STARRING JOSEPH K.:

FOUR STAGE ADAPTATIONS OF FRANZ KAFKA'S NOVEL *THE TRIAL*

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Individual Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Programme [Theatre/Germanic Studies])

We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

August 1997

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Individual Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Programme
Department of _____

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date 18 Aug 1997

DE-6 (2/88)

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Abstract

This dissertation takes as its premise the belief that privileging the text of a play as the site of meaning is inadequate, given the social nature of theatre. This privileging is evident in the low critical opinion of dramatic adaptations of prose works: the dramatic text, incomplete by nature, cannot compete with the self-sufficient narrative text which it adapts. Rather, as described in the introductory chapter, the socio-historical context of a production must be investigated to flesh out the meaning of the text. Four theatrical adaptations of Franz Kafka's novel *Der Prozeß* (1925) illustrate a history not only of Kafka reception, but also of society, politics and theatrical practice in Europe and North America.

The first adaptation, *Le Procès* (1947), by Jean-Louis Barrault and André Gide, is interpreted in the second chapter in the context of post-Occupation tensions in France, including a sense of guilt left by collaboration. Against an intellectual backdrop of existentialism and absurdism, *Le Procès* renders Joseph K. as a Jewish victim of unjust authorities.

The third chapter describes actor/playwright Steven Berkoff's antipathy to the middle-class conformism of 1970s Britain, which turns his adaptation, *The Trial* (1973), into a highly personal protest in which K. is destroyed by bourgeois "mediocrity."

Peter Weiss's German adaptation, *Der Prozeß* (1975), treated in the fourth chapter, attempts more sweeping Marxist social criticism, depicting Kafka's world as a historically specific Eastern Europe in the days leading up to the Great War: K. is a bank employee who, by refusing to ally himself with the workers, seals his own fate under exploitative capitalism.

Finally, Sally Clark's Canadian *The Trial of Judith K.* (1989) is described in the fifth chapter as a cross-gender revision of the novel reflecting both a feminist critique of male oppression and the freedom of interpretation of canonical works enabled by North America's relative intellectual isolation from the canon's European roots. K., as a victim of patriarchy, is a woman.

The diversity of these four adaptations pleads for the acceptance of dramatic adaptation as a creative form of interpretation, rather than as an ill-advised misappropriation, of its source.

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Acknowledgements

For assisting me throughout the lengthy process of producing this dissertation, I am indebted to my dissertation supervisor, Prof. Peter Loeffler, and my supervisory committee members, Prof. Eva-Marie Kröller, Prof. Klaus Petersen and Prof. Jerry Wasserman. Their enthusiasm and support have been invaluable.

In addition to my committee members, I am also grateful to other colleagues and friends who supplied research material, assistance and support, including Martina Barth, Prof. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz, Melanie Kolbeins, Lena Larsson, John and Marnie Rice, Ingrid Schutzmann, and Prof. Steven Taubeneck. Particularly helpful was Sally Clark, who not only provided several sources from her personal files, but also graciously made herself available for two personal interviews several years apart. Additional information was also supplied by Jason Sherman, former editor of *what* Magazine.

Important supporting roles were played by the two respective chairs of what has become the Individual Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Programme, Prof. Laurie Ricou and Prof. Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe; and by departmental secretaries Ingrid Ross and Christa Rathje (Germanic Studies) and Leah Postman (Individual Interdisciplinary Studies). Thanks must also go to my external examiners, Prof. Laurence Kitching of Simon Fraser University and Prof. Maurice Yacowar of the University of Calgary.

Funding was provided during my studies at U.B.C. by the university itself, in the form of the Dr. Joyce Hallamore Scholarship, a partial U.B.C. University Graduate Fellowship, and the Tina and Morris Wagner Fellowship; and by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, through a two-year Doctoral Fellowship. Thanks also to my family for financial assistance.

I am also grateful to Joanna Russ, whose witty book *How to Suppress Women's Writing* made me laugh out loud when I came upon the following: "I once asked a young dissertation writer whether her suddenly grayed hair was due to ill-health or personal tragedy; she answered *It was the footnotes*. . ." (137). I can now personally vouch for the truth of this anecdote.

Special thanks are due to my wife, Teresa, for her unfailing love and understanding, particularly while hearing most of this dissertation read aloud.

Introduction

"You can throw Kafka's *Trial* open anywhere you like to prove that it isn't suited to be the basis for a theatrical event." So wrote reviewer Gerd Jäger in 1976 in the journal *Theater heute*, prompted by the Düsseldorf production of Steven Berkoff's Kafka adaptation. According to Jäger, Berkoff and his company would have been wiser had they expended their energy on a work written for the stage, rather than on a "watered-down" version of a novel. This is not owing to the quality of Kafka's prose alone: the novel in general, Jäger writes, is a form whose advantages are different in principle from those of the drama, and are not easily communicated theatrically (34).[1] Jäger's dismissal is so self-assured that it seems to brook no disagreement—though the long history of theatrical adaptations from fiction (to which we will return shortly) is itself a history of disagreement.

Indeed, if Jäger offers no evidence to support his position, it is presumably because he feels it to be self-evident—founded on opinions not original to Jäger, but themselves enjoying a long history and a respectable pedigree. Almost two decades before Jäger, for example, the same position had seemed self-evident to Theodor W. Adorno, whose remarks regarding André Gide's 1947 adaptation of *The Trial* Jäger consciously or unconsciously echoes: "amid the rising tide of illiteracy, [Gide], at least, ought not to have forgotten that for works of art which deserve the name, the medium is not a matter of indifference. Adaptations should be reserved for the culture industry"

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[1] "Zu sehr fällt in Düsseldorf auf, daß gerade ein Theaterstück, also nicht der 'Prozeß', die geeignete Ausgangsbasis für Berkoffs und des Ensembles Arbeit gewesen wäre. Denn dann wäre das theatralische Resultat nicht zu messen an den Vorzügen einer Literaturform, die prinzipiell andere, nicht zu übertragende sind. Man kann Kafkas 'Prozeß' an jeder beliebigen Stelle aufschlagen, um zu beweisen, daß er als Vorlage für eine Theaterveranstaltung nicht taugt."

(Adorno/Weber and Weber, *Prisms* 262-263).[2] For Adorno, there is no drama without freedom, or even the mere striving for freedom: because Kafka's characters are never free, they cannot be transferred to "the tragic stage" (*die tragische Bühne*) without making them ridiculous (Adorno, *Prismen* 270). Furthermore, by ascribing adaptations to the realm of the "culture industry," Adorno implies that they are fraudulent creations, foisted off on the public in lieu of genuine aesthetic pleasure.

Adorno's name is of course far better-known than Jäger's, and carries greater authority. Even the statement quoted immediately above, which is given as a mere footnote in a lengthy essay on Kafka, is itself well-known enough that, a year before Jäger's review, one critic of Peter Weiss's 1975 dramatization of *The Trial* had concisely referred to it as *das Adorno-Gebot*: "Adorno's commandment" (Burkhardt, "Kafka den Prozeß gemacht"). Useful though Adorno has proven for critics of Kafka's adapters, however, they do not mention that a consistent application of Adorno's ideas on drama and freedom would damn a great deal of respected postwar theatre: if drama requires freedom, how does one evaluate the works of Beckett, Ionesco, Handke, Bernhard, or many others?

I have chosen Jäger's words to begin this dissertation, however, because he demonstrates an acceptance of Adorno's attitude—which, as regards the theatre, is a restrictive and conservative one—within the ranks of theatre criticism itself. Jäger, like Adorno, has a clear idea of the properties pertaining respectively to the novel and to the drama, and those properties most advantageous to one medium (for example, presumably, the novel's length, since it must be "reduced"—*reduziert*—for the stage), simply are not transferable. Clearly, it is difficult to dispute his claim that the two media are

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[2] ". . . [Gide] wenigstens hätte nicht im Zuge des fortschreitenden Analphabetismus vergessen dürfen, daß Kunstwerken, die es sind, ihr Medium nicht zufällig ist. Adaptations [*sic*] wären der Kulturindustrie vorzubehalten" (Adorno, *Prismen* 270).

not the same; if they were, such adaptations would be not impossible, but superfluous.

Curiously, however, Jäger undercuts his own conclusion, for his review of Berkoff's *Trial* is not wholly a negative one. On the contrary, he has much praise for the actors' work, for the rhythm and counterpoint of sound and movement, text and choreography. All in all, "the perfection (if also, however, the slickness) of the production knows almost no bounds" (34).[3] What is more, "the experience gained by the cast in their craft will not simply evaporate. When they are faced with more rewarding objects, they and their audience can profit from it" (35).[4]

This conclusion raises some serious questions. If the production of the adaptation is even a qualified success, how can it be said that the adaptation has failed, or that the very activity of adaptation is pointless? If the two forms are so different, is it even possible to compare them on the basis of an abstract standard of "quality"? In other words, must the adaptation, necessarily *different from* the novel, necessarily be *lesser than* the novel? And unless the answer to that question is a resounding "yes," *can* one indeed prove that Kafka's novel (or any other) is not suited for adaptation to the stage? If it simply is *not* in some essential manner—as, for example, Kafka scholar Heinz Politzer has argued, in terms similar to Adorno's and Jäger's (Politzer, *Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox* 300-301)—then why have so many theatrical writers been so obtuse or so foolhardy as to make the attempt?

I propose, in this dissertation, to address these questions by describing four notable dramatic adaptations of Kafka's *Trial*. I say 'address' rather than 'answer' because I can guarantee no definitive

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[3] "Die Perfektion (aber eben auch: die Glätte) der Aufführung zeigt kaum Grenzen."

[4] "Die handwerklichen Erfahrungen, die diese zwölf Schauspieler des Düsseldorfer Ensembles gemacht haben in der Arbeit mit Berkoff, werden sich nicht ohne weiteres verflüchtigen. In der Auseinandersetzung mit lohnenderen Objekten können sie und ihr Publikum davon profitieren."

answers. The purpose of this introduction, preparatory to examining the four adaptations, is fourfold:

a) to outline the theoretical basis from which I intend to perform my analysis—i.e., *what* is relevant to my task, which falls essentially under the heading of dramatic criticism/theatre history;

b) to describe a practical general model for the process of adaptation—*how* novels are transferred to the stage;

c) to provide a brief overview of the relationship between Kafka's work and the theatre—*why* Kafka's works have been so tempting to theatre practitioners; and

d) to provide an extremely brief synopsis of Kafka's novel.

A. A Theory of "Interdynamic Realism"

The most obvious method of dealing with the task at hand might seem to be the following: examining the scripts of the four adaptations I have chosen, I could compare them structurally to Kafka's novel and to each other, possibly coming to some conclusion about which adaptations better convey the meaning of the original. For two reasons, however, I do not propose to take this route.

One reason is that I have no intention of producing a reading of Kafka's *Trial*, be it my own or someone else's, as a yardstick for such a judgement. Kafka scholarship has produced such a wealth of interpretations of the novel, singly and as a part of Kafka's larger body of work, that I could not begin to assimilate them all, to say nothing of choosing among them or competing with them. My interest lies in the adapters' readings of the work, why they may have arrived at such readings, and how they have expressed them to an audience—the analysis of which will involve some structural description, but not as sum total of the project.

The second and perhaps more important reason is the fact that while straightforward

comparative literary analysis can be both valuable and interesting, in the present circumstances I would find it difficult to perform along strictly comparative lines without implicitly subscribing to the opinion I have already criticized above: namely, the opinion that an adaptation is somehow necessarily inferior to its source. The Dutch critic Herman Verhaar, for example, refers to all the subsidiary and adapted literature based on Kafka's works as *gesol-literatuur*: "literary tampering" (Verhaar 963). I will outline my objections to this opinion in some detail in the next section.

In place of the comparative strategy first described, then, I intend to show the four adaptations at hand not above all as texts, but as *theatrical events* taking place in *specific social contexts*. I feel I must devote some little space to the background of my procedure at this point, because in many academic quarters this strategy is regarded as vague and unscientific in comparison to textual analysis.

This textual bias of academic theatre studies is based both in the practical reality that it is easier for the purposes of a course to read a number of playscripts than to stage a series of productions, and in the ideological need to give the impression that theatre studies conform to a positivistic scientific model (see in this regard McConachie 466-474; Nellhaus 505-507). This leads to what Jean Alter has called the "literary fallacy" (amended by Rice and Malone to the "textual fallacy"; Rice and Malone 106-107) in which the meaning of the theatrical event is perceived as being located totally in the text (Alter 114-116). Discouraged or unsettled by the transitory nature of the theatrical production, it is understandable that many critics and historians prefer to deal with the playscript, the ever-accessible basis of the production, as the object of analysis.

The practical aspect of this textual approach—texts always being more readily available than productions—has moreover often been reinforced by a deep stratum of what Jonas Barish has called "the antitheatrical prejudice," in his book of that name (1981). Although Barish provides an

overview of the bias against theatre in Western culture since the Greeks, he singles out such "bardolatrous" Romantic critics as Lamb and Coleridge as examples of a general tendency to elevate the text far above performance, particularly as regards Shakespeare (328-332). Among more recent critics, F. R. Leavis and Yvor Winters are described as moderns who display either indifference or outright antipathy to performance (418-449).

Ten years later, Martin Buzacott, in his *The Death of the Actor*, quite rightly condemns Barish's view of the Romantics' antitheatricality as an oversimplification (5). However, Buzacott himself explains that the real struggle between text and performance is "between [Shakespeare's] characterisation which is imaginative, huge and chaste, and the actor who is physical, small and violently lascivious" (33). This lascivious actor, incidentally, is always represented by the feminine pronoun, not only when Sarah Bernhardt's acting is compared to "wartime atrocities" (34-5), but even when the futility of portraying Hamlet is described as an act of *hubris* worthy of Milton's Satan (28-29). Buzacott's description of Shakespearean performance as "textual mutilation" akin to "circumcision, tattooing [or] cicatrisation" (30), and his comparison of actors to "terrorists," "whores" (27), "sweaty, bare-breasted mulattoes" (59), "Pakistani beggars [and] miserable spastics" (73) pandering to a "fickle and perverted public" (134), substantiate Barish's charges and also raise questions of prejudices far beyond the antitheatrical.

The vehemence of Buzacott's polemic notwithstanding, both the textual bias and the concomitant positivistic stance, while clearly far from dead, have come under increasing criticism in the last two decades. As Michael Hays wrote in 1977:

> The most common practice has been to deal with dramatic literature as a text, a *literary* creation. This approach indicates an unwillingness to deal with the fact that a play, written for and produced in front of an audience, becomes a concrete artistic and social reality which surpasses the limitations imposed on analyses of authors and their works. Dramatic creation is not defined by the contributions of actor or director

> either. *Theater practice is social in nature and involves the participation of all the people present in the theater at the moment the theatrical event takes place.* (Hays 85; latter emphasis added)

Here it must be noted that merely including the audience as part of a communicative equation, as occurs in semiotics, is not sufficient to address the social nature of theatre practice. In the last decades, the rise of semiotic analysis has attempted to bring to theatrical study a new perspective, from which the text is of lesser importance and the production—a complex system of signs, composed of linguistic, sonic, visual and symbolic elements working in continual variations of harmony and counterpoint—comes to the fore. The insights afforded by this change have been valuable, and clearly semiotics have some bearing on the process of adaptation, which is a form of translation across sign-systems; but semiotic analysis, often carried out by scholars with no practical theatre experience, has proven almost useless to theatre practitioners themselves (De Toro 51). After a brief heyday in which all possible theatrical sign-systems were neatly codified and labelled, stagnation seems to have set in. Fernando de Toro, writing in 1992, more than a decade after Hays, could accuse semiotics of having the same blind spot as previous, text-based forms of theatre study:

> In semiotic approaches to theatre, . . . the analysis of the objects is independent of social context precisely because the analysis is based on the linguistic model. This limitation is also evident in semiotics in general. In the case of the theatre, particularly in the case of production (encoding-decoding) and reception (recodification) of the performance, this type of analysis is especially complex. *More than any other art form, theatre has always been intimately linked to a sociocultural context from the moment of production.* (de Toro 49; emphasis added)

De Toro's article, titled "Toward a New Theatrology," calls for an analysis of the drama which will take into account not only the formal elements but also the essential social nature of theatre.

Finally, Tobin Nellhaus has sought a theoretical framework better suited to the realities of the object of analysis, and better able "to develop concepts adequate for analyzing social and cultural

change" (Nellhaus 518). Nellhaus puts forward a theory of realism (based in part on the writings of Roy Bhaskar) which is founded on the following epistemological stands:

> First, . . . realism emphasizes that all knowledge is socially produced, and the mind grasps all perceptions and experiences in theoretically-conditioned ways . . .
>
> Second, . . . realism maintains that most things exist independently of the human mind and that knowledge of the extramental [*sic*] world is possible . . .
>
> Third, . . . realism rejects epistemocentrism. Instead, it maintains that consciousness contains only the "upper level" of a vast number of realities. (518-519)

At this point Nellhaus describes four "domains" of reality, nested one within another like puzzle-boxes: Bhaskar's *empirical* (including "only what we experience"); *actual* (including "all events whether perceived or not"); and *real* (including "the underlying generative (causal) structures and mechanisms that produce events, as well as the events they produce"); to which Nellhaus proposes a fourth, nested within the empirical: "the *ideological*, comprising ideas, values, and beliefs fashioned out of various kinds of experience and interpretations. In other words, *experience only becomes significant through social activity*" (Nellhaus 519; emphasis added).

Given the necessity of acknowledging and explaining social interaction as essential to the theatrical event, it is completely inadequate, for any real understanding of stage adaptation or of any other theatrical event, to examine structurally the text of a playscript as an object in itself. As Nellhaus points out, "Analyzing the phenomenon's internal structures is necessary but not sufficient for realist explanation" (Nellhaus 521).

Bhaskar calls his original philosophy, intended as an attempt to form a new epistemological paradigm for the natural sciences, *transcendental realism* (Bhaskar 25); Nellhaus's addition of the ideological domain serves to adapt Bhaskar's framework for social analysis. In order to differentiate his "realism" from "certain artistic and literary styles" of the same name, Nellhaus calls it *inter-dynamic realism*. Among the visible signs of this interdynamic approach in my project will be the

following:

First, I make no attempt to present the series of theatrical adaptations over time as any sort of evolution of Kafka interpretation towards (or away from) some standard of "fidelity," or some ideal of "modernity" or "postmodernity." Although these works may form a continuum, this is not to be interpreted in a teleological fashion, as does much positivist-oriented historical writing, bound to a Darwinian scientific model and an ideal of inevitable "progress" (see Vince 70-71; Nellhaus 507).

Second, I do not intend to produce from this study any general *laws* of theatrical adaptation, since the realist project (interdynamic or not) is descriptive and not prescriptive in nature (Nellhaus 521). Some qualities likely to be common to *most* theatrical adaptations of novels are outlined in the next section, but the nature of theatrical activity is such that no bounds can be set on the adapter's capability—and right—to use the source text as a jumping-off point for unpredictable variations on a theme (as Sally Clark does in her Kafka adaptation; see also de Toro 49).

Third and finally, I reiterate that my concern is not with the playscripts of the adaptations except insofar as they are evidence of the original theatrical events which they represent (whereas in text-based criticism the theatrical event, if acknowledged at all, is seen primarily as a representation of the text). I am aware that many scholars still see such analysis as doomed from the start, judging the individual theatrical production to be so ephemeral that nothing important can be said about it; but if my project is seen as being as much historical as literary, this objection is untenable even on positivist grounds, since the object of history naturally consists of social events, and the stage production is no more ephemeral than any other social event of which we have textual, graphic and/or physical evidence. In this regard, the large amount of readily available evidence generated by any European or North American public event in the twentieth century easily surpasses

that of many whole eras of past civilizations which are (and should be) seen as viable fields of study.

Of course, even given the available information, describing the complete social and historical context of any one event would be an infinitely complex task; but my approach is grounded in the belief that even the partial sketch possible to a single researcher limited by space, time and personal biases is both of more interest and more use than the most detailed analysis made without regard to social contexts. As de Toro points out, the complete semiotic analysis of only one dramatic text "would take a lifetime" as well, if pursued with a notational system such as that set forth by Keir Elam in his 1980 *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (49).

B. The Adaptation of the Novel to the Stage

After delivering a symposium paper concerning Sally Clark's version of *The Trial*, I was once taken aback when another academic in attendance remarked that he was extremely concerned that people who had gone to see such a production might be less inclined to read "the real thing." This allegation disturbed me on several points. After all, one could just as easily argue that a theatregoer might well be inspired to read the novel after seeing an adaptation; or that some of the audience might only be present because they had already read the novel; or that for the vast majority of people who are not going to read the novel under any circumstances, seeing an adaptation might be their only exposure to the subject. For that matter, what is the "real thing"? Will a translation do, or must it be the original—in this case, German—text?

To broaden the scope of that last question: at what point does an artistic work cease to be a translation (linguistic, generic, cultural, temporal, or any other kind) of its sources and become self-sufficient? Many older adaptations and reworkings are no longer seen as such. For example, no one would reasonably suggest that Aeschylus's tragedies are pale versions of the "real thing" embodied

in the works of Homer and Hesiod or in the corpus of Greek myth; likewise, it would be difficult to argue that Shakespeare's plays obscure our appreciation of Plutarch or Holinshed, among other sources. Certainly we could counter-argue that Shakespeare and many other artists improve on their sources, but is *Julius Caesar* really better than Plutarch's biography? Is *Coriolanus*? Or are they different in a way that makes such comparisons of quality meaningless?

Of course, such older reworkings have become fully assimilated in their own right, even supplanting their sources. Perhaps more importantly, they may be less likely in academic eyes to be seen as theatrical works based on written originals, simply because in an academic context canonical playscripts are more likely to be read and discussed as written objects themselves than as works of theatre; in other words, they have themselves become "real things." Two pivotal moments of this process of reification in the English tradition are well described by Timothy Murray in the first part of his *Theatrical Legitimation* (23-104): the first, when the playscript came into its own *as book* thanks to the self-legitimating activities of Shakespeare's contemporary Ben Jonson; and the second later, when the critic Samuel Johnson used Shakespeare in promoting an essentially antitheatrical "fictional concept of genius" (98).

In sharp contrast to the long tradition of dramatic theory stretching back to Aristotle, there is very little theoretical literature about the adaptation of novels to the stage. This seems natural enough, considering the relatively recent development of the modern novel as a prevalent poetic genre—this is not the place to discuss the problems of the Hellenistic novel in antiquity. However, it must also be remembered that historical texts (such as, for example, Plutarch) have been used as sources of dramatic adaptations since at least the Renaissance; and, considering both the tendency for premodern historians consciously to fictionalize history and biography, and the technique of most early novelists to configure their fictions as spurious histories or (auto)biographies, the actual

process of adaptation has possibly remained much the same since Shakespeare.

At any rate, perhaps because of its early feigned similarity to a historical source, the modern novel was no sooner born than it was reborn on the stage. Richardson's *Pamela* was adapted repeatedly by French dramatists—most notably by Voltaire, under the title *Nanine*, staged by the Comédie-Française in 1749—and Sheridan transformed Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* into a Drury Lane pantomime in 1781 (Hynes 118; McVeagh 137). This activity may have had a lasting effect on both genres: for example, Hynes tentatively attributes both the rise of the sentimental comedy and what he calls the Bakhtinian "novelization" of the drama to the adaptive activities of Voltaire and his contemporaries. Voltaire probably intended no such beneficial side-effects, incidentally, since he was "very hard on novels generally," and "unwilling to make exceptions for even the enormously popular works of Richardson"; the novel seems to have had its revenge on Voltaire, however, for *Nanine* became a favourite at the Comédie between 1760 and 1780, more popular than all but one of Voltaire's own tragedies (Hynes 118-119).

As well-established as the activity of translating novels to the stage may be, then, it apparently has not yet generated enough theoretical writing to make it entirely respectable. By comparison, curiously, the adaptation of novels to film has generated a considerable amount of theoretical consideration, especially in the last two decades. The dearth of corresponding theory on the theatre is puzzling; it may be that the cinema is so young a genre that it is not expected always to generate its own texts. Only recently, at any rate, as the number of such adaptations has apparently increased in the last century (or perhaps because our sensibilities have become increasingly more finely tuned to issues of intellectual property, copyright, translation, adaptation and its near-relative, plagiarism), have theorists turned from the examination of particular adaptations to general statements about the art of adaptation itself.

The following model, outlining the most likely options for an adapter, is itself adapted from a more specific model: Roger Mirza's analysis of a stage version of Gabriel García Márquez's novel *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* (*Nobody Writes to the Colonel*), produced in Montevideo in 1988. Mirza's article serves my purpose because it describes the movement from the original *narrative text* (NT) through the *dramatic text* (DT—the playscript) to the *performance text* (PT—the production as *mise en scène*); I have augmented Mirza's observations particular to *El coronel* with examples from other adaptations, which also serve to give an idea of how common adaptations have been, especially in the last century, and how many notable names are among both the original authors and the theatrical adapters.

1. From Narrative Text to Dramatic Text

In the movement from narrative text to dramatic text, Mirza observes, the "mode of presentation" changes from diegesis to mimesis, the diegetic narrative rewritten as dialogue and stage directions. This phase of the process is no mechanical conversion, but rather:

> fundamentally . . . a rewriting which involves a transcodification, though within the same linguistic system, capable of generating the conditions of a new production of meaning in accordance with the rules of the dramatic genre, i.e., of creating what Fernando de Toro calls 'matrices of representality or theatricality, which make staging possible.'
>
> This rewriting requires in particular "the disappearance of the narrator . . . [and] the reduction of all descriptive and situational aspects to scenic indications, gestural specifications, group and individual blocking, as well as indications of light and sound (musical) effects." (241-2)[5]

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[5] "Porque no se trata simplemente de convertir mecánicamente en estilo directo lo que estaba en estilo indirecto en el relato o de rescatar de las descripciones y situaciones los acotadores necesarios para el texto dramático. Sino fundamentalmente de una reescritura que implicará una transcodificación, aunque siempre dentro de mismo sistema lingüistico, capaz de generar las condiciones de una nueva producción de sentido, de acuerdo a las reglas del género dramático, es decir, de crear lo que Fernando de Toro llama las 'matrices de representatividad o teatralidad, que

This "process of recodification" is thus shaped by the general conventions of theatre which conform to the expectations of the intended audience; however (Mirza claims of *El coronel)*, because the work originates in a narrative source, the conventions of narrative prose, while subsumed by adaptation, remain perceivable at moments as "traces of the previous narrative text." Whether these traces are always apparent in every adaptation, even to a spectator ignorant of the text's origin, is difficult to establish. Some adaptations try to show no sign of their source; many contemporary adapters, however, prefer to "maintain the narrative voice, substituting storytellers for characters," or even staging the action in a progression from left to right, mimicking the act of reading (Miller 433; the problem of the narrator in Kafka will be mentioned in the following section).

At the same time, this recodification is completely subservient to the particular requirements of the final *mise en scène* (or PT) which change with the specific sociopolitical context of the production (Mirza 244).

To these elements Mirza also adds the following:

a) "The concentration of the entire action in a single space which may be described as 'polyfunctional,' and which, in the PT, is [the space of a particular theatre]."[6] Mirza cites the Teatro Circular as a specific example which is explicitly "polyvalent"; this is the common strategy for a non-naturalistic production, in which the usually multiple locations of a novel

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hacen posible la escenificación'. . . . La construcción de esa matriz que tiene como único objetivo en este caso, al texto espectacular, ofrece algunas particularidades la desaparición del narrador, . . . la reducción de todos los aspectos descriptivos y situacionales a algunas indicaciones escénicas, con especificaciones gestuales, kinésicas proxémicas así como la indicación de efectos luminosos y sonoros (musicales)."

[6] "La concentración de toda la acción en un único espacio del que se dice en la actuación que debe ser 'polifuncional' y que será en el TE el del escenario polivalente del Teatro Circular."

may be portrayed most easily by a neutral space. For example, the Taganka Theatre's 1979 production of Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* (adapted by Yuri Liubimov and V. Dyiachin) allowed 20th-century Moscow and first-century Jerusalem to occupy the same space, extending the theme of the novel by "introduc[ing] the audience into an aesthetic universe concerned with permanent verities beyond time" (Rzhevsky 332).

However, naturalistic productions have also been attempted, in which a single location or a small number of locations from the novel are reproduced and all action transposed to these locations or described as off-stage. Thus, for example, Henry James's novella *The Aspern Papers* is set in and around a Venetian palazzo, with a strong thematic opposition between inside and outside; but in Michael Redgraves's 1959 adaptation, the entire action takes place in the palazzo's parlour, which "becomes itself the dynamic locus of the conflict, the only place in which the opposed semantic areas of inside and outside meet. This occurs by means of a continual tension between represented and implied space" (Mochi 39-40).[7] In some circumstances, the locations of the novel may be synthesized into a new location altogether. Orson Welles cannily solved the seemingly insuperable problem of staging Melville's *Moby-Dick* by presenting it as a rehearsal of an adaptation by a turn-of-the-century actors' troupe, allowing him to set the play "naturalistically" in an old theatre, though the play itself, now called *Moby Dick Rehearsed,* was in blank verse and staged in pseudo-Brechtian style (Maack 269).

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[7] "Il testo di James, che pure elegge il salone a luogo di alcune delle scene principali, si articola tutto sulla opposizione Dentro/Fuori; . . . . Nel dramma invece, questa sorta di 'zona franca' che è il salone, diviene esso stesso il luogo dinamico del conflitto, la soglia su cui si scontrano le aree semantiche contrapposte del fuori e del dentro. Ciò avviene mediante una continua tensione tra spazio rappresentato e spazio alluso."

Generally, both naturalistic and non-naturalistic productions tend to reduce the number of locations used by one means or another, chiefly in order to render the story easier to follow by the spectator (though technical and budgetary considerations also come into play, especially, as we have seen, in the case of naturalistic productions).

b) "The concentration of the action on a few central characters."[8] As with locations, novelists have free rein to create as many characters as they deem fit; but as with locations, considerations both of coherence and of budget restrict theatrical companies from following suit. Not only is it more logical aesthetically to reduce the number of minor characters and concentrate on those who are most important to the plot and theme, but it is also uneconomical to hire a large number of actors to play small parts—even if those parts are "doubled," that is, one actor playing two or more roles. Henry Bataille's and Michael Morton's 1903 version of Tolstoi's lengthy novel *Resurrection* reduced the book's named characters by two-thirds and its locations to six, in the process replacing Tolstoi's philosophy with stereotyped Russian local colour (which drew audiences more effectively; Cutshall 33).

c) "The incorporation of characters, scenes and dialogue [from other sources or invented for the production] in order to enhance the action."[9] In *El coronel* another of Márquez's short stories is used for this purpose, but new characters may also be created from scratch or by combining the functions and/or characteristics of figures in the novel who may be deleted completely in the adaptation (though their names may be assigned to the new characters or used to refer to off-stage characters). This is often a by-product of the necessary abridgement

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[8] "La concentración de la acción en pocos personajes centrales."

[9] "La incorporación de personajes, escenas y diálogos tomados de *La mala hora* para enriquecer la acción . . . ."

that occurs in the course of adaptation, but may be done for its own sake, for formal or even for external reasons. Sheridan, adapting *Robinson Crusoe* as a pantomime in 1781, added Pantaloon and Pierot (the English spelling), and in the course of the action transformed Man Friday into Harlequin, who took over the second act to pursue his Colombine (McVeagh 140-147). In this century, *D.E.* (*"Give Us Europe"*), adapted from Ilya Ehrenburg's novel *D.E.: The Destruction of Europe* by Mikhail Podgaetsky *et al.* and staged by Vsevolod Meyerhold in 1924, "added many extraneous characters and plots drawn from popular fiction" to a loose but lengthy revue-like extravaganza whose very looseness allowed constant revision in accordance with "shifting political and social climates"; in its various forms, *D.E.* ran until 1931 (Gordon 52).

d) "The creation of new scenes . . . ."[10] Again, the shortening and concentration of the action may result in the jettisoning of large portions of the original material, necessitating new links between the remaining scenes. These may or may not have their inspiration in the original novel. Jacques Copeau's and Jean Croué's version of Dostoevski's *Brothers Karamazov* takes the fourth of its five acts to "expand events which occupy only a dozen pages in the novel . . . to emphasize the tragic character of [Dmitri's and Grushenka's] situation,"[11] while such well-known episodes as the story of the Grand Inquisitor are lost altogether (Le Marinel 256). In adapting Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby* for George Cukor's 1926 production, Owen Davis concocts a prologue with no counterpart in the novel, in which Gatsby romances Daisy

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[10] "La creación de escenas nuevas . . . ."

[11] "Cet acte développe des événements qui n'occupent dans le roman qu'une quarantaine de pages. L'importance donnée à cet épisode, dans la pièce, peut s'expliquer par l'intention de Copeau de souligner le caractère tragique de la situation de [Dmitri et Grouchenka] . . . ."

in 1917, thus bringing Gatsby on as soon as possible; Davis also extensively simplifies the novel's chronology, combining all of Gatsby's parties into one, for example, and giving Nick, diminished from narrative voice of the novel to a "minor player," scenes of pure exposition in conversation with his "elderly housekeeper, Mrs. Morton"—herself Davis's creation (Morsberger 494-5, 497).

e) "The non-naturalistic use of space, superimposing milieux and locations, together with non-linear temporal development, involving leaps, parallel scenes, flashbacks, and fore-shadowing; and the reduction of fictive time into shorter periods, such as the work's conclusion, which occurs over two days in the novel and which in the DT is wrapped up in the minutes required to read (in the PT, to speak) the final scene."[12] The first part of Mirza's observation again obviously applies most clearly to a non-naturalistic production, such as the Taganka's *Master and Margarita*, mentioned above. It is also true, however, that even supposedly "naturalistic" theatre routinely telescopes and foreshadows events far beyond the possibility of the real world or of the novel, and can juxtapose parallel scenes quite easily by stationing two groups of speakers at opposite ends of a comfortably-appointed drawing room. The reduction of time in general is usually necessary in both naturalistic and non-naturalistic adaptations: the novel's *scope* is relatively easily mimicked, but its actual *length* would be beyond the spectator's patience.

f) "The recontextualization of symbolic and emotional aspects by means of specific stage

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[12] "E1 manejo del espacio en forma no naturalista, superponiendo ambientes y lugares, así como un desarrollo temporal en forma no lineal, con saltos, escenas paralelas, racontos y anticipaciones. Y la reducción del tiempo ficticio a períodos más breves, como el final de la obra que lleva dos días en la novela y que en el TD se resuelve en los minutos que demoran en leerse (pronunciarse en el TE) las frases de la última escena."

directions requiring other codes in the PT to suggest those aspects."[13] Much of the material lost as verbal signs in the course of adaptation can be reintegrated into the PT by indicating the use of technological aids (lighting to suggest time of day or location; sound to represent off-stage activity or internal emotional states), or by indicating that specific thematic weight is to be invested in a particular prop, posture, movement, location or character (Mirza 244-246). Thus in Copeau's and Croué's *Brothers Karamazov*, "while the novel's narrator [in two pages] describes Ivan's mixed feelings toward Smerdiakov, the scenic adaptation manages to express the same feelings [in two lines] with a few indications of movement and gesture: 'Ivan climbs two paces, then, as if involuntarily, turns back toward Smerdiakov, who has been following him with the same smile'" (Le Marinel 257-258).[14]

2. From Dramatic Text to Performance Text

The second phase of the adaptation process is not so easily described in detail. The *mise en scène* itself involves, as its name implies, putting the work composed thus far into a real physical space, breaking the DT (which is still a purely linguistic construct) into the many codes of the PT. This process is determined not just by the adapter or director, but also by "cultural and theatrical conventions," and it involves the "incarnation of characters by (usually) living beings"—actors and/or technicians who are also individually responsible for many of the meaningful decisions made on

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[13] "La recontextualización de aspectos simbólicos y emocionales a través de acotaciones particulares que harán intervenir otros códigos en el TE para sugerir esos aspectos."

[14] "On voit que deux pages sont condensées en quelques lignes: alors que le narrateur, dans le roman, analyse les sentiments contradictoires d'Ivan pour Smerdiakov, l'adaptation scénique réussit à exprimer ces mêmes sentiments grâce à quelques indications de mouvement et de mimique: 'Ivan gravit deux marches, puis, comme involontairement, se retourne vers Smerdiakov qui le suivait avec le même sourire.'"

stage. Because these individuals move and interact in "concrete situations," constantly making interdependent decisions, the PT can change enormously through the rehearsal process and continues to change in smaller ways during the production run (Mirza mentions only changes up to the actual production, but any production of more than one performance undergoes continual change until closing). Many (often I would say: most) of these decisions have no counterpart, and by their nature could have none, either in the DT or in the augmented version of the DT which Fernando de Toro calls the "Virtual Performance Text": that is, the *Regiebuch* or director's book, in which the director, with the stage manager's help, makes additional notations in the course of rehearsals. Thus the *Regiebuch* "does not constitute a 'text' at the same level as the DT or the PT" (Mirza 246-247; in addition, it is usually the DT, and not the *Regiebuch*, which is handed on for subsequent productions, with notable exceptions, such as the Berliner Ensemble).

Obviously, the complexity of the performance text, with its multiplicity of codes and essentially collaborative nature, forces Mirza (and me) to fall back on semiotic generalities if there is no specific text under discussion. Beyond these generalities, then, examples will have to wait for the individual chapters of the body of the dissertation.

Before moving on to the adaptations, however, I will briefly deal with their source.

C. The Theatre and Kafka—Kafka and the Theatre

"Someone must have traduced Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning."[15]

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[15] "Jemand mußte Josef K. verleumdet haben, denn ohne daß er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet" (Kafka 9). Translation by Edwin and Willa Muir; the shortcomings of the Muirs' translation have often been enumerated, but their version remains the one most likely to be recognized by an English speaker.

The novel is called *The Trial*, and these are its opening words, certainly among the most famous in world literature; the beginning of Kafka's story "The Metamorphosis" ("Die Verwandlung") must be as well-known or more so. And no wonder: both openings are striking, both plunge the reader directly into the action, and both are essentially the only exposition the reader is going to get. Once we accept these two statements, however unlikely they may be, as true, the events of their respective stories follow as inevitable—or at least, so Kafka convinces us. For many text-oriented readers and critics, then, these words naturally become more than a token of Kafka's narrative presence: they are the quintessence of the kafkaesque.

The existence of the word *kafkaesque* is itself an indicator of the degree of recognition which is afforded Kafka, or rather, a well-established image of Kafka. The validity of this image is now contested: Milan Kundera, for one, has eloquently argued that Max Brod, Kafka's friend and literary executor, constructed a posthumous Kafka, a saintly, almost messianic religious thinker whose works, letters and life are to be interpreted spiritually and outside of all historical or literary context. This pseudo-Kafka, Kundera argues, and the self-propagating system of exegesis of his image which Kundera condemns as "Kafkology," serve as a "castrating shadow" obscuring the real novelist, Franz Kafka of Prague, and his achievements (Kundera 5). David Zane Mairowitz, in his *Kafka for Beginners*, agrees with Kundera that Kafka's being "widely over-interpreted" has "allowed the pork-butchers of modern culture to turn him into an ADJECTIVE" (emphasis in the original; Mairowitz and Crumb 5), as does George Steiner in his introduction to a recent edition of *The Trial* in English translation (Steiner vii).

Though Kundera and Mairowitz exaggerate their case somewhat for polemic purposes, they do accurately describe the success of Brod and the first generations of Kafka criticism in creating and disseminating a popular image of Kafka as a largely esoteric writer whose works are difficult

and depressing, and can only be decoded by the expert. Befitting the view of Kafka's work as a form of spiritual dispensation, "Kafkology" is both personal—seeing Kafka's novels as allegories, whether religious or "atheistic, psychoanalytic, existentialist, Marxist[,] . . . sociological, political" (Kundera 3); and sectarian—critics from each of these persuasions do not often appreciate the approaches of critics from any other school. Despite this multiplicity of competing interpretations, which Steiner decries as "cancerous" (Steiner vii), the adjective *kafkaesque* has filtered down to general usage, "irrevocably tied to fantasies of doom and gloom, ignoring the intricate Jewish joke that weaves itself through the bulk of Kafka's work" (Mairowitz and Crumb 5).

Theatrical critic Martin Esslin defines the kafkaesque atmosphere thus: "Kafka's novels [describe] the perplexity of man confronted with a soulless, over-mechanized, over-organized world . . . more accurately and more truthfully than any purely naturalistic novel could have done" (Esslin 316-317). And further: "The images of Kafka's own sense of loss of contact with reality, and his feelings of guilt at being unable to regain it . . . have become the supreme expression of the situation of modern man" (345). Modern theatre's interest in portraying this atmosphere is understandable; and since the (some say unnatural) grammatical rigour of Kafka's writing and the minuteness of his description contribute to assemble clear and striking verbal pictures, as Esslin writes, "the directness of his narrative prose, the concrete clarity of its images and its mystery and tension, have proved a constant temptation to adapters who felt that it was ideal material for the stage" (356).

Critics have certainly often agreed with these adapters: Jan Kott, for example, was inspired by the Barrault-Gide version of 1947 to write, "I was immediately struck by its 'theatricality.' I do not mean the theatrical qualities of the stage adaptation, but the intrinsic, natural theatricality of the story's substance" (Kott/Taborski 238). Even Kafka's friend and posthumous editor Max Brod recognized—here apropos of *The Castle*, which Brod himself adapted for the stage in 1953—that

"Kafka's genius as a dramatist appears in the tight and sharply drawn structure of each scene. Every word in the dialogue 'comes off'" (from the programme for the Berlin production of *The Castle*; quoted in Politzer, *Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox* 300-301).[16]

Nonetheless, there have always been severe critics of this strategy, bringing to bear what Kurt Klinger calls "traditional and shopworn reproaches of counterfeiting, banalization, oversimplification, willful manipulation, cheap showmanship, commercialization; with the ultimate goal of denying theatrical art the competence to deal with texts not primarily meant for the theatre" (Klinger 56).[17] Among the foremost of these critics have been Theodor Adorno and Heinz Politzer.

We have already seen Adorno's statement that "for works of art which deserve the name, the medium is not a matter of indifference." Despite his strong words, Adorno was not entirely against adaptation: he himself, as composer/librettist, attempted to adapt Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* as a lyrical drama. Nonetheless, as we have also seen, Adorno found the dramatic form unsuitable for Kafka's works because he believed that "[d]rama is possible only in so far as freedom—even in its painful birth-pangs—is visible; all other action is futile. Kafka's figures are struck by a fly-swatter even before they can make a move; to drag them on to the tragic stage as heroes is to make a mockery of them" (Adorno/Weber and Weber, *Prisms* 262-263).[18] We might note here in passing

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[16] "Die dramatische Genialität Kafkas zeigt sich hier darin, wie knapp und scharf jede Szene aufgebaut ist, wie im Dialog jedes Wort 'sitzt'—vor allem aber in der ganzen Anlage, die den Konflikt zweier Welten aufrollt" (Programmheft, Schloßpark-Theater, Berlin-Steglitz, 22, 1953/54, 13; in Politzer, *Franz Kafka der Künstler* 425-426).

[17] ". . . sehr hergebrachte und abgetragene Vorwürfe der Verfälschung, der Banalisierung, der Rudimentierung, der willkürlichen Manipulation, der Effekthascherei, der Vermarktung, letzten Endes mit dem Ziel, der darstellenden Kunst abzusprechen, mit Texten umzugehen, die nicht primär zum Theatergebrauch bestimmt sind."

[18] "Drama ist nur so weit möglich, wie Freiheit, wäre es auch als sich entringende, vor Augen steht; alle andere Aktion bliebe nichtig. Die Figuren Kafkas sind von einer Fliegenklatsche getroffen, ehe sie nur sich regen; wer sie als Helden auf die tragische Bühne schleppt, verhöhnt sie bloß"

that Adorno refers to the *tragic* stage, as if no other dramatic form were even conceivable; the fact that the adaptations described here often emphasize the comic aspects of Kafka's narrative text also antagonizes critics who consider comedy, in the words of Yvor Winters, "a minor form" (quoted in Barish, 443).

Heinz Politzer attacks Max Brod's adaptation of *The Castle* (and his authorization of André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault's staging of *The Trial*) by numbering it among Brod's "misinterpretations," claiming that Brod thereby contradicts his own assertion that "In the case of Kafka, . . . one simply cannot any longer separate content from structure, so intimately have they united" (Brod 195). In Politzer's view, this sentence alone should have been enough to dissuade Brod from attempting theatrical adaptation:

> If content and structure are inseparable in Kafka's novels and if the structure he chose for them is epical, then this structure cannot be dramatic at the same time. If Kafka's epical language is unique in its transparency, then it will not simultaneously "come off" as dialogue on the stage, since the law of genuine dramatic speech requires first and foremost unequivocal precision. That Brod condoned the dramatization of Kafka's works and actively participated in this enterprise cannot be called a misreading. It is a falsification. (*Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox* 301)[19]

Politzer's attack here, however, is based firmly in an idea of a "law of genuine dramatic speech" which might well reduce to silence many contemporary playwrights—among them, for example, Harold Pinter—and in an obstinate, almost petulant, refusal to grant that adaptation can ever

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(Adorno, *Prismen* 270).

[19] "Wenn in Kafkas Romanen Inhalt und Struktur 'schlechterdings nicht mehr zu scheiden' sind und wenn die Form, die er für seinen Inhalt wählte, episch ist, dann kann sie nicht zur gleichen Zeit dramatisch sein. Wenn Kafkas Sprache 'ins Transzendente weist', dann kann sie nicht zu gleicher Zeit als Bühnendialog 'sitzen', denn auf der Bühne sitzt nur, was im Sinn des Dramatischen eindeutig oder, mit Brods Worten, 'knapp und scharf' ist. Daß Brod die Dramatisierung Kafkascher Werke billigte und aktiv an diesem Unternehmen teilnahm, ist keine Fehldeutung mehr. Es ist eine Entstellung der Gestalt, die Kafka seinem Werk gegeben hatte" (Politzer, *Franz Kafka der Künstler* 426).

be sanctioned, since epic is epic and dramatic is dramatic and never the twain shall meet (incidentally, the German word *Entstellung*, which Politzer uses for "falsification," can also mean "disfigurement" or "perversion of truth"; on the subject of Brod's and Barrault/Gide's theatrical adaptations, Politzer's German text, published three years after the English version, occasionally goes beyond the sharp and somewhat moralizing tone of the English to the point of being vitriolic). Despite such outcries as Politzer's, however, there is really no physical or formal barrier to the adaptation of Kafka's text to the stage; in the balance against such critics as Adorno and Politzer are more than fifty recorded theatrical versions of *The Trial* (Klinger counted "a round half-hundred" up to 1974; 57).

It is true that there are gaps in *The Trial* where chapters remain unfinished; many extant fragments were never incorporated into the novel; and the order of the chapters, except for the obvious beginning and end, has been disputed—as we shall see shortly. Even in this form, however, the novel seems to lack very little. The critical consensus, indeed, is that the plot could be almost infinitely extended, since each episode ends with K. no further ahead than before (Rolleston 70; O'Neill 207). The book's lacunae cease to be a deficiency; it is, in a way, not only unfinished but unfinishable. Yet there is a definite beginning, middle and end: even by classical standards, there is no structural obstacle to theatrical adaptation.

Nor do the play's events of themselves defy theatrical representation. In fact, Evelyn Torton Beck, in her book *Kafka and the Yiddish Theatre*, claims that several major plot elements of *The Trial*—the unexpected arrest, for example—can be traced to Yiddish melodramas (Beck 154-171). As for the inevitable abridgement that takes place when a novel is translated into a play: the middle section is a series of circular episodes, and just as they could be infinitely extended, so also can a few simply be left out without much damage to the plot. Structurally an adapter's dream; practically, an

adapter's nightmare.

Because if the essence of Kafka lies in his words alone, the theatre has a problem: those famous opening words, and all the words that follow them, are inextricably tied to Kafka's narrative presence. This narrative presence, central to fiction, is one of those "advantages" of the novel described by Jäger in his review of Berkoff's *Trial*. As Mirza points out, no such presence exists in the theatre; though its form may be aped by a chorus or interlocutor, we in the audience remain outside that figure, as we are outside all the characters on stage. The prospective adapter for the stage has to decide, at the very beginning of his or her labour, whether or not these words can be dispensed with. As it happens, of the adaptations dealt with in this dissertation, only one (ironically, Berkoff's) retains these words, in the mouth of a chorus; and they are postponed to the end of a lengthy introductory section (Berkoff, *Trial* 13). Sally Clark's version reduces them to the first stage direction: "One Fine Morning" (Clark, *Judith K.* 11), which is of course not *directly* visible to the audience, but must be represented for it.

The critic who equates this narrative presence with the kafkaesque is quite simply unable to grant the validity of theatrical adaptation. The element lost onstage, in this view, is Kafka himself; or at least, the intensive yet problematic subjective viewpoint from which Kafka writes in all his work. In *The Trial*, for example, it seems that we share Joseph K.'s viewpoint almost exclusively. It is virtually impossible to tell when an outside narrator might be speaking (O'Neill 204). Thus Kafka's grammatical clarity is offset by an atmosphere of disorientation, produced primarily through specific syntactic strategies, as Leigh Hafrey explains: "In the narrative, Kafka alternates with no apparent motive between relative clauses and phrases that simply repeat the subject, shifting between hypo- and parataxis in a way that makes it difficult to gauge how close the narrator is to the story and specifically to K., the most plausible candidate for the role of narrator in the text" (Hafrey 45).

Furthermore, Gerhard Schepers, addressing the difficulty of translating Kafka not into theatre but into Japanese, remarks that the existence in Japanese of an enormous number of pronouns and verb forms

> creates almost insoluble problems with regard to the narrative perspective of Kafka's stories. Whereas in his texts it is usually difficult to say clearly to what extent the description reflects the attitude, feelings and thoughts of the protagonist or is an authorial narration (though the former usually prevails), a Japanese translator can normally only express one or the other, and not the combination of both that is so characteristic of many of Kafka's texts. (56)

Whether this combination is—as many critics claim—the deliberate product of Kafka's hard work, or, as Hafrey suggests, symptomatic of hasty writing and careless revision (Hafrey 44-45), the effect is to produce what Roy Pascal calls "the absence of an authoritative voice" (Pascal 29). I would suggest, however, that in this regard, the theatrical adapter may well have the advantage over the hapless Japanese translator, since the theatre has the option of using non-verbal means to convey this very difficulty—if, in theatrical terms, it is a difficulty.

In general, it is often not the absence, but rather the *presence* of a authoritative voice which causes problems for adapters: if authorial, the narrative voice tends to be omniscient, requiring large amounts of exposition to be transformed into improbable or clumsy dialogue; if fictional, the characterization implicit in the ongoing narration can be difficult to reproduce onstage (this is the challenge faced by adaptations of Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, for example [Hutchings 40-41]), or the privilege naturally enjoyed by a book's narrator is diminished to the level of the other characters onstage (as seen above with Nick in Davis's adaptation of *Gatsby*). In fact, the external yet limited narrative sensibility so common in Kafka may be perfectly served by the theatre, where a "privileged point of view cannot exist, other than that of the spectator (determined, obviously, by

the theatrical text in the broad sense), and this is circumscribed by the scenic space" (Mochi 43).[20]

Mochi's comment brings to mind Elisabeth Kiefer's remarks about the detailed observations in Kafka's prose of "gesture, posture, grouping of persons and tableaux," which Kiefer sees anticipated in the meticulous notes Kafka made in his diary of theatrical productions, and which demonstrate his "fine feeling for the tension between spectator- and stage-space." Kiefer goes on to say: "The immense importance of 'watching' in Kafka's texts; his specific manner of writing as one watching, so that the reader as well is placed in the role of spectator; and the numerous figures who are characterized as observers and spectators, could find their explanation in Kafka's interest in the 'theatrical situation'" (266).[21]

The source of Kafka's inspiration has been located entirely in the theatre, especially by Evelyn Torton Beck, who traces his "breakthrough" as a writer to the impetus given him by seeing a troupe of Yiddish actors. Beck, in her study *Kafka and the Yiddish Theatre*, further argues that exposure to theatrical rhetorical strategies and structures marked Kafka's mature work indelibly (8-11); although she concentrates on the inspiration of the Yiddish theatre, Kafka was a theatregoer and a reader of wide interests, who also admired Goethe and Schiller, Strindberg, and Hofmannsthal.

Walter Benjamin asserts that, like Hofmannsthal (and before Hofmannsthal, Calderón), Kafka uses the idea of the *theatrum mundi*; only in Kafka this idea is all-pervasive: "Kafka's world

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[20] "Non può esistere, a teatro, un punto di vista privilegiato, se non quello dello spettatore (determinato, ovviamente, dal testo teatrale in senso lato), ed esso è circoscritto dallo spazio della scena."

[21] "Kafka zeigt ein feines Gespür für die Spannung zwischen Zuschauer- und Bühnenraum. . . . Die immense Wichtigkeit des 'Zuschauens' in Kafkas Texten, sowohl die spezifische Schreibweise als Zuschauender, wodurch auch der Leser in die Zuschauerrolle versetzt wird, als auch die zahlreichen Personen, die im Text als Beobachter und Zuschauer charakterisiert sind, könnte in dem Interesse Kafkas an der 'theatralen Situation' ihre Erklärung finden."

is a world theater. For him, man is on the stage from the very beginning" (Benjamin/Zohn 124). And it is from the very beginnings of theatre that critics have found influences in Kafka's writings. Lewis Leadbeater, for example, sees in Kafka's 'breakthrough' story "The Judgement" ("Das Urteil") traces not of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, as might be expected, but rather of Euripides' *Hippolytus,* and he analyzes the story in the dramatic terms of *hamartia* and *ate* (that is, ordinary "sin" and "sin caused by divinely-sent recklessness"; 28). Meanwhile, the Renaissance Italian *commedia dell'arte* is seen as a powerful influence on modernity in general by Martin Green and John Swan, but they see concrete "commedic" signs, as they call them, in the author Kafka's very physical appearance, as well as in the conclusion of *The Trial*, "one of the most brilliant and moving pieces of commedia fiction we have" (255-257).

In fact, Gerd Jäger's opinion notwithstanding, critics have found *The Trial* to be a hotbed of theatrical elements. The novel is, itself, "Joseph K.'s Theatre" (*Das Theater Josef K.s*; Kurz 178-193): its very structure, with its circular pattern, not only mimics the repetitive nature of theatre but questions the Western idea of "construing narrative fiction on the model of a process of becoming" (Baldo 12); what is in fact repeated within this structure is Joseph K.'s original arrest, which K. constantly "re-enacts" in various ways for different audiences, "like the obsessive fixation of an 'arrested' psychotic" (Brantlinger 35-36); this is because K. consciously chooses, in the novel's first scene, "to act out the role of a man with a position to defend" (Rolleston 73); but, unfortunately for him, in *The Trial,* "as in the classical tragedy, the chorus knows more than the hero. . . . If the accused is blind, the public is clairvoyant" (Ramos 113).[22]

Even the physicality inherent in the novel's actions is seen as theatrical. Mark Anderson, in

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[22] "Como en la tragedia clásica, el coro sabe más que el héroe . . . . Si el acusado es ciego, el público es clarividente."

his book *Kafka's Clothes*, has demonstrated the importance of clothing as a thematic signifier in Kafka's work as a whole—in the theatre, this is of course known as 'costuming'—and also points out, in the chapter on *The Trial,* the influence of contemporary theories of stereotyped criminal physiognomy, totally reliant on externals. Kafka reacts against these theories by creating the equally externalized idea of "the attractiveness of the accused" (145-172). This very attractiveness, Rafael Angel Herra writes, makes Joseph K. "beautiful and ugly"—*bello y feo*—at the same time, which recapitulates the constant alternation in the book between the grotesque and the horrible: "This alternation produces a theatrical effect: in other times, wasn't the public execution perhaps a spectacle? In the text, however, this grotesque theatricality results in dilution on the one hand and, paradoxically, in cruelty on the other" (160).[23]

This physicality is carried through the novel in many ways: Monique Moser-Verrey isolates the body movements of the two figures in the "Before the Law" segment of *The Trial* and demonstrates that the three major steps of this "choreography" (which she designates *exchange of position, negotiation,* and *combination/paralysis*) are also played out through the course of the novel (343-344). Even the hand gestures used by the characters are of thematic importance; Philip Grundlehner has found over a hundred examples in the book to demonstrate that hands "function insidiously to provoke, seduce and deceive Kafka's Josef K. into predicaments where he loses his resolve and must ultimately struggle to maintain his human identity" (187). Grundlehner explicitly designates this use of gesture as "theater in its most elementary of forms, for it is inarticulate and presented mimetically to suggest its universal significance" (192), and proposes that it "enhance[s]

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[23] "Lo grotesco se intercambia con el horror en toda la novela. El acuchillamiento produce un efecto teatral: ¿en otros tiempos la ejecución pública no fue acaso un espectáculo? En el texto, sin embargo, esta teatralidad grotesca logra un resultado de atenuación, por un lado, y paradójicamente de crueldad, por el otro."

the dramatic qualities of the novel as well as form[s] a substructure of language occasionally as polysemous as the story itself" (194).

Concerning the polysemic nature of *The Trial* even as novel, Maria Rosa Franzoi Deldot writes: "The signs of the trial teem and multiply to the sole end of concealing reality or, perhaps, to give the illusion of a reality which does not exist" (59).[24] What clearer definition of the theatre could there be? When *The Trial* is read in this manner, then Gerd Jäger's complaint immediately loses its validity, for to the claim that you "can throw Kafka's *Trial* open anywhere you like to prove that it isn't suited to be the basis for a theatrical event," the most fitting reply is, in the words of Jörg W. Gronius, "The thrown-open book is, as it were, the opened stage" (quoted in Kiefer, 277).[25]

It would seem, then, that the theatre has more than enough technical means to convey Kafka's theme: if the adapter does no more than attempt to reproduce this linguistic polysemy by other sign-systems on the stage, he or she will already have a much clearer plan of attack than the vague mission of capturing Kafka's atmosphere. Indeed, as Elisabeth Kiefer writes, those adaptations "which translate Kafka's radical use of language into a radical theatrical or cinematic experiment are preferable to those which collapse into clichés such as 'kafkaesque' or 'expressionistic'" (261).[26]

What is more, once the theatrical experience is seen as a basis and inspiration for Kafka's work, it can be argued that his subsequent influence on the theatre, and the theatrical adaptation of many of his works, are in a sense a return to origins, even in some cases a triumphant return; Esslin

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[24] "I segni del processo pullulano, si moltiplicano al solo scopo di nascondere la realtá o, forse, per dare l'illusione di una realtá che non esiste."

[25] "Das aufgeschlagene Buch ist gleichsam die geöffnete Szene."

[26] ". . . die Bearbeitungen, die Kafkas radikale Sprachführung in ein radikales Theater- oder Filmexperiment übersetzen, denen vorzuziehen sind, die in Klischees wie 'kafkaesk' oder 'expressionistisch' verfallen."

claims, for example, that André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault's 1947 adaptation of *The Trial* "was the first play that fully represented the Theatre of the Absurd in its mid-twentieth-century form" (356; because Esslin is the originator of the term "Theatre of the Absurd," it is of course possible that, in working out his thesis, he fit his criteria to this particular production, rather than vice versa). From that time to the present, Kafka's general influence has been both evident and acknowledged in the work of playwrights such as Gide, Ionesco, Genet, Pinter and Václav Havel (23; 261; 324).

My limited ambition, however, is to deal only with a specific manifestation of Kafka's influence on the theatre: four adaptations, separated linguistically, united in their common source, Kafka's *Trial*. These adaptations have been chosen according to three main criteria: first, they were written in German, French or English, languages accessible to me in the original—and thus, for example, Jan Grossman's Czech adaptation is not included; second, they are published and generally available to readers—this excludes the intriguingly titled but apparently unpublished Irish adaptation *The Temptation of Mr. O*, by Cyril Cusack; and third, they are the products of acknowledged playwrights and/or directors who also wrote original works and yet *chose* to adapt Kafka's novel, and who may be presumed to have a certain amount of expertise in the practical theatre—adaptations written by professors for school performances (as one American version, *The Scapegoat*) or by theatrical dilettantes would also be rewarding subjects for analysis, but are not represented here.

I will examine, in the following chapters, why and how the adapters I have chosen use Kafka, under the guise of understanding him, to their own ideological and artistic ends. In so doing, they simultaneously mediate Kafka and use him as a medium for their own messages about their contemporary historical, cultural and geographical situations.

D. The Plot, Form and Structure of the Novel

The plot of the novel is in its outline simple: the bank executive Josef K. awakens one morning to find himself arrested, though he has committed no crime. Oddly, the arrest does not prevent K. from carrying on his life. He visits his neighbour Fräulein Bürstner, both to solicit her help and to initiate a relationship with her, but her response is diffident. K. attends his first hearing that Sunday; when it devolves into chaos, K. leaves in disgust. He returns a week later to find that there is no session. In the meantime, K. finds it impossible to contact Fräulein Bürstner again. In a storage room at the bank, K. discovers his warders from the arrest being whipped for going through his clothes. Afraid that his superiors will discover that he is accused, he leaves the warders to their fate. K.'s uncle then takes him to see the lawyer Huld, whose nurse, Leni, seduces K.

K.'s case makes little progress in succeeding months; increasingly preoccupied, he falls behind in his work. At last, one of his clients gives him the name of the court painter, Titorelli. However, at the painter's stuffy loft, K. discovers that acquittal is practically impossible, and deferral of proceedings merely temporary. K. decides to dismiss Huld, and when he does so, the lawyer and Leni humiliate another client, Block, to show K. how most accused are treated.

Arriving at the local cathedral to show an Italian client around, K. is instead interviewed by the priest, who criticizes him for seeking help from women and describes the workings of the law in a lengthy parable (often published separately as "Before the Law"). Finally, a year after his arrest, K. is greeted by two strangers whom he understands to be his executioners. He goes with them to a deserted spot where they lay him down and kill him with a kitchen knife.

The novel unfolds in ten chapters, some of which are further divided into titled sections. The novel's German title, *Der Prozeß*, is a pun: because the word can mean either "trial" or "process," it both draws attention to the fact that K.'s *trial* never actually arrives (compare *Waiting for Godot*),

and describes the *process* of mental and social breakdown which K. endures before resigning himself to his death. The processual aspect of the narrative is reflected in the episodic form of the plot: each chapter leaves K. no further ahead than before, and just as there is no actual trial, so also there is no conventional climax to the action.

This structure constitutes the text which is the object of the adaptations in question here, and which has often been so hotly defended from the encroachment of the theatre. Ironically, however, this text is itself contested as a site of meaning.

Kafka left his novel unfinished and disordered and moved on to other work; only a decade later, after his death, were the notebooks containing his manuscript gathered together and edited into publishable form by Max Brod. The chapters were not composed by Kafka in chronological order, nor did he necessarily finish one before commencing work on another, leaving completed and uncompleted chapters scattered over several notebooks. Brod ordered the finished sections as he thought fit for the first edition of 1925; in later editions he added as an appendix the unfinished chapters and variants of sections from the finished work.

Table 1 shows the structure given by Brod to *The Trial*, as solidified in the third edition (1946), with numbered chapters, titled sections, and unfinished chapters in the appendix. The relative sizes of sections are also given in the form of number of pages per section.

Table 1. The Structure of Kafka's *Trial* as edited by Brod

Chapter	*Section Title (Number of Pages)*
I	The Arrest (18)
	Conversation with Frau Grubach (5)
	Fräulein Bürstner (10)
II	First Interrogation (19)
III	In the Empty Courtroom (7)
	The Student (8)
	The Offices (13)
IV	Fräulein Bürstner's Friend (9)
V	The Whipper (8)
VI	K.'s Uncle (17)
	Leni (6)
VII	Lawyer (18)
	Manufacturer (13)
	Painter (29)
VIII	Block, the Tradesman (20)
	Dismissal of the Lawyer (17)
IX	In the Cathedral (28)*
X	The End (7)
‡	On the Way to Elsa (2)
‡	Journey to His Mother (5)
‡	Prosecuting Counsel (8)
‡	The House (6)
‡	Conflict with the Assistant Manager (7)
‡	A Fragment (1)

‡= *Unfinished Chapter* * = *Contains the Parable "Before the Law"*

The structure of the novel as laid out in Brod's edition can easily be represented by substituting letters of the alphabet for the chapters and fragments. Here, for example, upper-case letters represent the finished chapters and lower-case letters represent the fragments as arranged in Brod's appendix: *A / B / C / D / E / F / G / H / I / J / k / l / m / n / o / p.*

Considering the tendency of adapters to rearrange the sequence of events when moving from narrative text to dramatic text, it is important to draw attention to the fact that Brod's arrangement of the chapters has become increasingly controversial. As early as 1957, Dutch scholar Hermann Uyttersprot drew attention to the fact that in Brod's edition, the seasons of the year occur in the wrong order. Brod's counterargument was that in his novel, Kafka simply had no interest in the natural progression of seasons. Other critics took Brod's part with variations of this argument (see for example Gunvaldsen); but the controversy was not stilled, and Uyttersprot's suggestions for re-ordering the chapters have been taken up and elaborated by successors.

Most recently, Christian Eschweiler has put forward a division of the novel into nineteen chapters, integrating not only the fragments in Brod's appendix but also the separately published story "A Dream" ("Ein Traum"; long recognized as part of *The Trial* but never integrated into it, and represented here by an asterisk) as follows: *A*1 / *m* / *A*2 / *D* / *B* / *C* / *E* / *k* / *F* / *p* / *o* / *I* / *G*1 / *G*2 / *H* / *n* / *l* / * / *J.* Eschweiler's interpretation of the novel depends, of course, on the presumption that all the surviving chapters and fragments would have been used in Kafka's final version—as debatable a presumption as the claim that Kafka took no interest in the seasons. Eschweiler's ordering, however, has been considered viable enough that at least one introduction to the primary and secondary literature concerning Kafka recommends it as an improvement on Brod's edition (Dietz 92). The preparation of a full critical edition of *The Trial* by Malcolm Pasley was expected, if not to confirm Eschweiler's hypothesis, at least to place Brod's edition in serious question (88-89).

Pasley himself had made statements anticipating radical changes in the chapter order (Eschweiler 15-16); but when the edition appeared in 1990, to the surprise and disappointment of Eschweiler and others, it reproduced Brod's order in every detail except one, declaring the previously uncontroversial fourth chapter, "Fräulein Bürstner's Friend," unfinished and relegating it to the appendix with the other fragments. By contrast, the eighth chapter, "Block, the Tradesman/Dismissal of the Lawyer," has always been recognized as unfinished, but has never been removed from the body of the narrative; Pasley regards it as "almost finished," and admits that the fourth chapter might not be far from complete, which is evidently not enough to justify its retention (Pasley 125).

Disappointment with Pasley's edition ran high enough that a rival edition, reproducing the original manuscript as left by Kafka, has been launched by K. D. Wolff and Stroemfeld Verlag (Whitney 24). The question therefore remains very much open whether the most widely disseminated version of *The Trial* conforms to Kafka's vision of the text, or whether it has been corrupted—perhaps irretrievably—by Brod and his successors.

This controversy has had virtually no effect on a general readership, especially the wide audience who can read Kafka only in translation. In 1992, for example, two years after Pasley's edition, the Schocken republication of the Muirs' English translation from Brod's original still proudly bears the subtitle "The Definitive Edition"—despite its own introduction, in which George Steiner acknowledges that the ordering of chapters is disputed, dismisses Brod's recension as "amateurish and . . . arbitrary" and proclaims "Muir's reading and the translation which it underwrites . . . distinctly his" (thereby also neatly effacing Willa Muir's contribution; xii). The competing translation, by Douglas Scott and Chris Waller (Picador, 1977), makes up for not being "Definitive" by announcing on its back cover that it "adheres with scrupulous fidelity to the tone and the style of the original German." As for the chapters, the introduction by J. P. Stern proclaims off-handedly

that although disputed, "the order hardly matters" (11).

The fact that these disputes have taken place mainly in the rarified reaches of Germanic literary scholarship, and are otherwise relegated to cursory mention at most, does not lessen the irony of their implications for critical approaches which seek to defend Kafka's text from theatrical adaptation on the grounds of a sacrosanct original text. None of the adaptations presented here, incidentally, offers as radical a redistribution of the events, or as thorough an integration of the unfinished material, as Eschweiler's proposal—although two of the adaptations (Gide/Barrault and Berkoff) relocate the scene of K.'s hearing, and Weiss integrates some of the "Prosecuting Attorney" material, placing it exactly where Eschweiler suggests.

Finally, two brief comments about nomenclature and translation: in the original German, Kafka's novel has been known since 1925 as *Der Prozeß*; however, Pasley's research and revision has reinstated Kafka's antiquated spelling of the word as *Proceß*, and this spelling is now becoming popular in the secondary literature. I have referred to the novel by its English title, *The Trial*, in this introduction. However, I want to minimize the confusion that would result from continually referring to Kafka's *Trial*, Gide's and Barrault's *Trial*, Weiss's *Trial*, and so on. Therefore, in the succeeding pages each work will be referred to by the title it bears in its original language; the characters' names will also vary slightly accordingly. The André Gide/Jean-Louis Barrault adaptation of 1947 will be *Le Procès*. Steven Berkoff's adaptation is *The Trial* (1970). Peter Weiss's versions are called *Der Prozeß* (1975) and *Der neue Prozeß* (1982). Sally Clark's versions are respectively *Trial* (with no article; 1985) and *The Trial of Judith K.* (1989)—easily abbreviated to *Judith K.* Kafka's original novel will consistently be *Der Proceß*, in order to prevent confusion with Weiss's adaptation, *Der Prozeß*—although my references are not to Pasley's recent edition, since the adapters under discussion had no access to it. Unless otherwise specified, all references to "Kafka"

refer to Max Brod's 1946 third edition: this is the first edition which includes the added apparatus of unfinished chapters, textual variants and editors' afterwords which were mined by adapters after Barrault and Gide.

In this introduction, the original texts for all translated citations have been provided as footnotes, because much of the material has been unfamiliar to English readers but important to my theoretical position. In subsequent chapters, however, footnoted original text will only be provided for my translations of citations from works not available in English, or when an available published translation is imprecise or at variance with the original. Available English translations are cited as "Author/Translator" (for example, "Barrault/Griffin"); my translations of texts unavailable in English are cited as "Author/PM."

Paris, 1947: *Le Procès*

The adaptation of *Der Proceß* by Jean-Louis Barrault and André Gide is the first recorded stage adaptation of Kafka's novel. While in a social context it both fed off and spoke to experiences which seemed to many people to have been foretold by Kafka himself, in terms of theatre history it is considered a major influence on what became known as the Theatre of the Absurd. It is also the product of not one, but two major talents, one a prominent *littérateur*, the other a great theatrical figure.

As a result, the Barrault-Gide adaptation has attracted a great deal of critical attention, increased by the relatively long time period since *Le Procès* was produced. I attempt here to synthesize this huge amount of documentation into a coherent interpretation of several aspects of the production in its social and historical context, in the process often taking issue with the conclusions of previous critics.

The Origins of the Collaboration

André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault apparently made each other's acquaintance in 1934 (Claude 486). In 1938 Gide submitted to Barrault a play called *Robert, ou l'intérêt général* (*Robert, or the General Interest*), written four years before to be staged by Louis Jouvet. It was Gide's first full-length play not based on mythical or biblical sources—his most prolific period as a playwright had fallen long before, between 1897 and 1900—and Jouvet had found *Robert* an unfortunate mixture of two plays, one well-written in the grand style, the other socially conscious and botched (167-174). Barrault had just enjoyed success with a stage adaptation of Cervantes's *Numantia*, the second of Barrault's adaptations of novels; he had made his name in 1935 with the first, *Autour d'une mère*,

based on Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (Brown 405; Barrault/Griffin 71). Barrault also rejected Gide's play, telling him forthrightly that it was "pretty weak, not worthy of him. . . . His answer was a phrase which has been a lesson to me: 'You may be right: *I have spread my net too low*'" (Barrault/Griffin 172; Barrault's emphasis). While Jouvet's rejection of *Robert* seems to have soured his friendship with Gide (Claude 485), Barrault's had the opposite effect: the two men were drawn to each other, Gide impressed by Barrault's youth and honesty, and Barrault struck by Gide's modesty despite his stature (Barrault/Griffin 172-173). This awkward beginning eventually led to the adaptation of Kafka's *Proceß*.

Although Gide had read *Der Proceß*, and been impressed by it, in 1934 (Claude 214), the idea of adapting the novel for the stage first occurred to Barrault, who recalls that in 1939, he and André Masson had agreed that if war came, "everything would be bound to change, and that in any case, whatever the camps might be, we would be recognized by none of them. Neither by the right nor by the left: on all sides we would be considered as felons and outlaws. It was with that future in view that I penetrated into the world of Kafka" (Barrault/Griffin 102).

Only a year later, however, Barrault—now a *pensionnaire* (associate member) at the Comédie-Française—realized that "there was no question now of going on working at Kafka's *The Trial*" (116). France was occupied, and the German Propaganda Office was "purifying" French publishers in accordance with the Nazi German model. In September 1940, one day after French Jews were ordered to carry identity cards, the first "Otto list" was published, banning 842 Jewish and "anti-German" authors and more than 2,000 titles. A blanket ban was also imposed on all Jewish authors, excluding scientific works, but including biographies of Jews by "Aryan" writers (Scheler 280-307). Kafka and his works were thus proscribed.

This "purification" escalated, and in January of 1941, Barrault saw the number of his

colleagues diminished: the Jews at the Comédie were summarily expelled, and other *sociétaires* (full members) left in sympathy. Members of ambiguous background, like the Rumanian Marie Ventura, had to defend themselves (Ventura did so by pointing to her homeland's proud tradition of "virulent anti-Semitism"; Brown 424-425). Just over a year later, the first train from Paris to Auschwitz—bearing mostly Eastern European Jews without French citizenship—left on 27 March 1942 (Adler 3-14; Pryce-Jones 136).

It was also in the spring of 1942 that Barrault and his wife Madeleine Renaud met up with Gide in Marseille. When Paris was declared an open city Gide, like many others, had fled to the unoccupied zone, where, in May of 1940, he records reading *Der Proceß* again:

> I reread Kafka's *Trial* with even greater admiration, if possible, than when I discovered this famous book. . . . His book defies all rational explanation; the realism of his images ceaselessly overlaps the imaginary, and I could not say which I admire more: the "naturalistic" transcription of a fantastic universe which, however, the minute exactitude of the images renders real to our eyes, or the sure audacity of the swerves into the strange. There is much to learn here.
>
> The anguish which this book breathes is at times almost intolerable, so that one ceaselessly tells oneself: this hounded being, it is I (Gide/PM, *Journal 1939-1949*, 50-51).[27]

Gide might well have felt hounded: as a former communist (his brief period of activism had inspired the ill-fated *Robert*) and an admitted homosexual, he could expect no kind treatment from either the German occupiers or from many of his countrymen, who were already blaming the loss of the war on a general debilitation of the nation caused in part "by reading too much Gide and

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[27] "Je relis *Le Procès* de Kafka avec une admiration plus vive encore, s'il se peut, que lorsque je découvris ce livre prestigieux. . . . Son livre échappe à toute explication rationnelle; le réalisme de ses peintures empiète sans cesse sur l'imaginaire, et je ne saurais dire ce que j' y admire le plus: la notation 'naturaliste' d'un univers fantastique mais que la minutieuse exactitude des peintures sait rendre réel à nos yeux, ou la sûre audace des embardées vers l'étrange. Il y a là beaucoup à apprendre.

"L'angoisse que ce livre respire est, par moments, presque intolérable, car comment ne pas se dire sans cesse: cet être traqué, c'est moi."

Proust" (Perrault and Azema 15; Ragache and Ragache 235). The openly expressed homophobia of the Nazis and the collaborators was a strong reminder of Gide's vulnerability. The unoccupied zone was no more convivial, and when Barrault and Renaud met him in Marseille, Gide was dealing with the Vichy bureaucracy, getting the necessary visas to leave for Tunisia.

At this meeting, Barrault apparently proposed not only that Gide help him adapt Kafka, but also that Gide complete a translation of *Hamlet* he had started twenty years before. The mere presence of Barrault and Renaud encouraged Gide, who was willing to start on *Hamlet* almost immediately. By 5 May, however, when he left Marseille, the endless paperwork had returned Gide's thoughts to Kafka: "All of this very Kafka. Without letup, I dream of *The Trial*. Feeling of not yet being 'in order.' If it took this many formalities to die . . . That would make an admirable story. 'You can't go *like that* . . .'" (Gide/PM, *Journal 1939-1949* 116).[28]

Hamlet was nonetheless the first order of business: Gide finished his translation on 1 September 1942 (130). In the meantime, the second "Otto List" of July 1942 had proscribed his books on the Soviet Union, for obvious reasons (Loiseaux 70). Under these circumstances, Gide felt safer in Tunis, despite being much nearer the actual combat of the North African campaign. He moved from Tunis to Algiers in June 1943, but not until well after the Liberation did Gide return to Paris.

At their meeting, Barrault had also spoken of his desire to work with Jean-Paul Sartre. Gide, who admired Sartre, later suggested that Barrault and Sartre adapt *Der Proceß*, modestly adding that he himself was still willing: "What a role for you!" wrote Gide to Barrault on 12 September 1942.

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[28] "Tout cela très Kafka. Je songe sans cesse au *Procès*. Sentiment de ne pas encore 'être en règle.' S'il fallait autant de formalités pour mourir. . . De quoi construire un conte admirable. 'Vous ne pouvez partir *comme ça*. . . '"

"One word from you about it and I shall take up the work" (Claude/PM 214).[29] Barrault accepted Gide's offer enthusiastically; nonetheless, with the war still undecided, neither Gide nor Barrault took further steps towards the adaptation in the next three years.

By the end of the war, Barrault was a full *sociétaire* at the Comédie, with the leverage to pick his projects. As a sign of good faith, he staged Gide's 1921 translation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, revised and completed in 1937-1938 (199-200). Gide happily authorized this production from his self-imposed exile; he wrote to Dorothy Bussy that he would have liked to attend rehearsals, but preferred not to be in Paris even post-liberation: "That atmosphere of hatred and lies would be intolerable to me" (206-207).[30] Barrault kept Gide apprized by mail until the latter finally returned to Paris on 13 May 1945, and was favorably impressed by the production, though not by the actors. Gide's translation received many good reviews, but Louis Jouvet called it "hardly dramatic" and said, "His text reads well but it can't be spoken" (207).[31] Jouvet's opinion of the production itself was also scathing: "*La grande maison*," he wrote to Roger Martin du Gard about the Comédie, "is going more and more off the rails" (*déraille de plus en plus*; 207).

