

*Der Künstler und der Bürger*

Viele Aspekte des Lebens haben mehrere Seiten—Perspektiven, Entscheidungen, und bestimmt Personen. In der von Thomas Mann verfassten Novelle *Tonio Kröger* sieht man diese Zweiseitigkeit sehr genau bei der Hauptperson, Tonio Kröger. Dieses teilweise autobiographische Stück handelt von dem Leben des Tonio, als er „zwischen zwei Welten“ (S. 79) steht: das Leben des Künstlers und das Leben des Bürgers. Diese Unterscheidung gilt in seinem Familienleben, seiner Liebe, und sogar in seinem Menschenverhältnis. In diesem Aufsatz möchte ich diese zwei Welten vergleichen und untersuchen.

Die ersten Hinweise auf diese zwei Welten kommt von seiner Herkunft. Sein Vater, Konsul Kröger, wird immer als „ein langer, sorgfältig gekleideter Herr mit sinnenden blauen Augen, der immer eine Feldblume im Knopfloch trug...“ (S. 10), beschrieben. Er ist ein anständiger Mensch, für den alles in Ordnung ist. Von ihm stammt dieser bürgerliche Name *Kröger*, der Tonio einen oberflächlichen gesellschaftlichen Status gibt. Aus dem Süden kommt seine Mutter, Consuelo, die „dunkle und feurige“ war, und so „wunderbar den Flügel und die Mandoline spielte.“ (S. 11) Der Name *Tonio* kommt von einem Bruder seiner Mutter, der Antonio hieß. Von dieser Welt stammen seine künstliche Neigungen. Die Auseinandersetzung dieser Welten gibt ihm seine Fähigkeiten und auch seinen Fluch. Die ersten zwei Kapitel sind eine Einführung in seine zwei Welten.

Zunächst muß man seine Liebe in der Perspektive von Tonios zwei Welten verstehen. Wir erfahren ziemlich früh in dieser Novelle, daß Tonio Hans Hansen liebt.

Hans Hansen ist bestimmt ein Mitglied des Bürgertums—er ist hübsch, athletisch, von guter Herkunft, nimmt eine Reitstunde usw. Für Tonio ist seine Liebe eine Sehnsucht. Ob es echte homosexuelle Liebe ist oder nicht, erfahren wir nicht, aber zumindest sehnt Tonio sich nach der bürgerlichen Welt von Hans. Es ist sehr klar, daß Tonio nichts macht, um seine Liebe zu verwirklichen. Lieber empfand er Schmerz. Hier sieht man seine künstlerischen Eigenschaften:

...er solche Erfahrungen wohl vermerkte, sie gleichsam innerlich aufschrieb  
gewissermaßen seine Freude daran hatte, ohne sich freilich für seine Person danach zu richten und praktischen Nutzen daraus zu ziehen. (S. 9)

In seiner Künstler-Welt ist die Liebe ohne Empfindung und praktisch für seine Absichten. Um ein guter Künstler zu sein, darf er seine Liebe nicht völlig empfinden, sonst wird er wie Adalbert, der „von unzugehörigen Sensationen...beunruhigt“ (S. 30) wird.

Nehmen wir auch das Beispiel seiner Liebe für Ingeborg. Ich finde es fast natürlich die Frage zu stellen: ist sie einfach eine weibliche Version von Hans? Ihre Funktion in der Novelle ist den Kontrast zwischen seinen Träumen und der Realität, eine andere Interpretation von Tonios zwei Welten , noch zu verstärken. Tonio kennt Ingeborg überhaupt nicht, aber seine Liebe für Hans und entsprechend auch sein Schmerz um ihn sind größer. Diese übertriebene und komische Tanzszene funktioniert, um zu betonen, daß sie sich in der bürgerlichen Welt bewegt. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt wird es klar, daß die Trennung von Tonios Welten immer größer wird. Er denkt als Künstler, empfindet als Künstler, schreibt als Künstler, aber er lebt in einer Welt von Bürgern, deshalb musste er in den Süden reisen. Er weiß schon, daß er die Bürger-Welt sehr gut verstehen kann, aber nicht hinein passen kann. Noch muß er versuchen, die Künstler-Welt zu erleben.

