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Hanswurst and Herr Ich: Subjection and Abjection in Enlightenment Censorship of the Comic Figure

The well-known 'banishment' of the popular comic figure Hanswurst from the German stage by Gottsched and the Neuber acting troupe in the early eighteenth century is usually read as part of the historical movement from improvised folk theatre to bourgeois literary theatre. In this article Karen Jürs-Munby goes beyond that received wisdom to discuss what kind of acting, what kind of body, and what kind of relationship between stage and audience were censored by banishing Hanswurst. Considering this censorship as part of the larger historical relationship between discourses on acting and the emergence of a modern self in the Enlightenment, she argues that the osmotic body and stage that Hanswurst stood for prevented the aesthetic mirroring relationship sought by eighteenth-century stage reformers in an increasing need for bourgeois self-representation. The Hanswurst banishment can be theorized with reference to Julia Kristeva as an abjection of grotesque acting – a form of acting whose political power to question the autonomous bourgeois subject was to be rediscovered by practitioners in the twentieth century. Karen Jürs-Munby is a lecturer in Theatre Studies at Lancaster University; she has published articles on theories and discourses of acting in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries and recently translated Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre.*

THE HISTORICAL MOMENT I would like to revisit here is the curious and historically notorious 'banishment' of the fool Hanswurst from the German theatre that was publicly staged outside the gates of Leipzig in 1737 by Karoline Friederike Neuber's acting troupe. The Neuber acting troup were collaborating with the professor of logic, metaphysics and poetics Johann Christoph Gottsched, who regarded the theatre as a good vehicle for the dissemination of moral reason because, as he argued, examples 'make a stronger impression into the heart' than logical reasoning.[1] When Gottsched directed his attention to the German theatre of his time, however, he saw a theatre dominated by the 'disorderly' '*Haupt- und Staatsaktionen*' (chief and state actions), which consisted of adaptations of foreign and German baroque dramas, French and Spanish tragicomedies, as well as Italian opera libretti.[2]

Gottsched objected not only to the fact that these plays did not adhere to the unities of time, place, and action, or to probability and the 'imitation of nature'. In his theoretical writings on the theatre, as well as in his moral weeklies, *Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen* and *Der Biedermann*, he criticized most of all the integral role played by the comic figure who under various names – Hanswurst, Harlekin, Pickelhering, *et al.*[3] – disrupted the '*Haupt- und Staatsaktionen*' with his crude jokes and mockery of the aristocratic ideal heroes.

The Neubers for their part were driven in equal measure by their own reforming ideals and by the need to survive the tough competition in a landscape of travelling theatre troupes. Karoline Neuber was not without ulterior motives when she joined Gottsched in the fight against a stage dominated by Harlequin and Hanswurst: her strongest competitor in the struggle for performing privileges was Joseph Ferdinand Müller, a famous Hanswurst performer. The united campaign against the comic fool reached its culmination in the symbolic 'banishment' or expulsion of 1737, which took the form of a

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special prologue written by Karoline Neuber entitled 'The Victory of Reason or the Death of Hanswurst' ('*Der Sieg der Vernunft – oder der Tod des Hans Wurst*').[4]

Despite the fact that actors kept on performing as Hanswurst, Harlekin, Bernadon, and Kasperl throughout the eighteenth century, especially in the southern, predominantly Catholic parts of Germany and most of all in Vienna,[5] and although the playwright and dramaturg Gottholt Ephraim Lessing later ridiculed Neuber's and Gottsched's Hanswurst-banishment as 'the biggest harlequinade of all' ('*die größte Harlekinade*')'[6] this staged banishment has generally been regarded as an emblematic moment in German theatre history for the transition from popular, improvised, so-called '*Stegreiftheater*' to a modern bourgeois literary mode.

This paved the way for further debate about the legitimacy of the comic figure and for further theatre censorship throughout the Enlightenment. In Austria this took the form of a 'Hanswurst Streit' (1747–69) and comprehensive state censorship under the absolutist monarchy of Maria Theresia and Joseph II.[7] However, even though the censorship of Hanswurst performers often focused on their dangerous habit of 'extemporizing', there are indications that it marks an even more profound epistemological break than the shift from improvised to text-based theatre, involving changes in what and how theatre signified.

Anton Stranitzky as Hanswurst. Eighteenth-century etching, Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek (Sammlung Fritz Bruckner).

A Bourgeois Need for Self-Representation

In this article I propose to read the Hanswurst banishment as part of the larger historical relationship between discourses on acting and the emergence of a modern self in the Enlightenment. My main thesis with respect to this relationship is that the so-called 'natural' acting style developed by theatre reformers from around the middle of the eighteenth century is a response to an increasing need for self-representation, which turns the stage into an aesthetic mirror for the bourgeois individual.

This can be approached with the help of Lacanian and post-Lacanian psychoanalytical theories of subject formation. Lacan's theory of the mirror phase is highly pertinent here, as it not only shows how the child at a certain age first constitutes itself as a subject through its (mis-)recognition in the mirror, but also argues that this first identification with an external image or 'imago' sets the self on a track for future secondary identifications in the search of an Ideal-I, that it 'situates the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction.'[8] The subject's (fictional) sense of cohesion and autonomy is given to it by the fact that in the mirror image the body appears in a sculptural perfection, as a 'Gestalt' that contrasts with its own sense of fragmentation.