This production nonetheless established Barrault and Gide as a collaborative team, and in the summer of 1945 Barrault wrote to Gide, "I *would like* . . . to work *very closely* WITH YOU on your *Hamlet*, so that once I begin the actual direction, I can be certain not to deceive you in any way"

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[29] "Ah! si Sartre tirait une pièce (ou moi) du *Procès* de Kafka!! Quel rôle pour vous! Un mot de vous à ce sujet et je me mettrais au travail."

[30] "Cette atmosphère de haine et de mensonge me serait intolérable."

[31] "Sa traduction d'*Antoine et Cléopatre* est très belle mais uniquement littéraire et peu dramatique. Son texte se lit admirablement, mais ne se peut pas parler."

(208; Barrault's emphasis).[32] From September of that year, Barrault visited Gide every day, and together they went through the text word by word. This work occupied the whole of the winter of 1945-1946, interrupted only when Gide was absent from Paris.

Meanwhile, in September 1945, de Gaulle had set up a commission to revise the Napoleonic statutes governing the Comédie-Française. The Société des Comédiens itself had not been allowed to elect representatives, and the resulting bad feelings among the actors were so palpable that once the new statutes were in place, the government allowed any unsatisfied actor fifteen days to leave the Société, whose memberships were normally held for life (Barrault/Griffin 154-155). Barrault and Madeleine Renaud took this opportunity to leave and found their own company, the Compagnie Renaud-Barrault.

Thus, Barrault chose Gide's *Hamlet* to open his first independent season at the Théâtre Marigny on the Champs-Elysées, combining the role in which he had first had success at the Comédie (in 1942) with the novelty of a new translation. When Barrault now raised the issue of adapting *Der Proceß* again, however, Gide balked: he hesitated, Barrault remembers, "as any scrupulous person would; he said to me that the subject would be better suited to the cinema." Barrault's reply was, "It's just because cinematographic acting seems easy that one must avoid it at all costs if one wants to treat the subject afresh and in depth" (Barrault/Griffin 173). Gide remained doubtful, and Barrault offered to prepare a scenario on his own, which Gide agreed to hear before rejecting the proposal.

In preparing his first draft, Barrault simply transposed dialogue wholesale from the novel.

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[32] "Il me reste à vous communiquer un véritable *désir*: je *voudrais* dès mon retour (en septembre-mi-septembre) travailler de *très près* AVEC VOUS votre *Hamlet*, afin lorsque je partirai dans le travail proprement dit de la scène, je sois sûr que de ne pas vous décevoir, en aucun point."

Nonetheless, a heated reading of this version by Barrault culminated in a chandelier coming loose from the ceiling—at the moment the final words were spoken—and hanging by the electrical wire above Barrault's head. This omen fired Gide with enthusiasm beyond Barrault's wildest dreams; and they took up *Le Procès* in the spring of 1946, while still going through Gide's *Hamlet*, working together just as closely on the new script (173). The two projects together meant Gide was devoting practically all his time to Barrault (Claude 210).

It was fortunate for Barrault that Gide was now so enthusiastic, since the members of Barrault's and Gide's circle were not encouraging: "Madeleine [Renaud] was decidedly not warm. It seemed to her a crashing bore. Roger Martin du Gard, who was Gide's literary 'confessor,' kept ministering friendly discouragement." As for Louis Jouvet, he had been uniformly negative about Barrault's chances in general. He thought the Marigny a poor space, *Hamlet* dull and no good for a French audience (because "Parisians don't like ghosts"), Gide unsuited for the theatre, and any play referring to the occupation doomed—this last in reference to Salacrou's *Nights of Anger* (*Les Nuits de la Colère*), which Barrault was planning to produce; though Barrault, as we shall see, would also use *Le Procès* to this same end. When Barrault described his planned adaptation, Jouvet (who had never heard of Kafka) grew even gloomier: "*Mon p'tit vieux*—I don't want to discourage you—but you seem to me to be on the wrong tack. If one day you need help, you've always got your old brother. One last bit of advice: don't make long-term commitments. Beware of disaster" (Barrault/Griffin 159).

Surrounded by nay-sayers, Barrault saw himself and Gide as co-conspirators: "We were two young people out of [Gide's novel] the *Faux Monnayeurs*" (173). Beforehand, his plans must have looked foolhardy indeed, but this thankless work paid off. Despite Jouvet's forebodings the *Hamlet,* the Salacrou, and *Le Procès* were all to be considerable successes for Barrault, contributing greatly

to his company's early financial independence (163).

The press was uniformly generous in its praise for the translation of *Hamlet*; the close collaboration with Barrault refined Gide's draft into a simple text which lent itself well to performance, and exposed Gide for the first time to a real sense of theatrical writing (Claude 213-214). The success of this production was not only an auspicious beginning for Barrault's company. It solidified his intention to build his company's reputation on the twin pillars of André Gide and Paul Claudel, whose importance to Barrault we shall see shortly; for Barrault, who all his life felt undereducated and awkward with language (Barrault/Griffin 36; Brown 351), had by now "acquired a taste for using, for my 'avant-garde' explorations, scripts by real writers" (Barrault/Griffin 173). It was on this foundation that Barrault and Gide now devoted themselves full-time to their adaptation of Kafka, proceeding as they had with the *Hamlet*, going through the text together word by word.

The Problem of Authorship

Despite this history, since the play first appeared, critics have tended to refer to the playscript of *Le Procès* as the work of Gide alone. Max Brod himself, for example, though he had authorized the adaptation, presumably in communication with Barrault (175), refers in a brief footnote in his biography of Kafka to "André Gide's failed (*verfehlte*) dramatization" (Brod/PM 157; this footnote does not appear in the English translation). Maya Goth also writes of "Gide's adaptation" (Goth/PM 248), as do Manfred Schmeling (Schmeling 24) and Rebecca Vallette (91); and Renée Lang writes that

> Gide, especially in his maturity, is often seduced by intellectual forms contrary to his own. It is the dissimilarity, the *difference* that attracts him. Thus, by the time he finally completed his translation of *Hamlet* in 1945, he was further distant than ever from the Danish prince's manner of feeling. Likewise, his dramatic adaptation of Kafka's *Trial* in 1947 is, even more than testimony to literary admiration, the

contribution of an ethic diametrically opposed to his own. (Lang/PM 32)[33]

Even two of the most detailed analyses of the adaptation, by Ira Kuhn and Reinhard Kuhn (no relation), describe in similar terms Gide's lack of a "sense of the absurd" (R. Kuhn/PM 172)[34] and his "subconscious need to rationalize" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 229) as having a decisive effect on the dramatic text. Armgard Gerbitz occasionally mentions Barrault's contribution (for example, 15; 17-18; 40-41), but more often falls into the habit of using Gide's name alone. One of the few critics who gives Barrault precedence as adapter is Heinz Politzer, who is also among the most negative critics:

> Kafka's ever increasing fame produced imitators rather than genuine disciples. The most popular and the most misleading corruption of a Kafka hero was achieved by the French actor Jean-Louis Barrault when, aided by André Gide, he dramatized *The Trial* as a melodrama. With Barrault the Kafka hero became a withered dancer on the avenues of our sorrow, the charmingly evasive Hamlet of French existentialism after the Second World War. (*Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox* 334-335)

Interestingly, Politzer's own German version of this section, published three years later, is more expansive, but pushes *Le Procès* even further into the background (the following translation is deliberately quite literal and therefore clumsy):

> Certainly, that which grew, as the Kafka hero, into a striking equivalence of existential alienation and metaphysical hope, owes its effect to the attempts at popularization made by those Kafka interpreters who translated the essentially ungraspable nature of his works into the language of reason or its more or less tangible categories. What nowadays passes as "kafkaesque" or as the Kafka hero is little more than the slippery and slick reflection of a fragmentary legacy condemned by its own author to annihilation—a ghost bent over a misunderstanding. The Kafka

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[33] "D'ailleurs Gide, dans sa maturité surtout, est souvent séduit par des formes d'esprit contraires à la sienne. C'est la dissemblance, la *différence* qui l'aiguillonne. Ainsi, lorsqu'en 1945 il achève sa traduction de *Hamlet*, il est plus éloigné que jamais de la manière de sentir du prince danois. De même son adaptation à la scène du *Procès* de Kafka, en 1947, est, plus encore que le témoignage d'une admiration littéraire, l'apport d'une éthique diamétralement opposée à la sienne."

[34] "Comme M. Mouton le disait l'autre jour, je crois, Gide n'avait guère le sens de l'absurde."

> hero owes his final shape to the actor Jean-Louis Barrault, who in André Gide's and his own 'melodramatization' of *Der Prozeß* turned Josef K. into a boulevardier who moved like a dancer, the charming Hamlet of French existentialism after the Second World War. (Politzer/PM, *Franz Kafka der Künstler* 471)[35]

Politzer does not here express an opinion regarding such critics as Walter Kaufmann, Walter Sokel, R. M. Albérès and Pierre De Boisdeffre, who find abundant evidence of existentialism in Kafka, presumably without being duped by Barrault's adaptation. Ironically, in fact, Kaufmann's anthology *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* describes the parable "Before the Law," omitted from the Barrault/Gide adaptation, as "the broadest hint about [Kafka's] meaning and his method" (122). Nor does Politzer make clear exactly what Barrault's Hamlet and his K. had in common—other than Barrault, which for Politzer seems to be bad enough—although he at least gives the impression that he saw both productions. It is clear, however, that as Adorno did, Politzer objects to the attempt to give physical form to Kafka's "essentially ungraspable" (*unfaßbar*) work.

The two prevalent strategies at work among these critics would seem to be:

a) either to ascribe the adaptation mainly to Barrault, whose status as a "non-writer" is underlined by associating him completely with Hamlet, a role definitely written by another (as Politzer does); or

b) to ascribe the adaptation mainly to Gide, the "real writer," and emphasize the gulf between his

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[35] "Freilich, was sich da als Kafkascher Held zu einem einprägsamen Gleichnis von existentieller Ausgestoßenheit und metaphysischer Hoffnung auswuchs, verdankt seine Wirksamkeit den Popularisierungsversuchen jener Kafka-Interpreten, die das essentiell Unfaßbare seines Werks in die Sprache der Vernunft und ihrer mehr oder weniger haltbaren Kategorien übersetzt haben. Was heute als 'kafkaesk' oder als Kafkascher Held gilt, ist wenig mehr als der gleißende und glatte Reflex eines fragmentarischen und von seinem Autor selbst zur Vernichtung bestimmten Nachlasses—ein Gespenst, das sich über ein Mißverständnis neigt. Seine endgültige Ausprägung verdankt dieser Kafkasche Held dem Schauspieler Jean-Louis Barrault, der in André Gides und seiner eigenen Melodramatisierung des 'Prozeß'-Romans aus Josef K. einen tänzerisch bewegten Boulevardier werden ließ, den charmanten Hamlet des französischen Existentialismus nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg."

own and Kafka's sensibility, as most of the other critics do—though Ira Kuhn, as we shall see, goes on to maintain that Barrault ruined the script even further in production, to Gide's chagrin.

The fact is, however, that neither of these strategies of oversimplification is completely tenable. Barrault described the collaboration with Gide as "dovetailing our respective contributions closely," and acknowledged that Gide helped cut Barrault's original lengthy draft (which Barrault calls "*le monstre*") down to manageable size: "My defect is always to pack too much in. His was an extreme strictness, dryness even. We reached agreement halfway" (Barrault/Griffin 173). Gide's hand is also presumably evident insofar as the dialogue of the dramatic text is no longer Barrault's simple copying of the novel's dialogue; though the lack of Gide's usual formal and stylized syntax implies that he bowed to Barrault's experience in order to produce a text easily spoken onstage.

Likewise, to place all the responsibility for the script on Gide is to ignore the fact that Barrault had intended to adapt *Der Proceß* since at least 1939. Since discovering Kafka in the mid-thirties, either through Madeleine Renaud (Barrault/Griffin 96) or André Masson (Barrault, "Le Roman adapté" 37), Barrault had taken the author so much to his heart that in his autobiography he interprets many of his childhood experiences, long after the fact, as preparations for entering "the world of Kafka" (see especially Barrault/Griffin 31; 38-39;46). Further, Barrault adopted a quotation from *Der Proceß,* Josef K.'s "Don't take things too seriously," as one of his personal mottoes. It was Barrault who went to great effort to convince Gide to collaborate on the adaptation; and Gide, for his part, was scrupulous in giving credit to Barrault in a preliminary note to the published text (although Ira Kuhn claims Gide's motivation was neither fair nor generous; I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 236).

The great advantage of the second strategy, however, is that it allows the critics to maintain

that much of the compression and simplification of the narrative text in *Le Procès* is due to Gide's deep-seated rationalism, completely at odds with Kafka's sensibility (Politzer lays a similar charge, though he downplays Gide's role in the collaboration). As we have seen, however, Gide not only recognized that *Der Proceß* "defies all rational explanation," but found this admirable (*Journal 1939-1949*, 50-51). Thus it seems unlikely that Gide would seek systematically to destroy this quality. Ira Kuhn acknowledges that Gide recognized Kafka's irrationality but claims that he could not help himself: "[Gide's] attraction to it was surpassed only by his desire to suppress it" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 229). In fact, I propose that this compression and simplification is no more than is necessary to the process of adaptation according to Mirza's model, and is as likely to stem from Barrault's dramaturgical instincts as it is from Gide's rationalism.

Politzer's related contention—that *Le Procès* reflects the influence of French existentialism—is harder to dismiss: as Manfred Schmeling puts it, "Here Josef K. is forced into the role of existential hero" (Schmeling/PM 24).[36] However, this is hardly a damning charge against the adaptation. Although Gide is not generally considered an existentialist (despite the mutual respect between Gide and Sartre), and Barrault's philosophy was always a provisional mixture of superficial influences with a good deal of pragmatism, it is arguably true that by 1947, Kafka's reputation in France was highest among the existentialists and the absurdists, two related intellectual groups in the ascendant during and after the Second World War.

Since 1928, however, when Kafka was first published in France, the author had passed from the hands of the surrealists led by André Breton, through those of psychological critics like Denis Saurat and Wladimir Weidlé and then to such religiously-oriented commentators (following Max

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[36] "Josef K. wird hier in die Rolle des existentialistischen Helden gezwängt."

Brod's lead) as Daniel-Rops and Jean Carrive, before being taken up by existentialist and absurdist writers (Schmeling 24; I. Kuhn, "Kafka and the Theatre of the Absurd" 11-18; Goth 242, 123-137; Robert 316-318). Kafka so easily became a philosophical football because there was little biographical information about him—Brod's biography did not appear in French translation until 1945 (Robert 317)—and he seemed to have come literally from nowhere "as a citizen of some 'no-man's-land,' as a lonely man without antecedents, and about whom no one knew for sure in which language he had produced his works." Thus it was easy for the French not merely to adopt, but to "naturalize" Kafka, in a process "in which a new, French Kafka arose, far removed indeed from the real one"[37] (Robert/PM 310), an "unfathomable thinker" who had no historical relationship to other writers or to any literary tradition (316-317).

It is true that existentialists like Sartre at least emphasized Kafka's historically demonstrable religious aspirations—perhaps even overly so, Robert claims—whereas Camus saw Kafka as beyond any faith, "the pure hero of the absurd" (318).[38] Despite Robert's (and Politzer's) disparaging tone, however, both existentialist and absurdist interpretations of Kafka's works became current and numerous. Rightly or wrongly, these two groups became the main streams of thought with which Kafka was associated during the Second World War and into the fifties (Schmeling 24). Certainly, *Le Procès* was perceived as an existentialist play by many contemporaries, as for example by Robert

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[37] "Kafka trat als Angehöriger irgendeines 'Niemandlandes' hervor, als Einsamer, dem nichts voranging und von dem man nicht einmal genau wußte, in welcher Sprache er sein Werk verfaßt hatte. Da er scheinbar frei von jeglichen historischen und geographischen Bindungen dastand, wurde er ohne Bedenken adoptiert, ja man möchte fast sagen 'naturalisiert,' denn es war wirklich etwas wie ein Naturalisierungsprozeß, bei dem ein neuer, französischer, dem wahren allerdings weit genug entfernter Kafka entstand."

[38] ". . . für andere, wie Camus, war [Kafka] über jeden Glauben hinweg der reine Held des Absurden."

Kemp (6). It is difficult to see either how Gide and Barrault could have worked altogether outside this interpretation or how they can be blamed for working within it; particularly when the foundation of such an interpretation predates *Le Procès*—despite Politzer's implication that Barrault and Gide are greatly to blame for it.

The direct influences on Barrault and Gide's adaptation are further complicated, however, by their source. Barrault spoke little German, while Gide's, though fluent when he was a young man, was no longer trustworthy: in his journal he admits, "I do not read German without effort and pain" (Vallette 88; Kingstone 167-8; Gide/PM, *Journal 1939-1949*, 62).[39] Therefore, as the basis of their adaptation, Barrault and Gide used Alexandre Vialatte's 1933 translation (Robert 312); Vialatte was Kafka's first French translator, having translated "Die Verwandlung" ("The Metamorphosis") for the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in 1928, only three years after Kafka's death. At this early stage Kafka's champions among the French were the Surrealists, who fastened on the dreamlike quality of Kafka's works (Goth 13-63). Because Kafka's first translators, including Vialatte, came from this group—and because they were poets rather than Germanists—Marthe Robert claims not only that their translations are exotic and heavily flavoured by the stereotyping of Kafka as a fellow surrealist, but also that they are extremely unreliable: the translators had no way of checking their work for accuracy, since they did not expect Kafka to make sense (312-314). Given this possibility, it might seem strange that an adaptation based on Vialatte's translation should be accused of being overly rational.

Nonetheless, the use of Vialatte's translation was fortuitous for the two adapters (not that there was as yet another French translation to choose), since it may have been—for their specific

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[39] ". . . car je ne lis l'allemand qu'avec effort et peine. . ."

purpose—an easier text to work from than Kafka's original. In the course of translation, Vialatte had introduced what Gerbitz calls "visual clarification," changing the punctuation of the original to divide up the "long, rambling sentences used by Kafka," and altering the paragraphs to "visually set . . . off the dialogue from the action" (16). Vialatte also inserted speech attributions which were lacking—because unnecessary—in Kafka's text: the German subjunctive mood of indirect discourse (by which means literally pages of text can be clearly signified as citation of another's words) has no counterpart in French. In its place Vialatte used the French preterite and frequent reiteration of phrases like "the lawyer added" and "said Doctor Huld" (Schmeling 29). Gerbitz suggests that these considerable formal changes may have aided Barrault in preparing his original scenario (Barrault/Griffin 173), as well as smoothing the course of the collaborative process of adaptation.

At the same time, however, thanks to the lack of a comparable subjunctive/modal system, "the French translation can only partially express [the] ambiguous narration which reflects Josef K.'s uncertain position in the world of the trial. Kafka, on the other hand, deliberately forced this congruency between form and content" (Schmeling/PM 28-29).[40] Schmeling also claims that this problem was exacerbated by Vialatte's own interpretation of Kafka, which from the very first words led him to force his sentence constructions away from the "refusal, so typical for Kafka, to decide between hypothetical and affirmative expression" and towards a consistently affirmative tone expressed through the indicative mood (28).[41] Schmeling thus insists that Vialatte's translation is grammatically too concrete, while Robert accuses the same translation of being lexically over-exotic

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[40] "Die französische Übersetzung kann diese Ambiguität des Erzählens, die den unsicheren Standort Josef K.s in der Prozeßwelt spiegelt, nur partiell ausdrücken. Kafka hingegen hat diese Kongruenz zwischen der Ausdrucksebene und der Inhaltszene bewußt forciert."

[41] "Die für Kafka so typische Unentschlossenheit zwischen hypothetischen und affirmativen Wendungen verschiebt sich in der Übersetzung des Satzes zugunsten der Affirmation."

and unreliable. These charges are confusing but not contradictory. The last word on Vialatte's translation is perhaps best left to one of Vialatte's successors, Bernard Lortholary, who retranslated *Der Proceß* in 1982:

> Alexandre Vialatte's translation not only includes local errors. It is characterized by a global inexactitude due to Vialatte's own talent and to his sensibilities as a writer. His original works show him in fact as a delicate humorist, always combining a light melancholy with the eccentric, or even a discreet pathos, haloed with disillusioned reverie. . . . Nothing is further from the black humour of Kafka, and from his limpid, severe phrasing, than this dreamy humour. Vialatte thus rendered the black with greys, the comical with the bizarre, the theatrical with the psychological. (Lortholary/PM 16)[42]

In general, then, Vialatte's translation was a mixed blessing for Barrault and Gide; certainly, to blame the latter two alone for misinterpreting the tone and atmosphere of Kafka's work—and not all reviewers and critics made this charge by any means—is both imprecise and unfair under the circumstances. Vialatte himself, incidentally, asked that his name be removed from the adaptation after reading it, because he disagreed with its interpretation of the novel: he apparently complained to Gide, "In Kafka there is something of Pascal and something of Voltaire. As a Catholic I find it hard to bear that you sacrificed the former to the latter" (Siepe/PM 95).[43] Nonetheless, an article by Vialatte in *Le Figaro* appeared during the premiere week of *Le Procès*, kindly adding to the

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[42] "La traduction d'Alexandre Vialatte ne comportait pas que des erreurs ponctuelles. Elle est charactérisée par une inexactitude globale qui tient au talent même de Vialatte et à sa sensibilité d'écrivain. Ses oeuvres originales nous le montrent en effet comme un humoriste délicat, mêlant toujours au farfelu une mélancolie légère, voire un pathétique discret, nimbés de rêverie désabusée. . . . Rien de plus étranger que cette humeur songeuse à l'humour noir de Kafka, et à son phrase limpide et dur. Traduisant Kafka, Vialatte a donc rendu le noir par des gris, le cocasse par le bizarre, le théâtral par du psychologique."

[43] "'Es gibt in Kafka', sagte er zu André Gide, 'etwas von Pascal und von Voltaire. Als Katholik kann ich es schwer ertragen, daß Sie den ersten dem zweiten geopfert haben.'" The anecdote seems to be from the afterword of the German edition of Gide's collected plays; Siepe does not make its attribution clear.

publicity; and Vialatte's name remained attached to the adaptation, so it may be that this disagreement was smoothed over.

It is also unnecessary to lay the blame (if blame it must be) for the perceived increase in rationalism and lack of the mysterious in the Barrault-Gide adaptation at the feet either of Alexandre Vialatte's translation or of Gide's failure to appreciate absurdity. Rather, I maintain, the source of most of the changes from the narrative text is Barrault's sense of dramaturgy, coupled with a historical and social background in which there was no need to see the events of Kafka's story as mysterious. In the next section, I explore that historical background and its possible effect on the adaptation, before moving on to problems of dramatic construction which might also have motivated or necessitated changes. The tense period of French history immediately following the war deserves some description, since the oppressive—and specifically legalistic—atmosphere which prevailed in the worlds of literature and entertainment, and among the public, form a much nearer historical context for the Barrault-Gide adaptation of *Der Proceß.*

Life Imitates Art: the Purge and the Trial(s)

Martin Esslin correctly writes of *Le Procès*: "Kafka's dream of guilt and the arbitrariness of the powers that rule the world was more for the French audience of 1947 than a mere fantasy." However, he is overly optimistic to write, "It came at a peculiarly propitious moment—shortly after the nightmare world of the German occupation had vanished" (Esslin 355). The Germans had indeed vanished, but the nightmare went on.

Already toward the war's end, Free French radio from London was broadcasting dire warnings to collaborators, such as the following from April 1944, reminiscent of Josef K.'s predicament in grotesquely accelerated form: "'You are known, catalogued, labeled.' One day, or

one night, they'd come to get you. 'You'll turn green, sweat will pour from your forehead and down your back; you'll be taken away and, a few days after that, you'll be nothing more than a small heap of garbage'" (Lottman 90). During the liberation, these words came true for many alleged collaborators in the form of spontaneous lynchings. Officially, however, the bringing to justice of collaborators, known as the purge (*l'épuration*), was served by several legal bodies set up by decree: these included the Courts of Justice, the Civic Chambers, and the Governmental Commission for the Purging of Entertainment. Between them, these bodies directly or indirectly affected the lives of almost everyone in France.

The Courts of Justice, operating in every city, consisted of one judge and six jurors each, rather than the three judges and twelve jurors traditional in French law; it was assumed that there were not enough uncompromised judges and jurors to go around (42-3). These courts were meant to exist only in the short term, but the sheer volume of serious accusations extended their term until the last Court of Justice finally closed in Paris in 1951 (162-163).

The Courts of Justice were burdened only with cases of outright collusion. Since collaboration was no crime (and placing it on the books after the fact would have recalled Vichy methods), collaborative actions short of collusion were labeled *indignité nationale*—"national unworthiness"—and tried by lesser bodies called Civic Chambers, which could deprive those found guilty of professional status or of civil rights. Like Josef K., the defendant left the court free, whether found liable to sanctions or not; but the "petty" nature of the tribunal—in legal terms—encouraged truly petty accusations. In one case, a florist was prosecuted for sending flowers to the German Ambassador's wife (42-3; 164-165).

The existence of these lesser tribunals did not keep public figures out of the Courts of Justice. Especially at the beginning of the purge, the press was full of reports about the arrests of the famous:

Le Figaro ran a regular feature, whose contents resembled a society column, under the headline ARRESTS AND PURGING—particularly eye-catching since newspapers were rationed to a single sheet per day. For those not inclined to read the papers, pamphlets were sold on street-corners listing collaborators who allegedly deserved to be shot (82-83; 78).

In this atmosphere, a high public profile during the war became a liability, and a special Governmental Commission for the Purging of Entertainment was formed, empowered to enact sanctions forbidding a performer or journalist to work either temporarily or permanently. Approximately 140 sanctions were recommended by the Commission in its career, and the accused brought before it included such big names as "Fernandel, Mistinguett, Arletty, Maurice Chevalier, and Edith Piaf" (255-260). Meanwhile, in the Courts of Justice, faceless captains of industry who had contributed materially to the German army went unpunished—one construction firm was allowed to keep war profits of 360 million francs—while the more visible figures of entertainment and journalism, if charged with collusion, faced disproportionate retribution (Pryce-Jones 149; Rousso 20; Lottman 168; 217; 242).

Jean-Louis Barrault, of course, had had an extremely high profile during the Occupation. The Comédie-Française had been greatly reduced; with so many actors of senior rank expelled or resigned, Barrault "had become [by May 1942] France's most illustrious *pensionnaire*" (Brown 426). His climb to fame, however, had involved some unfortunate compromises.

In July 1941, for example, Barrault had commissioned and starred in André Obey's tragedy *800 metres*, staged at the Roland Garros Stadium. *800 metres* combined text read over the public address system with a staged footrace, based on the 1924 Olympics' 800-metre race; Barrault played the winning runner. While on the one hand the athletic theme was directly descended from the Artaudian physical dramaturgy in which Barrault had long worked, on the other *800 metres* catered

unambiguously to the "cult of the body beautiful which the Nazi propagandists promoted through the pages of the daily press." In fact, in the collaborationist magazine *Comoedia*, which promoted *800 metres* extensively, Barrault himself wrote approvingly of "the joy of effort," a phrase uncomfortably reminiscent of typical Nazi *Kraft durch Freude* ("strength through joy") pro-sport propaganda (Marsh 157-158).

800 metres served as curtain-raiser for a Barrault-directed production of Aeschylus's *Suppliant Women* which caught the attention of the Vichy government: Barrault was asked to organize a youth festival in honour of Marshall Pétain, and accepted with enthusiasm (Brown 427-428). Barrault has been accused of both political naivety and of opportunism, and he himself admitted that "I like to obey, perhaps from weakness of character" (428).

By the end of 1942 Barrault had begun directing at the Comédie, and was offered a *sociétariat*, which he accepted. He then plunged himself into one of the most talked-about productions of the Occupation: Paul Claudel's *Le Soulier de satin* (*The Satin Slipper*). This massive mounting of Claudel's forty-year old script, pared from ten hours down to five, was rehearsed for almost a year. When it finally opened on 26 November 1942, *Le Soulier de satin* became the toast of Paris and ran for sixty performances. The spectators granted it fourteen curtain calls at its premiere, since they apparently recognized much in it: "The major themes of this difficult play, separation, heroism, sacrifice, coincided with much of the anguish of the French at that moment. It was an example, among many, during the Occupation, when the theater sustained the courage and faith of the people" (Fowlie 59).

But *Le Soulier de satin* found favour with the Germans in the audience as well, thus joining a select company beside Montherlant's *La Reine morte* (1942) and Anouilh's *Antigone* (1944), which also became hits with both occupiers and occupied (Pryce-Jones 166-167; Perrault and Azema 112).

Barrault, who before the war had felt he would be recognized neither "by the right nor by the left," was now lionized by both.

Despite this unexpected success—or rather, because of it—once the war was over, Barrault might well have expected to find himself under suspicion. Again unexpectedly, however, he found himself legally in no danger. The Comédie could not begin rehearsals with any of its actors under suspicion, especially with its Jewish personnel now returning from exile; and so the company was allowed to set up its own purge commission, which opened on 28 October 1944. On November 6, Madeleine Renaud and Jean-Louis Barrault appeared before this commission and were told that "they had been found 'correct and loyal'" (Lottman 261). Legal absolution might not have set Barrault's conscience at rest, however, given that during the purge, his countrymen were likely to recall a star's popularity with the Germans more vividly than his or her fame among the French.

The well-known and popular actor-director Sacha Guitry, for example, had openly socialized with the occupiers as "an ambassador of French culture"; but his privileged position had allowed him to liberate prisoners from the Germans, and to save the life, in October 1943, of arrested Jewish humorist Tristan Bernard (Ragache and Ragache 198). Guitry was one of the first alleged collaborators arrested; imprisoned with other arrestees at the Velodrome d'Hiver (a cycling stadium previously used as a holding pen for Jews awaiting transport east), he suffered both verbal insult and physical assault while awaiting a hearing. A poll by the French Institute of Public Opinion showed that 56 percent of respondents agreed Guitry should be detained—while only 32 percent wanted Marshal Pétain punished (Lottman 92). Friends and colleagues, including Barrault, petitioned on Guitry's behalf, but he was indicted for collusion on 15 October 1944, only three weeks before Barrault was exonerated. He was released pending trial; as with Josef K., however, time passed without Guitry's trial ever arriving. He was finally informed in August 1947 that the case had been

dismissed.

The Guitry affair was not the only occasion when Barrault directly involved himself in a collaboration trial; he also intervened in the most famous trial of the period by signing a petition (along with Paul Claudel, Paul Valéry, Colette, and Jean Cocteau) to de Gaulle to commute the death sentence of unrepentent antidemocratic journalist Robert Brasillach (137-139). Where Guitry had used his fame to rescue prisoners from the Germans, Barrault traded on his to plead clemency for accused collaborators—including Guitry himself; where Guitry's attempts had borne fruit, however, Barrault's did not: despite the petition, Brasillach was executed on 6 February 1945.

Meanwhile, Gide, still in Africa, was also touched by the purge when his publisher Gaston Gallimard was tried for being "host and sponsor of the German-endorsed *Nouvelle Revue Française*," and for obeying the dictates of the Otto List. Gallimard had, however, attempted to avoid publishing Nazi authors and concentrated on non-collaborators. Camus and André Malraux spoke on Gallimard's behalf; Sartre testified that Gallimard had allowed the use of his house for secret meetings. Gide luckily came no nearer the machinery of the purge; though he was sharply criticized by Louis Aragon for having published in the "new" *N.R.F.* journal extracts expressing the opinion that Hitler's victory "revealed the profound decay of France," and granting the advisability, even the necessity, of collaboration (Pryce-Jones 8).

Perhaps most painfully for Barrault, his mentor Charles Dullin was called before the Commission for Entertainment in February 1945, "accused of writing for the violently collaborationist newspaper *La Gerbe*, and for changing the name of the Sarah Bernhardt Theater [to the Théâtre de la Cité]." Dullin was exonerated because his article had no political content, and because despite 'aryanizing' the theatre's name under duress, he had successfully kept a sign on the door reading "ex-Sarah Bernhardt Theatre" for the duration of the occupation (Lottman 257).

Barrault—who had also published in collaborationist periodicals—may well have experienced pangs of conscience seeing Dullin charged with collaboration, given that in June 1943 Dullin had staged Sartre's *Les Mouches* (*The Flies*), a play originally "written at Barrault's instigation and with every assurance that Barrault would stage it after quitting the Comédie-Française" (Brown 436). Barrault's acceptance of the *sociétariat* left Sartre in the lurch; and although Barrault and Sartre outwardly remained on good terms, their differences apparently stood in the way of ever working together (Barrault 1972, 196). Moreover, Frederick Brown suggests that Barrault felt guilty because while "his erstwhile master braved the powers-that-were on behalf of a play about tyranny by a young intellectual, [Barrault] had committed his interpretative energies to the *summum* of an old man [Claudel] who endorsed Generals Franco and Pétain" (Brown 436).

This recounting is not meant as an indictment of Barrault; although many of Barrault's contemporaries had very firm ideas on the subject, no clear consensus exists regarding what exactly constitutes collaboration. It is easy to criticize Barrault from the safe position of both geographical and historical distance; likewise, private French citizens were quick to condemn their celebrities. Barrault's perspective, though, was no doubt that he was simply trying to go on doing what he already did for a living, and Kedward has pointed out that such a desire to carry on as normal "can be used to suggest *either* an almost treasonable indifference to the occupation *or*, on the contrary, a heroic determination to maintain French life and vitality in the face of the occupiers" (Kedward 14-15).

Barrault suggests this latter interpretation in his own defense: "Was not the most correct behaviour precisely to live an *upright* life within one's own task? . . . During the Occupation there was only one recourse: *to be active*" (Barrault/Griffin 168). It is true that the romantic heroism of the Resistance was in practice simply unattainably dangerous for most Parisians: unlike in the rest

of the country, at any given time most of the resistance cells in Paris were in fact run by the Germans for the specific purpose of entrapment (Pryce-Jones 151-152). Even so, such actions as Barrault's participation in *800 metres* seem to do him little credit (Marsh 161). Barrault appears to have been aware of this fact, as he mentions none of these last three projects in his memoirs; which does not necessarily prove bad intent on his part, but perhaps demonstrates that he was, indeed, not politically naive.

Indeed, in the middle of his account of rehearsals for *Le Procès*, Barrault writes, as if out of nowhere, "My guilt feelings were having a field day" (Barrault/Griffin 175). Barrault claimed to have been subject to a guilt complex all his life (30-31), but at this time it may well have been exacerbated as he found himself in the enviable but uncomfortable position of spectator while many of his acquaintances faced punishment. As a reminder that feelings still ran high, Barrault might well have remarked that the recently-exonerated Sacha Guitry made his first postwar public appearance at the Salle Pleyel with a lecture entitled "Things Seen and Heard" (*Choses vues et entendues*), on 20 October 1947, a week after the première of *Le Procès*. When Guitry remarked that "During the occupation, one of the best ways to serve France was to return to the theatre"—hardly different from Barrault's own defense—he was interrupted by a young man who cried "Oh! Sh*t [i.e., "*m*—"], no! Enough, you bastard!"[44] This man, who had apparently been tortured by the Gestapo, was ejected by the audience amid shouts of "Bravo, Sacha!" (Bourget/PM 2). The support of the Parisian crowd meant little in the provinces, however: as late as 1948 Guitry's car was stopped by

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[44] "*—Pendant l'occupation, une des meilleures façons de servir la France était de se retrouver au théâtre.*

"Se lève alors un spectateur trouvant sans doute qu'il existait bien d'autres formes de Résistance.

"*—Oh! m .. Non! Assez, salaud!.*"

resistance people in Lyon and he and his entourage, expecting to be shot, were forced "to observe a moment of silence at the resistance memorial on Place Bellecour" (Lottman 260).

It may be seen from such cases as Dullin's and Guitry's how legally insubstantial the charges brought before the Courts and the Commission could be. The attempts to purge show business thus quickly acquired a bad reputation. A backlash against the entertainment and journalism purges led to the circulation of anonymous pamphlets charging that "purgers, by getting rid of alleged collaborators, wished to make room for themselves" (257); another protest, in Sartre's journal *Les Temps Modernes*, defended the film director Clouzot (arbitrarily singled out after making a film for the German-run Continental studio) by claiming that it is "only in the universe of Kafka . . . that one finds such preposterous decisions" (260-263).

If Barrault felt any qualms about his wartime career (as the omission of much of it from his memoirs might indicate), this must have been a tense period, and he describes it uncharacteristically tersely: "It was a sordid moment. Jealousy, informing, ambitious intrigue; it was dreadful and discouraging" (Barrault/Griffin 153). As we have seen, Gide felt much the same, refusing to return because "that atmosphere of hatred and lies would be intolerable to me" (Claude/PM 207).

The arbitrary nature of the purge, and the different standards of rigour adhering in the various courts, had been apparent to many as early as January 1945; but not until early 1947, when sentences were becoming increasingly light anyway, was the purge attacked by critics who were not themselves in danger from it, like Jean Paulhan (Rousso 20-1; Lottman 242). By this time, genuine concerns about justice were mixed with a resurgence of sympathy for those who had unquestionably been guilty: public debates on amnesty sometimes devolved into cries from the audience of "Long live Pétain! . . . Down with de Gaulle!" (Lottman 269-272). At about this time, in May 1947, Communist ministers were dismissed from the de Gaulle government, marking the end of a triparty

rule which acknowledged the Communist contribution to the resistance and the liberation (Rousso 27). As the cold war began, putting down the left wing was becoming more important than continuing to punish the right.

Arguably, then, by 1947 the purge had become meaningless, though it carried on mechanically in metropolitan areas for another three or four years (Lottman 162-163). This unfortunate conclusion may have been inherent in the very nature of the purge, which apportioned guilt along political lines rather than moral ones. Despite the fact that more French citizens may have died in the purge than at the hands of the occupiers (Pryce-Jones 207), it is also claimed that "no one of any rank was seriously punished for his or her role in the roundup and deportation of Jews to Nazi camps" or for any other truly substantial collaborative activity (Lottman 290).

It is in this charged atmosphere, and not in a general air of liberated relief, as Esslin implies, that Barrault and Gide completed *Le Procès*. If some critics have complained that the adaptation lacks a sense of mystery appropriate to Kafka, it may well be that for Barrault, Gide and many in their audience, there no longer seemed much mystery to be found in Kafka. As Armgard Gerbitz writes: "In retrospect, it seems as if this visual presentation was inevitable, in as much as Kafka had become, in the mentality of so many French, a part of the actual events of the time" (Gerbitz 4).

Barrault's "Equivalences," Their Result, and Critical Objections

The Barrault-Gide adaptation serves not only as a historical precedent for the adaptation of Kafka's novel; it is also, as we shall see, a test case for the ill-suitedness of purely textual criticism to understanding how a theatrical production works in its social context. Among the critics who have dealt with *Le Procès* since its production, many have treated it as a text above all, whose setting in motion on the stage, which they presumably did not witness, is incidental and does not

compensate for its deficiency as a text—for it must be deficient, because it is not the novel (a feeling which even some contemporary theatre reviewers found difficult to overcome). As Peter Lev writes, "Judging solely from the script, Barrault and Gide do not seem to have captured the multiple tones of Kafka's style. . . . Of course, the tone of the play may very well have been changed in performance" (Lev 181).

This approach is often facilitated by rigidly demarcating the contributions of Gide (text) and Barrault (production) and speaking either of "Gide's adaptation" as if Barrault had been a beneficiary and not a participant in the labour, or of "Barrault's version" as if to protect Gide from the scandal of association. As we have seen, such demarcations are problematic in the case of *Le Procès*; nonetheless, such designations are reproduced in quotations from these critics without further comment.

One of the adaptation's more positive later critics, who most consistently shows imagination in attempting to reconstruct the theatrical effect of Barrault's *mise en scène*, is Armgard Gerbitz. Gerbitz acknowledges the importance of Barrault's contribution to the dramatic text and points out that, a few years after *Le Procès*, Barrault demonstrated that he had put systematic thought into describing the means of altering the events of a novel to make them "more suitable to the new dramatic form into which the novel is adapted." In an article tellingly entitled "'Adaptation' is the Opposite of 'Cutting,'" Barrault writes:

> What is the goal? The goal is to reconstruct for the spectator the emotion experienced by the reader, and to prompt him to the same flow of reflections and thoughts, by different means. The adapter will therefore look for what is essential in the novel and commit himself to expressing that and only that. He will have to cut long, important chapters, characters, etc., to choose an anecdote with dramatic possibilities which, in the novel, may be of secondary importance; above all, he will take care to express dramatically, and not necessarily by means of text, the thought of the author (thus, in *Le Procès*, certain effects of lighting or of sound, and the set itself, and the costumes, replaced at times Kafka's text); in short, constantly to render equivalences.

(Barrault/PM, "'Adaptation' est le contraire de 'Decoupage,'" *Carrefour* (1955), quoted in Gerbitz 17-18)[45]

Here Barrault has concisely anticipated many of Mirza's observations on adaptation. In 1976, Barrault restated his main point even more forcefully: "Finding the main theme of a novel's drama is precisely the overriding objective of all theatrical adaptation. From then on, the driving force is found and *l'objet-théâtre* corresponds without betrayal to *l'objet-roman*" (Barrault/PM, "Le Roman adapté" 42-3).[46]

In order to demonstrate the effects Barrault's methods had on the dramatic text, let us here examine a brief outline of the alterations made to the narrative text to produce *Le Procès* (keyed back to Mirza's observations on adaptation, cited above, pp. 13-20):

The bank manager Joseph K., as he finishes his morning toilet, sarcastically wishes "Peace on earth to men of good will" on his thirtieth birthday and hopes to give himself something out of the ordinary. It comes when instead of receiving his breakfast, he is arrested for an unknown crime by Franz and Wilhelm. Although it is no birthday joke, he is not detained. Events proceed generally as in the narrative text (elements *A-J* on p. 36 above)—although compressed [Mirza *e)*], and placed

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[45] "De quoi s'agit-il? Il s'agit de restituer au spectateur l'émotion qu'a éprouvée le lecteur et de l'inciter au même courant de réflexion et de pensées, avec des moyens différents. L'adapteur ira donc chercher l'essentiel de l'oeuvre romanesque et s'attachera à l'exprimer, lui seul. Il lui arrivera de supprimer de longs et importants chapitres, des personnages, etc., de choisir une anecdote à possibilités dramatiques qui, dans le roman, n'occupait peut-être qu'une place secondaire; surtout, il prendra soin d'exprimer dramatiquement et non pas forcément par du texte la pensée de l'auteur (ainsi, dans *Le Procès*, certains éclairages, certains bruitages, et le décor même, et les costumes, remplaçaient par moment le texte de Kafka), bref, de donner à tous moments des équivalences."

[46] "Trouver le fil conducteur du drame d'un roman est précisement l'objectif impérieux de toute adaptation théâtrale. Dès lors, le moteur est trouvé et à l'objet-roman correspond, sans trahison, l'objet-théâtre."

in production in a polyvalent space [Mirza *a)*]—with some major changes:

1) Joseph K. is notified of the date set for his hearing *before* his conversations with his landlady Mme. Grubach or with his neighbour Mlle. Bürstner [Mirza *d)* and *e)*];

2) the brief episode with the Whipper *precedes* K.'s going to his hearing, and is portrayed as a dream sequence [Mirza *d)* and *e)*];

3) when K. goes to the empty hall for the hearing, he encounters the laundrywoman and the bestial law student, but the hearing *does not* take place (see 7 below);

4) the character of Fräulein Montag (Fräulein Bürstner's friend in the novel) and all mention of K.'s mistress Elsa are *omitted altogether* (though Fräulein Bürstner is conflated with her in some respects), and Captain Lanz (the landlady's nephew) is mentioned but *never named* [Mirza *b)* and *c)*];

5) the scenes with the merchant Block are integrated either into K.'s first visit with the lawyer Huld (in the play, the *only* visit) or into the final hearing [Mirza *d)*];

6) in one sequence, a Great Judge appears, despite the fact that no judge of any rank appears in Kafka's novel [Mirza *c)*];

7) the hearing occurs as the climax of the *second and final act* of the play, instead of early on as in the novel, with Mme. Grubach, Mlle. Bürstner, Huld, Leni, Block, K.'s uncle, and the painter Titorelli in attendance [Mirza *d)*]; and

8) perhaps most noticeably, the entire parable "Before the Law," though referred to in passing, is *omitted* from the cathedral scene [Mirza *d)* and possibly *f)*].

These changes streamline the plot of the narrative text and give it a shape of "rising and falling action" more traditional to the stage: the hearing which occurs early in the novel as the "first

interrogation" now becomes the climax of the play, with the much-shortened interlude in the cathedral as anti-climax before K.'s execution. The action, which in the novel takes a year to unfold (until Josef K.'s next birthday), in the adaptation occupies only a few days (Block says K.'s trial "is still counted in days and hours"; Gide and Barrault/PM 104[47]), bringing the time-frame much nearer conventional "Aristotelian" expectations (Vallette 89).

This is not to imply that *Le Procès* was a traditional production. Over and above these changes made by Barrault and Gide in the course of constructing the dramatic text, Barrault's staging resulted in a non-naturalistic performance text in which the kafkaesque atmosphere was expressed as "the maximum of the 'fantastic' with the minimum of the supernatural" (Starobinski/PM 22-23).[48] John Savacool wrote in the *New York Times* that "Sound, décor, movement, all are orchestrated together to create the mood of a waking nightmare. . . . In sum, this is one of those plays which was born in the director's script" (Savacool 7). This had indeed been Barrault's ambition all along. In September 1942, long before beginning the adaptation, he had written to Gide, "I had thought to treat the subject on stage in a particular form, avoiding the monotony of successive tableaux and striving to translate the nightmare more physically" (Claude/PM 215).[49]

Among the elements contributing to this "nightmare" were the scenic transitions ("Scenery flying to the grid in full view of the audience seems to become alive as it casts weird moving shadows across the stage"; Savacool 7), choreographed movement, and scenes played simultaneously. This last was an idea Barrault was particularly fond of: "Dovetail several places,

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[47] "Non, mais tout de même! le temps qu'a duré son procès, ça se compte encore par jours et par heures —"

[48] "Le maximum de 'fantastique' avec le minimum de surnaturel."

[49] "J'avais pensé pour traiter le sujet au théâtre à une forme particulière qui évitait la monotonie de tableaux successifs et qui tendait à traduire plus physiquement le cauchemar."

representing in them several different situations, and make these live simultaneously. They do not exactly answer each other, but correspondences do result that create a new situation: the real one" (Barrault/Griffin 174). The stage divisions, moving flats, and resulting playing spaces are well illustrated as technical plans in Leon Katz's English translation of *Le Procès* (though the translation itself is of uneven quality; plans are on pages 2;19;42;68;86 of Gide and Barrault/Katz). As Rebecca Vallette has remarked, the constantly shifting scenery and simultaneous scenes reproduce the sense of the omnipresent court which, in the novel, is achieved by K.'s finding traces of the court and its employees everywhere he goes in the city (Vallette 89). Barrault's intention is thus not to simplify the novel, but to provide a performance text equally, though differently, complex.

The production also made much of Barrault's talents as a mime. As Barrault himself put it, "Just as Dali had invented the soft watch, in *Le Procès* the ground was sometimes soft, especially the steps. By means of mime, of course" (Barrault/Griffin 174). This mime included, for example, Barrault's use of imaginary telephones ("J.D.," 6) and invisible doors (Benmussa 87); focus was kept on the actors—above all, on Barrault as Joseph K., who never left the stage—by reducing the sets almost to abstraction (Marcel 8). The use of props and set elements made visible only through Barrault's mime reproduced in the performance text the narrative subjectivity of Kafka's novel. As Barrault wrote: "All the characters, all the objects are the projection of what the hero sees and imagines he sees: Joseph K. If K. disappears, there is nothing more" (Barrault/PM, "Cas de conscience" 53).[50]

This statement explains why, for example, the scene with the Whipper, which in *Der Proceß* is a real occurrence, is portrayed in the play as a dream (Gide and Barrault 40-42): if the action takes

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[50] "Tous les personnages, toutes les choses sont la projection de ce que voit et imagine voir le héros: Joseph K. Si K. disparaît, il n'y a plus rien."

place inside the protagonist's head, it is irrelevant whether the events are real or imagined (for dramatic economy, the scene is also shortened and moved forward from its position as the fifth chapter in the novel; Kafka 103-111). Armgard Gerbitz points out that the novel's chapter "serves to underline K.'s growing subconscious preoccupation with the trial and to reveal how this preoccupation is beginning to interfere with his unreflective every-day existence"; she claims, however, that "[t]he dream-scene in the play cannot possibly serve the same objective," because it fails to show the novel's "subtle and imperceptible shift between the two levels of reality" (25).

This failure supposedly occurs because "[Gide] completely dropped the suggestive imagery of the 'Rumpelkammer,' the store-room into which the door opens (or could it not be interpreted as K.'s mind into which he enters?) and for it substituted the familiar image of the dream-world" (25-26). Gerbitz's parenthetical interpretation of the store-room, however, fits seamlessly with Barrault's intentions to portray the events as K.'s own perceptions; while at the same time her objection overlooks the fact that the nightmarish quality of the entire production must have rendered the dividing line between the "reality" of other events and the "dream" of the Whipper episode ambiguous. Exactly this sort of ambiguity was important to Barrault, who cited Kafka's "liv[ing] in ambiguity" as "[o]ne more reason, not only for admiring him, but for loving him" (Barrault/Griffin 175).

Barrault's reading of *Le Procès* as an externalization of K.'s subconscious also explains the brief appearance, in a multi-focus scene, of the Grand Judge (Gide and Barrault 74-82), which demonstrates for the audience Joseph K.'s *idea* of a Grand Judge, and shows that K.'s preoccupation with his trial has begun to interfere with his work, rather than portraying the Judge as a character in his own right (Vallette 92; Gerbitz 40). Barrault himself claimed in 1957 that this interpretation was communicated very effectively in production, and that "the audience understood very well that all

the characters were personal projections of the hero" (Barrault/PM, "Cas de conscience" 56).[51]

Portraying *Le Procès* in this manner, however, still does not perfectly reproduce the novel's subjective narrativity. The narrative text is largely devoted to recounting Josef K.'s inner monologue; rather than take up most of the dramatic text with a literal transposition of this monologue, external motivations (whether real or imagined) must be provided as a substitute. In other words, because we cannot constantly be made party to K.'s thought processes onstage, his motivation must often be externalized for us. Though Ira Kuhn claims that Barrault wilfully distorted Kafka, because in the novel "Josef K. is not coerced, or tricked or forced into anything as is, at times, his counterpart in Gide's dramatization" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 234), many events in the novel are set up with lengthy exposition which cannot easily be directly transposed to the stage.

One example of this disparity between novel and play is the "carpenter Lanz" episode, which has annoyed several critics. In the novel, Josef K. goes to the address where his first interrogation is set, but is afraid to ask the exact whereabouts of the court itself. Instead, he asks if a carpenter named Lanz lives in the building, choosing the name "Lanz" only because that is the name of his landlady's nephew, an army captain who lives in the same boarding house. Thanks to his subterfuge, K. is then led through the building by the residents until he is recognized as one of the accused by the laundress, who ushers him into the court (Kafka 49-51).

In the play, however, Joseph K. is explicitly told to ask for "the carpenter Lanz" in the phone call that announces the interrogation to him (though the interrogation does not, in fact, take place when K. first goes to the building; Gide and Barrault 24-26). Reinhard Kuhn suggests that Gide

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[51] "Quand nous avons monté *Le Procès*, le public a fort bien compris que tous ces personnages étaient des projections personnelles du héros."

made this change because he lacked a "sense of the absurd," or because he was "deceived by certain interpretations of Kafka more or less in fashion at the time, which insisted on the non-psychological character of Kafka's novels" (R. Kuhn/PM 172)[52]; while Ira Kuhn argues, "The carpenter Lanz episode is an example of Gide's subconscious need to rationalize" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 229).

"Feeding" Joseph K. the phrase as a password, however, saves valuable time. K. would otherwise have to speak aloud the thought process that leads his counterpart in the novel to invent the carpenter (in fact, this is impossible in the play because the name of Captain Lanz, the idea's inspiration, has been cut altogether). Also, though Ira Kuhn complains that this strategy "eliminat[es] the mysterious and nightmarish quality of K.'s search for the Court" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 230), it also eliminates the time-consuming search through four storeys of the apartment block (Kafka 49-51). Here again, a critic overlooks the atmosphere of mystery and nightmare repeatedly mentioned by contemporary reviewers of the performance text, in order to maintain that Barrault and Gide deprived the adaptation of these qualities.

Perhaps, as Rebecca M. Vallette suggests, it is in compensation for removing this long search that Barrault and Gide have Joseph K. ask both the lawyer Huld and the painter Titorelli at later stages who "the carpenter Lanz" is (Vallette 92). Kuhn claims that it is ridiculous of K. to ask this question because "he knows that carpenter Lanz is just a password" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 230); in fact, however, K. does not necessarily know that there is no such person. Only the last time K. asks does Titorelli explicitly tell him that "The carpenter Lanz does not exist. It's a password"—a password whose power, even as Titorelli replies, causes the artist's loft to open into the spacious

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[52] "Il se peut que Gide ait été ici trompé par certaines interprétations de Kafka qui étaient plus ou moins à la mode, et qui insistaient sur le caractère non-psychologique des romans kafkaïens."

courtroom (Gide and Barrault/PM 99).[53] Ira Kuhn, by quoting Huld's and Titorelli's responses in reverse order, makes Barrault's Joseph K. look more stupid than he is (230).

Neither the Whipper episode nor the carpenter Lanz episode, however, undergoes as radical a change as K.'s hearing (the novel's second chapter), which is transposed to the end of the play, where it immediately precedes the cathedral scene, and thus appears in a very different context, becoming the "Trial" of the title and forming a complex which merges into the cathedral scene and hence into the final execution. Kurt Klinger admires the way in which "K.'s rebellion, the affront to the court, and the adaptation's key sentence—that the individual case 'is the symbol of an action taken against many. It is for these that I stand here, not for myself'—are followed immediately by the execution" (Klinger/PM 62).[54] Ira Kuhn, however, does not see this manipulation so kindly.

Kuhn is extremely disturbed by her perception that "[w]ithout concern for the implications that a reunion of all major characters at K.'s hearing would have for the interpretation of the work, Mlle Bürstner, Mme Grubach, lawyer Huld, Leni, Block, the director of the bank, K.'s uncle and Titorelli are brought together for a theatrical finale" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 239). This objection is countered, however, by Armgard Gerbitz's observation that this gathering, while it does serve purely formal dramatic conventions, is by no means "without concern for the implications," which are entirely in keeping with Barrault and Gide's project: "Such an assembly, only suggested in the novel, implies that all of the apparently helpful and friendly people . . . whom K. has met

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[53] "Le menusier Lanz n'existe pas. C'est un mot de passe."

[54] "Dem Aufbegehren Josef K.s, der Beleidigung des Gerichts und dem Schlüsselsatz der Bearbeitung, der einzelne Fall sei 'das Zeichen eines Verfahrens, wie es gegen viele geübt wird. Für diese stehe ich hier ein, nicht für mich', folgt die Exekution auf dem Fuße." The "key sentence," as it stands in the original, is: "Aussi bien n'est-ce pas tant pour moi, que pour ceux-là, pour tous les innocents, accusés comme moi, que je parle" (Gide and Barrault 107).

individually during the period of his trial, are in reality themselves imprisoned within the huge organization of the Law that now confronts K." (Gerbitz 45).

Gerbitz and Kuhn, by the way, consistently contradict each other not only in their interpretation of this scene of *Le Procès*, but of the original novel as well. Kuhn takes exception to the characterization of K. in this scene, maintaining that shifting of the hearing to the end of the play proves that "Gide and Barrault did not see K. as someone who changes as his trial progresses," as Kuhn claims K. does, because only "someone who does not detect a change in K. from rejection to acceptance of the Law, could have K. act so brashly and indignantly at such an advanced point of his trial." Kuhn also blames this perceived deficiency of interpretation entirely on Barrault (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 239). Gerbitz, by concentrating on Barrault's and Gide's combining of K.'s hearing with the Tradesman Block scenes of the novel, points out that K.'s development is thereby contrasted with Block's, for "by making the interrogation K.'s and not Block's, who has waited patiently for five years and employed all possible means of support, Gide points out that K. has chosen to do the correct thing, because the only way that one can enter the door into the highest Law is alone" (Gerbitz 45).

In Gerbitz's interpretation, K.'s "develop[ment] into an individual" is thrown into sharp relief by "the caricaturized, dehumanized slave Block" (45) and by the "Chorus of the Defendants" which Barrault and Gide have added in an earlier scene (35-36). Gerbitz thus maintains, in sharp contrast to Kuhn, that "[t]he only character who undergoes a transformation in the play (unlike in the novel where it is never achieved) is K. himself" (84), and further points out that Barrault and Gide's individualization of K. directly contradict's Heinz Politzer's interpretation of K. as an "Everyman" figure, which may explain in part Politzer's dislike of the play (45). Clearly, then, while Barrault's and Gide's transposition of this scene may be a radical alteration, it is demonstrably not arbitrary and

can easily be attributed to important thematic demands.

So likewise can the changes made in the cathedral scene, which in *Le Procès* follows the hearing immediately. As mentioned, the famous parable "Before the Law," which is recounted and interpreted by the priest in the novel (Kafka 255-264), is cut from the dramatic text (much as the "Grand Inquisitor" episode, as we have seen, was cut from Copeau and Croué's version of *The Brothers Karamazov*), no doubt because narrating it would be undramatic (Vallette 91), and enacting it would slow the pace of a play that is now proceeding to its conclusion. A passing reference is nonetheless made to the parable when the priest says, "As a sentinel, I am set to guard a door, preventing entry to it. Yet it's for you I've been waiting, Joseph K., and this door, I tell you, is made for you alone" (Gide and Barrault/PM 114).[55]

This reference does not suffice for Ira Kuhn, who complains that "[o]nly someone familiar with the novel is able to tell that the following paragraph is at the same time a reference to and an interpretation of the parable" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 232-233). This objection is insubstantial, however: the reference substitutes for the parable, and no spectator unfamiliar with the novel is likely to miss the excised section. Kuhn apparently fears that spectators of the play are being cheated of the full symbolic value of the novel; this fear can perhaps be allayed with a reference to Armgard Gerbitz's interpretation of Barrault's and Gide's hearing scene, in which, at the moment Joseph K. dismisses his lawyer (which K. does in privacy in the novel), the scene changes to represent the court itself: "The scene grows larger. The arches go up and reveal a painted curtain representing a symphony of red robes. Rows of pillars as in 17th century paintings, drawing the eye across the vista toward a stretch of blue sky" (Gide and Barrault/Katz 123).

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[55] "Sentinelle, on me confie la garde d'une porte afin d'en interdire l'entrée. Pourtant c'est toi que j'attendais, Joseph K..., et cette entrée, je te le dis, n'est faite que pour toi."

As Gerbitz remarks, this scene is very different from Kafka's dark, stuffy and crowded courtroom, but can be explained thematically as another form of interpretation of the parable "Before the Law":

> Could the elaborate decor not be understood as a more dramatic representation of the moment in the parable . . ., in which the waiting man, already old and weak . . ., discovers ["a radiance that streams inextinguishably from the door of the Law" (Kafka/Muir and Muir 269)]? . . . It is possible that in this climatic [*sic*] scene Gide indirectly establishes the relationship existing between the destiny of the man from the country and that of K. and thereby makes the play, like the novel, a parable. (Gerbitz 43)

In Gerbitz's ingenious interpretation, quite in keeping with Barrault's idea of "equivalences," the opening up of the scene from Titorelli's cramped loft to the spacious courtroom symbolizes the possibility of freedom which the trial itself means for K., while the darkening and narrowing of the stage space which changes the courtroom to the cathedral represents K.'s failure to enter into the "radiance" implied onstage by the visible blue sky (43-44). The priest's brief reference to the "door" he guards has thus been prefigured in a striking and theatrical manner by the set, the lighting and the choreography of the actors.

As effective a means of translating the parable to the stage as this must have been, it leaves the cathedral scene with little to do dramaturgically, and leaves the priest without much to say. For this reason, the most apparent change in the play (except for scenic transposition) occurs in the cathedral: in the novel the priest, whom Josef K. recognizes as the prison chaplain, nonetheless makes no reference to conventional Christian religion (he speaks not of the Bible, but only of the law [*das Gesetz*]; Gerbitz 48; I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 233), but Joseph K. in *Le Procès* comes upon the priest delivering a sermon to the empty cathedral, based upon the lamentations of Jeremiah (Lamentations 3:7 and 3:31).

The use of biblical quotation in this scene is arguably the strongest sign in the play of Gide's

hand, for Gide knew the Bible extremely well and used quotations from it throughout his works (Tournier 51); certainly the use of such references for thematic purposes is more a trait of Gide than of either Barrault or Kafka. Gerbitz devotes several pages (48-58) to Gide's Calvinist background and to his personal view of spirituality, contrasting it with Kafka's religious rootlessness, in order to explain that Gide is "concerned with adding precision to the suggested ambiguity (in the novel) of the chaplain's character and duty" (55) and that the new development of the scene reflects Gide's more positive humanist view of human responsibility than Kafka's (57-58). However, I propose a simpler interpretation, in which Gide's undeniable biblical knowledge and spiritual concerns are subordinated to Barrault's thematic concerns in historical context.

As Gerbitz points out, Jeremiah, from whose lamentations the priest's sermon is taken in the play, was "one of the four great Hebrew prophets who was deeply concerned for the Israelites . . . whom he could not persuade to do penitence and contrition in order to prevent their total ruin" (Gerbitz 48-49). Aptly enough for the play, Jeremiah was also arrested, imprisoned and delivered several times during his career as a prophet, which coincided with the destruction of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon. The third chapter of his Lamentations complains of his captivity and torment at the hands of the enemy, and proclaims his faith in God (the lines quoted in *Le Procès* are here italicized): "*He* [mine enemy] *hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out*. . . . It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. . . . *For the Lord will not cast off for ever*." There is little mention in this chapter of the Hebrews' transgressions, but rather exhortations to hope of liberation and vengeance: "Render unto them a recompense, O Lord, according to the work of their hands" (Lam. 3:64).

I suggest that in the context of 1947, this passage is tied not to abstract Gidean metaphysics, but to recent historical events. Barrault believed that "the art of the theatre is essentially an art of

topicality" (Barrault/PM, *Reflexions sur le théâtre* 139, quoted in Gerbitz 5)[56], and he had said that he had chosen to interpret *Le Procès* according to its relevance to "the Jewish question," meaning the recent deportation and destruction of the Jews under the occupation ("J.D.," 6). This interpretation was rendered easier by the recent emphasis which existentialists like Sartre had laid upon the importance of Kafka's Jewishness, based on Max Brod's original contention that Kafka was first and foremost a religious thinker, if not conventionally Jewish. Further, the general conflation of the author Kafka with his protagonists enabled Joseph K. to be seen as a Jew as well (although Kafka never uses the word in the novel, and indeed the fragment "Journey to His Mother," to which Gide and Barrault and their contemporaries had no access, explicitly places K. in a Christian family; Kafka 277-278): at least one reviewer ("J.D.") refers to Joseph K. as "Kafka," and Alexandre Vialatte writes that "every evening, at the Théâtre Marigny, the Parisians come to see Kafka . . . punish himself for a crime whose name he does not know" (Vialatte/PM 1).[57]

Traces of this interpretation are to be found throughout the play, from the very beginning, when Joseph K. ironically wishes "Peace on earth to men of good will," immediately before remarking "*Nom du chien*! Why, it's my birthday today!"[58] (Gide and Barrault/PM 10). Armgard Gerbitz remarks on the biblical quotation, and devotes five pages to demonstrating that Barrault and Gide have chosen to begin the play with a complicated philosophical game in which "these first few words should be understood in a Gidian manner, rather than in their traditional sense, for they are

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[56] ". . . 'l'art du théâtre est essentiellement un art d'Actualité. . . . Parce que l'art du théâtre traîte essentiellement du Présent et du Simultané."

[57] "Chaque soir, au Théâtre Marigny, les Parisiens viennent voir Kafka . . . se punir d'une faute dont il ignore le nom."

[58] "Paix sur la terre aux hommes de bonne volonté. . . . A-men! . . . Nom du chien! Mais c'est mon anniversaire, aujourd'hui!"

but an example of the manner in which André Gide frequently resorted to biblical references, especially from the New Testament, when trying to clarify a personal moral or ethical conviction" (Gerbitz 18). For Gerbitz, however, the play fails to follow this "thematic thread," because Gide "did not manage to integrate it successfully into the rest of the play" until it appears again in the final scene (21). Yet Gerbitz fails to associate the biblical quotation (Luke 2:14), inextricably associated with the birth of Christ, with Joseph K.'s birthday.

It seems unlikely that Barrault, an experienced dramaturge, would begin a play with the complicated puzzle suggested by Gerbitz. If K. speaks the opening words ironically, we might more simply assume that he is not a Christian; and yet by tying K.'s own birthday to Christ's, Barrault and Gide certainly seem to imply that he is at least a Christlike figure. This would then tie in with his assertion in the courtroom that he represents "all those innocent accused" (Gide and Barrault/PM 107; this statement also occurs in the novel but seems less important because the courtroom scene takes place so early [Kafka 57]). The possibility of K.'s Jewishness is accentuated by the appearance of Block in this scene, one of those very accused. K. thus represents, among others, Block; and pictures from the production show Block portrayed as an older man, with a large nose, an Asiatic-style goatee, and a black skull-cap—in other words, as a Shylock-figure, or the stereotypical Jew of antisemitic propaganda (Gide and Barrault/Katz 80).

Such an interpretation not only explains the choice of text for the priest's sermon, but also gives a double meaning to K.'s question to the priest—"Are you, too, prejudiced against me?"—and to the reply: "I have no prejudice against you" (Gide and Barrault/PM 113[59]; these words also occur in the novel: Kafka 253). It may also explain why the only words of comfort the priest has for

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[59] "Je n'ai pas de prévention contre toi."

Joseph K. are "You must tell yourself: I am hunted; I am chosen" (Gide and Barrault/PM 114).[60] Thus the "hunted" quality which had struck Gide so forcibly in reading the novel years before now numbers Joseph K. among the "chosen," and perhaps among God's chosen people. Significantly, Gide, who knew the Bible so well, changed (or allowed Barrault to change) the quotation from Jeremiah, so that instead of "He has hedged me about with walls," the priest says "You [*vous*] have hedged me about with walls" (111)[61], perhaps directed to God, but perhaps implicating the congregation—the audience of the performance text.

Even the final execution scene serves this reading, for the odd guards who lead K. away to death are given their orders by a police inspector who has no counterpart in the novel (Gide and Barrault 116). Ira Kuhn maintains that here again Gide has deprived Kafka of his mystery, and that the appearance of ordinary police, "probably inspired by the experiences of the Second World War, is an interpretation on the part of Gide that is not only uncalled for, but also detrimental to the grotesque atmosphere Kafka has so well evoked in the novel's last chapter" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 231). This reference is certainly called for by Barrault's desire to be topical, however, and the vivid public memory that the occupiers had in fact delegated the regular French police to round up Jews for deportation must surely have provided all the "grotesque atmosphere" that could be hoped for.

I have laid great emphasis on this narrow interpretation of *Le Procès* because it corresponds to aims attributed to Barrault ("J. D." 6). It is important to note, however, that Barrault apparently did not place so much weight on this interpretation in the performance text that a more general

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[60] "Tu dois te dire: je suis traqué; je suis élu."

[61] "'Vous m'avez entouré d'un mur afin que je ne sorte pas!'"

reference to the events of the occupation was impossible. In the contemporary climate, Barrault may have been apprehensive about alienating some of his audience. The nationalist right wing was gaining in influence in France, and already since early 1947, at the public meetings which ostensibly discussed amnesty for collaborators, the cries of "Long live Pétain!" and "Down with DeGaulle!" were mixed with shouts of "Death to the Jews!" (Lottman 272). At least one review of *Le Procès* seems to bear signs of this resurgent nationalism: Jean-Jacques Gautier, in *Le Figaro*, wrote, "If tomorrow our theatre were to declare itself for a larger number of such plays, which obviously stem from a central European aesthetic, then it seems to me the houses would quickly empty" (Gautier/PM 47).[62] Gautier's criticism seems rooted in nationalistic rather than aesthetic grounds; it had not been long previously that a reviewer might well have written "Jewish" instead of "central European." Although Gautier himself (whom Paul Claudel called *ce petit paltoquet*, or "that little boor"; Claudel and Barrault/PM 348) might not have meant his remarks to be antisemitic (they might well be anti-German), there were no doubt those who might willingly have read it as such if the "Jewish" element of *Le Procès* were emphasized strongly enough. Given Barrault's temperament, he may have wanted to steer clear of possible confrontation with reactionary elements in the public, and so chose to emphasize the more general aspects of the production.

The production's reference to the occupation was nonetheless made fully evident in the programme for *Le Procès*, which bore "the twenty-four identity cards of the actors, stamped on one corner, and with two initials and a number: J.-L. B..., known as 'K...', 400,205" (Kemp/PM 6).[63] No

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[62] "Wenn aber unser Theater sich morgen zu einer größeren Anzahl solcher Stücke bekennen würde, die offensichtlich einer zentraleuropäischen Ästhetik entspringen, dann würden sich die Säle schnell leeren, so scheint mir." (From the German translation presented in *Prisma* 17, 1948)

[63] "Sur le programme, spirituellement, on a aligné les vingt-quatre cartes d'identité des artistes, marquées d'un quart de timbre, de deux initiales et d'un numéro: J.-L. B . . ., dit 'K. . .',

wonder, then, that André Frank wrote in *Le Populaire* that no one could attend this production without finding there "the dramatic, grandiose, powerful images of the sufferings of our time" (Frank/PM n.p.)[64], while "J. D.," in *Le Figaro littéraire*, remarked that "*Le Procès* is a permanent spectacle. Our own" ("J. D."/PM 6).[65] These readings had strong encouragement: to place the stamp of approval on this most general interpretation of the production, André Gide himself wrote in the programme, "This trial is your trial" ("J. D."/PM 6).[66]

It is, of course, important both for this more general reading of *Le Procès* and for the more specific "Jewish-oriented" reading that Gide's and Barrault's Joseph K. really be an innocent victim, which explains, for example, Max Brod's terse dismissal of the adaptation: in Brod's opinion, the failure lay in part in portraying K. as innocent (Brod's interpretation of the novel is that K. is guilty of "lovelessness"; Brod 157; 253-256). For any other critic who interprets K. as bearing some real guilt of whatever kind, the Gide-Barrault reading is clearly inadequate or, worse, misleading.

There is one exception to this statement: namely, those critics who conflated K.'s guilt with Kafka's Jewishness. Brod was well aware that such interpretations existed, and ascribed them above all to the French (Brod 267). Indeed, since the 'thirties both Catholic commentators like Daniel-Rops and Jean Carrive and Protestants like Denis de Rougemont had maintained that in Kafka's universe, "divine Grace" was either impossible or inaccessible because "Kafka's inability to make the leap into the unknown, to have faith in Jesus Christ, and to let Him be the way to salvation, makes him

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400,205 . . . "

[64] "Je ne crois pas que l'on puisse sentir l'importance profonde et décisive du *Procès* que la Compagnie de Madeleine Renaud et de Jean-Louis Barrault, sans y trouver aussi des images dramatiques, grandioses, puissantes des souffrances de notre temps."

[65] "*Le Procès*, c'est un spectacle permanent. Le nôtre."

[66] "Ce procès est ton procès."

inevitably prisoner of the anguish that he feels in face [*sic*] of our human condition" (I. Kuhn, "Kafka and the Theatre of the Absurd", 14-16). Paul Claudel, whose devout Catholicism often expressed itself as chauvinism, endorsed *Le Procès* even while proclaiming this interpretation: "There remains God to whom our K. makes his appeal, and Kafka, as a Jew, wins no response but the confirmation of his essential culpability in respect to the Creator, to whom he is indebted. Upon the threshold of Christianity he falls, blind, uncomprehending. There is nothing more but to end it. No matter how. With a kitchen knife" (Claudel, "Le Procès de Kafka"/PM 1).[67]

Thus Claudel praised Barrault's production and acknowledged its applicability to *la question juive* even while he subverted what may have been Barrault's (and what almost certainly would have been Gide's) intentions in dealing with that question, in the form of destruction of the innocent; for Claudel and many others who would never have thought themselves antisemitic, innocence and Jewishness were at the deepest level contradictory terms.

To return, however, to the final episode of *Le Procès*: even here, the narrower interpretation of the play according to the Jewish question is not necessary to provide a satisfying reading. Although Barrault and Gide's execution scene has been criticized as failing to convey the spirit of Kafka's conclusion—not only because of the intervention of mundane police officials, but because the inner monologue which signals K.'s resignation to his fate has been cut—it has nonetheless not been arbitrarily altered, but has been changed into a theatrical recapitulation of the greater action of the play, or as Armgard Gerbitz calls it: "a method of illumination—the whole fantastic pantomime being nothing but a short re-enactment of K.'s year-long process of questioning and resisting" (59-

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[67] "Il reste Dieu vers qui notre K. élève son appel, et Kafka, qui est juif, ne recueille pour réponse que la confirmation de sa culpabilité radicale à l'égard du Créateur, envers qui il est sous le coup d'une dette. Sur le seuil du christianisme, il tombe, aveugle, sans comprendre. Il n'y a plus qu'à s'en débarrasser. N'importe comment. Avec un couteau de cuisine."

60). This scene thus fits well with the repetitive structure of Kafka's narrative text, particularly, for example, as interpreted by Patrick Brantlinger (35-36).

There is some evidence, however, that this final scene was altered in the course of production, or after the original production. Reinhard Kuhn, for instance, mentions that the novel's comic exchange in which the two executioners politely pass the fatal knife back and forth, unsure which of them should strike K. with it (Kafka 271), does not appear in the play, and speculates that the omission is due to Gide's "insensitivity to this sort of black humour" (R. Kuhn/PM 173).[68] The stage directions, however, in the version of *Le Procès* published as part of *Le Théâtre complet de André Gide* (which reproduces the text of the original 1947 publication, with "some modifications . . . in the stage directions by Jean-Louis Barrault" [Gide and Barrault 125]) clearly describe exactly this business. At the same time, this edition does not contain K.'s final words from the novel, "Like a dog!" (Kafka 272); while Leon Katz's English translation, which also claims to be based on the version published in 1947, includes them (Gide and Barrault/Katz 140). Contemporary reviews do not make it clear whether these words were spoken in the production or not.

These important differences raise the possibility of other changes between editions of the playscript, which may reflect either changes in Barrault's staging, or the fact that the original publication (which must have been simultaneous with or soon after the production) was very possibly already in the proof stages before the rehearsal process had ended. Without access to other editions for comparison, I forego speculating about these changes, although a study of them might possibly prove instructive regarding Barrault's motivations and working methods.

At the centre of the production, of course, was its prime mover, Barrault himself, and his

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[68] "Était-il insensible à cette sorte d'humour noir?"

interpretation of Joseph K. Heinz Politzer's dismissal of Barrault's K. as a "charming boulevardier" no doubt owes much to the linguistic alterations in the adaptation from narrative text to dramatic text: as Vallette points out, "whereas in the novel K speaks a fairly literary and highly conservative German, interspersed with philosophic reflections, in the play K is much more excitable and uses everyday slang" (Vallette 88); or, as Ira Kuhn puts it, "The introduction of witticism and social ease in the portrayal of Josef K. is a disturbing change" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 239).

These changes are undoubtedly not arbitrary, however. Not only is Kafka's literary and stylized German far from being easily spoken aloud, but the extraordinary prolixity of his protagonist (who certainly sees himself as being charming and persuasive) requires massive cutting to prevent the dramatic text from being no more than a long series of untheatrical speeches. In the play, Gide's own tendency to write in a mannered and consciously "literary" style has been subsumed not only by a desire to "give precedence to Kafka" ("H.K."/PM 6)[69], but also by Barrault's recognition that the novel "swims in a kind of verbal fog, where the most simple words take on an unusual, as if incantatory, aspect"; and that since "nothing could be less visual" than this, the theatre must find other means to produce the same effects ("Avant-première: *Le Procès* de Kafka au Théâtre Marigny"/PM 2).[70] In fact, a comparison of surviving drafts shows a clear progression, as Gide pared away ever more verbiage to achieve a taut framework for Barrault's visual ideas (Claude 218-219).

This alleged change in K. to a self-assured boulevardier is in any case not remarked on by

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[69] ". . . m'effaçant le plus possible pour céder la place à Kafka . . . "

[70] ". . . 'Le Procès' baigne dans une sorte de brouillard verbal, où les mots les plus simples prennent un aspect insolite et comme incantatoire. Rien n'est précis encore moins visuel. . . . C'est cela justement qui m'a séduit: produire des effets analogue par des moyens différents."

the contemporary reviewers; Claudel above all saw Barrault's K. rather as "a crazed rat, a poor maddened insect"[71] with overtones of Kafka's Gregor Samsa (Claudel, "Le Procès de Kafka"/PM 1; it should be noted, however, that Claudel wrote privately to Barrault, "What a shame that my cursed deafness kept me from following everything" [Claudel and Barrault/PM 186][72]). Even the later critic Rebecca Vallette, reading the script differently from Ira Kuhn, sees Joseph K. rather as "a typical self-oriented bachelor, a middle-class bank employee of mediocre intelligence and sensitivity" and therefore no great charmer (93). Furthermore, the dreamlike and mechanical acting style which Barrault had developed as his own must have made it difficult to perceive his Joseph K. as merely suave, even as it disturbed some who saw Josef K. and *his* creator as equivalent.

Maja Goth, for example, complained that "the Marigny's Josef K. bears more of J.-L. Barrault's traits than the Czech author's" (Goth/PM 248)[73]; though photographs of the production show that some attempt was made to resemble Kafka, at least externally. Barrault slicked down and darkened his curly hair, parting it in the middle as Kafka had most of his life. From a distance, Barrault in makeup does look slightly like Kafka (see, for example, photos in Gide and Barrault/Katz 21;64;81;118).

To confuse the issue further, Barrault's mechanical style of acting in *Le Procès* was likened by several reviewers, as for example Gabriel Marcel and Jean Roy, to the screen persona of Charlie Chaplin (Marcel 8; J. Roy 1535), and Maja Goth also refers to Barrault's K. as "this swift *Charlot*" (*Ce Charlot véloce*; Goth/PM 248). Barrault and Gide, in their stage directions, explicitly call for

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[71] ". . . un rat afollé, un pauvre insecte affolé qui se cogne désespèrément à tous les murs."

