated how Schiller's dramatic text serves as a point of departure for a new production that reflexively attends to the context of its creation, both in terms of its historical moment as well as the contingent interactions of its multiple authors. Now I will assume a different position, and view the acting not from the side of its production, but from the side of its reception.

Before that, however, I would first like to return briefly to a question posed earlier in this chapter, namely whether or not the *ROBBERS Regiebuch* qualifies as an original dramatic text. This question opens up a larger issue of the relationship between theater and context. On the one hand, Castorf's mode of collective, even if hierarchical, authorship would not necessarily differ so greatly from how some scholars believe Shakespeare wrote his plays. On the other hand, to

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mathematically calculated to produce in him certain emotional shocks which, when placed in their proper sequence within the totality of the production, become the only means that enable the spectator to perceive the ideological side of what is being demonstrated-the ultimate ideological conclusion." Sergei Eisenstein, "Montage of Attractions: For Stupidity for Every Wiseman," *The Drama Review: TDR*, vol. 18, no. 1, *Popular Entertainments* (Mar. 1974), 78.

[89] For his work with actors in the 1980s and early 1990s, Castorf drew largely from German choreographer Pina Bausch, who created a dance troupe out of highly idiosyncratic dancers with whom Bausch developed work on a highly individualized basis. Cf. Frank Castorf, interview with Peter von Becker and Michael Merschmeier, „Ich möchte nicht in den Untergrund," *Theater heute*, Dec. 1989, 22.

view the *Regiebuch* as a dramatic text means not only to reconsider how we view the relationship between theater and text, but to also reconsider our understanding of a theatrical production as a "work of art." Whereas dramatic texts are typically viewed as notation that precedes a staging to come, the *Regiebuch* represents a textual remnant of a performance that was. Unlike postdramatic theater or *Regietheater*, which simply reorder the hierarchies of text, director, and performance, the *Regiebuch* demands that the concept of "context" be incorporated into our understanding of the kind of art-object theater represents.

Incorporating "context" into the idea of theater as a work of art would put pressure on concepts like *Werktreu* or "dramatic theater," both of which view the dramatic text as the "original work." But what if we instead rethink Schiller's *Die Räuber* not as the dramatic text, but as a lost performance, and the text its only trace? Certainly a director today could take the *ROBBERS Regiebuch*, reconstruct Bert Neumann's set, cast some actors, and stage the text. (In fact, Chris Dercon proposed to screen video recordings of "classic" Castorf era productions after Castorf's exit in 2017.) Yet although a director could restage the "text" of the *Regiebuch*, he or she cannot restage its "context." Even if this were done in Berlin at the Volksbühne, no director could turn the clock back to 1990, or bring back all of the original actors, several of whom have already passed away.

CHAPTER TWO: DISRUPTIVE (F)ACTOR

THE VOLKSBÜHNE AS AN AMORAL INSTITUTION

Backstage at the Volksbühne, just minutes before curtain, the stage manager pulls actor Herbert Fritsch aside to warn him about an unusually rowdy group of spectators up in the balcony. The show on the bill is Castorf's 1993 adaptation of Anthony Burgess' 1962 novel *Clockwork Orange*, and Fritsch has the leading role of "Alex." Peeking out into the house, he sees a group of roughly ten men in their early twenties, their legs dangling over the balcony guardrail, their hands waving around open bottles of beer. Curiously, they are in costume, dressed up like the "droogs"—Alex's gangbanging underlings—as depicted in Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation of Burgess' novel.[1] The other audience members look perturbed. Some say something. Most do not. Already tensions are high as Fritsch takes his position, and the show begins.[2]

Less than twenty minutes later, one of the droogs begins trash talking Fritsch in the middle of his performance. Another joins in. Then another. Eventually, stage musician Steve Binetti leans into his microphone, addressing himself to the balcony: "There seem to be ten

[1] Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange,* film, directed by Stanley Kubrick, Los Angeles: Warner Bros, 1971.
[2] This summary account is based on firsthand accounts by Herbert Fritsch (Volksbühne ensemble member, 1992-2007), Annika Krump (Volksbühne intern 1992-93), Silvia Rieger (Volksbühne ensemble 1992-present), Klaus Michael Aust (Volksbühne Planning Director, 1975-present), Georg Kehren (Chief Dramaturg, Oper Köln), and two theater critics. Published references include: Balitzski, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 142-146; Krump, *Tagebuch einer Praktikantin*, 79-80; Detlef Friedrich, „Zauberlehrling Castorf rief die Geister: Skinheads und Längerhaarige diskutierten im Volksbühnen-Foyer über ‚Clockwork Orange,'" *Berliner Zeitung*, nr. 65, March 18, 1993 in: Anthony Burgess, *Clockwork Orange*, directed by Frank Castorf, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, premiere February 25, 1993, in: Archives of the Akademie der Künste Berlin (Berlin Academy of Arts), production documentation for *Clockwork Orange* ID927; Sören Smith, „Applaus von falscher Seite: Gedanken zu Castorfs *Clockwork Orange* und zum Verhalten im Publikum," *Scheinschlag*, March 93 in: AdK production documentation; Klaus Michael Aust (planning director, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz), in discussion with the author, digital recording, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin, July 19, 2016; Georg Kehren (Chief Dramaturg, Oper Köln), interview with the author, digital recording, Café Fassbender, Cologne, Germany, November 18, 2016; Rieger, June 14, 2018.

people too many in the room."[3] The audience answers Binetti with applause, the droogs answer him with projectiles—mainly cigarettes, hopefully not beer bottles, Fritsch thinks to himself. As the situation escalates, individual voices call out for the theater management to remove the offending party. Backstage from the wings, Castorf and the dramaturgs look out at the scene and wait.

Also backstage is actor Silvia Rieger, who has already decided to shut the situation down. When her scene comes—roughly thirty minutes into the play—she stops the performance, yells at the droogs to "Get out!" [*Heraus!*], leaps off the stage into the audience, and heads for the balcony. Once there she yanks the droogs up out of their seats, and sends them on their way. The audience roars with applause. Rieger's use of physical force against the droogs raised eyebrows and questions over the following days and weeks. Was it appropriate to oust ticket-holding audience members? And by threat of physical force? Is not the theater a "safe and special space?"[4] On the other hand, was it not the droogs who instigated violence in the first place, and not only by their verbal and physical disruption, but by their appearance as well? For this was not some random group of thugs. These were skinheads.

Chapter One explored how Castorf's theater creates performances that present liminal subject positions by signaling the authorial agonisms that produce them. This chapter looks at acting from the other side, not from the standpoint of its production, but from that of its reception. If agonistic interactions give rise to the unusual quality of acting in Castorf's theater, to what extent does the acting give rise to agonistic interactions? Between actors and audience members? Amongst audience members? Amongst actors?

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[3] „[Daß] wohl zehn Leute zuviel im Saal seien." Steve Binetti qtd. in Sören Smith, „Applaus von falscher Seite…" in: AdK production documentation.
[4] Cf. Donald Trump, Twitter Post, Nov. 19, 2016, 5:56 AM, https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/799974635274194947?lang=en (last accessed Aug. 8, 2018).

The skinhead "disruption" took place at the second performance of *Clockwork Orange*. Burgess' novel tells the story of Alex (played by Fritsch), a teenage boy with an insatiable urge for violence and destruction. When a late night break-in spirals into manslaughter, Alex winds up in jail. To shorten his sentence, he agrees to receive an experimental behavior modification treatment. But after the state deems him "cured" and sends him back into society, Alex becomes the victim of those he himself once victimized. Castorf's stage adaptation takes Burgess' novel as the starting point for a critical investigation of delinquency, violence, and totalitarianism—issues central to the novel, and which echoed social and political challenges facing Germany at the time of the production's realization, specifically, the far-right resurgence that accompanied national unification.

In East and West alike, the 1990s saw the rise of neo-fascist groups seeking to become a visible and normative feature of post-Wall Germany.[5] This manifested in increased criminal activity targeting immigrants and racial minorities. In August of 1992, skinheads in Rostock-Lichtenhagen attacked the "Sunflower Tower," a public housing facility for foreign asylum seekers, with firebombs and Molotov cocktails. The following November, two Turkish girls and their grandmother were killed when skinheads set fire to their home in Mölln.[6] These crimes were met with new legislation restricting public expression of far-right ideology and political activity. Although these laws were implemented across the entire country, right-wing groups in

[5] Cf. Ben Knight, "The rise of the far right in the East," *Deutsche Welle*, September 21, 2010. https://www.dw.com/en/the-rise-of-the-far-right-in-the-east/a-5996369 (last accessed Aug. 8, 2018); Thomas Prenzel, „20 Jahre Rostock-Lichtenhagen. Kontext, Dimensionen und Folgen der rassistischen Gewalt" in *Rostocker Information zu Politik und Verwaltung*, vol. 32 (Rostock: Universität Rostock & Institut für Politik- und Verwaltungswissenschaften, 2012).

[6] Günter Kahl, „Brandanschlag Mölln: Ein Kranker als Staatsfeind?" *Schleswig-Holsteinischer Zeitungsverlag*, November 23, 2007. https://www.shz.de/regionales/schleswig-holstein/panorama/ein-kranker-als-staatsfeind-id458031.html (last accessed Aug. 8, 2018).

the East[7] especially perceived them as part of their fate as the victimized "losers of unification" [*Wendeverlierer*], which in turn fueled their nationalist commitments. While it is not my intent here to make sociological claims about skinheads in the post-Wall period, Germany's centuries-old preoccupation with national unification is a red thread connecting skinheads to Germany's public theaters that demands due attention if one wants to make clear the historical and artistic intervention of Castorf and his collaborators.

Castorf's Volksbühne presents itself—whether as an institution or an art form—as a "disruptive factor" [*Störfaktor*]. In contrast to an *interruption* [*Unterbrechung*], which represents a temporal or spatial break followed by a continuation of the previous conditions or activities, a *disruption* permanently alters that which preceded it, such that neither can its conditions be reconstituted nor its activities resumed. Walter Benjamin identifies "interruption" as the force in Brecht's Epic Theater that suspends identification, and in turn facilitates critical distantiation [*Verfremdung*], connecting aesthetic interruption to expanding political consciousness.[8] While disruption in Castorf's theater resembles this Brechtian interruption, Castorf's actors take on an ambiguous mode of address that at once ignores *and* acknowledges the audience's presence as opposed to Brechtian actors, who interrupt their performances by addressing themselves directly to the audience. This "(in)direct address" disrupts the individual spectator's identification with the actor, producing tensions either between themselves and the audience, or amongst the

[7] Despite their ideological similarities and mutual support networks, the far-right groups that emerged in Germany at this time in the former East and West bear distinct histories that cannot be lumped together into one narrative.

[8] "This uncovering (making strange of, or distantiating) conditions is brought about by processes being interrupted." [„Die Entdeckung (Verfremdung) von Zuständen vollzieht sich mittels der Unterbrechung von Abläufen."] Walter Benjamin, "Was ist das Epische Theater?: Eine Studie zu Brecht," (Version 2), *Versuche über Brecht*, ed., Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), 35. Translation mine.

audience itsel.[9] In this way, disruption exposes and animates divisions—that is, it runs counter to unity. This is the aesthetic and institutional basis of what is often called "The Volksbühne project."At a time when there was a growing consensus that the end of the Cold War meant the world-historical end of political enmity,[10] Castorf's theater reminded audiences of the ongoing presence of ideological difference by stimulating negative responses that would "[disrupt] the spectator's desire for consensus" [*Übereinstimmung*].[11] "We want to split the audience," Castorf says, "so that some yell 'Boo!' and others 'Bravo!'"[12] Theater critic Peter Laudenbach characterizes this performative disruption as a way of creating friends and enemies: "The Volksbühne understood itself as a disruptive factor and definitely did not want to please everyone: better real enemies than fake friends."[13] Laudenbach's reference to a "friend-enemy" dichotomy echoes Castorf's own statements about theater, and embraces the conceptual framework of political theorist (and once NSDAP member) Carl Schmitt. Schmitt conceives of "the political" as the arena of collective units that emerge through the antagonistic nature of political relations, and Castorf shares the view that difference and antagonism represent positive and productive forces.[14] Rather than supposing that readymade identities identify with one

[9] The absence of direct address in Castorf's theaters is also one of the main distinctions between the "agonism" characterizing the actor-audience relationship in Castorf's theater, and the antagonism of (West German) *Regietheater*.

[10] Cf. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1992).

[11] Castorf qtd. in Peter Laudenbach, „Gespräch mit Frank Castorf – ‚Wenn wir an der Volksbühne etwas hassen, ist es der Konsens,'" *tip berlin*, July 28, 2017. https://www.tip-berlin.de/gespraech-mit-frank-castorf-wenn-wir-an-der-volksbuehne-etwas-hassen-ist-es-der-konsens/ (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

[12] „Wir möchten gern Publikum spalten – daß die einen ‚Buh' und die anderen ‚Bravo' rufen." Castorf qtd. in Schütt, *Die Erotik des Verrats*, 120.

[13] „Die Volksbühne verstand sich als Störfaktor und wollte ganz bestimmt nicht jedem gefallen: lieber echte Feinde als falsche Freunde." Laudenbach, „‚Wenn wir an der Volksbühne etwas hassen...'".

[14] "Every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other anithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy." Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of The Political*, trans., George Schwab (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1976), 37. In addition to the resonance with Carl Schmitt, Castorf's critique of consensus as a veil that conceals latent antagonisms and structures of oppression echoes the discourse of "post-politics" espoused by political philosophers such as: Chantal Mouffe, *On The Political* (London & NYC: Routledge, 2005); Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement:*

another, political identity as such emerges through conflictual relations of difference. For Castorf too "enmity" is a necessary counterweight in any system: "The system threatens to collapse when the offsetting power of enmity is missing."[15]

In theater, Castorf imagines this enmity playing out in the form of a hostile dialogue between actor and spectator in the middle of a performance:

> Often I wish an actor would yell at a member of the audience: "You're a lazy bum!" And the audience member would yell back: "You're an arrogant, poorly spoken asshole!"[16]

In a way, the skinhead disruption brings Castorf's fantasy to life. It also raises the question of the extent to which Castorf needs enmity. The critic Benjamin Henrichs picks up on this question in his (negative) review of *Clockwork Orange*: "Does Castorf's theater perhaps need greater opponents, better enemies than are to be found these days?"[17]

This chapter locates "disruption" in specific acting techniques used in *Clockwork Orange* and investigates their forms and effects. How does disruption work? What does it look like? How can a disruption staged in a theater effect a disruption in the public sphere? I begin by situating the Volksbühne project and disruption within the German enlightenment tradition of theater as a "moral institution." I then identify three acting techniques of disruption that make use of an ambiguous mode of address to unsettle audience identification. I then return to the skinheads' disruption—or more accurately, to their disruption of a disruption—and show how it exposes internal contradictions in the Volksbühne project itself. I explore these contradictions by

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Politics and Philosophy, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Slavoj Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject* (London: Verso, 1999), 200-203.

[15] „ ... wenn die ausgleichende Feindkraft fehlt, dann ist das System vom Kollapse bedroht." Castorf qtd. in Schütt, *Die Erotik des Verrats*, 77-78.

[16] „Ich wünsche mir oft, ein Schauspieler würde einem Zuschauer zurufen: ‚Du bist eine ungeheure Schlafmütze!' Und der Zuschauer würde zurückgeben: ‚Du bist ein arrogantes, schlecht sprechendes Arschloch!'" Frank Castorf qtd. in Hacker, D. and U. Jenny, „Wir sind asozial – Theatermacher Frank Castorf über Spaß, Provokation und Kunst," *Der Spiegel*, 52/1993, Dec. 27, 1993.

[17] „[Ob] Castorfs Theater nicht wieder größere Gegner, bessere Feinde braucht, als man sie derzeit findet...." Benjamin Henrichs, „Nieder mit den Zahnärzten!" *Die Zeit*, March 5, 1993, 3.

juxtaposing the responses of three artists: Herbert Fritsch, Silvia Rieger, and Frank Castorf. I then summarize the skinheads' critique of the production and of the theater's management of the disruption. The chapter concludes with reflections on how aesthetic disruption exposes the way in which identities only exist relationally, and how actorial disruptions at the Volksbühne in particular can alert us to ideological antinomies both in the present-day, and in the past as well.

DISRUPTION AS *LEITBILD*

During Castorf's first season as artistic manager, posters hung in the Volksbühne foyer announcing the season slogan: „Gebt mir ein Leitbild!" [*Give me a mission statement!*].[18] This command quotes from a song called "Birth of a Nation" [*Geburt einer Nation*] by the Slovenian post-punk band Laibach. The song plays on ideological (and etymological) continuities between identification, unity, and totalitarianism.[19] The expression also refers to an essay by Theodor Adorno that makes similar connections between these three phenomena, but with a focus on the totalitarian tendencies of aesthetic conformism in particular.[20] The double reference to Laibach and Adorno helps to explain how the Volksbühne attracted its heterogeneous audience of students, "marginal social groups" [*Sozialrandgruppen*], intellectuals, and even members of the cultural elite. It also signals the Volksbühne's ideological position at the unlikely meeting point of enlightenment and punk in the figure of disruption.

[18] The word *Leitbild* has many possible translations. A combination of the stem *Leit* from the verb "to lead" or "to guide" and *Bild* meaning "image," a *Leitbild* can be a "guiding principle," a "mission statement," "a concept," or "an approach."
[19] The first strophe of "Birth of a Nation" establishes the formal emphasis on the word "one" that continues throughout the entire song. "One person, one goal,/ and one instruction./ One heart, one spirit/ only one solution./ One burning ember./ One god, one mission." [„Ein Mensch, ein Ziel,/ und eine Weisung./ Ein Herz, ein Geist,/ nur eine Lösung./ Ein Brennender Glut./ Ein Gott, Ein Leitbild."]
[20] Theodor W. Adorno, „Ohne Leitbild: *Parva Aesthetica*," *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed., Rolf Tiedemann. 10.1 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2015), 289-432.

In the mid to late 18th century, dramatists such as Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe reimagined theater as a public institution for bourgeois moral edification tied to a vision of a unified German state. Enlightenment dramatists saw theater as a useful instrument to form a public consensus in favor of liberal moral principles such as forgiveness, tolerance, and individual sovereignty. This was intended to foster a sense of belonging among the culturally disparate German-speaking peoples. Anticipated by Lessing's *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*[21] (1767-1769), this project is most often attributed to Friedrich Schiller by way of his short text "Theater Viewed as a Moral Institution" (1784). Schiller invests the theater with the capacity—indeed the moral duty—to model ideal human behavior on stage and therewith inspire a "national spirit" to unite the German-speaking peoples into one "Volk."[22]

The relationship Schiller imagines between theater and society serves as the model for the aesthetic relationship he advances between stage and spectator, namely one of identification. Schiller (like Lessing) attributes theater's capacity to transform an audience to its capacity to mobilize empathy through processes of identification.[23] His text outlines these processes as a series of causal reactions that begin between actor and character, before moving outward to the spectator, then to the collective audience, and finally to the nation as a whole. In this way,

[21] Lessing argues that theater has the capacity to stimulate a process of affective exchange that can direct the moral compass of individual spectators by means of a "dramaturgy of *Mitleid*" [*Mitleidsdramaturgie*]. This, he believed, could be the starting point for a unified German (bourgeois) moral culture, anticipating Schiller's vision for a German national theater by over a decade. For this project, Lessing recovers the Aristotelian figure of *eleos* or *Mitleid*, which can be translated into English as "empathy," although Thomas Martinec argues that in the specific case of Lessing *Mitleid* should be translated as "pity." Lessing himself does not speak in detail about the affective operations of *Mitleid*, yet the word in and of itself suggests an affective understanding between spectator and actor that anticipates Schiller's „Übereinstimmung." For more on identification in Lessing see: Thomas Martinec, "The Boundaries of *Mitleidsdramaturgie*: Some Clarifications Concerning Lessing's Concept of 'Mitleid,'" *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 101, no. 3 (July, 2006) 744-748. Cf. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie,* ed., Klaus Bohnen, vol. 6, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Wilfried Barner et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), 181-694; G.E. Lessing, *Hamburger Dramaturgy,* trans. Helen Zimmern (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1962).

[22] Schiller, „Was kann eine gute stehende Schaubühne eigentlich wirken?" 818-831.

[23] „[A]lle Wirkung der dramatischen Kunst für Schiller [beruht] auf der affektiven Identifikation des Publikums mit den dramatis personae." Riedel in Koopmann, *Das Schiller-Handbuch*, 562.

character, actor, audience, and nation become one in a series of affective exchanges that start with the actor's body and end with the body politic.

Castorf too understands theater as "an ideological instrument" [*ein ideologisches Instrument*] of audience "training" [*Ausbildens*]; yet whereas Schiller aims to *unify* different groups through identification, Castorf aims to create divisions among his audience.[24] Although Castorf has not written explicitly about his aesthetic position, his aversion to identification is clear enough from bald statements such as: "The disadvantage with … great theater is that every ass can identify with it. You need to avoid that."[25] Moreover, his place in the enlightenment theater tradition has been discussed by scholars and critics alike, many of whom have made a pun out of the Volksbühne being an "amoral" or "immoral" institution.[26] While this wordplay makes Castorf's position in the Schillerian tradition clear, it makes equally clear the ideological turn Castorf's theater performs against it.

In June of 1993, the Volksbühne's monthly brochure featured a text written by dramaturg Carl Hegemann. Also titled "Give me a mission statement!" the essay connects the Laibach quote to Adorno, and illuminates how Adorno's view of art and enlightenment fits into the Volksbühne project of disruption. Adorno's essay "Ohne Leitbild" provides a conceptual rationale for Castorf's resistance to identification. In this text, Adorno advocates for the permanent subversion of aesthetic tradition. By re-imagining their work's formal possibilities,

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[24] Frank Castorf, interview with Axel Geiß, „Theater als Instrument zur Veränderung," in: Wilzopolski, *Theater des Augenblicks*, 136.

[25] „Der Nachteil großer Literatur, großen Theaters ist, daß sich jeder Arsch damit identifizieren kann. Das muß man vermeiden." Castorf qtd. in Schütt, *Die Erotik des Verrats*, 35.

[26] For comparisons between the Volksbühne and Schiller's "moral institution" see: (artist interviews) Castorf qtd. in conversation with Günter Gaus in Balitzski, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 140-142; Johann Kresnik qtd. in Balitzski, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 90. For journalistic reflections see: Balitzki, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 138; Barbara Villiger Heilig, "Die Volksbühne als unmoralische Anstalt," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung,* December 9, 1997; N.N., „Lachend reißt er die Pflaster von den Wunden der Feigheit und der Schuld. Regisseur Frank Castorf will die Ostberliner Volksbühne flott machen als moralischen Anstalt der Avantgarde," *Neue Zeit*, September 5, 1992. For scholarly reflections on Schiller, German theater, and the Volksbühne see: Dietze, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, 50.

artists can avoid regressing into the unifying tendencies of totalitarianism Adorno identifies elsewhere with the culture industry.[27] (For Adorno, art's resistance against unity [*Identität*] marks one of the key distinctions between art and entertainment.) Hegemann writes:

> The opposite of totalitarianism is enlightenment. The ability to use one's own mind without the guidance of others—life "without a mission" (Adorno)—must form the bulwark that prevents us from falling into the strategies of mankind's demagogic benefactors. If this is to be counteracted, there needs to be a strong weapon against this seemingly existential need for clear guidelines, mission statements, and world pictures like the security of a child who can blindly rely on his parents. Totalitarian strategies suggest the possibility of a happy parent-child relationship as a dominant life orientation—for adults as well—that never lets go of the feeling that there is always someone to take care of me, and who knows where things are headed.[28]

Hegemann's statement takes up Adorno's understanding of enlightenment as part of a dialectic that includes totalitarianism. He writes that the "ability to use one's mind" at the core of the enlightenment project requires doing away with mission statements [*Leitbilder*] and artistic traditions. From this point of view, Castorf's refusal to intervene during the skinhead's disruption acts out Adorno's idea in real life. The Volksbühne will not play the role of an authoritarian parent. The spectators must enter into the conflict themselves.

The brevity of Hegemann's text leaves room for a few further conceptual considerations, however. For one, despite the rejection of tradition Hegemann advocates (through Adorno), the practice of breaking or rupturing with tradition is a tradition within enlightenment thought,[29] and

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[27] Cf. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 128-176.

[28] „Das Gegenteil von Totalitarismus ist Aufklärung. Das Vermögen, seinen eigenen Verstand ohne Anleitung anderer zu gebrauchen, das Leben 'ohne Leitbild' (Adorno) soll das Bollwerk bilden, das uns hindert, auf die Strategien demagogischer Menschheitsbeglücker hereinzufallen. Es muß gegen dieses offenbar existentielle Bedürfnis nach klaren Vorgaben, Leitfiguren, und Weltbildern, nach der Geborgenheit des Kindes, das sich auf seine Eltern blind verlassen kann, schon starkes Geschütz aufgefahren werden, wenn es neutralisiert werden soll. Totalitäre Strategien suggerieren die Möglichkeit einer glücklichen Eltern-Kind-Beziehung als dominante Lebensorientierung auch für erwachsene Menschen, daß einen nie das Gefühl loslässt: immer ist einer da der für mich sorgt und der weiß, wo es lang geht." Carl Hegemann, „Gebt mir ein Leitbild" qtd. in: Krump, *Tagebuch einer Hospitantin*, 125.

