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WILLIAM GRANGE

FOREIGN-LANGUAGE COMEDY PRODUCTION IN THE THIRD REICH

The two most frequently performed non-German comic playwrights on German-language stages from 1933 to 1944 were Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793) and Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), whose plays served the purposes of cultural transmission both by the theatre establishment and the political regime in power at the time. Goethe had seen Goldoni productions in Venice during his "Italian Journeys" between 1786 and 1788, and he reported that never in his life had he heard such "laughter and bellowing at a theatre."¹ It remains unclear whether he meant laughing and bellowing on the part of audiences or the actors, but since his other remarks on the experience were fairly charitable, Goldoni's status rose accordingly.² Goethe himself enjoyed the exalted status of cultural arbiter with unimpeachable judgement, so Goldoni remained a solid fixture in German theatre repertoires throughout the Third Reich. Oscar Wilde, on the other hand, had been an emblem of urbane sophistication and aphoristic refinement in Germany since the premieres of his plays in the 1890s. His plays enjoyed almost cult status among sophisticated elites in Berlin during the Weimar Republic, especially *Bunbury*, the German title for *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Productions of that play outnumbered all others in the Wildean *œuvre* from 1919 to 1933—but after 1933, *Bunbury's* status changed considerably, reflecting the changes within German theatre as a whole.

The change in the German theatre was predicated on establishing a new set of aesthetics standards, based on a "triumph of the will" over reason, applicable to all matters cultural in German public life.³ The subsequent amplification, or at least exaggeration, of "the will" to a standard of aesthetic judgement among National Socialists has been a subject of excessive concern in the twentieth century,⁴ and one may discern expressions

of this particular Nazi cultural doctrine in selected Goldoni and Wilde productions. They are the ones discussed in this essay, productions which would today qualify as somewhat bizarre yet “diverse” manifestations of cultural transmission.

Goldoni’s status on German stages prior to 1933 usually appeared in terms that translated as “the Italian Molière,” a categorical *residuum* of the Napoleonic wars when a general consensus evolved among critics that Goldoni’s plays might prove useful in the struggle to unshackle the German theatre from French influences.⁵ The subsequent tendency of German critics in the nineteenth century was to acknowledge the success of a divorce from France, while subsequently reappraising Goldoni and according him praise for “playability.” His comedies lost cultural status in the process and found themselves at somewhat the same level as Kotzebue—again for reasons attributable to Goethe: “High praise is due [Goldoni],” Goethe is reported to have said, “who from nothing has created such diverting pastimes.”⁶ Goldoni’s comedies were not “literary” in the sense of Molière’s or of Lessing’s, nor were they considered worthy of elevated cultural esteem. But diversions they certainly were, and most reviewers of Third Reich productions continued to honor them as such, denying Goldoni any iconographic station but bestowing upon him the relatively high rank of an Italian archetype. As a result, many observers, both professional and otherwise, looked to Goldoni productions for aesthetic clues as to what was “authentically” Italian and in a concomitant effort tried to arrive at some informed estimation as to what was likewise an authentically German interpretation of “Italian-ness.”

The most frequently performed Goldoni plays in the Third Reich were *La Locandiera* (*The Mistress of the Inn*, under the German title *Mirandolina*) and *Il servitore de due Padroni* (*The Servant of Two Masters*, as *Diener zweier Herren*). Reviewers in the Third Reich who saw productions of these comedies commonly based their observations and analyses upon two generally identifiable cultural positions. The first was a concern for “authenticity”: were production values “Mediterranean” or did they tend toward

“Nordic” interpretations of the same? The second was a critique of the acting; did the performers engage in improvisational *commedia* techniques, or did they attempt instead patterns of Italian national behavior? Critics voiced little preference for either approach in the acting, as both seemed equally acceptable. Nearly all the productions attempted to meld considerations of national or cultural identity with the aesthetic: the more “Italian” or even “Nordically Mediterranean”—and in some cases, the more “Nordically Italianate-Shakespearean”—a Goldoni production was, the more artistic success it seems to have achieved.