[72] "Quel dommage que ma maudite surdité ne m'ait pas permis de tout suivre . . ."

[73] "Or le Josef K. de Marigny porte plus les traits de J.-L. Barrault que ceux de l'auteur tchèque."

K. to explain his arrest to Mlle. Bürstner by means of "a burlesque pantomime *à la* Charlie Chaplin" (Gide and Barrault/Katz 35), and this is perhaps fitting, since Brod had already drawn attention to Chaplinesque elements in Kafka's sense of humour (Brod 80).

At the same time, the comic aspect inherent in this comparison troubled some reviewers, including Jean Roy, and (according to Ira Kuhn) Gide himself (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 237). Barrault had said in an interview before the opening, "I think I shall have succeeded in not betraying Kafka if the audience laughs" (Barrault/PM, quoted in I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 227)[74], and this statement, whether known to Gide or not, prompts Kuhn to observe that the audience "did indeed laugh and the play was a great success, but only for those who were not at all or only superficially familiar with Kafka's work" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 227).

Leaving aside for the moment the possibility that Gide may have objected to a comic interpretation, it should be observed that on the one hand Kafka's narrative text indeed has its humourous moments, as Maja Goth remarks ("There is no lack of comic characters in Kafka either. . . . Life becomes a tragicomedy" (Goth/PM 32-33)[75]; and that Brod remembered Kafka reading the first chapter aloud to his circle of friends, provoking such laughter that the author himself could not read for laughing (Brod 156). Indeed, by 1966, reviewer Christoph Trilse could take Czech director Jan Grossman to task for not making his adaptation of *Der Proceß* funny enough: "Kafka on the stage? Yes, but as Kafka-comedy" (Trilse/PM 32).[76]

On the other hand, Barrault himself was aware that the humour of *Le Procès* had to serve the

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[74] "Je crois que j'aurais réussi à ne pas trahir Kafka si le public rit."

[75] "Il ne manque pas non plus chez Kafka de personnages comiques. . . . La vie devient une tragi-comédie."

[76] "Kafka auf der Bühne? Ja, aber als Kafka-Komödie."

greater purpose of creating the nightmare: "everything must remain within the limits of humour and anguish, without spilling over into any romantic or fantastic deformation of the Doctor Caligari kind. If one manages to keep within the true, the real, the valid, then the slightest shock of surprise becomes terrifying" (Barrault/Griffin 175).

As Gerbitz further points out in respect to the scene in the stuffy corridors of the court, where K. has great difficulty finding an exit into the fresh air (described in detail in Benmussa 96-106): "It is the familiar technique of the circus-clown who, in an attempt to reach the goal of his desire, repeatedly falls on his face. . . . However, due to the seriousness of his situation these attempts already approach the tragic-comic" (Gerbitz 87). K. incidentally falls three times, again Christ-like, in the course of this scene.

Barrault apparently succeeded to some extent in making the humour serve the uncanny atmosphere of the play, for most of the reviewers acknowledged that the play was not merely amusing but also touching, disturbing, terrifying and even at times, as Robert Kemp found, erotic (6); moreover, the identification of the play's events as tied to the occupation and (thanks to the conflation of Kafka with K.) to Jewish themes in that context must have given *Le Procès* a macabre relevance which kept it from being perceived as mere comedy despite its absurdity.

Kuhn, however, steadfastly maintains that the adaptation, while not intended as such, was a thoroughly misleading betrayal of Kafka's *Proceß*. She writes, "Almost all of the reviews of the play were enthusiastic, and yet the more discerning critic, even while praising the production and thanking Gide and Barrault for having put Kafka on the stage, could not refrain from expressing his fears that the real atmosphere of *Der Prozess* had been lost" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 227).

In Kuhn's estimation, of course, those critics who express such fears are self-selected as "more discerning." Among these were Francis Ambrière of *Opera*, who wrote, "However

scrupulous Messrs. Gide and Barrault have been in respecting Kafka's intentions, their play lacks the better part of the novel: the fever, the anguish, the shiver of mystery," and "I left *Le Procès* . . . filled with so embarrassing an admiration for M. Barrault and the perfection of his spectacle, that Kafka and his message found themselves pushed to the background" (Ambrière/PM, in I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 239).[77] Claude Roy, in the communist journal *Action*, could not even praise the production: "One has such difficulty finding Kafka in this spectacle, which is not only mendacious in itself, but in respect to the work that it adapts" (C. Roy/PM 11).[78]

The less discerning critics included "J.D." in *Le Figaro littéraire* ("It is quite true that Barrault's *mise en scène* has recreated the flesh of the work and its anguish"; "J.D."/PM 6)[79], John Savacool in the *New York Times* (who, despite a generally unfavourable review, wrote: "M. Gide has been extraordinarily faithful to the novelist's text"; Savacool 7), and Gustave Joly in *L'Aurore* ("Messrs. André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault show an utter loyalty to Kafka and their adaptation scrupulously respects the spirit and the letter of the novel"; Joly/PM 2).[80] Kuhn does not mention either Savacool or Joly, and uses a quotation from "J.D." ("Reading the text, however, one has the feeling that something essential is lacking: the gripping atmosphere of the novel"; "J.D."/PM 6)[81]

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[77] ". . . je suis sorti de *Procès* . . . tout plein d'une admiration si génante pour M. Barrault et la perfection de son spectacle que Kafka et son message s'en trouvaient repoussés à l'arrière-plan."

[78] "C'est qu'on retrouve assez malaisément Kafka dans ce spectacle, qui n'est pas seulement décevant en lui même, mais par rapport à l'oeuvre qu'il adapte."

[79] "Il est bien vrai que la mise en scène de Barrault recréé la chair de l'œuvre et son angoisse."

[80] "MM. André Gide et Jean-Louis Barrault temoignent [*sic*] envers Kafka d'une entière loyauté et leur adaptation respecte scrupuleusement l'esprit et la lettre du roman . . ."

[81] "À lire ce texte, cependant, on a le sentiment qu'il lui manque quelque chose d'essentiel: le climat saisissant du roman."

to support her own position, without mentioning that the same critic goes on to describe the production itself as restoring this quality.

It is also noteworthy that some of the negative criticisms seemed to miss the point not just of the adaptation, but of Kafka altogether. Jean-Jacques Gautier, for example, complained that such plays were no use to theatregoers "who have had no 'philosophical schooling'" (Gautier/PM 47).[82] John Savacool claimed that "Kafka makes lots of sense, like non-Euclidean geometry, if you have the key to interpret his works," which "M. Gide, . . . Kafka-like, has only vaguely indicated"; *Le Procès*, therefore, "does not play fair with its audience," many of whom "rightfully cling to the old Gallic notion that in the theatre, at least, the writer must make some kind of sense"—while, presumably, the novelist is not so obligated, since explanatory notes and prefaces can helpfully be added. Savacool's review, which also takes Gide and Barrault to task for "violating the faith which brings an audience into the theatre to see an imitation of life" (Savacool 7), now seems ironic in the extreme, given the rise, shortly afterwards, of Beckett, Ionesco, and the Absurd.

At the same time, even some of Kuhn's "more discerning" critics demonstrate that Barrault's intention to make the play relevant had at least been successfully communicated, or that Barrault's work was nonetheless of high quality. Maja Goth, for example, writes that all of Barrault's "equivalences," by virtue of their sheer variety, "have nothing to do with the dead atmosphere of the authentic *Proceß*. K.'s trial at the Marigny is nothing more than *a court of the Gestapo or the GPU*; it gives little space to the interior trial" (Goth/PM 249; emphasis added)[83]; while Paul Claudel, whom

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[82] "Eine enorme Zahl guter Theaterbesucher würden [die Theater] verlassen, die keine 'philosophische Schulung' erhalten haben" (From the German translation presented in *Prisma* 17, 1948).

[83] "Le procès du K. de Marigny n'est qu'une instance de la Gestapo ou de la guépéou; il fait peu de place au procès intérieur."

both Goth and Ira Kuhn mistakenly name as criticizing Barrault for achieving a different atmosphere from the novel's (Goth 249-250; I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 236), refers to Barrault as "*a man of genius*" (Claudel's emphasis; Claudel, "Le Procès de Kafka"/PM 1).[84] Even Jean Roy, in *Les Temps Modernes*, whose review praises and condemns both dramatic text and performance text in roughly equal measure, wrote, "The whole has, nonetheless, the rare merit of satisfying both those who have read Kafka and those who have not" (J. Roy/PM 1535).[85] In short, the reviewers and contemporary critics of the production are enough at variance that a careful selection of quotations can support almost any critical opinion about *Le Procès.* As a result, the critics who regard the adaptation from a historical remove also display a wide range of opinions.

Far from Max Brod's and Heinz Politzer's condemnation of *Le Procès*, for example, Reinhard Kuhn's personal essay, while lamenting Gide's "relative insensitivity to black humour and the absurd," nonetheless concludes that "Gide's adaptation does not completely betray the spirit of the novel. . . . [D]espite his partial misunderstandings, he found in *Le Procès*, much more than in the story of Oedipus [which Gide had written for the stage in 1931], a myth to his measure" (R. Kuhn 172-173).

Rebecca Vallette, in a brief structural study with little reference to secondary literature, judges that "Gide and Barrault remained faithful to both [Kafka's] narrative and the actual dialogues. . . . But *Le Procès* is not only an example of a fine French adaptation of a German novel. It has independently gained stature as an effective piece of dramatic literature" (Vallette 94).

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[84] ". . .à notre moment médiocre, dans notre atmosphère accablée, le milieu le plus inattendu nous a fourni *un homme de génie*."

[85] "L'ensemble a, néanmoins, le rare mérite de satisfaire à la fois ceux qui ont lu Kafka et ceux qui ne l'ont pas lu."

Peter Lev, in a brief comparison of the Gide-Barrault adaptation, Orson Welles's film version, and a short educational film, *The Trials of Franz Kafka*, concludes that "Barrault and Gide have, in general, done a remarkable job of adapting Kafka, adding their own concerns without destroying the thrust of the original" (Lev 182).

Even Ira Kuhn, the most methodical of the adaptation's detractors, grants that "[a]s unfaithful as *Le Procès* was to the true atmosphere of Kafka's work, it had all the excitement of an approaching avant-garde," and that "the play still evoked enough of the anguish and despair of Kafka's paradoxical world to enable it, with the help of Barrault's theatrical genius, to become a success and strike a responsive chord in the post-war generation" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 240). Notably, however, she ascribes the production's popularity mainly to the effects of the war, which made the French audience "unusually receptive": "That recent, mutually shared experience which lifted the question of life's paradoxes from the purely abstract and philosophical realm and placed it into a concrete, everyday world, accounts not only for Kafka's unusual impact on the French audience, but also for the audience's subjective response to the play. In this lack of objectivity towards Kafka's work, the French were aided both by Gide and Barrault" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 226).

The basic presupposition of this claim would seem to be that people (or in this case, *a* people) exist or ought to exist in a sort of natural state of objectivity towards an artist and his or her work. The theatregoers' recognition of their own situation onstage at the Marigny becomes for Kuhn not the sign of success that Barrault saw in it, but rather proof that the events of the war had unbalanced the public's judgement: *Le Procès* "remains the effort of two great personalities to render hommage [*sic*] to Franz Kafka, but who in spite of their best intentions were unable to efface their individualities and let Kafka speak through his work to the impressionable French post-war audience" (227).

Against this image of a public unified by existential shell-shock into docility, Barrault's own opinion stands in evidence; when Barrault and Pol Quentin adapted Kafka's *Das Schloß* (*The Castle*) for the stage in 1957, Barrault writes, "The Kafka purists were up in arms. There were more and more purists, including the ones who had discovered Kafka by going to see *Le Procès*" (Barrault/Griffin 241).

The Authors' Contributions and Judgements

Although I have laid heavy emphasis in this chapter on Barrault's influence on *Le Procès* in order to counteract the tendency to ascribe the adaptation to Gide alone, it is clear that both authors brought their own influences and concerns to the work. However much Gide may have subordinated his personal writing style to his idea of Kafka's style and to Barrault's aims for the project, it is certainly no less possible to fit *Le Procès* into Gide's oeuvre, although this adaptation is as much marginalized in criticism of Gide's theatre as Gide's theatre is in criticism of his work as a whole.

E. San Juan, Jr., for example, one of the few critics to treat Gide's theatre in depth, claims (in a study that nonetheless excludes *Le Procès*) that "Gide's theater is . . . the theater of the individual struggling to find his own identity," in which "[o]bjective circumstances and characters are used to embody or symbolize the inner dialogue of opposing moral values: the sensual, dionysian and diabolic potencies of humans against the abstract god of his conscience" (6-7). In this adaptation Gide has had only to invert his usual theme, that "[i]n this struggle, [the individual] becomes heroic" (6), and it is perhaps in this very inversion that, as Gerbitz suggests, "Gide's interpretation creates, what could be called the play's affinity with existential theatre . . . in as far as it presents the dilemma of modern man whose traditional and religious beliefs are no longer intact and are, therefore, unable to serve him as crutches; left alone, he faces the task of justifying his human existence within a new

context of undefined values" (70-71).

If it is Gide's philosophical concerns, or at least this unusual expression of them, that most visibly tie *Le Procès* to existentialism (though Gide was not himself an existentialist), then it is Barrault's dramaturgy which foreshadows the Theatre of the Absurd. As Ira Kuhn admits, *Le Procès* "had all the excitement of an approaching avant-garde" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 240), because Barrault interpreted Kafka's work in such a form that "apparently nothing happens; on the contrary, what happens, is Nothing. . . . One dreams of running, but of making no progress" (Barrault/PM, *Une Troupe et ses auteurs* (Paris, 1950), 111; quoted in Gerbitz 71).[86]

To this end, Barrault realized that in order to dramatize what is "primarily an emotional and even a subconscious experience," despite the extremely verbally- and even philosophically-based nature of the original novel, for the stage "the reliance on mime and gesture would seem more adequate than the use of discursive thought" (Gerbitz 74). Ironically, though Barrault is thus credited with producing "the first play that fully represented the Theatre of the Absurd in its mid-twentieth-century form" (Esslin 356), he proved in the long run to be eclipsed by the avant-garde he had anticipated, and by 1960, Walter Fowlie writes that "[r]ecently . . . the critics have been harsh on Barrault and have claimed that he is out of touch with life, out of touch with the changes that are taking place in the theater" (Fowlie 51).

As we have seen, then, the Barrault-Gide adaptation of *Der Proceß* clearly shows specific signs of its historical and social context which problematize any attempt to describe its strategies of adaptation as "arbitrary" or "willful." The work of adaptation, like the work of critical interpretation, is shaped not only by the adapters' desire to express the theme of the work being interpreted, but also

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[86] "Rien apparemment ne se passe; au contraire ce qui se passe c'est Rien. . . . Rêver qu'on court mais qu'on n'avance pas."

by their need to address a specific audience.

Finally, it seems fitting and useful to sum up the feelings of the adapters themselves toward the results of their project. Barrault and Gide knew from the beginning that their adaptation would raise hackles among critics, and embarked on the work nonetheless. While their opinion of their own work is also problematic, it at least tells us whether or not they felt they had succeeded on their own terms.

Curiously, though the adaptation is often credited to Gide alone, Gide's own opinion of the finished work has proved difficult to reconstruct. In part, this is because of the adaptation's marginal status among his considerable output of prose, criticism, correspondence, and theatre, particularly from the point of view of textually-oriented critics. The only attempt in English to portray Gide's reaction to the production has been Ira Kuhn's, which, as we shall see, is flawed in several respects.

One of Kuhn's most interesting charges against the production is that because the worst excesses in the adaptation were Barrault's, Gide chose to distance himself from the production in protest. Kuhn claims that Gide's note to the published edition of *Le Procès*, crediting Barrault with the play's success, is not to be taken at face value, for "[t]hese words . . . do not stem from Gide's desire to be gracious and kind to Jean-Louis Barrault. In a very discreet and polite way Gide is letting everyone know that he does not assume full responsibility for the play version of *Le Procès*" (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 236).

Kuhn's assertion is based on truth; there were great differences of age, experience and temperament between Gide and Barrault, and these differences tended to grate on Gide, especially during the rehearsal process. The rehearsals for *Hamlet* had given evidence that the Gide-Barrault collaboration was not without friction, largely due to Gide's lack of practical experience in the theatre. Gide, who found stop-and-start rehearsals frustrating and much preferred run-throughs,

often gave actors line readings or leapt onto the stage himself (Barrault remarked charitably that Gide would have made a fine King). Perhaps most difficult of all for Gide was that he found himself unable to discuss with Barrault the latter's interpretation of Hamlet himself, which seemed to Gide rushed and desultory; and although his affection for Barrault prompted him to be open, he found himself silenced by the unaccustomed power dynamic of the rehearsal process. As much sensitivity as Gide had for the actor's work, he had never before had to communicate his ideas to an interpreter in this fashion.

However, Gide had no difficulty writing a detailed letter of complaint to his friend Roger Martin du Gard, and he considered sending a copy to Barrault; fortunately, Martin du Gard dissuaded him by pleading that the letter was too severe, in a situation comically reminiscent of Kafka's *Letter to his Father*. As it happened, once blocking rehearsals were over and Barrault could concentrate on his own performance, many of the traits which had bothered Gide simply disappeared—a development which a more experienced playwright might have anticipated (Claude 210-212).

Despite the positive reinforcement of the *Hamlet*'s success, this pattern seems to have repeated itself with *Le Procès.* Gide had somehow gotten the impression that he, and not Barrault, would be in charge of rehearsals. Not only was this not the case, but what is more, Gide found that he was now forbidden to make remarks until the end of sessions, "so that one no longer remembers them" (220).

It is with Gide's reaction to this situation in his correspondence with Martin du Gard that Kuhn's version continues: he first becomes diffident: "Let Barrault do what he wants: the play no longer belongs to me. . . . I furnished the text; all the rest is his domain, becomes his affair"

(Gide/PM, in I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 237).[87] Then, in the space of a few months, Gide's tone becomes one of outright rancour: "the text itself . . . is disappearing under this accumulation of embellishments and vagaries. . . . A plague on virtuosos!" (237).[88] Barrault's statement to the press that the audience's laughter would be a sign of success seems to Kuhn to have confirmed Gide's worst fears, and she points out, "Neither in his *Journal* nor in his letters to Martin du Gard does Gide mention Kafka or *Le Procès* again. There is not a word about the première nor about the play's success" (237).

This statement is true; however, Gide made only three journal entries for the entire year of 1947 (two dated respectively "15 March" and "November," one undated but ascribed to "December"; Gide, *Journal 1939-1949*, 307-308). His journal was not taken up again until 5 January 1948, and entries remained sporadic through that year and until 12 June 1949, Gide's last journal entry. As for Martin du Gard, he had never been enthusiastic about the project, and the lack of reference to *Le Procès* in their correspondence may merely indicate that he was not a receptive audience.

Moreover, by restricting herself only to the correspondence with Martin du Gard, Kuhn fails to note that the day after the first quoted letter above, Gide wrote to Mme. Théo Van Rysselberghe (known as "La Petite Dame"): "This is the first time I have really seen Barrault make his troupe work, and I really cannot but applaud everything he says" (Gide/PM, in Claude 221).[89] Furthermore, the second letter to Martin du Gard quoted above does not concern the production; rather, Gide is

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[87] "Que Barrault fasse ce qu'il veut; la pièce ne m'appartient plus. . . . J'ai fourni le texte; tout le reste est de son domaine, devient sa chose."

[88] ". . . je crains, s'il s'obstine, que [la pièce] ne soit plus qu'une suite de cascatelles et que l'étonnement, l'amusement peut-être, du spectateur, ne l'emporte sur l'emotion. La peste soit des virtuoses!"

[89] "C'est la première fois que je vois Barrault faire vraiment travailler sa troupe, et vraiment je ne puis qu'applaudir à tout ce qu'il dit."

objecting to Barrault's desire to include the stage directions in the published playscript—an objection which Barrault overcame in the end (Claude 223).

As for the play's premiere, Gide not only attended it, but both handwritten and typed copies of his notes on the production survive to prove he had not lost interest: the notes are largely positive, with entire scenes or characterizations described only as "excellente" or "très réussies," and he remarks with satisfaction that the audience was "in no way disappointed, after having expected much."[90] Several specific details, however, receive criticism or suggestions for improvement: for example, "I protest against the beard worn by one of the police agents [at the play's end]. They must both be clean-shaven"[91]; and "I should have liked, during the walk to the execution, for life to go on as if nothing was happening; workers crossing the scene. . . . And that would avoid the easy *grand guignol* effect" (David and Morel/PM 195-196).[92] The existence of the typed copy implies that these notes were given to Barrault (Claude 223). Perhaps Gide thus proved to himself that he had been in charge all along.

The strangest witness Kuhn calls for her interpretation of events, however, is Paul Claudel, whose review Kuhn mentions as "put[ting] the blame [for the changes in characterization of K.] on Jean-Louis Barrault," basing this claim on the contrast between Claudel's description of K. as a "crazed rat" and Gide's description of him as a "hunted being" in his journal five years previously (I. Kuhn, "Metamorphosis" 236). This is, however, flimsy evidence; the tone of Claudel's review is positive throughout, and a private letter to Barrault makes Claudel's enthusiasm for the production,

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[90] "Je crois l'impression générale du public excellente—nullement déçu, après avoir beaucoup attendu."

[91] "Je proteste contre la barbe d'un des argousins. Ils doivent tous deux être glabre."

[92] "J'aurai voulu, pendant la marche au supplice, la reprise ou continuation de la vie, comme si de rien n'était; ouvriers traversant la praticable. . . . Et cela éviterait l'effet grand-guignol facile."

which he calls "a magnificent example of professional heroism," quite clear (11 October 1947; Claudel and Barrault/PM 186).[93] That Claudel's praise was taken as sincere is proven by the fact that Gide was moved by it to shake Claudel's hand and thank him—the first exchange between them in years—despite the fact that Gide's name does not appear once in Claudel's article; in fact, far from being an indictment of Barrault, Claudel's piece is a calculated snub of Gide.

Barrault, "playing more or less the part of Scapin [between the two masters]," was inspired by this brief (and for Claudel upsetting) exchange to attempt to reconcile them (Barrault/Griffin 174). The failure of this attempt—although both attended an onstage party, Gide refused to approach Claudel again—prompted Barrault to the naive claim that "I can therefore bear witness that, in this quarrel, Gide, 'the indulgent', was the one of the two who was unwilling to renew an old friendship. I was deeply disappointed" (174).

This statement suggests that Barrault's awe of Claudel, whom he always addressed as "*maître*," got the better of him. Gide's and Claudel's friendship had foundered on Claudel's intolerance. As a Huguenot, an atheist, a onetime communist, and an open homosexual, Gide stood for everything Claudel found repugnant; and in fact, in 1947, before the opening of *Le Procès*, their short-lived correspondence had been published, padded out with entries from Gide's journals and a newspaper interview with Claudel in which the subject of Gide was raised. Both parties agreed to the inclusion of this extra material, provided they could read the other's addenda before publication. Gide thus had already read Claudel's interview, in which he said, among other things: "From the artistic and intellectual point of view Gide is nothing. His influence is one of the mysteries with which I am surrounded. . . . He offers an appalling example of cowardice and weakness. . . . The

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[93] "C'est un magnifique exemple d'héroïsme professionel!"

police very properly arrest poisoners—but Gide, too, is a poisoner, and I'm not speaking lightly. How many letters have I not received from young men who've gone astray? At the beginning of their downfall, there's always Gide" (Claudel and Gide/Russell 233-234).

These remarks are tame compared to the vitriolic entries in Claudel's own journals, unknown at the time to both Gide and Barrault (for example, *Journal I,* 666; 879; 977; *Journal II*, 74; 459; 616-617; 743; 756). Even after Gide's death, Claudel's feelings were so strong that he refused to write an article about François Mauriac's winning the Nobel Prize in 1952, on the grounds that he could not forget "the Swedish Academy's choice of that vile personage" five years previously (Claudel/PM, *Journal II*, 822).[94]

Barrault's inference that Claudel would have welcomed a reconciliation any more than Gide is thus clearly ill-founded, as is Ira Kuhn's supposition that Claudel could be blaming Barrault, particularly in Gide's favour. It seems in this light reasonable to accept Gide's remarks in the playscript as a "vibrant homage" (Claude 221-222) and as a genuine sign of that modesty which had once so touched Barrault.

The ultimate proof of Gide's sincerity is his willingness to work with Barrault again: in his last years, he took up another old project for Barrault, a translation of the anonymous English tragedy *Arden of Faversham*. Gide remarks in his final memoir that "translating *Arden of Faversham* . . . I was happy," and that the daily work was "a marvelous resource" for maintaining his faculties (Gide/PM, *Journal 1939-1949*, 1169; 1178).[95] Although the translation was finished,

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[94] "Je refuse par une lettre où je dis q[ue] je ne puis oublier le choix q[ue] l'Académie suédoise a fait de l'immonde personnage." [*Immonde* means literally "unclean according to religious law.]

[95] "Traduisant *Arden of Feversham* [*sic*] avec Élisabeth H[erbart] pour Jean-Louis Barrault, j'étais heureux" (1169); "L'an passé, ce travail quotidien avec Élisabeth, cette traduction d'*Arden of*

Gide died before the collaborative revision which had fuelled *Hamlet* and *Le Procès* could begin, and his *Arden* remains unproduced and unpublished (Claude 231).

Ironically, Gide's work on *Arden* was delayed by another theatrical project: he was given the opportunity to rework a published adaptation of his own *Les Caves du Vatican* (*The Vatican Cellars*) for the Comédie-Française. Jean Claude suggests that Gide's zeal for this work was increased by his experience with Barrault, from which Gide had learned a great deal about stagecraft (495); at the same time, Gide was eager to take revenge on Claudel by achieving success on the very stage where Barrault had triumphed with Claudel's *Satin Slipper*, and with a version of the novel which Claudel found most abhorrent among Gide's work (231-234). The *Caves du Vatican* adaptation became Gide's most successful play, and remains "doubtless the only occasion among his theatrical experiences that no shadow came to tarnish his enthusiasm" (Claude/PM 238)—*Le Procès* not excepted.[96]

By contrast, Jean-Louis Barrault's satisfaction with *Le Procès* is evident in many of his writings. A true man of the theatre, Barrault judged his success more by the audience's response than the critics', and he recounts several anecdotes to demonstrate that the production both affected, and was easily understood by, the proverbial "man in the street." Barrault says of the public as a whole that, at the general preview of the play, *Le Procès* "winded them" (Barrault/Griffin 173).

On the individual level, for example, one theatregoer, leaving after a performance of *Le Procès,* "stopped on the steps and, looking up at the sky, muttered: 'And into the bargain it's

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Feversham que m'avait demandée J.-L. Barraut m'était d'une merveilleuse ressource. Je ne sens encore aucun affaiblissement de mes facultés intellectuelles" (1178).

[96] "C'est sans doute la seule fois dans ses expériences théâtrales qu'aucune ombre ne soit venue ternir son enthousiasme."

raining!'"; while one of the stage technicians, a group too blasé to be much affected by the "exaggerated" atmosphere of the production, finally confessed to Barrault: "Ah, monsieur, today I understand your *Procès*: I've spent four hours kicking my heels at the Social Security Office!" According to Barrault, this technician forever after greeted any problem with the words, "*c'est du Kafka*," which became a stock phrase (174-5). For Barrault, communication of the play's most basic theme at this level was his assurance of success, even as some of the critics and reviewers reproached him for it.

Barrault was thus well satisfied; in spite of the misgivings of his circle, Barrault had had a triumph, or, as he modestly put it, "[i]t was Kafka who won the palm" (217). In particular, Barrault remained pleased with the success of his "simultaneous scenes," where "one must learn to entangle the phases of these actions well. If this succeeds it gives a very agreeable impression of the transposed, that is poetic, reality of real life" (Barrault, "Le Roman adapté" 38-39). He also compared his 1957 adaptation of Kafka's *Castle* with *Le Procès*, to the former's disadvantage: though he thought *Le Château* "came closer to Kafka's ambiguous world," he also felt that "[i]t was, nonetheless, only a half-success" (Barrault/Griffin 241).

Barrault also retained fond memories of Gide, though Gide's death on 19 February 1951 robbed Barrault of further partnership with him (Claude 495-496); in place of Gide and Claudel as the twin pillars of Barrault's repertory, as he had once envisioned, Barrault would later write that "for twenty-five years, from 1943 to 1968, I will have served alternatively Claudel and Kafka. Two biblical beings" (Barrault 1976/PM, 38).[97] Barrault considered his relationship with Kafka as real as his relationship with Claudel—perhaps even deeper—though he knew Kafka only through his

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[97] "Je note en passant et, dans un sens, je me comprends, que j'aurai servi pendant vingt-cinq ans, de 1943 à 1968, alternativement Claudel et Kafka. Deux êtres bibliques."

writings, and those only in translation. Barrault found Kafka an inspiring example: "My own feeling tends to be that I am one with him, and when I need help in continuing to endure life, I like to repeat to myself this phrase of Joseph K.'s: '*Don't take things too seriously!*'" (Barrault/Griffin 175-176). The ultimate fate of Josef K. ought to have been a warning, perhaps, against following his advice too carefully.

Nonetheless, it stands as a tribute to the range of Barrault's influences, and perhaps as a witness to their ultimate superficiality in the balance against his powerful personality, that this phrase should figure in Barrault's life as foremost among such watchwords as Aeschylus's "Gods, deliver me from my sterile torment," Feydeau's "God alone knows what we have lived, and he'll not tell us," Claudel's "Mesa, I am Isé, it's I," and Lenin's "Learn, learn so as to act and understand" (7-8).

Le Procès remained among the "well-tried favourites" in Barrault's repertory for many years, both at home and on tour (271; 222). In the end, Barrault's feeling towards the adaptation is best summed up in his autobiography:

> I knew that, in putting *Le Procès* on the stage, I would be attracting the thunderbolts of the 'high priests' of Kafka, not to mention the 'parish priests'. Max Brod had given his blessing. And I myself was convinced that I was serving Kafka's memory by what I did. I wrote an article on this subject, called '*Cas de conscience devant Kafka*'. After having followed up *Le Procès* with an adaptation of *The Castle* and another of *America*, my conscience is still at rest. That is how it is. (175)

London, 1973: *The Trial*

If *Le Procès* was the work of two acknowledged masters in the respective worlds of theatre and prose, Steven Berkoff's *The Trial* is the product of an artist who works in both the dramatic and the prose media, and who—at least until recently—has laboured largely without much respect in his own country. The revulsion which Berkoff often expresses toward reviewers, critics and academics (". . . the intellectuals who fart with their mouths at conferences and in coffee houses"; Berkoff, *Coriolanus* 141) is repaid mainly with an impressive body of silence from the critical establishment. Indeed, this establishment has often tended, both in reviews of his individual productions and in criticism of his work in general, to mention his name chiefly in order to have the pleasure of dismissing him.

This situation has existed largely because, as Paul Currant points out, Berkoff "approached the arts and the business of theatre in a manner deliberately at odds with the practices of the established commercial theatre." Currant goes on: "In particular, his acting style was anti-realistic and heavily reliant on mime, his writing non-causal, poetic, and given to sexual and violent themes, his directing and design techniques were symbolic or expressionistic, and his style of management was autocratic and combatative [*sic*]" (1).

As a result of these attributes, Berkoff remained an "odd-man-out in the British theatre" (Elder 37) whose career seemed stalled by the late 1960s, though one magazine had selected the twenty-eight-year old Berkoff in 1965 as one of the five most promising actors of the year, along with Terence Stamp, Nicol Williamson, Ian McKellen, and Peter McEnery, all of whom rose rapidly to fame (Elder 40).

Although Berkoff had taken to writing and directing as well by 1968—a year John Bull

describes as pivotal in the "period of cultural crisis" which led to a more serious challenge to the mainstream theatre in Britain than ever before (Bull 3-5)—Berkoff also did not enjoy the widespread acclaim of such playwrights as Howard Brenton, David Hare, Trevor Griffiths and David Edgar, whose works were politically more radical but aesthetically no more adventurous, and indeed far more firmly in line with recent British theatrical tradition than Berkoff's, whose work "is remarkable chiefly for a purity of form which is indebted to the traditions of dance, mime, and ceremony, rather than to those of the 'legitimate' theatre" (Elder 37).

Berkoff vs. the Theatre Establishment

Even while Berkoff was beginning to find success as an independent actor-director in the mid-1970s, his defenders complained about his marginalization in his own theatrical culture: "Because he fails to fit into any convenient category, Steven Berkoff is too often neglected in discussions of the contemporary British theatre" (Elder 37); at the same time, however, they have occasionally contributed to this same marginalization: "When first I saw Steven Berkoff's work in London's fringe theatre, I found it hard to believe he was a native Englishman" (Benson 83).

Berkoff himself has often disowned the British theatre in no uncertain terms, as for example: "I went and I looked and I thought, 'What is it that people are raving about? What is it that is making me want to heave up?'" (Elder 48), or "English theatre is like a way of death to me. . . . I'd rather be dead. I really would. I see some of the local plays and I feel like death" (Elder 42).

This dismissal, apparently from the position of an outsider, of "the local plays" is rooted in Berkoff's French mime training, and in his abiding interest in "Japanese theatre . . . , French theatre, German theatre, Russian theatre, expressionism" (Elder 42). His taste in literature also ranges more often outside Britain than within it: he knows and admires Gogol, Dostoevsky, Melville,

Hemingway, Mailer and Burroughs, while confessing ignorance of Hardy and Dickens (Berkoff, *Prisoner* 173).

Indeed, the extent of the influence on Berkoff from sources outside the British mainstream is so great that in 1976 Mary Benson could write of Berkoff's *East*: "such 'total theatre' I had come to associate with the Polish director, Grotowski, or the Americans, Joseph Chaikin and Robert Wilson" (83). Two years later, Berkoff agreed that his theatre might have more success in America: "I think that British theatre is still very hidebound and traditional and will not risk anything which is out of the norm. The general theatre standards have been of such a conventional nature that unless experimentation is done within the basic structure of very orthodox theatre the audience is just not going to buy it. . . . I think in America or anywhere else we'd be packed out" (Elder 38).

Although he has been increasingly more successful in Britain, a long history of greater identification with and acceptance from foreign audiences could still lead an older and more sanguine Berkoff to write: "I have been fortunate enough to have theatres around the world show my works and often have directed them. I have witnessed them bear fruit in revivals over the years but, more importantly, have seen them read, studied and used by actors to sharpen their teeth on. *Most of these essays take place in the USA* . . ." (Berkoff, *Overview* vii; emphasis added).

Perhaps it is Berkoff's lack of cultural patriotism which has led many critics to exclude Berkoff, in an act of symbolic expatriation, from studies of the British theatre scene. One of the few academic studies to mention Berkoff's work at all is the American Ruby Cohn's *Retreats from Realism in Recent English Drama*, which sums up an account of Berkoff's career as verse dramatist with the admission: "I am tempted, like most critics, to dismiss Berkoff as lexically imprecise, rhythmically faltering, and naively monotonous in his 1960s-type message of love, couched in obscenity" (94).

Cohn's description of Berkoff's basic message is not totally inaccurate, although Berkoff's investment in the "1960s-type message of love" is more tentative than Cohn implies. The most Berkoff admits to in print is that "[the] hippie creed, on which I was more bystander than participant, was beneficent and humane" (Berkoff, *Overview* 178). Furthermore, as Ned Chaillet points out, Berkoff's exploration of speech "[avoids] the 1960's solutions of grunts, nudity, and inarticulacy" (Chaillet, "Steven Berkoff" 91). Cohn's implicit assumption, however, that verse drama is better the nearer it approaches lexical precision and rhythmic regularity, and the more it avoids obscenity, would no doubt be seen by Berkoff as confirmation of his long-held opinion that critics "have in a way established the status quo of non-art in theatre, non-direct communication. They've helped produce a very bourgeois entertainment—and by bourgeois I mean something where you don't release from within but you skate on what's without—so you say a lot of witty things about Tom Stoppard plays and they've nothing to do with the gut" (Elder 38).

Berkoff's desire to deal with "the gut" has led him consistently and uncompromisingly to produce theatre which seeks its energy and intensity in non-realistic forms. For many critics, however, Berkoff's uncompromising stance appears immature and self-indulgent; their negative criticisms are often couched in "unusually personal" terms, "with more than one critic suggesting that the 'B' in Berkoff's name could be a misprint" (Currant 2).

This sense that Berkoff's work is self-indulgent is exacerbated not only by his position as writer, director, and lead actor in his own company, but also by his personality, which in his writing and in interviews often seems self-confident to the point of arrogance. Already in the 1970s he could say, "This is the age of the mundane, and I just stand out in it because I don't like the mundanity. I'd rather stand out with the great poets and the painters and the French impressionists and the German expressionists. That's why people come to see me" (Elder 42). Thus Berkoff places himself

at the forefront of a battle against "an age of normality, of awful banality" (Benson 89).

Much of Berkoff's reputation for egomania stems from "the sheer flamboyant idiosyncracy of Berkoff's own personality as latter-day actor-manager" (Elder 37), but his tendency occasionally to speak of himself in the Caesarean third person, as "Berkoff" (for example, Berkoff, *Trial/Metamorphosis/In the Penal Colony* 71), only amplifies the effect of self-aggrandizement; as does his habit of misspelling the names of colleagues—even very famous ones—as though they were unimportant (Among Berkoff's orthographic victims are Richard Dreyfuss ["Dreyfus"], Raul Julia ["Raoul"], Sonia Braga ["Sonya Bragg"]; the Brazilian actor José Wilker ["Wilke"; Berkoff, *Prisoner* 72, 157ff.]; producer Alexander Salkind ["Salkin"]; Lauren Hutton ["Laura"]; and Christopher Reeve ["Reeves"; Berkoff, *Overview* 58; 59; 97]).

Of his own accomplishments, Berkoff has spoken of his early work as a director at the Round House in London as being among "some of the most exciting theatre of the age" (Berkoff, *Overview* 180), and refers to watching himself in such films as *The Wild Duck* and *The Krays*, "bathed in myself immortalized in a dazzling performance and be[ing] accused of over-acting when really I was UNDER-ACTING!!" (58).

Much of Berkoff's autobiographical writing is in this self-righteous key, capitalized words and all. The tone of egomania is frequently undercut, however, by honest accounts of bouts of nagging self-doubt (which can be seen as either touching or embarrassing), and by his ability to step outside this persona and send it up: "I'm banned from a lot of theatres now because I get sick and I vomit over the man in front of me. This has caused a great deal of embarrassment so they have photographs of me in the box office and they don't allow me in. Often I dress up and wear disguises and carry a brown paper bag but still sometimes they hear, 'Yyeeeeccchhh!!' Then, 'It's Berkoff again. Get him out'" (Elder 48).

Both Berkoff's self-confidence and his sense of humour stood him in good stead in dealing with the difficulties at the beginning of his career, under the pressure of maintaining his own company from an early point. "If he didn't see the funny side," fellow-actors Barry Philips and Anna Nygh told Mary Benson in 1976, "he wouldn't have been able to go on despite a lot of disappointments. . . . After all, . . . he writes, produces, acts, directs and has to find our wages" (88-9).

Despite these coping mechanisms, Berkoff's long career as a critical target has led to such deep feelings of resentment that he has used these emotions to mimic insane anger while playing Adolf Hitler in the television version of Herman Wouk's novel *War and Remembrance*:

> I start slowly, and explode into a rage. It is totally believable according to Dan [Curtis, the director]—I have to feel so much hate, so much rage, frustration, insane disbelief at the actions of underlings. I've been here before somewhere. Instead of generals and foreign politicians I substitute a few critics. My rage comes out in an undiluted stream of pure bile. I have the cutting edge. Years of practice. (Berkoff, *Overview* 32)

With age, however, although Berkoff can hardly be said to have mellowed, the mainstream has come to accept him more or less on his own terms. Critical acceptance has increased, and Berkoff is nowadays invited as guest director to such prestigious venues as the National Theatre of Great Britain or Joseph Papp's New York Public Theatre, where Berkoff's once-controversial style no longer seems either misplaced or threatening (Currant 3-4). Indeed, by the late 1980s, the two constants which Paul Currant finds throughout Berkoff's work—"a continual desire to go to extremes, and a recognition of the sensory sophistication of the contemporary audience" (190)—formed the mainstay of so much of popular culture that one could be led to suspect, as Berkoff long did, that the establishment's long resistance to Berkoff was based more in snobbery and blind fear of innovation than in any aesthetic evaluation of his work (Elder 38).

Berkoff's Theatre: The Influence of Artaud and Others

Ironically, Berkoff's own main inspiration, and the source of much of his own aesthetic theory, is by no means a product of television-era popular culture. Berkoff looks back rather to the theories of Antonin Artaud; and like Artaud, Berkoff "intends to use the theatre as a visceral force, drawing energy from . . . sexual and primal urges which can unleash profound feelings in actor and spectator" (Chaillet, "Steven Berkoff" 91). Also like Artaud, Berkoff sees theatre as both a spiritual and an athletic endeavour: "Theatre is the last temple of the arts. Just you and them. No amps. No embalming in celluloid. Just you and your sweat" (Berkoff, *Overview* 177). Admittedly, other theatre practitioners in Britain had been influenced by Artaud, perhaps most notably Peter Brook, but Berkoff claims to set himself apart from others by his devotion: "I see this country as a great nation of flirts. . . . First they flirted with Artaud, then with Brecht, then Grotowski. Since I started with Artaud I've never flirted with anyone else" (Chaillet, "Cultural Assault" 8).

Thus Berkoff writes early in his "Three Theatre Manifestos" the Artaudian maxim, "Acting is for me the closest metaphor to human sacrifice on the stage" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 7). It is entirely in accordance with Artaud's ideal of a theatre of holy sacrifice that Berkoff has consistently refused to cater to the naturalistic theatre:

> In his imagination man is freed. If you are just mirroring your everyday life I don't think you're freed. It can be interesting. It's a form of journalism but you don't free yourself. In fact you chain yourself. You don't even become liberated in your body because there's nothing to be liberated for. What's the point of training your body to be really supple if you're going to sit in an armchair and smoke fags? (Elder 42)

However, whereas Artaud (as Berkoff puts it) "wished to get rid of all playwrights with their domestic and psychological obsessions, since he felt they got in the way of true theatrical obsession" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 11), Berkoff himself, who admits "I love words" (Benson 84), has for the most part disposed of playwrights by becoming one himself.

For Berkoff, who has insisted that, despite appearances, his theatre is above all verbal and not physical (Cohn 91), the theoretical reconciliation of his Artaudian beliefs and his literary aspirations is based in a recognition that words have the synaesthetic capability to evoke the visual:

> It's words that count, and yet words have the ability to produce all kinds of effects, and children are the fastest at making pictures in their minds and being moved, and as we age the picture gets drier and smokier until all that is left is the bare bones of meaning and we have the shape and skeleton but no hues of the flesh. The theatre, which is meant to be a visual art as well as spoken, has the proscenium arch built high to allow giant pictures and epic events to unroll via the words, but now, and how apt, many theatres have lowered that arch, the picture frame, so that the pathetically small actions taking place beneath on a sofa won't be too chilling in the vast cavern. (Berkoff, *Overview* 151)

In contradiction of Berkoff's claim that he has never "flirted" with any theorist other than Artaud, the justification of his love of words has from an early stage been adapted in part from the ideas of Bertolt Brecht; witness the central metaphor of his defense of "verbal communication" in his "Three Theatre Manifestos":

> All verbal communication is a form of acting. The telling of an event is to possess the event inside you. A person recalling an accident is acting out the event, but playing himself . . . the event is channelled through his responses and filtered through his prejudices. The 'cleaner' the filters are, the sharper the picture of the event. . . . By describing the accident, the witness becomes the accident; he is there reliving it: his emotions have accepted the event inside his system. Eventually the story becomes more important than the event itself. (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 8-9)

The idea of the witness describing an accident is clearly indebted to Brecht's "The Street Scene"; Berkoff reverses the priorities of the original, however, for where Brecht in this essay decrees that the actor "must not 'cast a spell' over anyone. . . . The demonstration would become no less valid if he did not reproduce the fear caused by the accident; on the contrary it would lose validity if he did" (Brecht/Willett 122), Berkoff insists that the witness must "become" the accident. Though Berkoff clearly has no use for Brechtian ideas on "alienation" in the theatre, he takes over

Brecht's imagery for his own purposes; perhaps in homage, since he counts Brecht along with "Artaud, Meyerhold, La Mama, Ronconi [and] Olivier" among the list of those "who in [their] time [have] made theatre breathtaking" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 12).

Brecht's theories, however, have ultimately very different concerns from Berkoff's (specifically, Marxist ideological concerns with which Berkoff is politically but not artistically sympathetic, as we shall see), and are of little use in reconciling Berkoff's love of words with his recognition that "The mystique of theatre . . . is first, to do with your body" (Benson 84). Fortunately, Berkoff early on found a practical method of effecting this reconciliation, largely through the medium of his mime studies at the Paris school of Jacques Le Coq in 1965.

Le Coq's style of mime was less austere and more open to psychological exploration and to collaboration with other theatrical media (sound, lighting, and so on) than the self-contained "pure mime" style of Etienne Decroux, friend and mentor of Jean-Louis Barrault (though both styles have a common source in the mime school founded in 1921 by Jacques Copeau; Senelick 681). The attraction for the word-loving Berkoff was that "[with] Lecoq the body was scrupulously studied as an articulate and expressive—almost verbal—form," and this approach allowed Berkoff to recognize that "the most powerful thing on the stage is a man walking into light. The next most powerful is when he opens his mouth but often he will never meet that first image" (Benson 84).

Berkoff has thus steered his vision of Artaudian "theatrical obsession" not to exclude the text, but rather to extend the actor's body, cued by the requirements of the text, so that the actor produces the environment, above all the setting and sound effects, from his or her body, in an attempt to "meet that first image." As Berkoff puts it in his own terms:

> I've seen hundreds of [farty English actresses] at auditions, and they're really broken wrecks because their arses are all shaped into chairs. They come on stage and say, "Where will the chair be?" So suppose you say, "There's no chair you silly fat bitch,

> but express a chair. Feel it. Talk about it. This is your house. Let this man become the house. Use your voice. Sing him a scaffolding. Change your environment."
>
> What I'm basically saying in my insulting smears is that it's not so much another way as a way away from laziness, away from the ordinary, because in laziness we tend to accept gross crimes of the mind. (Elder 42)

If Berkoff differs from Artaud somewhat in his chosen relationship between actor and text, he also differs from Barrault, who in his own way had also sought to reshape Artaud's ideas along more practical lines, often similar to Berkoff's methods. Despite his admiration for Barrault, Berkoff parts company from him on three important points.

The first is Berkoff's steadfast rejection of the stage set, which he regards as "a dead weight on a stage whose message should lie in what is imaginative and ephemeral," and as "an absurd piece of evidence to remind an audience of time and space" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 15). Indeed, one of Berkoff's few overt criticisms of Barrault is made in this regard: "Barrault invented the term total theatre because he said the actor should be totally used. You should know that he didn't always do it, but his theories are very fine. He occasionally had big lumbering sets but to put a set on the stage, I think, is already halfway to giving up" (Elder 41).

Once the set is done away with, Berkoff believes, "The actors, being placed in charge of the elements, can control them and release them at will, since they are not fixed in sets or ponderous machinery" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 20).

At this point we might recall the importance of sets to Barrault's production of *Le Procès* (in which the complicated movement of set pieces became itself nightmarish, and thus a thematically important part of the performance). Berkoff's emphasis on forgoing sets became so early a hallmark of his style that in 1976, Bruce Elder could write that Berkoff's *East*, "[like] all of Berkoff's productions . . . deploys every aspect of stagecraft—mime, dance, song, text, improvisation, lighting, makeup, but no set—into a compelling piece of theatre" (37).

The second difference is that whereas Barrault, ever unsure of his own linguistic (as opposed to his gestural) capabilities, felt himself reliant upon "real writers" to provide his texts, Berkoff, who is as much an autodidact as Barrault was, has for the most part chosen to supply his own scripts. Thus (as we have seen), despite his essential agreement with Artaud that "Acting, under the hands of the playwright, has largely become naturalistic" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 12), Berkoff has supplanted the "real writers," fulfilling in his own way Artaud's edict to "get rid of the playwright."

The third point of disagreement between Barrault and Berkoff concerns the political nature of theatre. Despite the often volatile political situation in France within the span of Barrault's career, Barrault never sought to make overtly political theatre, believing that "[p]olitical theatre . . . is in reality class theatre attacking another class," and that "it is not the business of theatre to further an extra-theatrical cause in this way, nor to serve the interests of a particular class. Theatre being a preeminently human art, its aim must be to address all men, not a particular group or class, and if it relinquishes this aim theatre loses its universality and communication becomes impossible" (Whitton 158).

Berkoff, by contrast, when he sets himself in opposition to "bourgeois theatre," already casts the conflict in terms of exactly the kind of class struggle which Barrault explicitly condemns. Berkoff's politics are, indeed, generally left of centre (". . . I see what rampant capitalism is; it is a total disregard for human values or for civilization"; Berkoff, *Overview* 170); his views, however, are informed more by the class-consciousness typical of British working-class intellectuals than by outright Marxism—though Marxism provides much of the vocabulary with which such consciousness expresses itself.

It is important to note in this regard that while Berkoff sees his art as a political action insofar

as he actively opposes "bourgeois" tastes and aesthetics, the class struggle itself is not for him an appropriate theme: he counts "class wars" among the "precious foibles and deceits" which have given rise to naturalistic drama as part of "the community's love for mirror worship" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 12).

Berkoff can thus hardly be described as a political firebrand. Although, unlike Barrault, he acknowledges that theatre, especially his own theatre, is an inherently political act, Berkoff in general eschews specific political causes or events (with the notable exception of his play *Sink the Belgrano!*, satirizing the Falklands/Malvinas war). Despite his leftist sympathies and his outspoken nature, Berkoff believes as much as Barrault did in a certain universality of theatrical experience: "You must make metaphysical leaps. Your mind is a theatre. The images of the mind in dreams are closer to theatre than realism, than a manifestation of your daily working life. Get out of that and you're closer to essential truth. Instead of showing one particular battle, you show the battles—the struggles—of all time" (Benson 88).

Hence, perhaps, Berkoff's unrevolutionary predilection for turning to the Greek tragedians and above all to Shakespeare, bastions of the Western tradition, as models for both the form and style of much of his original work, and as subjects for his directorial projects when not focussed on his own work. It is indeed in Shakespeare that the balance between Berkoff's love of words and his Artaudian "theatrical obsession" finds its fulcrum:

> Shakespeare kept what he could alive, since his stylistic rendering of speech into iambic pentameter demanded strength and commitment. Shakespeare was the last vestige of the frontal verbal assault; and his actors had to be possessed of tremendous vocal range and stamina. It is largely in Shakespeare that an actor's worth is tested by the critics of the age. Edmund Kean, Garrick, Henry Irving, Laurence Olivier, Ian Richardson and Alan Howard became great actors through Shakepeare [*sic*]. (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 12)

It is important to recognize, in short, that much of Berkoff's apparently revolutionary anti-

naturalistic impulse is rooted in that most conservative of sentiments, nostalgia: "Theatre used to be a tremendous world of soloists, acrobats, harlequins—every actor had to sing, dance, mime; every man to be a Shakespearian actor had to do juggling, sword fighting, lots of things. Now suddenly, in this age of realism, that's all gone" (Elder 49). For Berkoff, in comparison to this romantic view of the Elizabethan theatre, modern naturalism has not merely atrophied; it has become mendacious: "The real skills of psychic projection, demoniacal power, movement, acrobatics, mime or wide vocal range are now barely needed. Fidelity to reality has become the criterion of excellence. We have moved from illumination to deception" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 12). It should thus come as no surprise that Berkoff's idols are not Marx and Lenin, but rather "Houdini, Bernhardt, Edmund Kean" (Benson 89).

At the same time, it must also be emphasized that, revolutionary or reactionary, Berkoff is an idealist only in the realm of aesthetics, and not in politics or economics: his devotion to the theatre as temple and his status as an uncompromising iconoclast of the British theatre have never blinded him to the value of a steady income. Thus, though he demands of his London Theatre Group "an absolutely non-commercial attitude" (Benson 84), Berkoff, like Barrault before him, has frequently augmented his meagre theatrical income with more lucrative film roles. Where Barrault had had the good fortune to be associated with films like Carné's *Children of Paradise* (as before him, Artaud took part as Marat in Abel Gance's silent masterpiece *Napoléon*), Berkoff has been lucky enough to participate in three of the highest-grossing film franchises of the 1980s, taking villainous roles in *Beverly Hills Cop*, *Rambo: First Blood Part Two*, and the James Bond film *Octopussy*. Berkoff's film career is not mentioned here merely as a digression; much as he often downplays such film work (which he once called "the dirt under my fingernails," though he later repented somewhat; "On a plate" 89), it would be naive to pretend that the corresponding increase

in Berkoff's public exposure and bankability have had no effect on his acceptance by the mainstream at home in Britain.

Political considerations aside, the consistent—if not obsessive—method by which Berkoff has trained not only himself but his colleagues in the London Theatre Group, for whom his work is tailored and vice versa, has resulted in the realization of an intensely personal vision of theatre. This vision remains firmly under Berkoff's control not so much because he wishes to have a monopoly on it, but rather because few others dare (or care) to emulate it: "My plays . . . are usually put on by me, since few else apart from stalwart adventurers, idealistic youths, university drama groups or prisoners serving life seem to possess the necessary mania, passion or simple desire to perform them" (Berkoff, *Overview* 117).

The Genesis of *The Trial*

Given the lack of consistency in accounts of Berkoff's early life (even his own accounts are often contradictory), it is difficult to determine when exactly Berkoff first discovered the works of Franz Kafka. In his "Three Theatre Manifestos" Berkoff writes: "My first production in London was the *Metamorphosis* of Kafka. I had read the story many years ago in the American Library in Wiesbaden, and its first impression on me was overwhelming, the identification so strong that it became imperative to me to play the beetle" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 7).

When Berkoff may have been in Wiesbaden, and whether his readings in the American Library there were his introduction to Kafka, remains unexplained, though Berkoff writes in his introduction to *Metamorphosis* itself, "So I came to Kafka on reading *Metamorphosis*," whatever that may in fact mean (Berkoff, *Trial/Metamorphosis/In the Penal Colony* 71). Berkoff apparently read "a great deal, becoming fascinated by the darker tales of Kafka and Edgar Allan Poe," during

the early to mid-1960s (Currant 24), and Bruce Elder describes Berkoff's first directorial effort, which was not—despite Berkoff's statement above—the *Metamorphosis* but rather his 1968 version of *In the Penal Colony* at the Arts Lab, as "the beginning of a ten year obsession with Kafka" (40); Berkoff had already publicly demonstrated an interest in Kafka in 1957, however, when he auditioned for a London City Institute drama school by reading Kafka's short story "The Bucket Rider." The auditioning board objected, "But we want a play, not a story" (Benson 84), and Berkoff apparently failed the audition (though the next year he was accepted at the highly-regarded Webber Douglas Drama School; Currant 19).

Berkoff's devotion to Kafka was obviously unswayed by this setback, however; two decades later, when Mary Benson visited his Islington home to interview him for *London Magazine* in 1976, "[on] one wall, between high bookshelves, was a large portrait of Kafka" (83-4). By this time, Berkoff had long since completed his four adaptations of works by Kafka: *In the Penal Colony* (his directorial debut; 1968), *Metamorphosis* (1969), *The Trial* (1970), and *The Knock at the Manor Gate* (1972), though *Metamorphosis* remained in his company's repertoire, and Berkoff was directing the Düsseldorf production of *The Trial* (one review of which opens this dissertation) in September 1976, at the time of Benson's interview (84).

Of these four adaptations, *The Trial* represents an anomaly, in that it is based on a novel rather than a short story. Berkoff's troupe had gained a reputation for working from short stories as a means of Artaudian liberation from playscripts, which Berkoff saw as "a mass of dialogue with no resonances of inner life" (Elder 42); as Berkoff writes in his "Manifestos":

> The fixed play contains only dialogue—a relentless spewing of dialogue at other people forced to stand there and listen—the scenario is absent, so is the description of people and their thought processes, their environment and their duality; speaking one thing, thinking another. The play's fixed structure allows less room for the *mise en scène,* less room for improvisation. We in the London Theatre Group, which was

> formed around this time, thought that the short story form allowed us a variety of decisions, and in this way we could create our own plays. (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 7-8)

Although Berkoff immediately goes on to write, "We could select from the novel a thousand different possibilities," for the most part his adaptations remained in the realm of the short story, which requires less compression and cutting in the alteration from narrative to dramatic text—and which allowed Berkoff's productions to be short enough that their highly-wrought emotional impact was not lessened by intermissions. Barrault, it will be remembered, had early on established a pattern of working from novels, beginning with Faulkner and Cervantes, moving through Knut Hamsun to Kafka; thus it was logical that after *Le Procès* he should go on to present Kafka's other novels, *The Castle* and *America*. Berkoff, however, allowed only *The Trial* to seduce him from his usual practice of adapting the short story, before he moved on to write original works in the mid-1970s.

The origins of this seduction no doubt lay in Berkoff's own fascination with Kafka:

> I think Kafka had an immense imagination which dealt with the unconscious side of ourselves or the dreamlike side of ourselves. He dealt with the everyday in a very macabre, very interesting, and almost satirical way. He brilliantly described the everyday in uncommon terms. What theatre is all about is the ability to describe the everyday in uncommon terms. So you don't always have to choose fantastic subjects. You can choose an ordinary subject and do it fantastically. That's the main thing about Kafka. (Elder 40)

Beyond his admiration for Kafka's art, Berkoff also feels strongly connected to Kafka and Kafka's experience through their common Jewish heritage, claiming, "I was drawn to Kafka, this marvellous Jewish man, and the pain of guilt, the lyricism and mysticism which is a Jewish thing" (Benson 84). Although Berkoff is by no means religious, he identifies himself strongly enough with his Russian-Jewish background to have adopted a Slavic-sounding surname (itself a compromise between his father's fully-anglicized name, Berks, and the original family name of Berkovitch);

while the dialogue in Berkoff's plays is often deliberately flavoured with Yiddish vocabulary and syntax (Currant 17-18; Benson 87).

As Paul Currant points out, Berkoff also manifests his Jewish heritage throughout his work by direct and indirect references to Hitler, Nazism, and fascism (Currant 18). Such references, usually made in a context of social criticism but occasionally apparently gratuitous, are understandable considering the immediacy of the Holocaust in Jewish culture, even for non-religious Jews. As the culmination of these references, it is no wonder that playing Adolf Hitler in the TV version of *War and Remembrance* was for Berkoff "the most satisfying acting work I ever did on film" (Berkoff, *Overview* 27).

However, the central position which the Third Reich holds in Berkoff's consciousness occasionally leads to odd conflicts in Berkoff's psyche. Since the 1970s, Berkoff and his productions, especially *The Trial*, have had considerable success in Germany and Austria, where Berkoff claims the Kafka adaptation "had the flavour of German, which was, of course, its natural home" (Berkoff, *Coriolanus* 5).

Even in the 1990s, however, when Berkoff is in Munich to guest-direct a production of *Coriolanus*, a bout of self-doubt leads him to think the Germans see him as "the guilty Jew" (12). Even in moments of confidence, the Holocaust is never far from Berkoff's mind: surrounded by upper-class Germans in a restaurant, he writes, "To be even a Jew in such a place feels uncomfortable if not unsafe" (73), and he frequently equates Germans he dislikes with Nazis, as for example: "The waitress is a thick-waisted Bavarian with the cruellest face I have ever seen on a young woman. It is a face devoid of a shred of human feeling, a lumpy porridgy waxen orb, and it convinces me that the death camp warders who were women were best drawn from Bavaria, with their stolid expressionless demeanour walking around with the whips" (76).

This passage, incidentally, also demonstrates a broad streak of misogyny which runs through much of Berkoff's writing across two decades—recall the "farty English actress" reduced to "you silly fat bitch" above. Despite his occasional bursts of gushing praise for particular co-workers, Berkoff frequently expresses in such crude terms as "tart" and "bitch" his antipathy for women who antagonize him, even simply by not being attractive to him. His recognition of this behaviour as "insulting smears" (Elder 42) makes it no more endearing.

In light of Berkoff's preoccupation with the Holocaust, it is hardly surprising that a bad review of his *Trial* (then in revival at the National Theatre) in a German newspaper drives Berkoff to defend Kafka from a perceived charge of "German-ness": "Some Schweinhund who thinks Kafka is German has decided to poison the atmosphere with a scurrilous little fart of a review" (Berkoff, *Coriolanus* 43).

Ironically, after more than three decades' acquaintance with Kafka's work, it is apparently as a result of this stay in Germany that Berkoff writes, "I now understand Kafka so well. . . . Writing the pure distillations of his soul poor Kafka was unable to fulfil them in the flesh. In fact, mortified, poor man, and writing, writing, writing" (138; it is clear that Berkoff's interpretation of Kafka is heavily indebted to the traditional image of the lonely spiritual writer propagated by Max Brod).

It is at least certain that Berkoff came to *The Trial* by way of the short stories "In the Penal Colony" and "The Metamorphosis," which he adapted first. *In the Penal Colony* (adapted 1968), his first production, was for Berkoff a suitable basis for adaptation both thematically and formally, because it combined the depiction of a proto-fascist ethos, in the personality cult of the Old Commandant, with an already theatrical dialogic form: "There was little to do except put Kafka's words in the mouths of the characters since there is probably more dialogue here than is usual in his stories" (Berkoff, *Trial/Metamorphosis/In the Penal Colony* 123). Berkoff played the Officer in

charge of the colony's execution machine; the fascist element of the character is signalled theatrically not only by his full dress uniform, but the stage directions which describe him as "intense, Germanic," and indeed, "German" as opposed to the "English" Explorer, who is Kafka's narrator, but whom Kafka gives no nationality (126-7).

The longer and more complex story of *The Metamorphosis* posed a greater challenge for Berkoff in 1969, but it was a challenge he claimed to be ready for, since

> Berkoff, on reading this [story], could see in it the Theatre of the Impossible, as Kafka's stories are the legends of the impossible. Who in the world has the resources, the higher flights of the absurdist imagination but the surreal magician, Berkoff—actor/writer/director/novelist and ex-menswear salesman from Stepney? He sets himself the task of keeping an audience awake by the brilliant attempts to plunge into the unconscious areas of the imagination. The vaults where dreams have stored their treasure trove. A man becomes an insect and his family reject, then tolerate, then loathe and then destroy, by neglect. (Berkoff, *Trial/Metamorphosis/In the Penal Colony* 70)

Berkoff's identification with Kafka, and through him with Gregor Samsa, coloured his interpretation of Gregor as an analogue of Berkoff: "Introvert, artist, Jew, writer—therefore a bug" (70; simultaneously, Berkoff's ready identification of Kafka with *all* Kafka's protagonists enables Berkoff to assert that *Der Proceß* is written "from a beetle's eye view"; Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 19). As for the challenge of portraying the bug itself without the aid of costume or makeup, "Jean-Louis Barrault's description of his struggle to create a horse in *As I lay Dying* gave me the confidence to plunge in" (Berkoff, *Trial/Metamorphosis/In the Penal Colony* 70).

With Barrault as patron saint, Berkoff now ranged further afield from the original text in the course of adaptation. In the absence of dialogue, much of the story's omniscient narration is now taken over by the Samsa family, either as individuals or in chorus: at times the narration remains narration, while elsewhere it becomes dialogue in conversations only hinted at in Kafka's story.

This device, while allowing the dramatization of a largely internalized narrative, also changes

the focus of the story. Where in Kafka's text Gregor Samsa's inner thoughts and impressions are the focus, and the rest of the family remains in the background, perceived only through Gregor's senses, Berkoff's production almost of necessity forces the rest of the family (mother, father and sister) to centre stage, often relegating the insect Gregor to the position of an ominous background presence. This shifting of narration to characters, however, unlike the purely dialogic form of Berkoff's *Penal Colony*, becomes the central adaptive strategy for *The Trial* and for Berkoff's other adaptations.

Having found this strategy successful (as Berkoff says, "*Metamorphosis* never fails to move audiences whenever this adaptation is played"; Berkoff, *Trial/Metamorphosis/In the Penal Colony* 72), Berkoff was ready to undertake his most ambitious adaptation: "I read [*The Trial*] several times before I tried to hew out of its guts its theatrical essence. A metaphysical theatre. I studied it for years and became Joseph K." (Berkoff, *Trial* 5). External circumstances increased Berkoff's identification with the novel's protagonist (and author). "It was during a time of deadening theatre work for a hack director that the full force of my energy came throttling out when, after rehearsals, I would escape to the refuge of my room and investigate and unweave the tapestry that was to be my play/production. It is a diary of a no-one, the diary of the oppressed. . . . Kafka expressed me as I expressed Kafka" (5).

After the learning process of the first adaptations, *The Trial* was also the first production in which Berkoff began consciously to work "with the idea that the separate elements one works in should be fused where possible into a whole" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 19). This quest for unity obliged Berkoff to conceive of the play as an ensemble piece above all, requiring a chorus "to depict the man's inner life and conscience" and "the environment, both animate and inanimate"—in short, to be ". . . what narration and third person might be in the novel" (19).

This new emphasis on ensemble work is reflected in the fact that the creation of *The Trial*

also involved six weeks of improvisational workshopping (though with what actors, and whether the bulk of the writing was done beforehand, afterward, or concurrently, is unknown; Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 8). After four months in all of rehearsal, *The Trial* was mounted in 1970; its restaging in December 1973, however, by Berkoff's own newly-formed London Theatre Group, is considered by the author to be the first "major" production (Berkoff, *Trial* 5; 7).

The Sources of *The Trial* and Its Form

Berkoff, like Barrault and Gide, was unable to work from the original German texts when preparing his adaptations. Although Berkoff apparently both understands and appreciates the French language (Berkoff, *Overview* 118-9), as might be expected after his studies in Paris, and despite his love of Yiddish (indicating some survival of it in his immediate family), Berkoff shows little facility in German. Even after more than fifteen years of occasional work and touring in German-speaking areas, Berkoff can still write during rehearsals for his Munich *Coriolanus*: "Rufus [Beck, the actor playing Coriolanus] keeps chatting to the cast in German while I stand by, unable to follow at that speed, feeling helpless, without a rudder to guide me over the lake which is Germany. I think it devious to be able to use a secret code which any language must be when it is unfamiliar" (Berkoff, *Coriolanus* 39).

Berkoff was therefore thrown back on translations—and on previous adaptations. Conversant with Barrault's work, Berkoff undoubtedly knew of *Le Procès*, and may have seen it in Paris when the Compagnie Renaud-Barrault revived it in October of 1961 (Bradby, "Chronology" 10). Just as Barrault's *Autour d'une mère* inspired Berkoff's insect/Samsa, so too *Le Procès* may have more directly inspired *The Trial*. Indeed, Mick Imlah, reviewing a revival of Berkoff's *Metamorphosis*, suggests that "anyone acquainted both with Berkoff's other Kafka, *The Trial*, and with Barrault's

much earlier and genuinely innovative adaptation of the same" will realize just how much Berkoff "stole" from Barrault (816).

Paul Currant leaps to defend Berkoff against this charge, but admits that there are "passages of great similarity," demonstrating this by means of excerpts from *Le Procès* (in Leon Katz's translation) and Berkoff's *Trial*. "Even in translation the similarities are great," Currant grants, and judging by this alone, ". . . it might seem that Berkoff's use of Barrault is perhaps more plagiaristic than artistic" (50). As Currant mentions in passing, however, "The similarities in the dialogue are partly due, obviously, to the fact that the adaptations are from a common source" (51); and here Currant casually throws away what ought to be the main thrust of his argument. This weakness in Currant's argument apparently stems from his own conception of the original novel as a vague, supralinguistic entity, which Berkoff could somehow use as a basis without dealing with a real, concrete text—which in this case must be a translated text.

Berkoff himself, however, encourages this view of Kafka's work: he never mentions, prior to the 1990s, that Kafka wrote in a different language, although he saw very early the difficulty posed by Kafka's use of a different medium: "Kafka's drama seems on the page to be a perfect form for the reader . . . but not for the spectator" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 15). Even comparatively recently, although Berkoff acknowledges (as we have seen) that "the flavour of German . . . was, of course, [*The Trial*'s] natural home," he denies that translation is an issue relevant to Kafka's work, saying in regard to *Metamorphosis*: "Kafka touches all of us in some way and when read in English does not sound alien. It sounds right in any tongue since its theme is neglect and human suffering" (Berkoff, *Overview* 98). These broad humanist assertions explain Berkoff's lack of acknowledgement of the intermediary role of the translator in the preparation of *The Trial*.

There is, nonetheless, ample textual evidence in Berkoff's adaptation that he made use of the

most common (and for many years, the only) English-language translation, that of Willa and Edwin Muir. Many sentences in Berkoff's adaptation are clearly based on sentences in the Muirs' translation, and many more are simply lifted bodily from the Muirs' text. Even the very first sentence of the translation, now famous in its own right, appears in Berkoff's *Trial*:

> Someone must have traduced Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong, he was arrested one fine morning. (Kafka/Muir and Muir 3)

In Berkoff's version, the sentence appears later, after a prologue, as:

> CHORUS 1: Someone must have been lying about Joseph K.
> CHORUS 2: For without having done anything wrong . . .
> CHORUS 3: He was arrested one fine morning. (Berkoff, *Trial* 13)

The troublesome word *traduced*, which has often exercised critics of translation (as, for example, Crick 166) because it uses an uncommon word to translate the relatively common German *verleumdet* ("slandered"; Kafka 9), is in fact an emendation of E. M. Butler in her 1956 revision (The Muirs' original version was "Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K. . . ."; Crick 166). British Penguin editions, however, unlike the American edition I use for a reference, do not adopt Butler's alteration to the opening, which remains *telling lies about* as the Muirs wrote it (Bullock 14; Mandel 51).

More convincing proof that the Muirs' text is the basis for Berkoff's adaptation comes rather at the end of this sentence, with the phrase, "He was arrested one fine morning." Here the phrase *one fine morning* is peculiar to the Muirs, who use it for its colloquial value as a fixed phrase to translate the German *eines Morgens* ("one morning," or literally "of a morning"). Ursula Marie Mandel takes issue with the Muirs' "liberty" in adding *fine*, but it serves as a valuable clue in tracing Berkoff's sources (Mandel 53). Given some compression and transposition of elements, the similarity of Berkoff's text to the Muirs' is at least as great as any likeness to Barrault and Gide, translated or

otherwise, and if any charge of textual plagiarism is possible, it is the Muirs and not Barrault and Gide who are the victims.

Although I would maintain that Berkoff has certainly made enough changes in the course of adaptation to be acquitted of plagiarizing the Muirs' translation, I would nonetheless criticize more harshly his refusal to acknowledge their text, rather than Kafka's original, as his source; Berkoff's failure to recognize the Muirs is symptomatic of the general invisibility of the translator in western culture. Furthermore, it is very possible that Willa and Edwin Muir would have interpreted this invisibility as a compliment to the translation (Crick 162). All the same, Berkoff's behaviour in this instance contrasts unfavourably with Barrault's and Gide's scrupulous and repeated acknowledgement of Alexandre Vialatte (although we have seen that Vialatte, at least for a time, did not particularly appreciate their acknowledgement).

With the question of Berkoff's textual source answered, let us turn to the form of the play and its alterations from the narrative text, where we might in passing determine whether Imlah's charge of plagiarism is tenable on this level, rather than on the textual level. (Again, specific alterations are keyed back to Mirza's observations on adaptation.)

The play opens with the actors entering one by one, as electronic Bach plays behind them. The music ends with a crash and flies are heard buzzing as voices "intone the aphorisms of Kafka," taken not from *Der Proceß*, but from Kafka's notebooks. The voices then recount the parable "Before the Law," substituting Joseph K. for the man from the country, and afterwards K. himself begins to take part; the voices turn into an accusing chorus, and K. speaks a brief monologue based in part on the unfinished novel fragment "Prosecuting Counsel." Only after this monologue do members of the chorus speak the opening words of the novel, setting the scene for K.'s arrest by two

bowler-hatted guards. From this point, the structure of the play generally follows that of the novel (described as elements *A-J* on p. 35 above, although *A-I* might better describe Berkoff's structure). As with Barrault's version, events of the novel are compressed [Mirza *e)*], and set in a polyvalent space [Mirza *a)*], though Berkoff shortens and omits scenes which Barrault and Gide do not, while adding others and altering other elements:

1) as in Barrault and Gide, Berkoff's Joseph K. is notified of the date set for his hearing *before* his conversations with his landlady Mrs. Grubach or Miss Bürstner [Mirza *d)* and *e)*];
2) again as in Barrault and Gide, the Whipper episode *precedes* K.'s going to his hearing, and again it is portrayed as a sort of fantasy, although waking rather than in a dream [Mirza *d)* and *e)*];
3) yet again following Barrault, when K. goes to the empty hall for the hearing, he encounters the laundress and the bestial law student, but the hearing *does not* take place (see 7 below);
4) as in Barrault and Gide, the character of Fräulein Montag is *omitted altogether*; however, Captain Lanz *is also omitted altogether*, while K.'s mistress Elsa appears as a stripper, and *transforms into K's landlady* Mrs. Grubach (thanks to this surprising conflation, a didactic stage direction observes, "Thus we see [K.'s] expectations and then the reality"; Berkoff, *Trial* 22)[Mirza *b)* and *c)*];
5) K.'s uncle *is also omitted*; however, K.'s *dead father* appears as an apparition (in fact, he is apparently not dead, except "only to [Joseph]"; Berkoff, *Trial* 39) and performs the uncle's function by sending K. to the lawyer Huld; this scene contains excerpts from Kafka's "Letter to My Father" [Mirza *c)* and *d)*];
6) Berkoff's version divides the two acts *between K.'s escape from the law court and his visit to the lawyer*, as Barrault's and Gide's does; however, in Barrault, K.'s uncle appears at the top of the second act, while in Berkoff, K.'s father, the analogous figure, appears at the very end of

the first;

7) Joseph K. meets Block, the tradesman, and dismisses the lawyer Huld *before* going to visit Titorelli, the painter [Mirza *d)* and *e)*];

8) as in Barrault and Gide, K.'s hearing occurs *in the second act* and *immediately following the Titorelli scene*; however, Berkoff *uses virtually none of the actual hearing scene* from either the novel or the Barrault adaptation [Mirza *c)* and *d)*];

9) on his way to the cathedral, K. *briefly encounters and converses with Leni*, whereas in the novel this conversation takes place over the telephone before K. leaves his office {Mirza *d)*];

10) unlike in the Barrault/Gide version, in the cathedral scene the priest *does* recount the parable "Before the Law"; in fact, since "Before the Law" is also part of the play's prologue, *the parable is told twice* [Mirza *e)*];

11) K.'s execution occurs *almost immediately after the cathedral scene*, with no time to encounter anyone else, and K. *is not stabbed, but trapped in a rope* [Mirza *d)* and perhaps *f)*].

The number of occasions on which Berkoff's adaptation follows in the footsteps of the Barrault and Gide version would seem to lend some credence to Imlah's charge of plagiarism. It is certainly possible that Berkoff, having never before written a full-length play, took Barrault's alterations as a guideline, perhaps because several of these alterations (the disappearance of Captain Lanz; the reduction of the ancillary Whipper scene; the juggling of scenes, particularly the shifting of the trial itself to the second act) serve so well to restructure and streamline the text into a more conventional dramatic shape; Berkoff is not so radical or experimental, after all, as to want to deprive his works of a climax.

Other changes of Berkoff's, however, are very different from Barrault's and Gide's choices,

and even some of the formal similarities are undercut by Berkoff's decision to extend and emphasize different scenes from those chosen by Barrault and Gide as important. For example, where the trial scene of *Le Procès* takes more than four pages of text, almost three of those pages full of Joseph K.'s long speeches (Gide and Barrault 105-109), Berkoff's trial scene barely fills a page, and is conducted partly as dumb show, partly as dialogue (Berkoff, *Trial* 63-64). K. himself speaks only one brief paragraph without interruption; furthermore, unlike in Barrault's and Gide's adaptation, as we shall see, none of this dialogue is taken from Kafka's novel.

Berkoff's adaptation also clearly shows influences other than Barrault's. For example, the scenes within the two acts are not numbered but are given titles, some of which are either merely descriptive of the location ("The City," "The Bank") or are taken from Kafka's chapter headings (more accurately, from Max Brod's headings: "Miss Bürstner," "Cathedral"), while others are ironically descriptive of the scenic content in a manner owing more to Brecht than to Barrault or Artaud ("Huld the Lawyer, or an Illustrated Account of the Law," "Revisit to the Lawyer—and the Passage of Time").

In other words, although it can certainly be argued that Berkoff's *Trial* shows clear signs of Barrault's influence, as Berkoff would probably admit, the question of whether or not this influence shades into plagiarism is more difficult to answer. Since the artists under discussion directed as well as wrote (or co-wrote) the respective works, I suggest that the question is moot if posed in reference to the playscripts, and pass the question willingly to anyone fortunate enough to have seen the original productions.

Finally, there remains Mick Imlah's assertion that Barrault's production was more "genuinely innovative." Imlah may have seen both productions; and his claim may be true, depending on how one both recognizes and quantifies artistic innovation. Since Barrault's position in respect to the

theatrical mainstream of his time was very different from Berkoff's, and his acceptance by the mainstream was apparently greater than Berkoff's, I would declare this question moot as well. While in the following analysis I do refer to the Barrault/Gide adaptation for comparison, I will therefore not argue that either version is "better," "more innovative," or "more faithful."

Berkoff's Alterations: More of a Chorus, Less of a Set

The first alteration apparent to either the reader or spectator of *The Trial* is Berkoff's reliance on the chorus, which is far greater than Barrault's and Gide's, in which a "Chorus of Accused" appears only briefly, in the scene in the offices of the court (Gide and Barrault 53-54). As Berkoff writes, "The production's chorus is needed to depict the man's inner life and conscience—a questioning group. (The Greek Drama used this method since it was necessary to represent the public or the voice of reason at the height of tragedy, as well as to present the exposition.)"; and further, "Our chorus is all things. It is the environment, both animate and inanimate. It animates what is lifeless and amplifies K's situation" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 19).