[29] For more on enlightenment as a kind of break, rupture or interruption see: Aleida Assmann, *Arbeit am Nationalen Gedächtnis. Eine kurze Geschichte der deutschen Bildungsidee* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus,

this statement is, for all intents and purposes, a mission statement against mission statements. Secondly, Hegemann's characterization of intellectual emancipation as a familial feud oddly equates Adornian negativity with an Oedipal recalcitrance, a refusal to "let go of daddy."[30]

At the same time, the defiance Hegemann attributes to enlightenment thinking makes for a productive equivalence between enlightenment theory and the rhetoric of countercultural youth groups like punks that the Volksbühne sought to attract (for example, by quoting from Laibach). Castorf was never himself a punk *per se*, but he sympathized with the anti-fascist political stance of punks in the GDR.[31] While East German punk indeed fashioned itself after Western models, adopting its music, clothing, and general "look," it had its own distinct political commitments. West German punk (like British punk) arose out of nihilistic youth disaffection that resulted from unemployment, but in the GDR—which had no such unemployment to speak of—punk "was fuelled by optimism and an aspiration to revolutionize society."[32] This is not to suggest that GDR punks were not disaffected, just not on account of unemployment. Instead, they resisted the ideological conditioning of youth programs like the Free German Youth [*Freie Deutsche Jugend*], and the invasive policing of the *Stasi*.[33]

Clockwork Orange represents a key text for punks, who identified with Alex's social disaffection, interest in fashion, and resistance against authority.[34] Burgess' novel (via Kubrick's

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1993), 32; Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" *The Foucault Reader*, ed., Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 32-50.

[30] I am indebted to Eric Santner for this formulation and no less for the observation.

[31] Mike Dennis and Norman LaPorte, *State and Minorities in Communist East Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 153-169.

[32] Patricia Simpson. "Germany and its Discontents: die Skeptiker's Punk Corrective," *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 34/3 (2000), 129-130.

[33] "Stasi" is shorthand for the State Security Service [*Staatssicherheitsdienst*], the East German secret police.

[34] For more on the influence of *Clockwork Orange* on punk culture see: Jonathan W.C. Mills, 2014, *Clockwork Orange County—the 1970s California Punk Scene*, [Los Angeles]: Endurance Productions; Greg Colón Semenza, "God Save the Queene: Sex Pistols, Shakespeare, and Punk [Anti-]History" in *The English Renaissance in Popular Culture, Reproducing Shakespeare: New Studies in Adaptation and Appropriation*, ed., Greg Colón Semenza (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 143-164.

film) pre-empted several elements of punk culture. British bands like the Sex Pistols or Siouxsie and the Banshees referred to the novel in their songs and style, as did punk bands in West Germany like *Die Toten Hosen*, who named their debut album *Hier kommt Alex*.[35] In *Clockwork Orange,* Castorf draws attention to this connection between his source text and punk, for example, by hiring Steve Binetti, a "Free-Jazz-Punk" guitarist and staple of the East German underground music scene, to compose music for and perform on stage in his adaptation.[36]

Burgess' novel also represents a key text for skinheads, an indication of the entangled origins of these countercultural groups. The first skinheads emerged in Britain in the 1960s, but it was not until the early 1980s that the movement began to appeal to youths in the GDR. Historian Norman LaPorte writes that, "Early skinheads … tended to be former heavy metallers, football hooligans, or punks."[37] Like punks', skinheads' political commitments were fuzzy, and not all skins adopted far-right views; some were apolitical ("oi-skins"), others anti-racist ("red-skins"). There were even "fashion skins" and Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice ("SHARP-skins").[38] It was not until around 1985 that skinheads began to band together around the far-right views they are known for today.[39] In response to skinheads' rightward shift, punks worked trans-nationally to distinguish themselves from skins. Nevertheless, their shared countercultural origins created an overlap between skinheads and the marginal leftwing groups targeted by the Volksbühne's image campaign, which I discuss at the end of this chapter.

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[35] Die Tote Hosen, *Hier kommt Alex*, Virgin Records - 209 313-630, 1988, Vinyl.
[36] Steve Binetti is a guitarist, composer, and regular Castorf collaborator, who played a leading role in East Berlin's underground rock and roll scene. Cf. Steve Binetti, "Home," *Steve Binetti: Sounds, Songs, and Soundtracks*. http://www.stevebinetti.com/home.html (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).
[37] Mike Dennis and Norman LaPorte, *State and Minorities …*, 171.
[38] Bernd Wagner, *Jugend - Gewalt - Szenen. Zu kriminologischen und historischen Aspekten in Ostdeutschland: die achtziger und neunziger Jahre,* (Berlin: dip, 1995), 62-63.
[39] Dennis and LaPorte, *State and Minorities …*, 171.

The recalcitrant attitude of punks (and skinheads) resonates with the aggressive, at times even militaristic language of Hegemann's statement (e.g., "bulwark," "strong weapon").[40] It also resonates with a passage in Burgess' novel that uses a metaphor of "prodding" one's audience as an aesthetic technique for something like public enlightenment.

> I'm not a member of a specific party, but I fight against these monstrosities, wherever I can. The people want to exchange their freedom for a comfortable life. That's why one has to prod them. Prod them.[41]

This text raises the question of the artist's role in society, a question that comes up several times in *Clockwork Orange* by means of *Fremdtexte* authored by Nietzsche and Stalin among others. These map a tradition that views art and the artist as disruptive forces pit against the people's drive toward passivity. This passage is quoted verbatim in the penultimate scene of Castorf's adaptation in an unusual moment of artistic lucidity. It almost appears that director, writer, actor, and character are speaking together to explain the need for unpleasant aesthetic forms.

Clip 2.1 – "Prod them!"[42]

Critics and scholars often evaluate the relationship between stage and audience in Castorf's theater—its "prodding" [*Anstacheln*]—as a form of "provocation."[43] This emphasizes the intent to elicit a certain kind of audience response by means of creating displeasure. I propose instead the word "disruption" insofar as it implies a similarly negative effect, but points to a critical *rupture* at work in these performances, namely the rupture of identification.

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[40] Tanja Bogusz describes the Volksbühne's "mission of performative difference-production" [*Auftrag zur performativen Differenzproduktion*] under Castorf as a "stabilizing guiding idea" [*stabilisierende Leitidee*] in: Bogusz, *Institution und Utopie*, 161.

[41] This line is translated verbatim from Burgess' original in Castorf's production: „Ich bin kein Angehöriger einer bestimmten Partei, aber ich bekämpfe diese Ungeheurlichkeiten, wo immer ich sie bekämpfen kann. Das Volk will die Freiheit gegen ein bequemes Leben eintauschen. Deswegen muss man sie anstacheln. Anstacheln." Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*, 180.

[42] Anthony Burgess, *Clockwork Orange,* trans. Bruno Max, directed by Frank Castorf, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, February 25, 1993, DVD, Stanford University, ZDVD 34396.

[43] Provocation represents such an essential feature of Castorf's theater that Robin Detje titled his biography *Castorf: Provocation out of Principle* [*Castorf: Provokation aus Prinzip*].

The Volksbühne's mission to cause disruption has its aesthetic corollary in the actors' performances. Stationed each night at the threshold between stage and audience, the actors deploy techniques to thwart audience identification by adopting an ambiguous mode of address that at once ignores and acknowledges the audience's presence. Not only does this "(in)direct direct address" disrupt the individual spectator's identification with the actor, it also animates agonistic tensions between different audience groups to the extent that it exposes and reinforces the concealed divisions between them.

Three Techniques of Disruption

This section examines three actorial techniques of disruption as used in *Clockwork Orange*: close physical proximity, excessive duration, and interpretive inaccessibility. By obstructing the audience's ability to identify with or even "make sense of" the actions presented on stage, these techniques incite distress, boredom, and/or confusion in the viewer. Admittedly these examples do not represent a comprehensive account of all techniques of disruption used across Castorf's theater. Still these few can serve as an introduction to their ambiguous and indirect effects, while throwing light on the correspondences between specific acting techniques and the Volksbühne's broader institutional mission.

Each of the sequences discussed here takes place within the first forty minutes of the production. This is both in the interest of space, and in the interest of presenting material that would have been seen by the skinheads. These forty minutes consist of two separate parts, the first lasting thirty minutes and dominated by techniques of close physical proximity, the second lasting for the rest of the show and dominated by techniques of interpretive inaccessibility. This moment when the acting style and the spatial configuration shift corresponds to the central plot

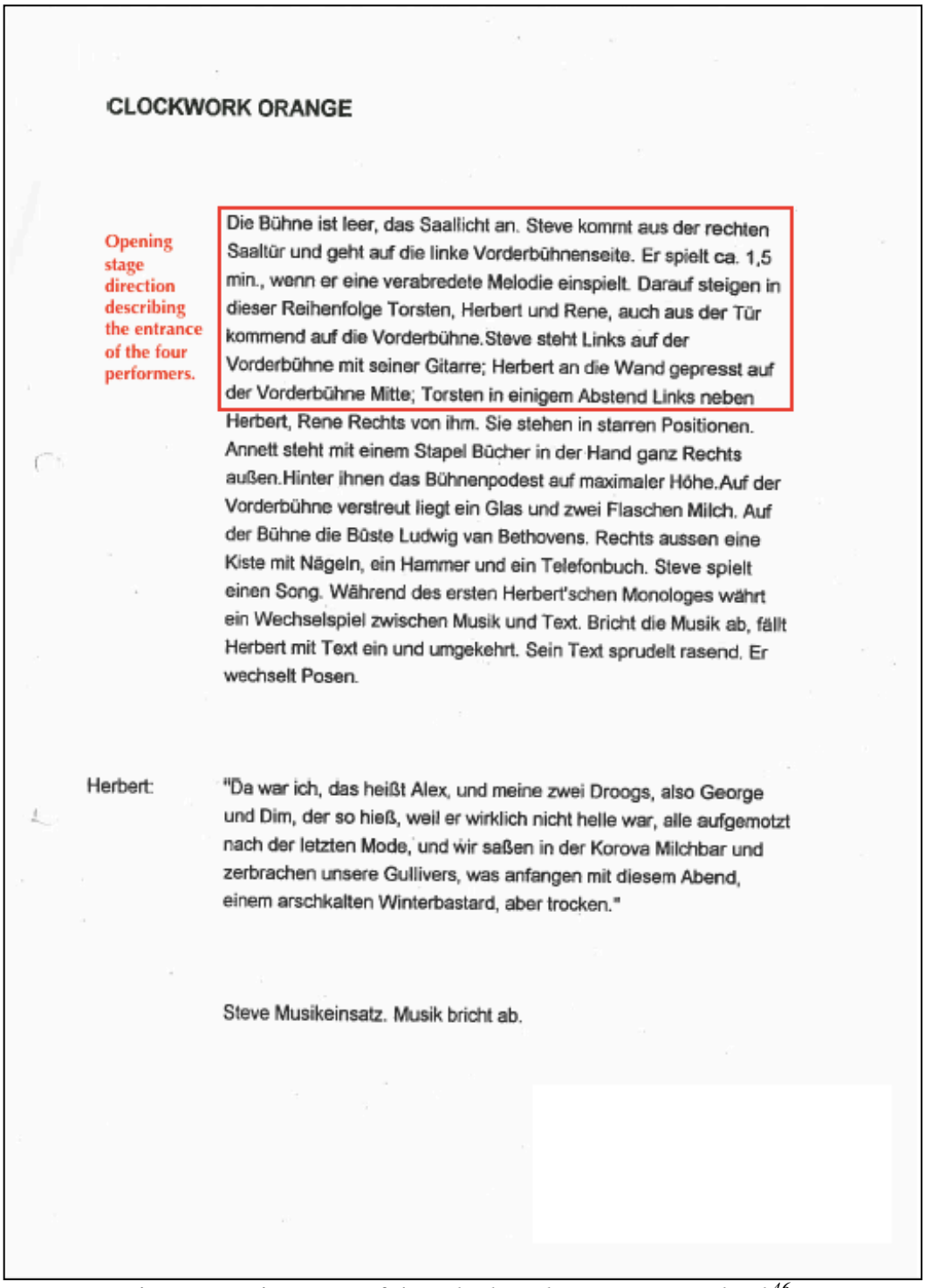
point when Alex is arrested. Not only does this shift mark Alex's downward spiral into prison, it also sets in motion the dramaturgical departure from Burgess' text into the dreamlike totalitarian chaos, in which the rest of Castorf's production unfolds

CLOSE PHYSICAL PROXIMITY

Clockwork Orange begins with Binetti's entrance through the stage right audience door, through which three other actors then follow.[44] The entrance stages the actors in unusually close physical proximity to their viewers, positioning them in front of the stage directly before the first row of seats on the lowered skirt. The "skirt" [*Vorderbühne*] is the front-most part of the stage, indicated in Figure 2.2 by the curved red rectangle. This section of the Volksbühne mainstage can be lowered to double as an orchestra pit or it can be set level to the first row of audience seats, as is the case at the beginning of *Clockwork Orange*. With the house lights still on, the performers' abrupt entrance (indicated by the arrow in Figure 2.2) dispenses with the formal conventions of starting a play.[45] Instead, the actors enter through the same door as the audience, and occupy a space level to them as well, suspending the illusory separation of the two groups.

[44] As in the case of *RÄUBER*, the video recording begins only after the first entrances have already taken place. Fortunately, the *Regiebuch* provides a helpful description of the blocking for this opening sequence (see Figure 2.1). Also the *Regiebuch* does not indicate Annett Kruschke's entrance even though the video shows that she too is on stage during the opening sequence.

[45] In the German-speaking theater, the terms "stage-left" and "stage-right" refer to the perspective of the audience. In Anglo-American theater they represent the opposite, referring to the perspective of the actor.



CLOCKWORK ORANGE

Opening stage direction describing the entrance of the four performers.

Die Bühne ist leer, das Saallicht an. Steve kommt aus der rechten Saaltür und geht auf die linke Vorderbühnenseite. Er spielt ca. 1,5 min., wenn er eine verabredete Melodie einspielt. Darauf steigen in dieser Reihenfolge Torsten, Herbert und Rene, auch aus der Tür kommend auf die Vorderbühne.Steve steht Links auf der Vorderbühne mit seiner Gitarre; Herbert an die Wand gepresst auf der Vorderbühne Mitte; Torsten in einigem Abstend Links neben Herbert, Rene Rechts von ihm. Sie stehen in starren Positionen. Annett steht mit einem Stapel Bücher in der Hand ganz Rechts außen.Hinter ihnen das Bühnenpodest auf maximaler Höhe.Auf der Vorderbühne verstreut liegt ein Glas und zwei Flaschen Milch. Auf der Bühne die Büste Ludwig van Bethovens. Rechts aussen eine Kiste mit Nägeln, ein Hammer und ein Telefonbuch. Steve spielt einen Song. Während des ersten Herbert'schen Monologes währt ein Wechselspiel zwischen Musik und Text. Bricht die Musik ab, fällt Herbert mit Text ein und umgekehrt. Sein Text sprudelt rasend. Er wechselt Posen.

Herbert: "Da war ich, das heißt Alex, und meine zwei Droogs, also George und Dim, der so hieß, weil er wirklich nicht helle war, alle aufgemotzt nach der letzten Mode, und wir saßen in der Korova Milchbar und zerbrachen unsere Gullivers, was anfangen mit diesem Abend, einem arschkalten Winterbastard, aber trocken."

Steve Musikeinsatz. Musik bricht ab.

Figure 2.1 First page of the *Clockwork Orange Regiebuch*[46]

[46] The passage in the red box in Figure 2.1 translates as: "The stage is empty, house lights up. Steve comes out from the right house-door and walks onto the left side of the skirt. He plays circa 1.5 minutes. Then he plays a melody determined in advance. Following this, in this order, Torsten, Herbert and Rene also enter from the door and climb onto the skirt." Translation mine.

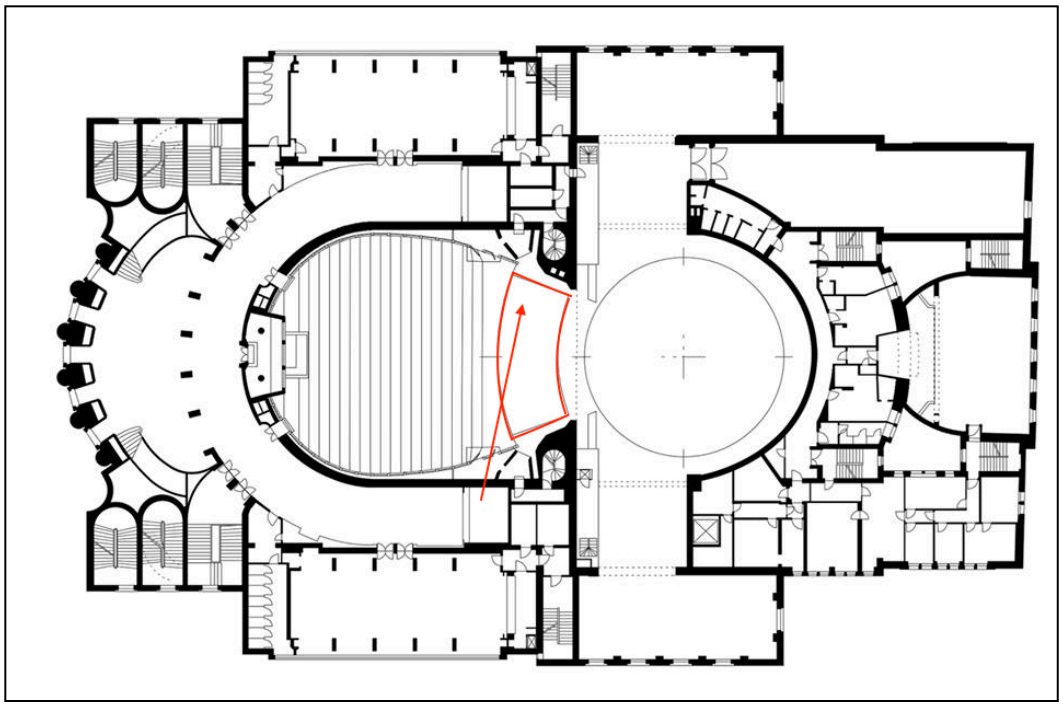


Figure 2.2 Blueprint of the Volksbühne, the *Vorderbühne* and entrance door in red (Image provided by Volksbühne Technical Director, Stefan Pelz)

For the next thirty minutes, the actors perform on the skirt in unusually close physical proximity to the audience such that the actors cannot be clearly distinguished as either characters within the *diegesis* or as "actual people" inhabiting the same world as the viewers. The scene consists of Fritsch (as Alex) narrating violent and criminal exploits taken almost verbatim from chapters one and two of Burgess' novel. Each time Fritsch recounts a crime, he and the other actors act it out in a crude, presentational style. Clip 2.2 shows how the actors face out toward the audience, perpetuating the suspension of spatial and/or temporal separation from reality.

Clip 2.2 – "Opening"

Although none of the actors ever addresses the audience directly, the combination of Fritsch's discursive text and the actors' forward gaze performs an indirect form of direct address that implicitly acknowledges the audience's presence.

Even though the audience is never directly implicated, the actors' close physical proximity (heightened by the presentational style of their acting and the violent content of Fritsch's lines) sets a menacing tone that alerts the audience to their physical vulnerability, especially for those spectators seated closest to the actors, who burst into erratic, violent gestures catalogued by critic Benjamin Henrichs:

> Legs kick, fists fly, stomachs cramp, bodies shake. Be embraced, convulsions! Theater blood flows, bucket-wise. Paint-filled water balloons explode. Bags of flour burst. Actors spit.[47]

While this violent activity is never explicitly directed at individual spectators, it often results in collateral damage at the audience's expense. This disrupts the viewer's sense of physical security, and prevents him or her from concentrating on the events on stage, as demonstrated by theater critic Kate Connolly in her distracted review:

> When I came out [of the theater] after a few hours, I was completely baffled. My cream trousers had been sprayed with all sorts of dye (I never got them clean again)—and I hadn't really learned anything new about Anthony Burgess' masterpiece either.[48]

Connolly's distress over her pants dominates her evaluation of the production to the degree that she titles her review, "Let me go home with clean pants, please!" On the one hand, the attention she gives to this rupturing of the fourth wall testifies to the visceral quality of the disruption. On the other hand, the attention she pays to this dramaturgically trivial incident sidetracks her from attending to the disruption's more complex aesthetic effects such as the challenge it creates for standard modes of audience identification.

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[47] „Beine treten, Fäuste fliegen, Mägen krampfen, Leiber schütteln sich. Seid umschlungen, Konvulsionen! Theaterblut fließt, eimerweise. Farbbeutel explodieren, Mehltüten zerplatzen. Schauspieler spucken." Henrichs, „Nieder mit den Zahnärzten!" 2.

[48] „Als ich nach ein paar Stunden wieder raus kam, war ich völlig perplex, meine cremefarbene Hose war mit sämtlichen Farben besprüht (ich habe sie nie wieder sauber bekommen) – und wirklich mehr verstanden von Anthony Burgess' Meisterwerk hatte ich auch nicht." Kate Connolly, „Lass mich mit sauberen Hosen nach Hause gehen, bitte!" *Berliner Morgenpost*, May 29, 1995.

EXCESSIVE DURATION

The next technique of disruption is "excessive duration," that is, the allocation of a disproportionately long amount of time to a particular action or activity. This disrupts identification mainly by boring the audience, making them susceptible to frustration, distraction, and generally poor behavior. So although excessive duration does not explicitly acknowledge the audience, it prompts the audience to make itself acknowledged by inciting individuals to signal their presence, whether by coughing, clapping, shouting, or getting up and leaving.

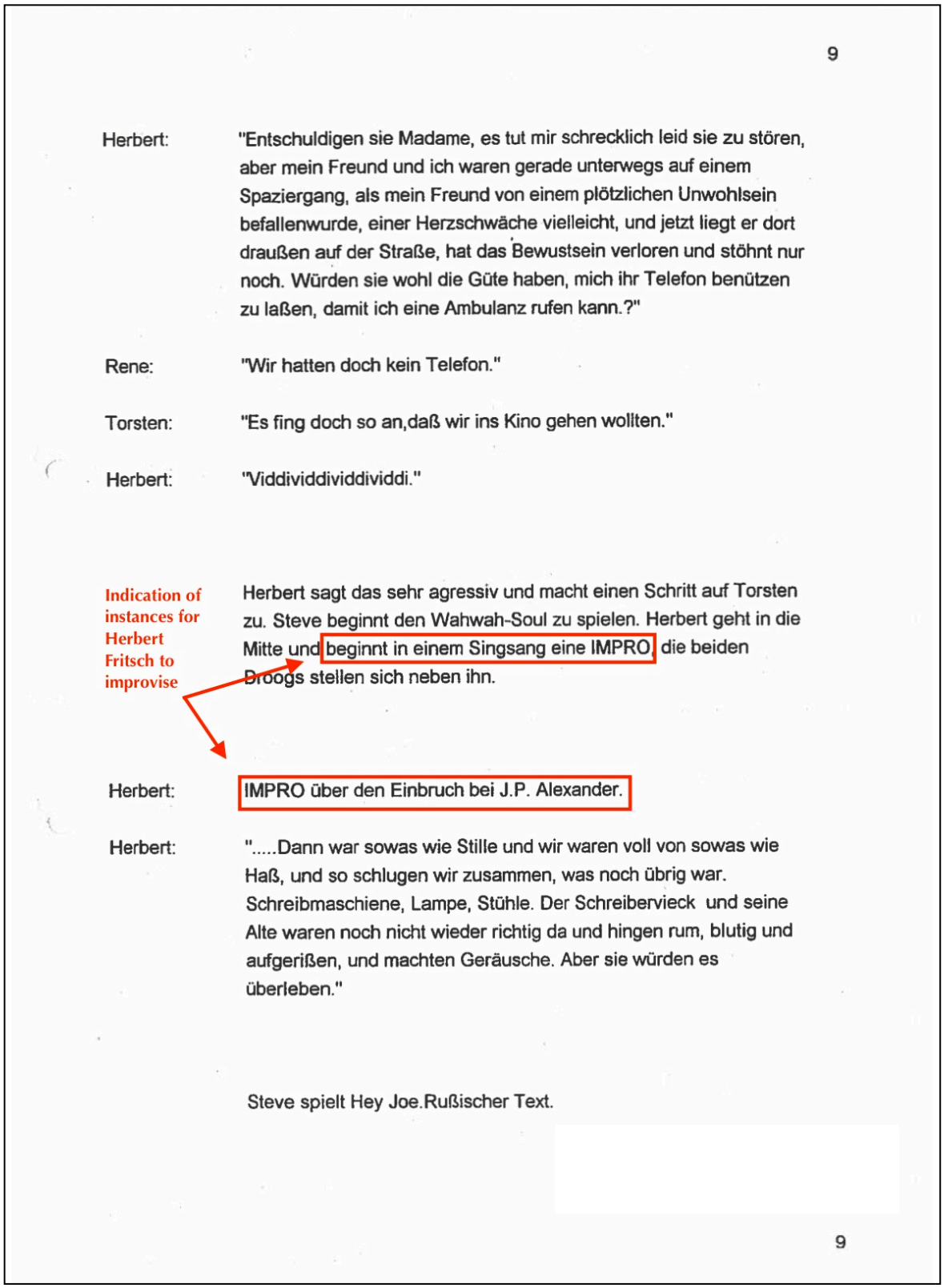
While excessive duration can occur at both scripted and unscripted moments in a production, in *Clockwork Orange* this indirect acknowledgement of the audience is most visible in the handful of improvised situations peppered throughout the script. As I mentioned in Chapter One, live improvisation is not a regular fixture of acting in Castorf productions. In *Clockwork Orange* it occurs more frequently, though only by Fritsch alone. A member of the Volksbühne ensemble from 1992-2007 (who later returned as a director in 2010), Fritsch began his career as an improviser, first garnering critical attention for his solo performance series *The Zero Show* [*Die Null-Show*] from 1979-1981.[49] His unique acting style straddles the gaps between performance, stuntsmanship, and what Bettina Brandl-Risi calls, "virtuosic acting."[50] Unlike Henry Hübchen's pseudo-improvised monologue in *ROBBERS* (see Chapter One), however, Fritsch's improvisations in *Clockwork Orange* are not scripted, but indicated in the *Regiebuch* with the word "IMPROV" plus the topic; for example, "IMPROV about the break-in

[49] This hour-long improvised format—during which Fritsch never uttered a single word—provided him with an early platform on which to hone his improvisational skills. These performances featured a wide array of absurd actions such as staring at a wall for thirty minutes, or making faces at superhuman speed. In one show, he licked the floor of the stage "centimeter for centimeter" for the entire hour. Claudia Voigt, „DER PIRAT: Multitalent Herbert Fritsch spielt in Berlin ‚Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde' - also sich selbst," *Der Spiegel*, Nov. 2, 1995, 32.