Julia Kristeva's theoretical contribution is to have argued that the child's identification in the mirror goes hand in hand with – or is actually preceded by – a rejection and repres-

sion of bodily matters and energies that threaten the constitution of an Ideal-I and the sense of a closed-off, separate self: 'Even before being like, "I" am not but do separate, reject, ab-ject. Abjection with a meaning broadened to take in a subjective diachrony, is a precondition of narcissism.'[9]

As I have already discussed elsewhere with respect to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Jacques Lacan can help us theorize the bourgeois desire for self-recognition in the visual *Gestalt* of the tamed and disciplined actor, while Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection can help us explain the censoring reactions to physically transgressive forms of performing and ultimately to the very threat of performance as such.[10] Arguably Lacan and Kristeva both assert that psychic processes of subject formation and abjection are *universal* individual phenomena, but Kristeva does indicate that

> socio-historical considerations can be brought in at a second stage. They will allow us to understand why that demarcating imperative, which is subsequently experienced as abjection, varies according to time and space, even though it is universal.[11]

And elsewhere she acknowledges – as if historically qualifying this universalism – that 'the transition from the baroque man, who had neither interior nor exterior, to the psychological man of the romantics . . . occurred during the eighteenth century'.[12]

Taking this as an invitation to historicize psychological subject formation, the questions I would, therefore, like to ask of the Hanswurst-banishment are: what kind of figure, what kind of acting and along with it what kind of body was symbolically expelled from the stage by expelling Hanswurst? What was at stake in this banishment psychosocially, politically, and aesthetically?

Hanswurst and the Civilizing Process

For good reasons, some commentators have read the banishment of Hanswurst in terms of Norbert Elias's 'civilizing process' and its problem with the carnivalesque plebeian body: for if we compare Hanswurst's main characteristics and typical actions on stage with Gottsched's values and ideals of a virtuous and dutiful human being, the comically stark contrast is that between a vulgar, base, and 'uncivilized' peasant, on the one hand, and a reasoned, restrained, and 'civilized' bourgeois citizen, on the other.

Accordingly, in another prologue play by Karoline Neuber, *Der alte und der neue Geschmack* (1738), the 'old taste' is personified by a peasant (Bauer) while the 'new taste' is a '*junger wohlerzogener Mensch*' ('young, well-mannered man').[13] Thus Hanswurst – in his original conception a '*Sauschneider*' (pig butcher) by profession but in later plays often a peasant-like servant figure – always has an enormous voracity for food and drink, which is already indicated by his name ('Pickelhering' and 'Jean Potage' suggest similar characteristics but are not as gluttonous as Hanswurst). He eats and drinks himself through enormous portions and grotesquely long lists of food and booze and generally has nothing else on his mind. As Müller-Kampel analyzes this '*Freßsack and Säufer*' (glutton and drunkard):

> Whether love intrigues are spun around him, whether battles are being fought and corpses having to be collected, or whether he only has to stand guard or deliver a letter, like will-o'-the wisps images of devouring or carousing are perpetually arising in him.[14]

By contrast, the readers of Gottsched's *Weltweisheit* are admonished to exercise moderation and self-restraint in their diet: 'one has to make oneself the master over one's senses and either break oneself of the habit of such unhealthy things altogether or stop with the foods and beverages when they taste best'[15] – an idea that would never occur to Hanswurst.

Similarly, while Gottsched in his *Weltweisheit* preaches a Protestant work ethic of diligence and moderation in expenditure,[16] Hanswurst has a thoroughly materialistic *Weltanschauung* and is willing do anything for money except work.[17] He is happy to lie, thieve, act as a hired killer, or marry someone rich but old and ugly. Only being a fool is for free, Hanswurst affirms in Stranitzky's *Scipio*,

for everything else he requires money.[18] This includes even his own excrement: 'Money and faeces are the equivalents in which Hanswurst deals,' as Gerhard Scheit notes. 'The jester wants money for everything and he gives for everything his excrement. For borrowed money he offers the usurer "two pounds from my body . . . as soon as I've had a good meal".'[19]

Finally, Hanswurst also exhibits a permanent lust for sexual adventures – his name and the essential prop of a wooden sword also bearing obvious phallic connotations (as the contemporary etching alongside demonstrates in a scarcely veiled manner).

> *Mein Lust besteht in Würst, die groß und völlig seyn;*
> *Wer mir sie nehmen will, der muß sich mit mir schmeissen:*
> *Ich ließ mir eh den Kopf, als meine Würst wegreissen.*
> *Ein jeder Würst-Hanß stimt auch dißfalls mit mir ein.*
>
> [My pleasure consists in sausages that are big and full; whoever wants to take them from me has to fight with me. I'd rather have my head torn off than my sausage. Every Wurst-hans also agrees with me in this.]

A priapic Wursthans. Seventeenth/eighteenth-century etching, Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg.

Being a notorious 'collector of women and sexual dreamer', Hanswurst's pet names for his lovers (he calls them '*Menschern*') reveal, as Müller-Kampel explains:

> his view of sexuality as a mutual use of genitalia, which he in turn reifyingly conflates with the imbibing of food and drink, the use of everyday tools, the operation of war weaponry, or the copulation of animals.

