

Parody as Criticism: The Literary Life of Eulalia Meinau

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ABSTRACT

DAVID ANDERSEN: Parody as Criticism: The Literary Life of Eulalia Meinau
(Under the direction of Dr. Jonathan Hess)

This thesis examines August von Kotzebue's 1789 drama *Menschenhaß und Reue* in regards to the role of the theater as an instrument of moral pedagogy in the late 18th and early 19th century. Kotzebue's work is examined and discussed as a parody of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*, which often held moral lessons for a middle-class audience. After *Menschenhaß und Reue* was introduced, it became the target of much criticism due to an ambiguous moral ending dealing with the forgiveness of the adulterous Eulalia Meinau. This work was later parodied by Friedrich Wilhelm Ziegler in 1791 with a sequel. Comparing Ziegler's work with a third work from Kotzebue dealing with the Meinau family establishes a moral dialogue about what should happen to the adulteress, as well as provides evidence against claims that Kotzebue felt he had not punished Eulalia enough at the end of *Menschenhaß und Reue*.

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Introduction

August von Kotzebue's 1788 drama *Menschenhaß und Reue* made Kotzebue into a star of German-language theater, as well as a target of many critics. Goethe was somewhat positive towards Kotzebue, but he certainly had negative criticism for the playwright, saying that Kotzebue was a "vorzügliches, aber schluderhaftes Talent."¹ Schiller also had little appreciation for Kotzebue and his work. After first viewing *Menschenhaß und Reue*, Schiller was reported to say "Menschenhaß? Nein, davon verspürt' ich beim heutigen Stücke keine Regung: jedoch Reue, die hab ich gefühlt."² August Wilhelm Schlegel addressed Kotzebue's work in his *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*. In 1808, Schlegel wrote that Kotzebue's affinity for likeable heroines, who had faltered like Eulalia Meinau, could actually threaten the moral integrity of German-speaking society if it were to be employed in works other than comedies.³ Kotzebue was altogether an inflammatory public figure.

In *Menschenhaß und Reue*, Kotzebue presents the story of a young woman and young man doing good deeds in order to repent for a past sin. The young woman is Eulalia Meinau, and the young man is her estranged husband, the Baron Meinau. Both end up in a small town together, going by different names, but being aware of the other's

¹ Frithjof Stock, *Kotzebue im literarischen Leben der Goethezeit: Polemik-Kritik-Publikum* (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann/ Universitätsverlag, 1971) 38.

² Stock.61; see also George S. Williamson, "What Killed August von Kotzebue? The Temptations of Virtue and the Political Theology of German Nationalism, 1789-1819," *The Journal of Modern History*, (Vol. 72, No. 4, Dec., 2000) 899.

³ Williamson 909.

reputation for performing good works. It is discovered that three years prior to the setting of the drama the young Eulalia was seduced and led out of her marriage by one of Meinau's friends, who has since passed away. In effort to repent for her adultery, Eulalia has been living as a servant in the service of the "Haushofmeister und Verwalter des Grafen."⁴

During a visit to the town where Eulalia has been performing her penance, the count falls into a creek and is saved from drowning by the Baron Meinau. Upon being invited to dinner as a reward, Meinau and Eulalia see one another, causing Eulalia to faint and the Baron to flee. Eventually the two agree to meet and talk, and a discussion about forgiveness ensues. In the final scene of the play, Eulalia is about to leave him forever, without being forgiven, when the couple's children are ushered onstage by the Major, the old friend of the Baron and Eulalia's recently made acquaintance. The Baron is so overwhelmed by the children's cries for their mother and father that he calls to Eulalia, exclaiming his forgiveness, and the curtain falls on a reunited happy family. While Kotzebue provides a happy ending for the troubled family, he does so at the expense of an unambiguous moral ending to his work. The ending of *Menschenhaß und Reue* is the antithesis of the clear moral instruction and lesson found at the end of many critically acclaimed dramas of the time. This earned Kotzebue a place of disdain among many critics and writers of the late 18th and early 19th century.

Kotzebue had the privilege to see morality and moral boundaries from different perspectives in German-speaking society: first, from the standpoint of the rising bourgeoisie, and second, from the perspective of a noble. Born in 1761 in Weimar,

⁴ August von Kotzebue, *Menschenhaß und Reue* in *Schauspiele* (Berlin: Christian Friedrich Himgurg, 1970) 44.