[50] Bettina Brandl-Risi's term "virtuosic acting" in Castorf's theater refers to Castorf's actor "divas" whose actual personalities come forward in moments of physical excess. Brandl-Risi continues to see this shift of subject position as a gesture of the actor "falling out of the role" [*Aus-der-Rolle-Fallen*], and not as a refocusing on the actor as I'm suggesting here. Cf. Brandl-Risi, „Neue Szenen des Virtuosen," 252.

at J.P. Alexander's home" or "IMPROV: Telecom," etc.[51] Sometimes improvised passages are also referred to as "Herbert-esque Monologues" [*Herbert'schen Monologen*], emphasizing Fritsch's exclusive rights to the technique.

[51] *Clockwork Orange Regiebuch,* 15 & 40 in: AdK production documentation.



9

Herbert: "Entschuldigen sie Madame, es tut mir schrecklich leid sie zu stören, aber mein Freund und ich waren gerade unterwegs auf einem Spaziergang, als mein Freund von einem plötzlichen Unwohlsein befallenwurde, einer Herzschwäche vielleicht, und jetzt liegt er dort draußen auf der Straße, hat das Bewustsein verloren und stöhnt nur noch. Würden sie wohl die Güte haben, mich ihr Telefon benützen zu laßen, damit ich eine Ambulanz rufen kann.?"

Rene: "Wir hatten doch kein Telefon."

Torsten: "Es fing doch so an,daß wir ins Kino gehen wollten."

Herbert: "Viddividdividdividdi."

Indication of instances for Herbert Fritsch to improvise

Herbert sagt das sehr agressiv und macht einen Schritt auf Torsten zu. Steve beginnt den Wahwah-Soul zu spielen. Herbert geht in die Mitte und beginnt in einem Singsang eine IMPRO, die beiden Droogs stellen sich neben ihn.

Herbert: IMPRO über den Einbruch bei J.P. Alexander.

Herbert: ".....Dann war sowas wie Stille und wir waren voll von sowas wie Haß, und so schlugen wir zusammen, was noch übrig war. Schreibmaschiene, Lampe, Stühle. Der Schreibervieck und seine Alte waren noch nicht wieder richtig da und hingen rum, blutig und aufgerißen, und machten Geräusche. Aber sie würden es überleben."

Steve spielt Hey Joe.Rußischer Text.

9

Figure 2.3 Improvised passages indicated in the *Clockwork Orange Regiebuch*

A comparison between two video recordings of separate performances shows the degree to which Fritsch creates new material for each show.[52] For example, there is a scene, where Annett Kruschke sings Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" while Fritsch listens silently in rapture nearby. (N.B. Fritsch's character has a profound passion for Beethoven's music.)[53] Suddenly, actor Torsten Ranft, playing one of Alex's droogs, bursts in with a rendition of Beethoven's melody produced from his lips, lungs, and elbow. This scripted interruption leaves room for Fritsch to improvise a different response at each performance. On the recording from 1993, he lets this musical presentation continue for a considerable length of time before abruptly spitting in Ranft's face, and screaming directly into his ear.

Clip 2.3 – "Schiller"

This differs considerably from the 1995 recording where Fritsch responds to Ranft by entering into a staring contest that lasts for over four minutes, creating a situation of excessive duration. Although Fritsch never addresses the audience directly, the long pause causes the audience to grow antsy, and to act out. They cough and clap, making their presence known, as well as their desire for the show to move on. Eventually Fritsch breaks off the stare, mutters to himself, and then returns to the script.[54]

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[52] In addition to the video available at Stanford University, there is another recording available at the AdK: Anthony Burgess, *Clockwork Orange*, trans. Bruno Max, directed by Frank Castorf, Volksbühne Berlin, October 20, 1995, Videocassette (VHS) in: AdK production documentation, AVM Theater 33.8369.

[53] Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is one of Alex's favorite musical works in Burgess' novel. In Kubrick's adaptation, it becomes his favorite piece of music, and is incorporated into the soundtrack at several key points in the plot. In the context of post-Wall unification, Beethoven's symphony has a particular resonance with European unity. The fourth movement (for which Beethoven famously used Schiller's poem "An die Freude") was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1972 as the "European Anthem". In 1985, it was adopted as the official anthem of the European Union.

[54] "[T]he audience holds the silence for a minute. Then they try to laugh it away. After two minutes and ten seconds, a concert of coughing and whistling begins. After three and a half minutes, the audience tries with applause, and again a minute and a half later, this time louder. After four minutes and ten seconds the redeeming sentence falls from the stage: I found that here really shitty." [„[Das Publikum hält] die Stille eine Minute lang aus, dann versucht es, sie wegzulachen. Nach zwei Minuten und zehn Sekunden beginnt ein Hust- und Pfeifkonzert. Nach dreieinhalb Minuten versucht man es im Zuschauerraum mit Applaus, eine halbe

The agonistic force of Fritsch's extension of time is most explicit in the show's final improvisation: "IMPROV about the wish for petty-bourgeoisness."[55] Here Fritsch would test his audience's patience, taking as long as he wanted to finish, even to the point where at some performances, every member of the audience had already left the theater by the time he did. This explicit acknowledgement of the negative sentiment caused by excessive duration also performs a reflexive critique of tolerance insofar as this torturously long improvisation on the virtues of human rights, respect, and good will can only be stopped if the audience explicitly refuses to tolerate it.[56] In form and content, this moment stages the oppressive potential of tolerance, gesturing toward a critique of liberal values that resonates with the Volksbühne's project to subvert any tendency toward unity.

Excessive duration is not only deployed in Fritsch's improvisations, however. In fact, it is frequently coupled with other techniques of disruption as a way to exacerbate a disruption already taking place. For example, one scene in *Clockwork Orange* features two actors doing nothing but chewing gum for over two-and-a-half minutes. At another point, a blackout between scenes lasts for three whole minutes. These discrete cases of excessive duration correspond to the excessive duration of Castorf's productions altogether. A Castorf show frequently exceeds four hours, sometimes running six or even seven. This has created a viewing culture characterized by large portions of the audience departing at intermission, such as I did in 2006.

Minute später noch einmal, diesmal lauter. Nach vier Minuten und zehn Sekunden fällt von der Bühne der erlösende Satz: Ich fand das echt Scheiße jetzt."] Detje, *Castorf: Provokation aus Prinzip,* 224.

[55] „IMPRO über den Wunsch nach Kleinbürgerlichkeit." This final improvisation is based on the twenty-first chapter of Burgess' novel—which incidentally Kubrick excluded from his cinematic adaptation—Fritsch's monologue expresses Alex's desire to become a productive member of liberal society. *Clockwork Orange Regiebuch*, 40.

[56] Cf. Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, eds., Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 95-137.

INTERPRETIVE INACCESSIBILITY

The third technique of disruption is interpretive inaccessibility. By intentionally obscuring the reasoning or logic behind the actions on stage, the spectator cannot make sense of them, and becomes frustrated. Interpretive inaccessibility can work against the entire audience at once. It can also use knowledge and experience unique to specific sub-groups to fractionalize the audience. In these cases, interpretive inaccessibility exposes already existing divisions among audience groups. This extends beyond merely disrupting identification between an individual spectator and an actor to disrupting the audience's collective identification with itself.

This disruption of collective identification occurs overtly in the scene following Alex's arrest at the end of the opening sequence on the skirt [*Vorderbühne*]. Once Fritsch, his droogs, and his victim have all cleared the stage, the scene begins with the entrance of an anonymous couple. Silently, they crawl out of an abyss. They do not speak. They seem hardly able to stand. The man wears a black suit; the woman a white bridal dress and a veil. She stumbles about, collapsing over and over again. To her left is metal water dispenser, which she struggles to carry back to the man. "Water spout..." [*Wasserhahn*…] she says with a rolled "r." He repeats the word, also rolling his "r."

Who are these characters? What is their relation to Alex? And why do they have such strange accents? The staging makes no effort to communicate the dramaturgical function of their puzzling actions or the scene's relationship to the previous thirty minutes. All we can deduce is that these two people are malnourished, and that they probably come from Eastern Europe. However, this does little to make sense of the scene, or to orient the viewer dramaturgically.

The first verbal exchange between this man and woman takes place ten whole minutes later. Whereas one might expect language to bring clarity to the situation, it does in fact the

opposite, since the language the woman speaks is not German but Russian. Although this choice has some basis in Burgess' novel (i.e., Alex and his droogs speak in a Russian-based fictional argot called "Nadsat") this connection is never made explicit to those unfamiliar with the book, and no effort is made to render Rieger's speech intelligible either.

Clip 2.4 – "Russian without Titles"

Without knowledge of Russian, the spectator might be able to glean some meaning from the combination of Russian-German cognates and Rieger's physical gesticulations. For instance, when she points to Alex and repeats the Russian word "фашист" pronounced [fa:ʃist]—which means *Faschist* in German or "a fascist" in English—a German-speaking person could likely deduce that she is calling Alex a fascist. But even so, without a deeper knowledge of Russian, one would not be able to identify this text or its conceptual connection to the recurring question of the artist's role in society.

Rieger's text loosely quotes from a famous speech by Joseph Stalin given at the first Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers, in which he finds a metaphor to define the role of artists in Communism as "the engineers of the human soul."[57] Rieger's quotation of Stalin's speech sets off a dramaturgical excursion on the topic of art and society that unfolds during her conversation with Hunger-Bühler with the aid of German texts from Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*.[58] This is then followed by an entire scene based on testimony from the Slansky Trial by a

[57] "The production of souls is more important than the production of tanks… And therefore I raise my glass to you, writers, the engineers of the human soul." Joseph Stalin, "Speech at the Home of Maxim Gorky," Oct. 26, 1932. Transcribed and translated by Ekaterina Raykova-Merz, to whom I am grateful for making me aware of the Stalin citation.

[58] In this passage, Nietzsche defends "absorption" or "frenzy" [*Rausch*] as the necessary state for artistic production. His examples of activities that stimulate frenzy resonate with Alex's own activities, including: "the frenzy of sexual excitement […] the frenzy of feasts, contests, feats of daring, victory, all extreme movement; the frenzy of cruelty; the frenzy in destruction, the frenzy under certain meteorological influences, for example the frenzy of spring; or under the influence of narcotics; and finally the frenzy of will, the frenzy of an overcharged and swollen will." „…der Rausch der Geschlechtserregung … der Rausch des Festes, des Wettkampfs, des Bravourstücks, des Siegs, aller extremen Bewegung; der Rausch der Grausamkeit;

victim, who speaks of his affiliations with the Volksbühne, Erwin Piscator, and other theater artists.[59] Those without a certain knowledge of Russian, however, would not be equipped to grasp the textual association that connects the two sequences with the question of the artist's social function.

Clip 2.5 – "Russian with Titles"

What's more, Rieger's use of Russian would not have obstructed all audience members equally, since East Germans were educated in Russian. The Stalin quote is also likely to have been more familiar to East German audience members insofar as this speech appeared in the standard Marxism-Leninism curriculum.[60] In this way, Rieger's Russian-language performance addresses itself to East German spectators, while deliberately turning itself away from West Germans. (Beyond *Clockwork Orange*, Castorf's theater often includes scenes performed in Russian. These generally feature actors born in the former Soviet Union such as: Silvia Rieger, Jeanette Spassova, and Margarita Breitkreitz.)

At this moment, Rieger's address acknowledges and animates an extant, though perhaps invisible, division within the audience. Whereas during moments of close physical proximity or excessive duration, conflict is produced between the audience and the actor, here conflict

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der Rausch in der Zerstörung; der Rausch unter gewissen meteorologischen Einflüssen, zum Beispiel der Frühlingsrausch; oder unter dem Einfluss der Narcotica; endlich der Rausch des Willens, der Rausch eines überhäuften und geschwellten Willens."] Friedrich Nietzsche, „§8. Zur Psychologie des Künstlers," *Götzen-Dämmerung oder Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert*, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*, eds., Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, vol. 6 (München: dtv, 1980). Translation mine.

[59] The Slansky Trial was a Stanlinist show trial held in 1952 against members of the Communist Party of Czechslovakia (KSC), who were suspected of conspiring in a "Trotskyite-Titoist-Zionist" plot against the USSR. The defendents included General Secretary of the KSC Rudolf Slansky and thirteen other leading party members, eleven of whom were Jewish, as was Slansky. Those eleven men were hanged in Prague on December 3, 1952. The other three were sentenced to life in prison. The Slansky Trials were part of Stalin's broader purge of Jews from the Communist party's leadership throughout Central Europe. Cf. Ivan Margolius, *Reflections of Prague: Journeys Through the 20th Century*, (London: Wiley, 2006), 220-233.

[60] Starting in 1951, all GDR citizens were taught Russian in school such that they would have been able to understand the simple vocabulary and syntax of Rieger's lines. Cf. Ministerium für Hoch- und Fachschulwesen. *Lehrprogramm Grundlagen des Marxismus-Leninismus an den Universitäten und Hochschulen der DDR.* (Berlin, 1977 & 1986).

emerges between the audience and itself. This exposure of difference not only carries out the Volksbühne's core institutional mission; it also stages the second dialectical moment of acting in Castorf's theater. If the first dialectical moment occurs in the formation of a performance between actor, director, and text (see Chapter One), the second occurs in this interaction between audience and actor that exposes and activates that with which one cannot identify.

This is not to suggest that every East German would be able to make sense of the tenuous connections between these literary, philosophical, and historical references, or that they could all identify the authors who wrote them. Castorf acknowledges as much in his assessment of theater as an "elite island of resistance against the rage of entertainment."[61] From this perspective, the sequence above not only exposes East-West divisions, but also differences in education and/or taste. The East-West divide is merely one of several extant divisions Castorf's theater plays with in order to suspend collective identification, and to animate tension amongst audience members.

Split Reactions

That Castorf and his management team chose not to intervene in the skinhead disruption left the artists, technicians, and staff members to respond individually. As a result, different actors acted differently. Whereas Herbert Fritsch engaged with the skinheads, Silvia Rieger refused to perform for them purely on the basis of their political commitments. In the following, I closely consider these different responses, the political positions they reflect, and how they relate to the *Leitbild* slogan.

Before doing so, however, I want to acknowledge some methodological challenges facing this section of the chapter. The research I have conducted to verify what took place at the

[61] „Insofern ist Theater für mich eine letzte, freilich elitäre Widerstandsinsel gegen die Unterhaltungswut. Theater ist der letzte Partisan." Castorf qtd. in Schütt, *Die Erotik des Verrats*, 30.

performance on February 27, 1993 comes from a selection of eye-witness accounts taken from press reviews, an intern's diary, and interviews conducted by me with Silvia Rieger, the Volksbühne planning director (Klaus Michael Aust), and a member of the audience who was seated in the balcony amongst the skinheads (Georg Kehren). Despite the fact that all of these witnesses were present at that night's performance, their stories still conflict with one another in certain details, I have tried to focus my analysis on their points of agreement, and to alert the reader as needed to their points of divergence.

Herbert Fritsch describes acting during the skinheads' disruption as an enjoyable professional challenge. Despite the group's inappropriate and potentially dangerous conduct, he maintains that he never felt "disrupted" or "disturbed" [*gestört*].

> I tried to do my thing, never felt disturbed, because it [the skinheads' disruption] never went against the rhythm. The more they scream, I thought, the quieter I can become, and I would have made a joke of it. You can't wish for a better audience reaction.[62]

Fritsch views the skinhead's disruption exclusively in terms of its formal qualities, that is, its rhythm and volume, without ever mentioning the actual content of their speech. Similar to his improvisations, the disruption forces him to alter his performance in a kind of extemporaneous counterpoint. He expresses delight at the challenge. At the same time, his focus on whether or not the disruption would prevent him from fulfilling his professional obligations causes him to overlook its political stakes. According to these formal criteria, the skinheads' disruption could have been caused by a group of school children, and Fritsch would have responded the same.

To better illustrate how Fritsch's response depoliticizes the skinhead's disruption, I offer a point of comparison with another audience disruption. On a separate occasion, a homeless man

[62] „Ich habe dann versucht, meine Sache durchzuziehen, fühlte mich auch nie gestört, weil es nie gegen den Rhythmus ging. Je mehr die rumschreien, dachte ich, desto ruhiger kann ich werden, und hätte mir daraus einen Spaß gemacht. Eine bessere Publikumsreaktion kann man sich eigentlich nicht wünschen." Fritsch qtd. in Balitzki, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 143.

in the front row began heckling Fritsch. Eventually Fritsch acknowledged him, by bringing the man onto the stage, where he ordered him to urinate into a bottle and imbibe the contents, which the man did.[63] This scene shows how Fritsch is prepared to incorporate any disruption—whether by a homeless man or by skinheads—into his performance. At the same time, although he brought the homeless man on stage, that is, into close physical proximity, in the case of the skinheads, he later admitted that he was indeed afraid that they might hurt him.[64] Nevertheless, by staying in character in both cases, Fritsch neutralizes the disruptions, and erases the political distinctions between them.[65]

Fritsch's disinterest in the political stakes of the disruption are also reflected in comments he made that the skinheads were "harmless" [*harmlos*].[66] Not only does this characterization contradict his concerns about his physical safety, but, more importantly, even if Fritsch may have felt safe during the incident, Georg Kehren—an openly gay member of the audience seated amongst the skinheads that evening—did not. Twenty-five years later, Kehren recalls the sense

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[63] "At another performance, Herbert Fritsch was disrupted by a homeless person, who was staying at the theater, and was now sitting in the first row. Fritsch is playing the super gangster Alex, and acts out his character's sadism on the renitent spectator. He pulls him onto the stage, and commands him—in front of everyone—to urinate into a bottle. The man obeys. Then Fritsch commands him to drink the bottle empty. He does that, too. A while later, he leaves the theater with a green face. Perhaps some members of the audience thought the incident had been staged." [„In einer anderen Vorstellung wird Herbert Fritsch von einem Obdachlosen gestört, der im Theater untergekommen ist und nun in der ersten Reihe sitzt. Fritsch spielt den Obergangster Alex und agiert den Sadismus seiner Figur am renitenten Zuschauer aus. Er holt ihn auf die Bühne und befiehlt ihm, vor allen anderen in eine Flasche zu urinieren. Der Mann gehorcht. Dann befiehlt Fritsch ihm, die Flasche leer zu trinken. Auch das tut er. Eine Weile später verlässt er mit grünem Gesicht den Saal. Vielleicht glauben die Zuschauer, der Vorfall sei inszeniert."] Detje, *Provokation aus Prinzip*, 225.

[64] Fritsch qtd. in Balitzki, *Castorf der Eisenhändler,* 144.

[65] Detje reports that the person who instigated this confrontation was a "homeless man who had been taken in by the theater…." A quick glance over the Volksbühne's schedule of events from winter 1992-1993 shows that the Volksbühne was offering a kind of artistic residency to an amateur company of homeless performers, *Ratten 07* during the rehearsal period for *Clockwork Orange*. "Die Ratten" were invited to use the Volksbühne as a rehearsal space and shelter as part of the Volksbühne's initiative to support marginalized social groups. This suggests that the homeless man in the audience was not only an employee and resident of the Volksbühne, he was—though not a member of the permanent ensemble—a Volksbühne actor. Still, this is not to suggest that the disruption was scripted, but only that Fritsch might have known the man in advance of the disruption.

[66] Fritsch qtd. in Balitzski, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 144.

of relief he felt upon seeing Rieger appear in the balcony "dressed in a ridiculous bridal gown, like a guardian angel!" Today, he still feels indebted to her for putting an end to what he believes would have escalated into violence against other audience members, if not against himself.[67]

Rieger's response represents a stark contrast to Fritsch's, and exposes internal divisions amongst the cast and crew. Rieger does not engage with skinheads ever: "I don't talk to Nazis. Period."[68] While Fritsch was adjusting his performance, Rieger was already backstage, calling out for him to "break it off!" [*Abbrechen*!]. As it became clear to her that Fritsch wanted to sustain the conflict between stage and skinheads, Rieger took it upon herself to stop the show, as described at the beginning of this chapter.

While Rieger's response drew loud support from the audience, she was met with a fair amount of backlash from her colleagues. This internal division reveals how the skinheads' disruption reversed the splitting operations normally performed upon the audience, exposing difference among the actors themselves instead. Although the sources conflict about whether or not other actors assisted Rieger in the balcony, all accounts confirm that she was assisted by a group of stagehands. Afterwards, however, in her dressing room, she remembers being "berated" [*beschimpft*] by an anonymous fellow actor.[69]

Rieger also received backlash from journalists, who criticized audience members like Kehren as well. Critic Sören Smith lambastes the audience's "narrow-mindedness" [*Borniertheit*]. He accuses them of dodging the conflict, and of overlooking the play's critique of "everyday" totalitarianism in the sphere of cultural production as well, a critique, Smith makes

[67] „Wie ein Schutzengel in diesem lächerlichen Brautkleid, erschien sie!" Georg Kehren, Nov. 18, 2016.
[68] „Mit Nazis red' ich nicht. Zack!" Rieger, June 14, 2017.
[69] „Dann kam man wieder ran. Dann mach mal weiter. Dann hab ich mich ausgeruht in der Garderobe, wurde von einem Schauspieler noch beschimpft, dass man so was nicht macht. Ein Vollidiot. Möchte keinen Namen nennen." Rieger, June 14, 2017.

clear, is addressed at those "bourgeois" audience members who wanted the skinheads out.[70] The proper response, he argues, would have been to follow Fritsch's lead and engage in a mutual dialogue.[71] Only by communicating with the other side, Smith argues, can one truly combat the skinheads' violent ideology.

Minus the affirmative nod to rational forms of public deliberation, Smith's critique resembles Castorf's justification of his inaction backstage. In an interview, Castorf explains that what Rieger derides as a failure of leadership during the conflict was a calculated effort to force those members of the audience who wanted the management to remove the skinheads to take responsibility for the situation themselves.[72] His inaction, he claims, was an active refusal to relieve others of their obligation to fight for their own political position as per the *Ohne Leitbild* mission statement.[73] To have done otherwise would have realized the totalitarian models of oppression that avail themselves of public consensus and mob-like mentality to silence marginal political groups, even if in this case that marginal group was a band of authoritarians.

The skinhead disruption does not end here, however. After Rieger forced the group from the balcony, they did not leave the building. Instead they availed themselves of the Volksbühne foyer to voice their grievances against the theater and its audience. The offenders were offended. When a fight broke out between the skinheads and other members of the audience, the management finally stepped in, sparking a heated exchange between a skinhead and dramaturg

[70] Smith, *Scheinschlag* in: AdK production documentation.
[71] „[To] be against violence would mean to notice it to talk about it, to discuss it." [(Gegen) Gewalt sein hieße, sie wahrnehmen, hieße darüber zu reden, zu handeln."] Smith, *Scheinschlag*. Smith's commitment to rational dialogue as the optimal method of public deliberation echoes Jürgen Habermas' concept of "communicative action." Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, trans., Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).
[72] Balitzki, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 142-143.
[73] Krump's account of the situation in her journal paints a different picture. She writes that Castorf hid helplessly in the background while his management team dealt with the situation themselves. Krump, *Tagebuch einer Hospitantin*, 79.