For example: 'my butterbarrel', 'you chosen inkwell of my quill', or 'yonder target at which I have already shot most of my powder'.[20] Many plots thus revolve around Hanswurst chasing women or conversely finding himself being chased by women. Needless to say, such sexual appetite runs counter to Gottsched's view that a virtuous person should regard intercourse solely as a means for procreation and refrain from it otherwise.[21]

Not surprisingly Gottsched at the end of this last section advises the person striving for chastity that he avoid 'places where sensual pleasure is aroused, such as opera theatres and dishonourable comedies, in which romantic escapades, dirty jokes, and fooleries are the best adornment' ('*Er vermeide ferner die Oerter, wo man zur Wollust gereizet wird, als Opernbühnen und unehrbare Komödien, darinnen verliebte Romanstreiche, Zoten, und Narretheidungen der beste Zierrath sind*').[22] Gottsched obviously saw the stage as providing direct models or sensual enticement for the spectator's behaviour – the dilemma being, as we have seen above, that he wanted to use the theatre as a didactic vehicle precisely because it was a medium appealing to the senses. Consequently, censoring and controlling the action or the figures on stage for Gottsched was synonymous with educating and restraining people in the audience.

While Hanswurst apparently gives free reign to his drives, the tenor of Gottsched's

'practical' *Weltweisheit* and by extension of his theatre reforms is the neccessary control of one's affects. As we 'cannot root out the passions altogether', Gottsched says, 'it is therefore enough that we learn to bring them under the obedience of reason' ('*Es ist also genug, daß wir* [*die Leidenschaften] unter den Gehorsam der Vernunft bringen*').[23] '*Vernunft*' here serves the function of the superego – be it as the moral agent for the individual or as the three unities and various other rules for the composition and performance of a play (these 'new' regular plays were often referred to by Gottsched and Neuber as '*vernünftige Stücke*', or 'reasonable plays').

In light of this it makes sense to read the Hanswurst figure as a victim of the 'civilizing process', whose long-term influence in changing social structures towards a higher level of differentiation and integration in modernity, according to Elias, exact the price of people's increasing and differentiating control of affects and the gradual formation of a strong superego.[24] This also seems to be the object of Gottsched's reform of comedy.

In his *Critische Dichtkunst* he constrasts the 'old comedy' of the ancient Greeks, which he describes as belonging to peasant culture – 'comedy', as he points out, meaning 'village song'[25] – with the 'new comedy' of Terence, which was 'regular' and imitated nature without resorting to comic figures such as Hanswurst or Harlekin who have 'no example in nature'.[26] Gottsched summarizes the ideal comedy as follows:

> *Die Comödie ist nichts anders, als eine Nachahmung einer lasterhaften Handlung, die durch ihr lächerliches Wesen den Zuschauer belustigen, aber auch zugleich erbauen kann.* (p. **348**)

> [Comedy is nothing but an imitation of a wicked action, which through its ridiculousness can amuse but at the same time edify the spectator.]

In other words, the spectator should no longer laugh *with* a comic figure but *about* the wicked action of a person, while at the same time applying this laughter to himself. Supporting the formation of a strong superego, his gaze should turn in on itself. This reform demanded an identity of the subject and object of comedy which Hanswurst or Harlequin as generic comic figures could not provide (as I will discuss below).

Unlike Gottsched's reform of comedy, which ultimately left no place for the comic figure, Neuber's reforming ideas at the time of the *Deutsches Vorspiel* still included the Harlekin figure, whom she wanted to convert for didactic purposes.[27] This project, however, would amount to a taming and disciplining of the comic figure, as was indeed witnessed in Neuber's later plays. As Lessing later criticized, the reformers

> *hatten nur das bunte Jäckchen und den Namen abgeschafft, aber den Narren behalten. Die Neuberin selbst spielte eine Menge Stücke, in welchen Harlekin die Hauptperson war. Aber Harlekin hieß bei ihr Hänschen und war ganz weiß anstatt scheckicht gekleidet.*

> [The reformers had only got rid of the colourful jacket and the name, but kept the fool. The Neuberin herself put on many plays in which Harlequin was the main figure. But Harlequin with her was called Little Hans and was dressed all in white instead of speckled colours.]

Even though Lessing here as elsewhere mocks Neuber's and Gottsched's 'banishment' of the comic figure, his own dramaturgy arguably still profited from it. For not only was Hanswurst turned into the harmless diminutive of Hänschen (after he had already been replaced by the more 'civilized', i.e. 'frenchified', Harlekin), but the comic figure itself was also separated out from the main action in the form of *Hanswurstiaden* or Harlequin pantomimes (i.e., plays in which Hanswursts or Harlequins were the main figures). These comic mini-plays were then relegated to the position of pre- or after-play entertainments and merely framed the main 'serious' drama of the evening.

Lessing's *Hamburger Dramaturgie* reflects this new high/low division only in as much as these *Hanswurstiaden* and Harlequin pantomimes, like ballets and other 'side shows', are hardly ever mentioned in his comments on an evening at the theatre.[28] Lessing's and Mylius's own early theatre journalism had actually programmatically brought about such a cultural marginalization of popular theatre by excluding it from critical reflection. Thus they state at the beginning of their *Beyträge zur Historie und Aufnahme des Theaters*

(Contributions to the History and Acceptance of the Theatre, 1750):

Alle diejenigen Schaubühnen werden also außer der Sphäre unsrer Betrachtungen seyn, auf welchen sich nicht anders, als von ohngefähr, ein gutes Schauspiel sehen läßt, auf welchen das Geschrey des Hanswursts und seiner Cameraden die Vernunft und den guten Geschmack übertäubet und die Dummheit entzücket; auf welchen die curieusen, extragalanten Haupt- und Staats- und Heldenactionen das Bürgerrecht noch haben, und kurz, welche Verstand und Sitten verderben.[29]

[All those stages will remain outside the sphere of our considerations on which one can see a good play only by chance, on which the screaming of Hanswurst and his mates drowns out reason and good taste and delights stupidity; on which the curious and extra-gallant chief- and state- and heroic actions still have civil rights, and in short which corrupt mind and morals.]