Kotzebue was raised there by his mother and an uncle. He enjoyed visiting the theater as a young man, something that obviously stuck with him until much later in life. Kotzebue was educated in Jena and Duisburg. There he studied law, but he still remained active in the theater world in various roles.⁵

Upon leaving Duisburg, Kotzebue found himself in Saint Petersburg working for a German officer in the service of Catherine the Great. He was eventually given a title when he became the head judge in Estonia in 1785. During his time in Russian service, Kotzebue was able to be involved not only in Russian theater, but German theater as well, writing and producing several plays. It was in Reval, modern-day Tallinn, where he wrote *Menschenhaß und Reue*, even though the premiere was held in Berlin instead of Tallinn or Saint Petersburg.

Most *bürgerliche Trauerspiele* were not written in a manner so as to be capable of producing a sequel. The final scenes in Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* and *Miss Sara Sampson* present a definitive cut-off point for the plots. They end tragically with the death of the imperfect heroines. *Menschenhaß und Reue*, while not a *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*, can be considered to be a parody of the genre, as Kotzebue adapted the structure and several key elements for his work. For example, Kotzebue left his ending very open for a continuation of the plot. Eulalia is still alive, and, despite everything leading up to the end of that very last scene, is happy and forgiven her adultery, but still in a foreign place in what could possibly be deemed an awkward situation. This drastic deviation from an expected ending sets *Menschenhaß und Reue* apart from other *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*; it does not have a sense of finality to it.

⁵ Williamson 893.

While many criticized Kotzebue and his morals in journals, newspapers and in other public spaces, others decided to criticize his ending by writing a sequel or continuation to *Menschenhaß und Reue*. In 1791, Friedrich Wilhelm Ziegler published his criticism of Kotzebue's popular drama in the form of another play, adopting the same characters and taking over the plot after Kotzebue had left it in an untidy manner with an ambiguous moral lesson. Ziegler was a 30-year-old member of the Viennese *Hoftheater*, having been appointed by Joseph II in 1781, and he remained there until his retirement in 1822. Mainly he is remembered as an actor and a playwright in German theater histories, but he also is known for his ideas regarding auditioning procedures for a proposed theater school.⁶

Ziegler's work, *Eulalia Meinau, oder die Folgen der Wiedervereinigung*, focused on the moral dilemma posed by Kotzebue at the end of his play by allowing the Baron Meinau to forgive his estranged adulterous wife. The heroine of *Menschenhaß und Reue*, Eulalia Meinau, finds herself once again under the microscope of 18th-century morality. Eulalia's seducer is brought back into the lives of the couple, despite having been dead in Kotzebue's original work. The couple has remained unhappy since the audience saw them in the sentimental final scene of *Menschenhaß und Reue*. A duel between the Baron and Eulalia's seducer ends in the death of the seducer, but also with the fleeing of the Baron to America. Eulalia and her daughter stay together at the end, while the Baron Meinau and Wilhelm flee to America.

In 1793, Kotzebue wrote another work, in effect parodying the parody of his original play. It continues where the first play left off and is not a continuation of the

⁶ George W. Brandt and Wiebe Hogendoorn, *German and Dutch Theatre 1600-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 311-312.

Ziegler drama. In Kotzebue's second work concerning the Meinau family, entitled *Die edle Lüge*, Eulalia is continually stricken by the guilt supposedly absolved by her husband during the final scene of *Menschenhaß und Reue*. In an attempt to make her feel that he, too, is imperfect and has sinned, he instructs a young female servant to tell Eulalia that she is pregnant with the Baron's child. The true father of the child is unable to continue with the deception, and he informs Eulalia of the Baron's ruse. Eulalia goes to the Baron and praises him for his attempt to make her feel better, but it has only forced her to see just how noble a man the Baron is.

In his 2000 article, George S. Williamson discusses many of Kotzebue's critics and their reasons for disliking him. Many criticisms were decidedly harsh, including many coming out of Weimar, such as those comments already mentioned that are attributed to Schiller and Schlegel. Williamson states that allowing the young heroine Eulalia and other characters created by Kotzebue to escape even from the most difficult situations fostered a resentment for him and had his work branded as "artistically irresponsible and, ultimately, immoral."⁷ Others, including Bavarian censors, felt that the immoral impact from Kotzebue's works would have a corrupting effect on society, and these works were summarily banned from being produced, published or sold.⁸

Despite all of the criticism Kotzebue received, few critics went so far as to satirize or parody Kotzebue's material, as Ziegler did in 1791. Parody has long been a form of criticism, differing from other forms because of the way it directly engages a text on the same level as the original text, maintaining some of the same characteristics of the

⁷ Williamson 898.