In *The Trial*, the chorus begins the play: with some lines assigned to single "Voices," sometimes numbered from 1 to 5, others to "Chorus" (either as a whole or also, confusingly, numbered 1 to 5), and still others to a "Narrator," it is obvious from the first words of the prologue that Berkoff has not attempted to transform all the narration and interior monologue of the novel into naturalistic dialogue or to supplant them with stage directions. Rather, the characters' dialogue meshes with the choral speech to represent the narration, so that much of the play seems to be an unceasing flow of words (and other sounds, since the actors also "produce their own sound effects"; Edwards 43). For Berkoff, this constant vocal background became, at least in the Düsseldorf production, "one of the high points of the show, the choral sound and music underpinning and

creating atmosphere" (Berkoff, *Coriolanus* 11). The privileged position of Joseph K. as the centre of the narration is visually represented, at least in the two British productions recorded in photographs, by having all the actors except K. play in whiteface and in masks (Edwards 43; Berkoff, *Theatre of Steven Berkoff* 36-47; in the 1976 Düsseldorf production K. as well wore whiteface; Jäger 34).

Even when the chorus is silent, the characters often provide their own narration or speak aloud their unexpressed thoughts:

> K: Who are you?
> Guard 2: We are your friendly warders . . . You're lucky to have us.
> K: What's your name?
> Guard 1: I'm slim. He's well-knit.
> Guard 2: I wear a closely fitting black suit.
> Guard 1: I wear pleats.
> Guard 2: I wear pockets, buckles and buttons as well as a belt.
> K: They look like tourists.
> Guard 1: But it's eminently practical.
> Guard 2: Though we cannot tell you what purpose it serves. (Berkoff, *Trial* 14)

The continual mixture of choral speech with this sort of dialogue and asides not only reproduces formally the narrativity of the novel; it also contributes thematically, much as Barrault's constantly moving sets did, to a nightmarish atmosphere of disorientation.

To reinforce this disorientation, however, in place of Barrault's complex network of set pieces, Berkoff and his cast sought a more flexible (and undoubtedly also cheaper) method of indicating multiple locations, which nonetheless was to be firmly rooted in the thematic demands of the novel: "The novel travels through many situations and must be served by a moving environment that will transport us through time and space. . . . Since one would say that the work was of a metaphysical nature, the staging must discover its counterpoint in the *mise en scène*" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 19).

Berkoff's solution was found in focussing on the central metaphor of the parable "Before the Law":

> We devised a door. A wooden rectangular frame that stood by itself. In later productions they became steel. Ten frames became the set. The set became the environment. . . . Our set of ten screens became the story and as the story could move from moment to moment so could our set—no long waits for a scene change but as a flash with the magician's sleight of hand. We could be even quicker than the story. A room could become a trap, a prison, expand and contract and even spin around the protagonist Joseph K. This enabled us to recreate the environment—both physical and mental—of the book. (Berkoff, *Theatre of Steven Berkoff* 37)

The elegance of this solution lay in the fact that, for Berkoff, these doorframes/screens "could simply suggest the never-ending doors which [K.] will not reach, as well as the artifacts of the play and the environment" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 19).

Thus, for example, when Joseph K. becomes lost in the offices of the court, by holding the doorframes the other actors *"turn themselves into a corridor. As* K *moves down it they change position, creating a maze*" (Berkoff, *Trial* 37). Photographs from the production show the actors rocking the corridor of frames in opposite directions to create an impassable kaleidoscope, blocking K.'s path (Berkoff, *Theatre of Steven Berkoff* 44-45; 54-55). The importance of this metaphor to Berkoff's environmental design may explain why the parable "Before the Law" is emphasized by repetition.

Sexuality in Berkoff and Barrault

Yet another tactic of Berkoff's which becomes apparent early in the play is his decision to accentuate the sexual elements present in the novel, and contrast them even more vividly with images of bourgeois respectability. Whereas K.'s mistress Elsa is mentioned only briefly in the novel, in Berkoff's *Trial* she appears and performs a striptease, almost seducing K. before she

transforms abruptly into the landlady Mrs. Grubach, to "Groans from all the men," as a stage direction describes (22). Although a further stage direction (mentioned above) remarks that this scene contrasts K.'s expectations with his reality, for an audience Elsa's/Mrs. Grubach's stripping is more obviously contrasted with the beginning of the same scene, which shows the cast ". . . becom[ing] the office of a busy bank, machinery, people walking robot-like. Typists use their heads as typewriters. People move quickly, avoiding each other with clockwork precision" (20).

At the same time, the conflation of K.'s landlady with his mistress foreshadows the nighttime actions of K.'s fellow lodgers. Immediately after a confrontation between K. and Mrs. Grubach over Miss Bürstner, in which the landlady states, "After all, I must keep the house respectable" (23), K. searches for Miss Bürstner through the lodging house. As he does, according to the stage directions: "THE LODGERS as if in parody move from their screens—tapping is heard—they change rooms—screens move places—the events of night take place invisibly—women are seduced—the lonely listen—creaking sounds, sounds of orgasms. The effect is of a madhouse" (24).

If, in the rest of the lodging house, seduction leads to orgasms, K.'s visit to Miss Bürstner's room comes to no such satisfactory conclusion. The interview begins promisingly: as K. apologizes for her room being disturbed by his interrogators earlier in the day, Miss Bürstner (very unlike Fräulein Bürstner in the novel) "mimes the taking off of clothes" and then "relaxes, adopting a very seductive position, which disturbs K" (25-26). K. responds, unlike *his* prose counterpart, by lying about his arrest, turning it into a self-aggrandizing fight scene: "Now I may seem timid to you, Miss Bürstner, but I assure you I'm not. I allow no one to walk over me. A quick elbow into the stomach for the big one, and the little one saw the power of my left coming and scuttled his way off into the corner" (26).

K.'s macho preening is interrupted when he raises his voice in imitation of the inspector.

Whereas in the novel, this noise prompts a vigorous knocking from Captain Lanz next door (Kafka 40), in the play the chorus members who are re-enacting the scene of the arrest as if in K.'s imagination suddenly transform into fellow-lodgers who have barged into Miss Bürstner's room (the private and inviolable nature of which is the motivation of K.'s visit in the novel):

> LODGERS: And I have to get up early in the morning.
> Are you all right, Miss Bürstner?
> We thought he was disturbing you.
> I'll get the police! (Berkoff, *Trial* 27)

After the lodgers file out, K. "attempts to kiss her but fails awkwardly. He is left straddled over a chair"; he is then almost magically ejected from her presence—the set screens are re-arranged by the other actors, so that "in other words room goes to K rather than K goes to his room" (27). K.'s comic predicament on stage contrasts sharply with the disturbing sexual aggression of Kafka's protagonist: "K. . . . rushed out, seized her, and kissed her first on the lips, then all over the face, like some thirsty animal lapping greedily at a spring of long-sought fresh water. Finally he kissed her on the neck, right on the throat, and kept his lips there for a long time" (Kafka/Muir and Muir 38).

Later, in the law courts, Berkoff amplifies Kafka's description of the books on the judge's desk as pornographic (64-65) by using the actors to animate the books' contents:

> *The actors become FIGURES in the screens which become a large book of dirty pictures. . . . FIGURES in mime book search for each other.*
> FIGURE 1: Greta, where are you?
> FIGURE 2: I'm on page two.
> FIGURE 1: Come here you naughty girl—
> *They chase each other through the book and exit.* (Berkoff, *Trial* 31)

Again, Berkoff has added an overtly comic twist to a sexual situation presented with little (or subtler) humour by Kafka: "A man and a woman were sitting naked on a sofa, the obscene intention of the draftsman was evident enough, yet his skill was so small that nothing emerged from the picture save the all-too-solid figures of a man and a woman sitting rigidly upright, and because

of the bad perspective, apparently finding the utmost difficulty even in turning toward each other" (Kafka/Muir and Muir 65).

K.'s interrupted conversation with the laundress in this section, while much abridged, follows fairly closely the pattern of Kafka's scene (Kafka 64-77): the laundress appears to be about to seduce K., when a thuggish law student, Bertold (in Berkoff, Burtold), appears and carries her off to the Examining Magistrate. She complains—but not too much—and although K. was at first disgusted by the laundress's corruption, he is now disappointed to have a prize snatched from him.

An important alteration is made after her departure, however. As K. muses over his disappointment, the laundress's husband, who is the bailiff of the court, arrives. He is unsurprised that his wife has been taken to the magistrate. In the novel, the bailiff remarks, "she's actually most to blame of all. She simply flung herself at him. *As for him, he runs after every woman he sees. In this building alone he's already been thrown out of five flats he's managed to insinuate himself into*" (Kafka/Muir and Muir 76-77; emphasis added).

In Berkoff, however, the charges of promiscuity fall not on the magistrate, but rather on the laundress:

> BAILIFF: . . . Till now only the student had her, and now he's carrying her off to the magistrate. *Everybody's having her.*
> K: You think she may enjoy it?
> BAILIFF: *Of course she does; she loves it. Laps it up.* (Berkoff, *Trial* 35; emphasis added)

In the play, K. is not only forcibly excluded from the laundress's attentions; he is reduced to being *the only one excluded* (except for her own husband), despite the bailiff's assertion that she is, in fact, "easy." The scene thus becomes that much more an expression of K.'s sexual incompetence.

Such sexual comedy reaches its culmination in the affair between K. and Leni. K.'s first encounter with Leni takes place simultaneously with one of the lawyer Huld's long anecdotes (which

is now recounted to the audience with the chorus's mimic help), and climaxes with Huld having a heart attack.

This simultaneity, and the absurdity of the direct contrast thus achieved, is impossible in the linear form of the novel; furthermore, the presence of K. and Leni onstage, and of the audience, compensates for the loss of K.'s uncle (who does not exist in Berkoff's play) and the apparent loss of the visiting Chief Clerk of the Court (who is not named as such and is barely visible in the play)—in their absence, there is no longer any naturalistic motivation for Huld to continue his speech, but theatrical convention makes this less obvious. Because of this simultaneity, it also ironically appears that K.'s and Leni's sexual interlude precipitates Huld's heart attack, although in fact he apparently is not aware of their activities at this time (Berkoff, *Trial* 42-47).

The continuing liaison between K. and Leni is humorously demonstrated in the section titled "Revisit to the Lawyer—and the Passing of Time." This scene takes the form of a harangue by Huld constantly interrupted by brief blackouts during which the actors change position, in a theatrical simulation of time-lapse photography. After the final blackout, "*Lights come up. K is on top of LENI.*" Huld apparently cannot see them: he asks, "Leni. Are you still there? How do you like this boy?" and Leni replies from beneath K., "I hardly know him." The lights go down to end the scene (50).

Huld is not, however, ignorant of the affair. Just before K. dismisses Huld, Huld reveals his knowledge even as Leni drags K. down on the floor again:

> HULD *takes a screen, placing it over* K *and* LENI, *creating an oblong painting.*
> HULD: Leni has such a weakness for accused men. It's a peculiarity of hers in finding nearly all accused men attractive. She goes to bed with all of them, and they all love her. I must make apologies to you K, she even tells me about these affairs to amuse me, which I allow. It doesn't surprise me any more. If you have the right eye for these things, you could well find accused men very attractive. (53-54)

With this revelation, K.'s ridiculous sexual exploits within the framework of the play come to an end.

Berkoff's handling of the novel's sexual content contrasts sharply with Barrault's. Despite the fact that an undercurrent of sexual tension runs throughout Kafka's fiction and diaries (an undercurrent which Max Brod strove to ignore and occasionally censor; Kundera 4), and despite the fact that Barrault himself saw theatre of itself as an intimate form of communication analogous to the sexual act (Bradby, *Modern French Drama* 30), Barrault's play very much downplays sex in favour of nightmare. K.'s attack on Mlle. Bürstner is rushed (the stage directions require him to squeeze in his flurry of kisses "avant de partir, très vite"; Gide and Barrault 40) and his first embrace of Léni is only a minor element in a scene whose main purpose is to introduce Block (who does not appear until later in the novel and in Berkoff; Gide and Barrault 72). Since a single complex of scenes introduces Huld, Léni and Block, and follows quickly through to K.'s dismissal of Huld, no time is spent showing any further development of the affair between K. and Léni (62-82). Instead, Léni merely admires him from afar at his trial ("Oh! ce qu'il est beau!"), prompting Huld to remark to Titorelli that Léni "s'éprend de tous les accusés" (105-106; the literary verb *s'éprend de*, "becomes enamoured," is more elegant than but close in meaning to Kafka's *hängt sich an*, "latches onto," and both contrast with Berkoff's explicit "goes to bed with," which also has no real precedent in the Muirs' "makes up to").

Titorelli, incidentally, replies in his turn that he has noticed this attraction among "nombreuses personnes du sexe," caused not by illusion but by the fact that accusation results in "une sensible modification du visage de l'accusé" (106). This remark not only situates the phenomenon as strictly heterosexual (in contrast to the more ambiguous formulations of Kafka, the Muirs, and Berkoff), but also directly contradicts the other three texts, which are in agreement that

accusation in fact produces "no obvious alteration in a man's appearance" (Berkoff, *Trial* 54; Kafka 221; Kafka/Muir and Muir 229). Where Berkoff, building on the original, uses these lines as Huld's humiliating revelation to K., Barrault relegates them to a brief aside between Huld, Léni and Titorelli. (This scene is of course only possible in Barrault's and Gide's version, since in the original text and in Berkoff's adaptation Leni, Huld and Titorelli are not present at K.'s hearing.)

This emphasis in Berkoff's version on sexual aspects of the novel does not stem alone from the lapse of a quarter-century since Barrault's *Procès*, though that lapse certainly is not irrelevant. Barrault, while no prude, doubtless wished to emphasize other aspects of the story for his audience; at the same time, Berkoff's desire to create a visceral theatre shocking to the bourgeois mentality leads him naturally to go "for the volcanic option," to draw attention to bodily functions and to physicality in general (Edwards 44).

An instance of the former unrelated to sexuality is Berkoff's unprecedented stage direction indicating that during one of Huld's speeches averring that K. needs him, *"He shits. The* CLIENTS *clear it up with a shovel and wipe his ass*" (44). Back in the sexual realm but outside of *The Trial*, Berkoff's approach becomes even less subtle in his later original work: *East*, for example, contains at least three famous mime moments—one in which Dad is hit in the neck by Mike's ejaculation of sperm at the movies; another when Mike mimes repacking an enormous penis in his trousers after sex (Currant 90); and one of Berkoff's favourite scenes, "the great cunt scene where I [as Mike] mime climbing inside a huge vagina. . . . Chaplinesque in its approach" (Elder 38; when Barrault made K. mime his arrest for Mlle. Bürstner *à la Charlot*, he could hardly have anticipated Berkoff's idea of "Chaplinesque").

Berkoff's love of absurdly exaggerating physical action in general is also evident in such touches as the beginning of the scene in the offices of the court, where K., instead of being led by

the Bailiff, accelerates until he is racing him in a contest which (probably unconsciously) parodies Barrault's athletic dramaturgy:

> CHORUS: And it's the Bailiff in the lead from K. K is catching up and now it's K and the Bailiff. The Bailiff and K. K is sneaking ahead. He's leading by a short neck. Bailiff moving up fast behind him, it's anyone's race . . . Ladies and gentlemen, K is now moving ahead by a length, in very fit condition. Bailiff is trailing behind now, and it's K!
> *At the end of the race the rope has become the finishing line.* CHORUS *cheer.* (Berkoff, *Trial* 36)

Clearly, Berkoff's love of physicality for its own sake, married to his desire for material inherently provocative to the bourgeois critics he despises, motivates him to amplify the sexual aspects of Kafka's novel far beyond Barrault's arguably (and ironically) more politically-oriented version—perhaps all the more because Berkoff, in the '70s, was faced with an audience harder to shock than Barrault's cosmopolitan but conservative audience of the late '40s.

At the same time, it is important to note in conclusion that Berkoff's adaptation alters the characterization of the women in *Der Proceß*. While K. often looks ridiculous in sexual contexts in the narrative text, Kafka's protagonist usually has the upper hand in relation to women: his mistress Elsa is a prostitute remarkable chiefly for her absence from the events and from K.'s mind; K. browbeats Frau Grubach and assaults the unresisting Fräulein Bürstner; while only the presence of the brutish law student prevents him from making advances to the laundress, by whose conquest K. would embarrass the Examining Magistrate. Similar ulterior motives underlie his relationship with Leni, who at least seems in the end to be as corrupt in her tastes as K. is. Throughout, however, K. is never so much seduced from without as he is motivated from within by his desire to find a tool which can be of help in his court case.

Berkoff's sexually feckless K., by comparison, is continually led on and victimized by the women around him. The stripping Elsa, who transforms disappointingly into the landlady Mrs.

Grubach; the disrobing Miss Bürstner in place of Kafka's passively exhausted Fräulein Bürstner; the Laundress who "laps it up" from everybody except K. and her husband; and Leni, who lies on top of K. while protesting to Huld "I hardly know him"; all equally become not merely women in whom K. wrongly sees the possibility of help in his court case, but rather women who actively tease K. sexually and make him look ridiculous in a comic, yet unpleasant, manner.

This amplification of certain aspects of Kafka's narrative through Berkoff's eyes reduces the women as a group to the level of the "tarts" and "bitches" so often encountered in Berkoff's autobiographical writings. Such attitudes are by no means absent from Kafka, whose opinions will be discussed again in a later section; such direct expression of them, however, is arguably prevented by (among other factors) Kafka's historical position in a more repressed society.

Moreover, Kafka's characterizations of women are varied more by K.'s more active role in his relations with them—Frau Grubach is not an object of K.'s desires, for example, and thus he must use different strategies in attempting to manipulate her. Berkoff manages both to reduce K. to sexual passivity and to render the female characters relatively monotonous, at least on paper.

Far from conveying the "1960s-type message of love" seen by Cohn, therefore, Berkoff's *Trial* would seem rather to make use of the frank expression enabled by the sexual revolution of the '60s and '70s (and in Britain, by the still-recent end of the Lord Chamberlain's role as theatrical censor in 1968), while at the same time embodying conventional attitudes towards women which equate their sexuality with lasciviousness. Berkoff seems to imply that if K. were to live more dangerously, he would not only survive, but would also achieve one of the main goals of the Cockney protagonists of Berkoff's original works: more sex. Much recent feminist scholarship would maintain that this was what underlay the "1960s-type message of love" all along.

The Trial itself, Biblical Allusions and K.'s Guilt

It has already been remarked that Berkoff, like Barrault before him, places K.'s hearing itself in the second act and leads into it with the Titorelli scene. Since the resulting complex of scenes becomes the climax of both plays, this complex is also the natural focus for charges of plagiarism. An examination of this section of Berkoff's adaptation above all, however, demonstrates amply that Berkoff is in no way dependent on Barrault.

Barrault and Gide, in adapting the Titorelli chapter, make few changes other than compression (Gide and Barrault 85-99). The scene begins with K.'s encountering the troublesome and perverse little girls who live in Titorelli's neighbourhood. To Kafka's dialogue, Barrault and Gide add an intriguing touch here: when K. claims he is looking for Titorelli to have a portrait painted, the girls mistake him for a judge. When he denies this, they express wonder that he should want a portrait, because, as they tell him, "T'es pas beau, tu sais" (86; apparently, these girls are not among those "personnes du sexe" who find the accused attractive). Once K. is led to Titorelli, however, the scene proceeds much as in the novel until the conclusion, when—as we have seen—Titorelli's loft opens out to become the courtroom itself.

Berkoff dispenses with the little girls altogether, and places K. at Titorelli's in the equivalent of a cinematic cut from a scene at the bank, at the end of which Titorelli is left standing in one of the doorframes "*as a painting.* K *pulls him out*" (Berkoff, *Trial* 58).

The absurdity of this scene is signalled in Titorelli's first line to K.: "Thank you very much. I got stuck inside a self portrait. That's very dangerous. Once I got stuck two days before someone came" (58). The magical leaping in and out of paintings/doorframes becomes a running gag in the scene, for where Kafka's and Barrault's Titorelli is a mere painter of portraits and landscapes (in Kafka, actually, of one landscape, which he simply repeats; Kafka 196-197), Berkoff's Titorelli is

described in the list of characters as a "surrealist verbalist clown" (Berkoff, *Trial* 9). The visual emblem of his surrealism, at least in the 1991 revival of *The Trial*, is the bizarre Salvador Dali moustache he wears; while verbally, he speaks not the perfect German, French or English of preceding Titorellis, but a fractured syntax reminiscent at times of Chico Marx:

> TITORELLI: . . . You like dirty pictures? I make a quick portrait for you. One sitting.
> K *goes into frame.*
> It's beautiful, it's my best portrait. I hang it in the gallery. Maybe I come in it with you . . . you like that?
> K: I can't see it.
> TITORELLI: Take a look. *They run out.* You like it?
> K: I didn't see it.
> TITORELLI: You're not quick enough, put your skates on, one, two, three, go.
> *They race around.*
> K: Yes, it's very good.
> TITORELLI: What are you talking about, there's no picture in there. (59)

It goes without saying that nothing like this conversation takes place in Kafka's novel, or like the following:

> TITORELLI: . . . if I were to paint all the judges in a row, masterpieces comparable to Greco, and you were to plead your case before all my paintings, you would have more success before the real Court than before my paintings.
> K: You mean more success before your paintings than the real Court?
> TITORELLI: That's very nice of you to say that, that too, but if you're innocent, I will help you. (60)

One important factor in the metamorphosis of Titorelli from Barrault's relatively naturalistic character to Berkoff's clown is the fact that, while Barrault played the part of Joseph K., Berkoff wrote Titorelli's role in his version for himself "as a wonderful cameo," taking a smaller role in order to concentrate on directing the production. Thus, despite Berkoff's identification with K. and his desire "to express the spirit of Kafka via K," in this scene K. is virtually reduced to being Titorelli's straight man (Berkoff, *Prisoner* 173). This is perhaps not unnatural, given that Kafka's protagonist spends so much time having things explained to him at length by various characters; and indeed,

amongst all this clowning Berkoff does manage to convey to K. and to the audience the essential information of the scene, regarding the options for acquittal of the accused—which turns out, of course, to be virtually impossible.

At the end of this scene, Berkoff departs even further from the novel than Barrault's metamorphosis into the courtroom. Where Barrault's K., like Kafka's, politely purchases three of Titorelli's paintings in return for his advice, Berkoff's K. feels no such obligation. Instead, he tells Titorelli that his advice is "useless," and claims, "I don't want your paintings, I'd rather die!" Thus, the ever-helpful Titorelli of the novel and the French adaptation becomes angry and vengeful in Berkoff's version: "That can be arranged—you waste the time of Titorelli the greatest painter in the entire world—I'll show you what happens to the people who waste the time of Titorelli." The painter then *"takes* K *and drags him behind a screen, painting* K *into a position of anguish and guilt*" (63).

The self-referential nature of this moment—an artist of monumental ego shaping Kafka's protagonist to his will—is obvious, and is perhaps due to Berkoff's own ability to laugh at himself and at his reputation; it is not, however, dwelt upon. Almost immediately, as the stage directions describe, "*The Court comes in, pushing* K *out of the screen—the picture frame is now full of masked faces who silently accuse him*" (63). Without the Gide/Barrault preamble, in which Titorelli's loft flies apart and the entire cast assembles to be greeted by K. (Gide and Barrault 99-101), Berkoff now plunges directly into the hearing scene. Although a brief exchange between the judge and K. is taken from Kafka—the judge informs K. that he is late and mistakes K. for a house painter—the remainder of the scene has no origin in the novel.

In *Der Proceß*, being taken for a house painter prompts Josef K. to respond to his situation with a lengthy and ironic speech which, with interspersed reactions from the court and reflections of K. himself, takes up the remainder of the chapter (Kafka 55-63). This is, of course, earlier in the

proceedings than in either the Gide/Barrault or the Berkoff adaptations, and K. is still vigorous, self-assured, not yet worn down by the year-long treadmill of the trial. Barrault uses K.'s speeches with little abridgement, but coming at the end of the trial as they do they become touching, almost compelling in their apparent sincerity (Gide and Barrault 106-109); where in the original, with so little of the trial behind him, K.'s speeches seem overblown and precious, and his sense of satisfaction out of proportion with his meagre achievement.

Berkoff does more than just pare this long passage down: he cuts it altogether. In its place, Berkoff's narrator announces, "The magistrate is now reading out the charges against him [K.]," a formality which Kafka's K. never experiences, and which Berkoff also denies his audience. The stage directions describe the scene: *"Their mouths open and shut—K hears silently the worst crimes he is capable of—we hear nothing—K collapses—the accusers leave—one man is left"* (Berkoff, *Trial* 63). It is presumably the last man whose voice we hear in exchange with K. for the rest of the scene:

> VOICE: *You will disappear as a dream and not be found, passing as a vision in the night.*
> K: Upright men will be astonished at this and the innocent shall stir at the hypocrite.
> VOICE: *Your bones, Joseph, are full of the sins of your youth, which shall lie down with you in the dust.*
> K: The just shall hold on, and he that hath clean hands shall grow stronger.
> VOICE: *You will suck the poison of asps. The viper's tongue will slay you.*
> K: There is my hope and who shall see it?
> VOICE: *The heavens shall reveal your iniquity and the earth rise up against you.*
> K: *(as a roaring crescendo) Mark me and be astonished and lay your hands on your own mouths. Wherefore do the wicked live? Wherefore do you see my ways and count my steps? I cry unto you, and thou dost hear me. I stand up and thou regardest me not, though they cry for my destruction. How be it you will not stretch your hand to the grave for me?* (64; Berkoff's emphasis)

Then, in another abrupt transition, the court disappears: "Bank Scene: *The* FIGURES *of the Court who remain on stage continue as office staff as if we have never left it—perhaps he has never left the bank*" (64).

This, in Berkoff's adaptation, is the entirety of K.'s hearing. There is nothing of Kafka left in it besides the brief exchange with the judge. Rather, the dialogue is pieced together from the book of Job (King James version): the accusing voice speaks lines taken from chapter 20 (verses 8, 11, 16 and 27 respectively; spoken in the Bible by Job's friend Zophar the Naamathite) and K. replies with lines from chapter 17 (verses 8, 9 and 15 respectively; spoken by Job himself) before his final outburst, which is adapted from Job 21:5, 21:7, 31:4, 30:20 (though the original line reads, "thou dost *not* hear me") and 30:24 (with its two clauses transposed). All of this latter speech is also spoken by Job; indeed, Job 31 is known as Job's "oath of clearance," in which "Job demonstrates his innocence of any social injustice by going over the details of his past ethical conduct" (which K. feels obligated to do but never gets around to; Lasine 189; Kafka 137).

As Stuart Lasine observes in "The Trials of Job and Kafka's Josef K.," however, "it is difficult to envision K. making an oath like Job's when one considers that, in contrast to Job, K. *was* attracted to a married woman (Job 31:9; [Kafka] 72), *was* willing to raise his hand against poor children (Job 31:21; [Kafka] 49), and *did* rejoice at the idea of his enemy's ruin (Job 31:39: [Kafka] 75)" (Lasine 189). No wonder, perhaps, that little of Job 31 finds its way into Berkoff's scene.

We have already seen how Gide and Barrault used biblical allusion to elucidate the theme and the relevance of their adaptation of *Der Proceß*. If for them the book of Jeremiah, with its motif of the persecution and destruction of the Jews, was the key to K.'s situation as "homme traqué," then we must assume that for Berkoff, the book of Job serves a similar purpose in defining K.'s identity. This is not a wild aberrant conceit of Berkoff's: although he has never mentioned any work of Kafka criticism, it is reasonable to suppose that he might have read Brod's biography of Kafka, in which Brod explicitly relates *Der Proceß* to "the fundamental question of Job" (*die uralte Hiobsfrage*), and points out that there are both similarities and great differences between Job's and K.'s behaviour

(Brod 155-162).

Brod, it will be recalled, took issue with Barrault and Gide for presenting K. as innocent (Brod 157); for Brod, K.'s sin was in a lack of love, or in possessing a "love not felt through to the end" (*die nicht bis ans Ende durchgefühlte Liebe*; 255). Berkoff's interpretation of the novel owes much to Brod: "The hero wanders through his life, never really getting close to anyone and so becoming a distant viewer of the outside world which observes him as if in orbit, floating at a distance: 'in these visions Frau Grubach's lodegers [*sic*] appeared as a closed group . . . they stood shoulder to shoulder with open mouths like an accusing chorus'" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 19). But for Berkoff this failing is not so easily encapsulated in the concept of "lovelessness" as it is in his personal *bête noire*, mediocrity:

> What is K's alias Kafka's guilt? Nothing so complex as world guilt or messianic martyrdom, but K's guilt for which he must die is the guilt of betrayal: the guilt of betraying his inner spirit to the safety of mediocrity. . . . For every shout held back, for every venture not ventured on, for every regret in the soul, for every compromise you make and slur you took adds to the sorry storehouse of guilt that screams out for justice. The soul screams out for vengeance, starved as it is in its dark and stinking hovel. Guilt is the difference between what your spirit sings out for and what your courage permits you to take. Joseph K's guilt—Kafka's guilt. (Berkoff, *Trial* 5)

And Berkoff's guilt as well: "Joseph K's mediocrity was mine and his ordinariness and fears were mine too: the 'under-hero' struggling to find the ego that would lead him to salvation" (1988, 5). Thus Berkoff's own preoccupations layer themselves on to Kafka's.

If Barrault's guilt feelings had motivated his adaptation (and perhaps his performance as the protagonist), however, he had refrained from making them his theme. Berkoff's dismissal of K. as a martyr marks clearly his divergence from Barrault's interpretation, and his return to the spirit of Brod, who saw *Der Proceß* primarily as a moral (and not a political or social) work. This return to a moral interpretation is demonstrated when the accusing voice in Berkoff's *Trial* speaks the words

of Zophar, who "shews the state and portion of the wicked"; and further by the fact that in this *Trial*—unlike in the original—actual charges are read, which move K. to collapse upon hearing them even if they remain unknown to the audience. These changes show that for Berkoff, K. is not innocent, and that Berkoff's interpretation builds upon Brod's to anticipate Stuart Lasine's observation that *Der Proceß* "answers questions such as: 'What would a court be like that *did* prosecute an individual for failing to live up to such moral standards, even in his most private emotions and attitudes? What would happen if he had none of the self-knowledge that Job possesses to such an extraordinary degree . . .?" (187).

This is exactly the question that Berkoff wished to pose in his adaptation:

> The courage to be oneself, or to readily express these inner longings, determines how much guilt one is saddled with. Manifesting these inner longings requires a greater confidence than the ordinary person will possess. He will feel trapped by his lack of courage and after a while the contrast between feeling and doing will leave a sorry storehouse of guilt. This accumulates until he feels guilty at merely being alive, since he has betrayed and violated the longings of his soul. And for this, the conscience gives no aquittal [*sic*]. (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 20)

If, as Berkoff's stage directions clearly imply, K. may never have left the bank, then the tribunal whose charges were so devastating to him can easily have been his own conscience.

Lasine argues that previous scholars have failed adequately to recognize the relationship between Kafka's *Proceß* and the book of Job because "scholars making this comparison generally accept K.'s distorted perception of the court as corrupt and nefarious, if not his perception of himself as an innocent victim" (187). Two decades before Lasine's article, however, Berkoff attempted to make this same comparison in dramatic terms and to account ingeniously for the absurd corruption of the court by placing it in K.'s own conscience: thus, if the court is corrupt it does not prove K.'s innocence, but rather his guilt, for the court resides within K. himself.

The sentence of K.'s conscience is not delayed long: after the trial scene, Berkoff's

abbreviated version of the cathedral scene leads directly into the execution. In this brief section, K.'s fatuous lack of self-knowledge is repeatedly made apparent in the contrast between his circumstances and his behaviour.

Thus when K. enters the cathedral to meet a visiting client, the chorus becomes a choir who sings its narration: "He's going in—but there is no one there to tell him it's empty except for an old woman kneeling before a Madonna." K. breaks in, in words very unlike Kafka's, with: "Where the hell's my client?" (Berkoff, *Trial* 65). Again, when the choir sings, "By chance K notices a verger in the shadows. He is watching him with the eyes of compassion. He is the guardian of us all"—the latter two sentences with no precedent in Kafka—K. brusquely responds, "What does he want, a tip?" (66; this time, K.'s line *is* based on Kafka's text: Kafka 247).

This contrast, which marks K.'s inadequacy to his situation, is finally given visual expression with the appearance of the priest, *"suddenly revealed as a giant effigy"* before a screen is rolled back to reveal him *"stretched between a trapeze of rope—as a figure of Leonardo"* (Berkoff, *Trial* 66). Although theatrically this effect may well owe something to Peter Brook's 1970 staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Berkoff's evocation of Leonardo's "Vitruvian man" with his perfect geometrical proportions is clearly meant to contrast with the warped inner life of K. Berkoff keeps this contrast static by not allowing the priest to descend from his trapeze ("I must speak to you from here. Otherwise, I might be swayed from my duty"), unlike Kafka's priest, who does eventually descend to K.'s level (67; Kafka 255; this change may not be due merely to thematic considerations, since it is also possible that getting the actor down from his rope perch gracefully and efficiently was too difficult to accomplish in the middle of the scene).

K.'s pathetic inability to grasp the self-imposed nature of his fate is finally and ultimately signalled by Berkoff's abrupt ending to this scene and to the play. Instead of the lengthy interpretive

discussion of "Before the Law" which takes place in the novel (Kafka 257-264), K. cuts the conversation short. No sooner does the priest finish recounting the parable than K. responds:

> K: The doorkeeper deceived the man, just as the Law is deceiving me. There is no door and no entrance.
> PRIEST: But doesn't the keeper say, "The door was meant only for you"? There is no mention of deception in it. You must accept the Law's servant or doubt the Law itself. It is not necessary to accept everything as true, one must only accept it as necessary.
> K: I want to go. Where is the main doorway? (Berkoff, *Trial* 68)

Berkoff's cutting of the discussion causes an absurd conflation of the cathedral's main doorway with the door that leads to the law—but this conflation, while absurd, is true in the universe of the play. The priest advises K. to "*Follow the wall. You'll come to the door*," and as the choir continues to sing, "*A rope is stretched between* TWO MEN—*they change the shape and make stairs and endless corridors. As he arrives at the end of one stretch it reverses and he continues—the rope gets smaller until he is trapped in it*" (69).

As Berkoff himself glosses "Before the Law": "The necessity of maintaining this society is your acceptance of lying as a universal principle. If we are tinged with enough guilt, our legacy from the betraying of our spirits, how easily might we allow others to enchain us" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 20). Joseph K.'s lazy acceptance of mediocrity instead of self-expression thus becomes one of the "gross crimes of the mind" against which Berkoff has long struggled (Elder 42), and it is fitting that instead of by the knife, K. dies truly "Like . . . a . . . dog" (Berkoff, *Trial* 69), with the rope closing around his throat, presenting at the end the picture of a man literally at the end of his tether, leashed like an animal. "Joseph K took what he thought was the safe route but got caught in the snare. End of play" (Berkoff, *Theatre of Steven Berkoff* 57-58).

The Mixed Reception of Berkoff's *Trial*

> If one is too literal in reproducing a work of literature on the stage, one can do greater disservice than one who tries to recreate the basic forces that animated the novel in the first place. So what one has is a commentary of *The Trial* as one person recalling the events. The story changes hands and is imbued with the sensations it cast in the teller. We shake the verbal elements into a visual plastic metamorphosis. We are telling it by process of analysis; fastening ourselves to what we believe are its basic truths, we step further into our own minds. (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 20)

The above passage from Berkoff's "Manifestos" demonstrates clearly that Berkoff is entirely aware that theatrical adaptation is foremost a form of interpretation: it is not the novel, but a vision of the novel altered by a particular point of view, which is represented. The story of the novel is naturally "imbued with the sensations it cast in the teller," and thus the play's cast "becomes" the novel in the same way that, in Berkoff's revision of Brecht's "Street Scene," the witness "becomes" the accident; not, that is, in any real way, but in a manner that supplants the original event—the accident, the novel—in the spectator's attention. "In the end there is only the actor, his body, mind and voice" (11).

Berkoff's critics, however, apparently could not simply efface Kafka's novel from their memory. Although contemporary reviews of *The Trial*'s original 1971 production, or even its first major production of 1973, are difficult to track down—perhaps because the Oval House and the Round House were not major mainstream venues—it is clear that the original reception of Berkoff's *Trial* in London was not what he had hoped: "*The Trial* played successfully in Germany to over 1,000 people a night while in London I had to struggle for audiences at the Round House. So *The Trial* was seen in England for only three weeks, in 1973" (Berkoff, *Trial* 6).

Here, Berkoff's account is again misleading in terms of chronology, if not in other terms as well: *The Trial* was not in fact produced in West Germany until 1976, and Mary Benson writes that the play had "a successful run at the Round House in 1973," after which it "was invited to the Vienna

International Festival where it won the prize for the best new work" (Benson 84). This was, presumably, the London version of *The Trial*, played in English.

When Berkoff did direct the play in German at the Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus three years later, Georg Hensel's review in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* newspaper called it "one of the most amazing and riveting evenings of theatre this season,"[98] and "the best stage version [of *Der Proceß*] by far: the only one that does not arduously accommodate the novel to the requirements of the stage, but rather makes an originary stage event from the novel" (Hensel/PM).[99] Hensel was impressed both by the physical precision of the adaptation's pantomime and by the fidelity of the text: "Berkoff does not dialogize, he theatricalizes. He makes the novel into a libretto, in which there is nonetheless hardly a sentence that does not come from Kafka"[100]; while at the same time, "nothing remains of the epic genre; everything has been transformed into action" (Hensel/PM).[101]

Gerd Vielhaber, of *Der Tagesspiegel*, was equally impressed, at least to begin with: remarking on Berkoff's independence from previous adapters, Vielhaber agrees with Hensel that "Berkoff approaches the material with an actor's inspiration. He does not interpret the parable dramaturgically[, . . . but] rather attempts, through the coordination of language, music, pantomime, ballet, lighting effects and soundscapes, to realize the vision of total theatre, less unrestrained than

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[98] ". . . einer der verblüffendsten und fesselndsten Theaterabende dieser Spielzeit . . ."

[99] "Es ist die mit Abstand beste Bühnenfassung: die einzige, die den Roman nicht mühsam den Erfordernissen der Bühne anpaßt, sondern aus dem Roman ein originäres Bühnenereignis macht."

[100] "Berkoff dialogisiert nicht, er theatralisiert. Er macht aus dem Roman ein Libretto, in dem es doch kaum einen Satz gibt, der nicht von Kafka stammt."

[101] "Es gibt keine epischen Restbestände; alles ist in Aktion verwandelt."

choreographically and artistically perceived" (Vielhaber/PM).[102]

And further, "He succeeds in this, at least in the first section, in a fascinating manner."[103] However, Vielhaber observes, "after intermission, unfortunately, it is noticeable that there is a serious dropoff in the ensemble's energy, which in the beginning was so determinedly hard-won"; and this dropoff brings other flaws to light: "The effect of the 'doorframe-trick' wears off with repetition. Imprecisions appear. The inner monologues are over-interpreted by the chorus, and remain external trimmings, as do some of the pantomimed 'explanations' in the badly overdrawn advocate scene and the annoying business in the superficial Titorelli episode."[104]

Despite these drawbacks, Vielhaber's final judgement is nonetheless positive: "the quality of the production, even when it only circles around Kafka in time-loop fashion, and the ensemble's achievement deserve respect. . . . The applause was thunderous" (Vielhaber/PM).[105] Both Hensel and Vielhaber singled out Hans Christian Rudolph, the actor portraying Josef K., for particular praise, with Vielhaber even comparing him to Buster Keaton for his puppetlike tragicomic demeanour.

Given such praise after the stony silence of Britain, Berkoff remembers this period fondly

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[102] "Berkoff nähert sich dem Material mit der Inspiration des Schauspielers. Er interpretiert die Parabel nicht dramaturgisch. Er versucht vielmehr, durch die Koordinierung von Sprache, Musik, Pantomime, Ballett, Lichteffekten und Geräuschkulissen die Vision totalen, zwar weniger entfesselten als choreographisch-artistisch wahrgenommen Theaters zu verwirklichen . . ."

[103] "Das gelingt ihm, zumindest im ersten Teil, auf faszinierende Weise."

[104] "Die Wirkungen des 'Rahmenstils' nutzen sich in ihren Wiederholungen ab. Präzisionsschwächen stellen sich ein. Die Innenmonologe werden chorisch überinterpretiert, bleiben äußerliche Zutat, wie auch manche pantomimischen 'Erläuterungen' in der arg überzogenen Advokatenszene und das ärgerliche Gebaren der vordergründigen Titorelli-Episode."

[105] "Von solchen Mängeln abgesehen verdienen die Qualität der Aufführung, auch wo sie Kafka nur zeitlupenhaft umkreist, und die Leistung des Ensembles Respekt. [. . .] Der Beifall war stürmisch."

even after two decades: "I gained a reputation in Düsseldorf with *The Trial*, which won instant approval from the press and the public" (Berkoff, *Coriolanus* 5). Gerd Jäger's ambivalent review in *Theater heute*, discussed in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, either did not come to Berkoff's attention or was perhaps considered positive enough in the final analysis.

Jäger, it will be remembered, lamented the fact that "it is too apparent in Düsseldorf that a play above all, and thus not *Der Prozeß*, would have been a suitable starting point for Berkoff's and the ensemble's work" (34). The production is only successful in terms of its achievements "viewed separately from Kafka's novel,"[106] which are considerable. Jäger praised the actors' precision of sound and movement, claiming that "when they are faced with more rewarding objects, they and their audience can profit from [the work]" (Jäger/PM 35).

As for Berkoff himself, whose opinion about ordinary playscripts being too confining for the actors' work Jäger simply "cannot share," his script contains "textual inconsistencies" (*Ungereimtheiten*) such as inconsistent substitution of "Joseph K." for "the man from the country" in the opening parable (34). In fact, in the first paragraph of "Before the Law" as adapted by Berkoff for the prologue, "Joseph K." or "K" is regularly used, while in the second paragraph only "the man" is mentioned (Berkoff, *Trial* 12). This seems too neat to be accidental; furthermore, since Berkoff's script must have been translated into German for the Düsseldorf production, presumably in consultation with Berkoff, and no emendations were made, it might be inferred that this "inconsistency" is a deliberate choice of Berkoff's. Jäger himself implies that this is the case when he goes on to write that these inconsistencies are disposed of (*weggeschoben*, literally "pushed away") once Berkoff's use of the metal frames makes it clear that "here more is to be represented

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[106] ". . . isoliert von Kafkas Roman gesehen . . ."

through abstraction than with a stage full of concrete props" (Jäger/PM 34).[107] Jäger's ironic tone, however, indicates that even if abstraction is a valid strategy of adaptation, it is no excuse for "textual inconsistency" (Ruby Cohn's charge of "lexical imprecision" fifteen years later is foreshadowed here).

Berkoff's direction, though seemingly lauded in connection with the cast's "unforced and easy quality" (*Unverzwungenheit und Leichtigkeit*), is in fact somehow sharply separated from the actors' accomplishment: "The perfection (if also, however, the slickness) of the production knows almost no bounds" (34), and thus Berkoff's *Trial* "seems like the result of animal training." Any positive gains for the cast are merely "side effects" (33).[108]

In Berkoff's own account, however, the Düsseldorf production was nearly sabotaged by its own cast, who expressed opinions and attitudes all too familiar to Berkoff from his critics. Dissatisfied with rehearsals, they went over Berkoff's head to the theatre's artistic director; for them, Berkoff claims, "anything that doesn't have the ABC of plodding naturalistic familiarity and the linear thinking of the plodder is invalid. . . . So in Düsseldorf they again went to the Herr Intendant and whined like kids in a kindergarten" (Berkoff, *Coriolanus* 43). Having similar troubles with his Munich cast of *Coriolanus* twenty years later, Berkoff's reminiscences prompt him to muse that "the need to whine, whinge and complain seems so much a part of this company's character, and it is reflected in the German nation as a whole" (43).

Such sentiments undercut somewhat Berkoff's comparative analysis of his English critics

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[107] ". . . mit dem Metallrahmen ist hier abstrahierend mehr darzustellen als mit einer Bühne voll konkreter Requisiten."

[108] ". . . das Düsseldorfer Remake seiner Londoner Arbeit mutet an wie das Resultat eines Dressuraktes, mit vielen positiven Nebenerscheinungen allerdings, die zu beschreiben sind."

after his German triumph: "Of course when I got it back to London the critics dismissed it. Said we were trying to capture the mechanistic qualities of the bureaucracy. They couldn't deal with it. It was pathetic" (Elder 40).

At any rate, the praise Berkoff garnered in Germany—whether real or imagined (Berkoff's lack of German may have helped him interpret his reception even more in his favour)—seems to have been enough that in 1978, even Berkoff was "humbled, still, by the accolades" (Elder 40). In Berkoff's own words, "I'm just Steve from Islington and here were people acclaiming me over great men like Peter Weiss and Barrault and Orson Welles" (40). Peter Weiss's adaptation of *Der Proceß* had been written in 1974 and first produced the following year; if Jäger did not feel that Berkoff's adaptation succeeded, he at least also pointed out that adapting Kafka did not work for Weiss either, "whose *Prozeß* is nothing other than a determined, dialogized interpretation of the novel, comparable in its quality to the essays of Benjamin, Kofler or Mayer" (Jäger/PM 34).[109]

By the 1990s, however, it seems as though little had changed for Berkoff in his homeland: though he was invited to remount *The Trial* at the National Theatre's Lyttleton stage—a sign of artistic acceptance from the British mainstream—he could nonetheless write afterwards that he was "[s]till smarting from the gruesomely unfair reviews I had in *The Trial*" (Berkoff, *Coriolanus* 24).

Among these reviews is presumably that of Christopher Edwards, who wrote in *The Spectator*, "Steven Berkoff's production of *The Trial* is, as you may have gathered, more about Mr. Berkoff's style of theatre than it is about Franz Kafka" (43). Edwards ironically turns against Berkoff two of Berkoff's own most cherished tenets: first, that Berkoff's theatre is in fact primarily

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[109] "Man kann Kafkas 'Prozeß' an jeder beliebigen Stelle aufschlagen, um zu beweisen, daß er als Vorlage für eine Theaterveranstaltung nicht taugt. Auch nicht getaugt hat bei Peter Weiss, dessen 'Prozeß' nichts anderes ist als eine entschiedene, dialogisierte Interpretation des Romans, in ihrer Qualität vergleichbar den Aufsätzen Benjamins, Koflers, oder Mayers."

self-centred—the actor both becoming and supplanting the text as focus of attention—and second, that Kafka's work is likewise above all about Kafka. For Berkoff these two tenets are not self-contradictory ("Kafka expressed me as I expressed Kafka"), while for Edwards they are, and self-evidently so.

Edwards does not make this claim in ignorance of Berkoff's aesthetics. Rather, he takes the liberty of arguing Berkoff's side briefly: "Where Kafka plays it down, Berkoff is extravagant and way over the top. But, Berkoff would argue, the whole point of the theatre is that it enables you to use resources not available elsewhere. Who wants to replicate the experience of a reader in the auditorium? Of course. We agree. Berkoff is happy to be guilty as charged. But might it not be better also to abandon any claim to be staging a piece of interpretive theatre?" (43).

Edwards's certainty and his open-mindedness in admitting Berkoff some representation—albeit as a straw man—do not obscure the failure of any logical connection between "using resources not available elsewhere" and "abandoning any claim to stage interpretive theatre." Indeed, this argument only makes sense if we regard "reading" and "interpretation" as terms wholly and sufficiently synonymous: the literary fallacy in its purest form.

Berkoff, however, admits (or even requires) that in adaptation "[the] story changes hands and is imbued with the sensations it cast in the teller. . . . We are telling it by process of analysis" (Berkoff, Trial 20). It is these sensations, and not the tone of the novel, which take precedence as the actor becomes the event by analyzing his sensations. Edwards himself admits that Berkoff triumphs on this level: "This production is a masterclass in expressionistic variations by Steven Berkoff. Interesting and arresting variations they are too" (43).

Although he is arrested by the cast's white-face makeup, the vocal sound effects, the oblong metal frames "deployed with great virtuosity," and the sharp contrast between the other actors

"strik[ing] grimacing postures inside their frames" and Antony Sher's "spinsterish, stiff-collared clerk" Joseph K., Edwards is apparently disturbed by the sexual content of the play (43-44; Edwards, incidentally, misspells Sher's first name as "Anthony"). As Edwards describes the role of sex in Kafka's novel, "Joseph K.'s sexual world is, generally, murky. Or, at least, we have a sense of a respectable surface shifting perilously under subterranean pressures." In contrast to this vague disquiet, Edwards claims, "Berkoff, naturally, goes for the volcanic option. There is no room for doubt in the cavortings of the lurid, predatory sexual creatures he encounters in this production" (44). We might note the casual way in which Edwards inserts "naturally" in this section; very much like the clause "as you may have gathered" in his opening sentence, it implies that Berkoff's trademarks, egomania and extravagance, are givens, so predictable that a review is scarcely necessary.

Edwards's confident capsule description of Kafka's work, however, is not as indisputable as it seems. In contrast to the ambivalent picture of Kafka's view of sexual relations rendered in Edwards's review, even an introductory work like David Zane Mairowitz's *Kafka for Beginners* points out in no uncertain terms, "Kafka always sees these [female] figures from a male point of view, making his traditional position clear quite early on. 'Women are traps which lie in wait for men everywhere, in order to drag them down into the Finite,' he is reported to have said" (Mairowitz and Crumb 127). While this too is an interpretation whose direct applicability to *Der Proceß* can be disputed, it demonstrates that Berkoff's vision of "lurid, predatory sexual creatures" is hardly unprecedented either in Kafka's work or in Kafka criticism; in fact, the "Finite" as attributed here to Kafka is possibly a good precedent for the condition Berkoff continually characterizes as "mediocrity," "mundanity" or "banality."

Edwards begins summing up by remarking that Berkoff's *Trial* "seems to be setting out to create a sense of nightmare through grotesque and comic overstatement." Given Berkoff's adaptive

strategies as described in part in this dissertation, it may well seem that Edwards is stating the obvious. Edwards's final conclusion, however, if not obvious, is the mixture of grudging praise and enthusiastic reproach which must seem familiar to Berkoff: "It is packed with invention and even if, after some three hours, a strong sense of repetitiveness creeps in, you always admire Berkoff's antic imaginings. But the one ingredient you do not find is a sense of the tense, quietly disturbing horror as Joseph K.'s inexplicable fate overtakes him. You might feel this is part of the essence of Kafka and you might be right. If so you will have to read the novel to experience it" (44).

Other reviewers were largely, though not always completely, in agreement with Edwards. John Peter, writing in *The Sunday Times*, found Berkoff's adaptation "a personal fantasy inspired by Kafka and translated into a personal theatrical style which bears about as much relation to the original as a child's account of a row between demented adults in a foreign language." The cursory mention of Sher in this review indicates that for Peter, the play's lead hardly stood out. Rather, with the actors reduced to "13 furious marionettes," Peter describes the effect of the play as "one of skilfully organised artifice, whereas Kafka's tale is imbued with the terrifying naturalness of things." As a concrete example of this artifice, Peter offers Matthew Scurfield's performance of Huld as "a drunken King Ubu": the portrayal is "done with huge physical strength and skill: but what has it to do with poor old Kafka?" As for the play, "What is it doing at the National Theatre?" (6).

Hardly less negative is Michael Billington's review in *The Guardian*, "Berkoff the baroque." Billington sees *The Trial* as embodying the tension between two Steven Berkoffs, one "a highly disciplined theatrical artist" and the other "a feverish romantic who believes that nothing succeeds like excess." Such excess, however, is inappropriate to an interpretation of *Der Proceß*, which is, as Peter also argued, "anchored in a casual naturalism . . . . Kafka was, among other things, a minute realist." Although Billington, interestingly, approves of Berkoff's depiction of the book's female

characters (including the "open-legged Miss Burstner" [*sic*]), he is particularly critical of the interpretation of Huld, whose business disturbs the play's "narrative impetus." As for Sher, despite "his own physical precision" and a slight resemblance to Kafka, Billington finds him "a little subdued by the hero's universality." Though Billington praises many of the production's details, particularly in the first act, his final judgement is again typical of Berkoff's reviews: "If only the former [Berkoff] could conquer the latter [Berkoff], you might then have The Trial without the attendant, self-indulgent tribulations" (32).

As indicated by its title, "A journey going nowhere," Benedict Nightingale's review in *The Times* was also less than enthusiastic. Leading with the claim that Scurfield's portrayal of Huld is one that "most people will have to battle to forget," because "this Rabelaisian Rumpole hijacks the play," Nightingale grants that such business "may please those who like vaudeville effects and value theatrical invention for its own sake. But does it altogether serve Kafka?"

On this point, Nightingale is uncertain. He cites George Steiner as witness that the novel is "the classic model of the terror state," and notes that Berkoff foregoes this interpretation to concentrate on K.'s refusal to abjure personal mediocrity; but Nightingale is less critical of Berkoff's divergent interpretation than he is of the production's perceived failure to convey that interpretation clearly. The same uncertainty is reflected when Nightingale balances his approval of K.'s complex psychopathology in the play against his dislike of the staging, which moves from being "striking" in one paragraph to "irritatingly attention-getting" in the next. Amidst all this business, however, Nightingale effusively praises the performance of Antony Sher, who plays K. "with a restraint that somehow maintains emotional power. Would that were true of the production as a whole" (Nightingale 22).

Throughout these reviews, as with Barrault's production years before, the possibility that

there is any comic potential in the original novel, which is famous for its "tense, quietly disturbing horror," is summarily dismissed. Everyone knows, as Edwards for one implies, that humour is not "part of the essence of Kafka," not Kafkaesque; as Mairowitz and Crumb point out, however, "Kafkaesque" is "an adjective that takes on almost mythic proportions in our time, irrevocably tied to fantasies of doom and gloom, ignoring the intricate Jewish joke that weaves itself through the bulk of Kafka's work" (Mairowitz and Crumb 5).

It may be reviews such as these which prompted Michael Coveney to write in *The Observer*: "Yet more vain voices, proffering O-level tips on Kafka, are raised against Steven Berkoff, whose brilliant 1973 version of *The Trial* has opened in the Lyttleton" (57). In one of the few unreservedly positive reviews of Berkoff's career as an adapter (or, indeed, of Kafka as an adaptee), Coveney observes, "It is a bit late to argue for the protection of a text that, ever since André Gide introduced it to the theatre, has been a mythically reverberative plaything of directors for decades" (57).

In sharp contrast to most of the other reviewers, Coveney writes that Sher, as K., "strik[es] new notes of recognisable terror"; in fact, as if in direct reply to Edwards, Coveney goes on: "Try telling the Birmingham Six [Irish political prisoners] that Berkoff and Sher have missed a Kafkaesque nuance here and there." Coveney is also not in the least troubled by the comic aspects of the production; if there is any deficiency in Berkoff's approach, it is rather that he "err[s] occasionally on the side of solemnity." There is only some measure of agreement between Coveney and the other reviewers insofar as Coveney also points out that Berkoff "has evolved a remarkable Expressionistic manner of production which is all his own" (57).

Coveney reserves special praise not only for the much-maligned Scurfield as Huld, but also for Berkoff's cameo as the painter Titorelli, "playing a duet with Sher which, in sheerly visceral, mimetic terms, is without equal on the London stage." This praise is all the more noteworthy

because it is framed in terms of Berkoff's own theatrical priorities—and because Edwards does not even bother to mention Berkoff's appearing onstage, while the other three reviewers are uniformly negative in their appraisal of Berkoff's Titorelli. Indeed, in a remarkable display of unanimity, Nightingale, Billington and Peter all compare Berkoff's thick Italian accent to that of a stereotypical ice-cream vendor, in an "absurdly flamboyant" performance (Nightingale 22) in which "Kafka gets lost under a star turn" (Billington 32). In Peter's words, "As a display of athletic comic timing and irrepressible vulgarity, this is quite entertaining: but as a response to Kafka's portrayal of the bankruptcy of art it is both tedious and feeble-minded" (Peter 6).

Among these reviews, Coveney's dissenting voice stands out in its support for Berkoff's commitment to his own aesthetic standards, and to Kafka. In fact, though one might question the relevance of Coveney's characterizing Sher's and Berkoff's scene together as "Two nice Jewish boys having competitive fun" (57), Berkoff, as we have seen, might not only find it relevant, but might well add, "And Kafka makes three."

Berkoff's Achievement

The mere existence of a review like Coveney's would seem to indicate that Berkoff has at least made some headway in his battle with the mainstream. Nonetheless, as we have seen, the extremely personal nature of his work has provoked extremely personal criticism in return, and the rarity of productions of his work by others has formed an almost indissoluble bond between Berkoff and his plays. Unlike many other playwrights with such lengthy careers, Berkoff has little opportunity to blame bad reviews on bad direction or casting. Much of the criticism levelled at him thus seems to be filtered through a sort of reverse cult of personality: Berkoff is felt to be a known quantity, incapable of rising above his image, which is in turn perpetuated by such criticism.

It may be that an unfortunate side effect of this personal view of Berkoff is that it constructs a separate Berkoff: a stereotypical Berkoff, whose character traits writ large are directly at odds with the stereotype of Kafka with which many reviewers seem conversant. Berkoff himself contributes to this by his own writings, which are rich in emotional and physical details of the moment, but which surprisingly reveal almost nothing of the author's private life; even his autobiography is a performance. The boisterous egomaniac Berkoff, a comedian possessed of an "indiscriminate demotic energy" (Cohn 94), seems worlds apart from the dour, emaciated ascetic Kafka who has become common currency, and the contrast makes Berkoff's pretensions as an interpreter of Kafka seem ridiculous.

The fact is, however, that Kafka was himself in life more humorous and athletic than is usually realized, and was thought to be a more than adequate public speaker; Brod has of course recorded the humour and energy with which Kafka read *Der Proceß* aloud to his friends (156-157). Certainly, Kafka and Berkoff share a vision of their respective arts as obsessions, to which both their private lives and any other work must be subservient.

This is in fact the aspect of Kafka which Berkoff has no doubt found most congenial, and arguably, this is the aspect of Kafka which Berkoff has dramatized most consistently. When Mick Imlah takes exception to Berkoff "crudely" expressing his criticism, in *Metamorphosis*, of "the 'small, paltry, bourgeois achievements' of the creeping family, things like eating and working" (816), he overlooks the fact that Kafka (and especially that Kafka who is in part Brod's creation) shares Berkoff's exaggerated artist's distaste for the bourgeois.

Kafka, in fact, wished to separate his art from the mundane realities of life so much that he forbade himself to work either at any job which was remotely connected with literature or at a job whose hours extended so late into the afternoon as to preclude literary work (Brod 73). In this

connection Brod moans on Kafka's behalf that there will always be those petty-bourgeois (*Spießer*) who believe that "it is enough when a genius has 'a few hours free,'" when in fact "*all* the available hours of the day and night are barely enough" (Brod/PM 81).[110]

Thus when Imlah suggests that Berkoff's sending up the bourgeoisie "seems to have deflected [him] from Kafka's larger purpose" (816), he fails to acknowledge the possibility that as far as Berkoff is concerned, this ruthless rejection of bourgeois values *is* Kafka's larger purpose (Imlah does not suggest what else it might be; perhaps he, too, regards the answer as self-evident, though the sheer volume of Kafka interpretation proves otherwise). Ten years earlier, Mary Benson saw more clearly the similarities between Berkoff and Kafka when she used quotations from Kafka to lend weight to Berkoff's statements, like scripture underpinning a sermon: "you make that tremendous effort to go really far and that way you strip your daily existence, your mediocre plain human experience and reveal a super-human being which gets into a much richer mine, more mystical, and much more savage. . . . ('Man,' said Kafka, 'throws himself into the dark rainbow which spans living and dying.')" (89; Benson's parenthesis).

Any similarity of temperament or opinion between Berkoff and Kafka is of course no guarantee of quality in Berkoff's adaptation. It is nonetheless demonstrable that Berkoff's thematic interpretation of *Der Proceß* is by no means outrageous, but rather falls soundly within the tradition of interpretation established by Max Brod; more so, in fact, than Barrault's version had. Although Berkoff's vision of Kafka has strong precedents, it is, in general, the provocative nature of his adaptive strategies and of his dramaturgy which has motivated critics to question his interpretation.

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[110] "Es wird leider immer Spießer geben, die der Meinung sind, es genüge, wenn das Genie 'einige Stunden frei' habe,—die nicht verstehen, daß nur *sämtliche* verfügbare Stunden des Tages und der Nacht gerade knapp ausreichen. . . ."

Judging the success of *The Trial* without having seen the production is of course virtually impossible; the futility of such an attempt is brought home when Edwards mentions in passing that the play runs "some three hours" (44) despite the fact that the playscript covers only fifty-eight pages. The amount of mime and choreography which must be lost to the script reader is clearly substantial.

If, however, we regard Berkoff's adaptation of *The Trial* as a use of the novel as raw material in an ongoing project of antagonizing the bourgeoisie, we must grant him considerable success. The energy which Berkoff has maintained through his rage against "mediocrity" has arguably sustained him better than years of adulation might have; it is difficult to imagine Berkoff wishing himself more comfortable than his audience: "To go past, *past* the audience's comfort in taking an image, it's only past it that you get into the mystic area, you go on and on and the audience suddenly begins to want more and you go on and they say ah! *then* they start getting tingles up the spine so you go on, *that's* the ultimate. Not where it's comfortable" (Benson 87).

Berkoff's obsessive discipline in search of the uncomfortable has by now earned a modicum of respect, and even his most vicious detractors are forced to admire his refusal to compromise or relax his standards. As Ruby Cohn writes, "Though heavy-handed, he does snarl against complacency" (Cohn 94). Such backhanded praise is both the price and the reward of Berkoff's throwing himself into Kafka's "dark rainbow between living and dying," and *The Trial* is not merely Berkoff's tribute to Kafka, but the most ambitious embodiment of Berkoff's early dictum from the "Manifestos": "Be a sacrifice and live dangerously" (Berkoff, "Three Theatre Manifestos" 8).

Bremen, 1975: *Der Prozeß*

At this point, we leave the realm of actor-directors adapting the novel from a vision of themselves as its protagonist (though Berkoff saw himself in the role, he never cast himself in it). Peter Weiss had several careers—as visual artist, film-maker, journalist and prose author—before he took up writing for the stage, but he had never been an actor. Moreover, in contrast to the adulation of Kafka expressed by Barrault, Berkoff, and even Gide, Weiss claimed to have long overcome an early enthusiasm for Kafka, and took up the project of adaptation at the suggestion of a third party. As a result, Weiss's version differs from its precursors in being a critique of its source. Kurt Klinger describes this difference even more forcefully: "By comparison, Peter Weiss's interpretation of *Der Prozeß* is so decidedly confrontational that contradiction was presumably the only motivation to embark on an undertaking which hardly seemed either original or particulary necessary in 1974" (Klinger/PM 64).[111]

Weiss's adaptation is also markedly different from the previous versions in that while Barrault's production was a considerable triumph, and Berkoff's adaptation—after moderate initial success—was restaged later in his career as a sign of his acceptance in the mainstream, Weiss's *Prozeß* quickly came to be regarded both by its creator and by most critics as a disaster; dismissed by Stefan Howald, for example, as "one of Peter Weiss's most colourless works . . . interesting above

[111] "Dem entgegen begibt sich die 'Prozeß'-Fassung von Peter Weiss so entschieden in die Konfrontation, daß vermutlich der Widerspruch der eigentliche Beweggrund gewesen ist, ein Unternehmen in Angriff zu nehmen, das 1974 kaum noch originell oder besonders notwendig zu sein schien."

all in its failure" (Howald/PM 190).[112]

It is difficult to reject Howald's assessment altogether: Weiss's *Prozeß* was hurriedly written, and premiered at second-rate provincial theatres—in productions at which Weiss himself expressed horror—to scathing reviews often motivated by personal and political antipathy; subsequently, as Weiss re-immersed himself in his prose work, *Der Prozeß* disappeared from the theatre scene like a neglected orphan (Zimmermann 149; Klinger 68). The release of Weiss's massive novel *Ästhetik des Widerstands* (*Aesthetics of Resistance*) and its success as a cult book in the early 1980s (Howald 7) overshadowed the embarrassment of the Kafka adaptation; and finally, Weiss's decision to return to Kafkaesque themes in 1982 more successfully in his play *Der neue Prozeß* (*The New Trial*; dedicated to Kafka and using character names from *Der Proceß*, but otherwise unconnected to Kafka's novel) upstaged the 1975 work even further.

Howald's remarks notwithstanding, however, *Der Prozeß* deserves more than an offhand dismissal: it is also interesting because "Weiss's attitude towards Kafka and his reception of his works illustrate how closely artistic creativity, revolt against a bourgeois value-system and political activity are interrelated for Weiss" (Hesson 283). Moreover, the play is remarkably complex in its handling of Kafka's themes and its integration of Weiss's own political and personal concerns. Perhaps only the speed with which Weiss completed it prevented him from integrating these concerns more smoothly; though *Der Prozeß* is both capably written and formally quite faithful to the novel, its refusal to conform consistently to Weiss's stated intentions remains its greatest failing, and—judging from the reviews—one of the most significant obstacles to its successful production.

Some of these difficulties were already foreshadowed when a bedridden Weiss marked the

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[112] "Denn das Resultat dieser Bearbeitung ist eines der blassesten Werke von Peter Weiss. Seine *Prozeß*-Dramatisierung ist vor allem interessant in ihrem Scheitern."

beginning of the project with a terse entry in his *Notebooks* on 2 February 1974:

> Conversation with Ingmar Bergman. His suggestion: dramatize Kafka's *Trial*.
> Lie in bed. Flu. Read the book again (how many times is it now?)—same strong impressions. Dramatization maybe possible on the side—
> Read Kafka against the grain. (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 255)[113]

Weiss's decision to pursue the adaptation "on the side" while working on the *Aesthetics*, and his desire to interpret Kafka critically, "against the grain," would prove in the end to be less than mutually compatible. Bergman's choice of Weiss as the recipient of this suggestion, however, was neither ill-advised nor arbitrary; rather, it was grounded in a thorough acquaintance with Weiss and his work, for throughout his life Weiss had exhibited a strong and public identification with, and reaction to, Kafka—still evident in the above quotation—which had often become the subject of his writing.

Weiss and Kafka: From Major Influence to Passing Acquaintance?

Peter Weiss was born near Berlin in 1916. His mother Frieda had been an actress under Max Reinhardt, but had given up the stage; his father Eugen, a factory owner, came from a Hungarian Jewish family, but had converted to Christianity. The young Weiss grew up in Berlin and in Bremen, where his life bore certain resemblances to Kafka's. Sven Hugo Persson, for example, writes: "In both Kafka's and Weiss's cases, Jewish origin manifested itself as national and social alienation, growing up in a bourgeois family where artists and bohemians were regarded with

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[113] "Gespräch mit Ingmar Bergman. Seine Anregung: Kafkas Prozeß zu dramatisieren. Liege zu Bett. Grippe. Lese das Buch wieder (zum wievielten Mal?)—gleich starke Eindrücke. Dramatisierung vielleicht möglich als Zwischenarbeit—Kafka gegen des Strich lesen."

disapproval, the charged relationship with an authoritarian father-figure" (Persson/PM 16).[114] Irène Tieder has also noted similarities between Weiss's life and Kafka's fiction, where the family atmosphere is always "strange and oppressive, even stifling, the relationships marked by conflict. The confrontation between son and father, and the close relationship with [Weiss's] favourite sister Margit, are not unevocative of Kafka's *The Judgement* or, again, *The Metamorphosis*, where Greta alone goes on taking care of her brother who has become a repellent vermin" (Tieder/PM 44).[115] Indeed, according to Irène Tieder, Weiss's relationship with his father was "exactly like in Kafka's stories," where "the relationship is generally of a sado-masochistic type, and deeply marked by conflict" (47; see also Hesson 283).[116]

The atmosphere cannot have been improved by the fact that the 18-year-old Weiss's relationship with his sister, six years his junior, went beyond being "close" to include incestuous heavy petting; after she was fatally injured by a car in the street, the trauma and Weiss's obsession with her forced Weiss into a long period of fear of sex and relationships which mimicked Kafka's own awkward and unfulfilling erotic patterns. Moreover, this trauma shaped much of Weiss's career as an artist concerned with questions of identity: "My sister's death was the beginning of my attempts to free myself from my past" (Weiss/Levenson 60).

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[114] "Hos både Kafka och Weiss finns det judiska ursprunget som betingar nationell och social utstötthet, uppväxten i en borgerlig familj där konstnären-bohemen ses med oblida ögon, det laddade förhållandet till en auktoritär fadersgestalt."

[115] "L'atmosphère qui régnait dans la maison familiale était bizarre et lourde, étouffante même, les rapports très conflictuels. La confrontation du fils avec son père et la relation privilégiée avec sa soeur Margit ne sont pas sans évoquer le *Verdict* de Kafka ou encore la *Métamorphose* où Grete seule prend encore quelque soin de son frère, devenu une abjecte vermine."

[116] "L'affrontement du père et du fils est un thème récurrent dans plusieurs récits. Exactement comme chez Kafka, la relation est généralement d'ordre sado-masochiste et profondément conflictuelle."

Shortly after Margit's death, in 1934, the Weiss family was forced to emigrate from Germany; to the Nazis Weiss's father was still a Jew, as were his children. Only now did Weiss learn from his half-brother Gottfried that his father had been a Jew, and for Weiss, "this came to me like the confirmation of something I had long suspected. Disclaimed awarenesses came to life in me, I began to understand my past . . ." (54-55). As a child, Weiss had often been made the target of insults—and occasionally of stones—hurled by his classmates; now, it seemed, the reason for such behaviour was clear (Tieder 45).

Though Weiss claimed indifference to this discovery, he began more and more to identify with his Jewish background, a problematic identification given his feeling that he could just as easily have been among the murderers (Rey 67). The concomitant sense of guilt would eventually grow into a "terrible feeling of culpability that pursued him during these years, this feeling of having betrayed millions of brothers." By the end of the war, in fact, "[h]e goes so far as to proclaim, after a visit to Auschwitz, that this place is the only place on earth that really counts for him: Auschwitz is *his* town" (Tieder/PM 47).[117] Such critics as Otto F. Best, for example, claim that "Weiss's 'self-accusation as potential "persecutor" and "executioner" is a key to the author's entire work', and it is certainly closely related to the sado-masochistic element which constantly appear in it" (Hesson 277). As this process of identification and self-accusation was beginning, the family made ready to leave for England—by way of Kafka's home, Prague, since Eugen Weiss held Czech citizenship, which was passed on to his children.

After a brief stay in England, Weiss returned to Prague, where he studied art at the Academy

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[117] "Peter Weiss insiste fréquemment sur ce terrible sentiment de culpabilité qui le poursuit durant des années, ce sentiment d'avoir trahi des millions de frères. . . . Il va même jusqu'à proclamer, à la suite d'une visite à Auschwitz, que cet endroit est le seul au monde qui compte vraiment pour lui: Auschwitz est *sa* ville."

from 1936 to 1938. In both 1937 and 1938 he visited Switzerland, where he met Hermann Hesse and read his novel *Steppenwolf*, the first of Weiss's major literary influences. Weiss was contracted to provide illustrations for two of Hesse's stories in 1938. Leaving his art studies with the Academy Prize in that same year, Weiss returned briefly to Switzerland before moving to settle in Sweden.

Weiss now had the opportunity to see the beginning of the "final solution" first hand: as the bearer of a Czech passport, Weiss was able to travel overland through Germany, witnessing the shocking effects of *Kristallnacht* (the "Night of Broken Glass"), the Nazis' nationwide anti-Jewish pogrom on the night of 9-10 November 1938 (Roloff 220). Only after this experience, apparently, was Weiss able to make use of a gift he had received in Prague—Kafka's *Der Proceß* and *Das Schloß*:

> I had received the books from Peter Kien [a Jewish fellow student who would die during the Holocaust] in Prague and had often skimmed through them and tried to read them, but always lay them aside again. Suddenly I was receptive to the opening words of *The Trial*. Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning. This was the book I read that first night in my new room [in Stockholm]. (Weiss/Levenson 150)

The association with Kien and the recent experience of *Kristallnacht* intensified the novel's effect on Weiss:

> All that I had read previously receded into the background. In all the books that had revealed their world to me so that I might identify myself there had always been some chance of retreat—into mysticism or a concept of beauty, into an idyll or illusory love. In all these books I became aware of reservations and escape clauses that no longer existed in Kafka. Here all the trimmings had been peeled off and the I of the book stood there naked and defenceless. Even if this book presented me with a rich store of new images, the essential virtue of this confrontation was to provoke thoughts of my own. So now, while reading *The Trial* I began to listen for the trial in which I myself was convicted. (150)

Weiss, who in Tieder's words had felt like "an outsider everywhere, in England, in Prague, in Switzerland, in Sweden," now felt a common bond with Kafka and with his protagonist Josef K.

(Tieder/PM 45).[118] "When living in Prague," Weiss writes in *Leavetaking* (*Abschied von den Eltern*), "the city where Joseph K. fought for his life, *The Trial* was too close for me to recognise it" (Weiss/Levenson 150). Now, in Stockholm, Weiss's exile and sudden immersion in a foreign language was giving him distance even as it further traumatized him, and this situation was playing him, so to speak, into Kafka's hands:

> Whenever I seemed about to achieve something, some obstacle would suddenly arise and I would have to discard and break off whatever I had in hand. I fought against these limitations and when I succeeded in removing them in one place I slumped back again, understanding neither what I had gained nor what these limitations actually represented. Kafka had stood in front of this wall which finally destroyed him, he was constantly running up against this wall which was, after all, no broader than himself. This wall was composed of the traditional laws and I needed only to move one step to the side in order to stand in front of an open space. But to be capable of this simple step I had first to abandon the chimera under which I was struggling. (188)

And the process of abandoning this "chimera" involved, among other things, sidestepping Kafka, which Weiss claims he was able to do rather quickly. Shortly after his arrival in Sweden, Weiss suffered "a fit of asceticism," and took a suitcase full of his once-revered books to a second-hand dealer. At that time, Weiss writes, "I had retained only a handful of books which I could not dream of parting with: *Klingsor*, *Steppenwolf*, the volumes of Kafka, *Hunger*, *Pan*, and Van Gogh's letters" (190).

Despite this show of deference to Kafka in the early '40s, in a later interview Weiss could say offhandedly, "I began to read Kafka seriously in 1940 and by the end of the war I was pretty well over my Kafka period. Then it was Henry Miller's turn" (Roloff 221). Weiss would later claim that it was Miller's effect on him, and not Kafka's, that was lasting; after reading *Tropic of Cancer*, he

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[118] "Peter Weiss se sent étranger partout, en Angleterre, à Prague, en Suisse, en Suède. Il se plonge alors dans la lecture de Kafka avec lequel il se sent en étroite communion: le *Procès* lui semble être le sien propre, le voici prisonnier du même destin que Joseph K."

writes in *Point of Departure* (*Fluchtpunkt*), he felt: "That was how a book should be. . . . The world where I stood alone with Kafka received its death blow. It was still near, it still existed, but it was a sepulchral vault in which I ran my head against a wall" (Weiss/Levenson 245). Weiss reread the *Tropic* novels every year for years: "Miller made such a positive impression on me because he presented such a wonderful contrast to the Kafkaesque world, a wonderful contrast to this entire twisted, guilt-laden, doomed and damned bourgeoisie" (Roloff 221). The exact nature of the contrast Miller posed to Kafka is elaborated at length in *Point of Departure*, where Weiss makes it clear how much of his affinity for Kafka and Miller both is tied up with his own search for identity:

> Kafka had never dared to revise the verdicts of the judges; he had exalted their superior force and constantly abased himself before it. Whenever he was on the verge of seeing through it he sank to his knees and apologised. . . . He had never been able to renounce his father, and for women, too, he had never felt anything but his inadequacy. He had stared his eyes out at the wall, at the barricaded door, and had allowed himself to be treacherously murdered. But here, from the red and green book, revolt against every authority came upon me. There was no longer any superior force. The book began at a point where all superior force had been overrun. The news came from the same world in which Kafka had perished, the mechanically anonymous world of annihilation, only experienced in a more intense, a more brutal and feverish way. . . . The hierarchies of offices, the all-embracing laws were smashed, and free life began in a fertile chaos. Everything was tangible and possible and sex, which in Kafka lay dimly in the background, assumed a tropical luxuriance. (Weiss/Levenson 245-246)

From this point on, Weiss chose Miller's world, and not Kafka's, as his model for relationships with women, with authority (paternal and otherwise), and with himself: in his ongoing search for identity through his work, "I did not divide myself up into fictitious peronsages [*sic*] and let my affairs be conducted by advocates, but wanted to find the thief, the grocer, the thug, the hypocrite, the do-gooder, the apathetic and a thousand other disguises within myself" (248).

By the war's end, Weiss had become a Swedish citizen, but felt no more at home, looking back on a full decade in which "I had to deceive myself, for I did not seem worth anything better,

and if I wanted to release myself from this compulsion there came the punishment of guilt" (243). By now, however, he had almost worked through the crisis of identity which the war had exacerbated, and was, indeed, about to become an activist. Whereas Kafka had, in Weiss's words, "died of himself" as of an illness, because an artist usually "experiences external defeats on his own body and carries on nonetheless" (Lindner/PM, "Zwischen Pergamon und Plötzensee" 278)[119], Weiss now saw new horizons opening after his survival, and by his thirtieth year, in 1947, "I saw that it was possible to live and work in the world, and that I could participate in the exchange of ideas that was taking place all around, bound to no country" (Weiss/Levenson 275). Feeling that he stood "between classes, between peoples, between languages," Weiss now, in contrast to Kafka, who "died of himself," was prepared to rebel "against all authority, [having come] to the realization 'that I could take responsibility only for myself" (Rey/PM 67-68).[120] After a youth spent largely without firm political or ideological attachment, Weiss now began the journey of self-exploration which would eventually lead him to Marxism.

The Road to *The Aesthetics of Resistance* and the Return to Kafka

In the fifteen years following the war, Weiss moved from painting and drawing to making experimental films. After a few forays into prose and drama in Swedish, Weiss finally returned to writing in his native German with the prose work *Der Schatten des Körpers des Kutschers* (*The*

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[119] "Kafka ist an sich selbst zugrunde gegangen. Es gibt kaum Produzenten von Kunstwerken, die nicht am eigenen Leib die äußeren Niederlagen erfahren hätten und trotzdem weitermachten."

[120] "So steht er zwischen den Klassen, zwischen den Völkern, zwischen den Sprachen, und es ist nur zu begreiflich, daß er, im Gegensatz zu Kafka, gegen jede Autorität rebelliert und zu der Erkenntnis kommt, 'daß ich nur für mich selbst einstehen konnte.'"

Shadow of the Coachman's Body, written 1952 but unpublished until 1960).