The Nazi *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power) in January of 1933 signaled a distinct change in critical tenor toward Oscar Wilde. While *Bunbury*'s fortunes took a downturn, those of its creator ironically improved. There were 147 different productions of Wilde plays in the Third Reich (the identical number of Goldoni productions), and among English-language playwrights, Wilde was second only to Shakespeare as the most prolifically produced. The plays most often staged, however, were those which Wilde wrote before *Bunbury*, namely *Lady Windermere's Fan* (as *Lady Windermere's Fächer*), *An Ideal Husband* (*Ein idealer Gatte*), and *A Woman of No Importance* (*Eine Frau ohne Bedeutung*). The plays were done so frequently in the mid 1930s that one critic characterized those years as the “Wilde Renaissance.”⁸ Causes for the renaissance are too numerous to delineate here, but three of them stand out for the purposes of this essay. The first and most significant was official German diplomatic policy toward the British government between 1934 and 1939; the second was one particular director in Berlin; and the third was the influence of a film based on a Wilde play, a film which stimulated interest in other Wilde plays for live performance.

A good example of the first reason for a Wilde renaissance was Hitler's contempt for the English elites, whom he considered effete and degraded. That was especially true of those “senile British statesmen” of the diplomatic corps who had failed to address premonitory indications of the British

Empire's decline at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁹ Hitler's disdain for the British aristocracy motivated his enthusiastic receptions in the mid-1930s for David Lloyd George, the Welsh commoner (later elevated to a peerage) who had led the British government during World War I and a man whom Hitler greatly admired.¹⁰ Lord Illington in *A Woman of No Importance*, and to a lesser extent Sir Robert Chiltern, Wilde's Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs in *An Ideal Husband* are personifications of the "senility" Hitler had in mind. *An Ideal Husband* also provided at least one documented example of how aesthetics adjoined politics in the Third Reich: on January 30, 1936 the production's entire cast stood before the house curtain of the Kleines Haus in the Berlin Staatstheater at intermission to join with the audience in commemorating the "Day of National Solidarity" by singing the national anthem, "Deutschland über alles."

Karl Lerbs, whose translations of Wilde plays were most widely in use during the Third Reich, argued the dubious notion that criticism of British aristocrats was the most significant aspect of Wilde's dramatic output.¹¹ The Frankfurt am Main Municipal Theatre was one of several regional theatres to stage Lerbs' translations of all three of Wilde's social comedies in the same season (1935-1936), and all three productions took the politically correct, somewhat jaundiced view of the British aristocracy. Those productions revealed Wilde's "real intentions in these comedies," said critic Erik Krünes, comedies from which "the German Fatherland to date has withheld its appreciation."¹² It was, in the words of another critic, as if Wilde had "manufactured brilliant comedies in the form of detective romances, . . . [and by] adding a whiff of pulp fiction, [he] thereby mercilessly ruffled the elites." Wilde "obviously wanted to hold a mirror up to English society, and the reflection is shocking."¹³

One must also note that the reflection Wilde held up in the German language did not always contain the droll waggishness found in the original, despite Lerbs' attempts to ferry it across for German consumption. Herbert Ihering, who had witnessed dozens of Wilde productions in his long career as a

Berlin critic (which began in 1910 as lead critic for the *Berliner Börsen-Courier*), attempted to dismiss the lack of frivolity in Nazi-era Wilde productions by claiming that German audiences suffered historically from “a lack of appreciation for ‘the conversational play.’”¹⁴ That claim was obviously tailored to fit prevailing political sentiment, as Wilde’s plays had been enormously popular since their premieres in the 1890s and throughout the Weimar Republic—lines like “nothing succeeds like excess” (from *A Woman of No Importance*) found enormous resonance in the 1920s and could have qualified as a kind of motto for that decade, even in Germany. Most critics of *Bunbury* during the Weimar Era had furthermore made positive mention of Wilde’s flippancy and ability to create the rapier-like *bon mot*, but rarely did a critic of any Wilde production during the Third Reich allude to laughter among the audience.