⁸ Markus Krause, Das Trivialdrama der Goethezeit 1780- 1805: Produktion und Rezeption, Vol. Bd. 5, (Bonn: Bouvier, 1982) 301.

original text, but offering up suggestions and opinions on how the original work strays from being capable of accomplishing its original goals, artistic or other, as defined by the author/critic of the parody.⁹

By examining the Eulalia works as a form of parody, and even considering *Menschenhaß und Reue* a parody of the prolific *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*, one has the ability to look at a moral dialogue between a critic and one of the most prolific writers of the late 18th and early 19th century. Eulalia is particularly interesting when discussing bourgeois morality. Kotzebue was in a unique position to evaluate morality because of his upbringing in a bourgeois family and also having been given a title by the time he wrote *Menschenhaß und Reue*. Eulalia is a penitent person and is very aware of her guilt in breaking the moral code of the day. Even being alive three years after her adulterous act is unique in and of itself among the *bürgerliche Trauerspiele* heroines. By examining Eulalia's role in the three texts, as well as the critical and popular reception of the adulteress, one can examine not only the moral criticisms heaped on Kotzebue and his tendency to forgive his heroines, but also a dialogue about morality in the works of Ziegler and Kotzebue. Eulalia, how she is portrayed, and how she is engaged by other characters in the three works sets the parameters of this dialogue, namely whether it is alright to forgive someone or if the only true release from guilt can come through isolation and death.

Kotzebue had written around 230 plays at the time of his assassination in 1819 by Karl Sand, the radical student who came into Kotzebue's home and stabbed the writer for his opposition to the growing *Burschenschaften* movement at the time. His work has been

⁹ For more on parody and self-reflexivity, see Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms*, (London: Methuen, 1985), and Robert Siegle, *The Politics of Reflexivity: Narrative and the Constitutive Poetics of Culture*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1986).

translated into at least 13 languages. Even with Goethe's 26-year-long control of the Weimar theater, Kotzebue's work was performed 667 times out of the total 4,809 performances in Weimar.¹⁰ From 1779 to 1839, Kotzebue was performed 1,487 times compared to Schiller being performed only 276 times.¹¹ With success like this, it is difficult to believe that Kotzebue did not write much of any worth.

Kotzebue and his works have not been extensively discussed within scholarly circles, and the popularity among the larger population of the German-speaking, and sometimes non-German speaking areas, necessitates that scholars engage Kotzebue's writings. In three German literary histories in German and English, Kotzebue was only mentioned a handful of times.¹² Many of these references pertain to *Trivialliteratur*, and how Kotzebue's work belongs only to this genre and contains no redeeming qualities as art. Other literary critics argue that Kotzebue's reputation as a peddler of entertainment and not art or literature of value makes it difficult, if not impossible to save his work from the realm to which he is assigned.¹³

Only Oscar Mandel, in his 1990 work titled *August von Kotzebue: The Comedy, the Man*, tries to redeem Kotzebue as an author of artistic and literary value.¹⁴ Mandel is on

¹⁰ Williamson 891. Also see Oscar Mandel, *August von Kotzebue: The Comedy, The Man: including "The Good Citizens of Piffelheim"*, translated from "Die deutschen Kleinstädter" (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990) 50.

¹¹ Doris Maurer, *August von Kotzebue: Ursachen seines Erfolges: Konstante Elemente der unterhaltenden Dramatik*, Vol. Bd. 34. (Bonn: Bouvier, 1979) 228.

¹² See Wolfgang Beutin, *A History of German Literature: From the Beginnings to the Present Day*, 4th ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 1993) 204, 254. and Peter J. Brenner, *Neue Deutsche Literaturgeschichte: Vom "Ackermann" zu Günter Grass* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996) 152, and Klaus Gysi and Hans Günther Thalheim, *Geschichte der Deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Bd. 7. (Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1961) 32, 55.

¹³ Mandel 3-4; also see Stock 9.

¹⁴ Mandel 4-14.

the right track to try and lead Kotzebue out of the realm of the trivial. Something mass-produced need not be considered worthless because of the method of production, and Kotzebue's dramas are no different. They entertained and provoked many people of varying ranks and classes when originally performed, and the possibility of discovering and discussing the cause for this alone should lead to a more thorough examination of Kotzebue's works.

These three works are an interesting to examine because they involve the same characters, and, in particular, the same heroine. Following the events of Eulalia Meinau's literary life allows one to trace the moral discussion surrounding her fate. By examining Ziegler's and Kotzebue's continuations of *Menschenhaß und Reue*, one can see how critical reception of the original work may have altered the author's original moral stand, or, as some have argued, lack thereof, over the five-year span between the first and third work. Also, by examining the works as parody of one another, one is aware of a certain self-reflexivity present, which inherently calls for these works to be examined, dissected and criticized as they were being consumed by the public.

In this project, I wish to examine the use of Eulalia Meinau as a means of discussing theories of parody, the possibility of *Menschenhaß und Reue* as a parody of the *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*, and the dramatic discussion of bourgeois morals in the late 18th century. I aim to look at theories of criticism that involve parody, particularly the definition of parody and its characteristics.