Despite his claims that Kafka had for a long time been out of his system, however, Weiss's autobiographical *Fluchtpunkt* (*Vanishing Point*, 1962) is not only filled with references to Kafka (since it deals with the period when Weiss was introduced to and influenced by Kafka), but exists as a reply to Kafka, a step in the process of Weiss's differentiating himself from Kafka, who, as Weiss points out, "had remarked in his diaries what child's play it must be to write one's own autobiography, as easy as writing down a dream. And yet he never got around to it. In the openings of his books there was an immediate compulsion, a suppressed element" (Weiss/Levenson 245-246). Weiss, by contrast, was in this very work, and in its precursor *Abschied von den Eltern* (*Leavetaking*, 1961), laying his life bare with frightening, even Milleresque forthrightness. Indeed, Heinz D. Osterle characterizes these books as "two autobiographical studies that describe in naked truth how unbearable the old life already was for the narrator, and how much a new life was longed for. In both works an 'I' appears who, after long hesitation, wants with all his might out of his old skin at last" (Osterle/PM 134).[121]

By the time *Point of Departure* appeared in print, Weiss was about to experience world-wide success—not as a painter, journalist, film-maker or prose author, but as a dramatist. Weiss had begun writing drama in 1948 with *Der Turm* (*The Tower*, produced in 1950), but had not been prolific: from 1950 to 1963 he had written only two plays, *Die Versicherung* (*The Insurance*, 1952) and *Nacht mit Gästen* (*Night with Guests*, 1963), and only the latter had been produced. All three of

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[121] "Es sind zwei autobiographische Akte, die in nackter Wahrheit darstellen, wie unerträglich das alte und wie heiß ersehnt ein neues Leben für den Erzähler immer schon waren. In beiden Werken erscheint ein Ich, das nach langem Zögern, am Ende aber mit aller Kraft aus seiner alten Haut heraus will" [The German word *Akt* in an artistic context means specifically a *nude* study—befitting the "naked truth"; PM].

these plays showed traces of Kafka's lingering influence (Innes 1992). In early 1964, however, the Schiller-Theater in West Berlin premiered Weiss's new play; four months later, it opened in English translation, performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company under Peter Brook's direction. In less than half a year, Weiss became a leading figure in both the German- and English-speaking theatre worlds, with a play set in a madhouse: *Marat/Sade*.

Marat/Sade struck a nerve in its audience with its intensity, and won critical admiration by the dialectical means with which its content not only played off against each other the historical figures of Jean-Paul Marat and the Marquis de Sade, and the political ideas of egalitarian revolution and elitist libertinism, but with which its form also represented "an oscillation between Artaud and Brecht, the two major influences on post-war European theatre" (Suvin 411):

> By the employment of music, chorus, and mime the effects of Total Theater are achieved, and the dramaturgy of Brecht as well as that of Artaud serve the ends of both education and entertainment. Epic theater destroys the illusion of reality when actors address the audience directly and figures step out of their roles to provide exposition. . . . The so-called Theater of Cruelty according to Artaud prescribes the trances, hallucinations, fits, paroxysms, and violence that transpire in the asylum. . . . In the Artaudian setting of an asylum bathhouse a debate on revolution takes place in the dialectical method of Brecht. (Lewis 66)

If this debate onstage mirrored Weiss's internal political debate, it also led indirectly to the latter's resolution: shortly after working with an East German theatre company on a production of *Marat/Sade* in Rostock in 1965, Weiss published the essay "10 Arbeitspunkte eines Autors in der geteilten Welt" ("The Necessary Decision: 10 Working Theses of an Author in the Divided World"), in which he openly declared his commitment to socialism while criticizing both the East German and West German regimes. As Howald notes, "It was scandalous at the time, and proved the occasion

for vicious attacks and for malice" from both sides (Howald/PM 37).[122] Weiss had made himself an outsider again, at the very moment of his arrival in the spotlight.

With *Marat/Sade*, however, Weiss embarked on a series of successful plays, produced all over the world, heavily politicized and marked, like *Marat/Sade*, by a mixture of Brechtian alienation effects and—though less and less—Artaudian theatricality, but now with the addition of documentary aspects. These plays included *Die Ermittlung* (*The Investigation*, 1965), *Gesang vom Lusitanischen Popanz* (*Song of the Lusitanian Bogey*, 1966), and a work whose title sums up Weiss's increasingly Marxist political commitment: *Diskurs über die Vorgeschichte und den Verlauf des lang andauernden Befreiungskrieges in Viet Nam als Beispiel für die Notwendigkeit des bewaffneten Kampfes der Unterdrückten gegen ihre Unterdrücker sowie über die Versuche der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika die Grundlagen der Revolution zu vernichten* (*Discourse on the Prehistory and Course of the Long-lasting War of Liberation in Vietnam as an Example of the Necessity of the Armed Struggle of the Oppressed against their Oppressors, as well as on the Attempts of the United States of America to Destroy the Foundations of the Revolution*, 1967).

Throughout this period, Weiss seemed to have forsaken Kafka, whose influence—alongside Brecht—loomed large in the absurdist experiments of many German dramatists in the 1960s, among them Tankred Dorst, Wolfgang Hildesheimer, and the early works of Weiss himself (Innes, *Modern German Drama* 84). This was hardly surprising, however, given the often hostile reception of Kafka among Marxists since the mid-1940s. In the Soviet Union itself, Kafka's works had been rigorously banned until 1963 (Schneider 305), an ironic circumstance given the remarkable biographical similarities between the two very different men, Franz Kafka and Karl Marx, "not only insofar as

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[122] "Das war damals ein Skandalon und bot Anlaß zu heftigen Angriffen ebenso wie zur Häme."

both were of Jewish origin, both studied law, and both displayed signs of genius in their literary specialties, but moreover, in that both also had characteristic conflicts with their fathers" (Tijer/PM 115).[123]

Perhaps it was Kafka's tendency to transfigure this conflict into minute descriptions of apparently totalitarian situations that disturbed the Soviet regime, so that Kafka, "who saw life and politics as a threat, became for his part a threat to an entire system" (Schneider/PM 305).[124] Or perhaps it was just that, since the creation of Soviet socialist realism in the '30s and '40s, there had been no tolerance of the avant-garde in general (Ermolaev 430). Weiss himself would later write in his *Notebooks* that he had "never yet met a revolutionary whose taste wasn't petty-bourgeois in character" (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 101).[125]

There had always been some isolated critical dissent against the Soviet dismissal of Kafka. In the early to mid-1960s, however, as Weiss was moving to embrace Marxism, there arose a wave of "revisionism," as Stalinists called it, partly as an expression of Central and Eastern European Marxists who sought political and intellectual autonomy from Moscow. Some of the revisionists sought to reclaim Kafka as a symbol of this autonomy, either because he expressed the alienation of bourgeois society or because he expressed the alienation which had now come to exist under Soviet socialism; others simply wanted the freedom to consider literature independent of political

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[123] "Las similitudes de dos personajes tan disimiles como Marx y Kafka no se refieren solo a que de los dos se esté celebrando el centenario (muerte de uno y nacimiento de otro), o a que los dos se fuesen de origen judío, los dos estudiaran Derecho y los dos manifestaran en su especialidad literaria las virtudes del genio, sino a que los dos tuvieron también peculiares conflictos con el padre . . ."

[124] "Er, der das Leben und die Politik als Bedrohung ansah, wurde seinerseits zur Bedrohung für ein ganzes System."

[125] "Habe noch keinen Revolutionär getroffen, dessen Geschmack nicht kleinbürgerlich geprägt."

dictates (Petr 54). Though this movement opened some critical debate about Kafka in Marxist circles, authors who dared show the influence of Kafka were nonetheless accused of "formalism"—the most damning charge available to Soviet criticism (Schneider 310). And by the end of the 1960s, it was exactly this charge that Weiss found himself facing from the fiercely Stalinist East German critics, who rightly felt that he was "far from being an exemplary Party comrade" (Rey/PM 71)[126], every time one of his plays opened in the German Democratic Republic (Innes, *Modern German Drama* 187).

After the appearance of the *Discourse on Vietnam*, Weiss moved away from such sweeping and abstract political examinations, and "perhaps as a response to the criticism that he was substituting art for political activism, . . . turned to analyzing the role of the revolutionary writer" (Innes, "Peter Weiss" 1063). This analysis began with the play *Trotski im Exil* (*Trotsky in Exile*, 1969) and continued with *Hölderlin* (1971). This change in tack did not raise Weiss's standing in the socialist countries. In fact, the problem of the writer under revolutionary circumstances quickly became more than an academic investigation: after the West German production of *Trotsky in Exile* in the spring of 1970, Weiss found himself denied entry to the German Democratic Republic at Berlin's Friedrichstrasse Station. "This experience had a traumatic effect on him. . . . With great bitterness, the 'Communist' Peter Weiss describes how he has been deported from the East, where he would like to belong, to the West, where he does not want to belong" (Rey/PM 79).[127] Weiss found himself once again caught in the middle of German historical circumstances, now unable to

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[126] "Wie man sieht, war Peter Weiss alles andere als ein vorbildlicher Parteigenosse."

[127] "Diese Erfahrung hatte eine traumatische Wirkung auf ihn. . . . Mit großer Bitterkeit berichtet der 'Kommunist' Peter Weiss, wie er von dem Osten, zu dem er gehören möchte, ausgewiesen wird in den Westen, zu dem er nicht gehören will."

accommodate himself to either Germany:

> The voices of an authoritarian and a libertarian communism, equally sonorous in him, make it impossible in their symbiosis to stay in the GDR; at the same time this symbiosis, together with his visceral hatred of the Social Democratic Party, would make him a cultural outcast in West Germany. Whatever the reasons, beyond any doubt Weiss' artistic evolution can only be understood in terms of German history. (Feher 164, footnote)

Given Weiss's identification with the oppressed, his long struggle "to find a safe position within a Marxism that knew no duty to any party" (Müssener/PM 233),[128] and the authoritarian nature of the Soviet Union and East Germany, "which demand[ed] the unconditional subjugation of the individual," he could never fully commit himself to the Soviet-controlled regimes despite his commitment to their ideology. "Thus, he basically never escaped his destiny as an outsider" (Rey/PM 69).[129]

Weiss's response to this crisis was to leave off his theatre work in 1972 and throw himself into preparation for a larger project, which would become Weiss's "*summa*, in which he expounds his views on revolution, art and politics" (Hesson 275): *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* (*The Aesthetics of Resistance*, 1975-81), a massive mixture of historical essay and Marxist art criticism framed as a pseudo-autobiographical novel.

The Aesthetics of Resistance was the "answer to his identity crisis of 1969-72" (Osterle/PM

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[128] ". . . erst nach vielen inneren Kämpfen gelang es ihm, einen sicheren Standpunkt im Marxismus zu finden, einem Marxismus, der sich keiner Partei verpflichtet weiß . . ."

[129] "Aber er wird bei seinen Versuchen der Eingliederung immer wieder zurückgestoßen durch die autoritäre Ordnung der kommunistischen Staaten, d.h. also vor allem der Sowjetunion und der DDR, die die bedingungslose Unterwerfung des Individuums fordern. Dies erklärt, warum es nie zu einer völligen Integration seiner künstlerischen Subjektivität in ein objektives politisches System kommen konnte. Wie im folgenden zu zeigen sein wird, nimmt er, trotz aller gutgemeinten Bekenntnisse, auch in dieser Hinsicht eine Zwischenstellung ein. Im Grunde ist er also seinem Schicksal, ein Außenseiter zu sein, nie entronnen."

138),[130] and the supreme effort in Weiss's long search for identity. The novel gave Weiss the opportunity to make himself anew (137), and to find "a successful alternative to his failed attempt to identify himself with the victims of Auschwitz" (Schlunk 30). This alternative is to recast himself "as a sort of counterpart to himself: 'What would I have become. How might I have evolved had I come from the proletariat instead of a middle-class environment?'" (Scherpe 98). The resulting figure, in bare outline, would hardly be out of place in a work of Soviet socialist realism:

> Weiss is again on the side of the victims, fighting against every representation of the Auschwitz mentality during his lifetime. He reinvents for himself a new biography, that of a young worker born in 1917—a significant deviation from his own date of birth in 1916 to coincide with the Russian Revolution—and traces the steps of his life as a resister. This work then represents Peter Weiss' biography, not as lived in actuality, but as a projection of his innermost desires and devoted to the resistance of repression, repression of any and every kind. (Schlunk 30)

Symbolically, this first-person narrator, the pseudo-Weiss, remains nameless, "in search of his artistic and polisical [*sic*] identity" (Scherpe 98). The details of his life that Weiss chooses to alter are telling. The background of the novel's narrator is almost a mirror image of Weiss's own: the narrator's family is thoroughly working-class, and "while the father in the novel is not of Jewish descent, the mother has already 'declared herself a Jewess' earlier, after being described several times as a Jewess because of her black hair" (Osterle/PM 144).[131] Rather than attending art school, the narrator volunteers to fight fascism in the Spanish civil war. When the war is lost, he goes into exile in Sweden and takes a job in a factory (as did the real Weiss; because Weiss's father owned the factory, however, Weiss was naturally "not accepted as one of their number by his fellow-workers";

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[130] "Der Autor schrieb den Roman als Antwort auf seine Identitätskrise von 1969-72."

[131] "Während der Vater im Roman nicht jüdischer Herkunft ist, hat sich die Mutter schon früher 'selbst zur Jüdin erklärt', nachdem man sie wegen ihres schwarzen Haares einige Male als Jüdin bezeichnet hatte."

Hesson 276). The disparity between Weiss's life and his character's in these respects drew harsh criticism from some quarters as a falsification (Cohen/Humphreys 145); but this disparity, given Weiss's masochistic tendencies, can also be seen as a form of self-rebuke, showing the author's real life in an even less favourable light.

Most notably, however, the first volume of the *Aesthetics* shows Kafka's still-present influence, devoting long passages to Kafka's novel *Das Schloß* (*The Castle*), while at the same time, other writers who had exerted a marked influence on Weiss (such as Hesse and Miller) barely appear, and indeed, "in the context of an *Aesthetics of Resistance*, are hardly conceivable any more" (Kässens and Töteberg/PM 244).[132]

Not only that, but in *Aesthetics*, "a proletarian form of Kafka reception is contrasted with the bourgeois reception" (244),[133] a very different method of reading Kafka from the historical Weiss's original reaction to the novels. This alteration reflects not only the changes in Weiss's character and thought, but also the use to which he wants to put Kafka in this work. Kafka becomes a means of expressing dissent from the party:

> In *Aesthetics of Resistance* the narrator and his young working-class friends consider Kafka's *Castle* to be a proletarian novel, even though the official party-line dismisses Kafka as decadent. These fictional characters are echoing Weiss's new interpretation of Kafka's world, in which he sees the individual at the mercy of repressive forces over which he has no control, forces which include bureaucracy and officialdom. (Hesson 283-284)

Weiss's narrator explicitly says, "What Kafka wrote was a proletarian novel" (*Ästhetik*/PM

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[132] "Andere Schriftsteller, die für Ihre Entwicklung prägend waren (wir denken an Hermann Hesse und Henry Miller), sind im Kontext einer *Ästhetik des Widerstands* kaum mehr denkbar."

[133] "Passagen über Kafka in beiden Büchern [*Vanishing Point* and *Aesthetics*], in denen der bürgerlichen Kafka-Rezeption eine Rezeption proletarischer Art entgegengestellt wird."

179),[134] comparable with Klaus Neukrantz's "red novel" *Barrikaden am Wedding* (*Barricades in Wedding*, 1931), which concerns the difficulties of a Berlin Communist cell during the anti-Communist crackdown of 1929: "Everything which in Kafka's work remained discussion about the nature of the castle was here [in Neukrantz's book] fully realized fact" (Weiss/PM, *Ästhetik* 181).[135]

The Castle, however, showed that Kafka spoke on a wider theme: "As his book had no ending, so also his whole intent was endless; he dealt not with an isolated case, but rather with the totality of existence which contained, if not hope, at least action" (182),[136] and the effect on the narrator is revelatory, as "[t]he book of the castle overlaid itself on a long bottled-up uneasiness and a yearning for knowledge that was still in the beginning stages. It made me apprehensive, forced me to see my weaknesses and omissions" (183).[137]

Weiss's narrator and his circle thus interpret Kafka as a fellow proletarian, not merely in opposition to the prevailing Marxist reading that would be developed during and after the war, but even as a sort of preemptive strike on the latter reading, for in the late 1930s (before the narrator goes to fight in Spain), Kafka was not yet widely known. Even the real Peter Weiss, reading *Der Proceß* in Sweden in 1939, was becoming acquainted with Kafka "earlier than most Germans" (Roloff 221). This early—almost anachronistic—acceptance of Kafka in proletarian circles in the novel seems to

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[134] "Was Kafka geschrieben hatte, war ein Proletarierroman."

[135] "Alles, was bei Kafka Erörterung blieb über das Wesen des Schlosses, war hier vollendete Tatsache."

[136] "Wie sein Buch ohne Ende war, so war sein ganzes Vorhaben endlos, nicht mit einem Einzelfall befaßte er sich, sondern mit dem gesamten Dasein, das zwar keine Hoffnung, doch Handlung enthielt."

[137] "Das Buch vom Schloß legte sich dann über eine lange aufgestaute Unruhe und über eine sich in ihren Anfängen befindende Wißbegierde. Es rief Beklemmung hervor, zwang mich, meine Schwächen und Versäumnisse zu sehn."

stem in part from the narrator's independence, his aggressive self-education. Later in the first volume, in an ironic reference to the real Weiss, the narrator muses, "I was an autodidact. My development would have taken a different course if I had belonged to an economically advantaged family" (Weiss/PM, *Ästhetik* 337).[138] The narrator is indebted to nobody, least of all the Party, for his learning, and is therefore all the more exemplary, because "[f]or Peter Weiss, the principle of critical thinking is most closely bound with Marxism. He follows the example of today's neo-Marxists, in that he turns against the perception of Marxism as dogma and identifies it with freedom of thought (Rey/PM 71).[139] In terms of Weiss's early identification of himself with Kafka, this self-sufficient working-class scion's reception of *The Castle* becomes a form of veiled condemnation of the Soviet-controlled Party's exclusion of Weiss. Indeed, Weiss's young protagonist and his critical stance towards both fascism and Stalinism reflect the older Weiss's position *vis-à-vis* American-style capitalism and Warsaw Pact socialism; as Jürgen E. Schlunk writes, "The reality of his imagination therefore becomes the writer's mode of resistance against the world around him" (Schlunk 30).

Clearly, *The Castle*, with its unfinished form leaving open the possibility of the protagonist reaching the eponymous goal, is better suited to Weiss's positive interpretation than *Der Proceß*, whose conclusion is already all too fatally set. The central theme of *Der Proceß*, however, also has a ghostly presence in the *Aesthetics*, as the absurd Moscow show trials take place in the background. The thoughts and discussions of the main characters continually return to them, demonstrating "what

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[138] "Ich war Autodidakt. Meine Entwicklung wäre anders verlaufen, hätte ich einer ökonomisch begünstigten Familie angehört."

[139] "Für Peter Weiss . . . ist das Prinzip des kritischen Denkens aufs Engste mit dem Marxismus verbunden. Er folgt dem Beispiel der heutigen Neomarxisten, indem er sich gegen die Auffassung des Marxismus als Dogma wendet und ihn mit der Freiheit des Denkens überhaupt identifiziert."

heartrending torments German communists in the 1930s had to undergo until they could internalize that the Moscow trials served the better interests of the revolution" (Feher 164, footnote). In the published *Notebooks* from the period of the *Aesthetics'* creation, moreover, Weiss writes, whether in reference to himself or to his narrator, "Understanding for Kafka awakened by Moscow trials" (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 212; see also 227).[140] Thus, ironically, the Party itself is responsible for the narrator's embrace of Kafka.

It was during this period, as Weiss was in the midst of writing the first volume of the novel, and indeed just as he was finishing the sections on Kafka (Cohen/Humphreys 166), that the Swedish film and stage director Ingmar Bergman asked Weiss to adapt *Der Proceß*.

The Shaping of the Adaptation in the *Notebooks*

Despite Weiss's remark that the adaptation might be possible "on the side," the proportion of notes on Kafka's novel to notes on the *Aesthetics* in the immediately succeeding pages of the *Notebooks* gives the impression that it was Weiss's own novel that was pushed to the side (Weiss, *Notizbücher* I, 255-314). This impression may be misleading: certainly, Weiss had been preparing for the *Aesthetics* for a long time, and a new project would naturally require more initial work. However, the speed with which Weiss completed the adaptation suggests that he did indeed devote most of his attention to *Der Prozeß*.

In a few fragmentary sentences recorded directly after the news of Bergman's call, Weiss begins sketching his adaptation (although many of these ideas would not survive in the finished script):

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[140] "Verständnis für Kafka geweckt durch Moskauer Prozesse—"

> How does a person fight this court? In the pauses do the assistants lounge around, eat, copulate? K never turns to the court directly — /Everything somewhat dingy, grey — but in the background the incidents dazzlingly bright: the world outside — /The impossibility of a new life — /The terrible sharpening of the knives (Song of Miss Bürstner and mother) — /In the court a uniformed man and a worker: indication of K's guilt — /Only the last scene downstage, dazzlingly bright, everything outside black — /The worker sits on his bed, explains to him. But K sleeps — /Worker = doctor — (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 256)[141]

As these and other notes on these pages demonstrate, Weiss was already thinking not only in larger thematic terms ("All of reality dehumanized —"; 256), but also in terms of the details of stage business ("[K.] stands half-naked. Washes. Eats an apple — . . . /In the evening, Miss B[ürstner]. In the background intoxicating music. People dancing —"; 256-257).

By 8 February, only three days after Bergman's call, Weiss's notes show him beginning to ground Kafka's plot in a particular historical frame: "Kafka born 3 July 1883 /Begins writing *Proceß* in August 1914 (at the outbreak of war) /The duration of the trial as described: 3 July 1913-3 July 1914" (257). Weiss also started examining Kafka's diary for this period, from May 1913 on (258). In this section of the *Notebooks*, Weiss also mentions Kafka's support of the workers, if slightingly: "He supports the use of protective devices. For the good of the workers, of course. But the better they function, the greater the business the company does— /When an accident occurs, it isn't the worker who's mourned but rather the company's loss" (258).[142]

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[141] "wie [*sic*] kommt ein Mensch gegen diesen Gerichtshof an? In Pausen lümmeln sich die Gehilfen herum, essen, koitieren? K wendet sich nie direkt an den Gerichtshof— /Alles etwas trübe, grau— doch Hintergrund die Vorkommnisse blendend hell: Außenwelt— /Die Unmöglichkeit eines neuen Lebens— /Das entsetzliche Schleifen der Messer (Gesang Fräul. B. u Mutter)— /Im Gerichtshof ein Uniformierter u ein Arbeiter: Hinweis auf Ks Schuld— /Nur letzte Szene vorne, blendend hell, alles draußen schwarz— /Der Arbeiter sitzt an seinem Bett, erklärt ihm. Aber K schläft— /Arbeiter = Arzt —" [Throughout the notes and his adaptation, Weiss consistently spells the protagonist's name "K" without a following period.]

[142] "Er setzt sich für Schutzvorrichtungen ein. Natürlich zum Besten der Arbeiter. Aber je besser sie funktionieren, desto größer das Geschäft der Firma— /Wenn ein Unglück passiert, wird

Binding together Weiss's just-completed interpretation of *Das Schloß* for his novel with his new project, the notes continue: "*Schloß* and when any headway is made in the novel, then it leads only to the petty bourgeoisie, the effort can do no more than to accommodate oneself—" (259).[143] Weiss then leaps to reflect on Kafka's biography: "Don't look for meaning in his torments. He simply can't cope with life. He should have given his father hell just once" (260).[144] Weiss's final interpretation of *Der Proceß* is foreshadowed at the end of the notes for 8 February, when he writes, "No, it's certainly nothing to do with God. At most with a kind of literature—"; the very last note for the day, based on this train of thought, would become a key for the adaptation: "The trial is there so that one can rise up against it—" (260).[145]

By mid-February, Weiss had begun outlining details of the scenes onstage, sometimes in terms of the literal stage picture, sometimes in terms of the metaphors that picture should communicate: "*Leni with the lantern held high.* Long white apron— /Leni— Bird's claws— Siren— lure with song, then tear apart— /The lawyer's room lit only with the little lamp— /At Titorelli's *very bright*— /At the lawyer's many shapes in the dark— /The lawyer actually a kind of Mephisto!" (262).[146] He had also begun to plan the time frame of the play's events: "Uncle September /Painter

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nicht der Arbeiter beklagt, sondern der Verlust der Firma—"

[143] "*Schloß* und wenn es bei ihm irgendein Weiterkommen gibt, so führt es nur zum Kleinbürgertum, weiter reicht das Streben nicht, als sich anzupassen—"

[144] "Such keinen Sinn in seinen Plagen. Er kommt einfach mit dem Leben nicht zurecht. Er hätte sich seinen Vater mal vorknöpfen müssen."

[145] "Nein, um Gott geht es bestimmt nicht. Höchstens um eine Art Dichtung— / . . . Der Prozeß ist dazu da, daß man gegen ihn aufsteht—"

[146] "*Leni mit der hocherhobenen Laterne.* Lange weiße Schürze— /Leni— Vogelkralle— Sirene— durch Gesang anlocken, dann zerreißen— /Zimmer des Advokaten nur beleuchtet von der kleinen Lampe— /Bei Titorelli *sehr hell*— /Beim Advokaten im Dunkeln viele Gestalten— /Der Advokat eigentlich eine Art Mephisto!"

end of November /Cathedral February/March /Mother end of June /Execution July. Passersby with parasols—" (263).[147] As the end of February neared, Weiss was searching for a characterization for K., writing, "K has dropped out of his class, he doesn't really know how, he has anarchistic leanings, but gets no further"; and, further down the page, "He wants to accommodate himself, but sees all the hypocrisy, lies, corruption—and yet not enough—" (264).[148]

The first half of March 1974 produced only a couple of pages in Weiss's *Notebooks*: some fragmentary notes on *Der Prozeß*, others to do with the *Ästhetik*, some musings on Goethe's Italian travels. From the fifteenth on, however, unconnected lines and exchanges of dialogue from the adaptation fill the notes; in the midst of these pages of dialogue appears a full paragraph in which Weiss notes the basic principles by which he is pursuing the act of adaptation:

> That which in the book is represented as the subjective world becomes onstage, through the act of making visible, by its nature objective. The individual person, inside whom the hallucinations and fears take place, stands here bodily before us; that which we have whispered to us about him in the course of reading must here be translated into the tangible. We no longer perceive elements of a dream, rather we are confronted by actions. He pursues a profession, he inhabits a room in a lodging-house, he moves among living people, is seen and judged by them: as he shows himself to them, who are indifferent to whatever visions plague him— (271)[149]

After a few more specific notes about scenes and dialogue, Weiss continues thinking through

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[147] "Onkel September /Maler Ende November /Dom Februar/März /Mutter Ende Juni/ Hinrichtung Juli. Passanten mit Sonnenschirmen—"

[148] "K ist aus seiner Klasse herausgeraten, er weiß nicht richtig, wie, er ist etwas anarchistisch angehaucht, weiter aber kommt er nicht. . . . Er will sich anpassen, sieht aber die ganze Scheinheiligkeit, Lüge, Korruption—und doch nicht genug—"

[149] "Das was im Buch als subjektive Welt dargestellt ist, wird auf der Bühne, durch die Praxis der Sichtbarmachung, naturgemäß objektiv. Der Einzelmensch, in dessen Innern die Halluzinationen und Ängste stattfinden, steht hier leiblich vor uns, was wir bei der Lektüre von ihm eingeflüstert bekommen, muß hier ins Handgreifliche übertragen werden. Wir nehmen nicht mehr Traumelemente auf, sondern konfrontieren uns mit Handlungen. Er führt einen Beruf aus, er bewohnt ein Zimmer, in einer Pension, er bewegt sich zwischen lebendigen Menschen, wird von diesen gesehn und beurteilt: so wie er sich ihnen zeigt, gleichgültig, was für Visionen ihn gerade heimsuchen—"

the act of adapting the novel:

> The work itself, as a complex of thoughts, is placed outside all historically definable time. The reader accepts this as valid. In the attempt to make something visible out of something imagined, and thus to translate a dream into reality, there immediately arise certain dependent relationships with the dimension of time. Besides the connection, which is becoming apparent, between the spectator's time and the time in which the observed events take place, there is the possibility of setting the content in relation to a particular historical period. (272)[150]

As Weiss further explains, this tension between the time of observation and the time represented onstage can be exploited as the basis of a Brechtian alienation effect: "In the course of reading, the sense of 'present-ness' is predominant. In the observation of something acted one can feel a distance: here something typical, important, something itself long past, brought to life again for interest's sake, is being demonstrated—" (272).[151]

Another page full of notes on dialogue and situations intervenes before the surprising entry of 24 March, quoted here at length, in which Weiss first gives up the project and then takes it up again on his own terms. In this passage Weiss also mentions his familiarity with the Barrault-Gide adaptation, at least as a reader; he had in fact been in Paris in 1947, but in the spring, too early for the October premiere of *Le Procès* (Zimmermann 94). Weiss clearly considers the earlier adaptation as a failure, and this appears to have been a contributing factor to his abandoning the project; curiously, the passage in which he explains his decision echoes both Barrault's understanding of the

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[150] "Das Werk selbst, als Gedankenkomplex, stellt sich außerhalb jeder historisch umreißbaren Zeit. Beim Lesen wird dies als etwas Gültiges akzeptiert. Beim Versuch, aus etwas Erdachtem etwas Sichtbares zu machen, also Traum in Wirklichkeit zu übersetzen, entstehn sofort bestimmte Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse gegenüber der Zeitdimension. Außer der deutlich werdenden Beziehung zw. der Zeit des Zusehns und der Zeit, in der sich das geschaute Ereignis abspielt, gibt es die Möglichkeit, den Inhalt in das Verhältnis zu einer bestimmten historischen Periode zu setzen."

[151] "Beim Lesen ist die Empfindung der Gegenwärtigkeit vorherrschend. Beim Aufnehmen von etwas Vorgespieltem ist ein Abstand zu verspüren: hier wird etwas Typisches, Wichtiges, etwas an sich Vergangenes, des Interesses wegen Wiederbelebtes, demonstriert—"

novel—as a projection of its protagonist—and Gide's initial objections to the theatre, rather than the cinema, as a medium for interpreting it:

> Give up, after 1½ months, the work on *Der Prozeß*. Seems impossible to transport a totally subjective world into a concrete and objective reality.
> *Der Prozeß* is a hermetic story that allows itself to be placed into no other relationship except that given by the subject. The trial is experienced by one single person, everything, every character, every occurrence, every change, is inside, in a closed person. The attempt to provide external pictures and continuities can only elide, banalize, destroy the fragile and the complicated in the essence of this trial.
> Had read Gide's version of *Der Prozeß*: here too you can see how insane the effort is to put this inner drama of ideas, this unheard-of dream on the stage. What is presented are the omissions of an imagination stunted and accommodated to mediocrity.
> Decline to B[ergman], send the advance payment back to the Dramaten. In the same moment the material forces itself on me again.
> Now write freely, without a patron, don't care about the expectations of someone else. Take up the theme on my own responsibility. (Weiss, *Notizbücher* I, 273-274)[152]

Once this decision was made, Weiss's enthusiasm was apparently redoubled. In the next note he reconfirms the rightness of his plan to set the adaptation in the specific period between 3 July 1913 and 3 July 1914, "a particular historical epoch"; this decision is "aimed against the irrational,

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[152] "Gebe, nach 1½ Monaten, die Arbeit am Prozeß auf. Scheint unmöglich, eine total subjektive Welt in eine konkrete u objektive Realität zu transportieren.
"Der Prozeß ist eine hermetische Geschichte, die sich in kein andres Verhältnis versetzen läßt als das vom Subjekt gegebne [*sic*]. Der Prozeß wird von einer einzigen Person erlebt, alles, jede Figur, jedes Geschehnis, jede Veränderung, ist drinnen, in einer geschlossenen Person. Der Versuch, äußere Bilder u Kontinuitäten herzustellen, kann nur glätten, banalisieren, das Zerbrechliche u Komplizierte im Wesen dieses Prozesses zerstören.
"Hatte Gides Version des Prozesses gelesen: auch hier zeigt es sich, wie wahnwitzig die Bemühung ist, dieses innere Ideedrama [*sic*], diesen unerhörten Traum auf die Bühnenbretter zu stellen. Dargestellt werden Auslassungen einer verkümmerten, der Mittelmäßigkeit angepaßten Phantasie
"Sage B ab, sende das Bestellungshonorar ans Dramatische Theater zurück. Im gleichen Augenblick drängt sich mir der Stoff wieder auf.
"Schreibe jetzt frei, ohne Auftraggeber, kümmere mich nicht um die Erwartung eines anderen.
"Gebe mich mit dem Thema auf eigne Verantwortung ab."

mystical" (274).[153] Howald suggests that Weiss also had a deeper psychological motivation to make this change: "[Weiss's] entire work is based on locations described both precisely and meaningfully. The causes for this are not least biographical ones. In the long years of exile and homelessness, Peter Weiss had always sought a point from whose vantage the world could be conceived anew" (Howald/PM 11).[154] This personal need may also explain why, in Cohen's words, "Weiss's intention 'to read Kafka against the grain'. . . is characterized far more by his choice to disregard the enigmatic, the metaphysical, and the mystical in Kafka's work than by any partisan socialist and antifascist reading of *The Trial*," given that "[a] Marxist reading of Kafka . . . need by no means share Weiss's disinterest in an essential aspect of Kafka's oeuvre" (Cohen/Humphreys 171).

The next day's notes begin with Weiss recording his determination that "the characters that I saw before me when reading should be shown just in the condition in which they take shape"; proceeding from this principle to the work as a whole, Weiss determines to make his work an exercise: "to reproduce a reader's experience as clearly as possible, i.e. to analyze what is learned, and thereby constantly to render this listening, this rumination and the accompanying uncertainty, this groping and waffling" (Weiss, *Notizbücher* I, 274-275).[155]

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[153] "Richtig, den dramatischen Verlauf in einen bestimmten Zeitrahmen zu verlegen: vom 3. Juli 1913-3. Juli 1914. Ks Vision wird in einen Zusammenhang gestellt mit einer bestimmten historischen Epoche.
"Gegen das Irrationale, Mystische gerichtet."

[154] "Sein ganzes Werk basiert auf ebenso präzise wie bedeutungsvoll beschriebenen Örtlichkeiten. Das hat nicht zuletzt lebensgeschichtliche Ursachen. In den langen Jahren des Exils und der Heimatlosigkeit hatte Peter Weiss immer wieder einen Punkt gesucht, von dem aus sich die Welt neu begreifen ließ."

[155] "Die Figuren, die ich beim Lesen vor mir sah, sollen in dem Zustand gezeigt werden, in dem sie gerade Gestalt annehmen.
"Eine Übung: eine Leseerfahrung so deutlich wie möglich wiederzugeben, d h Vernommenes zu analysieren, und dabei ständig dieses Lauschen, dieses Nachdenken und die dazugehörige Unsicherheit, dieses Tasten und Schweben zu schildern."

From this point on, Weiss's own notes reveal little sign of either groping or waffling, as the work takes shape. Most of the succeeding notes are brief sketches of lines and speeches. The only exception is a brief paragraph in which Weiss further hones his adaptation strategy: "In the novel K. finds himself in no measurable time, because he moves only in the regions of thought association which are free, outside the testable—now a logic governed by laws must be introduced, in which every step taken is based on what has gone before—" (276).[156]

Although Weiss's notes for the last few days of March and the first two weeks of April are mainly taken up by descriptions of a trip to Spain, where he was researching locations for the second part of the *Aesthetics*, work on the adaptation obviously continued unabated: on 15 April he records, "*Prozeß* sent off to the Dramaten. Began the Spanish part of the novel" (314).[157] Bergman had first called on 5 February; Weiss had written the play in only sixty days (1974 was a leap year). It was half again as long before Weiss received a reply on 5 July:

> Received only now, almost three months after delivering the Kafka adaptation, the answer from Bergman: he had expected something entirely different, a "daring experiment," a "personal interpretation." Maybe he's right. In any case, I can't change the play any more. So it won't be directed by B at the Dramaten, but rather premiere on another stage. (329)[158]

Weiss's reaction to this unexpected rejection from the very director who had solicited the

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[156] "Im Roman befindet sich K in keiner meßbaren Zeit, weil er sich nur in den Regionen der Gedankenassoziationen bewegt, die frei stehn, außerhalb des Überprüfbaren—jetzt muß eine Logik eingeführt werden, die gesetzmäßig ist, in der jeder vollzogne Schritt auf Vorhergegangenem basiert—"

[157] "Prozeß an das Dramatische Theater abgeliefert. Begonnen mit dem Spanien-Teil des Romans."

[158] "Habe erst jetzt, fast 3 Monate nach der Ablieferung der Kafka Bearbeitung, von Bergman die Antwort bekommen, daß er sich etwas ganz anderes erwartet habe, ein "kühnes Experiment," eine "persönliche Deutung." Vielleicht hat er recht. Ich jedenfalls kann an dem Stück nichts mehr ändern. So wird es nicht von B am Dramaten inszeniert werden, sondern an einer anderen Bühne zur Uraufführung kommen."

adaptation is here subdued, perhaps by surprise, perhaps by his concentration on the *Aesthetics*; but in the succeeding ten days, his bitterness clearly rankled until he could no longer contain it, and had to spew it out in a long paragraph:

> . . . there are authors and directors who get worked up for K[afka] in a complicated manner, i.e., use his visions for their petty dreams. They make him conform to their dimensions, believing in their extravagance that they could do him justice; make him a victim of their epoch, a tragic outsider, a mystic lost man, etc. It's most awful when they want to use him as raw material for excesses, for so-called daring applications [clearly a reference to Bergman's remarks; PM], for a stream of their own associations. Why don't they just invent something instead that they can put together themselves, why do they misappropriate something original in order to make a copy, a plagiarism out of it. In attempting a dramatization, to do justice to K.'s trial one can only keep as closely as possible to the text, it contains everything that can be said on the subject, any effort to "translate" it is condemned to failure from the beginning because it can only be a reduction, a dilution. (330-331)[159]

Weiss's remarks seem to damn Barrault and Gide, at least, as well as Bergman; he appears to have other authors and adaptations in mind too, but we have no way of knowing what other versions Weiss may have been acquainted with. Obviously, however, he is also congratulating himself for his fidelity to Kafka's text, won by using as much of the narrative text itself as possible (and Weiss, of course, is the first author discussed in these pages who could actually use the original German). Weiss's bitterness in this passage is proportionate to his faith in the dramatic text and in

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[159] ". . . es gibt Autoren u Regisseure, die sich auf eine verzwickte Weise an K aufgeilen, d h seine Visionen für ihre kleinlichen Träume benutzen. Sie passen ihn ihren Dimensionen an, in ihrer Verstiegenheit meinend, sie könnten ihm gerecht werden, sie machen ihn zu einem Zeitgenossen, machen ihn zu einem Opfer ihrer Epoche, zu einem tragischen Außenseiter, zu einem mystischen Verlorenen usw. Am Heillosesten ist es, wenn sie ihn als Rohmaterial für Ausschweifungen verwenden wollen, für sogenannte kühne Applikationen, für einen Strom eigner Assoziationen. Warum erfinden sie dann nicht lieber etwas, das sie selber zusammensetzen können, warum vergreifen sie sich an etwas Originalem, um eine Kopie, ein Plagiat draus zu machen. Um Ks Prozeß gerecht zu werden kann man beim Versuch einer Dramatisierung nur so nah wie möglich an den Text herangehn, er enthält alles, was über das Thema zu sagen ist, jede Bemühung, ihn zu 'übertragen', ist von vorn herein zum Scheitern verurteilt, weil sie nur eine Abschwächung, Verwässerung herbeiführen kann."

its faithfulness.

Given this faith, Bergman's rejection of Weiss's adaptation, disappointing as it clearly was, need not have been a setback for either Weiss or his creation. As it would turn out, though, Weiss's disappointments with the project were hardly at an end. Before proceeding to the production history of the play, however, we must examine the adaptation itself.

Weiss's *Prozeß*: Faithful to Kafka—in its Fashion

A contributing factor in the above-described miscommunication between Weiss and Bergman may have been the fact that, as Robert Cohen writes, "[t]hey were both wrong: Bergman by insisting that Weiss's treatment lacked a 'personal interpretation,' and Weiss by claiming that he had adhered closely to the text. While this may be true in terms of plot, Weiss clearly plays down the extent to which his adaptation was determined by his own personal interpretation" (Cohen/Humphreys 167). Kurt Klinger states even more strongly than Cohen that Weiss's misrepresentation was willful, his statement of fidelity meant to camouflage an attack on the *status quo* (Klinger/PM 65).[160]

Indeed, given Weiss's desire from the project's conception to read Kafka "against the grain," it seems surprising both that he should claim such fidelity to the text and that others—including some critics—should take his claim at face value. This was possible only because Weiss's interpretation is cleverly layered onto the work by means of small alterations and additions, and that his "very personal reading is rooted in themes and motifs already present in Kafka's text" (Cohen/Humphreys 167).

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[160] "Natürlich gibt der nie verlegene Dialektiker, der Peter Weiss war, nicht zu, er verwende Kafkas Wirkung dazu, sie umzukehren—es sei lediglich die Mißdeutung Kafkas, die Okkupation durch Kräfte, denen an einem Klima der Unterwürfigkeit und Verfügbarkeit gelegen ist, zu revidieren gewesen."

It is true that Weiss often follows the novel extremely closely. Unlike Barrault, Gide and Berkoff, of course, Weiss is free to use Kafka's text in its original form (as edited by Brod), rather than in translation; and though much of the dialogue has to be truncated, it is also often taken word for word from *Der Proceß*. Some lines have only been altered orthographically: Weiss maintains a spelling quirk from the *Aesthetics*, in which many of the unaccented vowels are dropped (*gehen* becomes *gehn*, for example, and *gerade* becomes *grade*) to approximate the pronunciation of casual spoken German.

Under these circumstances, it was relatively easy for Weiss to maintain, and for others to credit, his fidelity to the text. However, despite this apparent fidelity, Weiss has no interest in interpreting *Der Proceß*, as his fictional counterpart had interpreted *Das Schloß*, as a "proletarian novel." On the contrary, Weiss means to use Kafka against himself: Kafka, the author, who "died of himself," is here conflated with K., the character, who "submits to the point of self-obliteration" (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß* 266).[161]

In fact, Kafka himself had exhibited socialist leanings from high school on, condemning British imperialism during the Boer War and being ejected from student fraternity meetings for refusing to rise when *The Watch on the Rhine* was sung (Hayman 30). In 1946, the Czech anarchist Michal Mareš had remembered Kafka as a fellow Young Socialist and member of the Club of the Young (*Klub Mladých*), a Czech socialist group (78), and further recalled that Kafka personally posted bail for jailed socialist demonstrators (Pawel 152). Ernst Pawel, however, regards Mareš's reminiscences as untrustworthy, since such activities would have given Kafka a police record of which there is no trace (152-153). In other words, "what [Kafka's] 'socialism' amounted to, in the

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[161] "Er unterwirft sich, bis zur Selbstauslöschung."

end, was little more than a lifelong identification with the underdog" (72). The fact that regular exposure to the plight of the working classes, forced upon Kafka by his employment with the Workmen's Accident Insurance Company, never raised his "identification with the underdog" to activism is the major target for Weiss's criticism of Kafka in his adaptation, which becomes a record of Kafka's/K.'s failure—and thereby also of Weiss's early failure in the 1930s when, as he wrote, "while reading *The Trial* I began to listen for the trial in which I myself was convicted."

Beginning with a brief synopsis of the dramatic text's deviations from the narrative text, we shall see how Weiss transforms Kafka's concerns into his own, and *vice versa*:

The bank manager Josef K. lies in bed asleep. Franz and Willem, two uniformed officers of the court, are already onstage in his room as the lights come up. K.'s landlady Frau Grubach stands behind the table set with his breakfast. Behind her in the half-darkness are three bank employees, Rabensteiner, Kullich and Kaminer. The captain, Frau Grubach's nephew, performs his morning exercises. Fräulein Bürstner's room is visible above and upstage, but she is absent. K. suddenly awakens with a fright, and is arrested by Franz and Willem. Events proceed very much as in the novel (again, elements *A-J* from p. 35 above are utilized)—although, as always in adaptation, compressed [Mirza *e)*], and placed in production in a polyvalent space [Mirza *a)*]—with some major changes:

1) the character of the inspector at K.'s arrest *has been cut, and Willem is given his remaining lines*, at least in the version originally published in 1975 in the magazine *Theater heute*—in the revised version published in 1991 in Weiss's *Werke* (*Works*), the inspector is present, and the cast list of the 1975 premiere printed on page 422 of this volume makes it clear that the role had already been reinstated; at play's end, *Franz and Willem also become the two*

executioners [Mirza *b)* and *c)*];

2) Rabensteiner, Kullich and Kaminer, the three bank clerks (who go unnamed in the Barrault-Gide version, and whom Berkoff cuts to only Rabinstein [*sic*] and Kullich), *are shown to be in the employ of the court from the beginning* (even in the list of characters they are labelled "assistants"—*Gehilfen*—of the warders), and later provide onstage exposition of information that K. is only told over the phone [Mirza *d)*];

3) from the first scene, *an additional character*, "the man who wants to help K," *appears repeatedly to urge K. to ignore his arrest and the trial*; this character is based on the lone figure who gestures towards K. at the moment of his death (Kafka 272), and accordingly his last onstage appearance is in the execution scene [Mirza *c)* and *d)*];

4) Scenes 2 ("At the Bank"), 16 ("Before the Court") and 17 ("In the Boarding House") *are Weiss's creations*, not directly tied to anything in the novel (Zimmermann 100) [Mirza *d)*];

5) *K.'s friend, the prosecuting attorney Hasterer, visits K. at the bank before his hearing*, thanks to Weiss's use of one of Kafka's unfinished chapters (called "*Staatsanwalt*" ["Prosecuting Attorney"] by Brod). This interpolation corresponds almost exactly with Eschweiler's division of element *A* (the first chapter) of the novel into two parts, separated by the Hasterer episode (element *m*); much of Hasterer's dialogue, however, is Weiss's invention [Mirza *c)*];

6) as in the previous adaptations, there has been some alteration in the order of the hearing scenes: although the first hearing occurs in the same position as in the novel, *K.'s second visit to the empty courtroom is put off until after the scene with the whipper—and with the intermission between the two acts intervening* [Mirza *d)* and *e)*];

7) *K. is constantly attempting to escape from the captain*, who expects K. to exercise with him; at the same time, Weiss makes it clear that *the captain and Fräulein Bürstner are having a*

sexual relationship; noteworthy among Weiss's changes is this decision to make the captain a more important character [Mirza *b)*, *c)* and *f)*];

8) Fräulein Bürstner's friend Fräulein Montag also *finally appears onstage*, having been omitted from both the Barrault-Gide and Berkoff versions; their relationship is not only somewhat eroticized, but also depicted in terms approximating a master-servant bond [Mirza *c)* and *d)*];

9) in accordance with the historical setting, *additional dialogue is repeatedly added*, referring to the immanence of war (in this case, the Balkan War which preceded the outbreak of World War I) [Mirza *d)*];

10) *The lawyer Huld appears much less prominently*, portrayed as even less competent than in the novel, and *in later scenes his lines are taken by K.'s uncle, Leni and the merchant Block* [Mirza *b)* and *c)*];

11) throughout, *additional dialogue is culled not only from Kafka's unfinished chapters, but also from his diaries* [Mirza *c)* and *d)*];

12) the young girls at Titorelli's *are no longer physically present, though their presence is indicated by giggling*; the business and dialogue related to the heat in Titorelli's studio is also extensively cut down, so that *K. does not disrobe*; in addition, the rear entrance over Titorelli's bed is cut—K. simply crosses to his desk; in short, any sexual overtones present in this scene in the novel are minimized as much as possible [Mirza *b)* and *c)*];

13) in a scene largely derived from the unfinished chapter "Conflict with the Assistant Manager," *the assistant bank manager demolishes K.'s desk, while the Italian visitor whom K. is supposed to meet at the cathedral actually appears at the bank* [Mirza *c)* and *d)*];and

14) the parable "Before the Law" *is not only shortened but stripped of its allegorical overtones and becomes a metaphor specifically applied to K.'s situation by the chaplain* [Mirza *d)*].

Weiss's idea for the setting has developed into a far more complex vision than the rough notes found in the *Notebooks* at the end of February, where Weiss writes only: "Gigantic blocks—heavy, bulky" (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 264).[162] Weiss now envisions a multi-levelled space combining flexible and changeable areas with other settings which remain constant; the stage directions describe this space as follows (all page references are to the 1991 revised text in Weiss's *Werke*):

> *The stage is divided into three levels, climbing like steps.*
> Downstage*: at right a bed, a wash-table, a couple of chairs, at left a desk and its armchair.*
> *The downstage playing space is of minimal depth.*
> Centre stage*: left, a couple of broad steps lead upward; right, a couple of narrower steps. From these elevations back, quick scene changes must be possible. These are accomplished either with a revolve or by turning, spinning and moving the elements of the set. For this pieces of furniture, preferably in the form of cubes, are necessary.*
> Upstage*: from here outward the scene can be expanded for the crowd scenes and for the representation of larger spaces. From centre stage back to upstage, the objects onstage can easily be transformed into podiums and galleries.*
> *The downstage is divided in the middle by a broad low cabinet, whose depth extends to centre stage. This cabinet, when opened, allows various changes in its inner space.*
> *The setting of the downstage is the same in all scenes.*
> *The upstage, unless otherwise described, is dark.* (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß* 263)[163]

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[162] "Riesige Blöcke—schwer, klobig."

[163] "*Die Bühne ist zu drei stufenweise ansteigenden Höhen aufgeteilt.*
"Vorderbühne: *rechts ein Bett, ein Waschtisch, ein paar Stühle, links ein Schreibtisch, ein Schreibtischsessel.*
"*Der vordere Spielraum ist von geringer Tiefe.*
"Mittelbühne: *links führen ein paar breitere Stufen hinauf, rechts ein paar schmalere. Von dieser Erhöhung an müssen schnelle Szenenveränderungen möglich sein. Diese werden durch eine Drehbühne vollzogen, oder durch Wendungen, Drehungen, Verschiebungen der Bauelemente. Es werden dazu Möbelstücke, am besten in Form von Kuben, benötigt.*
"Hinterbühne: *von hier aus ist eine Erweiterung des Spiels möglich, in den Massenszenen und zur Darstellung großer Räumlichkeiten. Von der Mittelbühne an bis hinauf zur Hinterbühne können die Einrichtungsgegenstände leicht zu Podien und Galerien verwandelt werden.*

The downstage areas which remain the same portray K.'s room and his office, which are not strictly separated from each other. The downstage cabinet remains in position throughout, but becomes polyvalent by changing its interior: in the first act it is the storage space in which K. discovers the whipper beating Franz and Willem, and in the second act it becomes Titorelli's studio. As Ulrike Zimmermann points out, both by its positioning and its use the cabinet unites the private and professional aspects of K.'s life, which are already fused downstage (Zimmermann 117-8).

The next level of the stage depicts the other rooms of K.'s lodging and the other offices of the bank, as well as the areas of the court, the lawyer's room and the cathedral. This is the area which can be changed by a revolve or by moving set elements, though at times Weiss explicitly demands that the revolve not be used. In the first four scenes, for example, Weiss alternates scenes between the boarding house and the bank; these transitions are to be effected rapidly by shifts of lighting, without the aid of the revolve, thus smoothly setting up (and once again combining) both the private and public spheres of K.'s life.

Behind and above the second level of the stage is room for crowd scenes when necessary. As Zimmermann remarks, "the arrangement, step-fashion, of the three stage levels, which practically serves the simultaneous presentation of different events and allows rapid scene changes, thus becomes the reflection of a hierarchically structured society and its power relationships"

"*Die Vorderbühne wird in der Mitte abgegrenzt durch einen breiten niedrigen Schrank, dessen Tiefe sich in der Mittelbühne befindet. Dieser Schrank läßt, geöffnet, mehrmalige Veränderungen seines Innenraumes zu.*
"*Die Einrichtung der Vorderbühne ist in allen Szenen gleichbleibend.*
"*Die Hinterbühne ist, wenn nichts anderes angegeben, verdunkelt.*"

(Zimmermann/PM 118).[164]

In terms of the events that unfold in this setting, the novel's plot has been streamlined, chiefly by cutting. This cutting was clearly an ongoing process: even many sections of the narrative text which are represented in Weiss's notebooks have not survived to the final version. The first seven scenes, constituting Act One, alternate between K.'s lodgings and the bank—setting up his arrest, his isolation in private life from his fellow lodgers (broken only by his desire for the lower-class Fräulein Bürstner) and in public from his colleagues, his dependence on the good will of his superiors—until the fifth scene, the hearing, which K. disrupts and leaves in disgust. Afterwards, K.'s interview with Fräulein Montag demonstrates his failure to initiate a relationship with Fräulein Bürstner; then, in the eighth scene, his job is put at risk by his discovery of the whipper and his victims in the bank. Weiss thus provides a climax to close the first act; he then delays K.'s second visit to the now-empty court until the first scene of the second act.

The second act presents K. on the defensive. It starts in the empty court, where K. learns that the judges are of a lower class than he is, before being accosted by homeless workers who recognize him as a bank official. In the second scene, his uncle appears to rescue him from the scandal of the trial, and takes him, in the third scene, to the lawyer, where K. is distracted from the obviously pointless discussion by the maid Leni. Already in the fourth scene, K. decides to dismiss the lawyer, and is referred by a manufacturer client to the painter Titorelli, who, in return for an explanation of the difficulty of being acquitted, sells K. several landscapes in the fifth scene. K. then, in the next scene, dismisses the lawyer and sees the tradesman Block humiliated by Leni. Back at the bank, K.'s

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[164] "Die stufenweise Anordnung der drei Bühnenebenen, die praktisch der simultanen Vorführung verschiedener Ereignisse dient und einen schnellen Wechsel der Bilder erlaubt, wird so zum Abbild einer hierarchisch strukturierten Gesellschaft und ihrer Machtverhältnisse."

superiors destroy his desk and assign him to guide a sensitive client around the cathedral; when, in the eighth scene, K. enters the cathedral, the chaplain tells him that his case is not going well. As a result, in the ninth scene, K. seeks the court among the workers; failing to ally himself with them, he returns home in the penultimate scene to ready himself for the inevitable. In the final scene, K.'s warders from the first scene appear and take him to a spot where, with his social equals and superiors watching, K. is executed.

The structure of Weiss's play thus corresponds to his intentions of reconstructing the plot so that "every step taken is based on what has gone before." Despite this streamlining through conflation and combination of events, the action of the play as a whole is explicitly described as unfolding over a year, as in the novel and in Berkoff's adaptation, and unlike the apparent telescoping of the Barrault-Gide version into a few days' time. As we shall see, however, Weiss introduces and elaborates themes which complicate the apparently straightforward structure of the dramatic text.

The play begins, of course, on K.'s birthday. Frau Grubach has baked a cake for the occasion, which Willem tells her to offer K.'s uninvited "guests," Kaminer, Rabensteiner and Kullich. Rabensteiner cuts a piece and takes it to Willem, establishing a link between K.'s clerks and the court. K., however, misunderstands the nature of this link, assuming, as in the novel, that the arrest is a birthday prank arranged by his colleagues (269-270).

From this point on, K.'s interaction with these two constellations—the two warders and the three assistants—becomes a vital through line in the play; another important element is linked to these when the assistants join the captain at the breakfast table. As K first begins to realize that his arrest is no joke, the captain and the three assistants read the newspaper together. The captain slams the flat of his hand down on the table:

KAMINER: War?
RABENSTEINER: War?
CAPTAIN: I tell you, there's war! (270-271)[165]

Immediately afterwards, Franz and Willem actually dress K., first performing a "ritual" in which Willem lays K. on his back over Franz's knee, feels K.'s ribs and taps him with his middle finger over the heart (271); none of this occurs in the novel, where K. dresses himself. Moreover, once K. is dressed, a man in "simple, dark clothing" (*in schlichter dunkler Kleidung*) appears from upstage and turns to K.: "Just go out, Mr. Chief Clerk. Pay no attention to them at all. They can't touch you" (271-272).[166] Rabensteiner tells the man not to interfere, and the man disappears again. The three assistants then invade Fräulein Bürstner's room, examining her photographs and dressing Kullich in some of her clothes, as K.'s questioning begins (272-273).

During the questioning, the inspector displays an interest in Fräulein Bürstner which does not appear in the original, remarking on her odd hours: does she go to work so early, or has she even come home? Frau Grubach responds that she often does not, or comes home very late (anticipating K.'s later conversation with Frau Grubach). With the formalities ended, K. is released to go to work, and the presence of the three clerks is revealed to him, as in the novel. As if to excuse K. for not recognizing them, Kullich remarks as they all leave, "The bank is large, Mr. Chief Clerk. Subordinates are easily overlooked there" (275),[167] echoing an early observation on Kafka's work

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[165] "(*Am Tisch hat der Hauptmann die Zeitung vor den drei Gehilfen ausgebreitet. Er schlägt mit der flachen Hand drauf.*)
KAMINER: Krieg?
RABENSTEINER: Krieg?
DER HAUPTMANN: Ich sage, es gibt Krieg!"

[166] "Gehn Sie einfach raus, Herr Prokurist. Scheren Sie sich gar nicht um die. Die können Ihnen nichts anhaben."

[167] "Die Bank ist groß, Herr Prokurist. Da werden untergeordnete Leute leicht übersehen."

in the *Notebooks*: "We only ever see the subordinate personnel. We ourselves belong to this personnel" (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 210).[168]

Weiss's opening scene is remarkable for the manner in which it considerably reduces a lengthy chapter from the novel, while at the same time introducing so many of the images and themes which will recur in the adaptation. The increased importance of the captain and of the bank clerks throughout the play, for example, places K. more concretely into a social and historical context. At the same time, ironically, they also demonstrate how socially isolated K. is as an individual: he is not expected to recognize his subordinates, and he tries throughout the play to avoid the captain—later Fräulein Montag will remark, as in the novel, upon his manner of keeping himself aloof from all his fellow lodgers (294).

This contextualizing trend continues, and is extended into a wider milieu, in the second scene, set in the bank. This scene is Weiss's invention, based on Kafka's observation that following K.'s arrest, the day "had passed quickly, filled with pressing work and many flattering and friendly birthday wishes" (Kafka/Muir and Muir 23). In the adaptation, despite K.'s tardy arrival at work, the bank's assistant manager gives K. a birthday bonus, mentioning both day and date: 3 July 1913—Kafka's own thirtieth birthday (Weiss, *Prozeß* 277). In accordance with the historical context, when an embarrassed K., anxious to begin work, draws his superior's attention to the nervously waiting clients, the assistant manager acknowledges their apprehension, but reminds K.: "You know, however, we can't give any loans these days. With the threat of war" (277).[169] Whereas in the novel

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[168] "Zu Kafka: wir sehn immer nur das untergeordnete Personal. Wir gehören selber zu diesem Personal."

[169] "Aber Sie wissen, wir können keine Darlehen geben, in diesen Tagen. Bei der Kriegsgefahr."

K.'s business and that of the bank remain vague, in Weiss's version the bank's intimate connection with historical and social structures, and particularly with the military situation, is continually emphasized.

K.'s superiors also reveal a more personally sinister aspect, however, demonstrating the precarious nature of his social position; a long speech in which the aged bank manager (who does not actually appear until the last chapter in the novel) remarks, "It's nice when one finds everything in the morning just as it was at night," implies that perhaps he too, like the three clerks, knows of K.'s arrest and is involved with the court (279).[170] This aspect of the manager is an extension of the personal rivalry and animosity already present in Kafka's *Proceß* between K. and the assistant manager—indeed, one of the unfinished chapters is labelled by Brod "Conflict with the Assistant Manager" (*Kampf mit dem Direktor-Stellvertreter*).

The third scene, back at the boarding house, closely follows its counterpart in the novel, where K. converses first with Frau Grubach and then with Fräulein Bürstner; but Weiss adds an exchange to the first conversation which establishes a relationship between K. and the captain, who is in the habit of asking K. to take morning exercise with him. K. asks if the captain is still at the barracks, but a preoccupied Frau Grubach only asks in reply, "Do you think we'll mobilize?"—thus reintroducing the theme of the war (280).[171] This theme is given further expression at the scene's end: after K.'s talk with Fräulein Bürstner, the captain appears in person, stripping off his pyjama

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[170] "Es ist schön, wenn man morgens alles so wiederfindet, wie es am Abend war."

[171] "K: Ist der Hauptmann zuhause?
"FRAU GRUBACH: (*gedankenverloren*) Er war so enttäuscht heute morgen, als Sie nicht die Übungen mit ihm machten—
"K: Ist er noch in der Garnison?
"FRAU GRUBACH: (*immer noch abwesend*) Glauben Sie, daß wir mobilisieren werden?"

top, throwing himself on K. and pinning him to the ground, with the words, "You got out of the morning gymnastics—you can't begrudge me the evening exercise, at least!" (284).[172] Thus the captain not only "foreshadows the coming World War with his military blustering"(Howald/PM 192),[173] but also physically becomes "a representative of militarism who by literally tackling K. embodies, as it were, the threat of war which overshadows a life apparently secure" (Zimmermann/PM 103).[174]

In the fourth scene, again in the bank, K. receives a call announcing his upcoming interrogation. Unlike in the Barrault-Gide and Berkoff versions, however, in Weiss's adaptation the audience does not hear the voice at the other end of the connection; the audience therefore has no idea throughout the scene what the exact content of the call was. As in the novel, the assistant manager invites K. to a party on his boat, and K. declines because of a prior appointment. In Weiss's version, this conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Hasterer, the prosecuting attorney, who appears only in an unused and unfinished chapter of the novel (Kafka 282-289). Hasterer has come to talk with "an understanding person" (*einem verständnisvollen Menschen*), as he considers K., mirroring the close friendship between the two men in Kafka's unfinished section; here as in the book, "the prosecuting attorney . . . competes for K. and thereby strengthens his social position" (Howald/PM 192).[175] The latter half of their conversation, regarding Hasterer's aging girlfriend

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[172] "Um die Morgengymnastik haben Sie sich gedrückt—mindestens die Abendübung müssen Sie mir gönnen!"

[173] ". . . der Hauptmann in der Pension, der in seinem militärischen Schwadronieren den kommenden Weltkrieg voraussieht . . ."

[174] "Der Hauptmann wird in der szenischen Variante zum repräsentativen Vertreter des Militarismus, der, indem er K. im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes zu Leibe rückt, gleichsam den drohenden Krieg verkörpert, der das scheinbar sichere Leben überschattet."

[175] ". . . der Staatsanwalt, der sich um K bemüht und damit dessen soziale Stellung verstärkt."

Helene, is based on this section; the first half, however, has no counterpart in Kafka.

In this half of the conversation, K. and Hasterer discuss the court—or rather, the courts, for K. is deeply interested in the difference between the strange court which has called him to account and the ordinary court system in which Hasterer works. Faced with Hasterer's complaint that his work is fruitless, K. replies, "And yet! The court you represent is tangible! What you have found can't be taken back. . . . With your judgement—even when you consider it insufficient—and it must always be insufficient—you arrange the accused into some order" (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß* 286).[176]

As Zimmermann points out, K. is thinking above all of himself; it is he who feels he has been set outside the desirable order. For Hasterer, however, the implications of the other court are broader, threatening the "norms" and "principles" of bourgeois society: "when we have demonstrated guilt and sentenced punishment, and suddenly these other forces enter, these forces against which we have no jurisdiction, what then? There something spreads, there the masses rise up, the individual case frees itself, there something vague, violent begins—" (286).[177] Hasterer's system is defeated when "Others now set themselves up as judges" (286).

Zimmermann writes that for K., "the mood of revolutionary upheaval is irrelevant, he remains trapped in his individual problems," and therefore he ignores the political aspects raised by Hasterer (Zimmermann/PM 103).[178] This is not entirely true, however; self-absorbed though K. is,

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[176] "Und doch! Das Gericht, das Sie vertreten, ist greifbar! Was Sie aufgefunden haben, kann nicht zurückgenommen werden. . . . Mit Ihrem Rechtsspruch—selbst wenn Sie ihn für unzureichend halten—und er muß immer unzureichend sein—gliedern Sie die Angeklagten in eine Ordnung ein."

[177] "Aber dann, wenn wir eine Schuld aufgezeigt und eine Sühne gefordert haben, und plötzlich diese anderen Mächte auftreten, diese Mächte, für die wir nicht mehr zuständig sind, was dann? Da greift etwas um sich, da stehn Massen auf, der einzelne Fall entzieht sich, da setzt etwas Dumpfes, Gewaltsames ein--"

[178] "Auf diesen politischen Aspekt geht K. nicht ein. Die revolutionäre Umbruchsstimmung ist für ihn belanglos, er bleibt gefangen in seiner individuellen Problematik."

the idea that there may be class differences between him and these new judges strikes him with fear: "What if there were no more understanding? If there was nothing more in common?" (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß*, 286).[179]

Hasterer quickly changes the subject to talk of Helene; but the theme of class implicitly surfaces again when Hasterer, taking his leave, expresses his solidarity with K. by inviting him to use first names and the German familiar *du* form of address. As if in response, almost immediately after Hasterer leaves, the three "subordinates," Kaminer, Rabensteiner and Kullich, approach. While they perform their menial tasks, they quiz K. on his phone call—in words often taken *verbatim* from the call in the novel—while K. tries to feign ignorance:

> KAMINER: You've got the address?
> *K. looks up questioningly.*
> KAMINER: They told you the number of the building?
> K: What do you want?
> RABENSTEINER: We know where you have to go tomorrow. To a first minor interrogation regarding your case.
> KULLICH: Considerate, at any rate, to put the hearing on a Sunday. So you're not bothered in your professional work.
> RABENSTEINER: It would have been possible at night too, of course. But then you probably wouldn't be fresh enough.
> KULLICH: Best if you're there right at nine o'clock in the morning.
> KAMINER: In the Juliusstraße. It's a long way. In the suburbs, near the freight station.
> *K. drives the officials back with a movement of his arms. Stands then, as if he were ready for a jump.* (287-288)[180]

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[179] "Wie, wenn es kein Verständnis mehr gäbe? Wenn sich nichts Gemeinsames mehr finden ließ?"

[180] "KAMINER: Sie haben die Adresse erhalten?
K blickt fragend auf.
KAMINER: Man hat Ihnen die Nummer des Hauses genannt?
K: Was wollen Sie?
RABENSTEINER: Wir wissen, wohin Sie morgen sollen. Zu einer ersten kleinen Untersuchung in Ihrer Angelegenheit.
KULLICH: Immerhin rücksichtsvoll, die Verhandlung auf den Sonntag zu legen. Da stört man Sie

K. remains frozen in this position while the scene changes around him to the court in the workers' district. As the shabbily-dressed workers spill over into the area where K. is standing, he "unfreezes." Interestingly, Weiss has cut the entire search for the court—the court comes to K.; and though the captain plays an important role in the adaptation, his name, Lanz, is not mentioned until the second act. Thus "Lanz" cannot become either a password or an excuse for K. to search the tenement. Weiss had made early notes regarding the search, including some play on "Lanz" and "Lancelot" (*Lanzelot*), but apparently later thought better of it and cut the sequence (Weiss, *Notizbücher* I, 257). K. simply quickly finds the laundress, who, as in the novel, guides him to the court and shuts the door behind him (Weiss, *Prozeß* 288-289).

K.'s first hearing proceeds much as in the novel. His second visit to the court, however, which is recounted immediately afterwards in *Der Proceß*, is put off by Weiss until the beginning of the second act, to which we now proceed; the remaining two scenes of the first act will be dealt with in later sections. Although the beginning of the second court scene—with the laundress and her pursuer the student—follows the narrative text closely, after their exit and the entrance of the usher, Weiss makes more substantial changes which modify our perception of K. and his relationship to the court.

Almost immediately on meeting the usher, for example, in an exchange which does not originate in the novel, K. compares the shabbiness of the court unfavourably with the luxury of his

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nicht in der beruflichen Arbeit.
RABENSTEINER: Es wäre ja auch in der Nacht möglich. Aber da wären Sie wohl nicht frisch genug.
KULLICH: Am besten, Sie sind gleich um neun Uhr früh da.
KAMINER: In der Juliusstraße. Es ist ein langer Weg. In der Vorstadt, beim Güterbahnhof.
K scheucht die Beamten mit einer Armbewegung zurück. Steht dann, als sei er bereit zu einem Sprung.

own office. This observation prompts the usher to reply, "Yes, according to your position you're superior to all the judges"; then, pointing to the other accused persons waiting in the court, he goes on: "But look at them waiting. This here *he points inconsiderately from one to another* —is a customs director. This is a well-travelled merchant. Here a government advisor—" (302-303).[181]

This exchange is based on Kafka's description of the other accused in the waiting rooms of the court: "All of them were carelessly dressed, though to judge from the expression of their faces, their bearing, the cut of their beards, and many almost imperceptible little details, they obviously belonged to the upper classes" (Kafka/Muir and Muir 78). Weiss's version not only makes this more specific, but more explicitly numbers K. among the other accused by his class standing.

To further emphasize K.'s relatively high social status, Weiss closes the scene at the court with another invention: after the dizzy and disoriented K. leaves the offices of the court, he encounters a group of poor dispossessed workers, who recognize him as an official of the bank:

> FIRST WOMAN: Sir, let us be!
> THIRD MAN: We'll pay the rent once we've got work again!
> FOURTH MAN *from far above*: Throw him out!
> FOURTH WOMAN: It's his building!
> *K. rises unsteadily, supports himself on the chair arm.*
> FIFTH WOMAN *downstage*: He acts like he doesn't hear us.
> SECOND MAN: That's easy!
> WOMAN WITH INFANT *sinking to her knees before K.*: Sir, where are we supposed to go? *She grabs his hand, kisses it.*
> *K. walks a few paces, like a blind man, with hands groping.*
> FIRST WOMAN: Grant us a few days' grace! (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß*, 305)[182]

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[181] "Ihrer Stellung nach sind Sie alle den Richtern überlegen. *Er zeigt auf die Wartenden.* Aber sehn Sie, wie sie dasitzen. Das hier *er zeigt rücksichtslos von einem zum andern* —ist ein Zolldirektor. Das ein Großkaufmann, weitgereist. Hier ein Regierungsrat—"

[182] "ERSTE FRAU: Herr, laß uns noch!
DRITTER MANN: Wir werden die Miete zahlen, wenn wir nur wieder Arbeit haben!
VIERTER MANN *von weit oben*: Werft ihn doch raus!
VIERTE FRAU: Es ist sein Haus!

Faced with this onslaught, the greatly weakened K. is aided by the stranger from the first scene, who takes K. under the arm and leads him to his bed. K.'s weakness in the play is in sharp contrast to his condition in the narrative text where, once escaped from the stifling atmosphere of the offices, K. bounds away alone, energy renewed (Kafka 92).

Although this scene owes little to the novel, it is clearly indebted to Max Brod's reminiscences of Kafka, who, as a daily witness to the maimings and illnesses caused by unsafe and exploitative labour practices, once remarked in awe: "How modest these people are. They come to plead with us. Instead of storming the institute and smashing everything to smithereens, they come to plead" (Brod/PM 76).[183] In this context, however, so close to the beginning of the second act, the scene abruptly changes the perspective from which the play observes K. His interaction with the workers "show[s] K. in his socially liminal state; he is by no means given powerless into the hands of those above him, but rather is himself a relatively influential confidential clerk in a bank, to whom others must come in supplication" (Howald/PM 191-192).[184]

The very abruptness of this change of perspective disturbs Ulrike Zimmermann, who

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K erhebt sich schwankend, stützt sich auf die Stuhllehne.
FÜNFTE FRAU *vorn*: Er tut, als höre er nichts.
ZWEITER MANN: Das ist leicht!
DIE FRAU MIT DEM SÄUGLING *vor K in die Knie sinkend*: Herr, wo sollen wir denn hin?
Sie ergreift seine Hand, küßt sie.
K geht ein paar Schritte, wie ein Blinder, mit tastenden Händen.
ERSTE FRAU: Gewähren Sie uns Aufschub!"

[183] "'Wie bescheiden diese Menschen sind,' sagte er mir einmal, mit ganz großen Augen. 'Sie kommen zu uns bitten. Statt die Anstalt zu stürmen und alles kurz und klein zu schlagen, kommen sie bitten.'"

[184] "Und es kommen ganz neue Figuren hinzu, etwa Arbeiter im Gerichtsgebäude oder eine Obdachlosenfamilie, die von K Hilfe erhofft. Diese Figuren zeigen K in seiner sozialen Zwischenlage; er ist keineswegs bloß ohnmächtig denen oben ausgeliefert, sondern auch ein relativ einflußreicher Bankprokurist, zu dem andere als Bittsteller zu kommen haben."

observes, "This configuration—the bank as owner of the building and K. as its inhumane administrator, who without sympathy sets the poor on the street—appears sudden, since the events up to now have given no hint whatsoever of such a context" (Zimmermann/PM 106).[185] Howald further complains that Weiss's additions

> have the opposite effect from that desired. As K.'s social position is enhanced, his submission seems less motivated. This is not without irony: Peter Weiss wanted to suppress everything 'irrational, mystical' and make the events socially explicable, but the explicatory power of his version dwindles in the face of the model. Why should a person in such a position of security allow himself to be brought down? The dreamlike relentlessness of Kafka, as much subtly socially as psychologically motivated, falls, at the mercy of bare social logic, into the incomprehensible, even into something ridiculous. (Howald/PM 191-193)[186]

However, Weiss does take pains throughout the first act to demonstrate that K.'s position at the bank is by no means unassailable, under threat from his superiors and undermined by his subordinates: by the final scene of the act, when he discovers the whipper and the warders at the bank, his first concern, unlike in the narrative text, is that the disturbance might cost him his job (Weiss, *Prozeß* 297).

Moreover, it does not seem unreasonable that Weiss, the "dialectician never at a loss" (Klinger 65), should attempt to build a two-act structure into a form of thesis and antithesis; nor that the experienced dramatist might take advantage of the element of surprise, which makes K.'s

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[185] "Diese Konstellation: die Bank als Besitzer des Gebäudes und K. als unmenschlicher Verwalter desselben, der die Armen mitleidslos auf die Straße setzt, wirkt unvermittelt, da das bisherige Geschehen in keiner Weise auf einen solchen Zusammenhang hingedeutet hat."

[186] "Doch diese Ergänzungen haben statt des gewünschten den gegenteiligen Effekt. Indem Ks soziale Position aufgewertet wird, wirkt seine Selbstunterwerfung weniger motiviert. Das ist nicht ohne Ironie: Peter Weiss wollte bei Kafka alles 'Irrationale, Mystische' zurückdrängen und die Vorgänge sozial erklärbar machen, doch die Erklärungskraft seiner Fassung hat gegenüber der Vorlage abgenommen. Warum sollte sich ein Mensch in solch gesicherter Position so unterkriegen lassen? Die traumhafte Unerbittlichkeit Kafkas, ebenso subtil sozial wie psychologisch motiviert, gerät, der blanken sozialen Logik ausgesetzt, ins Unnachvollziehbare, gar etwas Lächerliche."

debilitating class-consciousness even more apparent, and at the same time enlivens the second act of what remains, in comparison with the two other versions discussed so far, an extremely "talky" play. Curiously, however much Weiss attempts to tie K. to Kafka's biography, he never takes the logical step of making K. Jewish. Such a change would not only explain K.'s insecurity—the real Kafka also felt that his position at the insurance institute was tenuous, given that its official policy was not to employ Jews at all (Pawel 181)—but would also play off a major contributing factor to Weiss's early affinity for Kafka's work. Weiss's notes give no hint that raising the issue of Jewishness ever occurred to him in connection with *Der Prozeß*; apparently, he was entirely concerned with framing the play's issues in terms of class.

Class considerations are also evident, for example, in K.'s uncle's concern for the family's good name—"You were our honour, you mustn't become our shame"—taken directly from the novel (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß*, 307; Kafka 116),[187] and in the way that Weiss's version of the uncle interacts very differently in the play with the lawyer's servant Leni and with the lawyer Huld himself.

At Huld's house, for example, the uncle in the novel loses his temper at Leni for attempting to cut short their visit to the lawyer. He addresses Leni with the familiar address: "Du verdammte . . ." ("You damned . . ."), shocking K., who steps forward to shut his uncle's mouth with both hands; the uncle controls himself, however, and returns to the formal address: "Bitte, gehen Sie jetzt!" ("Please, go now!"; Kafka 124). In the play, this exchange is not merely shortened, but altered and intensified. The uncle raises his hand as if to strike Leni, crying in the familiar form, "Scher dich weg!" ("Clear off!"); and it is the bedridden Huld who quickly sits up to forestall violence, while K. does nothing (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß* 309). The uncle does not speak to Leni again

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[187] "Du warst unsre Ehre, du darfst nicht unsre Schande werden."

in this scene.

The uncle's relationship with Huld is also altered from the original. For one thing, since the chief court clerk who is introduced as Huld's guest in the novel (Kafka 127-128) is absent in the play, the dynamic is different, and K. spends much less time with the two older men before a noise from offstage draws him into a scene with Leni. Moreover, partly in the interests of stage practicality, it is the uncle and the sickly Huld who exit, laughing, with a bottle of wine that Huld has produced, while K. remains onstage. This is very different from the lively three-way conference, dominated by the chief clerk, that K. sneaks away from to see Leni in the original (129-130).

Throughout this scene, Huld and the uncle are discredited as sources of assistance by their behaviour (Zimmermann 107). Whereas it is true that the novel's K. begins quickly to doubt Huld's abilities, in the play Huld is of doubtful use from the beginning. Without important guests, his story of having friends at the court is without substantiation, and when he pulls the wine bottle from his bedclothes, it dangles in his hanging hands as K.'s uncle helps him offstage (Weiss, *Prozeß* 310).

The impotence of the uncle is also underscored again at the end of the scene. In the novel, K. returns from his impromptu tryst with Leni to be scolded at length by his uncle (Kafka 135-136); but in the play, the uncle enters just as K. and Leni disappear behind a desk to make love. He cannot find K. and wanders upstage and off, calling his nephew and promising that the lawyer will help and is waiting for him (Weiss, *Prozeß* 312). Weiss thus demonstrates that while the uncle, as a representative of his class, is abusive to subordinates, his attempts (and by extension K.'s) to enlist members of his own class for aid are trivial and futile.