A second reason for the “Wilde Renaissance” was director Alfred Bernau at the aptly named Renaissance Theatre in Berlin. His production of *Lady Windermere’s Fan* opened September 14, 1934 and ran for three seasons in that theatre. His 1936 production of *A Woman of No Importance* proved to be equally popular, and these productions prompted directors in several other German theatres to “revisit” Wilde. Bernau was so successful with *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, in fact, that he leased the Kleines Theater, also in Berlin, and opened there a second production of *Fan*. In a marketing ploy unprecedented in Berlin, the two productions then proceeded to compete against each other through the same season! Bernau was convinced of the aestheticized political import of the play, so in both productions he sought to overcome preconceptions of Wilde as a “mere” boulevardier. The director persuaded most critics of his cause, at any rate. Critic Anton Franz Ditezenschmidt stared in his review:

At the 1892 premiere of [*Lady Windermere’s Fan*] in London, Wilde accepted the applause of the audience while sarcastically smoking a cigarette and standing at the theatre’s stage apron. “I have enjoyed the evening immensely,” Wilde supposedly said to his ad-

mirers. "The actors have given us a charming rendering of a delightful play, and your appreciation has been most intelligent. . . [Your applause] convinces me that you think almost as highly of the play as I do myself."

At the Renaissance Theatre "he would have been pleased again, not just because he would have been eighty years old, but because he would have been forced to bow before the artistry of great [German] performances."¹⁵ Another reviewer was more cautious, though just as appreciative of director Bernau's arbitrary, yet politically informed stance: "In the third act [when] Lord Darlington assumes a virtuous air and starts throwing moralistic tidbits to the spectators in the front-row orchestra seats . . . the director's real message comes through." Lord Darlington is obviously emblematic of aristocratic degradation, and the proof of that, the reviewer concluded, was how hollow such moralizing sounded to audiences in the "new" Germany: "We don't need such tidbits these days—we're too robust—but we can chew on them all the same."¹⁶ Critic Ernst Kalkschmidt, reviewing a Munich Schauspielhaus production in 1937, stressed the same qualities Berlin critics had found in the Bernau productions: "The 'fan' is more than just a prop in this play," he wrote. It represented an entire bygone era, a Victorian house of mirrors in which coquetry and "fan language" abounded. "'Fan language' cannot really be translated," Kalkschmidt conceded, "and anyway it is spoken only by experts in decadence."¹⁷

Beyond the glorification of the "new" Germany's novel appreciation of Oscar Wilde (which accorded with cultural predilections in both the Reich Chancellery and in Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry), the third basis for the Wilde revival was an extremely popular 1936 Gustaf Gründgens's film of *A Woman of No Importance*. Gustaf Gründgens (1898-1963) played Lord Illingworth in the film, bringing to it the modernist sensibility of a cabaret confèrencier seasoned heavily with a mysterious ingredient called "cultural despair."¹⁸ After the film's premiere, many of Germany's most accomplished leading men aspired to duplicate Gründgens's approach to the character, even though

the screenplay differed from the Wilde version.¹⁹ The celluloid image of Gründgens, arguably the Third Reich's most celebrated actor, had captivated Third Reich audiences, critics, and imitators alike. It prompted Otto Ernst Hesse, in reviewing the stage performance of Viktor de Kowa as Lord Illingworth, to remark that stage performances in the shadow of Gründgens's on film may prompt "all of us . . . to see these plays as ironic portraits" of a calcified Victorian society.²⁰ Herbert Ihering praised de Kowa as Lord Goring in a subsequent production of *An Ideal Husband* while alluding to Gründgens. The role of Lord Goring, he said, required "the combined talents of a cabaret confèrencier and a classical dramatic actor"—almost an exact description of Gustaf Gründgens himself. One cannot avoid comparisons with Gründgens as Lord Goring some years earlier, Ihering said, who played Lord Goring "as it should be played . . . speaking every line like an aphorism."²¹