Hanswurst within a Baroque Episteme

The contrast in Lessing's description between the screaming Hanswurst and the (extra) gallant heroic actions makes us realize that the Hanswurst figure ultimately cannot be viewed in isolation if we want to understand its role in the civilizing process and its shifting epistemes. Rather, we have to backtrack a little and look at the whole constellation of artistocratic hero, opponent, and comic figure within the *Haupt- und Staatsaktionen* (chief and state actions) of seventeenth-century touring companies. As Erika Fischer-Lichte has shown, this constellation and the semiotics of German baroque acting practices, too, could be read within the context of the civilizing process,[30] since they embody new social requirements brought on by the transformation from a warrior class to a courtly nobility at the beginning of the seventeenth century, which Elias summarizes as follows:

Deliberation, calculation over long periods, self-control, precise regulation of one's own affects, and knowledge of people and the whole terrain become essential prerequisites for every social success.[31]

Accordingly, the heroic ego in these baroque plays of labyrinthine intrigue and changing fortune had to prove itself by resisting the onslaught of affects.

Illustration of proper posture in Franciscus Lang's *Dissertatio de Actione Scenica*, Francke Verlag, Bern 1975, p. 29 (reprinted with permission from Narr Francke Attempto Verlag).

The disciplined art of acting which corresponds to this aim is elaborated in instructional texts as late as Franciscus Lang's *Dissertatio de Actione Scenica* (1727). As here illustrated, the actor is taught to assume the basic posture, the so-called '*crux scenica*', in which the feet were placed at a ninety-degree angle, while performing strictly prescribed physical representations of the emotions.[32] By thus controlling his body according to the rules, the hero proves that he is also in control of the affects that storm in on him. His opponent, on the other hand, often a tyrant or a madman,

is characterized by being unable to follow the rules: he runs across the stage, hits his head against the wall so that blood is squirting out, rolls around on

the floor, and thus manifestly proves to the spectator that he is helplessly at the mercy of the affects.[33]

The comic figure – Pickelhering, Hanswurst, or Harlequin – similarly violates all the rules of this highly regimented acting: rather than keeping his body taut and controlled, he bends his knees and upper body, shows his naked behind, and gestures obscenely below the waist. But instead of being determined by affects he is ruled by bodily materialism. Instead of proving himself through changing fortune like the heroic martyr, he adapts to every change, thinking only of his stomach, never about the salvation of his soul.[34]

His reversals and transgressions were not necessarily a threat to aristocratic authority. Within a baroque world view, he was funny not because he 'subverted' the power of the heroes but because he revealed his own peasant ignorance of courtly ideals.[35] Rather, as Fischer-Lichte has argued with reference to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival, within the episteme of baroque theatre the Hanswurst figure had an important compensating function in the civilizing process:

> He oppose[d] the controllable and controlled body of the hero with the grotesque body of carnival, [bringing] the excluded back into the frame of society. In doing so [the comic figure] took on a relieving function for those spectators who were not yet up to the pressures of the civilizing process and the demands of the new behavioural ideals.[36]

What is not entirely convincing about this argument is that early eighteenth-century reformers simply 'thought the compensatory function of the fool to be outmoded and obsolete'.[37] This cannot account for all their motivations, and even less for their fervour in banishing him, which I shall now address.

I take my cue from a Hanswurst prologue published in 1816, which is itself part of a nineteenth-century, counter-Enlightenment nostalgia for the fool and which bemoans the demise of Hanswurst and the fact that he is now mostly known as a puppet-play effigy for children. Commenting on the audience's pleasure which has since supplanted the enjoyment of watching a Hanswurst performance, the Hanswurst prologue says:

> *Doch will ich bey Leib damit nicht meinen,*
> *Daß außer mir keine Lust kann erscheinen:*
> *Sie seh'n auf den Brettern immer nur sich*
> *Und wer ist spaßiger als der Herr Ich?*[38]
>
> [Yet by no means do I want to say here
> That no pleasure but me can appear;
> It is always themselves who on stage they see
> And who could be funnier than Mr Me?]

What follows is a long list of scenes the spectators might see, a kind of parodic index to the now dominant repertoire of bourgeois comedy and sentimental family melodrama.

From Osmotic to Closed Body, Stage, Self

Even though the representation of the bourgeois world and bourgeois heroes in comedy *and* tragedy was still a far cry for Gottsched and Neuber, because tragedy was reserved for aristocratic heroes, I would maintain that they were already carving out a space for the bourgeois subject. Thus Gottsched not only wants tragedy to hold a critical mirror up to aristocratic rulers – to 'teach you, the gods of this earth, that you, too, are humans'[39] – but conversely also paves the way for bourgeois tragedy by asking, 'Can't a noble man and citizen practise on a small scale what princes and heroes have done on a large scale?'[40] Gottsched signalled a move from the virtuous nobleman to the 'noble citizen' by insinuating that the ideals inscribed in baroque tragedy – virtue and gallant self-control – are transferrable to the emerging bourgeoisie.