Indeed, Huld's assistance is so negligible in Weiss's version that the lawyer has no further lines in the play: Kafka's lengthy description of K.'s ongoing meetings with Huld and the progress of his case (Kafka 137-154) is abridged into a monologue delivered by K. to his empty bed (Weiss,

Prozeß 314-315). At the end of this monologue, K. decides to dismiss Huld, but this is never carried out in the lawyer's presence, as it is in the novel (Kafka 162-163). Two scenes later, after K.'s visit to Titorelli, K's uncle reappears to confirm Huld's dismissal; the uncle, the tradesman Block and Leni enact the humiliation of Block performed by Leni and Huld in the novel (Kafka 200-236). In the play, the lines based on Huld's dialogue in the novel are shared by the uncle, Block and Leni, as the lawyer lies silently in bed, where Leni holds up his hand for Block to kiss (Weiss, *Prozeß* 322-326). Weiss thus reduces Huld from the major figure of the narrative text—and from the "Mephisto" of his own early notes—to a mere puppet in the play.

The scene in which K. has his long monologue on the subject of Huld also introduces the manufacturer who will refer K. to Titorelli; as the assistant manager leads the manufacturer in, they are conversing:

> MANUFACTURER: Uprisings! Revolutions! Yes, where are investments still safe, then?
> ASSISTANT MANAGER: Weapons, I tell you, weapons! There you'll collect . . . the highest dividends! (313)[188]

The assistant manager's words ring even more grotesquely in contrast with the homeless workers' plight; and when K. rushes off at the scene's end to visit Titorelli, the assistant manager takes over K.'s caseload, and appropriates all his paperwork, with the same mercenary instinct (316-317).

After the visit to Titorelli, back at the bank, the assistant manager gives K. the important task of guiding an Italian business associate around the local cathedral, as in the novel. Weiss adds business here from Kafka's unfinished chapter "Conflict with the Assistant Manager" (Kafka 298-302): the assistant manager digs at a loose section of K.'s desk with a pocket knife, finally breaking

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[188] "FABRIKANT: Aufstände! Revolutionen! Ja, wo sind denn Anlagen noch sicher? "DIREKTOR-STELLVERTRETER: Waffen, sage ich Ihnen, Waffen! Da werden Ihnen die höchsten . . . Dividenden ausgeschüttet!"

it free. At this point, Weiss's invention takes over. The manager and the Italian guest enter, whereupon the assistant manager turns to the manager, saying, "You see how the chief clerk treats company property!" (Weiss, *Prozeß* 327-328).[189] The struggle between K. and his superiors has thus escalated to the point of K.'s embarrassment and potential disgrace; during the scene change, Rabensteiner, Kaminer and Kullich loudly repair the damaged desk and carry it to the side of the stage, while glancing at K.—who is now lying on his bed reading in preparation for the tour—"grimacing reproachfully and shaking their heads" (*vorwurfsvoll grimassierend, kopfschüttelnd*), indicating that K.'s downfall is a foregone conclusion.

As in the narrative text, the Italian never appears at the cathedral, and K. is instead confronted by the prison chaplain, though Weiss's version is much shorter, chiefly because the parable "Before the Law" has been so abridged. Afterwards come two scenes, both original to Weiss, which are together almost as long as the cathedral scene.

In the first of these scenes, K. finds himself again in the workers' quarter, looking for the court. The workers know nothing of the court, but the stranger appears again, telling K. (in the familiar address), "Stay here. Pass a different judgement on yourself." K. replies, "It's too late. There's no more new beginning for me," and a passerby responds, "No, not for him" (333).[190] The workers, K.'s erstwhile helper among them, withdraw.

In the next (and penultimate) scene, K. returns to the boarding house, where the captain, as in the first scene, slams the newspaper, spread out on the table, with the flat of his hand: "War, I tell

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[189] "Sehn Sie, wie der Herr Prokurist mit dem Eigentum der Firma umgeht!"

[190] "DER MANN: Bleibe hier. Sprich dir ein anderes Urteil.
K: Es ist zu spät. Es gibt für mich keinen neuen Anfang mehr.
VIERTE FRAU *unten, im Vorbeigehen*: Nein, für ihn nicht."

you! There's war!" (334). As Robert Cohen writes, "When the captain repeats these words at the end of the play, shortly before K's execution, there is an ominous hint that K's death prefigures the coming slaughter of millions. Like them, K is innocent and, like them, he had done nothing to prevent this imminent catastrophe" (Cohen/Humphreys 167). Indeed, the last words of the scene are also the captain's: "Now it begins" (*Jetzt beginnt es*), as he puts on his uniform jacket (Weiss, *Prozeß* 334).

The captain's donning of his uniform is then immediately mirrored in the opening of the next (and final) scene, as K. puts on his best clothes with great care and sits to wait for his coming executioners, who—unlike in Kafka, Barrault-Gide, or Berkoff—turn out to be Franz and Willem. This development gives a new meaning to a line from the novel, where K. asks, "Why did it have to be you they sent?" (335).[191] K. is marched upstage and back down, to the place of his original arrest, and is bent back over Franz's knee, as in the first scene, while the entire cast gradually assembles onstage to watch the execution (335-336). As we have seen, Weiss had written in his notes that his K. would "move among living people, be seen and judged by them"; thus, in Weiss's version K. dies surrounded by a social milieu, instead of in the deserted and remote location of the novel (Kafka 270).

K., Fräulein Bürstner and Women as a Class

One aspect of this social milieu which has not yet been mentioned is the relationship between the sexes, as exemplified by K. and the women in the play. The manner in which Weiss transforms K.'s relationship with Fräulein Bürstner into social critique, however, deserves separate treatment.

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[191] "Warum hat man gerade euch geschickt?" In the novel K. speaks to the executioners, who are strangers to him, with the formal address: "Warum hat man gerade Sie geschickt?" (Kafka 268).

Particularly notable is the fact that Weiss introduces elements from Kafka's own biography in order to elaborate the abortive relationship depicted in the narrative text into a theme which recurs in different contexts in the play from those in the novel.

In the first scene, for example, during the three clerks' horseplay in Fräulein Bürstner's room, Rabensteiner takes one of her photos from its frame and pockets it (272); at the beginning of the following scene, in the bank, he passes it to K "as a memento" (*Zur Erinnerung*; 276). Moments later, while giving K. his birthday bonus, the assistant manager spots the photo lying on K.'s desk and snatches it up, further embarrassing K., who tries to take it back from him: "A lovely woman." K. explains away the other men in the photo as acquaintances, or rather, relatives; the assistant manager jumps to a conclusion: "Your fiancée? Ah, what a figure!"—then, teasing K., "Or is it a new conquest?" (277).[192] After mentioning the threat of war, the assistant manager returns to his former line of thought: "But you, I understand it, you want security, especially now. Yes, it's home and family we've got to have, so that we've got something to hold to."[193] As if inspired by these remarks, after the assistant manager leaves him K. takes a pair of scissors and carefully cuts the other men from both sides of Fräulein Bürstner in the photograph, then places it in his own breast pocket (278).

This sequence is a reference not to the novel, but to Kafka's own troubled engagement to Felice Bauer, which itself ended during the period in which Weiss's adaptation is set. The engagement, in fact, ended with a confrontation in July of 1913, about the time of K.'s execution in the play. Kafka began writing *Der Proceß* in August of that year, as the Balkan War was beginning;

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[192] "Eine hübsche Dame. . . . Ihre Verlobte? Ah, welche Figur! . . . Oder ist es eine ganz neue Eroberung?"

[193] "Sie aber, ich verstehe es, Sie wollen grade jetzt Sicherheit. Ja, Heim, Familie müssen wir bilden, um etwas zu haben, an das wir uns halten können."

the connection between the engagement and the events of the novel, and the correlation between the dissolution of Kafka's relationship with Bauer and K.'s execution, are explored by Elias Canetti in *Der andere Prozeß* (*Kafka's Other Trial*, 1969). Weiss too alludes to this connection in the *Notebooks* (*Notizbücher* I, 257), and it is on the basis of the parallel between Kafka's engagement and *Trial* that Weiss binds K.'s pursuit of Fräulein Bürstner—which now, like Kafka's ill-fated engagement, takes on the air of a desperate search for respectability—to K.'s trial (Zimmermann 101).

Thus, though Weiss follows Kafka's text very closely in the third scene, when K. suddenly defends Fräulein Bürstner from Frau Grubach's suspicions, he has already set up K.'s pursuit of her visually: K. has literally cut other men out of the picture. Unfortunately, K. is not so easily the master of his reality, and his scene with Fräulein Bürstner goes no better for him than in the novel. After first his self-serving description of the arrest, and then his kissing of the exhausted Fräulein Bürstner's neck, are interrupted by the captain's knocking from the next room—much as in Kafka—he leaves her room only to be intercepted by the captain, who throws him to the floor as already described, before running off upstairs. The vanquished K. remains spread-eagled on the ground as, in the space denoting her room above him, Fräulein Bürstner strips naked and, humming, spreads her hair as the lights go down (Weiss, *Prozeß* 283-284). As often happens in the dramatic text, K.'s defeat and downfall are foreshadowed even more explicitly than in the novel.

Three scenes later, when K. returns to the boarding house after his hearing, the captain is visible in Fräulein Bürstner's room, sitting up among the bedcushions in his uniform and boots, smoking a pipe. Fräulein Bürstner hangs Fräulein Montag's things in her closet as Montag unpacks them (293). The presence of the captain lends an ironic tone to Frau Grubach's apology for her remarks and K.'s acceptance of it; and the atmosphere becomes ominous when, as Montag visits K.

in his room to tell him that Fräulein Bürstner will not speak to him again, Bürstner herself sits beside the captain on her bed (294).

Fräulein Montag's speech follows the narrative text closely; but her conversation with K. in the novel ends just as Captain Lanz enters from outside—the first time K. has seen him up close—and kisses her hand. K. takes this opportunity to leave them, feeling that, despite Montag's and Lanz's attempts to bar his way, Fräulein Bürstner is no more than "a little typist" (*ein kleines Schreibmaschinenfräulein*) who cannot resist him for long. He surreptitiously checks Fräulein Bürstner's room, only to find that she has gone out while he was distracted by Fräulein Montag (Kafka 100-102).

In Weiss's version, however, K.'s conversation with Montag does not end on a civilized note. Instead, K. speaks his class-conscious thoughts aloud: "What would I want from her anyway. . . . What does Fräulein Bürstner think, then—a typist—"[194] and Fräulein Montag, insulted on her friend's behalf, spits at him. K. tries, too late, to take back his remarks as she exits; meanwhile, Fräulein Bürstner, quietly singing, bends over the captain. The lights go out, and in the dark we hear "groaning and sighing, muffled thrusts, stifled cries" (295).[195] Frau Grubach's suspicions, and K.'s fears, are thus substantiated far more concretely than occurs in Kafka's novel. From this point on, K.'s attempts to contact Fräulein Bürstner are thwarted by the captain's rivalry and Montag's intercession.

When next we see Fräulein Bürstner, in the second act, she and Fräulein Montag have assumed a sort of master-servant relationship: as Bürstner puts the finishing touches on her hairdo,

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[194] "K: Was sollte ich von ihr schon wollen. . . . Was glaubt Fräulein Bürstner eigentlich—ein Schreibmaschinenmädchen—"

[195] "*Ein Stöhnen und Seufzen, gedämpfte Hiebe, unterdrückte Schreie sind zu hören.*"

Montag stands ready to put Bürstner's cape over her shoulders. K., just returned (in stage time) from his visit to the empty courtroom, lies exhausted on his bed. The captain sits onstage in his shirt sleeves (305-306). K. suddenly leaps up and runs upstairs to Bürstner's room, shouting, "Listen to me! . . . I must explain to you—I'd like to tell you—" and stands prepared to knock at her (invisible) door. She replies that she will call for help if he troubles her again, and when K. demands to be let in, she calls, "Fräulein Montag! Herr Lanz!" The captain rises and begins to stalk K., who gives up and returns to his room to wash. The captain claps his hands to get K.'s attention and calls, "How about it?"; and K., terrified, replies, "No! No!" K. is saved only by the arrival of his uncle, which forces the captain to withdraw (306).[196]

In conversation with the uncle, the K. of the novel tells him the entire story of the arrest, with one exception: "Fräulein Bürstner's name he mentioned only once and in passing, but that did not detract from his frankness, since Fräulein Bürstner had no connection with the case" (Kafka/Muir and Muir 122-123).[197] In Weiss, K. does not mention Bürstner at all; at the end of the scene his

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[196] "*K springt plötzlich auf.*
"K *nach rechts hinaufrufend*: Fräulein Bürstner! Gnädiges Fräulein! Hören Sie mich an!
"*Er läuft die Stufen rechts herauf. Steht mit erhobener Hand, als wolle er auf eine unsichtbare Tür einschlagen.*
"K: Ich muß Ihnen erklären—Ich möchte Ihnen sagen—
"FRÄULEIN BÜRSTNER: Wenn Sie mich wieder belästigen, rufe ich um Hilfe.
"K: Lassen Sie mich ein!
"FRÄULEIN MONTAG: Frau Grubach! Herr Lanz!
Frau Grubach blickt auf. Der Hauptmann geht gebückt, in Kampfstellung, langsam links die Treppe hinunter.
"*K wendet sich ab, eilt zum Waschtisch, beugt sich über die Schüssel, schlägt sich das Wasser ins Gesicht.*
"*Der Hauptmann klatscht in die Hände. K schnellt herum.*
"DER HAUPTMANN: Wie wärs?
"K *abwehrend*: Nein! Nein!"

[197] In the original, ". . . Fräulein Bürstner stand mit dem Prozeß in keiner Verbindung"; that is, she had no connection to the *trial*, rather than to the *case* (Kafka 121).

uncle, suspecting something of the sort, asks, "Is it to do with women?" *(Sind es Frauengeschichten?*; Weiss, *Prozeß* 308). K. does not reply, but upstage, as the scene changes, the captain, now in uniform, meets Montag and Bürstner, takes Fräulein Bürstner's arm, and exits with her; Montag, having passed her friend into the captain's care, disappears (308). The connection between the trial and K.'s failed relationship to Bürstner is thus visually signalled once again.

At the lawyer's, this theme resurfaces: when K. is alone with the servant Leni and she inquires if he has a lover, he shows her the now-crumpled photo of Fräulein Bürstner from his breast pocket. Leni is unimpressed, asking, "Would she be able to do anything for you?"[198] K. replies that she would not, that her only advantage over Leni is that she knows nothing of his trial. Leni maintains that this is hardly an advantage, and by the end of the scene has seduced K. (311).

While abridged, this scene corresponds closely to its counterpart in the novel, except that in the novel, the picture K. shows Leni is in fact of his mistress, Elsa, and Leni asks the far weightier question, "Would she be able to sacrifice herself for you?" (Kafka 134).[199] It is not surprising that Weiss has substituted a question less precise and more realistic, as part of his agenda to remove the "mystical and unreal" from Kafka's plot; however, by excising Elsa (who is only a marginal presence in the novel) Weiss increases the importance of Fräulein Bürstner—and therefore, of Leni, as a willing rival to the obviously unwilling Bürstner.

Not until the end of the play does Fräulein Bürstner appear again. She and Fräulein Montag are in their room when the captain cries "There's war!" K. enters and shouts to Fräulein Bürstner; when Montag instead approaches him, he makes no objection, but only gives her the creased

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[198] "Würde sie etwas für Sie tun können?"

[199] "Würde sie sich . . . für Sie opfern können?"

photograph, saying, "Give this to Fräulein Bürstner. I beg her to forgive me."[200] As he watches, Montag takes the photo up to her friend, who looks at it, gives a brief laugh and tears it up, letting the pieces drop to the floor. K. retires to his room to wash himself as the captain dons his uniform, and Fräulein Montag opens a parasol over Fräulein Bürstner as they move downstage on the middle level (Weiss, *Prozeß* 333-334). There they remain, Bürstner singing and humming, as they watch K. dress and move to the place of his execution; the humming dies away as Franz and Willem set K. in his final position, and the rest of the cast assemble to watch K. die (334-336).

By focussing so much of the play on K.'s behaviour towards Fräulein Bürstner, Weiss dramatizes not only the novel, but also his critique of Kafka's own actions. As Weiss describes Kafka's situation in the notes for the adaptation: "His love is too great. He isn't up to it. . . . So he flees, in panicked fear. But if he stayed. If he faced his terrible love—"(Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 260).[201] Dramaturgically, this alteration gives the play a stronger and more apparent through line, in contrast to the novel's more episodic structure. The connection to Kafka's biography helps motivate and structure Weiss's changes.

However, the focus on this one figure also lessens the time spent on exploring the other female characters in the play; the laundress, for example, barely has the opportunity to make an impression on K. or on the audience. K. quickly dismisses any possibility of a liaison with her, saying, "I like you, it's true, but you belong to the society that I have to fight"[202] (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß*

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[200] "K: Geben Sie dies Fräulein Bürstner. Ich bitte sie, mir zu verzeihn."

[201] "Seine Liebe ist zu groß. Er ist ihr nicht gewachsen. . . . Da flieht er, in panischer Angst. Bliebe er doch. Setze er sich doch seiner furchtbaren Liebe aus—"

[202] "Sie gefallen mir schon, aber Sie gehören zu der Gesellschaft, die ich bekämpfen muß." The East German critic Manfred Haiduk, incidentally, in his study misquotes "Gesellschaft" (*society*) as "Gesellschaftsschicht" (*social stratum*; Haiduk/PM 234).

301). Even Leni's ongoing relationship with K. pales in contrast to his clearly signalled obsession with Fräulein Bürstner. At the same time, the increased exposure of Fräulein Bürstner in the adaptation, and the explicit display of her body and its availability, reduces her ambiguity. As a result, the complexity of the various women in Kafka's *Proceß* is hardly conveyed by the play, as Ulrike Zimmermann points out, explaining Weiss's reasoning for these changes as follows:

> Weiss wants to render impossible the metaphysical interpretation of the events as it is usually given. A connection between female power and the power of the court . . . would work in favour of just such an interpretation. The depiction of the female characters is therefore based above all on the questions: What role do women play in society? How does K. see the women, and according to what behavioral models does he encounter them? Weiss accordingly represents the relationship of the laundress and Leni to the court as one of dependence. Since the women are completely involved in the existing relationships and do not rebel against them, they can be no help to K. (Zimmermann/PM 131)[203]

In Weiss's introductory remarks to the play, he explains that K. treats the women he encounters "according to the models of patriarchal seizure of property."[204] His play is also therefore a critique of the patriarchal aspect of bourgeois capitalism, mirroring similar critical intention in the *Aesthetics*, which was being written at the same time (as described in Feusthuber 1990 and 1994; and in Poore). Ironically, however, in the service of this critique Weiss reduces the women to the monotony of "pure love objects" (Haiduk/PM 234)[205] in a manner similar to the more openly

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[203] "Eine wie auch immer geartete metaphysische Auslegung des Geschehens will Weiss unmöglich machen. Eine Verbindung von weiblicher Macht und Gerichtsmacht . . . würde aber eine solche Deutung begünstigen. Deswegen orientiert sich die Gestaltung der Frauenfiguren vor allem an die Fragen: Welche Rolle spielen die Frauen in der Gesellschaft? Wie sieht K. die Frauen und nach welchen Verhaltensmustern begegnet er ihnen? Die Beziehung der Gerichtsfrau und Lenis zum Gericht stellt Weiss darum explizit als Abhängigkeitsverhältnis dar. Da die Frauen vollkommen in die bestehenden Verhältnisse involviert sind und sich nicht gegen sie auflehnen, können sie für K. auch keine Hilfe sein."

[204] "Die Frauen, die er trifft, behandelt er nach den Mustern patriarchalischer Besitzergreifung."

[205] "Frauen sind [für K.] reine Liebesobjekte . . ."

misogynist adaptation of Berkoff. It is entirely consistent with the reduced role of women in the adaptation that, in Weiss's cathedral scene, the chaplain's line about K. "seeking too much help from others" no longer mentions women (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß* 330; cf. Kafka 253).[206] For K., help could only be obtained from other quarters, and Weiss takes pains to point out where these quarters lie.

K.'s Would-Be Helper

In mid-February 1974, only a few weeks after Bergman's call, Weiss wrote a brief paragraph in his notes that would grow into an entire figure in the adaptation: "To whom do you really belong? Are you at home anywhere? Do you have something to do with these gentlemen? Do you have something to do with those listening, with those in attendance? No. Well, then. Where do you stand? Why have you really been accused?" (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 263).[207]

By 15 March, Weiss had recorded in his notes a draft of the exchange which would become the other end of the arc of this figure's appearance in the adaptation: "why don't you go with us— /I have to look for the court— /are you the judges— /No— maybe we are— but not the way you think—" (267).[208] This figure would come to be described in the list of characters as "THE MAN who helps K." (*DER MANN, der K behilflich ist*; Weiss/PM, *Prozeß* 262).

As we have seen, Weiss places this figure onstage already in the first scene, where he appears and speaks to K., telling him, "Pay no attention to [the warders] at all. They can't touch you" (271-

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[206] "DER KAPLAN: Du suchst zuviel fremde Hilfe."

[207] "Zu wem gehören Sie eigentlich? Sind Sie irgendwo zuhause? Haben Sie mit diesen Herrn da was zu tun? Haben Sie mit den Zuhörern, den Beisitzern was zu tun? Nein. Also. Wo stehn Sie? Weshalb sind Sie eigentlich angeklagt?"

[208] "warum gehst du nicht mit uns— /ich muß nach dem Gericht suchen— /seid ihr die Richter— /Nein— vielleicht sind wir es— aber nicht so wie du meinst—"

272). In this capacity, the man functions both as a Marxist *raisonneur* and as an alienating device, to indicate "that K.'s attitude towards his trial is to be regarded critically in the further course of the action" through the play (Zimmermann/PM 100).[209] Thus Weiss creates a figure who, by his very presence, is a corrective to Kafka's original text. This is perhaps the most visible sign of Weiss's interpretive mediation; the figure of the man, however, like so many of Weiss's interventions, has its origin in Kafka's text.

The inspiration for K.'s helper does not appear until the final page of the novel, when K., in his last moments, sees a window in a lonely house thrown open:

> a human figure, faint and insubstantial at that distance and at that height, leaned abruptly far forward and stretched both arms still farther. Who was it? A friend? A good man? Someone who sympathized? Someone who wanted to help? Was it one person only? Or was it mankind? Was help at hand? Were there arguments in his favor that had been overlooked? Of course there must be. (Kafka/Muir and Muir 286; Kafka 272)

The man's next appearance is in the second act, after K. leaves the offices of the court. When the weakened K. is set upon by the evicted workers, it is the man who takes him under the arm, leads him wordlessly to his bed, and helps him lie down before slowly withdrawing (Weiss, *Prozeß* 305). This scene seems to have begun in the *Notebooks* as a fragmentary idea: "The worker sits on his bed, explains to him. But K sleeps — /Worker = doctor —" (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 256) [210]; and this idea in turn is probably connected not to *Der Proceß*, but rather to a chapter in *Das Schloß* (in which Weiss had been submerged while writing the *Aesthetics*), where an exhausted K. falls asleep while the functionary Bürgel explains to him the political workings of the castle. (Although in the novel,

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[209] "Dieser Einschub [des Mannes . . .] zeigt an, daß K.'s Haltung zu seinem Prozeß im weiteren Handlungsverlauf kritisch zu beobachten ist."

[210] "Der Arbeiter sitzt an seinem Bett, erklärt ihm. Aber K schläft— /Arbeiter = Arzt —"

it is K. who sits on Bürgel's bed; Kafka, *Schloß* 243-255).

The man appears for the third time as K. seeks the court after the visit to the cathedral. As Klinger points out, this is the first scene in which K. seeks the workers out and tries to enlist their aid (Klinger/PM 67) [211]; but he also feels intimidated and ashamed in their presence. Emerging from the crowd, the man questions K., asking "all the questions . . . that many of the novel's readers also ask" (Zimmermann/PM 110).[212] The exchange itself is clearly descended from Weiss's early jottings in the *Notebooks*:

> MAN: Who called you, then?
> K.: I have to give myself up.
> MAN: Who commands you, then? Who has such power over you?
> K.: I go of my own free will.
> MAN: You've already acknowledged the sentence?
> K.: Yes.
> MAN: You're resisting?
> K.: It's useless.
> MAN: You can find no more objections?
> K.: No. . . .
> *K. grabs the man, his erstwhile helper, by the arm.*
> K.: Are you my judges?
> MAN: Your judges? Maybe. . . . Stay here. Pass a different judgement on yourself.
> K.: It's too late. There's no more new beginning for me. (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß* 333)[213]

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[211] "Erst jetzt, knapp vor seiner Erdolchung, nimmt K diese Menschen wahr und empfindet auch sie als seine Richter."

[212] "Weiss legt dem Mann zunächst all jene Fragen in den Mund, die mancher Leser des Romans sich auch stellen mag. Sie beleuchten kritisch K.'s Haltung gegenüber seinem Prozeß."

[213] "DER MANN: Wer hat dich denn gerufen?
"K: Ich muß mich stellen.
"DER MANN: Wer befiehlt dir denn? Wer beherrscht dich so?
"K: Ich gehe freiwillig.
"DER MANN: Du hast das Urteil schon anerkannt?
"K: Ja.
"DER MANN: Du setzt dich zur Wehr?
"K: Es ist nutzlos.
"DER MANN: Du findest keine Einwände mehr?
"K: Nein. . . .

The man and the workers, who have been openly hostile to K. (one interrupts this exchange with "They [the gentlemen] *should* let themselves be sentenced!"[214]; 333), withdraw; only shortly thereafter, in the final scene, as the cast assembles around the place of execution, does the man appear again. Now, he stands apart from the others, centre stage atop the large cabinet, and like his prototype in the novel, "*raises his hand and makes a gentle waving motion, as if to call K. to him. But K. is already turning his head back.*"[215] And the knife enters his breast (336).

The creation of this figure thus serves to offer an alternative to K., "a way out of his self-subjugation" (Howald/PM 194)[216]: he has the option of joining the working classes. Instead, K. surrenders himself to the judgement of the court—which is not, as he and Hasterer feared, a tribunal of the workers (who do not even appear in the final scene); rather, "it consists of the bourgeoisie whom he knows, with whom he lived"(Klinger/PM 67),[217] and serves as a symbol and proof of his failure to realize that "the stratification of reality and its power structures" (Zimmermann/PM 125)[218] can be both rationally understood and resisted. Thus K., as Weiss once said of Kafka, "dies of

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"*K faßt den Mann, seinen früheren Helfer, am Arm.*
"K: Seid ihr meine Richter?
"DER MANN: Deine Richter? Vielleicht. . . . Bleibe hier. Sprich dir ein anderes Urteil.
"K: Es ist zu spät. Es gibt für mich keinen neuen Anfang mehr."

[214] "ZWEITER MANN: Sollen sie sich doch verurteilen lassen!"

[215] "*Dort ist, über dem Schrank, abgesondert von allen anderen, der Mann, der sich K als Helfer angeboten hatte, erschienen.*
"*Er hebt die Hand und vollzieht eine leicht, winkende Bewegung, als wollte er K zu sich rufen.*
"*Doch K dreht den Kopf schon zurück.*"

[216] "Zum anderen hat Peter Weiss eine Figur eingeführt, die K einen Ausweg aus der Selbstunterwerfung eröffnen soll."

[217] "Aber K will vor das Gericht, und er bekommt es bei Peter Weiss zu sehen: es besteht aus den Bürgern, die er kennt, mit denen er gelebt hat."

[218] ". . . die Vielschichtigkeit der Wirklichkeit und ihrer Machtstrukturen . . ."

himself, experiencing external defeats on his own body." Through the figure of the man, however—"the last in a long series of messianic redeemer figures in Weiss's literary work" (Cohen/Humphreys 172)—the self that dies is contrasted with another "self" that carries on.

Robert Cohen explains that Weiss, in his later works, uses a sophisticated type of doubling as a dialectical strategy: "Weiss's literary figures are intended to be both identical and nonidentical with their historical models." Cohen uses the play *Hölderlin* as an example: Weiss's portrayal of the German poet Hölderlin is at calculated odds with the 'correct' traditional image; however, Weiss nonetheless makes an implicit (and often an explicit) claim to objective description of reality for his works through well-documented research. It is this claim, Cohen maintains, and not Weiss's changes alone, which explains the negative reaction Weiss's later works often engendered. "Weiss even changed the degree of fictionalization from work to work and from figure to figure—a contradictory poetic method that the dramatist himself was never completely able to explain, a method that hardly permits statements of a general nature about Weiss's treatment of reality" (136-137). It is through a similar form of doubling that Weiss recreated himself as a proletarian in the *Aesthetics* (145); and this strategy is at work again—facilitated by the fact that here, the "reality" is itself already a fiction—in *Der Prozeß*.

The "man who tries to help K." is well-named, in that he appears only at crucial moments when K. could change his fate: first, when he advises K. to ignore his arrest; second, when K. is accosted by the dispossessed workers; and at last when K. is trying to seek the workers' help to find the court. On the latter two occasions, K. has the opportunity to align himself with the workers in solidarity and thus escape the death sentence of the bourgeoisie, as the man makes clear in the last of the three scenes.

If the man fails to incite K. to the side of the proletariat, "as indeed the historic attempts at

an alliance between the proletariat and the lower middle class have failed" (172), it may be because, as Kurt Klinger points out, it is all too apparent that "the 'oppressed,' on the point of their victory, possess the same unanimity *en bloc* as their oppressors; so that K. cannot understand the offer of solidarity, 'Stay here,' were he to accept it, as a step towards freedom—must it not seem merely like the invitation to exchange one ideological cage for another ideological cage?" (Klinger/PM 68).[219]

Perhaps Weiss's inability to depict the workers in a more encouraging light explains why, although the man twice appears among the workers, he seems to have no real relationship to them. Rather, he rescues K. from them in the first of these scenes, while in the second, it is clear that they grant the man no authority: they have no desire to let K. join them and they tell the man not to speak to K. Nor does the man have any contact at all with the other characters, other than his being dismissed by Rabensteiner in the first scene. In fact, inasmuch as the man is the only figure in the play who is as socially isolated as K. is (Zimmermann 126), and because he appears only at pivotal moments, he functions as K.'s mirror image, "an alter ego, an *advocatus antidiaboli* (for Weiss thought that those who believed in the 'Law' were the devils) [who] tries to hold K. back" from his self-destruction (Klinger/PM 67).[220] The opposition of K.'s actions to those of this double reveals once again the same strategy that Weiss had used to interpret and contradict Kafka—and through Kafka, himself—since Weiss's first discovery of Henry Miller: a strategy of critical comparison and antithesis.

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[219] "Auch wird vielleicht mehr als es Peter Weiss lieb sein konnte auffällig, daß die 'Unterdrückten', deren Sieg erst bevorsteht, dieselbe blockhafte Einmütigkeit besitzen wie ihre Unterdrücker, wodurch K das Solidarisierungsangebot 'Bleibe hier', wenn er es annähme, nicht als Schritt in die Freiheit verstehen kann—muß es ihm nicht lediglich als Aufforderung erscheinen, einen ideologischen Käfig mit einem anderen ideologischen Käfig zu vertauschen?"

[220] "Ein alter Ego, ein Advocatus antidiaboli (nach Ansicht von Weiss wären ja die "Gesetzes"-Gläubigen die Teufel) versucht K zurückzuhalten."

Fantasy and Reality in Weiss's *Prozeß*

There is, however, another opposition present in Weiss's dramatic text: the tension between fantasy and reality, which is already famously present in Kafka's realistic depiction of bizarre and impossible events. In his notes, Weiss had described at an early stage the difficulty of "transport[ing] a totally subjective world into a concrete and objective reality" (Weiss, *Notizbücher* I, 273)[221]; and this difficulty had moved him briefly to give up the adaptation altogether.

Upon reflection, however, Weiss had decided that it was nonetheless possible to represent the novel's events onstage, and furthermore that it was also both correct and necessary to provide a more concrete historical context, in which "the transference of the subjective world of threats, fears and hallucinations into the tangibility of the stage is meant to render impossible the assumption of a metaphysical deeper meaning" (Zimmermann/PM 119).[222] Weiss remained well aware, however, that "[t]he trial is experienced by one single person, everything, every character, every occurrence, every change, is inside, in a closed person" (Weiss, *Notizbücher* I, 273)[223]; and therefore it should not be assumed that Weiss's denial of the metaphysical precluded attempting to represent K.'s subjective and sometimes internal experience.

In his prefatory remarks to the playscript, Weiss is still at pains to point out that this tension between reality and fantasy remains present in the dramatic text. His words are based on his original working notes, with some modifications: "The individual person, inside whom fears, hallucinations

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[221] "Scheint unmöglich, eine total subjektive Welt in eine konkrete u objektive Realität zu transportieren."

[222] "Die Überführung der subjektiven Welt der Bedrohungen, Ängste, und Halluzinationen in die Handgreiflichkeit der Bühne soll die Annahme eines metaphysischen Hintersinns unmöglich machen."

[223] "Der Prozeß wird von einer einzigen Person erlebt, alles, jede Figur, jedes Geschehnis, jede Veränderung, ist drinnen, in einer geschlossenen Person."

and obsessions play out, stands here bodily before us . . . . We no longer perceive elements of a dream, which we work out in our own imaginations, but rather patterns of behaviour, occurrences, actions. . . . his fellow-actors . . . are indifferent to whatever visions may plague him" (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß* 264-265).[224] In other words, the theatre, as opposed to the novel, prevents us as spectators from fully indulging our imaginations regarding the events portrayed; but the characters are themselves subject to visions and hallucinations.

Thus, as Howald points out, many of the scene changes either begin or end with K. in his bed, giving the impression that individual scenes are his dreams or imaginings (Howald 194); moreover, almost every scene change is also carried out by either an onstage visible transformation, or in blackout with audible noises (such as the sounds of Bürstner's and the captain's love-making) as a transitional device (Zimmermann 115). These devices, like cinematic fades, serve as "flowing transitions between the various levels of waking and dreaming" (Howald/PM 194).[225] On one occasion, indeed, Weiss even turns an ordinary event into a vision: a telephone conversation with Leni just before the cathedral scene, in which Leni tells K., "They're goading you" (*Sie hetzen dich*; Kafka/Muir and Muir 254-255; Kafka 243-244), becomes, in the dramatic text, Leni suddenly appearing bent over the exhausted K.'s bed as he lets his cathedral guidebook fall (Weiss, *Prozeß* 329).

While the depiction of visions and hallucinations is permitted by Weiss's approach, however,

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[224] "Der Einzelmensch, in dessen Innern sich Ängste, Halluzinationen, Zwangsvorstellungen abspielen, steht hier leiblich vor uns. . . . Wir nehmen nicht mehr Traumelemente auf, die wir in der eigenen Phantasie verarbeiten, sondern Verhaltensweisen, Vorkommnisse, Aktionen. . . . seine Mitakteure, . . . es ist ihnen gleichgültig, welche Visionen ihn gerade heimsuchen."

[225] "Zum einen hält er, entgegen den vorgängigen Bekundungen, dramaturgisch doch daran fest, daß es fließende Übergänge zwischen den verschiedenen Ebenen von Tag und Traum gibt."

the presence of a metaphysics which might be revealed by such visions is not. Thus, most notably, Weiss has cut almost all references to the primordial "law" (*das Gesetz*) throughout the play, and consistently refers only to the physically representable and temporally-bound "court" (*das Gericht*; Zimmerman 120). Only in what remains of the parable "Before the Law" is it unavoidable to speak of the law, and this section is cut down to a brief exchange, ending, as in the novel,with K.'s disillusioned "It turns lying into a universal principle" (Kafka/Muir and Muir 276; perhaps better rendered in this context more literally, as "The lie becomes the world order"[226]; Kafka/PM 264). In the novel, however, K. is uncertain of this conclusion: "K. said that with finality, but it was not his final judgment" (Kafka/Muir and Muir 277), while the statement as made by Weiss's K. is never set in doubt, because it is not to be doubted: "This means, more plainly put, that K. grasps the untruth of the law, which is in Peter Weiss's opinion a law of inhumanity, of social oppression . . . The fact that K. can draw precisely this conclusion to the point of total impotence marks him, for Weiss, as lost, treading the border between classes" (Klinger/PM 67).[227] The contradiction between K.'s recognition of the court's injustice and his willing subjugation to it is what dooms him (Zimmermann 123-124); and thus, rather than with any metaphysical interpretation of the "law," Persson can sum up Weiss's *Prozeß* with the statement: "Here Weiss combines a recent interest in society and history with his old occupation with intellectual borderlines, 'hallucinations,' inner destructiveness. Josef K., who accommodates himself to the executioners' claims, has masochistic traits" (Persson/PM 137).[228]

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[226] "Die Lüge wird zur Weltordnung gemacht."

[227] "Das heißt, weniger verschlüsselt: K faßt die Unwahrheit des Gesetzes auf, das nach Ansicht von Peter Weiss ein Gesetz der Inhumanität, der sozialen Unterdrückung ist. . . . Daß K eben diese Schlußfolgerung völlig in die Ohnmacht zieht, fixiert ihn für Weiss als verlorenen Grenzgänger zwischen den Klassen."

[228] "Här förenas Weiss senare intresse för samhälle och historia med hans gamla upptagenhet av själslivets gränsområden, "Halluzinationen", inre destruktivitet. Josef K. som fogar sig efter

By straddling this "intellectual borderline," Weiss attempts both to suppress the "mystical and irrational" elements of the novel and to be faithful to its events. This attempt, however, is not always entirely successful; and Howald, for example, considers this strategy no more than "self-deception" (*Selbstüberlistung*) on Weiss's part, because Weiss fails in the end to reconcile the two poles: "His dramatization is defeated by this rigid opposition between subjective and objective" (Howald/PM 190-191).[229]

The difficulty of Weiss's strategy is made evident in his rendering of one of the novel's most unsettling scenes: the discovery of the whipper and the two warders in a storage room at the bank (Kafka 103-111). In the play, the scene is played within and in front of the broad cabinet occupying centre stage. K., passing by, hears the sounds of beating and whimpering from within, and throws the door open to reveal the warders and their tormentor. K. overcomes any concern about the warder much more quickly and unambiguously than in the novel: "Does there have to be such screaming? It'll cost me my job if anyone finds out!" (Weiss/PM, *Prozeß* 297).[230] After failing to bribe the whipper to let his victims loose, K. slams the door shut as Rabensteiner, Kullich and Kaminer arrive, and claims that the noise was made by a dog in the courtyard. The clerks point out that there is no dog there and ask if something is wrong with the cabinet. K. tells them that it is in disorder and orders them to clean it tomorrow, but Rabensteiner offers to do it now and starts toward the door. Terrified, K. pushes him away and blocks the door, pounding on it. He orders them to go, switching suddenly from the German formal address to the familiar ("*Geht! Geht!*"), and they slowly withdraw,

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bödlarnas anspråk får masochistiska drag."

[229] "An dieser starren Entgegensetzung von subjektiv und objektiv aber scheitert die eigene Dramatisierung."

[230] "Muß denn so geschrien werden? Es kostet mich die Stellung, wenn das jemand erfährt!"

only to remain standing above, listening carefully and holding their lanterns high in vigilance. The cabinet doors begin to open from the inside, widening the crack of light shining through them, and forcing K. to struggle to hold them shut. The lights go to blackout and the act ends (298).

Weiss's alterations do somewhat lessen the "mystical and unreal" atmosphere of the novel, where, after pretending that the noise was only a dog in the courtyard, K. finishes his day and goes home. The next day, he cannot get the scene out of his mind, and at day's end he opens the storeroom door again to find the whipper and his victims exactly in the same positions in which K. first found them. Only then does he order the arriving clerks to clean out the storeroom; they promise to do it the next day, though K. had hoped they would start immediately. K. then goes home, tired and distracted (Kafka 107-111). Weiss (like the other adapters) cuts the bizarre effect of the day's lapse of time in which nothing seems to have changed in the storeroom; he also changes the novel's unnamed clerks into the sinister triad of court helpers; and by the final image of K. at the doors, he directly contradicts the unsettling fact in the novel that when the storeroom door is closed, everything seems normal—even the screams can no longer be heard. Weiss also adds a touch which ties the events symbolically to his own biography, rather than to Kafka's: instead of a single rod, as in the novel, the whipper wields a bundle of rods that alludes to the Roman *fasces*, root of the modern *fascism*.

Unlike the other adapters, however, Weiss makes no attempt within the scene to identify the events as a dream or fantasy, and so risks making it appear even more improbable that such scenes of torture should be enacted in K.'s bank. Moreover, since the three clerks are clearly shown in Weiss's version to be agents of the court and party to its secrets, K.'s motivation in hiding the scene from them seems unclear (although of course, in his momentary fear, his desire to keep them from seeing what they may very well be already aware of does not appear unreasonable either). This

scene, therefore, demonstrates how difficult it is to deprive the events of Kafka's novel of their irrational elements, given the hallucinatory and subjective qualities acknowledged by Weiss in his preface to the play.

This scene, however, also provides Weiss with one of the play's most striking visual images: the image of K. straining at the cabinet doors as the light shines through from within, all under the observation of the clerks, is a brilliantly economical theatrical depiction of the tension between K.'s sense of being constantly spied upon and his middle-class terror of being conspicuous, with a basis in the novel's events. Furthermore, the sharp delineation of this tension summarizes and heightens K.'s situation in such a manner as to provide a sense of danger held in abeyance suitable for closing the act; and the image is echoed immediately at the top of the second act, when K. is discovered in the same attitude at the doors—only now he is inside the empty court (Weiss, *Prozeß* 299).

Thus, if Weiss does not entirely overcome the difficulties raised by his almost documentary approach to Kafka, he does at least turn one of the novel's most problematic scenes into a *coup de théâtre* which also nods toward the absurd elements of the narrative text. Unfortunately, the dramatic text is too seldom enlivened by such visual inspiration; the only comparable image is in the moment after K. dismisses the lawyer, when he lets his jacket drop behind him until his arms are caught in the sleeves as in a "straitjacket" (*Zwangsjacke*), indicating that "his blow for freedom is not directed at the system itself" (Zimmermann/PM 108).[231] Such moments, however, which refer obliquely to the symbolic nature of the novel, are in Howald's opinion no more commendable than if Weiss's objectification of the text had been complete: "This compromise, however, weakens the

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[231] "Sein Befreiungsschlag richtet sich nicht gegen das System an sich, deswegen bleibt er gefangen wie in einer *Zwangsjacke* . . ."

power of the representation from both directions" (Howald/PM 194).[232]

In fact, the most apparent problem with *Der Prozeß* is that it is forced into more than just two directions at once. Weiss's desire was to produce a text faithful to Kafka's novel, yet simultaneously to introduce material from Kafka's life in order to criticize Kafka's behaviour; *and* to integrate both concrete historical references to Kafka's period, pre-World War I, and symbolic references to Weiss's experiences prior to World War II. As Kurt Klinger accurately puts it:

> It is thus not a matter of *one* trial, but rather of four: the trial of bourgeois power against an individual who wanted to be submissive but was not submissive enough; the trial of a "new class" against an individual who, despite knowing better, incorrigibly acts as an enemy; the trial that Kafka is supposed to have conducted against himself, with no more result that the transformation of acknowledged guilt into a literary figure; and the trial of Peter Weiss versus Franz Kafka, with the plotted intention of demystifying Kafka's example and, as a warning, presenting it to the present as unusable and "historically" overtaken. Even for a dramatist of this capacity this is a bit too much at once. Or is it too little? (Klinger/PM 67)[233]

If to this inventory we add Weiss's personal biographical concerns and the self-critique implicit in them, it is understandable that *Der Prozeß*, written in a feverish six weeks, might bend under the accumulated weight. When the play was produced, the personal and politicial opprobrium which Weiss had gathered drew many of the critics to the play's weaknesses—weaknesses which the premiere, unfortunately, was unable to remedy.

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[232] "Dieser Kompromiß schwächt aber die Kraft der Darstellung auf beide Seiten hin."

[233] "Es geht also nicht um *einen* Prozeß, sondern um vier Prozesse: um den Prozeß der Bürger-Macht gegen ein Individuum, das gefügig sein wollte, ohne gefügig genug zu sein, um den Prozeß einer "neuen Klasse" gegen ein Individuum, das sich trotz besserer Einsicht zu ihn [*sic*] unbelehrbar wie ein Feind verhält, um den Prozeß, den Kafka deshalb gegen sich selbst geführt haben soll, ohne allerdings mehr zu erreichen als die Verwandlung einer erkannten Schuld in eine "Schriftfigur", und um den Prozeß Peter Weiss gegen Franz Kafka, in der Absicht angezettelt, Kafkas Beispiel zu entmystifizieren und der Gegenwart als ein warnendes, unbrauchbares, "historisch" überholtes vorzusetzen. Das ist sogar für einen Dramatiker dieser Kapazität etwas zuviel auf einmal. Oder sollte es zuwenig sein?"

The Critical Reaction—Including Weiss's Own

The initial effect of the adaptation on Peter Weiss was above all a personal one: with less than a third of the gigantic *Aesthetics* written, Weiss found that the distraction of writing *Der Prozeß* had greatly contributed to an attack of writer's block. On 21 September 1974, he wrote in his *Notebooks*:

> The catastrophe of my work on the novel. After two weeks in the USSR, ten more days lost to illness, exhaustion. Before that the totally unsuccessful month in the country. And from February on the interlude with Kafka: this last led to the actual break. Since then—now half a year long—found no more access to the actual work. Every day the attempt to make a new beginning becomes more questionable. (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 374)[234]

As Weiss struggled to get his novel back on track, the release of a new play from his hand was met with little enthusiasm. Arrangements were made for a double premiere in Bremen—Weiss's childhood home—and Krefeld, with the opening date to arrive on 28 May 1975. Two days before this, an apprehensive Weiss recorded the dress rehearsal of the Bremen production: "Off to the last rehearsal of *Der Prozeß.* (My Kafka-adaptation). What couldn't be accomplished on the stage was accomplished all the more by the management: they tracked down the friends, and the enemies, of my youth . . ." (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 424).[235] Whatever fears Weiss may have had were exacerbated on preview night, when he gloomily notes: "The scenery, totally at cross purposes to the play: everything is set as far back as possible in a tiny space, you need a telescope to make out

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[234] "Die Katastrophe meiner Romanarbeit. Nach den 2 Wochen der SU-Reise 10 Tage wieder weg durch Krankheit, Ermattung. Davor der total verunglückte Monat auf dem Land. Und ab Februar das Zwischenspiel mit Kafka: dieses führte zum eigentlichen Abbruch. Habe seitdem—nun ein halbes Jahr lang—keinen Zugang mehr zur eigentlichen Arbeit gefunden. Mit jedem Tag wird der Versuch, zu einem Neubeginn zu kommen, fraglicher."

[235] "*Bremen*. . . . Gleich zur letzten Hauptprobe des Prozesses. (Meine Kafka-Bearbeitung.) Was auf der Bühne nicht geleistet werden konnte, war desto mehr geleistet worden von der Intendanz: man hatte meine Jugendfreunde bzw. Feinde aufgespürt. . ."

anything that's happening in the peep-show—a feeling of failure, of disaster—I have to be at the premiere" (427).[236]

The premiere itself fulfilled Weiss's expectations with a vengeance. To his horror, he saw that: "The TRIAL is being conducted against me. . . . I don't understand a word of dialogue, don't see anything that happens on the stage, at intermission I have to present myself to my old love, my old enemy . . . . Angry, icy faces draw past me; the critics" (428).[237]

Even a week later, the *Notebooks* record, Weiss recalled how "in the theatre, during intermission, [*Theater heute* critic Henning] Rischbieter walked past me with an expression on his face that said: the death sentence has been passed on you!" (429-430).[238] True enough, as the reviews came out, the headlines alone made it clear that the critical reaction was largely negative: "Weiss puts Kafka on trial" (K. Wagner/PM, "Weiss macht Kafka den Prozeß"); "Kafka put on trial" (Burkhardt/PM, "Kafka den Prozeß gemacht"); "*Trial* without Kafka" (Beckmann/PM, "'Prozeß' ohne Kafka"); "Stage play without people" (Ziermann/PM, "Ein Theaterstück ohne Menschen"); "Shouldn't Weiss have been more daring?" ("Hatte Weiss nicht kühner sein sollen?"; Rischbieter/PM 38).[239]

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[236] "Das völlig gegen das Stück gerichtete Bühnenbild: alles wird in einen winzigen Raum so weit wie möglich nach hinten zurückgelegt, man braucht ein Fernrohr, um etwas aufzufassen von dem, was in dem Schaukasten vor sich geht—Ein Gefühl von Mißglücken, von Unheil—Ich muß an der Premiere teilnehmen."

[237] "Der PROZESS wird gegen mich geführt. . . . Ich verstehe kein Wort vom Dialog, sehe nichts von den Geschehnissen auf der Bühne, muß mich in der Pause wieder meiner Jugendliebe, meinem Jugendfeind stellen . . . . Böse, eisige Gesichter ziehn an mir vorbei; die Kritiker."

[238] "Im Theater, in der Pause, ging Rischbieter mit dem Gesichtsausdruck an mir vorbei, der besagte: das Todesurteil über dich ist gefallen!"

[239] Respectively, "Weiss macht Kafka den Prozeß"; "Kafka den Prozeß gemacht"; "'Prozeß' ohne Kafka"; "Theaterstück ohne Menschen"; "Hätte Weiss nicht kühner sein sollen?"

For several of the critics, such as Heinz Beckmann, Weiss's interpretation alone was a red flag in more than one sense: "That Peter Weiss has wrongly understood Franz Kafka's . . . *Trial* will hardly come as a surprise. Weiss didn't even become a real Marxist until the Rostocker Theater completely misunderstood his own play *Marat* and Weiss enthusiastically devoted himself to this ideological misuse" (Beckmann/PM, "'Prozeß' ohne Kafka").[240] Werner Burkhardt was somewhat more subtle in expressing the same idea: "It won't surprise anyone that the Josef K. that Peter Weiss presents does not think about his guilt in religious terms" (Burkhardt/PM, "Kafka den Prozeß gemacht").[241] Henning Rischbieter complained further that Weiss's "hard-won socialist viewpoint" had motivated him to a "rather direct, simple-minded historical materialist interpretation" (Rischbieter/PM 38).[242]

Ulrich Schreiber, the only reviewer of the Krefeld production, held back from attacking Weiss's ideological approach—though hardly to Weiss's advantage:

> After 'Hölderlin,' in which he shared his less-than-profound insights into the life, work, problems and influence of several leading figures of German Idealism, Peter Weiss has turned his attention to yet another writer. . . . Skepticism was guaranteed towards the venture of transferring this masterwork . . . to the peep-show stage. . . . Thus it comes down to the new persecution and assassination of Josef K., on an aesthetic level, to be sure, corresponding to that of a high school essay on *The Trial*. (Schreiber/PM 11)[243]

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[240] "Daß Peter Weiss das Romanfragment 'Der Prozeß' von Franz Kafka falsch verstanden hat, wird kaum verwundern. Ein richtiger Marxist wurde Peter Weiss nämlich erst, als das Rostocker Theater sein eigenes Stück 'Marat' gründlich mißverstand und Peter Weiss sich diesem ideologischen Mißbrauch mit Begeisterung verschrieb."

[241] "Niemanden überrascht es, wenn der Josef K, den Peter Weiss vorführt, über seine Schuld nicht in religiösen Kategorien nachdenkt."

[242] "Weiss wählte, seinem schwererrungenen sozialistischen Standpunkt gemäß, die Interpretation des historischen Materialismus, allerdings eine ziemlich umweglos-simple."

[243] "Nach den in seinem 'Hölderlin' vermittelten und nicht gerade tiefsinnigen Einsichten in Leben, Werk, Problematik und Nachwirkung einiger Hauptfiguren des Deutschen Idealismus hat

Klaus Wagner, at least, took some care to tie Weiss's biographical circumstances to his interpretation (Zimmermann 150), calling Weiss "the adapter as self-interpreter." Wagner had the insight to call *Der Prozeß* "a negative portrait, with which Peter Weiss ascertains earlier, decisive stations of his painstaking but unwavering self-realization, tests the consequences of these decisions"[244] ; and he also defended Weiss's reading on its own terms, as one which "in view of the polysemy of its model has to be allowed."[245] Wagner's defense of the theory did not extend to the practice, however: "Confirmation for these hypotheses of Weiss is in any case not given by this script, essentially condensed from dialogue in the original."[246] The play did, however, adhere to the novel's character as "a punishment fantasy"[247]; and Wagner praises Weiss's "openness and integrity, since he does not theatricalize the action taken from the novel—if there actually is any—through additions of his own (as did Gide and Barrault), nor does he ideologize it"(K. Wagner/PM 19).[248]

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sich Peter Weiss erneut einem Dichter zugewandt. . . . Skepsis war dem Unterfangen sicher, dieses Meisterwerk . . . auf die Guckkastenbühne zu übertragen. . . . So kommt es zur erneuten Verfolgung und Ermordung des Josef K., allerdings auf einem ästhetischen Niveau, das dem eines Sekundaneraufsatzes über den 'Prozeß' entspricht."

[244] "Für die Bearbeitung des 'Prozesses' und ihren Antrieb gilt wohl das gleiche, wenn auch im Sinne eines negativen Porträts, mit dem Peter Weiss sich früherer, entscheidender Stationen seiner mühevollen, aber unbeirrbaren Selbstwerdung vergewissert, die Konsequenz dieser Entscheidungen überprüft."

[245] "Soweit der Bearbeiter als Selbstinterpret, der andern, älteren Ausdeutungen eine weitere und, wie Peter Weiss glaubt, 'äußerst aktuelle' hinzufügt, was angesichts der Vieldeutigkeit dieser Vorlage erlaubt sein muß."

[246] "Bestätigung für jene Weiss-Hypothesen liefert dieser im wesentlichen aus Originaldialogen geraffte Bühnentext jedenfalls nicht."

[247] "Die späte Reaktion des Bearbeiters, der Kafka nun gewissermaßen den Prozeß macht, entspricht bezeichnenderweise dem Charakter der Romanvorlage: als Strafphantasie."

[248] "Weiss belegt andererseits mit diesem Szenarium, das nach seinen Angaben zusätzlich lediglich eine Leihstelle aus anderen Kafka-Texten enthält, neuerlich seine Offenheit und Integrität, indem er die herauspräparierte Spielhandlung—wenn es denn überhaupt eine gibt—nicht durch eigene Zutaten theatralisiert (wie etwa Gide und Barrault) oder gar ideologisiert."

Among the criticisms, it was not uncommon for the Barrault-Gide version to be held up, either as a model or as proof that the idea of adapting Kafka was untenable. Beckmann, whose attitude to *Le Procès* is unenthusiastic, nonetheless says of the French adaptation, "But at least it was Franz Kafka on the stage, a distant cousin of Søren Kierkegaard and not of Karl Marx" (Beckmann/PM, "'Prozeß' ohne Kafka").[249] Schreiber claimed that the Barrault-Gide adaptation, "main export of the existentialist Kafka fashion in post-war France, passes the comparison with Weiss with flying colours" (Schreiber/PM 11)[250]; while Ziermann approvingly remarked that for Gide and Barrault, "'the slightest deviation from a state of perfection was already a sin,' so that Josef K. asks at the end: 'Is it because I've never loved?'" (a perfect summary of Brod's reading of the novel, but a line that appears nowhere in the French or English versions of *Le Procès*; Ziermann/PM). [251] Karasek did not name *Le Procès*, but remarked that Weiss's adaptation, like previous versions, "failed . . . faced with the impossibility of transferring Kafka's fear and visions of guilt from the hero's head onto the stage" (Karasek/PM 116).[252] Weiss's adaptation would become a yardstick in its turn—a yardstick for failure—by 1976, when Jäger, in condemning Berkoff's adaptation, claimed that Weiss's version was "nothing other than a determined, dialogized

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[249] "Immerhin war jedoch Franz Kafka auf der Bühne, ein ferner Vetter des Sören Kierkegaard und nicht des Karl Marx."

[250] "Die 'Prozeß'-Bearbeitung von Gide-Barrault, Hauptexportgut der existentialistischen Kafka-Mode im Frankreich der ersten Nachkriegszeit, besteht jedenfalls den Vergleich mit Peter Weiss glanzvoll."

[251] "Die [erste Dramatisierung] stammt von André Gide und Jean-Louis Barrault, für die 'die geringste Abweichung vom Zustand der Vollkommenheit schon Schuld' war, so daß Josef K. am Ende fragt: 'Ist es, weil ich nie geliebt habe?'"

[252] "Wie vorangegangene 'Prozeß'-Bearbeitungen scheiterte auch das 'Prozeß'-Drama von Weiss an der Unmöglichkeit, die Kafkaschen Angst und Schuldvisionen aus dem Kopf des Helden auf die Bühne zu verlegen."

interpretation of the novel, comparable in its quality to the essays of Benjamin, Kofler or Mayer" (Jäger/PM 34).[253]

Curiously, as Wagner's review indicates, there was little questioning, even from Weiss's detractors, of his claim to fidelity to the novel; Beckmann concludes his scathing review with the lament that "the Kafka-text was entirely faithful, only Kafka was missing" (Beckmann/PM, "'Prozeß' ohne Kafka").[254] At the same time, Juergen Schmidt maintained, in a generally positive review, that Weiss's play proves that "Whoever scoops out of their narrative context the essential thoughts that Kafka formulated almost completely in direct speech, has nearly got a usable play already" (Schmidt/PM, "Entfremdung")[255]; even if not usable enough for Rischbieter, who claimed that "a genuine play, a real examination of Kafka's themes ought to be written, rather than producing a 'dramatization' that—this way or that—strings fragments of the novel one after another" (Rischbieter/PM 38).[256]

Once the metaphysical interpretation of the events of the narrative text was ruled out, however, many critics found the events themselves less interesting. The possibility that Weiss's K. could have been saved by aligning himself with the working classes, for example, struck Horst Ziermann as an unworthy conclusion: "He [K.] misses the opportunity to change the world—'from

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[253] "Auch nicht getaugt hat bei Peter Weiss, dessen 'Prozeß' nichts anderes ist als eine entschiedene, dialogisierte Interpretation des Romans, in ihrer Qualität vergleichbar den Aufsätzen Benjamins, Koflers, oder Mayers."

[254] "Der Kafka-Text ist durchweg getreu, nur Kafka war nicht da."

[255] "Wer die wesentlichen Gedanken, die Kafka nahezu vollständig in direkter Rede formuliert hat, aus ihrem Erzählzusammenhang herausschält, hat schon beinahe ein brauchbares Theaterstück."

[256] "Ein genuines Theaterstück, eine wirkliche Auseinandersetzung mit Kafkaschen Motiven wäre zu schreiben gewesen und keine 'Dramatisierung' vorzunehmen, die—so oder so—Bruchstücke des Romans aneinanderreiht."

this, his own weakness, he breaks down.' From this, the triviality of the solution offered, however, Weiss's play suffers, and no directorial extravagance can obscure this. . . . By means of a friendly proletarian alone, who now and again allies himself with the accused, this bourgeois clerk, nothing is gained" (Ziermann/PM, "Ein Theaterstück ohne Menschen").[257] In Schreiber's opinion too, the adaptation "fails miserably because Peter Weiss, for the very reason that he largely follows the original text and transfers dialogue *verbatim* from Kafka, allows complex structures of consciousness to dwindle to trivial content" (Schreiber)[258]; and the uncredited reviewer for *Der Spiegel* (whom Weiss names in his notes as Hellmuth Karasek) wrote that "*Der Prozeß* is like a condensed photo-novel: trivial pictures with speech balloons" (Karasek/PM 116).[259]

Beckmann implied that the adaptation was certainly trivial in comparison to its great model, which he compared to the Book of Job in its transcendence of petty historical relationships: ". . . it is not the deep thinkers—and certainly not the shallow thinkers of class struggle—but rather those who are experienced in human existence who have spontaneous contact to the reality in Kafka's works, which is no more to be interpreted than the simple reality of human Being" (Beckmann/PM,

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[257] "Er verpaßt die Gelegenheit, die Welt zu verändern— 'an dieser eigenen Schwäche zerbricht er.'
"An dieser Trivialität der angebotenen Lösung aber krankt Weiss' Stück, und kein inszenatorischer Aufwand kann darüber hinwegtäuschen. . . . . Durch einen freundlichen Proletarier allein, der sich hin und wieder zu dem Angeklagten, diesem Prokuristen-Bourgeois gesellt, ist gar nichts gewonnen."

[258] "Doch das Unternehmen scheitert kläglich, weil Peter Weiss gerade auf Grund der Tatsache, daß er dem originalen Textablauf weitgehend folgt und wörtliche Dialoge aus Kafka übernimmt, komplizierte Bewußtseinsstrukturen zu trivialen Inhalten verkümmern läßt."

[259] ". . . der 'Prozeß' wirkt wie ein kondensierter Photo-Roman: triviale Bilder mit Wortblasen."

"'Prozeß' ohne Kafka").[260]

Such comments prompt Ulrike Zimmermann to describe Beckmann's critique as "woolly" (*schwammig*), and further to point out that Beckmann several times remarks that "a spectator unaware of Weiss's preface to the play couldn't for a moment perceive class relationships or Marxism in it; and yet, contrary to this statement, [Beckmann] continually refers to exactly this preface instead of to the play itself—or to the production which is the primary concern—in order to tear the play apart" (Zimmermann/PM 151).[261]

Beckmann does, in fact, address the production itself at several points; but again, only to tear the play apart. For example, he makes the following unflattering—and "woolly"—comparison: "In Kafka the lawyer says to Josef K., 'It is the accused who are the most attractive.' This is due not to their guilt, but to 'the proceedings carried out against them.' For *Der Proceß* this is a significant key word. In the dramatization by Peter Weiss, Leni speaks of the beauty of the accused and takes Josef K. lecherously between her legs. Thus the key word no longer counts for anything" (Beckmann/PM, "'Prozeß' ohne Kafka").[262] In fact, the business Beckmann describes is not in Weiss's stage directions

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[260] ". . . denn nicht die Tiefsinnigen—die Flachdenker des Klassenkampfes schon gar nicht—, sondern die in der menschlichen Existenz Erfahrenen haben den spontanen Kontakt zu der Wirklichkeit in Kafkas Dichtungen, einer ganz einfachen Wirklichkeit, die sich so wenig deuten läßt wie die einfache Wirklichkeit menschlichen Daseins."

[261] "Bezeichnend ist Beckmanns Rezension, der mehrmals konstatiert, ein Zuschauer in Unkenntnis von Weiss' Vorbemerkung zum Stück könne *keinen Augenblick auf die Klassenbindung oder den Marxismus verfallen*, sich jedoch im Widerspruch zu solcher Feststellung fortwährend auf eben diesen Autorenkommentar statt auf das Stück selbst oder die Inszenierung, um die es vorrangig geht, bezieht, um das Stück zu verreißen."

[262] "Bei Kafka sagt der Advokat zu Josef K.: 'Die Angeklagten sind eben die Schönsten.' Das liege nicht an ihrer Schuld, sondern 'an dem gegen sie erhobenen Verfahren'. Das ist für den 'Prozeß'ein schwerwiegendes Schlüsselwort. In der Dramatisierung von Peter Weiss spricht Leni von der Schönheit der Angeklagten und nimmt dabei Josef K. lüstern zwischen ihre Beine. So wiegt das Schlüsselwort nichts mehr."

(and close adherence to those directions would render this business very difficult; Weiss, *Prozeß* 326). Beckmann's point here may be unclear, but it is clear that that he is eager to ascribe anything he finds offensive in the production to Weiss's interpretation.

Beckmann's objections cannot all be easily countered, however. In agreement with Beckmann's observation, Wagner, who was more respectful of Weiss's interpretation and paid more attention to the production, also remarked that it was "conspicuous how little the class-social aspect of the adapter comes through, despite all the concretization by means of period colour dating the costumes and décor" (K. Wagner/PM, "Weiss macht Kafka den Prozeß")[263]; and Schmidt, though positive towards both text and staging, interprets Weiss's *Prozeß* as a more general—and totally valid—statement about social alienation (the title of Schmidt's review is "Entfremdung," "alienation"; not to be confused with the "alienation-effect" of Brechtian theatre, *Verfremdung*). One could almost mistake Schmidt for Beckmann's hypothetical "unaware" spectator.

As foreshadowed by Beckmann's description of the business with Leni, however—and by Weiss's own horror at the preview—when the critics did turn their attention fully to the production itself, this by no means worked in Weiss's favour. Weiss had once feared that "[t]he attempt to provide external pictures and continuities can only elide, banalize, destroy the fragile and the complicated in the essence of this trial," and the Bremen production apparently sank to his worst expectations: again and again, the reviewers repeat such words as *platt* ("flat"), *vordergründig* ("superficial"), *Einebnung* ("levelling, flattening").

Klaus Wagner, who had no objection to Weiss's interpretation, could spare no good will for the production, whose length was itself a target for several reviewers: "[Director] Helm

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[263] "Auffallend, wie wenig jener klassengesellschaftliche Aspekt des Bearbeiters durchschlägt, trotz aller Konkretisierung durch das über die Ausstattung datierte Zeitkolorit."

Bindseil . . . presented the three-hour succession of eighteen scenes with unusual thoroughness. The result is like a grey-on-grey coloured, exhaustingly tame revue . . ." (K. Wagner/PM 19).[264] No wonder, then, that Werner Burkhardt, who disagreed with Weiss's reading, was even harsher in his description of the staging:

> even he who with a self-deceptive effort frees himself from Adorno's commandment that for great works of art, the medium is not a matter of indifference; even he who tells himself that it does no harm if on top of all the zionist, existentialist and psychoanalytic interpretations a class-struggle interpretation is offered, [even he] at the end of the three-hour very long evening, can only pronounce this judgement: This trial is lost. (Burkhardt/PM, "Kafka den Prozeß gemacht")[265]

Rischbieter agreed that Weiss's impoverishment (*Verarmung*) of Kafka "was doubled by the Bremen premiere production's attempt to authenticate scenically the narrowness of Weiss's interpretation" (Rischbieter/PM 38).[266]

The Bremen production seems to have spared no expense on the technical aspects of the production. The set, designed by Dieter Flimm, included downstage three rooms of the boarding-house, furnished "in the spare Reform style of 1910" (Rischbieter/PM 38); rather than the seamless transitions within the same space demanded by Weiss in the first series of scenes, mechanical transformations physically replaced the boarding-house with the bank, including K.'s desk rising

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[264] "In Bremen . . . hat Helm Bindseil . . . die dreistündige Abfolge der 18 Szenen ungemein ausführlich vorgeführt. Das Ergebnis ist eine wie grau in grau eingefärbte, ermüdend zahme Revue . . ."

[265] ". . . auch wer sich mit selbstverleugnender Mühe von dem Adorno-Gebot frei macht, daß großen Kunstwerken ihr Medium nicht zufällig ist; auch wer sich sagt, daß es ja nichts zu schaden braucht, wenn nach all den zionistischen, existentialistischen und psychoanalytischen auch einmal eine klassenkämpferische Deutung angeboten wird, kann am Schluß des dreistündigen, sehr langen Abends nur das Urteil fällen: Dieser Prozeß ist verloren."

[266] "Es [das Resultat der Verarmung] wurde verdoppelt dadurch, daß die Bremer Uraufführungs-Inszenierung versuchte, die Enge der Weiss'schen Interpretation nun auch noch szenisch zu beglaubigen."

through a trap door and frosted glass office partitions sinking from the flies (Rischbieter 38; Ziermann, "Ein Theaterstück ohne Menschen"). The bank too could be removed to reveal the galleries and stairways for transitional scenes, which themselves revolved to reveal the narrow and crowded courtroom (Rischbieter 38). Ziermann complained that the complicated movements of the set hardly left the actors room to work (Ziermann/PM, "Ein Theaterstück ohne Menschen"),[267] while Wagner felt that the staging solved "problems of transport," but in the end "only shrugged its shoulders in the face of the basic dilemma of this non-drama on a creakily moving revolve" (K. Wagner/PM 19).[268] Only Schmidt found the set "exemplary" (*mustergültig*) and the technical execution of the changes "admirable" (*bewundernswert*) in its non-naturalistic method of making it clear "how absolute human estrangement is everywhere" (Schmidt/PM, "Entfremdung")[269]; but Beckmann found this very technical proficiency a distasteful symptom of the production's empty slickness—the smooth functioning of the stage machinery echoed the fact that "the actors were thoroughly trained in stereotypes and therefore forced into small roles" (Beckmann/PM, "'Prozeß' ohne Kafka").[270]

Rischbieter also remarked on the mechanical quality of the acting, particularly that of

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[267] "Für die Darsteller, die sich inmitten der paradierenden Technik bewegen, ist da kaum Raum zur Entfaltung."

[268] "Die Schlußbilder im Dom und auf dem Richtplatz bestätigen vollends, daß diese wie vom Fließband gehobene Kleinszenenreihe leerläuft, nichts weiter löst als Transportprobleme, aber das grundsätzliche Dilemma dieser Nicht-Dramatik auf ächzend rotierender Drehbühne nur achselzuckend ausstellt."

[269] "Anstatt sich auf die von Kafka beschriebene Endgültigkeit der Gerichtsgänge und so fort naturalistisch einzulassen, macht es dem Zuschauer immer wieder klar, wie absolut die menschliche Beziehungslosigkeit an allen Ecken und Enden ist."

[270] "Es ging bei der Uraufführung in Bremen sowieso alles glatt über die Bühne. Die Technik funktionierte einwandfrei, die Schauspieler waren durchweg zu Typen dressiert und also zum Chargieren genötigt."

Wolfgang Schenck as Josef K., "as if [the gestures] carried out the director's dictates" (Rischbieter/PM 38).[271] Burkhardt thought that the cast members "were almost always either too young or too old, did too little or too much, and [were] themselves as one-dimensionally superficial as the whole story" (Burkhardt/PM, "Kafka den Prozeß gemacht").[272] Schmidt, however, approved of the acting as further elucidating the theme of alienation: "Whatever they do, they do apparently naturally, matter-of-fact but without sympathy and coldly" (Schmidt/PM, "Entfremdung").[273]

The mechanical quality of the acting was intensified by the costuming (designed by Susanne Sommer), which Rischbieter found "embarrassingly bourgeois-petty bourgeois," and over-stereotyped: "See, this is how typical, how reduced to types, the bourgeois are!" (Rischbieter/PM 38)[274]; Beckmann further complained that the costumes, like the furniture, belonged in an Ibsen play (Beckmann, "'Prozeß' ohne Kafka").

Weiss's approach to the play, which had attempted to convey too many ideas at once, led to a production which was apparently unsure whether its style should be expressionism, naturalism, Socialist Realism, or Brechtian epic. Wagner was taken aback by the alternation of symbolic and grotesque elements with journalistic historical touches, such as the workers' singing of Czech songs

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[271] "Ganz stereotyp und äußerlich—monotone Stimmführung, die Gestik so, als ob sie Diktate des Regisseurs nachvollzöge—blieb die zentrale Figur Josef K (Wolfgang Schenck)."

[272] "[Schenck als K. ging]. . . vorbei an Partnern, die fast immer entweder zu jung oder zu alt waren, zuwenig oder zuviel machten, und selbst so eindimensional vordergründig wie die ganze Geschichte."

[273] "Was immer sie tun, tun sie scheinbar selbstverständlich, tatsächlich aber ohne Mitgefühl und kalt."

[274] ". . . sonst schloß das penible bürgerlich-kleinbürgerliche Kostüm die Figuren in eine nicht bloß unindividuelle, sondern auch unrealistische Chiffrenhaftigkeit ein: seht hier, so typisch-typisiert sind Bürger!"

(K. Wagner/PM 19),[275] a "sociological" addition which also disturbed Burkhardt (Burkhardt/PM, "Kafka den Prozeß gemacht").[276]

Several of the reviews of the Bremen production at least acknowledged both the effort of the theatre and the polite attention of its audience, though the effect is generally backhanded: Burkhardt, for example, immediately after calling the play "a mystery without suspense" (*Krimi ohne Spannung*) and "transparent agitation" (*durchschaubare Agitation*), remarked that "The Bremer Bühne did both: it gave its best and showed its limitations" (Burkhardt/PM, "Kafka den Prozeß gemacht").[277] In return, Rischbieter emphasized, the audience "withstood the emptiness of the production and briefly applauded the famous writer and the ensemble" (Rischbieter/PM, "Kafka-Studien").[278] Wagner was slightly more generous in the tone of his observation that writer and cast "are to be thanked amicably for such gruelling effort devoted to a probably insoluble task" ((K. Wagner/PM 19).[279]

The final verdict on the sister production in Krefeld, directed by Joachim Fontheim, was no more positive: although the set, as designed by H. W. Lenneweit, apparently more closely

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[275] "Milieureport von der Prager Kleinseite, detailverbissen ausgearbeitet bis zum Absingen tschechischer Lieder, wechselt ab mit unbewältigter Überzeichnung, mit der Symbol-Anzeige von Enge und Überfüllung, kaum aufgelockert durch kleinmütige Ausflüge in die Groteske."

[276] ". . . das Volk . . . ein Lied in der soziologisch hier so signifikanten tschechischen Sprache singt."

[277] "Die Bremer Bühne tat beides: Sie gab ihr Bestes und Auskunft über ihre Grenzen."

[278] "Das Bremer Premierenpublikum hielt dem Leerlauf der Aufführung stand und beklatschte kurz den berühmten Dichter und das Ensemble."

[279] "Wolfgang Schenck als stämmig-verunsicherter Josef K. führt die lange Reihe der Mitwirkenden aus dem Bremer Ensemble an, das am Ende, mit Peter Weiss in der Mitte, freundlich bedankt wird für solch aufreibende Bemühung um eine Aufgabe, die wahrscheinlich unlösbar ist."

corresponded to Weiss's intentions, the cast—except for Norbert Kollakowsky as K.— "moved by rote [and] often fell into mere provincialism" in a production which "rushed, on the principle of a luxury steamship, towards a much-applauded end, granting Weiss a painful triumph and Kafka's [story] a noisy obliteration" (Schreiber/PM 11).[280]

Schreiber's choice of the word "provincialism" was not by chance: he and other critics found the choice of venues for the play meaningful in itself. As Schreiber put it, "the fact that Suhrkamp [Weiss's publisher] granted the premiere of this play to the provincial theatres in Bremen and Krefeld says it all regarding the editors' opinion of the work" (Schreiber/PM 11).[281] Beckmann made much the same point, twisting the knife by referring to Bremen and Krefeld as "not exactly the focus of theatre life" (Beckmann/PM, "'Prozeß' ohne Kafka").[282] Karasek, in *Der Spiegel*, referred to "Kafka's original soundtrack rattled down to banality by robust theatre provincials" as the hero "loses himself in the mediocrity of a hard-working but unconscious subsidized theatre" (Karasek/PM 116),[283] in a brief review which Weiss himself singled out as the *coup de grace* for his play: "an execution. Very

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[280] "In H. W. Lenneweits streng der von Weiss geforderten Dreiteilung der Spielebenen folgendem Bühnenbild und mit einem aufwendig bewegten, oft in schiere Provinzialität verfallenden Ensemble rauschte diese Premiere nach dem Luxusdampferprinzip einem umjubelten Ende entgegen, dem Autor Peter Weiss einen schmerzenden Triumph und Kafkas—laut Thomas Mann—'grundeigentümlichem Gebilde von sublimer Sorgfalt' eine geräuschvolle Vernichtung bescherend."

[281] "Daß der Suhrkamp-Verlag die Uraufführung dieses Stücks in die Theaterprovinz nach Bremen und Krefeld vergab, sagt schon alles über die Einschätzung des Opus durch die Verlagslektoren."

[282] "Daß seine Dramatisierung am gleichen Abend in Bremen und Krefeld, also nicht gerade an einem Brennpunkt unseres Theaterlebens, uraufgeführt wurde, sagt obendrein einiges über seinen sehr gekonnten, aber durch falsche Vorzeichen verfehlten Versuch."

[283] "In Bremen wird Kafkas O-Ton von robusten Theaterprovinzlern zu Banalität heruntergeknattert. Wo Kakfas Held sich in eine Art realistischen Alptraum verläuft, verläuft sich sein Bühnendouble in die Mediokrität eines angestrengten, aber bewußtlosen Subventionstheaters."

brief. With a shot in the back of the neck" (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 429).[284] The *Spiegel* review was not even printed in the magazine's theatre pages: it occupied a small part of the general culture page *Szene* ("scene"), immediately above a selection of graffitti found in a New York *pissoir*.

The cumulative effect of these notices was to produce in Weiss a reaction worthy of Berkoff's combination of bile and lack of self-confidence:

> 4/6 [1975] . . . Spend the days in a numbness mixed with brief attacks of hatred. Raving hatred of murderous criticism. Impossible to defend oneself, the blows land on air, the judges have long since forgotten you. You don't matter to them, nothing you've done matters to them, they've eliminated you, that's enough. Onward—to the next one they can dispose of! (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* I, 429-430)[285]

As Burckhardt Lindner points out. "[t]he notes attest . . . to the enormous vulnerability, by which the author sees himself at the mercy of his political malefactors and critics" (Lindner, "Hallucinatory Realism" 130). Nonetheless, Weiss's reaction was brief and confined to the privacy of his *Notebooks*; in public, Weiss "took [the unspectacular failure of the play] amazingly calmly. The work on the *Aesthetics*, then the controversy regarding Vietnam, which flared up anew in 1978 [when China invaded], took up all his strength" (Howald/PM 193).[286]

By the autumn of 1978, *Der Prozeß*, which had long vanished from West German stages, was finally produced in East Germany. The production of Hanns Anselm Perten and the Rostocker

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[284] "Auch Karaseks Rezension im Spiegel war eine Hinrichtung. Sehr kurz. Durch Nackenschuß."

[285] "4/6[1975] . . .Verbringe die Tage in einer Betäubung, die von kurzen Anfällen des Hasses durchmischt ist. Rasender Haß gegen die Kritik, die mordet. Unmöglich, sich zu wehren, Schläge in die Luft, die Richter haben dich schon längst wieder vergessen. Du bist ihnen gleichgültig, alles was du getan hast, ist ihnen gleichgültig, sie haben dich eliminiert, das genügt. Weiter—zum nächsten, den sie fertig machen können!"

[286] "Diese Uraufführung in Bremen wurde 1975 ein unspektakulärer Mißerfolg. Peter Weiss nahm ihn für seine Verhältnisse erstaunlich gelassen. Die Arbeit an der *Ästhetik des Widerstands*, dann die 1978 erneut aufgeflammten Auseinandersetzungen um Vietnam brauchten all seine Kräfte."