Von seiner Zeit im München erfahren wir durch seine Konversation mit Lisaweta, die Malerin. Er hatte schon etwas Erfolg und fängt an, die Künstler-Welt zu verstehen. Er hat schon seine Philosophie des Schreibens, in der Leiden ein wichtiger Teil ist. Er glaubt fest an seinen Fluch, „das Menschliche darzustellen, ohne am Menschlichen teilzuhaben...Ist der Künstler überhaupt ein Mann?“ (S. 32) In der zeitlichen Entwicklung sehen wir ihn total in der Künstler-Welt, aber dies gefällt ihm auch nicht. Lisawetas „verirrter Bürger“ reist nach Dänemark, um seine inneren Gedanken und die Vergangenheit zu bewältigen. Kapitel IV ist der Höhepunkt, weil seine zwei Welten zusammengestoßen sind, und jetzt muss er eine Lösung finden.

Während seines Aufenthalts im Dänemark sehen wir Ingeborg und Hans als Geliebte. Ihre Liebe ist eine bürgerliche Liebe, nicht so treu und rein wie die Liebe von Hans, aber trotzdem realisiert. Dieses unwahrscheinliche Ereignis funktioniert als Motivation für ihn, eine neue Synthese zwischen seinen zwei Welten zu finden. Endlich versteht er seine Rolle im bürgerlichen Künstlertum. Hier in der schönsten Parallele der ganzen Novelle beschreibt er seine Bürgerliebe genau wie er im Kapitel eins seine Liebe für Hans beschreibt: „Sehnsucht ist darin und schwermütiger Neid und ein klein wenig Verachtung und eine ganze keusche Seligkeit.“ (S. 73 und S. 17) Die Reife seiner Liebe ergänzt die Entwicklung seines Verstehens seiner Rolle und ihn selbst. Das Erwachsenwerden des Tonio in seinen zwei Welten und die letztendliche Synthese dieser zwei Welten sind wichtige Teile dieser gut geschriebenen Novelle und geben uns einen Blick auf Thomas Mann selber.

*Der Verfremdungseffekt in Die Blechtrommel (The Tin Drum)*

Midgets, unusual sexual encounters, eels in a dead horse's head—these images, ranging from the atypical to the downright gross, are all encountered in the 1979 film by Volker Schlöndorff, *Die Blechtrommel (The Tin Drum)*. This film explores many facets of German life in the time leading up to and during World War II. This production utilizes an important dramatic method that was introduced by Bertolt Brecht called *Der Verfremdungseffekt*, the alienation effect. Brecht alienates the audience through the use of sparse sets, unusual characters, and actors that often step out of their roles, rather than assuming their parts. The goal of this dramatic method is to force the audience to consider the implications of what the actors are saying, not to become emotionally involved in the dramatic action. This essay will examine the use of the *Verfremdungseffekt* in *The Tin Drum*. The alienation of the audience is accomplished by a choice of characters that one cannot easily identify with, a general level of grossness achieved by sex, food, death and various combinations of the three, and a cinematography that never allows the viewer to become comfortable with the film.

The first element of the alienation effect is achieved by not allowing the audience to identify with any of the characters. To illustrate this point, let us take a look at several examples from the film. The main character is Oskar Matzerath, a midget who “chose” to stop growing at the purported age of three. Throughout the film Oskar grows emotionally at a slower rate than normal to his age group, but his supposedly adult behaviors seem even more out of context and disturbing due to his young appearance. In

addition, his continual possession of the tin drum is a tool that helps to make him childlike while also preventing others from invading his space. His strange vocal abilities are often used in a destructive manner. His childish behavior often adversely affects others, e.g. he ultimately causes the death of his uncle and potential father, Jan. Were Oskar a simple child, the viewers would be prompted to feel sorry for him, but as a result of his character in the film, we are unable to identify with him in any way.

Two other roles that the audience might ordinarily identify with, Oskar's mother, Agnes, and the relatively minor character of the grade school teacher, are given characteristics that make them altogether foreign. It is quite tempting to feel sympathetic towards Agnes, as her son is a midget with behavioral problems, yet, her highly sexual nature prevents that. Her weekly trysts with Jan, while Oskar is in the care of the toymaker, reveal the importance of base sexual satisfaction to her. Of course, her fish-eating obsession and ultimate death is also quite disturbing. When one thinks of grade school teachers, images vary from caring to occasionally mean, but the grade school teacher we encounter does not fit the archetype. Her immobile, unnaturally blond hair and other facial features make her look like some strange cross between an alien and a stereotypical East German swim team member. The measured repetition of the study plan, "Schrei-ben, Rech-nen, Re-li-gion," further gives the viewer some sort of intrinsic discomfort. By transforming even minor characters into unrecognizable forms, Grass and Schlöndorff do not allow the viewer to identify with the characters; thus, we do not become emotionally involved with the characters, keeping our distance.