Michael Peschke that also devolved into a physical altercation.[74] The incident then came to an abrupt end when at least one of the skinheads shattered six of the building's historic windowpanes. The theater management responded by calling the police, and the skinheads fled the scene.[75]

DISRUPTIVE AIRWAVES

The contradiction between the Volksbühne's anti-authoritarian self-image and the action of calling the police did not go overlooked by either the Volksbühne staff or theater critics. As mentioned above, Smith and other journalists publicly condemned the theater's expulsion of the skinheads, while, in private, staff members like intern Annika Krump contemplated the hypocrisy of a theater that "regularly talks about skins, attacks, violence, fascism," and then calls the police when they show up: "The whole intellectual wish-wash collapses apart in front of so much reality."[76]

Dissatisfied with the situation, chief dramaturg Matthias Lilienthal, who was responsible for most of the Volksbühne's non-artistic event programming at that time, arranged a conversation between the Volksbühne and the skinheads in the interest of giving public visibility to the conflict. On account of the broken windows, the event was not hosted at the Volksbühne, but instead at the studio of East-German Radio Brandenburg [*Ostdeutsche Rundfunk*

[74] Krump, *Tagebuch einer Praktikantin*, 79-80.
[75] „Im Theaterfoyer soll es dann zu Rampeleien mit anderen Theaterbesuchern gekommen sein, in deren Verlauf auch sechs Fensterscheiben eingetreten wurden. Das Stück wurde nach der zehnminütigen Unterbrechung zu Ende gespielt." N.N., „Skinheads störten Theatervorführung," *Der Tagesspiegel*, 21, February 28, 1993 in: AdK production documentation; Cf. Krump, *Tagebuch einer Praktikantin*, 79-80.
[76] „Das Theater hat ziemlich hilflos dagestanden—obwohl ständig über Skins, Anschläge, Gewalt, Faschismus geredet wird …Die Aggressivität schlägt einem direkt entgegen, und man begreift es nicht. Das ganze intellektuelle Geschreibsel verkommt vor so viel Realität." Krump, *Tagebuch einer Praktikantin*, 79-80.

Brandenburg] (hereafter: ORB).[77] The guests included Frank Castorf, Herbert Fritsch, and two anonymous representatives from the skinhead group, appearing under the pseudonyms "Mr. Lampe" and "Mr. Rotten."[78] Not surprisingly, Rieger did not participate. In 1993, giving a platform to skinheads represented itself something of a media disruption. In this way, a disruption normally performed within the space of the theater crossed the threshold into the actual public sphere.

The radio conversation begins with a summary of the incident, followed by a discussion of the skinheads' critique of the show, which consists of two parts: one about who owns a work of art; the second about theater's educational responsibilities. Rotten and Lampe's main point of criticism is that Castorf's adaptation does not affirm the skinhead understanding of *Clockwork Orange*, which they felt entitled to see.

> I had a certain basic idea how the whole thing should go. Nothing against artistic freedom … But I have to say … that was such a pseudo-intellectual thing … You go to Castorf, doesn't matter what kind of sense or nonsense happens, you go in, applaud like a good person—what an excellent effort! You can show yourself, but you didn't get the meaning of *Clockwork Orange*.

Due in large part to Stanley Kubrick's 1979 film adaptation, the group had come to the Volksbühne with a fixed image of *Clockwork Orange*. Insofar as Burgess' novel represents "their lives"[80] and their experiences, the skinheads insist that its adaptation for the stage ought to present them with their own self-image.

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[77] From 1991-2003, ORB was one of the four public broadcasters established in the former GDR after German unification. These were all subsidiaries of the West German broadcaster consortium ARD.

[78] In German, the surname "Lampe" refers to an idiom used when a person wants to remain anonymous; "Mr. Rotten" likely refers to punk singer Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols.

[79] „Ich hatte 'ne bestimmte Grundvorstellung, wie das ganze ablaufen soll. Nichts gegen künstlerischen Freiheit … Abe rich muß mal sagen … daß war so's pseudointellektuelles Zeug … Man geht zu Castorf, egal was für'n Sinn oder Unsinn da passiert, das zieht man sich rein, klatscht brav, is' ja 'ne prima Leistung, man kann sich zeigen, aber den Sinn von *Clockwork Orange* hat man nicht kapiert." Lampe qtd. in Balitzski, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 144.[80] This is quoted by Annika Krump from the row in the lobby: Krump, *Tagebuch einer Praktikantin*, 79-80.

The skinheads do not object to directorial intervention principally, but believe an adaptation requires a special kind of fidelity.[81] A director need not stage a "one-to-one transposition" of the original source text. What matters is that the adaptation captures the spirit or tendency of the original.

> For me, the meaning of *Clockwork Orange* lies in the fact that a maladjusted group is forcibly adjusted by the state. Naturally, one can impose images, as Mr. Castorf does, that do not correlate with the original. But somewhere the throughline was lacking. … I'm not asking for a one-to-one transposition of the book's scenes [*Szenentreue*], but for a fidelity to the line [*Linientreue*]—oh, naughty word—that's the least I ask for.[82]

Here Lampe differentiates between "fidelity to the scenes" [*Szenentreue*] and "fidelity to the line" [*Linientreue*]. Whereas "fidelity to the scenes" reflects a formal fidelity to the original narrative structure, "fidelity to the line"—a pejorative term generally affiliated with Communism that connotes blind commitment to the "party line"—implies an *ideological* fidelity. To rephrase Lampe's point, Castorf's adaptation need not adhere to the structure of Burgess' novel, but it must remain faithful to its intentions.

The next section reflects the frustration Rotten and Lampe experienced when Castorf's adaptation did not reflect their own understanding of the novel. Lampe explains that he was happy to have known the book in advance, but that, even so, he was still left wondering how the

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[81] The question of fidelity to the text is a common feature of the *Werktreue* v. *Regietheater* debates. Whereas *Werktreue* (which literally means "work-fidelity" or "fidelity to the work") supports theatrical stagings that understand themselves as being "true" to the original, *Regietheater* is the (typically pejorative) term for those productions that demonstrate "completely individual interpretations of a play in an artistically shaped space that does not follow the playwright's specifications" [„…ganz und gar individuelle Auslegungen eines Stücks in einem künstlerisch durchgestalteten Raum, der nicht den Vorgaben des Autors folgt."] Irmer and Schmidt, *Die Bühnenrepublik*, 139.

[82] „Für mich besteht der Sinn von ‚Clockwork Orange' darin, daß eine unangepaßte Gruppe durch den Staat zwangsmäßig angepaßt wird. Da kann man natürlich Bilder, wie der Herr Castorf das macht, zusetzen, die nicht dem Original entsprechen. Aber irgendwo fehlte da die Linie. […] Ich verlange nicht die Szenentreue des Buches, aber die Linientreue – oh, böses Wort – das ist das mindeste, was ich verlange." Lampe qtd. in Balitzki, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 146.

performance "made sense," and what it could teach less informed spectators about the original novel.

> I was glad that I was familiar with the book. But I had to always think, what's going on here? And I'm still of the opinion that it won't have made any sense to most people who had neither read it nor seen it. I hold Mr. Castorf responsible for that.[83]

In the lobby, one of the skinheads had expressed the related concern that a naive spectator with no prior knowledge of the literary source material would require some exposition to clarify the characters, setting, and main conflict before being able to contemplate the work's broader social implications: "A 45 year-old factory worker—after eight hours of work—would not be able to grasp what Auschwitz or the Slansky Trials have to do with *Clockwork Orange*."[84] Implicit in this criticism is the idea that art should make itself comprehensible to its spectators (as opposed to being "autonomous" or "existing for itself"), and that the Volksbühne should take a more inclusive approach when devising productions, for example, by taking the presence of non-experts, such as middle-aged factory workers, into consideration.

After Rotten and Lampe finish their thoughts about the production, the interview turns to the incident itself and the Volksbühne's handling of it. This brings the interview to an unforeseen note of agreement between all four men. Rotten begins by accusing the Volksbühne and its audience of hypocrisy to the extent that while both claim to support marginalized social groups, in reality neither will engage with them. "Yes, we like our marginal groups," Rotten says, "But

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[83] „Ich war froh, daß ich das Buch kannte. Ich mußte aber ständig nachdenken, was denn jetzt wieder los ist. Und ich bin immer noch der Meinung, daß für die meisten, die es weder gelesen noch gesehen haben, kein Sinn rausgekommen sein wird. Das kreide ich dem Herrn Castorf an." Lampe qtd. in Balitzki, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 146.

[84] „Ein 45jähriger Fabrikarbeiter nach acht Stunden Arbeit' könne nicht begreifen, was wohl Auschwitz oder der Slansky-Prozess in ‚Clockwork Orange' zu suchen hätten." Anonymous skinhead qtd. in Friedrich, „Zauberlehrling Castorf rief die Geister." This remark refers to the inclusion of a video clip in the production from the Nazi propaganda film *Terezin. Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet*, also known as *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt*, as well as the previously mentioned transcriptions of an interrogation from the Slansky Trial.

not here at the theater."[85] Indeed, this inclusion of marginal groups represented a key part of the Volksbühne's post-Wall profile, but as Rotten points out, it and its audience favored far-left groups over far-right ones.[86] Castorf and Fritsch are quick to express their agreement with this point, prompting Rotten to respond with the conciliatory comment that the Volksbühne actors and team themselves had acted "relatively fair and cool" [*relativ fair und cool*].[87]

Rotten's criticism of the Volksbühne resonates with conservative critics, who also criticized the theater for what they considered to be its privileging of East German groups, which, they argued, romanticized the GDR. Gerhard Stadelmeier called the Volksbühne a "warming station for beleaguered PDS'ler" referring to the political party that succeeded the SED in unified Germany.[88] Benjamin Henrichs called the theater a "sanctuary, the [Wagnerian] festival house, the Bayreuth of the Big Anti-Kohl."[89] The comparison to Bayreuth presents the Volksbühne as a kind of theater-church, a cultish shrine to the GDR. In his report about the skinhead disruption, Detlef Friedrich notes how skinheads and "bourgeois" [*bildungsbürgerlich*] critics both disapprove of Castorf's directorial practice.[90] These entangled antagonisms between "bourgeois" critics and skinheads against the Volksbühne, or skinheads, leftwing critics, and Castorf against Rieger and liberal theatergoers reveal how the divisions exposed through conflict

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[85] „Ja, wir mögen unsere Randgruppen, aber nicht hier im Theater." Rotten qtd. in Balitzki, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 146.

[86] In a separate interview, Castorf links his "leftist heart" [„*linkes Herz*"] with the Volksbühne's institutional collaborations with marginalized social groups. Castorf qtd. in Schütt, *Die Erotik des Verrats*, 15.

[87] Rotten qtd. in Balitzki, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 146.

[88] This quote is in part a reference to Castorf's personal friendship with PDS president Gregor Gysi. Under Castorf, the Volksbühne hosted many PDS (and later *Die Linke*) events. N.N. qtd. in Schütt, 10.

[89] „Heiligtum, das Festspielhaus, Bayreuth des Großen Anti-Kohl." Benjamin Henrichs, „Nieder mit den Zahnärzten!" 2.

[90] "Castorf and his art have a hard time in principle. When the director tears up Shakespeare's *Lear* however he imagines, the educated bourgeoisie gets stirred up. When he breathes his timely, critical ideas into *Clockwork Orange*, the unschooled youngsters from Prenzlauer Berg protest." [„Castorf und die Kunst haben es prinzipiell schwer. Wenn der Regisseur den "Lear" von Shakespeare zerfetzt, wie es ihm gefällt regt sich das bildungsbeflissene Bürgertum auf. Wenn er dem "Clockwork Orange" seine zeitkritischen Einfälle einhaucht, protestieren die bildungsunbeflissenen Jungscharen vom Prenzlauer Berg."] Friedrich, „Zauberlehrling Castorf rief die Geister."

in Castorf's theater also conflict with one another. That is to say, the groupings Castorf's theater creates are not individuated, stable "identities," but rather fluid relational interweavings.

This raises questions about the Volksbühne's audience, and the contested status of the German people, the *Volk*. In the final days of the GDR, the status of the *Volk* became a focus of the East German protest movement as the demonstrators' slogan transformed from "We are the people!" ["Wir sind das Volk!"] to "We are one people!" ["Wir sind ein Volk!"]. The protests did not necessarily reflect a desire to unify under West German conditions, however, and even well after unification, the identity of the German *Volk* remained hotly contested. Rotten's objection to having been expelled reflects this ongoing social tension: "Once outside [the balcony], I had to put up with the question, what I was doing at the theater. The thing is called People's Stage [*Volksbühne*], and I can go in as I please."[91] As with Burgess' novel, Rotten believes himself to have a proprietary right to the Volksbühne. Is this true? Is there a group to which the Volksbühne belongs? Or asked differently, does the Volksbühne have an institutional "identity" independent of the artists running it?

WHOSE VOLKSBÜHNE?

Since the Volksbühne first opened, its façade has served as an interpellating surface to its audience. The original inscription above the entrance read: "Art to the People" [*Die Kunst dem Volke*].[92] At the time, this address was clearly directed toward the "people," the city's workers,

[91] „Ich mußte mich draußen fragen lassen, was ich denn im Theater will. Das Ding nennt sich Volksbühne, und ich kann da reingehen, wie's mir passt." Rotten qtd. in Balitzki, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 146.

[92] Under the motto "Art for the people!" [*Die Kunst dem Volke!*], the Volksbühne was founded by the German Socialist Party (SPD) in 1890 with the aim of promoting the consolidation of a proletarian cultural identity. This inscription deliberately alludes to the inscription above the German Parliament [*Reichstag*]: "Of/For/To the German People" [*Dem deutschen Volk*], which was added in 1916, two years before the construction of the Volksbühne was completed. The theater's explicitly left-wing political mission reached an early highpoint under artistic manager Erwin Piscator, who secured the Volksbühne's reputation as the vanguard of the Marxist avant-garde in the 1920s. For more on the history of the Volksbühne, see: Heinrich Braulich, *Die*

many of whom resided in the surrounding area.[93] For them the Volksbühne was built, for them the productions were devised, all in the interest of cultivating proletarian cultural life, and raising critical consciousness among the working class. After the theater was rebuilt in World War II, the inscription was rewritten as just "Volksbühne."[94]

As mentioned in the introduction, when Castorf took over the theater in 1992, his chief designer Bert Neumann made yet another change to the facade, not by removing the previous inscription, but by adding new text. On the top of the building, he placed a neon sign made up of the word "OST" [EAST]. The sign alerted onlookers to this word's new ambiguity. What does "East" mean in unified Germany? What does it mean to identify a theater as "East?" The directors, designers, dramaturgs, and actors at the Volksbühne were not predominately East German. Neither was the Volksbühne's audience. In fact, the elimination of travel restrictions between East and West Berlin produced a new mobility that resulted in significant demographic shifts throughout the city.[95] This reconfigured the sociological makeup of several Berlin neighborhoods, especially those in the former East, where real estate was especially cheap. The new mobility equally affected the sociological makeup of theater audiences, a phenomenon that Castorf, Bert Neumann, and Matthias Lilienthal used to their advantage to attract non-traditional theatergoers to the Volksbühne.[96]

Volksbühne. Theater und Politik in der deutschen Volksbühnenbewegung (Berlin (DDR): Henschel, 1976); Cecil Davies, *The Volksbühne Movement: A History* (Amsterdam: Routledge Chapman & Hall, 2000); Siegfried Nestriepke, *Geschichte der Volksbühne Berlin. 1. Teil: 1890 bis 1914* (Berlin: Mauer & Dimmick, 1930).

[93] For more on the history of the *Scheunenviertel*, the area of Berlin where the Volksbühne is located, see: Cf. Eike Geisel, *Im Scheunenviertel. Bilder, Texte und Dokumente* (Berlin: Severin & Siedler, 1981).

[94] In 1943, the Volksbühne was destroyed during an ally air raid. It reopened its doors on April 21, 1954. Cf. Davies, *The Volksbühne Movement*, 185, 197

[95] Felix Denk, „Das kurze Glück der Anarchie: Ekstase im Stroboskopgewitter: In Berliner Bunkern entsteht Anfang der Neunziger die Techno-Szene. Körper verschmelzen, Unterschiede zwischen Ost und West sind egal," *Die Zeit*, Nov. 8, 2014. https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2014-11/techno-party-berlin-90er-jahre (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

[96] Cf. Bogusz, *Institution und Utopie*, 155-156; and Dietze, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, 211-232

A handful of studies attest to the diverse origins of the Volksbühne audience under Castorf. In *Institution and Utopia* [*Institution und Utopie*], Tanja Bogusz describes how after unification Berlin's theaters became gathering sites for individual post-Wall identity groups, cultivating a *sensus communis* around certain aesthetic tastes and political commitments.[97] Among these, Matthias Middell writes, the Volksbühne represented a "laboratory, in which the process of unification could be watched, [and which] proved to be equally attractive for a certain type of spectator in the East and West."[98] Similarly, art critic Diedrich Diedrichson locates the binding character of the Volksbühne's audience not in a common political allegiance or geographic origin so much as in a kind of shared position on the margins of society.

> It was the constellation of young aggressive types, people with a student-like interest, eccentrics and hipsters that one could get used to at this place. The sociological miracle of the Volksbühne audience is that it truly has no center, no bourgeois middle around which the marginal groups group themselves, but rather that it is none other than that "Patchwork of Minorities" of which Jean Lyotard once spoke—a patchwork in which no one is a marginal group, no one is hegemonic, yet which does not fall apart.[99]

Diedrichson's idealistic description of the Volksbühne audience conflicts, however, with the skinhead's experience. Critic Peter Laudenbach too exhibits skepticism, and ascribes the image of the Volksbühne as a kind of "patchwork" to the theater's aggressive image campaign: "No

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[97] Kant's notion of *sensus communis* frames "common sense" as shared aesthetic judgment based on prior knowledge by which moral norms can be rationally deduced. Cf. Immanuel Kant. "§ 40: Of Taste as a kind of sensus communis," *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in *Werke in sechs Bänden*, vol. 5 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983). Tanja Bogusz uses Kant's term to describe the sociological shifts in the Berlin theater landscape of the 1990s in: Bogusz, *Institution und Utopie*, 156.

[98] „...eines Laboratoriums, in dem man dem Vereingungsprozess zuschauen könnte, erwies sich als gleichermaßen attraktiv für einen bestimmten Typus des Zuschauers in Ost und West." Matthias Middel, Foreword to Dietze, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, 13.

[99] „Es war die Konstellation aus jungen Aggressiven, studentenhaft Interessierten, Exzentrikern und Hipstern, an die man sich an diesem Ort nun gewöhnen konnte. Das soziologische Wunder dieses Volksbühnenpublikums ist tatsächlich, dass es kein Zentrum hat, keine bürgerliche Mitte, um die sich die Randgruppen herumgruppieren, sondern dass es nichts anderes ist als jenes ‚Patchwork der Minderheiten,' von dem Jean Lyotard einst gesprochen hat—ein Patchwork, in dem niemand Randgruppe, niemand hegemonial ist, aber das dennoch nicht auseinanderfällt." Diedrich Diederichsen, "Die Ordnung der Getränke," *Endstation. Sehnsucht: Kapitalismus und Depression I*, ed., Carl Hegemann (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2000), 171.

other theater has staged itself as a label with such success. No other stage has so early on and so openly directed itself toward a clearly defined target group [of] … scene-goers, youths, and people who tend to go to the movies or to clubs."[100]

Even so, the theater's self-branding as "East" means little without a "West" as Ivan Nagel's committee seems to understood when it imagined the role of the Volksbühne-East in post-Wall Berlin. In fact, the Volksbühne-East was envisioned as one part of a two-theater system that included the "Free Volksbühne" [*Freie Volksbühne*] located in former West Berlin.[101] As a complement to the domestic focus assigned to the Volksbühne-East, the proposal designated the Volksbühne-West as a "Theater of the Nations" [*Theater der Nationen*], where touring productions from "European (and occasionally extra-European) cultures" would meet.[102] Unlike the Volksbühne, however, where the individual artists played such a critical role in the formation of the theater's post-Wall identity (as demonstrated in Chapter One), the Volksbühne-West would host visiting productions, and maybe even co-produce, but it would not have actors of its own. (Perhaps this is why the two theaters never came to have a meaningful institutional relationship.) In this way, the proposal made East-West difference into a matter of aesthetic choice. Castorf describes the central characteristic of the Volksbühne audience as a shared

[100] „Kein anderes Theater in Deutschland hat sich in den vergangenen Jahren so konsequent als Label inszeniert, keine andere Bühne hat so früh und deutlich auf eine klar umrissene Zielgruppe gesetzt [von] …Szenegängern, Jugendlichen, Leuten, die eher ins Kino oder in Clubs gehen." Peter Laudenbach, „Die Zielgruppe bin ich," *Schwerpunkt Marke*, *brand eins,* 02/2005. https://www.brandeins.de/magazine/brand-eins-wirtschaftsmagazin/2005/marke/die-zielgruppe-bin-ich (last accessed Aug. 8, 2018).

[101] The "Free Volksbühne" [*Freie Volksbühne*] was founded in 1949, after negotiations to devise an international plan for the Volksbühne broke down. In 1962, the Volksbühne-West found its permanent home in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, where it remains to this day under the new name, Haus der Berliner Festspiele.

[102] A typical season might include: (i) an annual German-language theater festival [Theatertreffen]; (ii) Berliner Tanz, featuring the dance ensembles of Berlin's opera houses as well as freelance groups; (iii) an annual festival called 'Theater of Nations' [*Theater der Nationen*] with 4-8 weeks of international theater; (iv) touring productions of American, European, and German dance groups; (v) individual touring productions of excellent foreign theater; (vi) German-language guest productions. Nagel, „Zur Zukunft der Berliner Theater," 131.

"mentality" [*Mentalität*], something like an attitude.[103] In other words, one could join the Volksbühne's core audience by mere elective affinity, and not by political necesity.

The preservation of a Volksbühne-East and a Volksbühne-West demonstrates the necessity of conflictual relations of difference in order to create an institutional identity. Yet, the clear-cut difference it proposes overlooks the more complicated, internal contradictions housed within these institutions themselves, something about which Castorf and his colleagues were acutely aware. Historically speaking, the Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz is not just a "leftwing" theater. For example, in 1933, an NSDAP artistic manager was appointed to run the theater, which was subsequently renamed the "Theater on Horst Wessel Square" [*Theater am Horst-Wessel-Platz*] after the alleged Nazi "martyr" Horst Wessel.[104] In this way, ideological conflicts similar to those made visible by posturing a Volksbühne-West against a Volksbühne-East are also revealed to be intrinsic to the Volksbühne-East itself. It contains its own *agon*.

The Volksbühne's internal institutional *agon* is staged in the form of a gesture in *Clockwork Orange* that has since become one of the most iconic moments in Castorf's theater. Near the end of the production, Hunger-Bühler walks up-stage right, and unwraps a human billboard. On the side visible to the audience, it reads: "Horst-Wessel-Platz." Rieger quickly tears the sign out of Hunger-Bühler's hands, and puts it on. Then she begins to turn, revealing the other side of the billboard, which reads, "Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz." She then twists back and then turns again. This blurring of names stages the Volksbühne's internal contradiction, that it had served both communist and fascist interests at different historical moments. The combination of

[103] "I make theater for people who maybe come from a similar direction as we at the Volksbühne do." [„Ich mache Theater für Leute, die vielleicht aus einer ähnlichen Richtung kommen wie wir an der Volksbühne."] Castorf qtd. in Schütt, *Die Erotik des Verrats*, 18-19.

[104] Horst Wessel was a Berlin-based leader of the Nazi "SA" [*Sturmabteilung*]. In 1930, Wessel was murdered by Communists for allegedly political reasons, and became a major propaganda symbol by Joseph Goebbels for the Third Reich. Cf. Daniel Siemens, *Horst Wessel. Tod und Verklärung eines Nationalsozialisten* (München, Siedler, 2009).

her physical action (turning) and its symbolic content (Germany's *historical* turn) brings the ideological antinomies of these two moments together into the dialectical gesture of a turn, a *Wende*. After she has finished, she picks up a pan, and begins to hum Beethoven's Ode to Joy (i.e., the European Anthem), before making use of her new Western kitchen equipment to fry up some eggs.

Clip 2.6 – "Rieger's Turn"

In this chapter, I have sought to show how the Volksbühne's project of public "disruption" begins in the actors' performances. Using the example of *Clockwork Orange* and the skinhead disruption, I situated aesthetic disruption within the German enlightenment tradition of theater as a "moral institution." I then illustrated three actorial techniques of disruption that unsettle audience identification, before demonstrating how the skinheads' disruption exposed internal contradictions in the Volksbühne project itself. I then investigated these contradictions by juxtaposing the responses of Herbert Fritsch, Silvia Rieger, and Frank Castorf. This was followed by a summary of the skinheads' critique of the production and of the Volksbühne's management of their disruption. My conclusions stepped back from this single incident to assess how aesthetic disruption in general exposes how identities exist only relationally, and how an agonistic theater can expose the complex contradictions that constitute our social relations, which today are so frequently and so falsely misconstrued as fixed properties of individual being.