Theater—who had a long history of producing Weiss's work, including the pivotal production of *Marat/Sade*—was greeted with satisfied approbation by reviewer Gerhard Ebert, writing in the East German journal *Theater der Zeit*. Ebert, as might be surmised from the title of his review, "Kafka entmystifiziert" ("Kafka demystified"), enthusiastically endorsed Weiss's interpretation of the novel; he described Kafka's depiction of petty-bourgeois stupidity, conceit and submission as a "perfect, intact ideological system of human thought,"[287] which still survived in such lands as West Germany and Austria as the grounds for anti-communism. "Thus," Ebert continues, "[Weiss] does not impoverish Kafka, on the contrary, he places him into a contemporary dimension, that is, he makes petty-bourgeois thought transparent for us, as an ideological force which unfortunately must still be taken bitterly seriously."[288] In so doing, "Weiss avoids the anonymous mystification of *Der Prozeß*. He illuminates it as the normal life process of the bourgeois world, into which the individual is set and out of which he cannot break, as long as he strives for petty-bourgeois solutions" (Ebert/PM).[289]

Although Ebert's review is obviously as much guided by politics as the negative review of Beckmann in 1975, it can no more easily be entirely dismissed: in his praise for Perten's production (which unfortunately takes less space than the effusive recapitulation of Weiss's interpretation), Ebert describes a staging, sparely designed by Falk von Wangelin, which seems to correspond much more closely to Weiss's stage directions than the ill-fated Bremen premiere: "There is no stopping for

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[287] ". . . all das erwiest sich als perfectes, intaktes ideologisches System menschlichen Denkens."

[288] "So verarmte er Kafka nicht, im Gegenteil, er setzt ihn in eine aktuelle Dimension, nämlich kleinbürgerliches Denken uns Heutigen durchschaubar macht als eine leider noch bitter ernst zu nehmende ideologische Kraft."

[289] "Weiss meidet die anonyme Mystifikation des 'Prozesses'. Er erhellt ihn als den normalen Lebensprozeß der Bürgerwelt, in den der einzelne gestellt ist und aus dem er nicht auszubrechen vermag, solange er kleinbürgerliche Lösungen anstrebt."

scene changes. The trial goes on inexorably. And the events are always represented as the ideas, fixed but born in his world, of Josef K."[290] As played by Siegfried Kellerman, K. "takes the pictures of his imagination as possible real phenomena, conducts a running battle with them, loses himself ever more deeply in the tangle of his own, finally mercilessly real, fantasizing" (Ebert/PM).[291]

If in fact the Rostock production was more successful than the productions of 1975, Weiss took no note of it. He was now deeply involved in finishing the final volume of the *Aesthetics*, and his only concern with theatre had been in the early spring of 1978, when he wrote despairingly, "Several theatres in the Federal Republic (maybe even many—my plays are hardly produced any more) are closed to me. Established critics, even in reference works, deny my works any quality since a political position has been taken in them—What is common to both Germanies today is this insidious rejection by critics of those who think differently" (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* II, 699).[292]

Weiss may well have been correct in this criticism, but many of his own critics also had a point when they argued, as Kurt Klinger does, that, politics aside, "Peter Weiss simply did not benefit from the didactic implementation of theatrical possibilities—he never again reached the liveliness and effect of his Sade/Marat play"; as a result, *Der Prozeß*, like many of his later plays, suffered from "a jury-rigged excess of overtness without convincing atmosphere" (Klinger/PM

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[290] "Es gibt keinen Aufenthalt durch Umbauten. Der Prozeß läuft unaufhaltsam ab. Und immer stellen sich die Begebenheiten dar als die fixen, aber in seiner Welt geborenen Ideen des Josef K."

[291] "Er nimmt die Bilder seiner Phantasie als mögliche Phänomene der Wirklichkeit, schlägt sich mit ihnen herum, verirrt sich immer tiefer im Gewirr seiner eigenen, letztlich erbarmungslos realen Phantasterei."

[292] "Einige Theater in der BRD (vielleicht sogar schon viele—meine Stücke werden kaum mehr gespielt) verschließen sich vor mir. Etablierte Kritiker, bis in Nachschlagewerke hinein, sprechen meinen Arbeiten jegliche Qualität ab, seitdem darin politische Stellung bezogen wird—"Was heute gesamtdeutsch ist, das ist diese schleichende Ablehnung der Kritiker, der Andersdenkenden."

68).[293] Howald is equally dismissive, arguing that "[t]he topicalization [of the play] adds nothing new sociohistorically about the First World War, while the sociopsychological arrangements are already precisely laid out in Kafka's original" (Howald/PM 194-195)[294]—an accurate remark, though it damns Weiss both for being unfaithful and for being faithful. Dissenting opinions, however, are registered by Robert Cohen, who feels that Weiss's "ambivalent attitude [towards Kafka]. . . led to a productive and creative rereading of an over-canonized and over-interpreted text" (Cohen/Humphreys 172), and by East German critic Manfred Haiduk, who maintains that "Weiss, with his *Prozeß*, gave the theatres a practical adaptation of Kafka's novel, although this was obviously not proven by the premiere" (Haiduk/PM 238).[295]

Regardless of the play's merits, when the *Aesthetics of Resistance* was finally completed—the third and last volume was finished in 1980—its success rescued Weiss's reputation on both sides of the Iron Curtain; together with the *Notebooks*, which were published in 1981, it re-established Weiss as a prose author in his native language, winning several important West German literary prizes (Cohen/Humphreys 180). On the other side of the Iron Curtain, even the Soviet journal *Voprosy Literatury* was moved in 1985 to praise the combination of the *Aesthetics* and the *Notebooks* as "a typical and brilliant example of contemporary realistic prose. [The *Aesthetics*] is rich in documentary content, but the documentary material is reworked in it with great artistic

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[293] "Überhaupt ist Peter Weiss der lehrmittelhafte Einsatz der theatralischen Möglichkeiten nicht gut bekommen—er hat nie mehr die Lebendigkeit und Werke seines Sade/Marat-Stücks erreicht. . . . eine zurechtgestutzte Überpointiertheit ohne atmosphärische Überzeugungskraft eignet auch dieser "Prozeß"-Bearbeitung . . . "

[294] "Die Aktualisierung fügt nichts bei, was sich sozialhistorisch über den Ersten Weltkrieg lernen ließe, während die sozialpsychologischen Dispositionen alle schon in Kafkas Vorlage präzise angelegt sind."

[295] "Weiss hat mit seinem *Prozeß* den Theatern eine praktikable Adaption des Romans von Kafka geliefert, was allerdings durch die Uraufführung offensichtlich nicht bestätigt wurde . . ."

originality. . . . In this novel are also displayed the typical features of the author's creative personality—intellectual integrity, straightforwardness of expression, tirelessness of quest" (Motyleva/PM 78).[296]

With that very same tirelessness, an exhausted Weiss took up his examination of Kafka once again in 1980; he had never entirely given it up, as fragmentary notes from December of 1976, for example, demonstrate (Weiss, *Notizbücher* II, 546). Free of the novel at last, he now proceeded with a dramatic interpretation which made use of "a more radical approach, both thematically and technically" (Howald/PM 193-194).[297] Only six years later was he able to comply with Bergman's desire for "a personal interpretation," and to respond to various critics' demands that Weiss distance himself from Kafka. Rischbieter, for example, had asked, "What if [Weiss] hadn't historicized Kafka's Prague of 1914, but rather had thrown his own biographical experience, Prague 1938/39, Sweden after 1940, into the scales? Then judgement would probably not have ended in condemnation as quickly as it does now" (Rischbieter/PM, "Kafka-Studien").[298]

Rather than following Rischbieter's directions closely (since at any rate, some of Weiss's biographical experience is very much present in *Der Prozeß*), Weiss produced a sort of fantasia,

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[296] "'Estetika Sovrtivleniya' vmeste s neotryvno s nei svyazannymi 'Zapicnymi knizhkami'—kharakternoye i yarkoye yavlenie sovremennoi realisticheskoi prozy. Ona bogata dokumental'nym soderzhaniem, no dokumental'nym material pererabotan v nei s vysokoi khudozhnicheskoi original'nost'yu. . . . V etom romane proyavilis' vmeste s tem kharakternye cherty tvorcheskoi lichnosti avtora—intellektual'naya chestnost', pryamota rechi, neutomimost' poiska."

[297] "Erst nach Abschluß des Romans wurde er wieder frei für anderes und wurde die erneute Auseinandersetzung mit Kafka eine Notwendigkeit. Sie stand unter einem radikalisierten Ansatz, nicht nur thematisch, sondern auch arbeitstechnisch."

[298] "Wie denn, wenn er sich nicht gegenüber Kafkas Prag von 1914 historisierend verhalten hätte, sondern seine eigene biographische Erfahrung, Prag 1938/39, Schweden ab 1940, in die Waagschale geworfen hätte? Da wäre wohl das Urteil nicht so schnell in eine Verurteilung gemündet wie jetzt."

dedicated to Kafka, set in no real historical time, and owing as much to Dante's *Divine Comedy* as to *Der Proceß*, as Cohen points out (Cohen/Humphreys 173). Written, again in the space of a few weeks, in early 1981, *Der neue Prozeß* (*The New Trial*) was described by Weiss as "the most spontaneous and personal play I've ever written," without his usual extensive documentary research and preparation (Weiss/PM, *Der neue Prozeß* 109).[299]

In *Der neue Prozeß*, characters bearing the names of Kafka's characters in the novel act out the story of Josef K., a humanistic intellectual who allows himself to be co-opted by the machinations of a vague multinational corporation. K. rises through the ranks of the company because he is useful as a figurehead, who by his very presence disguises the destructive intentions of his employers. When war breaks out, to the company's profit, however, the unfortunate K. is one of the first casualties, shot down "Like a dog" (106). Unlike Weiss's previous plays, Cohen maintains, *Der neue Prozeß* "seems to express Weiss's nascent doubts . . . that either the Eastern bloc countries or the leftist political parties in the West still represented the future of socialism" (Cohen/Humphreys 178); as a result, socialism is no longer presented as an alternative in the play.

On 12 March 1985, *Der neue Prozeß* debuted in the most prestigious venue in Sweden, Stockholm's Dramaten, as its precursor had been meant to. The director was not Ingmar Bergman, but Weiss himself, in his first solo directing venture (although his wife, Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss, had a hand in the direction, as well as co-designing the production with Weiss). The reviews were generally favourable, and in conjunction with the success of the *Aesthetics*, *Der neue Prozeß* served to displace *Der Prozeß* and its failure even more. In fact, a mistranslation allows the entry for Weiss in *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre* to rename Weiss's "final play" as *The New Investigation*, as if

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[299] "Das spontanste und persönlichste Stück, das ich je geschrieben habe."

it were a sequel to his 1965 play *Die Ermittlung* (*The Investigation*), a "return . . . to earlier themes"; thereby the entry effaces *Der Prozeß* from history altogether (Innes, "Peter Weiss" 1063; Christopher Innes, author of this article, does in fact mention *Der Prozeß* in a chart at the end of his 1979 *Modern German Drama: A Study in Form*, 287).

Weiss now seemed to be at a peak, with a new career as a director, the beginnings of a more personal style, and possibly—if Cohen's interpretation is correct—a new political direction before him. He was even nominated for the prestigious Georg Büchner Prize, which he had desired for years, but had felt shut out of for political reasons. This peak was a final one, however: Weiss died on 10 May 1982, aged sixty-five, less than two months after the premiere of *Der neue Prozeß*. A short time later, he was announced as the winner of the Büchner Prize.

As for *Der Prozeß*, Ulrike Zimmermann writes that, given the wide range of opinions expressed in the reviews and their clear correspondence to a range of interpretations, both similar and dissimilar to Weiss's,

> It is also clear that the unsuccessful premiere in Bremen should be no reason to judge the play in principle as a dramatic failure. Perten's production obviously seems to have proved the contrary. As a dramatization of Kafka's novel alone, the drama has difficulties asserting itself in the face of a piece of "World Literature"; if one sees it above all as a drama that gives information about Peter Weiss and his reception of literature, the assessment is more satisfactory. (Zimmermann/PM 153)[300]

Zimmermann may be considered overcautious; in addition to the positive evaluations of Cohen and Haiduk, even so critical an observer as Kurt Klinger admits that "the inflammatory

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[300] "Einsichtig wird aber auch, daß die mißlungene Uraufführung in Bremen nicht Grund dafür sein sollte, das Stück prinzipiell als dramatische Fehlleistung einzuschätzen. Das Gegenteil scheint offenbar Pertens Inszenierung bewiesen zu haben. Einzig und allein als Dramatisierung von Kafkas Roman betrachtet, hat das Drama es schwer, sich gegen ein 'Stück Weltliteratur' durchzusetzen, nimmt man es aber zu allererst als Drama, das Aufschluß gibt über Peter Weiss und seine Art, Literatur zu rezipieren, wird die Beurteilung befriedigender ausfallen."

revision is not especially appealing to me, although I consider it professionally done and interestingly stageable" (Klinger/PM 67).[301] Though by no means Weiss's best work, *Der Prozeß* was quickly written off as a disaster beyond its failings, largely for reasons that had nothing to do with its fitness for the stage; nor did it have the benefit, as the Barrault-Gide and Berkoff versions had, of coming early in the career of an artist adept at self-promotion.

Weiss, by contrast, was never able to overcome his sense of being an exile; in the 1980s as much as in the 1940s, he could write, "I belong to those who have no fatherland" (Weiss/PM, *Notizbücher* II, 653),[302] and as much as he felt it allowed him a critical distance, it also made it too easy for him to alienate potential supporters. He embraced his position as an outcast as a political position and found, in the image of the apolitical outcast Kafka, an *alter ego* with which he could engage himself in debate. As Kurt Klinger remarks, explaining why Weiss chose a project which was neither "original nor particularly necessary":

> It might be surprising that Peter Weiss even encountered Kafka, that he did not push him aside, pass over him in silence. But that would probably be underestimating the attractive power of the myth formed around Kafka, and also no doubt underestimating the militant personality of the German-Swedish thinker/author who, in any matter of public interest, was never prepared to waive his right of appeal. (Klinger/PM 64)[303]

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[301] "Ich gebe zu, die agitatorische Transscription ist mir nicht besonders sympathisch, obwohl ich sie für professionell gemacht und für interessant inszenierbar halte."

[302] "Ich gehöre zu denen, die kein Vaterland haben."

[303] "Man mag es verwunderlich finden, daß Peter Weiss überhaupt an Kafka geriet, daß er ihn nicht beiseite stellte, überschwieg und überging. Aber wahrscheinlich unterschätzt man da die Anziehungskraft des Mythos, der sich um Kafka gebildet hatte, unterschätzt wohl auch den militanten Charakter des deutsch-schwedischen Denk-Dichters, der bei keinem Sachverhalt von öffentlichem Interesse bereit war, auf sein Einspruchsrecht zu verzichten."

Toronto, 1989: *The Trial of Judith K.*

> There he is, lying on the beach, his long thin legs protruding at odd angles from one of those black gymnasium tank suits. Franz Kafka does not look good in a bathing suit. This is a fact. He sees me coming along the beach. I look like his father. Big. Burly. Stupid. He knows my intentions. I'm going to take his novel and adapt it for the stage.
>
> "No, please!" he shrieks. "Don't come any closer!" He clutches his towel and wraps it around him. He looks up at me with those large, dark, prisoner-of-war eyes. He implores. I laugh and kick sand in his face. (Clark, "Comedy on Trial" 20)

Whereas Peter Weiss's *Prozeß* was first suggested by a third party but was nonetheless based heavily on Weiss's own interests and concerns, Sally Clark was commissioned to write an adaptation despite a lack of interest in, even some antipathy to, Kafka and his work: "I'm sure Kafka-lovers exist," Clark writes, "but they're probably the same people who like Egon Schiele paintings" (20). The themes of Kafka's narrative text, however, were similar enough to those which Clark has continued to articulate throughout her career that the result of her commission, not entirely satisfactory to her, motivated her against her usual practice to revise her work. It is this second, revised version which is now available in published form, and the first version will be referred to here only as a step in the composition of the final dramatic text.

Clark's adaptation is of particular interest because of its situation in an extremely complex socio-historical nexus, balanced between the problems of North American Kafka reception—during a period when the established canon seems to be ever more neglected—and the difficulties of women writers gaining success in a Canadian theatre business which is male-dominated, governed by conservative humanist criticism, and increasingly marginalized in respect to mainstream popular culture.

A New Career in Hard Times

Sally Clark was born in 1953 in the well-to-do Vancouver district of Shaughnessy. The family was large and close-knit; but in 1973, Clark moved to Toronto, which became her home until her return to Vancouver in 1996. She had considered becoming a lawyer (Kirchoff C2), but studied painting at York University instead. Already during her studies, however, her interest in theatre competed and sometimes conflicted with her studies in art. In addition to her visual arts classes, she enrolled in a playwriting class, and ran a cabaret with a university friend (Clark, personal interview, 29 Feb. 1996). This early work in cabaret may have contributed to her writing style, for her plays often, at least at cursory examination, resemble extended skits in their wit and their fast pace. Influences of her training as a painter have also been seen in her work: Nigel Hunt, for example, compares her expansive plays to "canvasses more extensive than most [playwrights] dare imagine" (Hunt/Vaïs/PM 28).[304]

Almost a decade of frustration followed her graduation, however, as Clark's paintings failed to sell (Kirchoff C2). By the end of this period, Clark was not only frustrated with visual art, but bored as well (Rudakoff and Much 79; Morrow, "Painter moooves career" C11); she began work on a novel, but discovered that she preferred the dramatic form of dialogue and action to the more descriptive medium of prose. She also valued the social aspects of theatre over what she had experienced as the solitary nature of painting: "I like the idea of actually physically communicating with people" (Interview, 29 Feb. 1996). The result of her efforts was a one-act play, *Ten Ways to Abuse an Old Woman*, first produced in 1983. Since then, her preference for writing over painting has led her to write eight full-length plays in fifteen years, with productions in prestigious venues

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[304] "Sally Clark . . . est venue au théâtre par la peinture, et ses oeuvres montrent qu'elle affectionne des canevas plus considérables que ceux que la plupart osent envisager."

throughout central and western Canada.

Clark's entrance onto the theatrical scene, however, was not unproblematic, for several reasons. Above all, there have historically been a wide range of obstacles set before women who take up a literary or artistic profession in what has remained primarily a man's world. Yvonne Hodkinson affirms that this situation has also existed in the Canadian theatre: "The female struggle for self-definition is no more apparent than in the medium of drama, for, unlike the private world of fiction, drama, due to its public nature, has traditionally been a male domain. Taking their place in drama is a task that does not come without struggle. The socio-political repercussions have kept women silenced, carefully tucked away in a domestic cocoon" (156).

It is in fact debatable whether fiction has been much more receptive to women than drama. In a wider cultural context, Dorothy Smith writes of "women's exclusion from a full share in the making of what becomes treated as *our* culture" as "a silence, an absence, a non-presence" (283). Smith describes the function of controlling access to intellectual, ideological and educational activities as "gatekeeping" (287), a term later taken up and elaborated by Dale Spender and Lynn Spender: "While gatekeeping permits as part of the social reality information which favours males, and denies, dismisses and distorts women, women will remain silenced and oppressed" ("Editorial" 467). This term is particularly apposite here. In the view of Smith and the Spenders, the woman artist or author is in a position analogous to that of Kafka's man from the country, who waits in vain to be admitted through the portal that is rightfully meant for him (and Elizabeth Boa points out that the absence of women from this parable, and their exclusion by the priest as a solution to Joseph K.'s situation, are themselves telling; Boa 41). As a result of the gatekeeping activities of male authors, publishers, reviewers and academics, women's literary production is denigrated and often effaced. For instance, the average representation of women authors published in university anthologies like

The Norton Anthology, or taught in literature courses, is calculated in several separate surveys in Britain, the U.S. and Australia during the 1970s and 1980s at an average of about 7%, never rising above 10% (Russ 77-79; D. Spender, *Writing or the Sex?* 19). Drama, incidentally, has also been disadvantaged in these same contexts: until the most recent edition, the two volumes of the *Norton* contained only eleven plays, some only in excerpts—and none of them by a woman (A. Wilson 16).

True to this pattern, in 1981, about the time Clark began her writing career, a survey by Rita Fraticelli concluded that only about 10% of Canadian playwrights were women (Hodkinson 157)—despite the fact that, according to a bibliography compiled by Patrick O'Neill, the proportion of female to male playwrights in Canadian history from the 1600s to 1967 had been almost exactly fifty-fifty (H. Jones, "Connecting Issues" 81). Women's participation had been only marginally increased by the Canadian theatre boom of the 1970's. During this period, many women found their scripts were being produced because "artistic directors might choose a Canadian woman playwright's work for a season to kill two birds with one large stone" (Rudakoff and Much 9). This boom brought to the public the first generation of major contemporary Canadian women playwrights, including Sharon Pollock, who later writes that despite this apparent increase in acceptance, "the talent, and vision, of women is so circumscribed, diminished, and diluted by the male's primary position as artistic director in the realm of mainstream theatre as to render their contribution essentially insignificant" (Pollock 109); and Margaret Hollingsworth, who remarks in an essay titled "Why We [i.e., women] Don't Write" that critics tend to be particularly harsh when dealing with women playwrights, all the more if the playwright is obviously feminist (Hollingsworth 376). In this context of gatekeeping, the fact that most of the reviews of Clark's work cited in this chapter are male-authored—as is this dissertation—and are therefore not necessarily free of a vested interest in the *status quo*, must be kept in mind.

In any case, the period of "growth" ended in the recession of the early '80s, when government funding of theatre fell to an all-time low (Wallace 98). The situation did not improve significantly during the decade under discussion in this chapter, nor has it improved since. In spite of Richard Plant's claim, in 1989, that in Canada, "theatre has moved into the late 1980s with renewed vigour, confidence, and immense variety" (164), other observers have concluded that "theatre in Canada—especially theatre in English-speaking Canada—has suffered severely during the past decade or so; many theatres have disappeared due to lack of funding, many have been unable to attract sufficient audiences, and many have had to reduce their operations" (Brask 10). Faced with this increasingly difficult situation, by May 1989 the Playwrights' Union of Canada issued a press release demanding that a seven-year freeze in Canada Council funding for new play development be ended, and asking that cancelled playwriting programs somehow be reinstated without depriving functioning theatres of their funding (Wallace 121). Female membership in the PUC had risen to 30% by mid-decade, but their representation in terms of actual stage productions in Canada remained at only one in ten (Hollingsworth 379-380). In 1990, Judith Rudakoff and Rita Much looked back at the boom of the 1970s and wrote bitterly that "today, the cachet of being a woman and a playwright isn't quite so painfully chic" (9).

This situation is very different from the relatively thriving circumstances under which Barrault and Gide, Berkoff, or Weiss created their respective adaptations. For example, a new playwright in postwar France, particularly in Paris, would have had access to a newly founded system of *Centres dramatiques*, competitions for newly-formed companies, and subsidies for first plays (Bradby, *Modern French Drama* 88). Berkoff, though often forced to take other jobs, began writing his *Trial* during a period when funding for alternative theatre in Britain underwent a steady, "if not spectacular," increase; even though much of this funding was earmarked for building facilities

or siphoned into the established venues, the overall effect was growth in theatre activity (Bull 96-97), and in short order Berkoff was able to manage his own company full-time. Finally, though Weiss, in Germany in the mid-'70s, faced a climate similar to that in Canada—where conservative audiences were largely uninterested in new works and where the young playwright had difficulty making ends meet—he also had the advantage of an established career, the backing of a heavily state-subsidized theatre system, and the comfort of a large middle class culturally accustomed to theatregoing (Patterson 12-14). In practice, of course, all of these mechanisms served mainly to further the careers of men. Of the playwrights under discussion here, only Clark wrote her adaptation during a period of shrinkage, when in her country it was virtually impossible for more than "a handful" of well-established writers to make their living in the theatre without taking other jobs; named as members of this handful are Sharon Pollock—and four men (Wallace 46-47). It should be mentioned in passing that the situation has been somewhat different in Quebec, where the combination of fierce cultural pride and the European tradition of integrating the playwright into the systems of theatrical production, rather than institutionalizing and segregating them as "literary" creators as in the US and English Canada, seems to be more conducive to nurturing new talent (Wallace 49; 188-189).

In both English Canada and Quebec, however, the difficulty of making a career as a woman playwright faced with the "gatekeepers" of male criticism has been exacerbated by a Canadian critical establishment perceived by some observers as reactionary. In 1988, for example, an issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* devoted to "Critical Practice in Canada" contained several articles which collectively charged that Canadian reviewers are bound to "a bizarre hybrid of half-hearted New Criticism and modified Romanticism" and trained as literary critics rather than critics of performance (Leonard 6); that the prototypical Canadian reviewer is "a modern critic alienated by a postmodern age" (Leonard 9); that "criticism [is] mired . . . in the commodification of theatre as

an industry in Canada" (Leonard 10); that reviewers "tend to rely on humanist [and male-centred] ideologies without questioning the terms and implications of these assumptions" (A. Wilson 16); and that "critics today have inherited [their predecessors'] intellectual smugness but have abandoned the political mission that made it bearable" (Filewod 52).

Among these criticisms appeared Paul Leonard's claim that, "as Canada becomes more genuinely multicultural, and as the social critiques of feminists, people of colour, the disabled, and the oppressed gain greater currency, it becomes difficult to maintain the illusion of homogeneity" (Leonard 8), and that much theatrical criticism was motivated by a "peevish nostalgia for vanished meta-narratives" (10). Ann Wilson agreed, maintaining (in Catherine Belsey's terms) that the apparent "common sense" that grounds most contemporary reviewing is based in a nostalgic humanism in which "'man' is the origin and source of meaning, of action, and of history" (Belsey 7, quoted in A. Wilson, 16). The final result was a general claim that most reviewers valorize conventional writing which emphasizes "unity and closure" and which "enlightens" or uplifts without threatening the *status quo* (Leonard 8; A. Wilson 16). Such prejudices have indeed frequently been encountered by Clark's work in the course of her career thus far.

Despite these inauspicious circumstances, however, Clark was fortunate enough to establish herself quickly as a playwright, thanks in part to her intriguing and characteristic ability to blend a deceptively comic approach with some very serious themes.

The Investigative Theatre of Sally Clark

One major theme in Clark's full-length plays has consistently been the *mystery* that she believes to be at the root of a good story. For Clark, the act of playwriting is an attempt—though it need not always be a successful one—to offer a solution: "You're writing because you're

investigating" (Rudakoff and Much 78-79). The mystery itself usually revolves around the question of identity, most often specifically of gender identity; and the play becomes structured by Clark's investigations of that identity and its implications, frequently in the form of either a quest or a trial, or indeed of both. Regarding her interest in the trial format, Clark says, "I love legality, protagonist and antagonist, those two opposing views. . . . I like that argument" (Interview, 29 Feb. 1996).

My choice of the term "investigative" to describe Clark's theatre both refers to the importance of investigation as a formal means of structuring her plots and adapts Catherine Belsey's description of "interrogative" texts, as opposed to the "declarative" texts of classic realism and the "imperative" texts of propaganda (1980). Belsey posits, with the help of Lacanian theory, that the interrogative text "disrupts the unity of the reader [i.e., makes clear the reader's position as both subject and object of his or her own conscious discourse] by discouraging identification with a unified subject of the enunciation. The position of the 'author' inscribed in the text, if it can be located at all, is seen as questioning or as literally contradictory. . . . In other words, the interrogative text refuses a single point of view, however complex and comprehensive, but brings points of view into unresolved collision or contradiction" (91-92). Belsey's theory owes a certain debt to Brecht, in that laying bare the contradictory division in the reader's consciousness in this manner can become a force for social change (88-89); as examples of interrogative dramatic texts, Belsey mentions not only Brecht's *Galileo* but also Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* and several of Shakespeare's plays (including *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar* and *The Winter's Tale*). In Clark's work, the fluidity of her characters' identity frequently prevents "identification with a unified subject" as Belsey describes. Clark employs such strategies as loss of memory, purposeful deception and role-playing to deepen the mystery for her characters and to "disrupt the unity" of the audience.

British critic Coral Ann Howells finds exactly such anti-authoritarian "disruption," based in

"the refusal to privilege one kind of discourse or set of cultural values over others," to be not only typical of women's narratives, but particularly characteristic of modern Canadian women's fictional works (by such authors as Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro and Joy Kogawa), "with their mixed genre codes as well as their chronological and narrative dislocations" (Howells 13). Like the fictions examined by Howells, Clark's plays usually avoid linear narrative structures, piecing together the story gradually from various points of view, in various time frames, or through a mixture of "reality" and fantasy sequences which defy generic typification. Additionally, the large number of characters in Clark's plays contributes to their difficulty as puzzles. As Clark says, "Writing for a large cast is the difference between writing a symphony or a quartet. . . . Sure it's nice to write string quartets, but it's also nice to bring out more voices" (P. Wilson D7). The malleability of characters' identity is often particularly apparent because many parts are obviously played by a single actor, with the manner of division of many roles among a small cast usually carefully specified by Clark.

This idea of identity as fluid appears already in Clark's first full-length play, *Lost Souls and Missing Persons*, in which Canadian tourist Lyle Halstead badgers the New York police to track down his wife Hannah, as she roams the streets, feigning amnesia and speaking in gibberish. She meets an artist named Turner, who accepts her as a childlike being and names her "Zombie." Throughout, the play shifts back and forth from the present to scenes from the course of Lyle's and Hannah's marriage. This plot is further counterpointed by the story of the pious Mrs. Cape, who drags her mentally handicapped son Nesbitt through various scenes, first searching for her own estranged husband, then giving him up for dead and staging a ludicrous memorial service. Finally, Mrs. Cape and Nesbitt meet and torment Lyle, while the mysterious Mr. Cape resurfaces in the last scene to murder Hannah in the very moment of her self-realization.

Lost Souls and Missing Persons juggles twenty-three characters in a variety of temporal and spatial locations. Lyle's fruitless tracing of Hannah is paralleled by Hannah's reliving her memories to find herself, on a quest to escape a stagnant marriage in a world where "Husbands are inevitable" (Clark, *Lost Souls and Missing Persons* 109). In further parallels, Hannah's recurring dream of waking up next to a stranger, metaphorically realized in her marriage, comes literally but happily true in her brief liaison with Turner; and the dreamlike quality of her real life as an unfulfilled mother shifts effortlessly into the nightmare of her final encounter, when she runs—"the banner in my hand . . . already shouting 'Bully Ho!'"—into Mr. Cape's upraised knife (140). Despite this ending, however, Clark considers the play life-affirming: "It isn't sad that [Hannah] gets killed in the end, because she found out what she needed to know." Clark maintains that, despite appearances to the contrary, "Lyle is partly Hannah's creation—she fell in love with him before she knew who he was. . . . Hannah decides that she wants Lyle and attaches herself to him. Then she starts to lose herself" (in Rudakoff, *Dangerous Traditions* 76). This basic idea—the submergence of women's identities in men, especially in the wrong men, even as they affect men's identities in turn—would become a main thread in Clark's work. Self-destructive as their actions may be, Judith Rudakoff asserts, "Clark never categorizes her heroines as victims. Their choices may not seem prudent, nor do they seem to be in the characters' best interests. Ultimately, these heroines are choosing Self over others. They are choosing the amoral path of self-discovery, opting to act on their strongest instinct instead of their most ingrained, socially correct intellectual impetus" (Rudakoff, *Dangerous Traditions* 126).

Remarkably complex for a full-length debut, *Lost Souls* was first produced at all only because Theatre Passe Muraille director Clarke Rogers was struck by its large scale during the 1981 recession, when many Canadian theatres were cutting back to smaller casts. As Clark later said, "I

was lucky and [Rogers] was a bit of a lunatic" (P. Wilson D7). When the play reached the stage in 1984, however, its complexity was seen by reviewers as a disadvantage. Though Clark herself garnered measured praise—"Sally Clark is a new playwright with a touch for light, comic writing and a fascination with surrealism"—the play drew such criticisms as: "What exactly is it in aid of? . . . the point of it all is frustratingly vague" (Conlogue, "Clark's comedy" M8). A 1989 Vancouver remounting prompted a similar mixed reaction: "Despite some insightful writing . . . there is a greater sense of what is lost than found in *Lost Souls*" (Moore, "Lost Souls" 38). The darkness of Clark's humour was also perceived as a failure, at least by Lloyd Dykk, who thought the play was "a serious lament undermined by comedy" (Dykk, "Lots of laughs" B8), though such generic ambiguity is in fact deliberately sought by Clark: "I like to set up the problem of writing a tragedy and then constantly undermine the tragic elements" (Rudakoff and Much 78).

Not until the script was published in a 1992 Passe Muraille anthology did the play win a fully enthusiastic review—from Richard Paul Knowles, who admitted, ". . . I thought I had been alone in admiring [*Lost Souls*] when it was first produced in 1984." With the benefit of Clark's later works as a compass, Knowles sees this early play in terms that partially fulfil Belsey's requirements for an interrogative text: "A sprawling urban epic, the play makes effective use of a disjunctive and contrapuntal narrative structure and divided subjectivities to tell from the skewed angle typical of Clark's work the stories of Hannah and the Capes, the missing and the lost, in what its first director Clarke Rogers calls 'the ultimate bourgeois nightmare'" (Knowles, "Letters in Canada 1992," 104).

Clark's Commission, its Background and its Result

"The ultimate bourgeois nightmare" could also very easily describe Kafka's *Proceß*. It was purely by coincidence, however—and perhaps on the strength of *Lost Souls*, which was then being

workshopped by Theatre Passe Muraille—that in the summer of 1983, Larry Lillo and Vancouver's Tamahnous Theatre commissioned Sally Clark to write a theatrical version of Kafka's novel as "a one-woman show, sort of terror-based" (Sally Clark, personal interview, 5 May 1993). Lillo's choice of Kafka as the source for a feminist project may seem strange, given that, as Daniela K. Pacher writes, "The more or less traditional view of Kafka critics places the woman and literature at opposite ends of the spectrum, both in his life and in his writing."

Pacher continues, however: "We have fallen into the trap of taking Kafka too much at his word in assuming that the threat he felt actually existed" (Pacher 57). It is true, she grants, that Kafka kept women whom he claimed to love at a distance, consistently "transforming even real women into fictional characters" in his diaries and correspondence; constructing for himself a fictive Felice Bauer and Milena Jesenská, for example, whose construction could itself only be maintained in the absence of their living counterparts (59-62). Nonetheless, Pacher argues, women serve in Kafka's works both as muses and as true artists whose creative powers outstrip those of men (72).

Furthermore, in contrast to many among his friends and family, Kafka frequently demonstrated support for what would nowadays be called women's issues. As a young man, for example, he encouraged his summer acquaintance Selma Kohn to study, which was still unusual for women—and was moreover against her father's wishes, which Selma finally obeyed (Hayman 32). Years later, Kafka went against his own family, even his feared father, to persuade his sister Ottilie to marry the man she loved, Josef David, who as a Gentile was regarded as thoroughly unsuitable; this time it was Kafka who won (242). These were not isolated incidents: time and again Kafka

> urged [women] to pursue their studies, to educate themselves, helped to guide their reading, later on ardently supported efforts by several of his women friends, including his youngest sister, to work as farmhands in preparation for life in a Palestinian kibbutz. He never shared the mordant, pseudo-urbane if sometimes elaborately masked contempt for women that afflicted most of the men in his circle,

> and in later years he became even more critical of these fashionable attitudes. But whether the often almost comically earnest eagerness on his part to foster women's intellectual growth was prompted by progressive ideas or by the more unconscious need to desexualize them is hard to say. (Pawel 83-84)

Whether his ideas were "progressive" or not, an incident recounted in Kafka's letters demonstrates how acutely conscious Kafka was of gender inequality in his society. When he suffered a fainting spell while at a Paris doctor's office, he lay on the couch, "during which time—really curious, this—I felt so much like a girl that I tried to tug down my skirt with my fingers" (Letter to Max and Otto Brod, 20 Oct. 1910; Kafka, *Briefe 1902-1924*, 82).[305] While near fainting, Kafka realized that "in a world which reduced male-versus-female to power-versus-submission, he was—with no manifest pleasure—on the female side of the equation" (Pawel 215).

A further example from Kafka's diary proves that concomitant with this realization, he did not act only in support of women with whom he was personally acquainted. At the same time, it demonstrates the ambivalence of Kafka's behaviour toward women. He records that he caught a boy in the act of throwing a large ball at a defenseless servant girl in the street; as it hit her from behind, the normally shy pacifist Kafka grabbed the boy, nearly throttled him, and pushed him aside with harsh words—though his solicitousness did not extend to paying any further attention to the servant (27 March 1910;Kafka, *Tagebücher* 200).

This same ambivalence is also reflected in the apparent disparity between how Kafka thought and what he wrote:

> Kafka's rational views about women, as about so many other issues, were eminently sensible, far more so than was common in his circle. But what the work records, the bedrock of his inner truth uncensored by reason, is a demonic vision of woman eerily consistent with the fanged monsters that hovered in the poison fumes of a twilight

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[305] ". . . während welcher ich mich—merkwürdig war das—so sehr als Mädchen fühlte, daß ich meinen Mädchenrock mit den Fingern in Ordnung zu bringen bemühte."

> culture—Weininger's syphilitic vampire, Nolde's Death as a Woman, Wedekind's Lulu, and Freud's hysterical virago seeking to avenge her loss. (Pawel 88)

Elizabeth Boa further includes among these monstrous women "the liberated sexual woman [who] displayed a monstrous virility which threatened male identity as in *fin-de-siècle* icons such as Salome, Delilah, or Judith" (Boa 43), the last of whom would become important in Clark's work.

Whether this "demonic vision" of woman is meant to be taken at face value, or is itself satirical or critical of his contemporaries, it is not without reason that Barbara Godard, in an article treating Clark's adaptation of Kafka as both a translation and a feminist reappropriation, points out that *Der Proceß* "exhibit[s] the misogynistic traits of the dominant [Western literary] tradition in excess" (Godard 25), where, as Dorothy Smith complains, only male characters are taken to be universal: "They do not appear as themselves alone. They are those whose words count, both for each other and for those who are not members of this category" (Smith 289). Kafka's works, as a landmark in that tradition, are indeed interpreted by that tradition in such a way as to exclude women further. We might recall here Martin Esslin's praise of Kafka: "Kafka's novels [describe] the perplexity of *man*" (Esslin 316-7), being "the supreme expression of the situation of modern *man*" (345; emphasis added).

Previous adaptations had enacted the narrative text's "misogynistic traits" in different ways. The Barrault-Gide version had focussed on K.'s persecution to the point of marginalizing the gender relations in the text, in a manner that echos Barrault's worshipful marginalizing of his wife and co-star, Madeleine Renaud, in his own biographies. Fortunately, *Le Procès* did not follow the model of Gide's plays from forty years earlier, wherein, in mythological or Biblical surroundings, two men bond at the expense of a woman caught in the middle (as in *Saül* or *Le roi Candaules*). Berkoff, who wrote of his adaptation that "*The Trial* is my life. It is anyone's trial" (Berkoff, *Trial* 5), had deftly

layered his own misogyny onto Kafka's, making even the landlady Frau Grubach into a sex object by transforming her briefly into a lascivious Elsa. Only Peter Weiss had stated any intention of criticizing the patriarchal misogyny inherent in the novel—but in so doing he had also written the actress playing Fräulein Bürstner into an entirely gratuitious nude scene.

If misogyny has often been found in Kafka, however, Pacher for one argues that "clearly those literary critics who see Kafka as nothing more than a troubled misogynist are missing the point altogether" (Pacher 72). Godard further claims that, as a member of a linguistic and religious minority, Kafka is a writer of "liminal texts" ripe for feminization (Godard 25). The sense of alienation and powerlessness within a system of arbitrary laws which permeates Kafka's work corresponds perfectly to the construction of patriarchal oppression which feminism posits as the social context within which women are forced to exist.

This sense of powerlessness may exist because Kafka, as Roman Struc remarked at the 1989 University of Calgary Faculty of Humanities Symposium, felt himself to be a victim of patriarchy in the most literal sense of the word. Sally Clark agrees that Kafka is unusual in his perception of this victimization: "It's interesting, because he had huge social pressure, too. I never think of men as being victimized by social pressure; I often think of single women as being victimized, but . . . he was" (Interview, 5 May 1993). Kafka's reaction to this pressure, in the interpretation of Elizabeth Boa, was to write *Der Proceß* as a critique of the gender dynamic of his society, in which by design, "[w]omen appear marginal to the action: the accused are all men, as are the lawyers and judges" (Boa 186); the formal sign of this critique in the narrative text is a "blurring between the psychic, the social, and the metaphysical" which, like the Canadian women's fiction described by Howells, "corresponds to generic blurring between fantasy, realism and symbolism so that the reader is left uncertain how to read" (181). Given Clark's ability to write in this mode, she would seem to have

been an apt choice to receive Larry Lillo's commission for an adaptation.

Clark's own ideological position is also problematic, however, in that she has—as we shall see—variously been constructed by others as either feminist or anti-feminist. She herself often refers to "feminists" in the third person. This is not an unusual phenomenon in a period when feminism has become a broad spectrum of political and cultural philosophies, many of them mutually incompatible, while the advances won by previous generations of feminism have led many women to assume that the need for action is no longer present. Women who choose to reject the stridency and militancy of the more extreme varieties of feminism (often presented by conservative observers as the norm) nowadays often reject the title itself, with its perceived negative connotations.

Nonetheless, many of these so-called "post-feminists" share the broad ideals of mainstream feminism, such as legal and economic equality between the genders and valuation of female experience on a par with male experience. Since Clark also recognizes the existence of unjust social pressure on women, as her work makes abundantly clear, I regard her work as broadly feminist, although she is at odds with particular strains of feminism on many points. The discrepancy between Clark's personal approach to feminist issues and Tamahnous's expectations of her adaptation, however, would cause some minor difficulties in the reception of *Trial*, as the first version of the play was titled.

Clark's motivation in accepting the commission, it must be pointed out, was far from ideological: "Had I gone mad? Was I that desperate for money? Or did I just want to get revenge on some poor dead author that I was forced to read in university? Ah, those grudges formed in one's youth. Yes, to all of the above" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial," 20). The flippant phrasing should not distract the reader from the fact that the need for money was a significant consideration. Still a fledgling playwright, Clark was working at day jobs, including work as an emergency librarian, to

pay the bills. By contrast, pecuniary interests play little role in the work of previous adapters. Barrault and Berkoff were both working steadily in the theatre as they wrote their versions (even if Berkoff found his work unsatisfying; Berkoff, *Trial* 5); Weiss could afford to return Bergman's advance before taking up his version in earnest; and Gide, thanks to inheritance, was financially independent all his life.

Clark thus accepted her first commission, and because the play was scheduled to open in September, she had "a month to write the play and a month to rehearse it before they put it on" (Interview, 5 May 1993). Because funding for the show was uncertain, however—a situation which had become typical since government cutbacks had begun— and because she was apprehensive that Tamahnous's group style of working might interfere with her writing process, Clark decided to wait until she arrived in Vancouver before beginning the writing. As a result, she finally wrote the play in only two weeks (Interview, 5 May 1993).

If these seem to be inauspicious conditions for producing memorable theatre, it should be remembered that they are by no means unusual in the contemporary business of dramatic production. Less auspicious still, however, was Clark's initial attitude toward Kafka's narrative text. We have seen her describe her adaptation as a form of revenge on an author she had been forced to read. Not only does Clark not apologize for her lack of sympathy, but she asserts that she is by no means alone: "Has anyone ever actually *read* their Kafka novel? I skimmed through mine, got the gist. . . . I find people read Kafka's *The Trial* in the same way they read Joyce's *Ulysses*; that is, they don't" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial," 20). David Zane Mairowitz complains that the long history of Kafka interpretation only served to reduce Kafka to "the ADJECTIVE ['Kafkaesque'], which would be known by many more people than would ever read his books" (Mairowitz and Crumb 156); Clark confirms Mairowitz's complaint by remarking that at university, "Kafka-esque [*sic*] was simply a

euphemism for boring. And serious. Deadly serious" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial," 20).

During the summer, however, Clark found access to Kafka through reading another Czech, Milan Kundera. Clark's enjoyment of Kundera's novels led her to a new appraisal of Kafka:

> Kundera claims a great kinship with Kafka, both of them being Czechoslovakians. I had noticed certain similarities between the two authors: nothing that I could put my finger on—a certain attitude towards life, a Czechoslovakian sensibility. Both authors write about police states run by incompetent bureaucrats. . . . In both Kafka's and Kundera's worlds, evil is the result of benign neglect and incompetence rather than intentioned malice—although malicious acts abound. (Clark, "Comedy on Trial," 20)

As a result of her reading, Clark began to question her stereotypical view of Kafka as boring and serious: "that got me into thinking that *Trial* should be funny . . . and it seemed to me that if I could use some of Kundera's sensibility in the *Trial*, that that would work" (Interview, 5 May 1993). Clark explains further: "The main difference between the two authors is that Kundera is funny and easy to read; Kafka is not. This led me to think that a) Milan Kundera speaks English and can ensure that his English translations are accurate, and b) maybe Kafka is supposed to be funny but has never been translated properly. These suspicions were later confirmed when I read an interview with Milan Kundera ("On Kafka and Chaos," *Vogue*, February, 1982). Kundera said that North Americans had misinterpreted Kafka for years" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial," 20).

This statement by Clark raises a series of issues, among them the fact that, as John Robert Colombo has put it, "Canadian society of the present and recent past has been relatively provincial or parochial in outlook" (Colombo 90). Czech *émigré* author Josef Skvorecky, for example, has complained that despite his gratitude to Canada, he finds Canadian observations of the Eastern European situation marked by—among other traits—"insensitivity," "ignorance" and "ahistoricity" (Skvorecky, "Are Canadians Politically Naive?" 290-294). Defensive Canadian critics have in turn

dismissed Skvorecky's remarks as "facile and condescending" (Thomas 142-143), and have accused both Skvorecky and Kundera of "smugness" (Corbeil E3), leading Skvorecky to respond, "I am not smug. But can anyone expect me to forget, to suppress, to ignore, or to keep silent about what I know and they don't? I don't know a great many things about Canada but I would not dream of accusing those who enlighten me of smugness" (Skvorecky, "Judgment" 175).

Understanding of the Eastern European intellectual heritage (and, by extension, of the intellectual heritages of other, more "exotic" cultures) is hardly furthered by the Canadian style of officially-supported multiculturalism (Kröller 85-87). In practice, these policies often reduce foreign cultures to quaint "ethnic" folklore exhibitions of "pretty girls in short skirts dancing the kozatchek in nicely embroidered national costumes" whose proper provenance is the nineteenth century. At the same time, literary ventures within the same cultural communities seldom receive government funding, because they are in neither of the country's official languages, and are apparently lacking in "Canadian content" (Skvorecky, "Some Problems" 84-86). Under these circumstances, the accessibility of authors from outside the Anglo-American tradition has been doubly threatened by a lack of contextual knowledge about the authors and, particularly in Kafka's case, a long tradition of interpretation demonstrating the author's "difficulty." Indeed, Ludwig Dietz's critical introduction to Kafka even emphasizes the challenge of presenting "a difficult author" (*ein schwieriger Autor*) to both students and teachers (Dietz 133).

In fact, Kafka's prose in the original is not at all hard to read; his stories are often among the first texts encountered by English-speaking students at the intermediate German level. Likewise, the English translation by the Muirs is lucid and easily understood, although the style has certainly dated in sixty years. As for Kundera, whether or not the English translations of his novels are more

accurate, they are certainly more recent; and whereas Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz has described long novels with talkative characters (like Kafka's) as reflecting "a deep and essential trait of the Central European mind," she has also pointed out that Kundera is the exception to the rule, "model[ling] his texts consciously on the French who, with notable exceptions, find it bad form to go beyond, say, 200 pages" (Goetz-Stankiewicz 167).

The general lack of historical contextual knowledge about Kafka has also made it a relatively unproblematic act to reassign him to Czech literature, despite the fact that he wrote in German and is usually claimed for German or Austrian literature. This reassignment probably attests to the success of Czech critical efforts since the early 1960s to "reclaim" Kafka as a symbol of autonomy from Soviet cultural domination as described in the previous chapter—a reclamation in which Kundera also obviously has a vested interest. These efforts have succeeded so well that Barbara Godard, whose own training is firmly in the Anglo-American tradition, describes *Der Proceß* as an "exploration of the clash of languages or heteroglossia resulting from Kafka's position as a Czech-speaking Jew writing in German within a province of the Austro-Hungarian empire" (Godard 23), apparently ignorant of the fact that German was Kafka's mother tongue, whether he felt himself at home in it or not (Kafka learned his father's language, Czech, from the servants, but received no formal education in it). It is ironic that in a country which refuses to recognize literature in Czech as "Canadian content," an entire *oeuvre* written in German can be arbitrarily treated as "Czechoslovakian content," particularly since Czechoslovakia did not even exist while Kafka was writing *Der Proceß*. Even when the Republic was created in 1919, it offered Kafka no welcome as an artist (Mairowitz and Crumb 161): all of his works, during his life and after, were printed by German publishers until the Nazi era.

These qualifications are not mentioned, however, to imply that Clark's linking of Kundera with Kafka is entirely unjustified. On the contrary, such similarities as Clark has noted are also remarked upon by Kundera's acquaintance Carlos Fuentes: "In both K's, Kafka and Kundera, rules a hermetic legality. Liberty is no longer possible because liberty is already perfect. Such is the solemn reality of the law" (Fuentes 271). Fuentes sees Kundera's fictional world as the realization of Kafka's forebodings: "the characters of Milan K live in a world where all the hypotheses of the metamorphosis of Franz K stand unshaken, with only one exception: Gregor Samsa, the cockroach, no longer thinks he knows; now he knows he thinks" (265). As for Kundera's humour, Fuentes does not overlook it, but rather sees it as highlighting the unsettling elements of the work: "I believe there is no image of totalitarianism more terrifying than this one created by Milan Kundera [in *The Joke*]: the totalitarianism over laughter, the incorporation of humor into the law, the transformation of the victims into objects of official humor, prescribed and inscribed in the vast fantastic constructions, which, similar to the prison landscapes of Piranesi or the labyrinthical tribunals of Kafka, pretend to the control of destinies" (Fuentes 272).

Clark writes that, under Kundera's influence, she then "made a concerted effort to reread *The Trial* with a steadfast intention to find the jokes and, lo and behold, there they were" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial," 20); but given the effect Fuentes ascribes to Kundera's humour, and Clark's own penchant for the macabre, it should not be assumed that an innocent evening of light entertainment was in store. Affirming the unpleasant undertones of Kafka's humour, Clark writes, "Kafka is funny. Funny as a crutch" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial," 20). Furthermore, her method of working generally does not allow her to take her material lightly: "There were gag lines [in *Moo*], but when I wrote them, I took them seriously too. If I write anything, I have to believe it, be totally serious about the

issues and events. If I try, consciously, to be funny, it falls flat" (Rudakoff and Much 78).

The idea of "jokes," however mordant, nonetheless hardly corresponded to Lillo's concept of a "terror-based" play—but by this time, Lillo had dropped the project for another job, and the Kafka adaptation was passed over to Morris Panych. Panych, himself a Vancouver playwright of note, was more inclined to macabre comedy than Lillo. Moreover, he had found the same access to Kafka that Clark had found. "The first thing [Panych] said to me was: 'I've found an interview with Milan Kundera and he says *The Trial* is supposed to be funny. What do you think? Should we make it funny?' 'Sure,' I said. 'Let's make it funny'" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial," 20). Panych also settled Clark's apprehension about the actual writing, promising that there would be no group interference with her process (Interview, 5 May 1993).

Clark's next step was to find a suitable version of the narrative text to work from. "Not that it was an easy task. In my ignorance, I had chosen the 'definitive authorized translation of the text' [i.e., the Muirs'], which begins: 'Someone must have traduced Joseph K. . . .' Thank God there are now newer translations which use English" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial," 20). Clark found a more recent translation—lexical comparison indicates the 1977 version by Douglas Scott and Chris Waller as the likely source—and went through it, constructing a skeleton outline of the action as follows:

> every time there was an action, I wrote it down . . . and any time an image grabbed me, I wrote it down. And so I sort of went through the novel doing that. Each chapter, I would work out what the action was . . . what someone physically did. And that was interesting, because there were a lot of images that kept reoccurring that I might not have noticed on a read: suffocation, and those great images where people would open a window and masses of soot would come through the window. . . . That was in the first version of the play. . . . And the crampedness, like the rooms kept getting smaller and smaller and more cramped and more suffocating. (Interview, 5 May 1993)

Unlike Peter Weiss's attempt to use as much dialogue as possible from the narrative text,

Clark sought to free her adaptation from Kafka's prose style by reducing the plot to actions. Clark's own colloquial style of dialogue becomes more marked in the formalized context of Judith's interaction with the Court, and becomes yet more noticeable in her later historical plays, where she steadfastly refuses to use the "dignified," or rather stilted, syntax generally accepted as the normal mode of discourse in male-centred historical drama. This refusal can also be seen as a form of feminist appropriation of the material, as Joanna Russ does: "*Women always write in the vernacular*. . . . In the vernacular it's also hard to be 'classic,' to be smooth, to be perfect. The Sacred Canon of Literature quite often pretends that some works can be not only atemporal and universal (that is, outside of history, a religious claim) but without flaw and without perceptible limitations. It's hard, in the vernacular, to pretend this, to paper over the cracks" (Russ 128-129). Clark's consistent use of vernacular in her historical plays is often mirrored by other deliberate anachronisms (in *Jehanne of the Witches*, for example, a medieval pagan spirit uses a cigarette lighter) which emphasize the contemporary nature of the events over the fictive era represented on stage.

It was therefore important for Clark to attempt to distance her adaptation from Kafka's narrative text by supplanting as much as possible of his prose with her own dialogue:

> The thing with Kafka's prose is it's sort of like following a snake-path . . . it's really mesmerizing, because if you start to use a little bit of . . . dialogue, you can't get rid of it, it's like glue. So the only way I could separate myself from this dialogue was to write it as action and then write the play from that. . . . Frequently I'd find myself getting sucked into it, and then the people would speak in very long and convoluted sentences. A couple of times it happens, it works out all right. (Interview, 5 May 1993)

Curiously, however, despite Clark's efforts the final text of *Judith K.* still contains traces not only of the Scott/Waller translation, but also of the Muirs, who have donated a couple of phrases

verbatim (there are also several passages which could have been adapted from either translation, since the two translations are themselves identical at many points, particularly in terms of their dialogue).

The next step, after isolating the actions of the plot, was to decide how the gender dynamics of the novel would be reshaped for the dramatic text. "I decided to just sort of play with the sexes, so . . . she was going to be female, I figured that all the women would be men in the book" (Interview, 5 May 1993). Many of the roles in the play, though not all, are accordingly switched across gender—women to men and men to women.

Corresponding to the change in gender, Kafka's Josef/Joseph K. is now renamed Judith, and given a punning surname: Kaye. Clark chose the name Judith (rather than Josephine, for example) for its Biblical overtones, explaining, "Joseph's a Biblical name, whereas Josephine isn't. . . . Judith, you know, has the same syllables, it just has the same ring to it and that same authority." The name was also a personal touch: "I have a good friend who's Jewish, and her name is Judith. . . . I thought this'll be funny, I'll put her name in there" (Interview, 5 May 1993).

This act of renaming, however, has deeper resonances, and would have repercussions in Clark's later career. The name "Judith" itself means "Jewess," and the book of that name is, at least in the Protestant tradition, not Biblical but Apocryphal (in the Catholic tradition, the book of Judith is accepted as deuterocanonical—that is, as a later addition to the canon, but nonetheless doctrinally authoritative). The book of Judith tells the story of how the eponymous young widow saves her town of Bethulia from the Assyrian invader by pretending to defect and seducing the enemy general Holofernes. By allowing Holofernes to drink himself into unconsciousness, Judith preserves her virtue; then, decapitating him with his own sword, she bears his head back to Bethulia, rallies the

menfolk, and helps rout the demoralized Assyrians.

The book is thought to be entirely fictitious because it is full of glaring anachronisms and inaccuracies, both historical and theological (Metzger 76). For example, Nebuchadnezzar, who carried the Jews into the Babylonian Exile (in which capacity he appears, as Nebuchadrezzar, in the book of Jeremiah), is falsely named as post-Exile king of Assyria (Judith 1:1-6); while former enemy Achior the Ammonite is converted by Judith's deed to Judaism (Judith 14:6-10), despite the fact that the Ammonites were expressly barred from becoming Jews under Mosaic law "even unto their tenth generation" (Deut. 23:3). Despite the text's oddities, Judith is an exemplary heroine—resolute, chaste and true to her faith—who single-handedly plans and accomplishes the salvation of her people. In terms of traditional patriarchy, the Judith myth thus depicts "a world turned upside down," even though the reversal is temporary and therefore illusory (Peters 83). Even centuries later, the violent nature of Judith's act, and particularly its Freudian implications, also made her a perfect focus for male anxiety as a *Mann-Weib* ("masculinized woman") during the period when Kafka was writing *Der Proceß* (Boa 43); and perhaps these overtones also contributed to Virginia Woolf's choice of Judith as the name of her fictional female Shakespeare in the pivotal feminist work *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Certainly, however, these same implications resurface in modern Canadian literature in the protagonist of Aritha van Herk's first novel *Judith* (1978; three years later, van Herk mines the very similar Biblical story of Jael and Sisera [Judges 4:1-24] for her second novel, *The Tent Peg*). The book of Judith was also to become increasingly important in Clark's *oeuvre*, and indeed she has returned to it twice more as a more direct source; but for *Trial*, the heroic nature of the Apocryphal Judith's foray into enemy territory remains only an ironic subtext. Judith's status as a "masculinized" but still desirable woman nonetheless makes her an apt model for a figure intended to replace the

aggressively male and "attractive" Joseph K.

Moreover, like her renaming, Clark's characterization of her Judith K. was not simply a transposition of the novel's protagonist into female form. Rather, Clark deliberately altered her character's personality to differ from her perception of the novel's protagonist.

> Joseph K. is just a snob, and . . . the funny part of the book is that absolute conviction that he's going to sort it out and that it's no big deal . . . never for one moment does he doubt that this is just some sort of clerical error . . . . I always thought Woody Allen would make a great Joseph K. . . . He was what I had in mind, with that sort of whining, but always felt he was on top of things . . . and loved women, right, he was an unattractive man but always had women following him. . . . I was trying to create a female equivalent. So I thought I'd create someone who was so busy getting ahead that she didn't have time to experience life. (Interview, 5 May 1993)

Despite these changes, at least some of which were necessitated by her mandate from Tamahnous, Clark maintains that the spirit of her adaptation was intended to be faithful.

> I try to be true to the author. . . . By making it a comedy, I felt I was entering into the spirit of it, because I thought I had evidence that that's what he wanted . . . and no one had done that, everyone had made him serious. So then I felt I had to—it was more of a mission. . . . I think the original author is your master, and you are serving your master, you're trying to serve your master; but it's a really tricky line, because if you serve him too well, then you have a boring play, because a novel and a play are not the same. . . . (Interview, 5 May 1993).

Clark also, however, openly acknowledges the differences between her version and its narrative source, calling it "loosely based" on the novel and disclaiming the word "adaptation" (Rudakoff and Much 85).

At the same time as Clark was working through the narrative text, Tamahnous was advertising the upcoming production as a feminist thriller, corresponding to Lillo's original intentions, "a woman's nightmare, and very serious, it was going to be like a South American torture . . . exposé. And of course Morris and I get together, and we decide it's a comedy" (Interview, 5 May 1993). The change in tone which Clark and Panych had engineered continued

to go unacknowledged in much of the advance publicity, even while Panych and designer Ken McDonald began planning to facilitate the necessary multiple casting by creating gigantic cartoon cut-outs, in a grotesque comic style, which would be worn by all of the actors except Barbara E. Russell as Judith. The intended effect, according to a late press release, was to make Judith K. "a grown-up Alice in a judicial wonderland" ("Free Judith K." n. p.).

When the play opened on 15 November 1985, the production suffered somewhat from the discrepancy between the expectations raised by most of the advertising and the actual result of Clark's work: "It was embarrassing, because the publicity machine was still cranking it out. They publicized this serious stuff, and then . . . some of the audiences came and they were a little bit cheesed off, because they were expecting a serious political feminist tract and they got like, a comedy" (Interview, 5 May 1993).

This disappointment was also evident in some of the reviews, as reviewers ignored the comic aspects of Kafka's original novel and took the production to task for its humour, illustrating Clark's own contention that "Kafkaesque" served as a synonym for "deadly serious." Kerry Moore, in *The Province*, complained that "*Trial* was supposed to be scary, but it was just too funny," and curiously ascribed the conflict to the ego of the company itself: "Tamahnous wants to tell a sobering story of victimization, intimidation, one that has universal implication. But it wants to be seen as very clever and talented at the same time" (Moore, "Trial trips" 43). *Vancouver Sun* reviewer Lloyd Dykk, on the other hand, blamed the playwright. Offended by Clark's changes to "Kafka's magnificent novel," Dykk apparently had never heard Brod's anecdote about Kafka's reading the novel aloud to general hilarity. He wrote, "[Clark] toys with the seriousness of the story, as though *The Trial* had been a classic in the public domain long enough that it might be turned into a hip black joke. . . . Judith

K. . . . has too much the stand-up comedian about her" (Dykk, "Sense of dread lost" B10). Only Alan Twigg, of the *Georgia Straight*, on the contrary, found *Trial* "a faithful adaptation that ingeniously reflects the universal aspects of the story. . . . no matter what you happen to have between your legs," though structurally flawed by "its many backwards or sideways detours for laughs or over-explication." Twigg was, however, aided in understanding the "universal aspects of the story" by interpreting Kafka's "nightmarish oppression of one individual by the laws of the state" broadly enough to include "God, Fate, Socreds, a traffic cop," "motor vehicle testing stations," and "Expo 86 baloney" (Twigg 32).

The gigantic cut-outs and their deployment were seen as the most striking element of the production. Moore felt that the cut-outs failed in their mission to "heighten the sense of depersonalization" because the production did not offer "dehumanized monotone voices" to match, consistency apparently being a greater sign of quality than polysemy (Moore, "Trial trips" 43). The otherwise disapproving Dykk found them "wonderful," however, despite a sense that they were inappropriate for Kafka's story, which he interprets as realistic (presumably a "magnificent novel" must be realistic as well as serious): "In a way, this conflicts with the semi-realism of the story, but the abstraction of these gargoyles, as grotesque, funny and black as a Carel Moiseiwitsch cartoon, serves to point up the flatness and implacability of the forces that have Judith K. in their maw" (Dykk, "Sense of dread lost" B10). Twigg had no such qualms, proclaiming that "Ken MacDonald's malevolent yet playful cutout caricatures account for the greatest strength of this production. His brilliant creations superbly emphasize the . . . approach that Tamahnous has decided to take in order to allow director Morris Panych and friends to lighten the piece with macabre humour without unduly diluting Kafka's message"—which Twigg is clearly willing to extend to Expo 86, but not to

macabre humour (Twigg 32). Finally, however, even the generally positive Twigg found *Trial* unsatisfying: "If only the entire cast . . . had remained behind those cock-eyed cutouts . . . and if only Toronto playwright Susan [*sic*] Clark's script had been pared to essentials . . . and if only that dying-swan act to close the show hadn't so much resembled the final chord in *Day in the Life* . . . this show might still be resonating as an artistic triumph" (32).

Clark herself, who sums up the reception of *Trial* with the phrase, "The critics hated it" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial" 20), was herself not entirely happy with the script. While also going on to new projects, Clark began rewriting *Trial*, which was read at the Shaw Festival Academy in June 1987, workshopped at the Banff Centre Playwrights Colony in May 1988, and read in its new form at the Canadian Stage Company's Playground in November 1988. This new version, now called *The Trial of Judith K.*, finally premiered at the Canadian Stage Company in Toronto in October 1989.

Clark's Revision of *Trial* and Re-Visioning of *Der Proceß*

Clark has given several explanations of why she felt the original version, with its relative fidelity to the narrative text, had not worked as she had expected. Above all, perhaps because it had been written so quickly, she thought that it was simply too structurally linear: "I think it was just a bit like Alice in Wonderland; it was she meets this, she meets that, she meets weird man, she bounces from one to the other, from one to the other and it's chronological, right, but the action doesn't come back on itself, which it should in a play" (Interview, 5 May 1993).

At the same time, Joseph K.'s sexual habits did not transfer well to a female character: "Joseph seduces women in the story in order to get information out of them. . . . In my version, Judith did the same thing to men. But where he had looked masterful, she looked pathetic"

(Conlogue, "I hate political correctness" C1). Dale Spender uses the same two adjectives to describe the inequity in cultural perception of the genders, even (or especially) when performing the same actions: "there are stereotypes of women's and men's language which mean people don't actually have to listen to women and men speaking to know that the women are 'pathetic' and the men are 'masterful'" (D. Spender, *Writing or the Sex?* 23). Just as Clark's (mostly male) critics had been unable to displace their stereotypes of the novel's tone and message in order to interpret Clark's adaptation as anything other than confused in its genre, so too the stereotypical cultural view of actions "appropriate" to the respective genders interfered with their reception of the play's protagonist. As Barbara Godard puts it: "The ambiguity which results from the substitution of one gender script for another produces tensions in . . . the dramatic [text] that interrupt textual and social decorum. Clark's basic strategy of changing the gender of the protagonist while quoting from [*The Trial*] produces a hybrid text that fails to conform to any of the established signifying practices" (Godard 25). The same difficulties with gender and genre dynamics would also bedevil the reception of Aritha van Herk's work—particularly her third novel *No Fixed Address* (1986), which was guided by an aesthetic similar to Clark's, and whose picaresque protagonist Arachne also engages in the casual promiscuity usually reserved for male heroes (see Scobie 37; Crosby; McGoogan; Leckie 279).

Unlike van Herk, who has dismissed such objections as the work of "dullard critics" (D. Jones 6-9), Clark took these criticisms into consideration in refashioning the play, herself dissatisfied with both the character of Judith K. and the reaction to her:

> It was interesting, because if you have a man doing that, people think it's very clever, and if a woman does it, she's a slut; and it doesn't matter how you say, "Oh, there's no such thing as male-female stereotyping," there is. . . . People just couldn't understand it, feminists got mad. . . . With Joseph K., it was funny because it was

> sort of like this schmuck who's getting all these women coming on to him. . . . I don't think there is a female equivalent for that. . . . Stagewise, she just looks like an idiot. (Interview, 5 May 1993)

In rewriting the play, Clark dealt with the problem by cutting Judith's several sexual entanglements (the equivalents to Joseph K.'s liaisons in the novel) down to one relationship, while also combining other characters from the first version into a smaller cast. The result, as we shall see, was to create composite characters who often take over the functions of both male and female figures from the narrative text. This complex process is represented in the following schematic synopsis of changes:

Judith K. awakens one morning to find herself not only under arrest, but stripped by her two warders, Biff and Clem. From under her bedclothes, she screams, "WHERE'S MY FLANNEL NIGHTIE!!" One of the warders says, "We confiscated it," and opens his gas station coveralls to reveal that he is wearing the nightie. When an inspector appears as well, Judith decides it must all be a birthday prank. To be a good sport, she offers to let them surprise her. They turn out the lights, she enters, and the three men leap up and shout: "SURPRISE!! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!!!!" as balloons fall from the ceiling. Though this beginning makes it clear that the tone of the dramatic text is much lighter at times, the basic plot outline remains as in the narrative text (described as elements *A-J* on p. 35 above)—although compressed [Mirza *e)*] and placed in production in a polyvalent space [Mirza *a)*]—with some radical changes in detail:

1) the landlady, Frau Grubach, *has been combined with the tradesman Block*, creating a new character, Mrs. Block, who now appears throughout the play [Mirza *b)* and *c)*];

2) K.'s male Assistant Bank Manager *becomes Mrs. Voight*, who circles like a shark even more

openly than her male counterpart to grab Judith's clients as Judith's attention is distracted by her trial; Mrs. Voight also *takes over the functions of the three clerks* in the novel [Mirza *b)* and *c)*];

3) *no character equivalent to Fräulein Bürstner appears in the play at all*; roughly at the same position in the plot, however, *Judith does encounter a so-called friend of Mrs. Block who introduces herself as "Milly Pearce,"* who wears Mrs. Block's clothes, but who is obviously a man in drag [Mirza *b)* and *c)*];

4) the search for the court is *cut altogether*, while the scene of Judith K.'s hearing—though it occurs in the same position as in the narrative text—is *much shortened* [Mirza *e)*];

5) the apelike law student who continually attacks the court laundress, the laundress herself, and Leni *are combined into a figure called Ted the Psychopath*, an employee of the court and of Theadora [Mirza *b)* and *c)*];

6) as in two of the other three adaptations, *there is no Fräulein Montag*, nor any male character equivalent to her [Mirza *b)*];

7) the scene with the whipper—here called the Flogger, as in the Scott/Waller translation—is transposed to *precede* the scene of Judith K.'s second visit to the now-empty court, and thus now comes *immediately after the hearing* [Mirza *e)*];

8) the visit to the court offices, with its presentation of other accused, is *cut* [Mirza *e)*];

9) Joseph K.'s uncle from the country *becomes Judith's uncouth sister-in-law Deedee*, who has two obnoxious children [Mirza *c)*];

10) Judith, unlike her male counterpart, is told that *the trial could be postponed indefinitely, as long as Judith "just keep[s] getting pregnant"*[Mirza *d)*];

11) Huld *becomes Theadora Moxie, Lady of Law*, who was formerly a hooker named Trixie [Mirza *c)*];

12) although a painter still appears, *his name has been changed* from "Titorelli" to "Fred Pollock" [Mirza *c)*];

13) the Italian visitor whom K. is supposed to meet at the cathedral *becomes a* "Monsieur LeBlanc from Paris" [Mirza *c)*];

14) the priest in the cathedral *becomes a nun* [Mirza *c)*];

15) although the parable "Before the Law" is kept, *any interpretation or discussion of it is cut* [Mirza *e)*]; and

16) the warders, Biff and Clem, rather as in Weiss's version, *appear at the end as Judith's executioners* [Mirza *b)*].

Although Clark's stage directions give basic indications of where each scene is located (e.g., "Bank," "Court of Inquiry," etc.), she offers no description of the set or scenery, leaving the set design completely in the hands of the director and designers—or the reader. The Tamahnous production seems to have used little or no physical set, making the giant cut-outs the primary visual focus, while the Canadian Stage production, which used no cut-outs, built a more elaborate set: "They actually built a little office, so it was quite neat, so you actually watched her office get smaller and smaller, and they had a little storage cupboard where the two men were, Biff and Clem [in the Flogger scene]" (Interview, 5 May 1993).

The play is divided, as the other three adaptations have been, into two acts, with Clark placing the intermission immediately after the equivalent of the narrative text's visit to the lawyer

and K.'s impromptu rendezvous with Leni (the lawyer and Leni here becoming Theadora and Ted respectively). The second act begins back in Theadora's room, implying that some time has passed in the interval. The first act consists of eleven scenes (the fourth scene a monologue less than a page long; Clark, *Judith K.* 31) and the second of ten. Each act, according to Clark's introductory notes, should run about forty-five minutes. She also specifies: "The action should move swiftly and relentlessly from scene to scene. Please, no blackouts or slow fades. 'Louder! Faster!' is a particularly useful maxim to bear in mind" (Clark, *Judith K.* 8).

"Louder! Faster!" is, stereotypically, the advice given to actors playing comedy, and it quickly becomes clear that Clark is not only accentuating the comic aspects of Judith's predicament, but intensifying the pressure exerted on her. Her reduction of the narrative text to basic actions and images, and then her revision of the play farther from its source, have resulted in a dramatic text which excludes large sections of Kafka's plot, while selected ideas from the narrative text are built upon and often recapitulated like jazz riffs, turned into running gags. For example, Biff and Clem, Clark's half-witted equivalents to Kafka's Franz and Willem, "*have Southern U.S. accents and are dressed like gas station attendants*" (11). In Kafka's narrative text, "the arrival of the court emissaries initiates a confusion of signifying levels as the symbolic underpinnings of the social order emerge into the empirical world" (Boa 183); accordingly, in Clark's version, their appropriation of Judith's clothes, together with the gag involving the birthday balloons, accentuates this confusion into the creation of "a carnival world in which order is upturned and inverted. There is nothing fearful in this first scene, despite Judith's cries of rape" (Godard 29). As if to confirm that no serious threat exists, Biff, Clem and the inspector leave almost immediately, assuring Judith that although she is under arrest, "that need not hinder you from leading your ordinary and tediously boring life."

Judith immediately takes umbrage:

> JUDITH: What makes you think my life is boring!
> INSPECTOR: An educated guess. (19)

She is to appear for her first interrogation at "1284597 One hundred and sixty-seventh street," which she immediately looks up on a map, only to realize that the address lies in Surrey—a suburb miles from central Vancouver, with a reputation for high rates of crime and violence (20). Throughout the play this address turns up again and again, so that Judith is always forced back to the court. We will return to the manner in which Clark uses such recapitulation and repetition as a structuring principle in a later section.

Not all of the material in the play is motivated by the central focus of Clark's original commission. The creation of Biff and Clem, for example, has its origin in broad political comment: "Well, that's my Canada-U.S. jibe. At one point I had a line about this is a third world country or something, but . . . mainly, the idea was the Americans are arresting us" (Interview, 5 May 1993). As for their conforming to a popular stereotype of American Southerners, "[They're] from one of those bad movies, you know, one of those Sam Peckinpah movies, where there's the evil car-lot attendant or something" (Interview, 5 May 1993).

Such political implications are not merely an arbitrary addition. The imbalance between the genders can easily be likened to the imbalance between Canada and its colonizers and neighbours. As Coral Ann Howells points out, "There are close parallels between the historical situation of women and of Canada as a nation, for women's experience of the power politics of gender and their problematic relation to patriarchal traditions of authority have affinities with Canada's attitude to the cultural imperialism of the United States as well as its ambivalence towards its European inheritance" (Howells 2). Clark's adaptation of Kafka is, of course, in itself an expression of such

ambivalence.

Moreover, Heather Jones, in an essay called "Feminism and Nationalism in Domestic Melodrama," has argued that Canada's best chance to assert its national identity is to rearticulate that identity as feminine and to accomplish this rearticulation through the medium of theatre. By emphasizing how our historical development differs from that of other countries, we reappropriate our culture: because Canada was settled in a more domestic manner than usual—that is, with more active female participation and less violence—Jones explores the possibility of making a new Canadian identity specifically feminine as a potentially important part of a nationalist ideology (H. Jones, "Feminism and Nationalism" 5-14).

Leaving aside the debatable question whether a nationalist ideology is necessarily a good thing, however it may be configured, Jones's ideas not only validate Clark's idea of presenting the conflict between Judith K. and the officers of the Court as a Canadian-American conflict, but also raise the possibility that Clark would have done better to have taken this idea further as a major thematic thread. In its present form, however, this "American connection" remains tentative and as a result, in reviews of the actual productions, seems to have been found more irritating than provocative. Such political additions do seem relatively tentative, of course, compared to the most noticeable change Clark rings on the narrative text. In the following section, I will describe how Clark's switching of genders within the cast of characters alters and comments upon Kafka's original.

Gender-Switching in Act One of *The Trial of Judith K.*

With the switching of genders, the characters form constellations different from those in the narrative text. Of the twenty characters in the play, seven are based on figures who are of the

opposite sex in the novel—most notably, of course, Judith K. herself.

Clark has attempted to create a new character in Judith, rather than simply a drag version of Joseph K. Whereas Joseph, for example, is a confirmed bachelor and would-be womanizer who regularly visits his mistress Elsa (Kafka, *Proceß* 28), Judith is a divorcée who admits that she is sexually frustrated (Clark, *Judith K.* 95). Despite already having a sexual outlet, Joseph takes advantage of any opportunity for sexual contact, especially with women who might have influence with the court. Judith, by contrast, is constantly extricating herself from sexual situations, with Ted, Pollock or Theadora. This denial of sexuality was one element which Clark chose to emphasize in a more career-oriented Judith: "Someone who's just work, work, work, who throws herself into her work, I think that's a more accurate portrayal of women today, and that she would just abandon that side of her life, and basically never thought about it, and being arrested, suddenly she has this free time to think about things" (Interview, 5 May 1993). Her strained relationship with her in-laws, her estrangement from her ex-husband, and her rivalry at work serve to isolate her from any real social bonds, as Joseph K. is isolated in the novel.

Other characters, however, are altered far more drastically by Clark. For example, Judith's landlady Mrs. Block is present in the background during Judith's arrest, like K.'s landlady Frau Grubach, but has disappeared by the time Judith arrives home from the bank. When she appears again, Mrs. Block is shown to be one of the accused, equivalent to the tradesman Block in *Der Proceß*. By combining the functions of these two figures, Clark re-creates the plot so that her character reappears throughout the play and solves a difficulty she perceived with the original version of *Trial*, where Judith K. lives with her mother: "I couldn't figure out a way of making her mother work in the play, it just seemed too perverse to just totally forget about your mother . . . the

people that I went to see it with complained and the critics said, well, that was the end of the mother? She just sort of appears and disappears" (Interview, 5 May 1993). Under these circumstances, Judith's failure to mount a search for her mother "automatically set her up as being incredibly cold-hearted" (Interview, 29 Feb. 1996).

At first, Mrs. Block appears ineffectual and almost senile, unable to tell Biff and Clem apart, and willing to condemn Judith out of general distrust of the young: "Young people these days. They're always up to something. You never know what they're going to do next. First, it was the Beatles with their funny haircuts. But that was only the tip of the iceberg. Now it's sex, drugs, pornography, free love—" (Clark, *Judith K.* 14). If, in Kafka's narrative text, the landlady Frau Grubach suspects the "working woman" Fräulein Bürstner of impropriety (Kafka 32-33), in Clark's version these suspicions fall directly on Judith.

Later in the play, however, not only do we discover that Block herself is among the accused—as we do not with Frau Grubach—but we see her being used and abused sexually by both her lawyer Theadora and the Psychopath. This amplification of Block's humiliation by Huld and Leni in the narrative text is a direct result, in Clark's version, of Judith's arrest: as Mrs. Block explains, "I lost [my house]. I spent all my money on my case. Your rent was the only source of income I had. So of course, when you were arrested, that was the end of my house" (Clark, *Judith K.* 102). After six years of her own trial, Block is in desperate straits, engaging additional counsel behind her lawyer's back, and driven by fear of discovery into betraying Judith at any opportunity. "It's my case," whines Mrs. Block. "It's changed me" (101). Unlike Berkoff's combination of Frau Grubach with K.'s mistress Elsa, which demonstrated K.'s reduction of all women to sex objects, Clark's demeaning sexualization of Judith K.'s landlady shows the eventual effects of the trial on its

victims, including Judith. It is noteworthy, however, that Judith can expect no more assistance from women than any male K. ever could.