Aphorisms were rare in German-language Goldoni productions, first of all because Goldoni employed them sparingly in his original dialogue; but during the Third Reich, a certain rhetorical woodenness was an unfortunate function of translations by Fritz Knöllner, which were widely in use after 1933. The result was an overreliance on sight-gags and slapstick devices, though some observers claimed to have detected a "dialectical tension"²² within productions, revealing itself as the contradiction between the "Nordic" and the "Mediterranean." That was a distinction to which several reviewers addressed themselves in their commentaries on *Mirandolina* productions. "The Latin peoples are more adept at the mastery of this kind of theatre," wrote Ernst Heilborn after seeing a Frankfurt am Main production of *Mirandolina*. Frankfurt productions in the Third Reich were particularly susceptible to oddly "Germanic" interpretations of Italian plays, as the director of municipal theatres in Frankfurt during the Nazi dictatorship was a *bona fide* member of the SS.²³ "The Germanic peoples experience a rougher quality of existence," said Heilborn, "one which sometimes spoils a sense of play. Our sun does not shine the whole year [as theirs

does] nor is our soil as rich. In Shakespeare we find our true comic echo.”²⁴ Heilborn went on to say that Goldoni’s debt to Shakespeare—and *Mirandolina*’s similarity to one Shakespearean comedy in particular—“strikes a contemporary chord: when the misogynist is transformed—a reverse taming of a shrew—it seems quite modern.” It was indeed modern, far more modern than Heilborn himself realized.

Translator Knöllner assumed the duties of director for a production of *Mirandolina* in Munich during the summer of 1940,

[which] portrayed the world of a market fair, one that captured the German imagination without losing the play’s Mediterranean spirit . . . The characters were singularly unique without being exaggerated. Sonia Karzau [in the title role] seemed to inhabit perfectly the ethnic atmosphere the director created, but with a sweetness that was rather un-Italian.²⁵

Perhaps the most unusual production of *Mirandolina* during the Third Reich was staged by Richard Weichert, who had enjoyed far-reaching success with several Expressionist productions in Frankfurt during the Weimar years and had managed to remain politically acceptable and artistically active during in the Third Reich. His work retained earmarks from his Expressionist period, especially those based on arbitrariness and directorial whim: in this production they appeared as distinct burlesque affectations, eschewing atmospherics or an ethnic pedigree in favor of an emphasis on broad humor, the kind most particularly evident during what Ernst Heilborn called the “conversion” scene. That was when the erstwhile misogynist, Cavalier Ripafratta, declares his love for *Mirandolina*, doing so with a series of slapstick gags which reviewer Max Gelsenheyner termed “genuinely *volkstümlich* [and] loved by every female member of the audience.”²⁶ Florian Kienzl credited the production’s success to the “zoological” portrayal of Flockina von Platen in the title role. This mistress of the inn, he said, was “a carnivore [*Raubtier*] with soft paws and sharp claws.”²⁷ Wilhelm Westecker, a Nazi official and author of several books and dozens of essays on the theatre, praised the Expressionist techniques Weichert employed with music in

Mirandolina. The director had commissioned composer Kurt Heuser to create “Italian-sounding” (Westecker’s phrase) music for the production, to which the actors rhythmically moved during the scene changes. One could thus detect a “Germanic feel” to the production, Westecker said; a good example was Kurt Waitzmann’s Fabricio, who was unassailably Nordic. He “seemed to have dropped into the production, blown in from a gale on the North Sea.”²⁸ The most interesting account of this production, however, was that of Paul Fechter, who wrote that the play “was originally rococo in style but somehow became, in this production, oddly baroque.” In other words, it suffered from “too much ornate ornamentation and was often heavy handed,” like Carl Kuhlmann’s portrayal of the Cavalier as a “Laokoön of love’s passions.”²⁹ An analogy between Laokoön and what should have been a fairly light-hearted comedic characterization is an indication of how heavy-handed the performance must have been.³⁰