CHAPTER THREE: HISTORICAL ACTORS

DISSOCIATION AND GENEALOGICAL CRITIQUE IN *SCHÖLLER'S BOARDING HOUSE/ THE BATTLE*

Sylvia Rieger's turn between Horst-Wessel-Platz and Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz embodies only one of several contradictions in the Volksbühne's institutional history. Since the theater's opening in 1914, it has been located on five different squares without ever changing its geographic coordinates. Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz received its name from the East German government in 1969 following a twenty-year stretch as Luxemburg-Platz (1947-1969). Before that, the square was called Liebknechtplatz (1945-1947) named after Karl Liebknecht, son of the co-founder of the German Social Democrats and close political ally to Luxemburg. Before that, the Nazis christened the square Horst-Wessel-Platz (1933-1945). And before that, Berliners knew the site as Bülowplatz (1910-1933) named after the German diplomat and former chancellor Count Bernhard von Bülow. Seven years prior to the construction of the Volksbühne, the square shortly bore its inaugural name Babelsberger Platz (1907-1910) in reference to the imperial Babelsberg Palace.[1]

Not only does each of these name changes evoke a notable figure from German history; each marks a change in Germany's political organization as well. Between 1907 and 1992 Germany underwent several political transformations that culminated in five distinct regimes: a constitutional monarchy (the German Empire, 1871-1918), a presidential republic (Weimar Republic, 1919-1933), a fascist dictatorship (the Third Reich, 1933-1945), a socialist republic (the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1989), and a federal republic (the Federal Republic of

[1] N.N., „Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz," *Berliner Straßenlexikon*, Luisenstädtischer Verein. http://archive.is/DfgfO (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

Germany, 1945-present).[2] These regimes (and their popular champions) are remembered—as are the ideologies they espoused—in the square's many names as well as in the Volksbühne's institutional and artistic history.

Staging history poses a unique set of challenges for theater. Whereas theater is bound to the here and now of its presentation, history has no single time or place that can capture the dynamic nexus of its constitutive elements, processes, contingencies, and power structures. This chapter explores how history is staged and critiqued in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* [*Pension Schöller/ Die Schlacht*][3] not by "re-setting" the play in an alternate time or place, but by techniques of "dissociation" that unbind the actor's signifying forces, and enable the actor to represent multiple historical figures in the form of a critical constellation. These constellations map genealogies that trace ideological inheritances from the Third Reich in the present day, whether in society more generally or in theater more specifically. My argument aims to show how the actors in this production perform a critique that equates operations of identification in theater with those that install and sustain totalitarian political regimes.

The chapter begins with an introduction to Castorf's concept of history and its foundations in dialectical materialism and genealogical investigation. Next, I introduce the textual foundations of *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*, before proposing Castorf's theater as a "genealogical" model of theater that deploys actorial techniques of dissociation. This technique enables actors not only to present history, but also to present it with an ambiguous, but unambiguously critical inflection. I illustrate this using four case studies. Next I demonstrate how dissociation functions in tandem with slapstick as a dialectical exercise that collapses and

[2] For more on the turbulent history of Germany's political formation see: Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany 1918-1990* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1-14.
[3] *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*, Carl Laufs, Wilhelm Jacoby and Heiner Müller, dir. Frank Castorf, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Apr. 20, 1994.

contracts the audience's faculties of identification. I conclude the chapter by relating these performances to the actual context of their production in the city of Berlin in the year 1994, and how this previews the sociological transformations Berlin would undergo over the next twenty years.

CASTORF'S CONCEPT OF HISTORY

One of the signature characteristics of Castorf's directorial style is his trenchant engagement with the histories of Europe, Germany, Berlin, and the Volksbühne. He acknowledges this "obsession" with history in an interview with Frank Raddatz:

> History is indeed always the foundation. Yet it is mostly explained from the state of that which we know, as a bourgeois, educational condiment. In fact, history represents a becoming or a transition. We find ourselves in a transition stage.[4]

In 2016, Castorf's comparison of history to a "transitional phase" alludes to the influx of refugees into Germany from the Middle East, North Africa, and the Balkans occurring at the time. More generally, however, his understanding of history as an "ongoing" [*Werdegang*], "transformative" [*Übergang*], and "class-determined" [*bildungsbürgliche*] force reflects his materialist concept of history.

Castorf's approach to staging this materialist concept of history draws significantly on the textual and dramaturgical forms developed by another post-Brechtian materialist theater maker, Heiner Müller. Particularly in plays like *The Battle*, *Germania Death in Berlin* [*Germania Tod in Berlin*], *Life of Gundling Friedrich von Preußen Lessing's Sleep Dream Scream* [*Leben Gundlings Friedrich von Preussen Lessings Schlaf Traum Schrei*], and *Hamlet Machine*

[4] „Geschichte ist tatsächlich immer die Grundlage. Nur wird sie meistens aus dem Zustand dessen, was wir kennen, erklärt. Als bildungsbürgliches Streugut. Tatsächlich stellt Geschichte einen Werde- oder Übergang dar. Wir befinden uns in einem Durchgangsstadium…." Frank Castorf „Es ist kein Zufall, dass jetzt alles in Berlin Englisch aussehen soll," Interviewed by Frank Raddatz, *Republik Castorf*, 327-328.

[*Hamletmaschine*], Müller conducts historical investigations less by means of plot or story than by means of aesthetic form, such as montage, that confront the present with "flashbacks" that shed light—albeit obliquely—on the historical contingencies of the present, particularly by making visible those historical continuities that have become taboo.[5]

Even before rehearsals for the 1994 production began, Müller's *The Battle* already "had a history" with several components of Castorf's staging, including its location and its cast. First, the play had its premiere at the Volksbühne in 1975 followed by a revised version that premiered in 1977.[6] (Both productions were directed by Manfred Karge and Matthias Langhoff.) Secondly, some of the actors in Castorf's version also appeared in that original production, for example, Henry Hübchen. Thirdly, Castorf had previously directed a version of *The Battle* in Anklam in 1982.[7] That production also featured actor Kurt Naumann in the role of "A," the same role he reads in the prologue of Castorf's 1994 adaptation.

The Battle also "has a history" with Bertolt Brecht in its allegiance to certain aspects of Brechtian dramaturgy. Müller's play consists of five vignettes related only by their historical setting in the Third Reich.[8] The play's episodic form and depersonalized depiction of its

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[5] This claim paraphrases Birgit Kawohl's observation that Müller's theater, "confronts the present GDR in collage-like flashbacks with the historical conditions of its possibility and aims to make such relevant, indeed taboo problems of origin radically conscious." [„konfrontiert DDR-Gegenwart collagenhaft in Rückblenden mit den historischen Bedingungen ihrer Möglichkeit und sucht solcherart der Erbeproblematik zugehörende, doch tabuisierte Zusammenhänge radikal bewußt zu machen."] Birgit Kawohl, *Hommage à Siegfried: Heiner Müller's „Germania Tod in Berlin" und das „Nibelungenlied"* (Germany: Kletsmeier, 1994), 16.

[6] Joachim Fiebach, Christa Hasche, and Traute Schölling, *Theater in der DDR: Chronik und Positionen* (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1994), 92.

[7] Wilzopolski, *Theater des Augenblicks*, 23.

[8] The episodes in *The Battle* are: "The Night of the Long Knives" [„*Die Nacht der langen Messer*"], the story of two brothers, A and B, who have chosen different paths under the Nazi regime; "I had a Companion" [„*Ich hatt' einen Kameraden*,"] in which four German soldiers decide to kill and consume the weakest to keep from starving to death; "Petit Bourgeois Wedding" [„*Kleinbürgerhochzeit*"] depicts a fanatical Nazi, who shoots his wife and daughter as the honorable solution to the impending arrival of the Red Army; "Butcher and Wife" [„*Fleischer und Frau*"] tells a similar story through a play within a play that consists of five scenes about a husband who decides to commit suicide at the end of the war, and is ultimately killed by his wife as she attempts to save him; in the final scene, "The Bedsheet or the Immaculate Conception" [„*Das Laken oder die Unbefleckte Empfängnis*,"] a Wehrmacht soldier ditches his uniform, for which he is later hanged by two

characters borrows from Brecht's anti-Fascist play *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* [*Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches*].[9] Müller defines his characters in relation to one another, that is, in terms of their most basic social functions; for example, none of the characters has a name. They are known only as A, B, Soldiers 1-4, a man, a woman, a daughter, etc. The only character with an actual name is Hitler, who is less a character than a specter who emerges out of his own portrait, only to vanish silently back into it. By depersonalizing these scenes, Müller politicizes them by depicting them as structural relations and not as individual experiences.

Müller's post-Brechtian dramaturgy had significant influence on Castorf, who would ultimately transfer Müller's dramaturgical fragmentation into the actors' performances, creating a mode of acting that represents historical relations more than historical personalities.[10] In the 1980s, Castorf garnered national attention for his enigmatic and provocative stagings of Müller's plays. In Anklam, he directed *The Battle* in 1982 and *The Mission* in 1983. In Karl-Marx-City (present day Chemnitz), he staged *The Construction Site* [*Der Bau*] in 1986, and *Wolokolamsker Chaussee I-IV* in 1988 in Frankfurt an der Oder. Under the scrutinizing eye of the SED, the critical combination of Müller's text and Castorf's staging often led to an impasse with the censors.[11] In a 1997 interview, Castorf reflects on the challenges of staging Müller under SED censorship.

> Anyone who wanted to stage Heiner Müller in the GDR had to get permission from the political authorities. With Shakespeare's *Othello*, they just thought, ah

members of the SS. Heiner Müller, *Die Schlacht*, *Gesammelte Werke 4,* ed., Frank Hörnigk, vol. 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 469-482.

[9] Bertolt Brecht, *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches*, *GkA*, vol. 4, 339-455.

[10] In *Postdramatisches Theater*, Lehmann calls Castorf's (textual) integration of *The Battle* into *Schöller's Boarding House* a kind of "silly—though at times fatuous—rebellion" [„*witzige—gelegentliche auch nur alberne—Rebellion*"] in Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater*, 220; Elsewhere in a commentary against conservative critics, Joachim Fiebach makes a direct comparison between Brecht, Müller and Castorf questioning why dramatists like Brecht and Müller are allowed to adapt classic texts, whereas a director like Castorf is not. Fiebach et al., *Theater in der DDR*, 128.

[11] Cf. Carlson, *Theater is More Beautiful than War*, 96-98; Dietze, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, 131.

> right, that conflict in Venice, the white people and the black guy, you can do that. And then I would make a Trojan Horse out of it.[12]

Castorf's "Trojan Horse" method refers in part to a practice of interspersing citations—from Müller among others—into the text of other plays (see Chapter One for more on Castorf's use of *Fremdtexte*). In this way, he was able to couch critical statements in the context of seemingly innocuous dramas. Today, even though East German censorship has ceased to be a threat to Castorf's theater, he has carried on this practice in productions including *Kean ou Désordre et Génie par Alexandre Dumas et Die Hamletmaschine par Heiner Müller* (2008), in which the actors recite famous passages from Müller's *Hamletmaschine* while packing themselves into small plywood houses, and *Journey to the End of the Night* (2013), in which Müller's "Angel of History" monologue from *The Battle* becomes the textual basis for a musical number.[13]

Not only does the interspersion of Müller's texts provide opportunities for more explicit expression of critical statements, it also enables Castorf to lend onstage presence to persons and/or events absent from the script. This technique unfolds paradigmatically in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*, in which the collision of different texts enables the actors to perform critical embodiments of German history. In the following section, I focus in detail on these textual interspersions, before addressing their impact on the critical potential of the actors' performances.

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[12] „Wer in der DDR Heiner Müller inszenieren wollte, musste sich das genehmigen lassen von den politischen Instanzen. Bei Shakespeares ‚Othello' meinte man bloss, na ja, das ist dieser Konflikt in Venedig, die Weissen und der Schwarze, das kannst du machen. Bei mir wurde daraus ein Trojanisches Pferd." Castorf qtd. in Barbara Villiger Heilig, „Die Volksbühne als unmoralische Anstalt," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, September 12, 1997.

[13] *KEAN ou Désordre et Génie Comédie en cinq actes par Alexandre Dumas et DIE HAMLETMASCHINE par Heiner Müller*, dir. Frank Castorf, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin, Nov. 6, 2008; *Reise ans Ende der Nacht*, Céline, Louis-Ferdinand, dir. Frank Castorf, Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel, Munich, Oct. 31, 2013.

The *Regiebuch* for *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* takes the first text as a dramatic surface that it sporadically disrupts using the second. This erratic form reminds the audience—while being itself *mindful*—of latent continuities between unification, German theater, the Volksbühne, and the Third Reich that remained publicly unacknowledged even in 1994. *Schöller's Boarding House* provides the dramatic surface. A Berlin-based farce written by Wilhelm Jacoby and Carl Laufs, the play premiered at the Wallner Theater in 1890, and became a comedy classic for German-speaking audiences particularly through its multiple film adaptations.[14] The plot of *Schöller's Boarding House* centers around Philip Klapproth, a provincial landowner, who travels to Berlin from the countryside to check up on his nephew Alfred and his new business, a center for the "mentally unwell" [*geistig Gestörte*], for which Klapproth has fronted the money. In reality, however, Alfred's charitable enterprise is nothing more than a ploy to weasel money out of his affluent and unsuspecting uncle. When Klapproth arrives in Berlin, eager to see a "real" madhouse, Alfred brings his uncle to "Schöller's boarding house," a hotel frequented by guests who, while not clinically "insane," are just eccentric enough that Klapproth believes them to be.

Beneath the comedic surface of Laufs and Jacoby's script, Castorf sets two other texts, each of which contributes to the production's evocation of concrete people, events, and convictions from the Third Reich. The first of these is Müller's *The Battle*. As I already mentioned, *The Battle* features short episodes about everyday life (and death) under the NSDAP.

[14] Since 1930, many film and radio play adaptations of *Schöller's Boarding House* have been produced in Germany (both in the GDR and the FRG) and in Austria. The most well known of these is the 1960 FRG version starring Theo Lingen, and directed by Georg Jacoby (Wilhelm Jacoby's son, who had already directed the play as a film twice before in 1930 and 1952). Cf. Georg Jacoby, 1960, *Pension Schöller*, Hamburg: Real Film KG.

The second of these is a text culled from a local Berlin newspaper published on April 20, 1939.[15] This second text differs from the other two in that it is neither a play, nor is it included in the production's title. In fact, its presence would probably go entirely unnoticed if not for the fact that the audience received a complete facsimile of the newspaper in lieu of a program booklet.

The front-page headline of this facsimile reads: "Greater Germany Celebrates Adolf Hitler's 50th Birthday."[16] The mere presence of this headline animates audience reflection about German history in two ways. First, it alerts the audience to connections between the production and the Third Reich. Secondly, insofar as Castorf's work premiered on April 21, 1994—fifty-five years and one day after the fact—the headline positions the present day in relation to the country's past. As a side note, the facsimile also helps audience members to identify and contextualize those texts included in the *Regiebuch* from the newspaper—which are never announced as such—as part of the Nazi propaganda machinery.

Yet on account of this program booklet, some critics and scholars have misguidedly characterized *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* as a "re-setting" [*Verlegung*] of Laufs and Jacoby's comedy.[17] Over the past three or four decades, a leading directorial strategy to tackle the challenge of staging history has been to "reset" dramatic texts, that is, to stage them in a time and/or place different from the one indicated by the original script, a practice affiliated with director's theater and/or *Regietheater*.[18] Such re-settings typically task the set and costume design with the work of representing "history," even though their material fixity prevents them

[15] *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, April 20, 1939 in: Carl Laufs, Wilhelm Jacoby and Heiner Müller, *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*, directed by Frank Castorf, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz. Archive of the Akademie der Künste Berlin (Academy of Arts Berlin) production documentation for *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* ID903.
[16] „Großdeutschland feiert den 50. Geburtstag Adolf Hitlers" in: AdK production documentation.
[17] Dietze, *Ambivalenzen des Übergangs*, 288; Benjamin Henrichs, „Pension Schöller oder das fidele Grauen," *Die Zeit*, April 29, 1994.
[18] For a case study of a "re-setting" directed by Peter Sellars, see: Marcia J. Citron, "A Matter of Time and Place: Peter Sellars and Media Culture," *Opera on Screen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 205-248.

from representing anything more than an unambiguous and facile comparison between another historical moment and the present day. This strategy reflects a concept of history that understands the past as a self-contained and knowable object; yet one way in which totalizing accounts of history prove themselves to be false is that even the most basic objects on which they would be based have no fixed identity independent of their historical context. Likewise, the fixed identities demanded by such theatrical re-settings prove inadequate to the complex interaction of forces that drive historical transformations in society, politics, and art. I believe that what is at stake in Castorf's theater is precisely an attempt to give theatrical form to these complex interactions in the actors' performances.

The Volksbühne's monthly brochure from April 1994 testifies to these ambitions in a statement about the artists' intent to "rob the farce of its innocence and to compress it into a 'genealogy' of German history."[19] This frames the team's interpretive methods in terms of two philosophical paradigms: dialectical materialism and genealogy. In the first case, the use of the word "farce"—which also refers to the dramatic genre of Laufs and Jacoby's comedy—makes a pun out of Marx's famous gloss of Hegel.[20] In addition to dialectical materialism, the brochure also refers to the philosophical technique of genealogy, to which I would now like to draw our attention.

The "genealogical method" of philosophical inquiry was introduced by Friedrich Nietzsche as a way to interrogate contemporary morals on the basis of their intellectual (and

[19] „…der Posse ihre Unschuld rauben und sie zu einer ‚Genealogie' deutscher Geschichte verdichten." Qtd. in Herrmann Pitt, „Pension Schöller: Die Schlacht," *Sonntagsnachrichten* in: AdK production documentation.
[20] "All great world-historical deeds and persons occur twice, so to speak. [Hegel] forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." [„Alle großen weltgeschichtlichen Tatsachen und Personen sich sozusagen zweimal ereignen. Er hat vergessen, hinzuzufügen: das eine Mal als Tragödie, das andere Mal als Farce."] Karl Marx, *Der Achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, *MEW*, vol. 8 (Berlin/DDR: Dietz Verlag, 1972), 115. Translation mine.

material) inheritance.[21] Nietzsche's method was later reformulated by Michel Foucault in the second half of the twentieth century to reflect a method of historical investigation that also takes phenomena not normally viewed as historically contingent, such as religion or sexuality, into consideration. Foucault's genealogies neither search for historical origins nor do they construct a linear narrative of historical unfolding. Rather, they attempt to capture the polysemic and contradictory character of history while tracing continuous influences and sites of power.[22]

The claim that *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* aspires to stage "a 'genealogy' of German history" begs the question: how can a genealogy be staged? We can begin to answer this by looking at the dramaturgical models available to Castorf, specifically those of Heiner Müller, whose approach to dramatic writing was also influenced by Foucault—though less in terms of genealogy than in terms of "archaeology." Loren Kruger has written about Müller's incorporation of Foucault's "archaeology of knowledge" in the context of his production plays, which take Foucault's account of history's ongoing presence in the present as the basis for a "stratigraphic" dramaturgy with multiple "layers of [historical] meaning."[23] Kruger ties Foucault's archaeological engagement with history to Müller's dramatic project of "excavating and reanimating historical remains in performance."[24] Castorf's production also performs

[21] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral, Kritische Studienausgabe* (*KSA*), ed., Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, vol. 5 (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988).
[22] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche – Genealogy – History," *The Foucault Reader*, ed., Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 76-100.
[23] Loren Kruger, "Positive Heroes and Abject Bodies in Heiner Müller's Production Plays," *New German Critique*, no. 98, Heiner Müller (Summer, 2006), 16.
[24] Kruger's article primarily dedicates its analysis to observations that extend beyond the purview of Müller's text into specific examples of actors' performances, which she explores from the standpoint of the actor's professional history, that is, his or her "previous roles related to the performance at hand." Kruger argues that as contingent bodies defined by both their stage presence and their stage past, actors themselves become meaningful sites of historical investigation that enable theater to perform "corporeal critique" of the GDR. Connecting this actor-based theatrical practice to Foucault's theory, Kruger calls this "archaeological performance." This practice represents a different but similar model of actor-based historical critique than that explored in this chapter. Whereas "archaeological performance" makes meaning out of the contingent histories

excavations and exhumations, but unlike Müller's stratigraphic approach, which orders things in vertical succession, Castorf's actors perform German history as a rhizomatic network of associations that map out an explicitly *dis*ordered (and *dis*orienting) model of historical critique. Moreover, whereas Müller gives *dramatic* form to Foucault's historical concepts (that is, as written texts), Castorf gives them *actorial* form, tracing connections between past, present, and future using the actors' bodies.

To this end, Castorf's actors do not act using techniques of total embodiment.[25] Instead, they create meaning out of ambiguous, polysemic gestures, similar to Silvia Rieger's "turn" in *Clockwork Orange* whereby the physical action and its symbolic content are brought into dialectical tension through their simultaneous presentation. The ambiguous quality of performance created by this approach imbues Castorf's theater with a playful self-reflexivity that captures the contingent character of that which connects present and past. This technique of temporarily exposing actual historical personalities is a regular feature of Castorf's theater, and a staple of how his actors figure as sites of historical critique. In fact, these activities of (re)presenting genealogical investigations of history is so central to Castorf's theater, that we can generalize it as a model I would like to call "genealogical theater."

GENEALOGICAL THEATER AND DISSOCIATION

Genealogical theater describes a self-reflexive model of theater structured by its own (concealed) history, which determines the actors' performances, which in turn expose and critique that history. Insofar as a genealogy is itself not an embodied historical object, but rather

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of the actor's body (like what I called "diachronic acting" in Chapter One), "genealogical theater" uses the actor's body to map historical contingencies. Kruger, "Positive Heroes," 16-17.

[25] For more on Brecht's term "Aristotelian theater," see: Brecht, „Über die Möglichkeiten nichtaristotelischer Dramatiken," 169.

a process of tracing relationships between historical material, the elasticity of the actor's performance offers an ideal vessel for its scenic realization. By situating the production's critical (i.e., genealogical) methods in the bodies of actors, Castorf is able to (re)present the kinds of phenomena and interactions that characterize more complex models of history. I want to stress the genealogical character of these performances insofar as they trace actual inheritances, whether political, institutional, or artistic. In genealogical theater, the actor's body serves as a site for the gathering of thoughts, making the audience "mindful" of its past. In this way, the actors in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* "remind" Berlin theatergoers of the complicity of Berlin's own theater institutions in totalitarian regimes.

Incidentally, Foucault uses the language of the theater to describe how genealogy cultivates the historical contingencies it seeks to expose.

> A genealogy of values, morality, asceticism, and knowledge will never confuse itself with a quest for their "origins," will never neglect the vicissitudes of history as inaccessible. On the contrary, it will cultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning; it will be scrupulously attentive to their petty malice; it will await their emergence, once unmasked, as the face of the other. Wherever it is made to go, it will not be reticent in "excavating the depths," in allowing time for these elements to escape from a labyrinth where no truth had ever detained them.[26]

Here Foucault describes genealogical inquiry as an "unmasking" of historical contingencies and structural forces, as a "leap from the wings to center stage," and as an "eruption."[27] Foucault's "eruption" is the historical-philosophical negative of Carl Schmitt's "irruption of history into the play."[28] The former charts power's outward burst from history into critical consciousness. The

[26] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche – Genealogy – History," *The Foucault Reader*, ed., Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 80.
[27] *Ibid.,* 84.
[28] Schmitt describes the enduring traces of a dramatic text's relation to the historical moment of its creation as an "irruption of time into the play" [*Einbruch der Zeit in das Spiel*.] Such traces of a historical "reality" appear on stage as "a faint light [that shines] through the masks and costumes of a theatre play. No interpretation,

latter charts history's inward implosion from a dramatic text into its scenic realization. Each concept imagines the moment when historical relations make their theatrical entrance—whether out of philosophy or out of theater—as a moment of rupture that occurs when competing structural forces align in a constellation that suggests the possibility of something like historical truth.

In genealogical theater, these moments of rupture all occur in the actors' performances, rendering the actor's body the main site of the production's critical activities. I will call this dialectic motion in and out of the actor's performance an "eruption/irruption" in order to reflect the simultaneous "eruption" of history *out of* the actor's performance and "irruption" *into* the acting. As shown throughout this dissertation, in contrast to epic theater, in which an actor steps out of her role to speak as "him-" or "herself," in Castorf's theater actors never embody any kind of "authentic" experience or unified subject position. Instead, Castorf's actors are always playing as if wearing a mask upon a mask upon a mask.

Also like epic theater, which relies on acting techniques of "distantiation" or "disillusion," genealogical theater relies on a technique I am calling "dissociation" or "dissociative acting." Whereas distantiation designates a technique that achieves critical distance by means of the actor's "full turn" [*volle Wendung*][29] from a diegetic mode of address to an extra-diegetic one, dissociative acting designates when an actor divides his or her performance among multiple characters at once. The term dissociation is borrowed from the field of psychology where it describes the mental activity of defensive splitting from one subject into multiple subjects, generally in response to some kind of emotional trauma. Dissociation is best known in its most extreme form, Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), the condition formerly

whether philological, philosophical or aesthetical, however subtle, can change that." Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet oder Hekuba: Der Einbruch der Zeit in das Spiel* (Düsseldorf: E. Diederichs, 1956), 21-22. Translation mine.