Hanswurst is an obstacle to this project of 'seeing Herr Ich' on stage not only because of what he represents but also because of what and how he communicates in the theatre. First of all, he is not a suitable object for identification because he is essentially a mask. 'He behaves himself like no human being amongst ourselves behaves himself' was a contemporary objection Lessing cites, and 'it is nonsensical to see the same individual appear in a different play every day'. To which Lessing insightfully responds: 'So he doesn't have to announce who he is. . . . One has to see him not as an individual but rather as a whole genre.'[41]

Lessing himself was quite prepared to tolerate this 'genre' at the fringes, but at the

same time he began to demand of tragedy that it should have heroes 'of the same substance' ('*vom selben Schrot und Korn*') as 'us' – that is, the bourgeois spectators.[42] However, such an aesthetic identification with individual heroes on stage required an aesthetic distance and a mirror 'plane', a 'fourth wall' between stage and auditorium. In other words, I argue that the emerging fourth wall served the same function as the mirror's surface in Lacan's model: without it, the illusion necessary for subject formation through the aesthetics of sympathy (*Mitleidsästhetik*) developed by Lessing could not have worked. Similarly, the actor's corporeality would have to be moulded into an individual, closed-off *Gestalt* the spectator could identify with. The fool, by contrast, represented an 'osmotic' relationship between stage and auditorium; his was a dangerously 'osmotic' body which threatened subject formation and therefore had to be 'abjected'.

What causes abjection, according to Kristeva, is 'what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules'.[43] Stranitzky's Hanswurst and Kurz's Bernardon, as Müller-Kampel has analyzed, represent a

> baroque body without a self – which is in a double sense a 'character-less' and 'unreasonable' body whose parts and functions do not obey their bearer, lead their own lives, and often enough get into conflict with one another.[44]

It is, moreover, associated with the kind of quintessentially 'open' body that Bakhtin has identified as the grotesque body of carnival:

> The distinctive character of this body is its open unfinished nature, its interaction with the world. These traits are most fully and concretely revealed in the act of eating; the body transgresses here its own limits: it swallows, devours, rends the world apart, is enriched and grows at the world's expense.[45]

It is also easy to see that Hanswurst does not adhere to the division between stage and auditorium: dramaturgically he is often positioned at the threshold between specators and performance space, continually destroying any illusion by extemporizing and addressing himself directly to to the audience. His asides frequently break through the reality of the stage action and point to its theatricality: everything to him is play. While this did not constitute a problem within baroque theatre, it did become a problem for an emerging bourgeois audience who wanted to see their world mirrored on stage.

Furthermore, the fool is not only positioned right at the threshold between stage and auditorium but, as a carnivalesque figure, also 'belongs to the borderline between art and life', as Mikhail Bakhtin has stated.[46] In a situation where the theatre is not yet firmly institutionalized but still part of the marketplace, the comic performer is not limited to the one theatrical site and is therefore capable of forming strong associative links with other popular forms of entertainment and popular (pre-modern) beliefs and practices. Without making a distinction between actor and character, Gottsched's moral weekly *Der Biedermann* thus talks of

> a lewd Hans Wurst who travels around from village to village with quacks, jugglers, marionettes, and cheapjacks. Everybody knows that these kind of people seek their sagacity in obscenities and their wit in a more than peasanty lewdness. These people I do not like to defend: rather I detest everything dishonourable and disgraceful they tend to produce.[47]

Related to this is my point about Hanswurst as 'osmotic body' – someone who embodied and was associated with a pre-modern conception of the body.

The Pre-Modern Perception of the Body

My reading here was originally inspired by Barbara Duden's work on body perceptions in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. She states that: 'The society of the seventeenth century did not yet have room for a corporeality that was isolated, "disembedded" from the total network of social relations.'[48] With reference to contemporary descriptions of the plague, Duden notes that a 'constant exchange took place between the inside and the outside, a relation of osmotic exchanges with the elements'.[49] Looking at the narratives of medical patients in the early

eighteenth century, she observes that the body was perceived to be vulnerable to vapours, 'impressions, delusions, and imagined things [as] the prime causes of illness'.[50]

> In this cosmos the skin does not close off the body, the inside, against the outside world. In like manner the body itself is also never closed off.[51]

The bodies of actors and spectators in the theatre were no exception to such permeability. On the contrary, as Joseph Roach explains in a study that links theories of acting to the history of science, seventeenth-century actors and acting have to be understood in terms of the rhetoric of passions derived from Quintilian. Drawing on ancient physiological doctrines such as *pneumatism*, this rhetoric defined the actor's 'impersonations as a mode of inspiration', whereby 'inspiration' was understood literally as a kind of breathing-into-the-body:

> The inspiring forces came literally out of thin air. A vital *pneuma*, imbibed from a universal *aether*, supposedly permeated the blood as spirits, and, radiating outward from the heart and lungs, displayed inward feelings as outward motions. This magical aether was neither fire nor water, air nor earth, but a fifth essence more subtle than any substance. The word *emotion* itself derives from the Latin *emovere* (to move out, to stir up), which assumed the existence of a vital spirit, constantly active and motive, suffused throughout the human frame.[52]

The actor who could call upon such 'inspiration' with his imagination was in a position that was especially privileged and at the same time dangerous :