The Servant of Two Masters was the second-most popular Goldoni comedy in the Third Reich. It suffered, or perhaps benefited, from like-minded directorial attempts to find a formula for politically correct approaches by means of ethnic or cultural identity. The aforementioned Flockina von Platen played the dual role of Beatrice/Federico in a production which tried to combine “the *ernst verhaltenen Schelmerei* (seriously restrained impishness or roguery) of the Germans with the *tändelnden Witz* (flirtatious or trifling wit) of the Italians.”³¹ Most productions of *Diener zweier Herren*, however, concentrated on the *Diener* of the title (Truffaldino), sometimes in the hope of finding a Teutonic heritage for the character. One of the first of such productions opened in 1936 at the Tribüne Theater in Berlin, designed for and directed by the actor Rudolf Platte as Truffaldino. Platte did the part cabaret-style (he had been a cabaret performer during the Weimar Republic), emphasizing a presentational style with exaggerated gestures and vocal conceits. Platte placed his personal stamp on the production (and on his fellow performers) by staging some scenes so that no words were spoken for

several minutes at a time, allowing him the opportunity to “go through a kind of dumbshow with the other characters.”³² Dumb show antics reached their nadir in this production when a spaghetti fight erupted in the final act. “There was a bit of the Hanswurst in this Truffaldino,”³³ observed one critic, though he credited Platte with good stage combat choreography, as handfuls of spaghetti effectively landed in the mouths of Truffaldino’s onstage targets.³⁴

A somewhat similar, though less rustic approach took place eight years later in Berlin with the well-known character actor Wilfried Seyferth. His Truffaldino was not in the Hanswurst mold but emphasized “the childish, naïve joy with which the Italians delight in clownery.” Seyferth’s performance, however, came at near the very end of the Third Reich, so perhaps his emphasis on what reviewer Bruno Werner called “Truffaldino’s contemplative side” is somewhat understandable.³⁵ Werner may also have been expressing a remarkable readiness, common in many reviews of Goldoni productions during the Third Reich, to discover a certain “Shakespearean” tendency in Goldoni’s characters. The inference was that Shakespeare, rather than Goldoni, spoke directly to the German soul and was more understandable to them than Goldoni. “The Italian character,” he concluded, “is essentially foreign to the northern European tendency to deliberate.”³⁶ Shakespeare had become established in the repertoires of nearly every German theatre long before the Third Reich, occupying a place of cultural status equal to that Goethe or Schiller. “If Shakespeare has been welcomed with open arms in Germany,” according to Goebbels’s most influential apparatchik in the Propaganda Ministry, “it has been because, and let there be no doubt about this, there is a bond of blood which unites us.”³⁷ “Official” pronouncements about Shakespeare voiced similar sentiments, insisting on Shakespeare’s “Nordic character” and on his role as a “great emancipator of the Germanic spirit.” Critic Cornelia Herstatt, one of few female theatre critics writing during the Hitler dictatorship, echoed Ernst Heilborn in his review of *Mirandolina* by citing

Shakespeare as a model for Goldoni. She likewise engaged in a bit of disquisitional hyperbole, referring to Seyferth in the role of Truffaldino as a “literary son of Falstaff.”³⁸

Perhaps the most curious example of endowing a Goldoni production with Shakespearean contours was a 1941 Berlin production by film director Heinz-Dietrich Kenter. He staged *Diener zweier Herren* as a rehash of his *Taming of the Shrew* production from two years before, a production that had featured a *commedia*-style raised platform center stage and a stylized painted backdrop of Padua suspended from upstage battens.³⁹ Kenter employed the identical scenic device for *Diener zweier Herren* and conceived of Truffaldino as the drunken tinker Christopher Sly in *Shrew*. René Deltgen as Truffaldino/Sly wandered through the production, offering lewd remarks in the Hanswurst manner about female cast members and generally conducting himself as “a knock-down puppet, the kind weighted at the bottom and who pops back up when struck on the head.”⁴⁰ Deltgen was a skilled acrobat and juggler upon whom many reviewers lavished praise for his skills as a clown—but they questioned director Kenter’s practice of using a previous conception for an altogether different kind of play.