[29] See p. 4, fn. 5.

known as Multiple Personality Disorder. DID is a disorder marked by a lack of connection—an extreme alienation—between a person and his own thoughts, memories, and identity. Similarly to DID, dissociative acting breaks apart the signifying features of an actor's performance (e.g., costume, makeup, text, voice, gesture) so that instead of unifying in one single character, they fray or "split" into multiple.

In *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*, the actors' deployment of dissociation maps constellations of historical personalities, events and attitudes, producing an ambiguous critique of German theater history, and, in particular, of the nation's historical actors. By making adjustments to the discrete signifying components of their performances (e.g., gesture, voice, utterance, etc.), actors can represent multiple characters at once. In this way, dissociation enables the actor to perform not only multiple subjects, but the relationships between those subjects as well. It transforms the actor's body into the site of historical eruption/irruption where multiple fictional characters and historical personalities collide.

Dissociation is of course not the only acting technique featured in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*. Quite the contrary, it mainly occurs in the form of abrupt eruptions/irruptions facilitated by the script's secondary and tertiary texts: *The Battle* and the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*.[30] By splitting the fictional characters of *Schöller's Boarding House* into multiple figures from German (theater) history, Castorf and his team map continuities, indeed genealogies, using the actor's bodies resulting in an embodied performance of critical historical

[30] The *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* was one of the two largest national papers during the Third Reich, appearing twice daily. The edition concerned here was the *Morgenausgabe* distributed in the morning hours of the day. The paper belonged, like the majority of media outlets in the Third Reich, to a body of papers that defined itself as "bourgeois-conservative" [*bürgerlich-konservativ*]. Along with the *Berliner Nachtausgabe*, *Die Woche*, and *Allgemeiner Wegweiser*, the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* was owned by the media mogul Alfred Hugenberg, an industrial manager, who also served as chairman of the board to the Krupp Corporation. Cf. Konrad Dussel, *Deutsche Tagespresse im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, (Berlin, Vienna, Hamburg, London, Zurich, and New York City: Lit, 2011), 65 & 90; Norbert Frei and Johannes Schmitz, *Journalismus im Dritten Reich* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999), 54-55.

writing—or indeed of *re*writing—that attends not to the representation of individual historical figures, but to the representation of the relationships *between* Germany's historical national crimes and its historical national actors.

Historical Constellations and German Stars: Four Case Studies

This section of the chapter describes four performances in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* that exemplify the historical-critical activities of genealogical theater. The actors featured here are: Hendrik Arnst (who already appeared in this chapter as B in the prologue), Herbert Fritsch (introduced in Chapter Two), Walfriede Schmitt, and Winfried Wagner (introduced in Chapter One). The production begins with a prologue, which, in contrast to the rest of the production, distills historical signification into concrete, material objects. No mere props, these objects are inflated physical emblems of two totalitarian German political regimes, namely the Third Reich and the GDR. When the actors toss these objects away from the stage during the prologue, their symbolic content disperses into the actors' performances where it remains dormant except for a handful of intermittent outbursts. These outbursts mark the moments when historical personalities emerge, and historical critique occurs.

The prologue borrows its text from an episode in Müller's *The Battle*. Two brothers "A" and "B" meet for the first time after years of estrangement at the door to B's home. A is a worker and an anti-fascist, whereas B joined the S.A., where he has been until now. Having just escaped physical torture by the Gestapo, and unable to bear his guilt, B returns home, and asks his brother A to end his life. In the wake of their cold exchange, A fulfills his brother's wish, and shoots him.[31]

[31] Heiner Müller, *Die Schlacht*, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed., Frank Hörnigk, vol. 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 471.

From the very start of the production, historical signifiers circulate independently from their physical embodiments, confusing the associations between specific historical signs and specific political ideologies. Like the openings of *Robbers* and *Clockwork Orange*, *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* begins when two actors abruptly enter the stage without any indication of the play's beginning, for example, by a shift in the lighting. Arnst, who speaks the lines of B (the Nazi brother) is costumed as a waiter, while Naumann, who speaks the lines of A (the antifascist), is dressed in an S.A. uniform complete with the iconic swastika armband. As the scene unfolds, additional signifiers enter the stage. The first is a large swastika scar Arnst reveals on his stomach.[32] This gesture sets off a chain reaction in the set design as the back of the stage—which until this point has been completely dark—alights with two large swastikas that flash and burn as the sound of explosions blast across the theater.

Figure 3.1 Hendrik Arnst lifts his shirt, revealing a swastika
(Photo: PAL Screenshot)

[32] "Removes his shirt. On his chest a swastika." [„Zieht das Hemd aus. Auf seiner Brust ein Hakenkreuz."] Müller, *Die Schlacht*, 470.

Figure 3.2 Swastikas alight along the back of the stage
(Photo: PAL Screenshot)

After the explosions desist, the back of the stage remains lit revealing a fortress rampart, and a tank upstage right. In the middle of the rampart, there appears the silhouette of a man wearing something that resembles a Bavarian loden hat. The silhouette hops across the crenellations, and eventually bends over, pulling up a colossal disc with a diameter of at least two meters. As the man carts the disc downstage, the stage lights come up, making visible the image painted on the front of the disc, namely the national emblem of the German Democratic Republic.[33] When Arnst and Naumann see the emblem, they throw a quick glance at the audience before crossing together toward the man center stage, grabbing the disc out of his hands, and rushing it back upstage. There, they throw it over the ramparts to the thunderous sound of a bugs-bunny-like crash. While the emblems themselves have a relatively closed meaning (e.g. the GDR emblem = the GDR), their absurd presentation on stage introduces

[33] The national emblem of East Germany contains a hammer and a compass encircled by a ring of rye. Cf. Harry D. Schurdel, *Flaggen & Wappen Deutschland* (Augsburg: Battenberg, 1995), 81-90.

audience members to the production's unorthodox methods of historical critique through acting in lieu of material objects.

Clip 3.1 – "Prologue"[34]

CASE 1: HENDRIK ARNST/ EUGEN RÜMPEL/ HEINRICH GEORGE

In *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*, Volksbühne ensemble member Hendrik Arnst plays the role of Eugen Rümpel, Schöller's talentless nephew, who has joined the wait staff of his uncle's boarding house to support himself while pursuing his dream to become an actor.[35] At first, Arnst's performance of Rümpel makes full use of the actor's tools of embodiment: costume, makeup, posture, literal actions, voice, gesture, and speech. For his costume, Arnst wears a turn-of-the-century waiter's uniform. His literal actions mainly consist of serving beer and potato salad to the guests, and the majority of his text is taken directly from Laufs and Jacoby's original script. Additionally, Arnst's performance of Rümpel features a simulated speech impediment that transforms his "l's" into "n's," an iconic trait of the character. Throughout Arnst's performance, this speech impediment serves as the primary signifier of Rümpel's presence, even as Arnst's performance splits across multiple characters. [36]

In the following sequence from first scene after the prologue, Arnst adheres to the definition of acting as "actor A impersonating role X."[37] His costume, makeup, posture, literal

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[34] Carl Laufs and Wilhelm Jacoby, *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*, Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Frank Castorf. Performed January 1, 1996. Berlin: 3sat, 1996. DVD in: Archive of the Akademie der Künste (Academy of Arts Berlin). Video-NR 410.

[35] Rümpel's abrupt recitations of canonical theater monologues becomes the basis for Klapproth's mistaking Rümpel for a madman.

[36] Arnst studied acting at the Hochschule für Schauspielkunst "Ernst Busch." In 1976 he joined the acting ensemble in Anklam where he worked with Castorf until defecting to West Germany in 1986. In 1993, he joined Castorf's ensemble at the Volksbühne, where he worked until Castorf's departure in 2017. For more on Arnst's collaboration with Castorf see: Balitzki, *Castorf der Eisenhändler*, 173-17; Arnst, Interviewed by Frank Raddatz, „Es geht um Leben und Tod," *Republik Castorf*, 57-69.

[37] See p. 6, fn. 12.

actions, voice, gesture, and speech combine in a holistic portrayal of Rümpel. The scene begins with Klapproth (played by Henry Hübchen) having just arrived at Schöller's boarding house with his two nieces (played by ensemble members Kathrin Angerer and Olivia Grigolli). Klapproth asks Rümpel whether or not he is at the correct address. Rümpel reassures him that he is indeed; however, Rümpel's speech impediment warps the name of the establishment from "Pension *Schöller*" into "Pension *Schönner*," resulting in a comic back-and-forth between the two men. The sequence concludes with Rümpel introducing himself to Klapproth as Schöller's ward, making clear that Arnst is playing Rümpel.

Clip 3.2 – "Schönner"

Later in this same scene, however, Arnst's performance signals a turn. After having left the stage to place Klapproth and his nieces' lunch orders, Arnst comes back in the same costume, with the same posture, and the same speech impediment. Nevertheless, the character represented by Arnst's performance appears to have changed on account of the curious content of his speech, which has become incompatible with the character at hand. This first becomes apparent when, in the midst of serving lunch, Arnst abruptly alludes to Adolf Hitler.[38] While Arnst's utterance exhibits certain continuities with Rümpel, who often inflates his improbable accounts of theatrical triumph as an actor, the reference to the "Führer" is not only dramatically out of place, it is anachronistic. There is no way Rümpel could have performed for—let alone known of—Hitler given that Laufs and Jacoby's play was written in 1890, just one year after Hitler was born. This anachronism displaces Arnst's speech from his physical embodiment of Rümpel, and raises the question if Arnst hasn't started to play someone else.

[38] "When the *Führer* comes to the theater, we actors get a special kind of stage fright." [„Wenn der Führer ins Theater kommt, haben wir Schauspiener ein ganz besonderes Nampenfieber."]

For the remainder of the sequence, Arnst's performance provides a number of clues that help the spectator identify the new role (role Y). After mentioning Hitler's name, Arnst crosses the stage, sits down, and launches into a monologue about his experiences performing in Hitler's presence. Over the course of this four-minute monologue, Arnst twice mentions his appearances at the "Schiller Theater" (or in this case, the "Schinner Theater") once as a guest speaker at the theater's inauguration, and once as an actor in the title roles of "Wannenstein" and "Goetz von Bernichingen," performances at which Hitler was—or was at least supposed to have been—in attendance. For those members of the audience still unable to identify the speaker, his identity is revealed at the end of the monologue when Naumann abruptly attacks Arnst, chasing him around the stage with a rolled-up newspaper, and calling him out by name: "It's all lies! Heinrich George, National Actor!"[39]

Clip 3.3 – "Heinrich George"

Heinrich George (1883-1946) was a star of the German stage and screen with an ambiguous relationship to the Nazi party.[40] Prior to Hitler's election, George had been a member of the German Communist Party (KPD), which he had joined in the early 1920s. As an actor, he worked with Marxist theater makers like Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, and performed regularly at the Volksbühne between 1925 and 1929. When Hitler came to power in 1933, George was initially banned from acting due to his Communist affiliations. It was only by cultivating a relationship with Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels that he was able to make amends with the Nazi regime and resume his position as one of Germany's most powerful acting

[39] „Alles Lüge! Heinrich George, Nationalschauspieler!"
[40] Cf. Berta Drews, *Heinrich George. Ein Schauspielerleben* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1956); Klaus Riemer, „George, Heinrich" in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1964); N.N. „Spielen oder sterben," *Der Spiegel*, 49, 1995, 236–245. http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-9247136.html (last accessed Aug. 8, 2018); Kurt Fricke, *Spiel am Abgrund. Heinrich George–eine politische Biographie* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2000).

stars, without ever officially joining the party. George did, nonetheless, take an active part in Goebbel's film and radio propaganda apparatus, playing lead roles in films like *Ein Volksfeind* and *Jud Süß*.[41]

In addition to his national celebrity, George played an especially important role in the local Berlin theater scene. He was appointed artistic manager of the Schiller Theater in 1938, a position George used both to legitimize Nazi ideological positions on the one hand, while at the same time hiring and protecting many friends and colleagues—in particular Jews and Communists—on the other. At the end of the war, George was arrested by Russian troops and incarcerated. He died in 1946 most likely of hunger and complications following a bout of appendicitis while incarcerated in Sachsenhausen, a former concentration camp located thirty-five kilometers north of Berlin.

[41] Henrik Ibsen, *Ein Volksfeind*, dir. Hans Steinhoff, Flensburg: Fabrikation Deutscher Filme (F.D.F.), 1937; Veit Harlan, Eberhard Wolfgang Möller, and Ludwig Metzger, *Jud Süß*, Veit Harlan, Berlin: Terra Film, 1940.

Figure 3.3 Hendrik Arnst as Heinrich George
(Photo: PAL Screenshot)

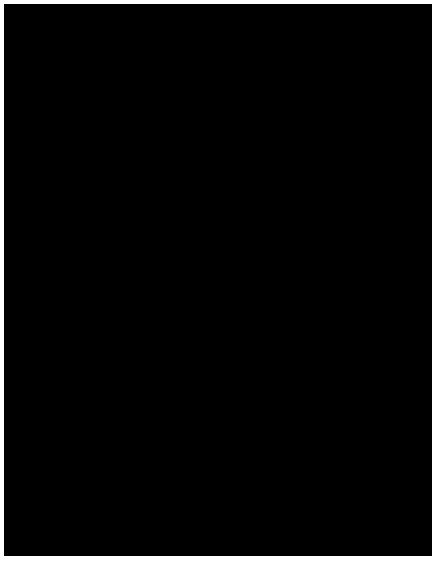

Figure 3.4 Actor Heinrich George
(Image not reproduced due to copyright)

In this example of dissociative acting, George's presence on stage is only partially staged, a performative eruption/irruption as opposed to mimetic embodiment. Neither Arnst's costume nor makeup participate in his evocation of George, whose most recognizable physical attribute—his Chevron moustache—is notably absent from Arnst's face. What's more, Rümpel's speech impediment persists throughout George's monologue, signaling the fictional character's ongoing presence throughout. In fact, Arnst's embodiment of George is based solely on his recitation of the text, which is taken from a contribution to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* by George on the occasion of Hitler's birthday included in the program booklet.[42] The historical names, events, and places mentioned in George's text (i.e., the inauguration of the Schiller Theater and playing leading roles for Hitler) lend George scenic presence without Arnst having to adjust any other part of his performance. In this way, Arnst (actor A) is able to embody Rümpel (role X) and George (role Y) simultaneously.

[42] Heinrich George, „Wenn der Führer ins Theater kommt," *Morgenausgabe des Berliner Lokal-Anzeigers*, April 20, 1939 (Nr. 94) in: AdK production documentation.

Heinrich George's emergence out of Arnst's performance of Rümpel feels paranormal, like a kind of supernatural acting that summons a deceased historical figure, even creating the impression that Rümpel has been possessed by George. The ghostly quality of Arnst's performance points to procedural similarities between dissociation and one of the modes of "ghosting" developed by Marvin Carlson in *The Haunted Stage*.[43] Ghosting is a phenomenon in theater that occurs, for example, when an actor's performance resonates with a previous performance so that the memory of that previous performance becomes projected into the present one, and changes the meaning of the performance at hand. Yet whereas ghosting refers to cases when a specific actor's professional past is evoked by that same actor, dissociation uses one actor to give presence to another. Moreover, whereas ghosting represents an arbitrary byproduct of theatrical performance, which can be instrumentalized if desired, the effects of dissociation in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* are dramaturgically calculated to expose connections between specific historical actors and the Third Reich.[44] In this way, dissociation resembles Müller's archaeological excavations of an undead past more so than ghosting.[45]

The choice to revive George in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* has clear historical motivations in 1994. Already that year, George's legacy had twice become a subject of controversy in the German public sphere. This took place first in the context of the Berlin Senate's decision to close the Schiller Theater[46]—where George had served as artistic

[43] See: Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage* (Anne Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).
[44] This instrumentalization of ghosting-like phenomena is similar to the procedures of "archaeological performance" described by Kruger, who also draws a comparison with Carlson's concept: Kruger, "Positive Heroes," 21.
[45] Incidentally, Müller's arguably most famous engagement with Berlin's ghosts, *Germania Tod in Berlin*, also premiered on the anniversary of Hitler's birth in 1978.
[46] Built at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Schiller Theater served as one of West Berlin's major public repertory theaters. As part of the ongoing debates on the allocation of public funds following German unification, in 1993 the Berlin Senate decided to close the Schiller Theater in spite of numerous protests, earning cultural senator Ulrich Roloff-Momin the name "Schiller-Killer." Cf. Nagel, „Gibt es eine Alternative? Referat an die Mitglieder des Schiller-Theaters am 20.8.1993," *Streitschriften*, 155-165.

manager—as part of their efforts to restructure the Berlin theater landscape in the wake of unification. Also George's name appeared in the headlines in 1994 when his remains were finally discovered in Sachsenhausen, ending decades of speculation about the actor's death. Admittedly, this occurred after the premiere of *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*, however.

In addition to these topical associations, the evocation of George facilitates a critique of actors and the political immunity granted them. It mocks the belief that actors are special people or geniuses, a belief I will call "actorial exceptionalism." In his text, George repeatedly lauds his own talents, for example, referring to his performance at the opening of the Schiller Theater as a "miraculous power source of actorly achievement."[47] Just as George's text boasts of his own artistic talent, Rümpel too repeatedly praises his "superior" acting skills, though the claim is undermined by his inability to properly pronounce the letter "l." The combination of Rümpel's speech impediment and his earnest passion for "Art" [*die Kunst*] results in comic recitations of classic German-language soliloquies. The first of these is taken from Schiller's *Wallenstein*, creating a minor biographical overlap between George and Rümpel's professional experience as actors. The persistence of Rümpel's speech impediment at once ridicules George's excessive self-praise, while also exposing the men's shared commitment to actorial exceptionalism. In the case of Rümpel, this commitment is shown to be merely ridiculous. In the case of George, however, it had real advantages. If only for a limited period of time, being a star saved George's life. In this way, Arnst's dissociative embodiment of George calls critical attention to the fact that some of Germany's actors benefited from their complicity with the Third Reich.

[47] „…wundertätige Kraftquelle schauspielerischer Leistung."

CASE 2: HERBERT FRITSCH/ FRITZ BERNHARDY/ GUSTAF GRÜNDGENS/ (GRÜNDGENS AS) MEPHISTO

In the program booklet, actor Herbert Fritsch is listed as "Fritz Bernhardy, Globetrotter" [*Weltenbummler*], a description taken verbatim from Laufs and Jacoby's script. Bernhardy is a resident at Schöller's boarding house, who suffers from an extreme case of the travel bug. In Castorf's production, Bernhardy's penchant for the exotic becomes the dominant characteristic of Fritsch's appearance. Over the course of his first scene, with the help of text from Müller's *The Battle*, Fritsch adjusts his voice and posture such that they unbind themselves from his embodiment of Bernhardy, and join together in a partial embodiment of another historical actor of ambiguous reputation.

As in Laufs and Jacoby's original script, Bernhardy first appears in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* having just returned from an African Safari. Also as in the original, his first line comes in the form of a racist joke: "Salaam alaikum, my dear Mr. Kissling. May I pitch my wigwam by you?"[48] Rather than simply excise this outdated humor from the promptbook, Castorf accentuates it by means of Fritsch's costume, makeup, voice, and posture. Dressed in a long brown skirt, holding a hand fan, and made up in yellowface, he enters the stage as the personification of several forms of racist exoticism.

[48] „Saleim aleikum, mein lieber Herr Kissling, darf ich bei Ihnen meinen Wigwam aufschlagen?" Carl Laufs and Wilhelm Jacoby, *Pension Schöller* in *Bühnenschwänke: Der Raub der Sabinerinnen, Pension Schöller, Die spanische Fliege* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 122.

Figure 3.5 Herbert Fritsch enters as Fritz Bernhardy
(Photo: PAL Screenshot)

With a mannered gait, and an open fan in front of his chest, Fritsch moves step by step downstage while the rest of the cast looks on aghast. Then he speaks. Fritsch uses his head voice, marking his performance with an effete tone accentuated by his mannered gesticulations and hysterical laughter. His voice mixes shrill head register with rumbling chest voice topped off with a widened vibrato to create a mock version of something trying to resemble Kabuki Theater. This "aria" culminates with another head voice passage, and concludes with a deep, grunted, "Ho ho ho ho!" as he sits at the small table stage right. Additionally, he pronounces his "r's" as "l's," enhancing the racist play on East Asian stereotypes already occasioned by his costume and makeup.

Clip 3.4 – "Fritsch's Entrance"

In spite of this curious entrance and the fact that Fritsch's character is never introduced by name, his utterance of unaltered original dialogue establish him as Bernhardy, as was also the

case when Arnst entered as Rümpel.[49] Yet the tension between the text and Fritsch's outward appearance inspires puns that draw attention to the production's spectral embodiments. For example, as a result of the appearance of Heinrich George beforehand, when Arnst greets Fritsch in this scene, his line, "And where have you been in the meantime, you restless spirit, if I may ask?" gains new meaning, despite the fact it derives from the original script.[50] Arnst's interpellation of Fritsch as a "restless spirit" [*unruhiger Geist*] alludes to the supernatural character of Arnst's prior embodiment of George, and suggests that Fritsch's performance might contain something equally paranormal as well.

Clip 3.5 – "Bernhardy Introduction"

Over the course of this scene, Bernhardy's "exotic" appearance becomes a source of antagonism for the other characters, who eventually gang up on him physically. This attack presents a turning point in the scene when Fritsch's performance of Bernhardy begins to transform from a racist caricature into something else.[51] When Arnst aggressively questions Fritsch, "Are you thinking about staying here for a while?" the latter nervously checks over his shoulder before braving an answer.[52] For this, he neutralizes his voice, lowering it to his normal speaking register, and pronouncing his "r's" like a native German speaker. These vocal adjustments are only the first in a series of shifts in Fritsch's performance that combine to form a new character (role Y) while holding onto the presence of the oriental stereotype (role X). Carrying on with Laufs and Jacoby's dialogue, Arnst dryly suggests to Fritsch that, "The best

[49] This scene features one minor change from Laufs and Jacoby's original script: instead of taking place between Bernhardy and Kissling, the scene in Castorf's staging takes place between Bernhardy and Rümpel.
[50] „Und wo waren Sie inzwischen, Sie unruhiger Geist, wenn ich fragen darf?" Laufs and Jacoby, *Schöller's Boarding House*, 122.
[51] This transformation begins when Fritsch recites a line from Bernhardy's original text that mentions the "wandering Jew" [*ewige Jude*]. At this moment, Olivia Grigolli, who has been playing Klapproth's niece Franziska, begins to scream the text of the Nuremberg Laws at Fritsch. This exacerbates the mob-like treatment of Fritsch as a racialized Other, and marks the tipping point where the other cast members shift from being bothersome to becoming aggressive.
[52] „Gedenken Sie nun nängere Zeit hier zu bneiben?"

thing for you would be to marry."[53] Fritsch balks at the idea: "Me marry? Nonsense! What would I do with a wife?"[54] Here, Fritsch's gestures become exaggeratedly effete again. He leans back, crosses his legs, cocks his wrists, and once more inflects his voice with a characteristically feminine cadence, only this time without the racist accent from before. The combination of effete affectations *without* the pseudo-East Asian inflection suggests yet another bigoted joke: that Bernhardy is a homosexual.

Later in the same scene, the other actors gang up on Fritsch again, this time armed with plates of potato salad. But before they can reach him, Fritsch begins shouting out a text that abruptly breaks with both his character and the situation at hand—not unlike Arnst's line from the previous scene, "When the Führer comes to the theater…." The source of Fritsch's utterance is a key monologue from *The Battle*, though this citation is never made explicit. While Fritsch recites Müller's monumental words, the other actors retreat, enraptured. In fact, they become so absorbed in his performance that they fail to notice the potato salad dripping off the plates they hold at their sides. Fritsch's performance grows increasingly passionate, and when he finally concludes with a burst of pathos, Arnst rushes to his side. "Fantastic!" he beams. "A colleague!"[55] The rest of the cast follows suit, bursting into rapturous applause.

Clip 3.6 – "Fritsch's Genius"

In this sequence, Fritsch's performance oscillates between two roles (i.e. Bernhardy and an unidentified role Y) by means of subtle adjustments he makes to his performance in tandem with adjustments that transpire within the broader scenic context. Unlike Brechtian distantiation, Fritsch's evocation of different characters does not include an explicit change in his mode of address. It does not imply that "Herbert Fritsch the actor" is speaking directly to the audience. He

[53] „Das allerbeste wäre für Sie, Sie heiraten."
[54] „Ich heiraten? Unsinn! Was soll ich denn mit einer Frau anfangen?"
[55] „Fantastisch! Ein Konnege!"

has not "broken character." He is always acting within the separate world of the stage. But as whom?

By isolating the discrete adjustments Fritsch makes to his performance, we can identify role Y even if he is never called out by name, as was Heinrich George. Fritsch's first adjustment is made to his physical mannerisms and voice, temporarily unfixing them from the yellowface caricature. Then, he adopts a declamatory delivery of his lines to which the other actors, including Arnst, respond with praise. The combination of Fritsch's expressive recitation and the other actors' awestruck reaction transforms him from a racialized Other (role X) into a genius actor (role Y).