Having examined some of the characters in the film, it now makes sense to examine several scenes and sequences in the film in which the *Verfremdungseffekt*

manifests itself directly through the cinematography and the actions of the characters. The first example here is the birth scene, one that helps set the tone for the film to follow. The scene starts with a close-up of Agnes's swollen belly and quickly transitions to an artificial shot showing an ugly fetus inside her body. The camera rotates around from overhead adding to the disorienting feeling of the shot. The camera then pans to an view through the birth canal looking outward, eventually leading to a close-up of a 60-Watt light bulb. This quite unconventional birth scene does not produce any sentimental feeling towards the mother or child so far. From the light bulb, the camera pans to an upside-down shot of a door, through which we see both Alfred and Jan walk through simultaneously. We are initially confused as to which one is the father, a matter that is left ambiguous throughout the film. The camera rotates to right-side up, briefly pans to the mother, then to an image of the young baby Oskar, covered with blood in a disgusting manner. The unusual montage, grossness, and unique and somewhat disorienting camera motion contribute to alienating the viewer during this scene.

A second scene that embodies this dramatic theory is what I will term the "soup scene." The scene begins with an image of a backyard area with children playing under the watchful eye of their uncle. The first action in the scene is the uncle spitting in a kettle of "soup" that the children are preparing. The camera then zooms to a close-up of the kettle with an image of two wriggling frogs that have been placed alive into the soup. This is followed by two images—first a close-up of the father skinning some bloody animal hanging from a hook on the wall, then of a young boy urinating into the soup. A young girl suggests that the children make Oskar, who has wandered onto the scene, taste the soup. As the children engage in a chase of Oskar in a circular fashion, the camera

moves to a disorienting overhead image of the scene. In addition, we are given a close-up of the same girl urinating into the soup. Finally, we see a close-up of Oskar, held by the other children being forced to taste the horrible concoction. One's image of purity and innocence of children is quite shattered by this scene. Furthermore, it is horrifying to know that all of this took place while the uncle was present but not intervening, even playing the role of a minor active participant by spitting into the soup. We partially feel some sympathy for Oskar as a result of this scene, but the feeling is tempered by our revulsion at the entire sequence. In a total non sequitur, the scene concludes with Oskar's quasi-nemesis, the trumpet player, playing a pleasing melody in a contemptuous fashion. Here the *Verfremdungseffekt* is a very important tool for making the viewer consider the analogy that is being presented. This is quite possibly an extremely subtle commentary on the behavior of the German people during the Holocaust—they knew of the many horrors that were occurring, maybe even were minor active participants, yet did nothing to stop it. Had Schlöndorff simply let us focus on our emotional sympathy for Oskar, we might have missed making this important analytical step.

Finally, it is useful to examine one more sequence from the film, that is the beach scene followed by the scene at dinner. This sequence incorporates all three major elements of grossness found in the film: death, sex, and food. The scene begins with Alfred taking a picture of Agnes and Jan, although both Oskar and the viewer see that Jan's hand is quasi-secretly moving up Agnes's leg. It is followed almost immediately by two fishermen hauling in a catch of eels writhing in a dead horse's head that was used as bait. This extremely gross scene prompts Agnes to vomit while Oskar stands there drumming. Alfred chooses to purchase a number of eels and prepare them for a dinner

which Agnes refuses to eat. A conflict ensues which proceeds with Agnes playing a piece on the piano and singing loudly simultaneously as its played on the radio. In a beautiful piece of irony, the music is von Weber's "Huntsmen's Chorus," an old-fashioned German piece that would fit wonderfully with the Old-German mythical themes of which the Nazi's were so fond. After the conflict becomes physical, Agnes becomes hysterical and runs into the bed in the other room. While Oskar is observing, the crying Agnes is soothed by manual stimulation from her cousin Jan. This disturbing scene prevents us from identifying with any of the characters due to its ridiculous nature, forcing us to carefully consider the actions of every character not the characters themselves.

Through this analysis of several of the characters and several of the scenes, a number of the methods used to alienate the audience in *Die Blechtrommel* have been examined. Both Günter Grass and Volker Schlöndorff achieve this state through a combination of excessive grossness, irony, unique and unsettling montage, and unusual camera motion. By achieving Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* they force the audience to think about the implications of everything the characters do and their value as a potential commentary on the history of Germany. This film is not meant to be light Friday evening entertainment, rather to make a statement on the ordinary lives of Germans and the role of the German state as told through the lives of some very extraordinary characters. This technique cannot be appreciated in its entirety immediately during a first viewing, but only by careful afterthought about the film. I found this technique to be an extremely powerful and thought-provoking way to discuss German history.