Or was it altogether different? Cultural transmission is always, or almost always, a freighted transaction. In the dictatorship of heavy emphasis on cultural distinctions that was the Third Reich, René Deltgen’s performance under Kenter’s direction may have been an example of primordial multiculturalism. An Italian comedy in German, seeking to establish consanguinity with Shakespeare, was in many ways analogous to an Oscar Wilde production’s arbitrary emphasis on the “senility” of British diplomats. Such productions certainly accorded with official Nazi taste; their subjective, even random interpretations bespoke a directorial approach to the play as a closed world. Such productions were therefore “close readings” of the plays, an often overlooked feature of modernism within Nazi culture. That National Socialism was modernist remains indeed a controversial topic, as many remain convinced that Hitler and his cohort—

particularly in matters cultural—were reactionaries. In 1940 the French prime minister Paul Reynaud warned, “If Hitler wins, it will be the Middle Ages again, but unilluminated by the mercy of Christ.”⁴¹ That view somehow prevailed through the twentieth century, even though no less a witness than Winston Churchill doubted its validity. He saw Hitlerism not as a return to the Middle Ages but as an enormous lurch forward into a new Dark Age, a modernist epoch that categorically rejected what Norman Cantor has called “an insistence upon a normative code of ethics” and proclaiming a “celebration of the arts as the authentic expression of humanity, giving artistic production a kind of moral *imprimatur*.”⁴² In terms of cultural transmissions, Hitler signified revolution, “his place in history closer to the great revolutionaries than to conservative despots. . . . He may have seemed anachronistic, but Hitler was more modern and more devoted to modernity than all of his domestic opponents.”⁴³

If indeed we are to see these productions as acts of cultural transmission and not simply exercises in superficiality, we would wisely conclude that Nazi theatrical assumptions were extremely well-crafted and highly articulated expressions of European modernist elitism already current with the likes of Paul de Man in Belgium, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in Italy, and T. S. Eliot in England. The paradoxical vulgarity of many of the performances noted above is best explained, according to Detlef Junker, by American antecedents. Hitler’s concept of modernism “drew largely on the American model, which in the 1920s was regarded as prototypical.”⁴⁴ The effect of Americanism on the arts in Germany may also explain the “lowering of standards in both creation and consumption in a modernist society [like that of Nazi Germany], while the overall number of consumers increases.”⁴⁵ In such societies, consumers come to regard art consumption and cultural transmission not as a privilege but as an entitlement. The sociologist Jürgen Habermas provided perhaps the most succinct summation of modernism in cultural transmission, at the expense of both aesthetic and ethical considerations that were characteristic of foreign-language

comedy in the Third Reich:

In the line from Nietzsche to Jünger and finally to Goebbels, the modernist credo was the triumph of the spirit and will over reason and the subsequent fusion of this will to a [politically directed] aesthetic mode. Aesthetic experience alone justified life, morality was suspended, and desire had no limits.⁴⁶

Notes

¹Alexandre Herénger, *Goethe en Italie. d'après son journal et ses lettres* (Paris: Attinger, 1931) 117.

²Goldoni's plays began to appear regularly on Berlin stages only when Iffland staged them in the early 1800s. Goldoni's popularity began in Vienna in the 1760s, and from there his renown (mostly in translations by Christian Felix Weiße) expanded in the German-speaking world via the more well-known troupes: Schönemann, Ackermann, and Koch did Goldoni extensively when they all visited Leipzig, Hamburg, Danzig, and Brünn, as well as courts in smaller locations. Goldoni was the only Italian playwright in Konrad Ernst Ackermann's repertoire, and he occupied fifth place in that manager's repertoire in 1771 in terms of the frequency of performances with fifty. In comparison with French playwrights, Voltaire had ninety five, Destouches had sixty nine, and Molière had sixty three. See Herbert Eichhorn, *Konrad Ernst Ackermann, ein deutscher Prinzipal*, Emsdetten, 1965, 274-280.

³*Der Triumph des Willens* ("Triumph of the Will") was the title of a well-known Leni Riefenstahl documentary film about the 1934 Nazi Party congress in Nuremberg, and the phrase found wide currency in many Nazi publications and public utterances.

⁴Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) was among the first observers to describe Nazi approaches to cultural activity as the "aestheticization of politics," or more accurately the politicization of aesthetic ideals in the service of authoritarian methods. Among the more informative and accessible of his cultural preoccupations translated in English are found in "Theories of German Fascism," *New German Critique* 17 (Spring 1974): 125-147.