> The rhetoric of the passions that derived from pneumatism endowed the actor's art with three potencies of an enchanted kind. First, the actor possessed the power to act on his own body. Second, he possessed the power to act on the physical space around him. Finally, he was able to act on the bodies of the spectators who shared that space with him. In short he possessed the power to act.[53]

As Roach points out, this power also made the actor physically dangerous to the audience as well as to himself:

> A seventeenth-century physician, steeped in ageless anxieties of bodily penetration by vapours from below, could not but notice the unsettling resemblance between inspiration and disease.[54]

As a most flexible and trained but at the same time dangerously uncontrollable actor, Hanswurst was bound to abuse this power. His humour, as we have seen, revolved around gluttony and defecation, sexual activity, birth and death, emphasized all orifices, bodily functions and emanations. In this way his imagination might literally have been seen as 'infectious' and dangerous.

Such power of the imagination (the German word *Einbildungskraft* literally means the 'power to imprint') can also be seen in another example from Gottsched's *Biedermann*, this time involving Harlekin. Warning of the dangers of dissimulation at the carnival, a correspondent writes:

> People go to great effort to disfigure themselves through ugly masks and are not satisfied with the face and appearance given to them by nature. . . . Nobody considers that had he been born this way he would live as an unhappy monster to the abhorrence of others. Just recently we had a memorable example, as a mother who frequented the carnival every day gave birth to a child in whose face a mask of flesh had grown and whose body showed red, yellow, and green patches all over: for the mother had mostly attended the carnival in the costume of a Harlequin.[55]

This example effectively condenses several contemporary cultural fears into one phobic image: 1) the fear of maternal imagination, which was believed to have a direct material impact on the appearance of the unborn child;[56] 2) the fear of uncontrolled artistic imagination in the shape of the 'unnatural' fantasy figure Harlequin; and 3) the fear of acting as dissimulation, as embodied in the mask.[57] The fear of maternal imagination especially relates this example to Kristeva's theory of abjection, which she links to the attempt to separate from the maternal body:

> The abject confronts us, . . . within our personal archeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of maternal entity even before ex-isting outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language.[58]

Yet in the eighteenth century, this rejection of an osmotic/merging relation with other

bodies takes the form not so much of a personal as a cultural form of abjection, which took place in several different spheres of society. As Duden has noted with respect to the medicalization of society in the eighteenth century, for example, peasants, the poor and women, who generally held to the traditional (pre-modern) conceptions of the body much longer, came to be considered as having 'offensive bodies' by Enlightenment reformers of medicine:

> In the final analysis, the Enlightenment reformer was not concerned with changing behaviour but with creating a new body. As one country doctor wrote from the provinces, 'It would be necessary, so to speak, to change the nature of the peasant . . . to make him into an absolutely different kind of person.

The creation of a new, 'sealed-off' body was, however, not restricted to only one field, practice, or discipline but has to be viewed in an interdisciplinary manner. Hanswurst and Harlequin play pivotal roles in this respect because they are positioned 'at the border between art and life' and thus cross different spheres.

In conclusion, we can say that Hanswurst's banishment is clearly multiply overdetermined by several, often seemingly disparate discourses: Not only is he, as we have seen, opposed to the 'civilized' bourgeois values Gottsched and the Neubers want to propagate through model behaviour; not only does he not adhere to the rules of reason; and not only is he not a 'natural' individual; but he is also representative of an osmotic body and an osmotic stage. As such he threatens the spectator with dangerous physical energies that do not allow for an aesthetic distance and therefore for the constitution of the subject in the mirror of the stage.

Conclusion: Subjection and Abjection

If the new aesthetic relationship of sympathetic identification between spectator and protagonist in bourgeois tragedy can be theorized in terms of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of subject formation, as I have argued, then the early banishment of Hanswurst, as I hope to have shown, could be theorized in terms of Kristeva's theory of abjection.The abject for Kristeva is defined as whatever is rejected from the subject's (or the culture's) self-definition with a feeling of disgust. It is that which does not allow for a recuperation of the other as an (aesthetic) object: 'The abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to *I*.'[59] Abjection is thus always a function of the superego: 'To each ego its object, to each superego its abject.'[60] In the case of Hanswurst, as we have seen, it was the superego of 'reason' that drove him off the stage. 'Ich' could come about in bourgeois theatre because the censoring '*Herr* Ich' abjected Hanswurst.

The actual historical form which censorship of the comic figure took in the Enlightenment varied historically and geographically from institutional marginalization, critical intervention (Gottsched), or critical silencing (Lessing), to the (attempted) state censorship of plays and even gestures. Thus Joseph von Sonnenfels, the most powerful censor in the Austrian Enlightenment (which was an Enlightenment 'decreed' by the monarchy rather than genuinely motivated by a bourgeois emancipation) demanded in 1770 that the 'concept of extemporizing be given its broadest meaning', including expecially 'gestures through which often an itself innocent speech can become the smuttiest joke'.[61]

In Catholic southern Germany and Austria, as I mentioned earlier, the comic figure with its 'baroque body' is much more resilient than in northern, Protestant areas. This is probably due to a Catholic sensualism that was opposed to a Lutheran and Calvinist rationalism, and favoured the perpetuation of baroque traditions.[62] But here, too, as the recent work of Beatrix Müller-Kampel has systematically analyzed, the comic figure undergoes a gradual taming and civilizing process which amounts to a kind of self-censorship of theatre practitioners.