In the play's second scene, for instance, when Judith arrives at work, she is faced with the obstructive assistant bank manager Mrs. Voight. Like K. and his male assistant manager in the narrative text, Judith and Voight are in constant conflict, and Voight uses any means necessary to place Judith at a disadvantage and take over her more lucrative clients. The conflict between the two is far less diplomatic in the play than in Kafka's novel; a main source of abrasion is Judith's heavy smoking, against Voight's fanatical enforcement of the office no-smoking rule (23).

As in the novel, Judith receives a phone call in this scene summoning her to the hearing—although, in Clark's version, this is not new information, since the inspector had already mentioned the hearing in Scene One (20). Judith's frustrated yelling over the phone when no time is given for her interrogation, and her lie that the call was from a client, cause Voight to upbraid her for inappropriate behaviour. Then, when Voight, like K.'s assistant manager, invites Judith to a party set on the same day as Judith's hearing, she is insulted by Judith's excusing herself due to a business engagement (24-26). Mrs. Voight is somewhat mollified by her assumption that Judith has "troubles at home," since she is wearing black. Judith, however, unlike Joseph K., is eager to carry their infighting even further: she informs Voight that she wears black to court Japanese clients, and furthermore that the navy blue pinstripes Voight is wearing are out of fashion, "Très outré" (26-27).

In the first act, Mrs. Voight appears again in Scene Seven, where she almost catches Judith speaking with the Flogger, Biff and Clem (41-42), and yet again in Scene Nine, where she clearly disapproves of Judith's sister-in-law Deedee and her children (53-58). By taking over some of the functions of Rabinsteiner, Kaminer and Kullich, the three clerks in the narrative text, and by

appearing in additional contexts, Voight becomes an even more obvious threat to Judith's security and position than the novel's assistant manager. It thus comes as little surprise that in the second act, Voight takes over not only Judith's clients, as in the narrative text, but also eventually her office, forcing Judith to move into a former storage cupboard—possibly the same one in which she found the Flogger and the two warders (97-99). When, in the ninth scene of the second act, Voight appears as a disembodied voice (like Judith's first phone call about her interrogation) and commands her to go to the cathedral, it is the natural result of this escalation of hostilities that she is also sending Judith to her execution (111).

In comparison to Mrs. Voight's active obstruction, Mrs. Block only seems passively inactive, the lesser of two evils. But when she returns home in Act One, Scene Three, Judith discovers a man at home wearing Block's clothes. The man introduces himself as an old friend of Mrs. Block, here to "look after things," and claims to be named "Milly Pearce." Milly deflects Judith's objection that they have never met without either of them mentioning the absurdity of Milly's obviously being a man:

> MILLY: On the contrary, we've been introduced several times but you were preoccupied and never paid any attention. Can you honestly say that you can remember the faces of your landlady's friends?
> JUDITH: No. Probably not.
> MILLY: There you are. (29)

Judith accuses him—or her—of being a government spy, but Milly merely replies, "You should have been paying more attention" (30).

The brief appearance of Milly Pearce (named after a friend of Clark's mother) is Clark's first major deviation from the plotline, as opposed to the gender dynamics, of the narrative text. Though originally conceived as a woman, Pearce's final manifestation as a man in drag owes itself to

whimsy: "I liked the idea of just creating the absurdity of his appearance . . . really, it just amused me" (Interview, 5 May 1993). However, he also serves a dramaturgical purpose, motivating Judith to take action. "Because I had to take out Frau Bürstner [*sic*], the next door neighbour and all that stuff, there was nothing goading her. . . . I just wanted Judith K. to be terrorized to the extent that she would do something, there always has to be a dramatic reason for the character to go" (Interview, 5 May 1993). This purpose was apparently particularly well served in a production at York University, where Milly Pearce wore a Secret Service-style earpiece and was relayed his lines by another actor above: "so he'd go like [*whispering*] 'I'm a good friend of your mother's' [as the script then stood] and it was really funny. . . it was really effective and creepy" (5 May 1993).

Barbara Godard describes this scene as a self-referential substitute for the narrative text's scene with Fräulein Bürstner, which "developed into a play within the novel, a staged re-presentation of the scene of K.'s arrest which foregrounded self-reflexively the process of textual construction through representation and repetition." Instead of taking over this scene and using it to critique "the construction of gendered subjectivity in a critique of representation," Clark creates Milly Pearce, whose exit line, "Time for the soap opera" (30),

> foreground[s] the type of comedy we seem to be watching. Like "see you in the funnies," this adieu points to the performance context of behavioural scripts for daily living but does not rehearse them, as Kafka's text does. Oscillating between melodrama and the ironic comedy of critique of melodrama's naïveté, *The Trial of Judith K.* stages the work of generic revision as repetition with a difference rather than undermining all representation with the relentless rhythm of doubling and repetition of Kafka's textual machine. Kafka has been "traduced," though not staged as re-presentation. (Godard 29)

Godard's interpretation is perceptive, insofar as Pearce's appearance can call to mind both the constructed nature of gender and the scripted quality of daily life, but is also bound, like the reading favoured by most of Clark's critics, to a vision of Kafka's novel as "serious." Even though Godard

regards Clark's changes positively (unlike, for example, Lloyd Dykk's negative assessment of them), she nonetheless shows no awareness of the humour in Kafka's original, which Clark had taken as her starting point.

Partly motivated by the apparition of Milly Pearce and the disappearance of Mrs. Block, Judith now takes the case against her seriously enough to attend her hearing; as she tells herself in a brief monologue that comprises Act One, Scene Four, "It is up to you, Judith, to straighten things out. You are going to get organized" (Clark, *Judith K.* 31). In Scene Five, however, when she finally arrives at the distant Court of Inquiry, she encounters Clark's most audacious creation: Ted the Psychopath, the only character whose gender is changed from female to male for the dramatic text.

The Psychopath is an amalgam of the court laundress, the apelike law student who continually attacks her, and Leni, Huld's maid. Described only as "very handsome" (32), he is outside the court when Judith arrives. He is so distracted by her that when she asks if she has found the court, he replies in *non sequiturs*: "You know, not everyone who lives in Surrey is a psychopath" (32). He knows that she is here for her interrogation, because it is "common knowledge"—unsettling news for Judith—and intimidates her by attempting to follow her inside, saying, "What if there's no one in the building but you and me" (33). Warning him not to follow, she enters.

In Scene Six, Judith's courtroom interrogation is barely under way when the proceedings are interrupted by a scream, as the Psychopath strangles a woman at the back of the hall. Judith, horrified, asks the magistrate what the court intends to do about this genuine crime. The magistrate calls the Psychopath forward:

> MAGISTRATE: Is she dead?
> PSYCHOPATH: Yes.

> MAGISTRATE: Any others?
> PSYCHOPATH: One in the Cedar Vale woods—left entrance—a couple of feet from the main path. One in the back alley of 152nd Street. Five buried in the basement of the AOΠ sorority house. Three in the—
> MAGISTRATE: (*pounding gavel*) GIVE THIS MAN TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS! (36)

Judith is horrifed anew, but the magistrate explains, "Information leading to location of victims" (37). The character of the Psychopath thus acquires truly macabre overtones by association with the infamous Clifford Olson case of 1981, in which a multiple murderer was paid by a B.C. court for providing information about the whereabouts of his victims. Judith's response to this turn of events is not only vocal and vernacular but foul-mouthed. In comparison to the rather effete eloquence of Joseph K., Judith's style is to tell the Examining Magistrate to "EAT SHIT," as she leaves the court in disgust (37). As Ray Conlogue aptly says, Judith is "a belligerent motormouth" ("I hate political correctness" C1), but, unfortunately for her, Judith K.'s aggression towards the Court as an institution is never carried far enough beyond the verbal to save her.

Two scenes later, after Judith has discovered the Flogger, Biff and Clem at the bank, she returns to the empty court in Scene Eight to find the Psychopath wearing a blood-soaked shirt. Like the laundress in *Der Proceß*, when court is not in session, the courtroom is his home; he claims to have gotten bloody by cutting himself shaving. When Judith pulls a can of mace from her purse, he approaches, takes it away, and begins to seduce her, undoing her blouse, as he will do continually throughout the play (Clark, *Judith K.* 47). Indeed, most of the males in the play are more concerned with undressing Judith than helping her. The two warders have already done so before the play even begins. Judith's usually successful resistance to these advances throughout the rest of the play becomes the substitute for Joseph's sexual aggression and for that of the earlier Judith; more in keeping with acceptable gender roles, Judith now spends most of her time on the defensive. As a

token of this reversal, whereas Joseph K. is drawn to women whom he thinks may have influence, the Psychopath claims to Judith that he has influence in order to attract her—it seems his ex-wife was having an affair with the Examining Magistrate. Now he and the magistrate are best friends, and as he leaves Judith to go to another woman standing in the shadows, he distractedly remarks that his ex-wife is now dead (48-49). As the Psychopath strangles the other woman, Judith makes her escape (50).

In the first version, *Trial*, this exit marked the end of Judith's relationship with the Psychopath, and Judith fled to the claustrophobic offices of the court, as in the narrative text, where she was subjected to the romantic attentions of the court's public relations man, Reggie Whipple. In the final version, however, the visit to the offices has been cut, and Judith enters the bank at the top of Scene Nine, only to be told by her secretary that a man had been asking for her—not a client, but a stranger wearing a stained shirt, maybe tie-dyed, and "brownie-red" (51). Judith forbids anyone admittance to her office, and in seclusion frets about her attraction for the Psychopath: "I trusted him. I find that horrifying" (52).

The frequency with which Judith returns to her office in the context of Clark's compressed plot has been interpreted by Godard as "dictated in part by the gender inversion: Judith's position within the male domain of business needs to be justified in terms of social norms in a way that K.'s position in the bank does not" (29). Whether Clark felt that this justification was necessary or not, it is true that the play's concentration on her place of employment emphasizes Clark's interpretation of Judith as a woman too involved in her work to participate in a full life. Godard is thus on firmer ground when she writes, "Whereas K.'s involvement in his trial absorbs him to the exclusion of any interest in his work, Judith's process of investigation leads to a frenetic increase in business activity

with no productive results" (Godard 29).

The frenetic activity is intensified, and productivity plummets, when Judith's office is suddenly invaded by her sister-in-law Deedee and her two children, Timmy and Tracy. More precisely, Deedee is the sister of Judith's ex-husband, tellingly named Dick. Much of Deedee's dialogue, and all of the children's, is represented fully capitalized to indicate high volume. Her greeting, for example, consists of: "JUDY! HOW THE HELL ARE YA!"; and only seconds later she yells, punching Judith on the shoulder, "GEEZ! HEARD ALL ABOUT THE TRIAL!" (Clark, *Judith K.* 52). In the narrative text, K.'s bourgeois uncle thought of K. as a black sheep; but compared to the upwardly mobile Judith, Deedee is portrayed as white trash. With her children barely under control, Deedee seems as great a threat to Judith's position at the bank as the trial:

> TIMMY: WHAT'S A TWIAL, MUMMY. I WANNA KNOW WHAT A TWIAL IS. TELL TWACY TO STOP HITTING ME!
> TRACY: TELL TIMMY IT'S TRACY. (*punching him*) TRACY (*pinching him*) TRACY TRACY YOU LITTLE TURD. SAY IT WITH AN "R," FUCKFACE!
> TIMMY: AAAAAAAAHHHHHH!
> DEEDEE: TRACY! SUCH LANGUAGE. NEVER SAY FUCKFACE IN A BANK. NEVER! NEVER! (*smacking her*). (53)

Mrs. Voight is drawn to Judith's office by this behaviour, and Judith drives her off by claiming that Deedee is a client ("Really? She looks like a relative," sniffs Voight as she exits; 54). Deedee generously overlooks Judith's "hoity-toity" attitude and offers to take Judith to an old friend, Trixie, a former hooker turned lawyer: "she figured she was spending so much time with the Judges and all, she might as well make it legit" (55). Furthermore, Deedee offers Judith an out: she thinks Judith could delay her trial for nine months if she were with child (57). Deedee even offers her brother, Judith's ex-husband, as potential father. Judith isn't interested, yelling, "YOU'RE NOT GETTING DICK INTO THIS GODDAMIT!" (58); but the option is one Joseph K. never had.

The idea of Judith getting pregnant had occurred to Clark very early in the writing process, although finally she did not pursue her original intention: "I think I was going to have where she finally met the judge, the big high judge of all, and it was going to be Germaine Greer, and she was going to go, 'Make babies!'; and I thought it was just going to turn the play into a bit of a political satire, so I just decided not to" (Interview, 5 May 1993). She decided, however, to keep the reference in the play for other reasons:

> The fact that she doesn't get pregnant shows that . . . there's a sterility about [her life], because she has the option of delaying the trial, and yet why does she hasten it the way she does? And so that whole thing of organization: okay, let's get this finished, even if it's my own life. . . . It worked in *The Crucible*, Elizabeth Proctor got pregnant and she didn't get killed. I don't know, I think I just thought it was something the sister-in-law would think of. It's an easy out, just keep having kids. (Interview, 5 May 1993)

Clark also intended Deedee's characterization to reflect upon Judith's ex-husband: "I like the fact that we see that [Judith] hasn't paid attention to her life, she married this guy, who was just—I mean, we know from the sister-in-law that this guy—why would she marry him? I sort of enjoyed the idea of people bullying her, on a personal level, and so she was bullied on a personal level before the trial even started" (Interview, 5 May 1993). Indeed, up to this point, Judith has been bullied, like Joseph K., by her warders, her superiors, her accusers and her family; and has had no chance, as Joseph K. did, to bully Fräulein Bürstner or anyone else. But if she has seemed at a disadvantage so far, worse is yet to come.

Judith attempts to decline Deedee's offer of help, but Deedee grabs Judith and exits. As Scene Ten begins, Judith and Deedee have dropped off the children and arrive at Theadora's office ("Theadora Moxie—Lady of Law"), which Judith is startled to discover is at the Court of Inquiry. As Deedee explains, "Trix likes to be where the action is" (59). Like Huld in the novel, Theadora

née Trixie is sickly and bed-ridden, and like Huld, she has domestic help to answer the door: the Psychopath, who goes unrecognized by Judith thanks to dark glasses and a clean shirt. Deedee barges in to find Theadora lying in bed, but Theadora's consumption lifts somewhat upon hearing that Deedee has come about the famous Judith Kaye case. "Teddy," as she calls the Psychopath, is sent out, and Theadora demonstrates her influence with the court by throwing back the bedclothes to reveal that her dear friend the Examining Magistrate (not, as in *Der Proceß*, the chief clerk of the court) has come to visit. As Theadora puts it, "You must consider that this intercourse enables me to benefit my clients in all sorts of ways, some of which cannot ever be divulged" (62). The Examining Magistrate ignores Judith, but appears charmed by Deedee.

In the eleventh and final scene of the first act, Judith attempts to leave but is blocked by Ted, who grabs her and kisses her (treating her, in fact, as Joseph K. treated Fräulein Bürstner). When she struggles, he suddenly turns apologetic: "Oh God! I'm sorry. Oh God, what have I done. Oh, I'm sorry. I really didn't mean to do that. I am so sorry. Can you forgive me?" (64). When she says yes, he grabs her and kisses her again. Only now does he take off his dark glasses, to her shock. He pulls her to him and tries to explain: he doesn't really kill those women who pretend to be dead—it's only his job to be a psychopath.

Although Judith is not entirely convinced, Ted begins fondling and seducing her. She seems on the point of succumbing when Deedee storms in: "CCCCCCCCCCHRRRRRRRIST! Have you blown it!" (68). Deedee sends Ted packing and, like K.'s uncle, tells Judith how she has damaged her case by snubbing the Examining Magistrate. Judith complains that it is only through Deedee's assistance that she had the chance to damage her position further, but Deedee is unimpressed: "After today, you're going to need all the help you can get" (69). Deedee exits, never to appear again,

leaving Judith alone—until she notices Ted in the background. With this image, Act One ends.

The Triangle of Act Two

Having taken the first act to set up both the general situation and the relationship between Judith, Ted and Theadora, Clark now concentrates on this triangle in the second act. The relationship between Judith and Ted in particular becomes far more important than K.'s affair with Leni in the narrative text, partly because of the reversed gender dynamic between the characters. At the same time, the close link between Ted and Theadora, figured in the similarity of their names, is more sexually charged than the relationship between Huld and Leni, even though Leni is ostensibly Huld's mistress.

The complexity of these relationships exists only in the revised version. In *Trial*, the Psychopath was a minor character, and Theadora lived with her son Peter, with whom Judith became involved. Peter's position as a younger man approximated Leni's status as a servant. After the Psychopath and Mr. Whipple, Peter became the third man to evince an attraction to Judith; Clark explains, "in my first version I got into sort of siren figures, because Joseph K. is constantly being approached by women, and it's almost like a guy who's never had any women in his life is suddenly James Bond" (Interview, 5 May 1993).

In revising the play, however, Clark tightened the play's structure by cutting down the number of characters. Based on the idea that Leni, in the novel, is "attractive and threatening at the same time," Clark decided that the Psychopath character was the one man of the three who should remain: "So I combined all the siren figures into one person because I figured it was easier to stage it . . . whether she has relationships with three different weird people . . . if they're all rolled into one

it made more sense . . . then it becomes a relationship and therefore it becomes a dramatic conflict, because he does something to her, she does something, and so it's ten times more interesting" (Interview, 5 May 1993).

The Psychopath's name, Ted, was added as a reference to serial killer Ted Bundy, but by another happy coincidence, Ted is also the masculine version of Theadora. The resulting new character appealed to Clark because she had combined "what I thought were these separate things, someone who worked as a clerk and someone who—it was just sort of fun to get this person who had these different jobs, and that everything was a job, and you could never tell where his job began or when it ended, like when he actually felt something or whether it was just part of his job, and I like that" (Interview, 5 May 1993). The absurd aspect of Ted's job, his continual strangling of the same woman, Maria—he begins strangling her yet again in Act Two, but when Judith enters he literally drops what he's doing—is balanced by the menacingly off-hand manner in which he mentions his dead ex-wife. At the same time, he sometimes seems genuinely concerned about Judith, at least as long as he is in control of the relationship with her. In these traits, Ted is well-matched with Theadora.

Theadora's character was initially shaped by Clark's interpretation of the "law" in *Der Proceß*:

> There is a mysterious underpinning in Kafka's world of *The Trial*. One could call it surrealistic, but it is more evocative than that. Since Medieval times, the Church and the State have been the two main governing bodies of society in the Western world. The Church represents man's [*sic*] spiritual aspirations and is usually seen as a sanctuary from the trials of the material world. The State governs pragmatic and material concerns. In Kafka's novel, Church and State are intertwined into one huge institution: the Court. The awe and mystery of the Church surround the banal and pragmatic events of K.'s State arrest. (Clark, "Comedy on Trial," 21)

Once Church and State are combined, Clark reasoned, ". . . so the law becomes a form of

worship, and lawyers become priests—which is why I made Theadora a hooker, because in *The Golden Bough*, the original priestesses were supposed to be holy prostitutes" (Interview, 5 May 1993). A decade later, George Steiner would make the same link, explaining the absence of women among the accused in *Der Proceß* by observing, "Women are, in enigmatic guise, messengers or servants (temple prostitutes?) of the Law" (Steiner xv). Through the same chain of historical association, Clark named Theadora after the Byzantine empress Theodora, who started her career as a prostitute and rose to marry the great law-giver Justinian. No wonder, then, that in *The Trial of Judith K.* the Examining Magistrate is in bed with Theadora.

At the beginning of the second act, Judith and Theadora are closeted together discussing the case (incorporating material from the beginning of Kafka's seventh chapter, *Proceß* 137-151), when Ted enters with a tea tray and syringe to inject Theadora. They offer a fresh syringe to Judith, who declines, despite "Special rates for clients" (Clark, *Judith K.* 72). With this brief interruption, Clark encapsulates Theadora's relationship to the law: she is both addict and pusher.

When, after she completes her explanation, she rolls over and goes to sleep, Judith is left in the next scene with Ted, whose friendship with the Examining Magistrate gives him the leverage to make advances to her. She refuses, however, to associate her desire for him with her quest for information. As she tells him, when he fondles her while talking about the court, "You make me feel like a whore . . . . Like I'm paying for the information" (75). When he goes too far, she slaps him, less from lack of interest than because she fears being put in "a compromising position": but as Ted admonishes her, "that is inevitable. It is the process of the Court that you will be compromised" (77). Judith, still unwilling, exits.

Caught between Ted and Theadora, and under pressure from Mrs. Voight at work, Judith is

naturally intrigued in Act Two, Scene Four, when Mr. Brazier, one of her clients (based on the manufacturer of the narrative text), offers her the address of the influential court painter, Fred Pollock. Pollock, in Scene Five, is based on Titorelli, of course, though his name is a nod to Jackson Pollock. Like Titorelli, Pollock's studio is under siege by young girls "*sinister in appearance*" (83).

Whereas Titorelli was a painter of landscapes, however, Pollock works in the abstract: all of his paintings are simple red canvases. Nonetheless, he tells Judith to disrobe the moment she enters his studio, asking, "You are Judith K. the nude model, aren't you?" (83). Judith's correction of his mistake does not dissuade him from his intentions, expressed in such terms as "you're a real uptight broad, but hey, I can help you there" (89). In counterpoint to his advances, the girls keep asking from outside, "Are you going to paint her in the nude?" (84). Their interest in the proceedings is even more unsettling than its model in the narrative text, reflecting Clark's own sense of disquiet: "Well, I make [the scene] really sort of creepy sexually . . . there's something really scary to me about thirteen-year-old girls or eleven-year-old girls that are too old" (Interview, 5 May 1993).

Amongst the leering sexual overtones of the scene, based on the comparatively mild homoerotic atmosphere of the Titorelli chapter, Pollock does explain to Judith and to the audience the procedures for obtaining the various kinds of pointless acquittal and deferment. The sheer amount of this exposition makes Scene Five the longest scene of the second act. Finally, Pollock pulls her onto the bed, telling her that information about the court "doesn't come free," but she categorically refuses to trade sex for help from him (90). He desists only when Judith offers to buy three of his identical paintings in lieu of responding to his advances; she is about to exit over his bed when she realizes that once again, she is at the offices of the court (91). Furthermore, since the signature from her cheque later turns up on forged loan approvals, Pollock—in collusion with

Brazier—has only exploited her sexually nonetheless (99).

No sooner does she escape from Pollock than she runs into Ted, who drops Maria and turns his attentions to Judith. Fed up, Judith actually takes the sexual initiative for once. Judith begins undressing in front of Ted, who has spent so many scenes unbuttoning her blouse, and he begs her to stop. She shouts, "I've already been mentally stripped at least a dozen times today, anyway. . . . It's what you want, isn't it. Take a good look cause a look is all you're going to get!" (94). Ted is extremely uncomfortable when she is the aggressor and, walking away, he feigns crying to make her stop; because such aggression on Judith's part is unusual in this version, it becomes both a temporary position of strength and a critique of the changes to Judith's character which Clark felt constrained to make. At last, she calls him Ted—the first time she has spoken his name—and he regains both his composure and the upper hand. He kisses her and tells her, ". . . you're beaten before you begin. Keep fighting. Writhe in the trap. For me" (96). And at last, she gives in and he leads her offstage.

This turn in the plot—in "typical Sally Clark fashion" (Wasserman, "Letters in Canada 1991" 84)—would drive many feminists mad, but it is indeed typical of Clark to show the autonomy of her female protagonists by allowing them to make unwise or even disastrous choices. She has said, "I hate political correctness. . . . This superwoman thing is just another kind of puritanism. It still comes down to the woman redeeming the man" (Conlogue, "I hate political correctness" C1). Though Judith is certainly a victim, Clark does not idealize her to make her an exemplary victim; not only does Judith finally surrender to Ted's blandishments, but the scene following their sexual encounter is the only occasion when she is "*exceedingly cheerful*" (Clark, *Judith K.* 97). Like Clark's other heroines, Judith pays the full consequences of her choice. From this point on, Judith is never in control again: it is in the next scene that she discovers that she has lost her clients and her office

to Mrs. Voight.

Judith then decides to dismiss Theadora, but this choice too leads to disaster. When she drops by to consult with Ted in Scene Seven, she unknowingly interrupts him having sex with Mrs. Block. Ted exits to check whether Theadora wants "tea," and Judith and her ex-landlady chat about their cases; Judith confides that she and Ted are having an affair. When Ted returns, the craven Block reports Judith for smoking and planning to dismiss her lawyer. Angry, Judith barges into Theadora's room where, in Scene Eight, the lawyer disabuses Judith of any illusions about her relationship with Ted. It seems Ted's affections are fickle: "He has a passion for accused women—possibly men, too," which Theadora understands perfectly. "We have bets to see how long it takes for them to succumb" (105). When Judith dismisses Theadora, Theadora turns nasty. "They've been very negligent with you. No one has corrected your attitude. Perhaps you should see how the other accused are treated" (107). Block is brought in and humiliated, and Ted and Theadora take obvious delight in each other as they torment her. When Block enters, Ted begins fondling Judith; but as Theadora's interrogation of Block becomes more intense, Ted moves to the bed and strokes Theadora's hair as Block kisses her hand. Ted kisses Theadora on the lips, and then Theadora "*reaches over to the side of her bed and pulls out a long sharp knife. She proceeds to sharpen it, slowly and deliberately against a barber's strop*" (109). While Theadora tells Block (as Huld informs Block in *Der Proceß*) that her case has not even begun, that after six long years everything has been declared void except the original arrest, Block, on all fours to kiss Ted's feet, begins to whimper and builds up to an ear-piercing howl. "It's what we all become, eventually. It's only a matter of time," Theadora tells Judith, and invites her smilingly onto the bed. Judith runs off (110).

In this scene, the perverse teamwork exhibited by Theadora and Ted has its inspiration in the

manner in which Huld and Leni, in the novel, work together to humiliate Block. Clark, however, has associated the two even more closely with one another, from their names to their verging on entering a *ménage à trois* with Judith—or is it *à quatre* with Block as well? The master-servant relationship of the narrative text collapses into a disturbing twinship. And when Ted tells Judith that all cases have a time limit, that their sexual liaison is her only hope, and that he "want[s] to keep her alive" (96), the possibility is raised that his and Theadora's sick vitality is one way of keeping the end at bay.

True enough, after her exit from Scene Eight, Judith rushes headlong to her destruction as Clark accelerates the pace of events, at the same time returning—particularly in the final two scenes—most closely to Kafka's original text (Godard 29). She is sent from the bank the moment she arrives to guide a Parisian visitor around the cathedral, whose address is identical with that of the Court of Inquiry. Though it is physically impossible that the Court and the cathedral could share the same street number, the coincidence is more than an absurdity; rather, it corresponds to Clark's perception of the relationship between Church and State in Kafka's novel. As a result, in the world of Judith K., it makes perfect sense that the same address should be shared by the seats of both law and religion.

In the tenth and final scene, Judith arrives at the cathedral, where she is met by a nun, based on the priest of the novel, who tells her, "You rely too much on outside help. Particularly from men." This line is taken directly from the novel—albeit with the gender reversed—as is Judith's reply: "But they're the only ones who've been of any use." The nun tells Judith that this is a delusion. All she has done by sleeping with Ted is alienate Theadora, who could have helped her (114). Joseph K. never receives any such assurance about his attorney; thus, while Joseph as a man

is criticized for seeking outside help at all, Judith is criticized more heavily for seeking help from men rather than women, even though complete self-sufficiency would be preferable. The nun finally scolds Judith for letting her case take control of her, and recites the parable "Before the Law" in Brechtian fashion, prefacing her account by announcing, "THE PARABLE OF THE MAN AND THE DOORKEEPER" (115). After the parable, rather than the novel's long exegesis, the nun simply tells Judith, "You have to leave now" (116), reflecting Clark's opinion that the parable "may be profound and philosophical but, essentially, it is still a shaggy dog story" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial"26).

Judith leaves the cathedral to find Biff and Clem waiting for her, ready to take her for execution. Ted appears and tells her not to get desperate, to "Make me proud of you" (Clark, *Judith K.* 117). Now comes the final, successful attempt to disrobe Judith: Biff and Clem undress her down to her slip, whereas in the novel only Joseph K.'s coat, vest and shirt are removed (Kafka, *Proceß* 270). She kneels for the knife, unlike Joseph, who was placed on his back (271). Also unlike Joseph, at the last she gives one cry of hope, seeing Ted in the distance and crying, "I've been reprieved!" But it is too late. The knife plunges in, and fickle Ted, who once said to her, "I wanna keep you alive," ironically now reproaches her: "I'm ashamed of you, Judith K. You're no different from the rest of them. You just want to live" (Clark, *Judith K.* 119). She falls forward onto all fours, so that her last words, "Like a dog!" (119), now take on an additional, sexual, meaning—foreshadowed by Ted's taking Mrs. Block from behind in Act Two, Scene Seven (100) and further recapitulated by Block's whimpering and howling "*in dog-like manner*" during her humiliation by Ted and Theadora (110).

Does Ted's "You just want to live" mean that she should have asked for more than merely

to live? Or that she should be brave enough to sacrifice herself? With this one line, without precedent in the novel, Clark emphasizes the double bind of Judith K.'s situation. As in so many of Clark's plays, the end deepens the mystery rather than solving it; but then, "There is no refuge. In the bureaucratic conglomerate of the Court, there are no answers" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial," 21). Unwilling to participate in family, friendly or sexual relationships which might have saved her, and unable to concentrate on the career which had taken over her existence, Judith has pronounced her own sentence; as the Nun said, "The proceedings determine the verdict" (114).

Recapitulation

Clark had been dissatisfied with the original version of her adaptation not only because the gender dynamics did not adapt well to a female protagonist, but also because its structure was simply too close to that of the narrative text. As Clark says, "the structure of novels is like a veneer. Events and conflicts don't repeat. In adapting you have to re-make the piece so people can reappear" (Rudakoff and Much 85-86). As a result, the other adaptive strategy Clark uses is recapitulation. Barbara Godard points out that this quality is already inherent in the novel's structure (Godard 27), and that Clark takes full advantage of it on several levels: "Characters, setting, action all multiply the play of repetition and substitution that is the work of 'traduction' or transformation, the process of defamiliarization" (Godard 29).

One of these levels, and perhaps the most obvious, is locative. All the addresses in the play—in fact, only one address is ever given—lead inevitably back to the same location: the Court of Inquiry in Surrey. Ted lives in the court itself, Theadora's office is in the same building, and so is Pollock's studio; the Cathedral is, impossibly, at exactly the same address, and the place of

execution is nearby. On a smaller scale, the fact that Judith is pushed out of her office into "a storage closet" echos the appearance of the Flogger, Biff and Clem in a storage closet.

Clark also finds subtle ways to recapitulate details in order to bind events and characters together. For example, in the first scene Mrs. Block mentions a friend of hers who was "happily married for fifteen years—at least she thought she was happily married. Til she found out she was happily married to the Surrey Psychopath." Since he was always "very nice to her," however, Block decides she must have been happily married after all (14). As we have seen, Ted the Psychopath later speaks of his now dead ex-wife, who was having an affair with his friend the Examining Magistrate (48-49); and of course, the Magistrate is next found in bed with Theadora (62).

Many of the repeated bits of business or dialogue have their origin in specific incidents from the novel, either singular or repeated. For instance, Ted's absurd recurring strangulation of Maria is a circular repetition based on a single event in the novel; while the repetitive quality of Joseph K.'s being told what to wear by his warders, his need to take his jacket off in the stuffy painter's studio, and the removal of his top clothing for his execution are extended by Clark into the constant attempts to undress Judith. We have seen that these attempts begin even before the play opens, when Biff and Clem appropriate Judith's nightie. The warders' directing Judith to wear black is directly based on the narrative text, but in Clark's dramatic text this command is superfluous: they have already taken all her other clothes (17), metaphorically undressing her yet again and foreshadowing their final disrobing of her at the execution (Like Weiss before her, Clark makes the warders from the play's beginning into the executioners at the end, thus allowing her play to build from the farcical harmlessness of her arrest to the final pointless act of murder).

The issue of Judith's identity also recurs in a manner typical of Clark's work, though based

on cues from *Der Proceß*. Upon his arrest, Joseph K.'s first instinct is to offer his identification papers, which the warders reject as irrelevant (Kafka, *Proceß* 14-15). Later, at the interrogation, K. is mistakenly described as a house-painter (54). When Judith offers her driver's licence, birth certificate and passport to Biff and Clem, they read her name and address from them and then tell her, "Your face conforms to the documents given us. This proves we've arrested the right person." "But I just gave them to you!" Judith objects, "It's my I.D.!" (Clark, *Judith K.* 15). Later, as with K. in the novel, the Examining Magistrate addresses her as a house-painter; but when Judith denies painting houses and replies that she is in fact Corporate Loans Officer at the Bank of Commerce, Clark's Magistrate suggests, "You might find you have a natural vocation for [painting houses]. Then, the files would coincide" (35). In the second act, when she arrives at Pollock's studio, he tells her to take her clothes off: "You are Judith K. the nude model, aren't you?" The fact that Mr. Brazier has sent her only makes Pollock more certain that Judith is his model; once again, Judith's assertion of her identity apparently does her no good (83-84).

By amplifying these repetitive patterns, Clark emphasizes the basically circular structure of the novel, and increases the plot's ability to frustrate the onlooker by making the stagnation of Judith's situation even more apparent. Clark has said, "Kafka's *The Trial* isn't tragedy; it's like suspended animation or a waiting room" (Rudakoff and Much 85). Beginning from this idea, in revising her original script, Clark in fact altered her own perception of Judith; she "began to feel sorry for a regimented professional woman who has forgotten to live . . . and wondered if the trial, by suspending her life, hadn't opened new emotional possibilities for her" (Conlogue, "I hate political correctness" C3). The imposition of new identities upon Judith by other characters may be a symbol of the possibilities which Judith has not explored by focussing on her career.

And it is even clearer in the concentrated and altered form of the dramatic text than it is in Kafka's novel that Judith K. herself is most to blame for this stagnation. Again and again, Judith is told that she is missing something: the Inspector, for example, makes an "educated guess" that her life is "ordinary and tediously boring" (Clark, *Judith K.* 19). Likewise, when she claims that she has never met Milly Pearce, Milly says, "We've been introduced several times but you were preoccupied and never paid any attention." Before she exits, Milly repeats that Judith "should have been paying more attention" (38-39). When Judith later shows Ted a picture of her husband (as Joseph K. shows Leni a photograph of Elsa), Ted immediately says, "Fooled around on you, eh?" It is obvious to him. She replies that in four years of marriage it was not obvious to her, and he observes, "You couldn't have been paying much attention" (67; in the original version, Peter tells Judith that her husband was gay, though the dialogue ends with the same exchange). Finally, before their sexual encounter, Ted tells Judith, "There's an animal buried inside you, Judith K. You're not letting her out" (96).

Judith's inability to give in to her desire for Ted, or at least to acknowledge and begin to do something about her isolation, is ultimately her doom: "her not living, right, it's almost a part of not being able to trust anyone. And that's sort of a statement of her inability to trust and therefore to live" (Interview, 5 May 1993). Judith's continual denial of her emotions is summed up in her battle cry, "Get organized!", a sort of one-minute-manager echo of Joseph K.'s "The only thing for me to go on doing is to keep my intelligence calm and analytical to the end" (Kafka/Muir and Muir 282). Clark writes of him, "K. seems to have no overriding philosophy, save that of the merits of organization and base opportunism. If an opportunity presents itself, K. seizes it, regardless of where it will lead" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial" 26); and in the end, Judith K. is led to the same conclusion

as Joseph, accepting her guilt and her execution. By so doing, Judith not only repeats the path trod by her male counterpart, but also recapitulates her brief embrace of the danger embodied by Ted. Judith's choices emphasize her link to Kafka's work and simultaneously align her with Clark's own heroines, whose imprudent choices lead to self-discovery and often to self-destruction (Rudakoff, "Under the Goddess's Cloak" 126).

The Production and Critical Reception of *Judith K.*

The revised *Trial of Judith K.* went into production in Toronto at the Canadian Stage Company in October 1989, directed by Richard Greenblatt. Clark had successfully fought to cast an experienced comedienne, Corrine Koslo, in the lead role: "It had to be a comedienne. Someone could play that straight, and it's not funny." The Toronto production, unlike the Vancouver staging, had an elaborate set which allowed Judith's office to shrink throughout the play. The set, designed by Dorian Clark, was also multi-levelled: Judith arrived at the bank in an elevator (simulated by the actress Koslo running quickly up and down three flights of steps; interview, 29 Feb. 1996), and the onstage steps leading up to the Court became progressively taller, so that Judith had some difficulty mounting them in her business suit and skirt (Crew, "Bleak comic play" C1). Of this set, Clark now says, "I think in future, I would like just a bunch of doors, a bare stage and a semi-circle of doors. I think that would look a lot better" (Interview, 29 Feb. 1996). Clark was nonetheless quite happy with the production.

Despite this promising beginning, however, Clark's working relationship with the company was generally "not a happy experience" (Interview, 29 Feb. 1996), marred by severe internal problems as Clark fell victim to the economic vagaries of the theatre business in Canada. The

Canadian Stage Company had been formed in 1987 purely as a result of financial pressures: the highly experimental Toronto Free Theatre had been forced to merge with its mainstream rival, CentreStage Company, thus marking, in Robert Wallace's words, "the end of the 'alternative' era in Canadian theatre once and for all." The merger had attempted to broaden the mandate of both original companies without settling on a firm identity; lack of purpose and conflicts within the administration led not to the hoped-for financial security, but rather to a million-dollar deficit for the new company by early 1989, and to aesthetic stagnation: "the largest not-for-profit theatre in Canada next to the Stratford and Shaw Festivals had snared itself in an artistic trap of its own making" (Wallace 147-149).

Under these circumstances, serious difficulties arose in Canadian Stage's interaction with Clark and with the public. During the production run of *Judith K.*, the company seemed determined not to promote the play:

> When [Canadian Stage] moved their offices, they didn't disconnect the phone lines, so anyone buying a ticket would just get a ringing phone and no one would answer. So then the box office that was supposed to sell tickets for *Trial of Judith K.* and for the other show would deny that there was a show called *Trial of Judith K.* The whole experience was really Kafkaesque. And so nobody bought tickets, so the first weekend it was like no crowds, and then gradually through word of mouth—that was the only way it was going to happen—it sold out in the final week, but Canadian Stage simply decided after the first weekend they were going to close it early, and it was just dumb. That part was too bad. (Interview, 29 Feb. 1996)

If the production had full houses in the last week, Canadian Stage's apparent diffidence notwithstanding, it may have been because Clark's work was now well-known in Toronto. This same year saw the Toronto opening of two other Clark plays: the Factory Theatre production of *Moo* in January had been a solid success, and *Judith K.* opened a month before the November premiere of *Jehanne of the Witches* at Tarragon. 1989 should thus have been a signal year for Clark, with

three of her plays produced at three of Canada's most prestigious venues.

Unfortunately, after the triumph of *Moo*, which won the 1989 Chalmers Best Canadian Play Award, and was nominated that year for the Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Play, neither *Judith K.* nor *Jehanne* met with great critical approval. Whereas, in 1985, Kerry Moore had written that the Vancouver version of *Trial* "was supposed to be scary, but it was just too funny," its Toronto opening in 1989 was met with lukewarm notices by reviewers who now found the play too scary to be funny.

Robert Crew, whose review in the *Toronto Star* bears the headline, "Bleak comic play too much of a trial despite good cast," begins by writing, "You will have to go a long, long way to find a more profoundly depressing theatrical experience than *The Trial of Judith K.*" Crew found that the comedy "sugar-coating" of the play was at odds with "the pill of nihilism" at its core: "the play creates a tension between what's actually happening on stage and the relentless and clever demand for laughter. There are two ways to react to this tension—either get totally depressed or switch off. . . . for me, it doesn't work. Laughter simply doesn't mix with menace and jackboot violence."

Despite his distaste, Crew took pains to praise Clark and the actors: "But even if you reject what the play is saying, it's still possible to admire the way it's being said. Clark is an excellent writer and the cast is a good one." Of Corrine Koslo, Crew remarked that the production allowed her to play to her strengths as a "dumpy, spunky character who shrieks and grits her teeth but fights back. The comedy is well-realized, if other depths are lacking." Co-star Stephen Ouimette was declared "brilliant in a couple of off-centre roles," including Ted, the Inspector and the Flogger. Crew blamed the shortcomings of the production on the director: "unlike *Moo*, this play contains no heart and no compassion, at least the way that Greenblatt has chosen to direct it" (Crew, "Bleak

comic play" C1).

Ray Conlogue, of the *Globe and Mail*, evinced similar doubts about the production, which he described as "Updated Kafka with a synthetic theatricality": "There has to be a good reason for taking a literary classic and putting it on the stage. Turning its hero into a heroine is a good contemporary ploy, but it doesn't solve all the problems, as Canadian Stage's interesting and puzzling season opener, *The Trial of Judith K.*, demonstrates." Conlogue writes approvingly, if not accurately, that "Clark . . . has freely adapted Kafka's story and introduced a loopy humor that is quite alien to the dour existentialism of the original." In spite of these changes, "Koslo's aggressive, high-energy comic flair, and Stephen Ouimette's dapper and understated Ted can only distract us for so long from the grimness of the tale. And as the grimness becomes apparent, so too do one's doubts about the story." The elucidation of Conlogue's doubt, however, becomes problematic:

> Kafka has been seen as the prophet of twentieth-century alienation, where institutions took over human lives in ways never before possible; but his vision is rooted specifically in the society of early Nazi Germany. The dysfunctional legal system he describes, the manic and corrupt judge, the whore who becomes a lawyer (in this version), the impossibility of acquittal—these all related to the all-too-real criminalization of the state Kafka knew.
>
> In Canada, the tale is different. Our institutions are all-too-efficient and functional, creating a different kind of alienation. The lavish theatricality of Clark's vision, and Dorian Clark's set—try to *imagine* a court in a Vancouver suburb with massive, crumbling Roman pediments—is synthetic. The parallels seem forced, even if you try to take the universal application of capital punishment (in the play) on a symbolic level. (Conlogue, "Updated Kafka" C10)

Conlogue's logic, by which the play's theatricality is "synthetic"—as opposed to "real" theatricality?—due to insufficient similarities between Nazi Germany and contemporary Canada, would be tenuous enough even if its premise were not the idea that Kafka's narrative text, written in 1912, has anything to do with Nazi Germany. Furthermore, how can Clark's changing the Huld figure into a prostitute be "related to the criminalization of the state Kafka knew"?

Conlogue's insistence on the specificity of *Der Proceß* and his denial of its universality are nonetheless interesting, especially in comparison to Lloyd Dykk's assertion, after seeing the Vancouver version of *Trial*, that "The problem is that Joseph K. is already every man and every woman, the butt of the human joke: born into all the available freedom of the universe, mankind will inevitably forge his own chains. Whoever this supererogatory Judith K. is, she can't top that" (Dykk, "Sense of dread lost" B10).

As might be suspected, however, given Conlogue's synopsis and his further remark that "The menacing court clerk—a woman in the original story—is now a man, reflecting the gender reversal of the title role," Conlogue is in no position to elucidate his interpretation of the novel from the text itself. Clark later remembered that

> Ray Conlogue . . . said he didn't have time to read *The Trial*, right, so we do this long interview, and he says, well, you know, when was this play [*sic*] written? And I said before the war. And so I thought he'd know it was World War I. But he didn't. He thought it was before World War II. So he spent his whole review concentrating on all the Nazi references that I'd missed in the book. . . . I remember looking it up, because I couldn't believe Ray Conlogue got the dates wrong. (Interview, 5 May 1993)

Despite his ignorance of the narrative text—an ironic confirmation of Clark's rhetorical question, "Has anyone ever actually *read* their Kafka novel?"—Conlogue does raise a good point in the interview described by Clark (which appeared in the *Globe and Mail* two weeks after his review), when he writes that Judith's affair with Ted "confuses the viewer's loyalty to Judith (Is she *sick*?) and raises the question of whether she is a genuine victim. To those familiar with Kafka's book, this suddenly emerges as an original way of restating his idea that Joseph K. collaborated in his own oppression" (Conlogue, "I hate political correctness" C3; this "confusion of the viewer's loyalty" also recalls Belsey's "disruption of the reader's identification with a unified subject"). Conlogue, like

Crew, also praises Clark's writing in this interview: "Even though her version of Kafka's *The Trial* has lots of problems, believable dialogue isn't one of them" (Conlogue, "I hate political correctness" C3).

Returning to the conclusion of Conlogue's original review, which nonetheless damns the play for its faulty parallelism, Conlogue finds, unlike Crew, that "These problems are greatly palliated by Richard Greenblatt's direction. He has good control over potent theatre business that would get out of hand with lesser directors." Almost as an afterthought, however, Conlogue's last line reads, "I didn't like the notion of making the two halfwit arresting officers into caricatures of southern U.S. sheriffs: It seemed slapdash" (Conlogue, "Updated Kafka" C10); in this remark, Conlogue echos Alan Twigg's *Georgia Straight* review of the original version: "But why were those two oddball emissaries at the outset of the play, who come to arrest Judith K. in her bedroom, depicted as imbecilic garage attendants? Or should such quirkiness that raises questions in the mind of the audience be deleted?" (Twigg 32). Twigg's remarks emphasize the tension between Clark's ideal of framing, but not necessarily solving, a mystery in her work, and an apparently common critical ideal of loose ends neatly tied up.

Signs of this conventional ideal, and of the vague humanism which Leonard, Wilson, and others had complained about in *Canadian Theatre Review*, abound in the reviews of Clark's adaptation in both its versions. In Vancouver, Moore and Dykk took *Trial* to task for failing to live up to the "universal" aspects of Kafka's "classic." For Dykk, the mere existence of Judith K. as a woman defeated any claim to relevance. Even Twigg, who did find such aspects in the adaptation, complained that the humour constituted "backwards or sideways detours" rather than "essentials," thus agreeing with the other two critics that comedy was ultimately detrimental to the serious

"universal" theme. Dykk was, oddly, disturbed by his own approval of the cutouts in the Vancouver production, which detracted from the "realism" of Kafka's story. In Toronto, Crew was most disturbed by the play's unenlightening "nihilism" and its apparent lack of "heart" or "compassion," again especially when mixed with humour. As for Conlogue, he not only repeats these objections, but even complains of the artificiality of "crumbling Roman pediments" in a Vancouver suburb, as if only documentary realism were worthy of notice.

The general reverence shown Clark's source throughout, as a "serious novel," is striking; particularly so considering the fact that the critics demonstrate a great deal of obvious ignorance, disguised with bland and sweeping assertions, about both the work and its author. If, in Barrault's time, he was a mysterious and unsettling figure of uncertain provenance and ambiguous meaning, for Clark's critics he is an icon whose meaning is, if no better known, also no longer in question. The once bizarre and troubling author has become a comforting fixture of the landscape of "high culture." Thus, despite the fact that none of the Canadian reviewers, unlike many of the European reviewers of previous adaptations, produces a coherent interpretation of *Der Proceß* to throw in the scales against Clark's, her reinterpretation is treated apparently on principle as a trivial misreading.

Clark herself sums up the reception of *Judith K.* as follows: "The critics in Toronto thought that Judith K. shouldn't have died, they said well, it's a comedy, you're laughing all the way through it, and then suddenly they die" (Interview, 5 May 1993). Only a month later Clark's first historical play, *Jehanne of the Witches*, about the bizarre relationship between Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais (the historical Bluebeard), fared even worse with the critics. The director, Clarke Rogers, bore the brunt of the blame; but doubts about the script itself were also later raised by Jerry Wasserman, who wrote: "Though one of our best playwrights, Sally Clark lets this ambitious work get the best of her"

("Letters in Canada 1990" 99). 1989 had thus not turned out a year of triumph for Clark, though she at least now had her name firmly linked to *Moo*, her biggest critical success.

In *Moo*, a woman spends her life tracking down the scoundrel husband who once accidentally shot her, tried to desert her, and even had her fraudulently committed. Clark says that the play originated when "I was intrigued by the concept of someone being a compulsive liar, say, and somebody else being in love with that person and constantly trying to make justifications for their behavior" (Morrow, "Playwright moooves career" C11). It no doubt worked in *Moo*'s favour, however, that the Toronto critics treated the play as a romantic domestic comedy, suitable for a woman playwright. Crew's review of the play was titled "Moo put humourous bite on snatches of family life" (Crew, "Moo" C2), while Conlogue's bore the headline, "Moo gets her man and tickles our funny bone" (Conlogue, "Moo" C9).

Academic interest in Clark also manifested itself that year in the form of Barbara Godard's article in *Canadian Theatre Review*. In "(Re)Appropriation as Translation," Godard analyzed *The Trial of Judith K.* and *Jehanne of the Witches* in the context of "Sally Clark's textual strategy of adapting novels for the stage and rewriting them with female protagonists," which Godard posited as "a challenge to the signifying practice of form, to the politics and poetics of both genre and gender" (Godard 22). Godard explains that

> Clark's choice of Kafka's *The Trial* and [Michel]Tournier's *Gilles & Jeanne* is critical in foregrounding the double bind in which she is situated as a woman playwright, hard pressed to find stageworthy dramatic situations for her characters in light of the theatrical grammar of female absence as motor for dramatic action [i.e., the common use of female characters as the objects of quest and desire, rather than as questing and desiring subjects], as well as in advancing a poetics of process, of transformation. (Godard 23)

Godard also describes Clark's strategy in a manner reminiscent of Belsey's "interrogative

text," in which "no authorial or authoritative discourse points to a single position which is the place of the coherence of meaning" (Belsey 92). As Godard expresses it, "That [Clark] has also chosen for adaptation fictions already translated is to multiply the disseminations of the author-function to an even greater degree. In the place of the singular author guarantor of the authoritative status of the truth value of the text we have a collectively 'authorized' text, co-signed by novelist, translator, adaptor, director, etc." (Godard 22-23). This interpretation is fruitful, at least as regards *Judith K.*, but the article is flawed in several respects: by its failure sufficiently to acknowledge that Clark wrote her Kafka adaptation at the behest of others; by its refusal to recognize the potential for humour in Kafka's original text; and by its assumption that *Jehanne* is also an adaptation, although Clark had never read or even heard of Tournier's novel (Interview, 5 May 1993). Godard also seems to have given the narrative text only a cursory reading, maintaining simplistically that Clark has "switch[ed] the genders of the roles almost uniformly to show the the [*sic*] effects of the law are experienced differently according to the gender of the characters and that what is a tragedy of the unbounded and indefinable for Joseph K., is experienced as rape and invasion by the female. Victimization is gendered" (Godard 30).

Godard's vague assertion that *Der Proceß* is a "tragedy of the unbounded and indefinable" bespeaks her reliance on an extremely narrow sample of the novel's history of interpretation: her own reading seems to be lifted awkwardly from two French sources, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's 1975 study *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* and Régine Robin's 1989 *Kafka*. What Godard lacks in specificity, she makes up for in a reliance on overdetermined academic jargon which occasionally threatens to slip into tautology and self-parody, as for example: "Both Clark's 'sources' are liminal texts, reworking various textual traditions from the position of racial and gender

minorities. As s(c)ite of investment of feminist 'poelitics,' these novels provide entry into a textual system deploying strategies of hybridization within a struggle against power from a position 'under occupation.' This is a position of dis-identification . . ." (Godard 25).

Judith K. was published as a playscript in 1991, dedicated "to the University of British Columbia, which provided the role model for this play"; a reference inspired by the experience of a friend of Clark's who had been teaching at UBC and had become embroiled in a tenure dispute (Interview, 5 May 1993). Jerry Wasserman reviewed the published playscript in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, where the year before he had named *Moo* not only the best of Clark's plays but one of "the year's best plays" ("Letters in Canada 1989" 66). Wasserman later also anthologized *Moo* in the second volume of his collection *Modern Canadian Plays*, thereby offering Clark entry into Canadian university syllabi (Johnson 44).

Describing Clark as a writer "who typically makes up in daring what she lacks in consistency," Wasserman interprets *Judith K.* as "black comedy of the absurd with an emphasis on the silly." He continues: "Like most of Clark's protagonists, Judith is an emotionally volatile woman on a quest that leads to her death. In reproducing this dramatic paradigm Clark is well served by the shape and many of the details of Kafka's novel" ("Letters in Canada 1990" 84). However, like many of the reviewers before him, Wasserman is troubled by the broad nature of Clark's comedy, in which the warders, for example, are reduced to "a couple of bozos in her bedroom. Even their names, Biff and Clem, suggest the tone Clark sets" (84). As a result of the play's failure to mesh style with content, "overall the play feels more like a reduction than an extension or expansion of her brilliant source. Judith's public life is run by misplaced business ambition (à la *Top Girls*), her private life by displaced sexual repression (an ex-husband named Dick among many other clues). The rest feels

like existential window dressing" (84-85).

The general tenor of the reviews, at least since Clark's revision of the play, remains balanced between praise of Clark's skill as a writer and dismay at her handling of the source material. In the final analysis, however, there is some validity to the reviewers' objections, insofar as Clark's basic lack of sympathy for Kafka and the speed with which the original version was composed have not entirely been conquered by subsequent revision. There are moments when passages from the original text jar in comparison with Clark's extremely colloquial diction, such as Judith's final monologue before the execution: "Are people to say of me after I am gone, that at the beginning of my case, I wanted to end it and now that it's coming to an end, I want to start it all over again? One must proceed with grace" (Clark, *Judith K.* 118).

More significantly, the dramatic text sometimes fails to cohere because so many of Clark's additions prove to be red herrings: the attempts at political commentary inherent in the characterization of Biff and Clem, and in the possibility of Judith's pregnancy averting her trial, are tantalizing beginnings, but the developments to which they were meant to lead were cut, or were never written. The creation of Milly Pearce, as well, for such a brief appearance, both needlessly complicates matters and contradicts Clark's own dictum that characters should recur. These elements remain distractions because they lead nowhere, and add nothing of substance to the plot. They thus have the result of reducing the already episodic plot to a disjointed series of sketches.

Other objections are less tenable. Most of the reviewers, as we have seen, clearly disagreed with Clark's opinion that there are comic aspects in Kafka's narrative text. Lloyd Dykk, for example, wrote of the first version, "What is lost from Kafka's magnificent novel . . . is the oppressive accumulation of dread for the arbitrary forces that govern our lives (or that only seem arbitrary to

us)" (Dykk, "Sense of dread lost" B10). Later reviewers have found rather that this sense of dread, or the violence by which it manifests itself, is all too present to allow any enjoyment of the play's comic aspects, whether they be justified or not. This objection, however, is not in itself particularly convincing, given the great success during this same period of plays by George F. Walker and Judith Thompson, who often juxtapose more absurd humour and more excessive violence. Indeed, in response to those critics who simply found Judith K. too depressing, Clark has defended herself well in print: "The main problem with Kafka is that if you try to be true to the text and get at its gloomy essence, people don't like it. . . . Should a janitor have appeared at the end of my play and tidied things up? Should Judith K. have woken up and said, 'My my, that was a terrible dream I had. Thank God things aren't really like that.' *The Trial* is an ugly story. It doesn't have a happy ending. The integrity of the story hinges on K.'s death" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial" 21).

In her later works, Clark has continued to explore the themes of identity and of female oppression, always treading a thin line between farce and *grand guignol*. 1991's *Life without Instruction*, for example, is based on the life of Renaissance painter Artemisia Gentileschi, whose rape leads to an inquiry which collapses under the weight of increasingly contradictory perjuries. In fantasy scenes throughout the play, Artemisia takes the role of the heroic Judith—the subject of her most famous painting—and casts her rapist Tassi in the part of Holofernes. Befitting her Apocryphal model, Artemisia is the first Clark protagonist to survive until the final curtain, though *Life* ends with her trapped in a loveless arranged marriage. When the play appeared in print three years later, Richard Paul Knowles, who had taken over Jerry Wasserman's annual beat in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, was impressed: "*Life without Instruction* manages to construct powerful and engaging characters and scenes while at the same time asserting that, like all characters

and roles, they *are* constructed" (Knowles, "Letters in Canada 1994," 108).

Clark's recent *St. Frances of Hollywood* (1995), however, exploring the life of actress Frances Farmer, is perhaps the quintessential Sally Clark play. Farmer's inability to toe the political and artistic line in 1930s America caused her to be deliberately constructed as insane, and the play is the ultimate expression of one of *Moo*'s most quotable lines: "If you are short, a woman, and wearing a straitjacket—well, forget it, you have no credibility at all" (Clark, *Moo* 28).

Not only *Moo* but all of Clark's previous works contribute elements to *St. Frances*: mental incompetence, loveless marriage, rape, torture and the dichotomies between saint and whore, or between role and actor. Even the sudden and arbitrary arrest by two functionaries which begins *The Trial* is visited upon Frances no less than three times. Though delivered with Clark's deceptively light touch, *St. Frances* is nonetheless her bleakest play to date, as Clark depicts her vision of Farmer's mysterious "personal, Job-like relationship with God" (Morrow, "Canada on stage" D2), but refuses to stage any of Farmer's career triumphs.

Critical responses to the play were mostly negative. Only the *Toronto Star*'s Vit Wagner praised the play as "absorbing" and "unusually unambiguous" for Clark (V. Wagner F1). Certainly it presents the clearest picture of Clark's theatrical universe, a dystopia where witty epigrams and deliberately comic anachronisms cannot disguise crushing gender inequities; where relationships, whether heterosexual, homosexual or parental, are almost invariably loveless and destructive; where the effects of patriarchal hegemony have made all women rivals for attention; and where, despite all this, men are as much victims as women are. No wonder that when Frances's ineffectual alcoholic father says, "I love you, Frances," she replies, "It's not doing me much good, Dad" (Clark, *Saint Frances* 80).

Finally, Clark's present work in progress, *The Widow Judith*, at last takes the book of Judith as its main source and is, in stark contrast to *St. Frances*, Clark's first play with an almost conventional happy ending: Judith not only survives the play's events, but lives free and single to the age of 105. Still marked by Clark's trademark colloquial style and mixture of comedy and violence, *The Widow Judith* completes an informal trilogy begun with *The Trial of Judith K.* and continued with *Life Without Instruction*, in which Clark's Judith-figures, women in hostile male territory, undergo first Clark's most senseless martyrdom, then survival at the cost of freedom, and at last victorious and independent life.

In the context of this later work, Clark's *Trial of Judith K.* does not seem especially marked in its opposition of comic aspects and harsh brutality, which so disturbed many reviewers. In fact, *Judith K.* is, if anything, subdued in its representation of misogyny and violence by its relative adherence to the ironic detachment of the narrative text. Though it is certainly true that Clark's original works are more confident and more consistent in their chaotic style, the fact that in the later plays no violence is being done to other authors may be as important a consideration in their reception as the amount of violence done to (and by) women in them.

By most standards, at any rate, Clark's career to date has been a very successful one: she has been playwright-in-residence at such important Canadian theatres as Theatre Passe Muraille, The Shaw Festival, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, and Nightwood Theatre, and has had her plays produced at Vancouver's Tamahnous Theatre, Calgary's Alberta Theatre Projects, Toronto's Canadian Stage Company and Tarragon Theatre. Thus she has now spent over a decade working at the same venues that are frequented by productions of such better-known Canadian playwrights as Joan MacLeod, George F. Walker and Judith Thompson. As early as 1990, Clark was counted

along with Wendy Lill, Joan MacLeod and Kelly Rebar as "talented playwrights who I believe will dominate Canadian drama for the next decade" (Wasserman, "Letters in Canada 1989" 58).

Nonetheless, Clark, unlike MacLeod and Lill, has so far in this decade attracted very little academic criticism and relatively few repeat productions. The possible reasons for this are many and complex. On the global level, Clark has been faced with a difficult market during a period of recession. The problems facing women playwrights at the beginning of the 1980s have already been described; by the end of the decade, the situation had arguably become even worse, and a survey found that in 1988, "the overall percentage of plays by Canadians was 66% (the 'small' theatres producing 78% of these) and the overall percentage of plays by women was 17% (of which the 'small' theatres produced 21%). . . . this 17% represents a fraction of a fraction—that is, 66% of all plays produced were by Canadians and 17% were by women, but not necessarily by Canadian women" (Zimmerman 21). Those women who, like Clark, have made a name for themselves as mainstream dramatists for the larger theatres in this period have overcome considerable odds.

At the same time, however, the disparity between her Toronto base and the Vancouver setting of most of her plays (even her Kafka adaptation) has arguably made it difficult to "place" her as either a Toronto or Vancouver playwright—a distinct disadvantage in the regionally-conscious Canadian theatre and academic scenes, where local interests often play a role in choosing both university syllabi and commercial theatre seasons (Johnston 35, 42; Rudakoff and Much 86).

Moreover, the sharp contrast between her themes and the actual content of her plays also makes it hard to place her sociopolitically: is she the feminist seen by Barbara Godard, "rewriting these texts to develop a feminist agenda [in] an expropriation of the first order" (Godard 25); the writer of "post-feminist parables, centring on strong, obsessive women who turn their victimization

in the grip of patriarchal systems into a personal virtue," as Jerry Wasserman suggests ("Letters in Canada 1989" 66); or the anti-feminist Ray Conlogue sought to construct by quoting her saying: "I hate political correctness"?

Perhaps most pertinently, the very complexity of Clark's original theatre arguably does her plays more harm than good. The large casts her plays require make them impractical for many small theatre companies, while their adult themes and language are inadmissible for most schools. Even in the commercial theatre, critics and reviewers do not always find her work accessible or even entirely comprehensible, and furthermore, even directors "have a lot of trouble approaching my work" (Clark, personal interview, 29 Feb. 1996). Indeed, according to her first mentor, Clarke Rogers, Clark's work poses such a considerable challenge to directors that "it demanded production just to see if it could work." He claimed to have been humbled by failure both times when he had directed *Lost Souls* and *Jehanne*: "I still find myself unable to find the key to realizing her work on stage" (Rudakoff, *Dangerous Traditions* 75).

Perhaps the great mystery in Clark's work is whether she will yet find a director capable of making her idiosyncratic style apparent as such. Nonetheless, in their inherent contradictions her works do show a strong thematic and dramaturgical consistency, and her success on the stage has been enough to warrant more serious attention than she has, as yet, received. In the meantime, she will no doubt continue writing in her own way; as she says, "I have to let my characters go in the direction they want. And I don't like to scrutinize my writing too much. I will let somebody else do that" (Conlogue, "I hate political correctness" C3). As for her experience with *Judith K.*, she has written, "Certainly, I can think of no more thankless task than adapting a Kafka novel for the stage. In future, I will choose a totally obscure novel that has never been made into a movie. I will never

adapt *War and Peace*. I don't even want to take a run at *Winnie-the-Pooh*" (Clark, "Comedy on Trial" 21).

Conclusion

In March 1995, an adaptation of *Der Proceß* entitled *K: Impressions of "The Trial"* opened at the Guthrie Lab Theatre in Minneapolis. Written and directed by Garland Wright, *K* (with no period after the initial) conveyed the plot of Kafka's narrative text by combining only thirty pages of text with stylized movement, harsh lighting and a black-and-white colour palette, as every one of the eleven cast members, male and female, played K in turn. Tad Simons wrote an enthusiastic review in *American Theatre*, calling *K* "perhaps the most exquisitely realized ensemble piece in the Guthrie's history" (Simons 4).

At the same time, he nonetheless contrasts Kafka's "unfinished masterpiece"—if this is not itself an oxymoron—with the "questionable" manner in which Wright's production "often looks and feels too much like the sophisticated feat of theatrical engineering it is." *K*, Simons writes, "though formally perfect in structure, refuses in every other way to conform to theatrical shape . . . [with] no rising action, climax or denouement" (Simons 4-5). Referring to strange incidents of *déjà vu* which both originally inspired Wright's production and took place during the rehearsal process, Simons titles his article "Déjà Vu All Over Again"; but this title is equally apt to describe both the continual return of the theatre to Kafka's narrative text as a source and the familiar contradictory tone of grudging praise and disapproval which marks Simons's review. *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reviewer Peter Vaughan, incidentally, was much less equivocal in his praise of the production—although he mistakenly believed it was set in the late nineteenth century (Vaughan E4).

Despite Vaughan's enthusiasm for Wright's project, we have already seen that adaptations have often been critically unpopular, subject to charges of tampering, counterfeiting,

misinterpretation, or wilful manipulation. Indeed, exactly such charges have been levelled against every one of the adaptations described in the preceding chapters, sometimes in the same breath with admiration of the theatrical skill brought to bear on the project. The tone of many reviews and criticisms makes it clear that the very idea of adapting a novel, above all a canonical "great novel," to the stage is suspect or even offensive to many critics, regardless of any intrinsic quality which may inhere in the adaptation as a work. This unpopularity seems, judging from many of the remarks recorded here, to be based in part on some presumption of rivalry between the adaptation and its original, the so-called "real thing"; or at least of some sort of interference with public reception of the original, as implied by Adorno's remark that adaptations should be left to the "culture industry."

These charges do not, however, stand up to close scrutiny. There is no evidence that any of the five adapters intended to compete with Kafka; on the contrary, it is clear from their own writings that Gide, Barrault and Berkoff strongly identified with Kafka at the time they produced their adaptations, and intended their work as homage to him. Further, Weiss received his commission from Ingmar Bergman based on prior evidence of such identification, though he claimed to have overcome those feelings. Even Clark, while not fond of Kafka, demonstrates no desire to outdo him, and rather set herself the task of a certain degree of fidelity to his work as "the master."

In fact, such homage or fidelity is entirely appropriate, insofar as the very project of adaptation—particularly when its object is a canonical work—is as much dependent on the continuing authority of the original work as is any other form of exegesis. For the authors of the adaptations (and for those who commissioned Weiss's and Clark's versions), the mention of Kafka's name remains vital as ultimate guarantor of the importance of the story represented. It is simply not in the adapter's interest to eclipse the source of his or her inspiration.

And, accordingly, there is no evidence whatsoever that the reputation of *Der Proceß* or of its author has suffered from continual adaptation. In fact, the story of Kafka adaptation is contiguous with the story of Kafka reception. At the end of the 1930s, Peter Weiss was by his own account in the minority of Germans acquainted with Kafka's writings; the French regarded him as an esoteric and "unfathomable" writer; and in England, the Muirs' translations of Kafka's novels had sold so poorly that a new publisher had to be found for each volume (Crick 162). The postwar spread of Kafka's fame and his currency as an author of "great works" coincides with the growth of the number of adaptations of his work, and the tendency to such adaptations ought properly to be regarded as a manifestation of that currency and an attempt to share in it, rather than to compete with it.

There is, indeed, some empirical evidence which suggests that adaptation enhances an author's reputation, at least insofar as reputation may be associated with marketability. To take an example far more obscure than Kafka's novel: in 1994, Lawrence Venuti was translating *Fosca*, a novel by the marginally canonical Italian romantic writer I. U. Tarchetti (1839-1869), when he discovered that the same novel was coincidentally being adapted into a Broadway musical, *Passion*, by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine. Venuti's publisher, Mercury House, cannily titled the translation *Passion* as well, and designed a cover reminiscent of the musical's advertising: "Copies were sold in the lobby of the theater at performances, which continued for nearly a year. Within four months of publication, 6500 copies were in print. The translation did not make the bestseller list, but it was widely circulated for an Italian novel that had previously been unknown to English-language readers" (Venuti, "Translation, Heterogeneity, Linguistics" 103).

It is difficult to see why a production in 1947 by a star of Barrault's stature would not have a comparable effect on the public profile, and thus possibly on the sales, of its source. Perhaps such

practical considerations in part motivated translator Alexandre Vialatte not only to reverse his request to have his name removed from the Barrault-Gide adaptation, but even to pen an article in *Le Figaro* in support of the production during the premiere week. Despite the fact that when an adaptation is regarded as unsuccessful, it cannot be proven to cause harm to the original text's reputation, it does seem that a well-regarded and popular adaptation can raise the public's level of interest in the original somewhat. In other words, the "real thing," rather than being obscured by the act of adaptation, is set into the spotlight through the medium of adaptation, even though the act of mediation itself remains clearly visible—and therefore remains problematic for the critics.

At several points, we have touched upon the connection between adaptation across genres and linguistic translation, not only because various adapters' views of Kafka have been dependent on access to him via translations, but also because adaptation is itself a form of translation between different sign-systems. If we accept this analogy, then it may be possible to explain the hostility towards dramatic adaptation by adapting Lawrence Venuti's description of prevailing translation strategies in Western—and particularly in Anglo-American—culture.

As Venuti explains in his history *The Translator's Invisibility*, Western standards of translation rely on *fluency* rather than *fidelity*; that is, translations which give the appearance of being written in the target language are valued above translations which "foreignize" the text, making clear both the text's origin in an alien language and culture and the violent mediation and appropriation of the translator's activity. The strategy of fluency effaces the translator's presence and allows the reader to believe that the translated text somehow represents the thoughts of the original author as they might be expressed if the author had written in the target language. Hence, the "invisibility" of the translator (Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility* 1-42). Exactly this strategy has allowed the

Muirs' translations of Kafka's novels to become the canonical reading of Kafka in English, despite their work's documented shortcomings in terms of fidelity or accuracy; it appears that only age, the great enemy of translations, will finally allow their increasingly old-fashioned diction to be replaced by one of the more contemporary, though not necessarily more accurate, contenders.

The medium of film seems to be able to achieve something like Venuti's invisibility by using techniques of cinematography and montage to mimic the internal imaginative process by which the reader pictures the events of a novel. This ability, and the fact that adaptations of novels have been the cinema's stock in trade almost since its invention, have made the novel on film unexceptional and produced a relatively large (though nonetheless surprisingly young) body of critical theory on film adaptations. At the same time, film adaptations have been as subject to the vicissitudes of age as linguistic translations: witness the number of remakes which have been produced of adaptations of Dickens, Hawthorne, or James Fenimore Cooper, in order to reappropriate the classics for succeeding generations who come to expect first sound, then colour, then increasing amounts of graphic violence or sexuality, always accompanied by new, more "natural" acting styles. Among these productions, of course, are numbered two adaptations of *Der Proceß*, both filmed in English as *The Trial*, in 1963 and 1993. These remakes are often accompanied by the release of new editions of the books on which they are based.

The stage, however, is not only subject to age; even in the immediate present, it is limited by real time and space. Within these bounds, methods must be found to coax the audience's imagination into seeing the dramatic performance as a series of real events. Ironically, since the development of cinema, the vocabulary of film has been modified and taken over by the stage to enrich its repertoire of strategies, so that the audience is now asked to collaborate in the imaginative

construction of wipes, crossfades, dream sequences and flashbacks based on cues from the actors, lighting or soundscape.

Nonetheless, the physical presence of actors in the same space as the audience prevents the audience, for the most part, from entirely overlooking the mediated nature of theatre. The mediators are literally present for the entirety of the performance; and their presence further implies the involvement of other mediators, such as the director, for example, or in the cases examined here, the adapter. The invisibility asked of Venuti's translator is never possible, and the adapter remains both present and provocative to the critic—especially when, as in two of the adaptations described here, the adapter or co-adapter is among the cast onstage (it will be remembered that at the Bremen premiere of *Der Prozeß*, Peter Weiss was present among the audience, and he seemed to feel particular animosity from the reviewers on that account).

If one does not accept this analogy to explain the general critical distaste for adaptation, less complicated charges can be put forward, such as Barrault's and Berkoff's accusations of territorialism and elitism on the part of the academics whom Barrault called Kafka's "high priests." Adorno's very idea of the "culture industry," for example, to which adaptations should be relegated, has prompted accusations of elitism (Bernstein, in Adorno, *The Culture Industry* 1); but more to the point, Kundera's indictment of the industry of "Kafkology," though perhaps exaggerated for polemic purposes, would seem to support the charges of elitism more substantially. We have repeatedly seen how, as if in imitation of Max Brod, Kafka critics tend with unusual consistency to become personally involved with and protective of their subject; hence, for example, Politzer's accusing Barrault and Gide of "perversion of truth."

Such possessiveness may explain many critics' tendency to take exception to the

interpretations of adapters, even when those interpretations are actually conservative in terms of contemporary textual criticism. Barrault and Gide's mixture of existentialism and absurdism with surrealist visual overtones; Berkoff's neo-expressionism, with an accent on sexuality; and Weiss's rather subdued Marxism, all represent approaches to Kafka which had become current in textual criticism long before the adaptations appeared. Even the apparently radical changes which Clark rings upon Kafka's narrative text are ultimately rooted in the most conservative of interpretations: Judith K. dies because she is unwilling to love and therefore to live, exactly as Max Brod explained Josef K.'s guilt.

Matching this conservatism of interpretation, the adaptations considered here have also seldom been entirely adventurous in form or technique. There is nothing formally revolutionary about either Clark's or Weiss's adaptations, whatever their sociopolitical mandate. Berkoff's theatre takes more risks in its visceral intensity than in its technique *per se*; his *Trial* is in this respect less interesting than his original plays in pseudo-Shakespearian blank verse.

Of these four adaptations, only Barrault and Gide's *Procès* was arguably at the forefront of contemporary theatrical technique. Its primacy as first stage adaptation of Kafka's novel and the combined prestige of its authors have given it an aura almost comparable to that of the source text. Indeed, we have seen how it has been regularly used as a yardstick for subsequent adaptations, though often in the negative, as proof that the task of adaptation is fruitless. *Le Procès* remains nonetheless the only certified stage success of the four adaptations, the most praised even amongst qualifications and denunciations, and the most critically examined.

The fact that I began this project with the Barrault-Gide version might give the impression that I have sketched the decline of Kafka adaptations through the years, in terms of quality,

popularity and fidelity. As promised, however, I refuse to interpret what I have presented teleologically. No corollary relationship exists between an adaptation's fidelity, its popularity and its quality (by whatever standards the last might be assessed). Nor do four adaptations constitute a statistically significant sample from which to judge any form of progress even if I so desired.

Finally, it must be remembered that the success of *Le Procès* is as bound to social and historical contexts as the production itself. As I write these words, the Barrault-Gide adaptation is almost fifty years old. Adaptations, like translations, seem to age faster than originals, and *Le Procès* is both. Already only ten years after its premiere, critics were beginning to call Barrault's style old-fashioned, "out of touch" (Fowlie 51). Ten years later again, Barrault was publicly reviled during the student revolution as a maker of "consumerist art" (Brown 445), in other words, as fully complicit in Adorno's "culture industry," a charge which Adorno himself had stopped just short of making.

The modern reader, faced with the now-stilted flavour of the play's 1940s dialogue, will be amazed to read the accusations of Politzer or Ira Kuhn, claiming that the dialogue of *Le Procès* is too witty and casual; the Anglophone reader, dependent on Leon Katz's wooden translation (itself now thirty-four years old), will be doubly amazed. To the contemporary Canadian English speaker, at least, the tone and rhythm of Sally Clark's dialogue is easier to speak, while a speaker of British English would be more comfortable with Berkoff's version, though Berkoff's particularly 1970s-style aggressive mixture of sexuality and misogyny, and his staging (now too reminiscent of Peter Brook's acrobatic 1970 *Midsummer Night's Dream*, full of juggling and trapezes) serve to date his adaptation as well. As for Weiss's version, his attempt to remain faithful to the novel results in too many passages taken almost *verbatim* from the novel, readable but often unspeakable; but with the

reunification of Germany and the fall of the Iron Curtain, Weiss's politics have aged his adaptation even more quickly than the form of his work could have done.

Nonetheless, all four adaptations have been, and therefore can be, staged. They thus demonstrably function as plays in and of themselves, and not as mere shadows of Kafka's novel. If their lifespan has proven—or yet proves—to be relatively short, that does not make them failures. If we choose their creators' judgements as sole criterion, then we must reckon *Le Procès* and Berkoff's *Trial* as successes, but not Weiss's and Clark's adaptations; yet the latter two versions have had their defenders and enthusiasts as well, and *Judith K.* played to full houses thanks to word of mouth alone (Weiss seems to have given up on his *Prozeß* so quickly after it opened that even if audiences contradicted the critics' opinion, he took no notice).

Likewise, all four adaptations can be shown to adhere closely to Mirza's observations about the strategies likely to be used in theatrical adaptations of novels. Of Mirza's six points, all six can be found in every adaptation; although the sixth point, *f)*, according to which material lost as verbal signs is reintegrated into the performance text by means of sound, lighting or props, is not mentioned explicitly in my analysis of Clark's version, and only appears once in the others, this strategy is in fact so pervasive throughout all versions that enumerating instances of it would be never-ending. Again, Mirza's observations are broad enough to be generally applicable; but they are not to be regarded as *laws* of theatrical adaptation, which this project had no intention of producing.

Their main function has been to be just precise enough to demonstrate that the alterations which narrative texts undergo in the process of dramatic adaptation are to some extent predictable. They are not dependent on Adorno's generalizations about the nature of drama or on Politzer's idea of a "law of genuine dramatic speech"; rather, they are dictated by the conditions under which

contemporary theatre is produced in the twentieth century. These strategies of adaptation are neither sufficient to explain the entire complex activity of adaptation, nor are they necessarily applicable to the theatrical forms of eras past or to come; they do, however, demonstrate that the resulting changes are not sufficiently explained by charges of either misunderstanding or wilful misrepresentation on the adapters' part.

Finally, I hope I have demonstrated that despite some scholarly opinions to the contrary, theatrical events can be understood as more than mere representations of their texts, with the help of social, political or biographical information which helps interpret the messages they were intended to communicate (and the messages which were apparently actually received) in their historical context of origin. The individual theatrical production is not, after all, so ephemeral that nothing important or interesting can be said about it.

This dissertation began with the words of a reviewer who suggested that Kafka has no place in the theatre, and that the theatre has no place interpreting Kafka. This opinion has often been expressed, and often, as we have seen, has seemed to prevail. Dissenting opinions have nevertheless regularly been both expressed and acted upon, in academia, among the critical establishment, and above all in the theatre itself. Despite the narrow-minded edicts of some critics, the theatre in its freedom will continue to turn to Kafka, and to hundreds of other authors, as a source for inspiration, adaptation, and occasionally, indeed, for plagiarism.

Kafka will be among these sources as long as he remains in the canon, and only when critics no longer care to "defend" him from the encroachments of the theatre will the theatre no longer care to adapt his works. In the meantime, I can only agree with Irmgard Gerbitz that "because the stage is a multidimensional medium, because movement, light, language, and decor can exist here

simultaneously, the stage is particularly suitable for the communication of complex images and feelings such as exist in Kafka's work" (Gerbitz 81).

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