⁵S.C. Schäffer and C. Hartmann, *Die königlichen Theater in Berlin: statistischer Rückblick auf ihre künstlerische Thätigkeit* (Berlin: Comtois, 1885) 118.

⁶Quoted by Hanns Bornemann, in his "Goldonis Diener zweier

Herren im Theater in der Saarlandstraße," *Münchener Zeitung* (20 January 1941).

⁷The other frequently produced English-language playwrights were (in rank order) George Bernard Shaw, Brandon Thomas, and Avery Hopwood.

⁸Otto Ernst Hesse, Rev. *An Ideal Husband*, "Eine Wilde Renaissance?" *Vossische Zeitung* (9 December 1935).

⁹Max Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen*, vol. 1 (München: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1965) 826.

¹⁰David Lloyd George (1863-1945) became munitions minister in 1915, then war minister, and in late 1916 British prime minister. His war policy was aggressive, one reason for Hitler's admiration. His policy was designed to unite all British imperial resources into the war effort.

¹¹Rev. *An Ideal Husband*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (19 September 1935).

¹²Erik Krünes, Rev. "Ein idealer Gatte," Archives of the Theatre Collection of the University of Cologne.

¹³Rev. *An Ideal Husband*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (19 September 1935).

¹⁴Herbert Ihering, "Ein idealer Gatte im Staatstheater," *Berliner Börsen-Courier* (9 December 1935). Herbert Ihering (1877-1977, sometimes spelled "Jhering") was an early champion of Bertolt Brecht. He awarded Brecht the Kleist Prize in 1923, and soon thereafter wrote a book about the young playwright titled *Bert Brecht has Changed the Literary Countenance of Germany*. Perhaps because of his close identification with Brecht, whom the Nazis considered an "enemy of the State," Ihering may have felt somewhat compelled to formulate his viewpoints along lines that would find official acceptance.

¹⁵Anton Franz Ditezenschmidt, "*Lady Windermere's Fächer*" (15 September 1934), Archives of the Theatre Collection of the University of Cologne.

¹⁶Rev. *Lady Windermere's Fächer* (19 September 1934), Archives of the Theatre Collection of the University of Cologne.

¹⁷Ernst Kalkschmidt, "*Lady Windermere's Fächer*," *8-Uhr Blatt* (Munich) (11 January 1937).

¹⁸Fritz Stern's original treatise on this phenomenon among the Nazis was his *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1961); three of the more convincing explications on the subject since Stern's have been George L. Mosse's "Faschismus und Avantgarde" in *Faschismus und Avantgarde*, eds. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980) 133-141; Jeffrey Herf's *Reactionary Mod-*

ernism (New York: Cambridge, 1984), and Norman F. Cantor, who discusses at length the role of the mass media, especially movies, in cultural despair. Cultural despair was also an important ingredient in the appeal Nazism held for European intellectuals.

¹⁹The Gründgens film changed the plot to make Lord Illingworth less of a cad. He had reluctantly acquiesced to his father's demands to abandon the "woman of no importance" whom he had impregnated, and had left for India. When he returned to England, he did so with bitter-sweet memories of his former love, the now-married and respectable Mrs. Arbuthnot. Gründgens's Illingworth was also perceived as less of a threat to his biological son Gerald, and therefore presumably a more sympathetic figure to film audiences.

²⁰Otto Ernst Hesse, "*Eine Frau ohne Bedeutung* im Staatstheater Kleines Haus," *Bild-Zeitung am Mittag* (Berlin) (9 December 1935).

²¹Herbert Ihering, "*Ein idealer Gatte* im Staatstheater," *Berliner Börsen-Courier* (9 December 1935).

²²C.W., *Diener zweier Herren*, in *Frankfurt am Main* (1 October, 1936). Archives of Theatre Collection, University of Cologne.

²³Friedrich Bethge (1891-1977) had established himself as a "soldier's playwright" before he took over the Frankfurt theatres and became a battalion commander (*Obersturmbannführer*) in the SS, an elite guard originally formed as political police. Bethge's *Reims* premiered in 1930 and had attracted widespread Nazi approval, helping to ensconce him later within the Nazi cultural hierarchy.