The presence of role Y is first acknowledged onstage when Arnst embraces Fritsch as a "colleague." At this moment, the other actors begin to applaud Fritsch for his passionate recitation, framing it as a performance. Arnst then approaches Fritsch approvingly: "With you, dear colleague, the closing of the Schiller Theater would never have come to pass!"[56] The combination of Arnst's acceptance of Fritsch as a "colleague" and his reference to the "Schiller Theater" provides helpful clues to identify role Y insofar as it reanimates George's scenic presence, and suggests a professional relationship between Fritsch's new embodiment and the former artistic manager of the Schiller Theater. This together with Fritsch's costume and makeup offers enough information for at least some audience members to identify role Y as Germany's arguably most famous twentieth-century actor, the other major artistic manager in Berlin during the Third Reich, Gustaf Gründgens.

Like George, Gustaf Gründgens (1899-1963) was an internationally acclaimed German actor-director who left an ambiguous artistic legacy on account of his complicity with the NSDAP. Although Gründgens had close professional relationships with anti-fascist artists like

[56] „Mit Ihnen Herr Konnege, wäre es nie zur Schnießung des Schinner Theaters gekommen!"

Bertolt Brecht and Ernst Busch, he enjoyed enormous professional success in collaboration with the Nazi regime.[57] On the one hand, his friendly relationship with Hermann Göring garnered him an appointment as artistic manager of the Preußisches Staatstheater in Berlin after 1933. On the other hand, his complicity protected him from imprisonment and possible execution for his homosexuality. Still Gründgens went above and beyond his political obligations to the Nazis; for example, in addition to his position as artistic manager, he held a political post as "Preußischer Staatsrat" and even voluntarily enlisted in the military [*Wehrmacht*] upon Goebbels' call for "Total Warfare" in 1943.

After the war, Gründgens enjoyed a considerably more agreeable fate than George. Like George, Gründgens was also incarcerated by the Soviets. During denazification, however, he was exonerated by a number of colleagues, in particular, by the former Volksbühne actor Ernst Busch, on whose behalf Gründgens had intervened during the Third Reich.[58] By 1946, Gründgens was officially "denazified" and back on the stage in Berlin's Soviet sector where he managed the Deutsches Theater for one year before leaving Berlin to serve as artistic manager in Düsseldorf and later in Hamburg until shortly before his death in 1963.

Gründgens' eruption/irruption out of Fritsch's performance is supported and sustained not only by these abstruse references to the Schiller Theater, artistic genius, and concealed homosexuality, but also by the contributions of Fritsch's costume and makeup as well. Whereas Gründgens himself did not resemble a crude yellowface caricature, one of his most famous performances did, namely his portrayal of Mephisto in his film adaptation of Goethe's *Faust*, a

[57] For example, Brecht and Gründgens corresponded before and after the war about Brecht's play *Die Heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe*, which Gründgens staged in Hamburg in 1959.
[58] Jacques Schuster, „Gustaf Gründgens: des Teufels Intendant," *WeltN24*, February 2, 2013. https://www.welt.de/kultur/literarischewelt/article113705453/Gustaf-Gruendgens-des-Teufels-Intendant.html (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

performance that became one of the most iconic of post-war German cinema.[59] The images below show the physical similarities between Fritsch as Bernhardy and Gründgens as Mephisto. Their painted-on, slanted eyebrows, slicked-back coiffure, and the lack of definition around their eyes are nearly identical. Additionally, the monochrome base makeup gives both faces a mask-like quality, even if Gründgens' is white and Fritsch's yellow.

Figure 3.6 Herbert Fritsch as Bernhardy
(Photo: PAL screenshot)

Figure 3.7 Gustaf Gründgens as Mephisto
(Image not reproduced due to copyright)

Fritsch brings multiple characters to expression by splitting and adjusting the discrete signifiers of his performance. At the most basic level, Fritsch is Fritsch, an actor familiar to the audience from other Volksbühne productions, like *Clockwork Orange*. Then, by means of costume, makeup, props, voice, and posture, he comes to impersonate an oriental stereotype (role X). Next, while his costume and makeup continue to perform role X, Fritsch adjusts his voice, posture and utterances so as to show Gründgens (role Y). This is reinforced by the reactions of the other actors onstage. In this way, Fritsch is able to divide his performance across multiple

[59] J.W. von Goethe, *Faust*, F.W. Murnau, Babelsberg: UFA, 1926.

subjects (e.g. Bernhardy, Gründgens, Gründgens as Mephisto) without engaging in any kind of emotional or psychological identification.

Additionally, dissociation reconfigures Fritsch's performance perpetually throughout the scene. That is, rather than role Y simply being added on top of role X, there is a fluid process of addition, subtraction, and substitution as Fritsch oscillates between characters, turning from and returning to each at different points throughout the scene. In this way, no hierarchy is formed among the competing subjects. Instead, Fritsch's performance brings them into relation with one another, and shows them in a dynamic and productive tension.

The question then becomes: what work is dissociation doing beyond enabling an actor to play multiple characters at once? To what end is this acting technique being deployed? As always when dealing with Castorf's theater, one must be careful when adjudicating meaning. The playful quality of these acting practices resists being interpreted as a coherent argument. That said, I would like to begin to address this question by returning to the abovementioned notion of "bringing into relation."

Insofar as dissociation enables the emergence of multiple figures from different discursive registers (fictional v. historical v. present), it implicitly suggests connections between them, bringing these personalities, their individual actions, and their historical contexts into relation with one another. I see this practice as an actorial mode of writing of history that stages the eruption/irruption as both historically contingent and ideologically conditioned, similarly to the materialist historian of Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* [*Über den Begriff der Geschichte*]. Benjamin argues that history cannot be written with a "historicist" view of the present as a "causal nexus of various moments of history." Instead, he offers the "materialist

historian," a dialectical thinker who "*records the constellation* in which his own epoch comes into contact with that of an earlier one."[60]

In Thesis XVII, Benjamin describes this "constellation" as the image of a suspended thought:

> Thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts, but also their zero hour. Where thinking suddenly halts in a constellation overflowing with tensions, there it yields a shock to the same, through which it crystallizes as a monad.[61]

Benjamin's image of a constellation shocked into temporary crystallization provides a philosophical correlate for those moments in Castorf's production when historical actors erupt/irrupt out of and into the actors' performances. Like Benjamin's materialist historiography, Fritsch and Arnst's partial representations of Germany's acting "stars" freeze in a fleeting constellation that maps Germany's historical tensions. For one brief moment, the actor transforms from a medium of representation onstage into a stage himself on which the immanent contradictions of history play out. It is then left up to the audience to perform the critical task of tracing the lines between those stars, that is, to map the constellation, and uncover the ways in which their own time "comes into contact" not only with the Third Reich, but also with the GDR

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[60] "Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal nexus of various moments of history. But no state of affairs is, as a cause, already a historical one. It becomes this, posthumously, through eventualities which may be separated from it by millenia. The historian who starts from this, ceases to permit the consequences of eventualities to run through the fingers like the beads of a rosary. He records the constellation in which his own epoch comes into contact with that of an earlier one. He thereby establishes a concept of the present as that of the here-and-now, in which splinters of messianic time are shot through." [„Der Historismus begnügt sich damit, einen Kausalnexus von verschiedenen Momenten der Geschichte zu etablieren. Aber kein Tatbestand ist als Ursache eben darum bereits ein historischer. Er ward das, posthum, durch Begebenheiten, die durch Jahrtausende von ihm getrennt sein mögen. Der Historiker, der davon ausgeht, hört auf, sich die Abfolge von Begebenheiten durch die Finger laufen zu lassen wie einen Rosenkranz. Er erfaßt die Konstellation, in die seine eigene Epoche mit einer ganz bestimmten früheren getreten ist. Er begründet so einen Begriff der Gegenwart als der ‚Jetztzeit,' in welcher Splitter der messianischen eingesprengt sind." Walter Benjamin, „Über den Begriff der Geschichte," *Gesammelten Schriften*, vol. 1.2 (Suhrkamp Verlag. Frankfurt am Main, 1974), 704. English translation by Dennis Redmond. http://members.efn.org/~dredmond/ThesesonHistory.html (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

[61] „Zum Denken gehört nicht nur die Bewegung der Gedanken sondern ebenso ihre Stillstellung. Wo das Denken in einer von Spannungen gesättigten Konstellation plötzlich einhält, da erteilt es derselben einen Chock, durch den es sich als Monade kristallisiert." Benjamin, „Über den Begriff der Geschichte," 702-703.

(via the Heiner Müller texts), with the late nineteenth century (via Laufs and Jacoby), and, of course, with today (via the performance). This mapping of constellations represents the historical-critical work demanded by Castorf's theater.

CASE 3. WALFRIEDE SCHMITT/ COMMUNIST CONCENTRATION CAMP PRISONER/ ULRIKE

Audience members are not always left alone with this critical task, however. In certain cases, the staging helps to guide them. For instance, in the scene where we previously left off, the staging itself steps in to map the constellation of historical actors. Directly after Fritsch's recitation of Müller's text, Arnst's/George's praise of Fritsch/Gründgens expands into a panegyric of Germany's superior theater tradition that glorifies its great dramatists "Schinner und Kneist" before Arnst abruptly stops. He stares stage right in shock as a new character enters. Arnst discreetly informs Fritsch of the newcomer. Fritsch then too becomes noticeably unsettled. Klapproth's nieces (played by Angerer and Grigolli) soon clarify that the new character is their "Mother!" [*Mutter!*] Ulrike, played by longtime Volksbühne ensemble member Walfriede Schmitt. However, in contrast to George and Gründgens, who do not manifest so explicitly in the material components of the actors' performances, this new character's relationship to the Third Reich is emphatically set in her costume, hair, and makeup.

Clip 3.7 – "Ulrike's Entrance"

The choice to costume Schmitt as a concentration camp prisoner unsurprisingly bears little relation to the original narrative of Laufs and Jacoby's original script. Without the context of Arnst and Fritsch's performances of George and Gründgens, her costume and makeup would make little sense. In this context, however, Schmitt's entrance points an incriminating finger at Germany's most revered theater stars for their complicity with the NSDAP. Schmitt's costume

unambiguously externalizes the presence of the Third Reich in the production, which until this point has only been suggested through text and gesture. Unlike George and Gründgens, who both emerge immaterially out of the characters from Laufs and Jacoby's play, Ulrike's entrance unambiguously announces her relationship to the Third Reich insofar as her costume and makeup immediately identify her as a concentration camp prisoner, and, more specifically, as a political prisoner by the red upside-down triangle over her heart.[62] It is only by means of Schmitt's subsequent interactions with other characters that her performance splits from a pure historical embodiment into the character of "Ulrike" as well. In this way, Schmitt's disruption of Arnst and Fritsch's praise of German theater history "makes a scene," in the sense that it both stages a historical constellation, and condemns it.

This practice of "making a scene" by means of staging a historical constellation resembles the major concern of Adorno's seminal essay, "What does it mean: to work through the past?" ["*Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*"]. Adorno argues that the conditions that had made the Third Reich possible lived on in Germany in 1960, and rejects the idea that the ideological foundation of National Socialism had somehow vanished after the war.

> [T]he past that one would like to escape is still very alive. National Socialism lives on, and until today we still do not know whether as a mere ghost of that which was so monstrous that its own death did not quite kill it, or if it never came to die in the first place; whether the willingness for the unspeakable persists in human beings as well as the conditions which surround them.[63]

[62] For more on Nazi prisoner badges see: Abraham J. Edelheit and Hershel Edelheit, *History of the Holocaust: A Handbook and Dictionary* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 218, 239, 266, 448.

[63] „[D]ie Vergangenheit, der man entrinnen möchte, noch höchst lebendig ist. Der Nationalsozialismus lebt nach, und bis heute wissen wir nicht, ob bloß als Gespenst dessen, was so monströs war, daß es am eigenen Tode noch nicht starb, oder ob es gar nicht erst zum Tode kam; ob die Bereitschaft zum Unsäglichen fortwest in den Menschen wie in den Verhältnissen, die sie umklammern." Theodor Adorno, „Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?" *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10.2, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015), 555. Translation mine.

Adorno's resistance to national forgetting was a response to the West German policy of *Aufarbeitung* or "working through the past," which relied on the assumption that a nation could absolve itself of its crimes by "working through" its past and on itself. *Aufarbeitung* translates roughly as "rehabilitation," but also includes the word *Arbeit*, which means "work" or "labor." Adorno is skeptical of the claim of *Aufarbeitung*, because it suggests a protestant model of redemption through work. That is, by working through a misdeed or crime, a person (or a people) can move beyond their guilt. In other words, by confronting Germany's painful history, Germans earn the right to forget. (Incidentally, in his essay Adorno attributes this protestant view of the ethical relationship between past and present to the corrupt moral philosophy of Mephisto in Goethe's *Faust*.)[64]

While Adorno writes that National Socialism is still alive, he acknowledges that its presence is not fully embodied. It is a specter, or, to borrow from the language of Karl Marx, a „*Gespenst*." Heiner Müller alludes to a similar concern when he paraphrases Brecht's metaphor that after the war, "new houses" were already being built even before the "cellars" had been cleaned out.[65] These critical terms also seem to inform the eruption/irruption of German historical actors in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*. This resonance can be best heard when Arnst looks down upon Ulrike, the iconic victim of the Third Reich, and speaks an insignificant line from Laufs and Jacoby's script that takes on greater meaning in the context of Castorf's adaptation: "Shadows of the past are turning up."[66] These, of course, are not just any

[64] "Such a view would draw the moral from the saying: 'And it's as good as if it had never happened,' which comes from Goethe but, at a crucial passage in *Faust*, is uttered by the devil in order to reveal his innermost principle, the destruction of memory." [„Das zöge die Moral aus jenem ‚Und ist so gut, als wär' es nicht gewesen', das von Goethe stammt, aber, an entscheidender Stelle des Faust, vom Teufel gesprochen wird, um dessen innerstes Prinzip zu enthüllen, die Zerstörung von Erinnerung." Adorno, „Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit," 557.

[65] Heiner Müller, „Fatzer ± Keuner," *Brecht Jahrbuch*, ed., Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 17.

[66] „Es tauchen da so Schatten aus der Vergangenheit auf."

"shadows." They are the skeletons in the closet of German theater history, its "untidied cellars" as Brecht or Müller might say.

CASE 4: WINFRIED WAGNER/ HERR SCHÖLLER/ RICHARD WAGNER

Winfried Wagner's performance of the title character, Herr Schöller, is the fourth and final case of dissociative acting discussed in this chapter, although there are additional examples in this production.[67] Like Arnst and Fritsch, Wagner's performance splits across multiple characters that include Schöller as well as a recognizable figure from German theater history with an ambiguous relationship to the Third Reich. Unlike Arnst and Fritsch, however, the historical figure latent in Wagner's performance was not alive in the twentieth century, but represents instead a prototype for the ideological intersection of actorial exceptionalism and totalitarianism, a figure whose emergence extends the genealogical critique performed by Arnst and Fritsch back another half century.

It is not until ninety minutes into the production that Wagner makes his highly anticipated entrance in response to his sister Amalie (played by Heide Kipp, who like Hübchen joined the Volksbühne under Benno Besson), whose repeated shouting of his name—"Schöller! Schöller!"—prompts Wagner to immediately and unambiguously identify himself: "Here! I'm here!"[68] It is not long thereafter that Wagner's performance begins to split, this time not by means of spoken text, however, but in the form of operatic vocalization.

Clip 3.8 – "Entrance Wagner"

[67] For example, Sophie Rois plays the part of fiction writer Josephine Kruger made up in the iconic dress and hairstyle of Rosa Luxemburg. The dissociative procedures of this performance split Rois' embodiments between Kruger, Luxemburg, and Nietzsche, whose philosophical writings provide Rois with additional text to praise the unique and exceptional status of art and the artist.

[68] „Hier! Hier bin ich ja!"

Wagner's vocal outbursts suggest a relationship to opera. The first occurs shortly after his entrance. In this situation, Amalie wants to convince Schöller that Klapproth would make a suitable husband for her daughter, Frederike. Exasperated by his sister's tireless chatter, Wagner explodes into a (mock) operatic response. This "operatic" quality can be localized in the recitative-like character of the vocal line in combination with the "trained" character of Wagner's actual voice, which he tosses between the chest and head register (e.g., "sa-att!") like a *Charaktertenor*.[69]

There is of course something comical about this unexpected turn, but even more interesting is how it evokes another star of German (music-) theater. There are three components of Wagner's performance that signal the presence of this new historical actor. The first is the abovementioned operatic outburst. The second is Wagner's costume: a black frock coat, black tie, and black beret. The third—and perhaps most obvious in the context of this analysis—is a pun on the actor's surname, Wagner. Out of this constellation of costume, utterance, and biographical information emerges the 19th-century German composer Richard Wagner.

[69] A "character tenor" [*Charaktertenor*] is an operatic voice type known for its high, forceful (at times shrill) quality. Standard roles include: Herodes from *Salome* (R. Strauss) and Monostatos from *Die Zauberflöte* (W.A. Mozart).

Figure 3.8 Winfried Wagner as Herr Schöller
(Photo: PAL Screenshot)

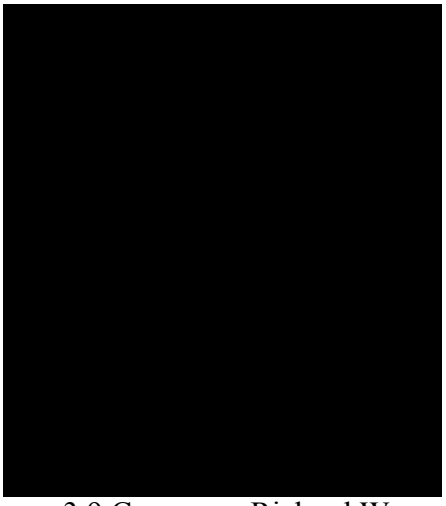

Figure 3.9 Composer Richard Wagner
(Image not reproduced due to copyright)

The first implication of Wagner's performance of Wagner, is that—as one might judge by their names—the actor (that is, Winfried Wagner) becomes yet another historical actor who emerges out of his own dissociative performance. This begins with a minor ideological overlap between Herr Schöller and Richard Wagner. In Laufs and Jacoby's play, Schöller is a retired music school director who prides himself on his artistic sensibility, the caricature of a German *Bildungsbürger*.[70] Schöller's reverence resembles Richard Wagner's views on the redemptive power of music and art, views which are ridiculed by Winfried Wagner's performance insofar as they are ironically brought into juxtaposition with Schöller's laughable artistic amateurism.

There is also some self-reflexive humor in Wagner's performance. One of the most senior members of the Volksbühne acting ensemble, Winfried Wagner is too a kind of "historical

[70] The term *Bildungsbürger* is a pejorative term that denotes a social class that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, and considered its extensive humanistic education a form of social capital equivalent to material wealth. In its common usage, it suggests an exaggerated interest in culture. Stereotypical characteristics of a *Bildungsbürger* are: humanistic education including extensive musical education, an academic position (i.e. professor, teacher), the belief that social prestige exceeds material wealth, and a Protestant religious affiliation. For example, in Theo Lingen's 1960 film adaptation, Schöller is introduced while practicing cello and simultaneously taking business phone calls. A *Bildungsbürger* might also be defined as a contrasting figure to the *Kleinbürger*. M. Rainer Lepsius, „Bürgertum und Bildungsbürgertum," *Demokratie in Deutschland,* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993).

actor." Born in 1937, as compared to George (1883) and Gründgens (1899), Winfried Wagner had been an actor in the Volksbühne ensemble for thirty-one years by the time *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* premiered. Remember from Chapter One that Wagner had shared the position of interim artistic manager with Marion van de Kamp and Annegret Hahn for two seasons directly before Castorf's appointment. And like actors Henry Hübchen and Walfriede Schmitt, he had also appeared in the original staging of Müller's *The Battle* at the Volksbühne, which closed only nine years earlier.[71]

Furthermore, Wagner is known by the Volksbühne audience as an actor who sings. (Incidentally, he also makes use of this operatic training in his performance of "Old Moor," in *ROBBERS*.) As such, his vocalizations render Winfried Wagner the actor a separate "role Z," a living embodiment of nearly half a century of Volksbühne history. This is suggested first of all by the choice to cast him in the role of Schöller, the senior figure and owner of the boarding house. It is then heightened as Wagner's biography resonates with some of his lines, for example, when he welcomes the other actors onstage—many of whom are recent additions to the Volksbühne ensemble—to his "hotel." Replete with "music salon, game room, and reading room" [*Musiksalon, Spielzimmer, Lesekabinett*], the establishment sounds less like a hotel than like a theater. It is almost as if Wagner were welcoming the new actors (e.g., Fritsch, Naumann, Angerer, etc.) to *his* Volksbühne. In this way, his vocalizations are not only a dissociative gesture, but a diachronic one as well (see Chapter One)

In addition to Wagner's reorientation of the production's critique inward toward the Volksbühne, the eruption/irruption of Richard Wagner out of his performance historically and conceptually expands the ongoing critique of actorial (or in this case merely "artistic")

[71] *Die Schlacht*, Heiner Müller, dir. Manfred Karge/ Matthias Langhoff, Volksbühne am Luxemburg-Platz, Germany, October 30, 1975 (revised version premiered on July 21, 1977).

exceptionalism. Nearly a century after the publication of Schiller's "Theater Viewed as a Moral Institution," Richard Wagner expanded on Schiller's vision of theater as a site of affective, moral, and national unity led by the messianic figure of the actor. In "A Theater in Zürich" [„*Ein Theater in Zürich*"], this idealist theater is portrayed as free from the commercial taint of "industrial" and "commercial" enterprise.[72] Through non-commercial education, Wagner's theater would—to use the author's own metaphor—"heal" its audience and restore the "healthy spirit of the public sphere."[73] In this way, Wagner's actor becomes a messianic figure, who embodies the moral purity (both on and offstage) not just necessary for moral education, but for spiritual redemption.

Written nearly thirty years later, Wagner's essay "On Actors and Singers" provides a more detailed account of the messianic actor, who will redeem theater, and, by extension, the public. In this text, however, Wagner has abandoned the idea that the actor must himself be the paragon of bourgeois virtue in order to do so.

> What the mime [actor] may be outside his art—educated, or ignorant, upright, orderly, or loose and flighty—has nothing in common with what he is within his art.[74]

The distinction Wagner draws between the actor-as-citizen and the actor-as-artwork promotes the idea of actorial exceptionalism, and eliminates the need to confront the ethically questionable deeds of historical actors like George and Gründgens. What's more, Wagner champions acting that achieves a "despotic effect" over its audience (and to which the audience desires to submit

[72] Richard Wagner, „Ein Theater in Zürich," *Neue Text-Ausgabe*, vol. 6 (Frankfurt am Main: axel dielmann verlag, 2013), 16-49.
[73] „gesunde Geist der Öffentlichkeit." Wagner, „Ein Theater in Zürich," 34.
[74] „Was der Mime außerhalb seiner Kunst noch ist, ob ein gebildeter oder unwissender, ein rechtschaffener, ordentlicher, oder leichtsiniger und lüderlicher Mensch, hat mit dem, was er innerhalb seiner Kunst ist, nichts gemein." Richard Wagner, „Über Schauspieler und Sänger," *Neue Text-Ausgabe*, vol. 10 (Frankfurt am Main: axel dielmann verlag, 1851), 143.

itself), cultivating a form of identification similar to the "charismatic authority" characteristic of totalitarian regimes.[75]

Already in the 1920s, Brecht criticized Wagner's "hypnotic" and "intoxicating" aesthetics for clouding the spectator's critical faculties, and instead advocated for a radical "separation of the elements" [*Trennung der Elemente*].[76] The aesthetic and critical effects of dissociative acting in Castorf lie somewhere between these two positions. On the one hand, dissociative acting shares Brecht's aim to create an anti-totalitarian theater. The historical constellations represented by Arnst's, Fritsch's, Schmitt's, and Wagner's performances of George, Gründgens, a concentration camp prisoner, and Richard Wagner expose and disavow a theater history that views actors with the same exceptionalism that installs and sustains totalitarian regimes like the Third Reich. On the other hand, the simultaneous emergence of different characters renders them polysemic, if not outright frenzied subjects with interrelated

[75] Max Weber, „Über die Herrschaftssoziologie," *Studienausgabe—Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, I/iii (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 140-147. Friedrich Nietzsche develops a similar critique of Wagner's aesthetics of "redemption" as well as his tyrannical conception of the artist-genius. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner*, in *Kritische Studienausgabe* (*KSA*), eds., Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, vol. 6 (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), 9-55.