Stranitzky's Hanswurst thus eventually transforms into Johann La Roche's harmless Kasperl, who represents a 'mere diminutive of the previous Hanswurstian corporeality [*Leiblichkeit*]' and is gradually relegated to

increasingly minor parts.[63] Often the later forms of Hanswurst or Kasperl themselves become civilized into figures of identification, if not for grown-up audiences then at least for children. In order to achieve this, however, anything grotesque, disgusting, horrible, revolting, loud, and transgressive about these figures had to be 'abjected' in the process:

> If the Hanswurst of the eighteenth century had screamed, roared, howled, and bawled, Kasperl now squeaks childishly through the world. The mountains of sausages and meat that he devoured have shrunken to a *Gugelhupf*, and instead of the barrels of beer, wine, and *schnapps* he prefers a glass of milk or lemonade. The streams of sperm, blood, urine, spit, and vomit have long ceased to flow, and anything faecal or sexual he does not even linguistically take in his mouth any more. He does not fight, clobber, betray, insult, curse, and mock any more, but, on the contrary shows children that all this can lead to no good.[64]

'And yet,' as Kristeva says, 'from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master.'[65] Analogously, as would have to be shown in detail since it is beyond the scope of this essay, the grotesque body and grotesque acting would be rediscovered in twentieth-century German and Austrian theatre as a politically powerful tool to dislodge the notion of the autonomous bourgeois subject – Herr Ich – by theatre practitioners ranging from Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Müller to Peter Handke and Elfriede Jelinek.

Notes and References

1. Johann Christoph Gottsched, 'Die Schauspiele und besonders die Tragödien sind aus einer wohlbestellten Republik nicht zu verbannen' (1736), in Gottsched, *Ausgewählte Werke*, Vol. IX, Part 2, ed. P. M. Mitchell (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), p. 492–500, here p. 495.

2. See Manfred Brauneck and Gérard Schneilin, *Theaterlexikon* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1986), p. 395. The term was polemically used by Gottsched to describe the repertoire introduced by professional English troupes. While this repertoire was extremely varied and could be said to have consisted of the dramatic works of the world literature of its time, the plays were mostly reduced to the main plot and often changed to the point of unrecognizability.

3. Helmut Asper has convincingly shown that the different names for the comic figure do not indicate entirely distinct types but rather appear as different generic names – some more prevalent at one time than others – for one and the same type of figure. Thus, roughly, the name Pickelhering is more prevalent in the late-sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when English acting troupes introduced professional theatre into the German-speaking landscape, Hanswurst is the generic term used more often by the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, and the name Harlekin is used increasingly from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards, with the rising popularity of *commedia dell'arte* plays. See Helmut Asper, *Hanswurst* (Emsdetten: Verlag Lechte, 1980), esp. Chapters I and II.

Even though Gottsched, Neuber, and Lessing often use the names interchangeably, contemporary sources do also make distinctions, especially between Hanswurst and Harlekin, based on their different connotations and presumed 'origins'. Thus, Harlekin is considered more sophisticated than Hanswurst, but at the same time is often associated with 'foreignness' and with the 'artificiality' of opera and courtly culture, since the figure arrived in Germany from Italy via France.

4. Compare the list of works by Karoline Neuber in Susanne Kord, *Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen: Deutschsprachige Dramatikerinnen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992), p. 411. Like most of Neuber's dramatic works this '*Vorspiel*' was never printed (for fear of pirating) or has been lost.

5. For an interesting study of the various transmutations of the Hanswurst figure (especially in Vienna) up to its echoes in contemporary Austrian *Volkstheater* by Thomas Bernhard, Elfriede Jelinek, and Werner Schwab see Gerhard Scheit, *Hanswurst und der Staat* (Wien: Franz Deuticke Verlag, 1995).

6. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, 'Literaturbriefe, 17. Brief (16th February 1759)', in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 2 (München: Carl Hanser, 1959), p. 53.

7. See Karl von Görner, *Der Hans Wurst-Streit und Joseph von Sonnenfels* (Wien: Konegen, 1884); and more recently Beatrix Müller-Kampel's discussion in *Hanswurst, Bernadon, Kasperl: Spaßtheater im 18. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2003), especially p. 152–65.

8. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: a Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 2.

9. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 13.

10. Karen Jürs-Munby, 'Of Textual Bodies and Actual Bodies: the Abjection of Performance in Lessing's Dramaturgy', *Theatre Research International*, XXX, No. 1, p. 19–35.

11. Kristeva, p. 68.

12. Julia Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 144.

13. Playbill quoted in Friedr[ich] Joh[ann] von Reden-Esbeck, *Caroline Neuber und ihre Zeitgenossen. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Kultur- und Theatergeschichte* (Leipzig, 1985 (1881), p. 232.

14. Müller-Kampel, p. 94.

15. Johann Christoph Gottsched, 'Von den Pflichten des Menschen gegen sich selbst', in *Erste Gründe der gesammten Weltweisheit*, Praktischer Theil, Gottsched, *Ausgewählte Werke 2*, ed. P. M. Mitchell (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1983), p. 177. Gottsched's *Weltweisheit* was a philosophical handbook and compendium of contemporary knowledge, the 'practical' part of which was

intended as a 'science . . . about the do's and don'ts of people, whereby they can make themselves happy' ['*eine Wissenschaft von den Mitteln der Glückseligkeit oder von dem Thun und Lassen der Menschen, dadurch sie sich glücklich machen können*' (p 71)]. First published in 1732 (theoretical part) and 1734 (practical part) respectively, the *Weltweisheit* saw several new editions during Gottsched's lifetime.