²⁴Ernst Heilborn, "*Mirandolina*," *Frankfurter Zeitung* (23 Oct. 1935).

²⁵Josef Magnus Wehner "*Mirandolina*" (18 July 1940) Archives of Theatre Museum, University of Cologne.

²⁶Max Gelsenheyner, "*Mirandolina* im Theater in der Saarlandstraße Berlin," *Frankfurter Zeitung* (30 December 1942).

²⁷Florian Kienzl, "*Mirandolina* im Theater in der Saarlandstraße Berlin," *Frankfurter Zeitung* (30 December 1942).

²⁸Wilhelm Westecker, "*Mirandolina*," Theater in der Saarlandstraße Berlin, *Völkischer Beobachter* (29 December 1942). The *Völkischer Beobachter* was in existence before it became the official Nazi Party mouthpiece in 1920; it was what today would be called a "grocery store tabloid" with headlines like "Kill All Jews!" Hitler convinced Helene Bechstein, the widow of a wealthy piano manufacturer, and other admirers of his to put up the funds to help the newly re-formed "National Socialist German Workers' Party" purchase the paper in 1921 (when he became the Party's leader) and to establish a media presence in Munich.

²⁹Laokoön was a priest in Troy who warned the Trojans against

accepting the horse left as a gift by the Greeks. As punishment for his warning, the gods put him and his sons to death. His statue at a Vatican palace in his death throes is the most famous visual representation of Laokoön.

³⁰ Paul Fechter, "Mirandolina im Theater in der Saarlandstraße" *Berliner Tageblatt* (29 December 1942).

³¹ Franz Dietzenschmidt, "Diener zweier Herren im Theater der Jugend" (Berliner Theater) Berlin, Archives of the Theatre Collection of the University of Cologne.

³² E.S. "Diener zweier Herren," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (1 October 1936).

³³ "Hanswurst" was a vulgar, low-comedy character type often found in the repertoires of troupes touring Germany in the early part of the eighteenth century. The character is said to have originated in Vienna, though Hanswurst himself is said to be of Salzburg ancestry. He provided slapstick and most often scatological comic relief in many *Haupt- und Staatsaktion* dramas on popular stages of the time, and the name has come to signify a kind of base humor that appealed only to the most unrefined of theatrical tastes. That, at least, is the context in which the name appears in the review quoted here.

³⁴ "Kampf mit Spaghetti," Rev. *Diener zweier Herren* (17 October 1936), Archives of Theatre Collection, University of Cologne.

³⁵ Bruno E. Werner, "Diener zweier Herren im Deutschen Theater," *Deutsche Allgemeine-Zeitung* (28 February 1944).

³⁶ Bruno E. Werner, "Diener zweier Herren im Deutschen Theater," *Deutsche Allgemeine-Zeitung* (28 February 1944).

³⁷ Rainer Schlösser, introductory essay to vol. 74 of the *Deutsches Shakespeare Jahrbuch* (1938): 23-24.

³⁸ Cornelia Herstatt, "Wieder Goldonis Lustspiel *Diener zweier Herren*," Deutsches Theater Berlin (28 February 1944), Archives of Theatre Collection, University of Cologne.

³⁹ Günther Sawatski, Rev. of *Diener zweier Herren*, Theater in der Saarlandstraße Berlin (20 January 1941), Archives of Theatre Collection, University of Cologne.

⁴⁰ Werner Henske, "Diener zweier Herren," *Berliner Börsen-Courier* (20 January 1941).

⁴¹ Qtd. in John Lukacs, *The Hitler of History* (New York: Knopf, 1997) 77.

⁴² Norman F. Cantor, *Twentieth Century Culture* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1988) 49.

⁴³Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974) 1037.

⁴⁴Detlef Junker, "Hitler and America," lecture at University of Nebraska (10 January 2000).

⁴⁵Matei Calinescu, *Faces of Modernity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977) 226.

⁴⁶Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity and Post-modernity," *New German Critique* 22:7.

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