[76] "As long as the term *Gesamtkunstwerk* means that the whole lot can be dealt with in one go, in other words as long as art forms are supposed to be 'fused together,' then the individual elements must all be degraded to the same degree, so that each one can only be a cue for the other. The smelting process takes hold of the spectator, who is also melted down and represents a passive (suffering) part of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This sort of magic must of course be contested. Everything that aims to induce hypnosis, or is bound to produce undignified intoxication, or makes people befuddled, must be abandoned." [„Solange ‚Gesamtkunstwerk' bedeutet, daß das Gesamte ein Aufwaschen ist, solange also Künste ‚verschmelzt' werden sollen, müssen die einzelnen Elemente alle gleichermaßen degradiert werden, indem jedes nur Stichwortbringer für das andere sein kann. Der Schmelzprozeß erfaßt den Zuschauer, der ebenfalls eingechmolzen wird und einen passiven (leidenden) Teil des Gesamtkunstwerks darstellt. Solche Magie ist natürlich zu bekämpfen. Alles, was Hypnotisierversuche darstellen soll, unwürdige Räusche erzeugen muß, benebelt, muß aufgegeben werden."] Bertolt Brecht, „Zu ‚Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny,'" *GkA*, vol. 24, 79. For English: Bertolt Brecht, "Notes on the Opera Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny," *Brecht On Theatre*, ed., Marc Silberman and Steve Giles (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 66.

identities that move fluidly in and out of one another without any clear distinctions between them—a stark contrast to Brecht's call for a "separation of the elements."[77]

SLAPSTICK AS RADICAL REBOOT

For individual audience members, the entangled operations of dissociation present a host of potential meanings and interpretative threads. This can make spectators feel insecure about their capacity to make sense of the performances unfolding in front of them. Insofar as dissociative acting shuns opportunities for emotional identification between an actor and a character or between an actor and the audience, it pressures the spectator to make meaning of the actor's at times abstruse activities without providing the necessary set of references to register the production's critique. This of course comes at the risk of "overloading" [*überfordern*] audience members such that the overload of signifiers renders them meaningless.

The mental contraction that dissociative acting performs on its audience does have a counterpart, however. Once the actor's discrete signifying components have been divided across multiple characters, these characters fall away in a moment of affective decompression. This falling away not only eliminates division amongst the actor's signifying parts, it eliminates division between actor and character, and reboots the actor's body to a neutral state. The device used by the actors to perform this radical reboot is slapstick.

[77] Alain Badiou also locates an "identitarian dominance" of Wagner's aesthetics in his subjugation of music to "a *unifying* formal discipline" that collapses the "multi-branched system of possible affects." Writing metaphorically, Badiou calls Wagner's unifying principle a "configuration" in contrast to Adorno's "constellation … a kind of dispersive fragmentation in which the identitarian dominance of form never determines the way the music is either composed or heard. This is a fundamental issue, since Wagner could then be considered as the last great model of music based on configuration, music configuring the system of its immanent multiplicity and never allowing it to be dispersed into the figure of constellation." Alain Badiou, *Five Lessons on Wagner*, trans., Susan Spitzer (London & New York: Verso, 2010), 37.

The deployment of slapstick has important theoretical implications both for the actors' performances as well as for audience reception of those performances in relation to dissociation. Let us start with the former. Not unlike the "reboot" function of a computer, slapstick eradicates the confusion generated by dissociation by offering an ostensibly universal action that activates identification. Charlie Chaplin famously defended silent film against the introduction of sound by insisting on physical comedy's "universal means of expression."[78] In contrast, Don Crafton has theorized slapstick—specifically, the gag—as part of a "lively dialectic" with narrative action that resists integration in a narrative's linear trajectory, and gratifies its audience by means of a momentary, hedonistic disruption.[79] In this way, slapstick's *unification* of the actor's performance into a single subject position is at the same time a *disruption* that stalls the narrative action. Its motion is at once toward and against unity. (N.B. Hübchen's makeup in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* features a toothbrush moustache reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin as well as Adolf Hitler, another instance of dissociation that could not be accommodated within the space of this chapter.)

In *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*, slapstick sheds the signs accumulated by dissociative acting as the audience joins together in a moment of pleasure and consensus at the expense of the actor who must suffer for the joke. For example, in the following scene, Klapproth (Hübchen) attempts to speak to his nephew, when the latter slams the door in his uncle's face, knocking him into a pool of potato salad. In this sequence, the narrative circumstances of the drama become unimportant, as do any questions of the character's subjectivity. Questions of who Klapproth is, or what his motivations are, momentarily disappear

[78] Charlie Chaplin, "Pantomime and Comedy," *The New York Times*, January 25, 1931.
[79] Many thanks to Artemis Willis for this observation. Don Crafton. "Pie and Chase: Gag, Spectacle and Narrative in Slapstick Comedy," *Classic Hollywood Comedy,* ed., Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry Jenkins (London: Routledge, 1995), 113.

as we enjoy the purely physical struggle between the actor's body, gravity, and potato salad. The reader might recall the description of this sequence from the introduction where dramaturg Carl Hegemann uses it as an example of the double figure of actor and character in Castorf's theater. It seems to me, however, that the way this physical sequence throws the body into relief does not represent a motion of splitting from which the actor suddenly emerges as an independent subject, but instead a moment of collapse or suspension of the mimetic signs previously accumulated from dissociation.

Clip 3.9 – "Hübchen Potato Salad"

In addition to the broad legibility of Hübchen's struggle, the slapstick routine also demonstrates his talents as a physical comic. At the end of the routine, the audience breaks into applause, expressly acknowledging the *actor* and their enjoyment of his virtuosic performance.[80] Throughout the production, in fact, slapstick routines are almost always registered by the audience in the form of applause or laughter. For example, in the same scene, actor Sophie Rois shifts from dissociative acting to slapstick. In this clip, Rois (playing both the fictional novelist Josephine Krüger and the historical political writer Rosa Luxemburg) nervously introduces herself to Klapproth (Hübchen): "You know, I've come to Berlin… Well actually, I'm an adventure novelist. And I have really seen a whole lot. I was… I was…."[81] Then she stutters. Words seem to fail her, and before she can regain her composure, her entire body stalls, while her voice carries on meaninglessly, her arms flailing about, and her legs trotting her around Hübchen in a virtuosic physical embodiment of a short-circuiting human being. Similar to

[80] My use of "virtuosic" here is unrelated to Brandl-Risi's. See p. 99, fn. 50.
[81] „Wissen Sie, ich bin nach Berlin gekommen… Also eigentlich bin ich Abenteuerschriftstellerin. Und ich habe wirklich schon eine ganze Menge gesehen. Ich war… Ich war…."

Hübchen, Rois receives a large laugh at the end of the routine, which she concludes with the modest apology, "Please excuse me, I'm a bit nervous."[82]

Clip 3.10 – "Rois Short-Circuit"

Chaplin once wrote that pantomime is the benchmark of "a truly capable actor." Indeed it does exhibit an actor's talent; but it can also put the actor at real physical risk. Here, the actor's exceptional talent can only be recognized by means of his or her actual suffering. In turn, this registers as pleasure for audience members. In *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*, the slapstick sequences too put the actors' talents on display, though not without a hint of (self-reflexive) irony. For example, the temporal proximity of Hübchen and Rois' slapstick routines brings the actors into a kind of competition, with one physical feat following directly upon the next as in circus or vaudeville. When Hübchen gets a laugh, Rois needs one too. In fact, throughout the production, slapstick routines offer a way to gauge the audience's preference for certain actors above others. In this way, they facilitate actorial contests. They stage another kind of *agon*.

These minor actorial contests culminate in a slapstick "duel" between Fritsch and Hübchen that deviates far from the production's genealogical activities. Prior to this scene, Klapproth has begun to fear the residents of Schöller's boarding house for their erratic behavior. This comes to a head in a scene between Klapproth and Bernhardy, which, little by little, devolves into a slapstick competition between two of the Volksbühne's most revered physical comedians, Hübchen and Fritsch. The scene begins with a literal standoff. Fritsch stares at Hübchen, who becomes uncomfortable by Fritsch's unrelenting, suggestive gaze (remember the homosexual insinuations of Fritsch's performance beforehand). Hübchen nervously fidgets, and

[82] „Entschuldigen Sie bitte, ich bin etwas nervös."

tries to sit down, but seems to have forgotten how to properly use a chair. When he finally remembers, the audience bursts into laughter and applause. One for Hübchen.

Despite this small conquest, the standoff is far from over. It carries on in the form of a striptease, whereby Fritsch removes his clothes to Hübchen's—arguably homophobic—dismay. Fritsch holds the audience in the palm of his hand, each minor gesture triggering guffaws. Hübchen, still playing the scene as Klapproth, continues to watch Fritsch, while trying desperately not to let on that he is terrified. His attempts to hide his bare legs from Fritsch's penetrating male gaze produce a second round of audience applause. Hübchen wins again.

Now half naked, Fritsch crosses upstage toward two travel bags, out of which he removes not one, but two adult pythons. Like an erotic dancer, he wraps them around his neck. Amidst the mixed sound of gasps and laughter, the audience applauds. One for Fritsch.

Hübchen slowly sneaks away from Fritsch (and the pythons), escaping off the front of the stage into the audience only to return seconds later through the stage right door. Seeing Fritsch, he disappears again. When he reenters, Hübchen ceases to act scared, and the real competition begins. Fritsch positions the snakes' heads between his legs in a gesture of phallic virility. Hübchen acknowledges the challenge, removing his coat, undoing his tie, and ripping open his shirt. He then takes his suspenders as if they were a snake, dangles them over his shoulder and around his neck, turns them into a lasso, and enacts a number of comic erotic gestures, before waving "goodbye!" to Fritsch, who eventually exits the stage. The audience bursts into applause.

Clip 3.11 – "Slapstick Duel"

These routines can help us to parse out other dialectical qualities of performances in *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle* based on their oscillation between dissociation and slapstick. Dissociation is critical. Slapstick is affirmative. Whereas dissociation facilitates partial

representation of multiple subjects, and resists complete identification (whether between the actor and the character or between the actor and the audience), slapstick stages the actor in a fully embodied action while fostering negative identification between actor and spectator—that is, when the actor feels pain, the spectator feels pleasure. In its resistance to identification, dissociation produces performances that serve toward a critical project of rendering historical constellations and genealogies. Slapstick, in turn, provides a platform for showcasing the actor's talent, and sharpens audience focus on the actor himself for a moment when the complex dissociations are "forgotten" via negative identification.

Slapstick additionally incites the audience to perform. While there are opposing views on whether audience laughter is a positive or a negative force of spectatorial experience, it unquestionably signals an intersubjective exchange.[83] In this way, it makes the spectator mindful of his or her position in an audience, in a collective, in a theater, in the here and the now.

DIT IS' BERLIN! – CONCLUSIONS

„Dit is' Berlin!" means "That's Berlin!" But whereas in standard German [*Hochdeutsch*], the sentence would read "Das ist Berlin!" this iteration is spoken in Berlin dialect. Although Hübchen repeats the line several times throughout *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*, it never actually appears in Laufs and Jacoby's script. Although the line is short, and may seem unremarkable compared to the more technically virtuosic moments in the actors' performances, the line expresses a critique that is not about the history of Germany and German theater, but explicitly about its present. In fact, the line "Dit is' Berlin!" not only ties the

[83] Cf. Sigmund Freud, „Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten," *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 14, (Berlin: S. Fischer, 2001), 383–89.

production to the time and location of its realization, it foreshadows how the Castorf era would eventually wrap up more than twenty years later.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, *Schöller's Boarding House* is at its core a comedy about Berlin. The play premiered in Berlin, its story takes place in Berlin, and its script pokes fun at Berlin. *The Battle* too takes place in Berlin.[84] In Castorf's version, the city's name is mentioned as early as Hübchen's first entrance. Excited by his arrival in the big city, he recites directly from Laufs and Jacoby's script: "There's apparently something's cooking here in Berlin!"[85] Not long thereafter, he cries out in rapture, bursting with excitement over the madness around him: "Dit is' Berlin!" Throughout the production, any time Klapproth sees anything strange, inexplicable, or "crazy," he repeats the line and takes a quick snapshot.

Figure 3.10 Henry Hübchen as Klapproth being chastised for taking a photo
(Photo: PAL Screenshot)

[84] Berlin is the location of final scene in "The Bedsheet or the Immaculate Conception" [„Das Laken oder die Unbefleckte Empfängnis."] This episode from *The Battle* is used as the final scene of Castorf's *Schöller's Boarding House/ The Battle*.
[85] „Hier soll ja was los sein in Berlin!"

On the one hand, the line "Dit is' Berlin!" reminds the audience of the here and now of the production's realization. This resonates with John Rouse's comment (quoted in the foreword) that, "It would be challenge for anyone even to imagine such a theater in [the United States]." Indeed, Castorf's theater—that is, either the Volksbühne or his directorial *oeuvre*—could not have been what was, had it not been located in Berlin. Albeit the specific critique staged by this production takes up issues that extend beyond Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, but the dissociative splitting of its actors always also points back inward to Germany, to Berlin, and to the Volksbühne itself. Heinrich George, Gustaf Gründgens, and Rosa Luxemburg (whose embodiment I am unable to address here) were figureheads *in Berlin*, and represent part of the city's history, just as *Schöller's Boarding House*, *The Battle,* and the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* are also texts about Berlin. The artistic choices made during the creation of this production clearly depended on the fact that the show took place in Berlin.

What's more, the combination of Hübchen's emphatic line reading and his compulsive photographing evokes—and mocks—the international "adventure-seekers" who came in droves to Berlin after the *Wende*.[86] As much as unification marked the start of a new era of economic prosperity and political peace in Berlin, it also set in motion the city's transformation into a cosmopolitan "global city." This change in Berlin's self-understanding is documented in part by the "be Berlin" image campaign spearheaded by Mayor Klaus Wowereit in 2008 and still ongoing today.[87] The "be Berlin" campaign involves a poster series featuring a red rectangular quotation bubble and three lines of text. In every poster, the last line reads either "sei berlin" or

[86] See p. 118, fn. 95.
[87] "On March 11, 2008, the Berlin Senate approved the 'be Berlin' image campaign to promote international investment in the city's economic, scientific, cultural, industrial, athletic, and social sectors." For more see the official "be Berlin" website: Sarah Tietze-Kamya, „be Berlin." Hauptstadt-Marketing, 2008, Berlin Partner für Wirtschaft und Technologie. https://www.berlin-partner.de/hauptstadt-marketing/be-berlin/ (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

"be Berlin." The posters differ from one another in that each depicts a different individual person and two individual adjectives that describe him or her, for example: "be unique. be delicate. be Berlin." Like the "be Berlin" campaign, "Dit is' Berlin!" becomes a hollow catchphrase expressing nothing other than the private fantasy Klapproth projects onto the guests of Schöller's boarding house, people who are in fact sane, but whom he desires to be mad.

Figure 3.11 "be Berlin" poster one

Figure 3.12 "be Berlin" poster two

Eventually, the Volksbühne too became implicated in the city's image campaign to court international investment.[88] In April of 2015 it was leaked that Castorf's tenure as artistic manager of the Volksbühne would end in 2017, and that he was to be succeeded by Chris Dercon, then director of the Tate Modern in London. The appointment of a man with no experience in theater management sparked the ire of theater makers, critics, and some self-proclaimed representatives of the Volksbühne audience, framing the end of the Castorf era as a political battle over Berlin's identity.

[88] John Goetz and Peter Laudenbach, „Die 255 Tage von Chris Dercon: Chronologie eines Desasters," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 2018. https://projekte.sueddeutsche.de/artikel/kultur/intendant-der-volksbuehne-chris-dercons-scheitern-e608226/ (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

Dercon's vision for the "neue volksbühne" consisted of interdisciplinary "performances" devised by international artists to be shown at other Berlin venues beyond the theater at Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz. However, many of those performances had already premiered in other cities before coming to Berlin, meaning that they had no particular relationship to the city itself. This incited public criticism, and a cultural boycott of the theater ensued. In less than eight month's time, the Volksbühne fell into insolvency, and Dercon was fired.

More importantly for this dissertation, preserving full-time positions for actors was not on Dercon's agenda. When his tenure at the Volksbühne began in September 2017, only three of Castorf's actors remained (e.g., Silvia Rieger, Sir Henry, and Sophie Rois), and no new permanent actors were hired. Less than a year later, Sophie Rois took up an offer to join the ensemble at the nearby Deutsches Theater, leaving the Volksbühne now with only two actors.[89] The collapse of the Volksbühne's ensemble played a significant part in the public debates about the theater, inspiring the hashtag #ensembletheater, and a number of articles both journalistic and scholarly on the significance of acting companies to the institution of German public theater more broadly.[90]

Dercon did, however, make an effort to retain some aspects of the Castorf era, for example, the idea of theater as an agonistic site of public debate: "Indeed the source of theater is not in effect. Its source is in the *agon,* in speech and counter-speech, in a dialogue of oppositional standpoints."[91] Yet in stark contrast to those at work in Castorf's theater, Dercon's agonistics represent a means to overcome difference, to resolve tensions, and achieve unity.

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[89] Christine Wahl, „Ich würde gern die Schaubühne übernehmen," *Der Tagesspiegel*, May 6, 2017. https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/berliner-volksbuehne-was-der-abgang-von-sophie-rois-bedeutet/20691922.html (last accessed: Aug. 8, 2018).

[90] See p. 6, fn. 11.

[91] „Doch der Ursprung des Theaters liegt nicht im Effekt. Sein Ursprung liegt im *Agon*, in der Rede und Gegenrede, im Dialog gegensätzlicher Standpunkte." Christopher Dercon and Marietta Piekenbrock.

> The point of reference is no longer a common language of origin (German) or the nation state (Germany), but a variety of languages and a cosmopolitan society. By breaking down boundaries and gestures of exclusion, new mental spaces open up to indirect effects such as sustainability, experience, and solidarity.[92]

The *agon* Dercon proposes aims to decouple the Volksbühne from the German nation, to universalize it, and to foster "solidarity" on the basis of a universal identification—in other words, to reach a "broad audience" [*ein breites Publikum*].[93] This is quite different from the divisive and confrontational *agon* of Castorf's theater.

Perhaps though, Dercon's vision is more proper to Berlin today than Castorf's. In 2018, the city is not just the German capital, it is a "creative capital" as well as a "global city." The crumbling facades of buildings in Prenzlauer Berg have long been renovated and bought up by a cosmopolitan middle class. Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz may have kept its name, but it is now occupied by designer shops, sushi bars, and some of the most expensive real estate in the city. In this gentrified landscape, the OST sign had already begun to look more and more like mere theater, the performance of an *agon* that was. From this perspective, it is only fitting to the historically contingent institutional profile of the Volksbühne that the actors, like the OST sign—which Castorf had removed prior to his departure—have too left the building. Many of these actors today have joined Castorf as a kind of wandering troupe [*Wanderbühne*], traveling across the country, making individual productions for different public theaters. This departure from Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz has dislodged the "Castorf Volksbühne acting style" from its original

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„volksbühne berlin: kollaboration als model," unpublished manuscript. Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz. PDF file, 3.

[92] „Der Bezugspunkt ist nicht mehr eine gemeinsame Herkunftssprache (Deutsch) oder der Nationalstaat (Deutschland), sondern eine Vielfalt an Sprachen und eine kosmopolitische Gesellschaft. Mit dem Abbau von Grenzen und Gesten der Exklusion öffnen sich neue mentale Räume für indirekte Effekte wie Nachhaltigkeit, Erfahrung und Solidarität." *Ibid.*, 4.

[93] Dercon and Piekenbrock. „volksbühne berlin: kollaboration als model," 3 & 4.

context, and released it into the broader German nation, where it now freely circulates from stage to stage.

Figure 3.13 Removal of the OST sign on June 25, 2017
(Photo credit: Immo Bräutigam)

AFTERWORD
MEDIAL REFLECTIONS

When I limped out of *The Idiot* back in 2006, I had just witnessed a production created in 2002, with the complete original cast to boot. Although four years may strike the Anglo-American theatergoer as remarkably long, at the nearby Berliner Ensemble, there is a production still "in rep" that first premiered in 1995, twenty-three years ago.[1] This might give one the impression that Germany's repertory system works like a time machine, but nothing could be farther from the truth; for unlike a Broadway play or even an opera—where actors and singers move in and out of shows like exchangeable parts—it is customary for productions in the German repertory system to transform *with* their actors. For example, Martin Wuttke, who plays the lead role in the Berliner Ensemble production—and who, incidentally, also played "the idiot" in Castorf's adaptation—was 33 years old when he first took up the role. Today, he is 55.

Not one of the productions featured in this study was still being performed in 2006 when I would have first had the chance to see it live. Fortunately, beyond acting and dialectics, Castorf shares another trait with Bertolt Brecht: his preoccupation with self-documentation. To the best of my knowledge, every Castorf production at the Volksbühne has been video-recorded. In fact, one would be hard pressed to find another director as well-documented as Frank Castorf. So instead of simply missing out on these illustrative productions, I was able to watch them on DVDs generously provided to me by the theater.

It should be noted that German dramaturgy departments are often generous with their in-house materials. Many scholars have private copies of productions that they use for their research. For those without private copies, there are two locations where recordings of Castorf's

[1] *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*, Bertolt Brecht, dir. Heiner Müller, Berliner Ensemble, Germany, June 3, 1995.

productions are available: the Theater Archive of the Academy of Arts in Berlin, and the MIME Centrum also in Berlin.

The archive can make for a difficult viewing experience, however. First of all, several of their recordings have not been digitized, and are only available on VHS. Not only does this format make it impossible to toggle quickly through the material, but the materials also deteriorate over time. Most of Castorf's GDR productions are barely discernible at this point, sometimes registering as little more than muffled sounds over a squiggly black void. Secondly, the archives did not previously have wireless internet, meaning that if an actor on video spoke a line that sounded perhaps like Nietzsche, the researcher was forced to transcribe the complete text *by hand*, wait several hours, and only then (and without the recording at hand) avail herself of the internet to find out the source.

Indeed, the ability to watch these performances as digital recordings in the comfort of one's home is a luxury. With the power to pause, fast-forward, and rewind, not to mention to be able to check sources, telephone with interview subjects, or make a sandwich, one enjoys a radically different situation than being either in the archive or at the theater. But is this not a problem? Surely the experience of watching these performances on a screen at home (or even in the archive) is qualitatively different from, say, Georg Kehren watching them whilst seated next to a skinhead.

The viewing conditions this audio-visual technology creates enable us to assume what Hannah Frank has called "a forensic gaze" whereby we can survey the object of our interest like a cadaver, outside of its own time.[2] On the one hand, this makes it possible to break these performances down, and to gain access to their complex procedures. On the other hand, this is

[2] Hannah Frank, "Looking at Cartoons: The Art, Labor, and Technology of American Cel Animation," PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2016, 29.

not necessarily how these performances want to be viewed. Might it not be that the very closeness we gain to the object transforms it into something else? Does viewing these performances outside of the theater constitute a displacement of them from their proper context? Does it divest them of what Walter Benjamin would have called their "ritual function?" [*Ritualfunktion*].[3]

What's more, these recordings confront us with the paradox of theater and intellectual property. Just as this study has questioned to what degree "Castorf's theater" is in fact *Castorf's* theater, the ownership of these video recordings is also ambiguous. In fact, they are not the legal property of any one individual. This poses a particular problem for scholars seeking to make these recordings available to their readers. Whereas production photographs can be published by securing the necessary permissions of either the archive or the photographers themselves, there is no protocol for the distribution of these uncopyrighted audio-visual materials. Were it not for U.S. Fair Use Law, a scholar would need to procure the individual permission of every artist involved in the desired clip. This not only means contacting the actors, (several of whom are now deceased), but also the directors, the designers, and the writers.

Video is not only crucial to Castorf's theater as a means of self-documentation, however. Live video figures as a central hallmark of "the Castorf style." Although there were already precursors to this in his GDR productions,[4] this component of Castorf's aesthetics reached its zenith in the late 1990s beginning with his adaptation of *Demons* [*Dämonen*] in 1998.[5] This

[3] Walter Benjamin, „Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarket," in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. I.2, ed., Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 441.
[4] For example, in Castorf's 1988 production of Ibsen's *Enemy of the People* [*Der Volksfeind*], Stockmann's attic is located off-stage, and the actor (Gerd Preusche) is visible via television live feed. For more on this production see: Detje, *Provokation aus Prinzip*, 130-133; and Wilzopolski, *Theater des Augenblicks*, 129-137.
[5] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Dämonen*, PAL, Frank Castorf, Korleput, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern: ZDF/arte, 2000; Cf. Lenore Blievernicht, *making of Dämonen* (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2000).

production introduced Castorf and Neumann's signature practice of staging entire scenes in enclosed spaces, such that the audience's view is entirely obstructed. What's more, Castorf and his collaborators shot a film version of the production in the West Pomeranian countryside that was distributed independently of the Volksbühne.

It should therefore come as no surprise that video represents one of the more researched aspects of Castorf's theater. Peter M. Boenisch characterizes the alternative view afforded by the added perspective of a screen in terms of a Zizekian "parallax."[6] This suggests fruitful grounds for further investigation of acting in the context of its appearance on screen.[7] A thorough analysis of screen acting in Castorf's theater would also allow for a deeper investigation of Castorf's engagement with the theater of Erwin Piscator, a director known for his theater "spectacles," as well as for his pioneering week in the use of found film in live theater, and for his Marxist political commitments.[8] In this way, the screen would offer yet another standpoint from which we can—and should—also consider Castorfian acting dialectics.

[6] Peter M. Boenisch, "Instance: Frank Castorf and the Berlin Volksbühne, *The Humiliated and the Insulted*," *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, eds., Sarah Bay-Cheng, Chiel Kattenbelt, Andy Lavender, Robin Nelson (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 202-203.
[7] Bettina Brandl-Risi makes the same point in: Brandl-Risi, et al. „Neue Szenen des Virtuosen," 252.
[8] For more on Piscator and film see: Erwin Piscator, *Theater Film Politik: Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed., Ludwig Hoffmann (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1980).

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