16. Gottsched, 'Von dem Fleiße, der Sparsamkeit und Freygibigkeit,' *Weltweisheit*, p. 369–81 (IV, Hauptstück).

17. See Asper, p. 137–40.

18. Joseph Anton Stranitzky, *Wiener Haupt- und Staatsaktionen*, introduced and ed. Rudolf Payer von Thurn, Bd II (Wien: Verlag des literarischen Vereins in Wien, 1908), p. 142, as cited in Müller-Kampel, p. 122.

19. Scheit, p. 43, my translation. He is quoting Christoph Blümel's *Der Jude von Venetien*, in *Das Schauspiel der Wandertruppen*, ed. Willi Flemming (Leipzig, 1931), p. 254. While, on the one hand, Hanswurst's connection of money and defecation shows archaic traits, Scheit argues that, on the other hand, it also indicates how deeply the money economy has already infiltrated feudal structures.

20. Müller-Kampel.

21. Gottsched, *Weltweisheit*, p. 366.

22. Ibid., p. 368.

23. Ibid., p. 335.

24. Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation: soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, Vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), Einleitung, p. ix–x.

25. Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst*, p. 337.

26. Ibid., p. 357–8.

27. Hannelore Heckmann, 'Theaterkritik as Unterhaltung: die Vorreden und Vorspiele der Neuberin', *Lessing Yearbook*, XVIII, ed. Richard Schade (Detroit, 1986), p. 120.

28. See J. G. Robertson, *Lessing's Dramatic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), p. 42–3.

29. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Christlob Mylius, *Beyträge zur Historie und Aufnahme des Theaters*, St. 1-4 (Stuttgart 1750), 1. St., p. 1–2.

30. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters* (Tübingen; Basel: Francke, 1993), Chapter 1.3, 'Theater im Prozeß der Zivilisation', esp. p. 72–3, 77–9; see also Fischer-Lichte, 'Theatre and the Civilizing Process: an Approach to the History of Acting', in Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie, ed., *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), p. 19–36.

31. Elias, Vol. 2, p. 370 (my translation).

32. See Fransiscus Lang, *Dissertatio de actione scenica* (Munich, 1727).

33. Fischer-Lichte (1993), p. 77 (my translation). For a more extensive semiotic analysis of this baroque code of acting see her earlier *Vom 'künstlichen' zum 'natürlichen' Zeichen: Theater des Barock und der Aufklärung, Semiotik des Theaters*, Vol. 2 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1983).

34. Fischer-Lichte (1983), p. 36–7.

35. Asper, p. 125.

36. Fischer-Lichte, p. 78-9 (my translation).

37. Fischer-Lichte (1993), p. 92.

38. In Aloys Weißenbach, 'Meine Reise zum Kongreß: Wahrheit und Dichtung' (Wien, 1816), as cited by Asper, p. 298–303.

The prologue appears as part of Weißenbach's travel book and report about folk theatre. As Asper argues, the nineteenth-century folk theatre does not prove that Hanswurst 'originated' in peasant theatre and survived there. Rather the *Bauerntheater* is a new tradition which cannot be traced further back than the second half of the eighteenth century (Asper, p. 296). Asper also doubts whether the prologue published by Weißenbach is authentic. This is, however, immaterial to my argument because in either case it provides us with a reflective insight on what was at stake in the banishment of Hanswurst.

39. Gottsched, 'Die Schauspiele und besonders die Tragödien sind aus einer wohlbestellten Republik nicht zu verbannen', *Ausgewählte Werke*, IX/2, p. 497.

40. Ibid., p. 498.

41. Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, 17./18. Stück (30 Juni 1767), p. 405.

42. Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, 75. Stück, p. 651.

43. Ibid., p. 4.

44. Müller-Kampel, p. 182 (my translation).

45. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p. 281, also cited in Müller-Kampel, p. 183.

46. Ibid., p. 7.

47. Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Der Biedermann*, facsimile print of the original print, Leipzig 1727–29, ed. by Wolfgang Martens (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1975), 85. Blatt (20 Dec. 1728), p. 140.

48. Barbara Duden, *The Woman beneath the Skin: a Doctor's Patients in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 11.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., p. 142.

51. Ibid., p. 11–12.

52. Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), p. 26–7.

53. Ibid., p. 27.

54. Ibid., p. 50.

55. *Der Biedermann*, 43. Blatt (23 Feb. 1728), p. 171.

56. See Marie-Helene Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

57. This fear of dissimulation also focuses here on a gender transgression which the masquerade makes possible, so that the monstrous child is probably also implicitly seen as an ironic 'just punishment' for the mother's cross-dressing. As Terry Castle has shown for the English context, the masquerade as a social and literary site is associated with eighteenth-century transvestite subcultures. See Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: the Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Ficton* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

58. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 13.

59. Ibid., p. 1.

60. Ibid., p. 2.

61. Joseph von Sonnenfels, 'Pro Memoria fuer die Richtlinien der künftigen Theatralcensur' (*c.* 1770), as reproduced in Müller-Kampel, p. 227.

62. See Müller-Kampel, p. 177–9.

63. Ibid., p. 187.

64. Ibid., p. 190.

65. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 2.