This is an attempt to better understand the exchange between Kotzebue and authors of contemporary *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*, as well as the moral dialogue between Kotzebue and Ziegler existing mainly through the use of parody. Kotzebue knew well

the norms and conventions of the times in which he wrote, as well as the popular beliefs regarding the stage as a tool for moral instruction. Schiller was a proponent of the stage as a setting for moral pedagogy, and his views are well-known from his 1784 address “Was kann eine gute stehende Schaubühne eigentlich wirken?” Kotzebue was without a doubt aware of these views and opinions about the role of the stage in society. Kotzebue also engages Lessing by deviating from a clear moral lesson at the ending of his parody of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*.

Finally, I want to examine the eventual fate of Eulalia Meinau in *Die edle Lüge* to see if Kotzebue may have changed his original moral stand from *Menschenhaß und Reue*. George Williamson claims in his 2000 article that Kotzebue “felt compelled to correct the impression that he had let his heroine off too easily.”¹⁵ It is my belief that this is not entirely accurate when one considers the ramifications of Eulalia’s forgiveness in the original work and how the family is living during *Die edle Lüge*.

To fulfill this task, I intend to use extensive textual examples from the three works. I will draw upon the work of Michele Hannoosh in order to discuss parody, its definition or definitions and the functions it serves and has served over time.¹⁶ By examining secondary literature on the nature of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*, I will demonstrate using textual evidence how Kotzebue’s work differs from the formula for the type of drama referred to as the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*. Also using textual evidence, I will compare the moral stances put forth by Kotzebue and Ziegler, in order to examine how the two authors engage one another through their works. By looking at both

¹⁵ Williamson 897.

¹⁶ Michele Hannoosh, “The Reflexive Function of Parody,” *Comparative Literature*, Vol.41, No. 2 (Spring 1989) 113-127.

Menschenhaß und Reue and *Die edle Lüge*, I will use textual evidence to analyze Williamson's claim that Kotzebue felt that he had not punished his heroine enough for her extramarital affair.

It is my hope that this examination of Kotzebue's work will provide some insight as to why he was so popular in his own time period, but also provides some insight as to why he and his work should continue to be an important part of the rich German literary culture and heritage.

Chapter 1: Parody, Genre and Kotzebue

Parody can be seen as a form of literary criticism used to point out what a critic may find absurd or ridiculous about a particular work. As William Van O'Connor states, "One of the functions of parody is to make us see, or better, let us *experience*, the nature of a style and subject, and their excesses."¹⁷ By Van O'Connor's definition, one can parody the content and style of an author.

Michele Hannoosh regards parody as a genre of literature unto itself, despite the various genres used for parody, such as poetry, prose, drama, and film. Hannoosh also writes that parody is self-reflexive. An "inherent" characteristic of parody as a retelling or mimicking of another's style or subject means the parody is acknowledging its own ability to be criticized.¹⁸ Furthermore, Hannoosh states that "parody challenges the notion of fixed works altogether," by changing the code or formula upon which genres rest.¹⁹ By changing the formula, the work that is parodying provides a view point counter to that of the original work. This change in code therefore provides a critique of the original work and way that the genre in question operates.

An example of a fixed-code genre is the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*.²⁰ Examples of well-known *bürgerliche Trauerspiele* are Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755) and

¹⁷ William van O'Connor, "Parody as Criticism," College English, Vol. 25, No.4. (Jan., 1964) 243.

¹⁸ Hannoosh 113.

¹⁹ Ibid. 113.

²⁰ For more information on discussions of *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* as a genre, see Karl S. Guthke, Das Deutsche bürgerliche Trauerspiel, 6th ed. (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2006) 1-7.

Emilia Galotti (1772). A later example is Schiller's drama *Kabale und Liebe* (1783). The archetypical *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* concerns itself with the moral values of the private, instead of public realm. The solution to the tragic element in this genre comes from within the guilty character, through a self-realization of guilt, and not from an outside force.

Hannoosh's definition of a parody leads one to ask if it is possible to refer to works within a specific genre to be parodies of earlier texts. Is *Emilia Galotti* a parody of *Miss Sara Sampson* because it has a similar structure and rules? Or does the repetition of structure or code occur because both works belong to the genre of *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*? What degree of variation is allowed within a genre before it is regarded as a parody? A key change would need to be made to the formula in order for the parody to be a parody of the genre instead of belonging to the genre. For example, a Shakespearean comedy must end with a wedding, and a classical tragedy ends in the fall from power and death of someone of royal stature. To have the fallen individual wed at the end of what would otherwise be considered a tragedy would be a key change in the code of the genre, and therefore lead to the creation of a parody.

Hannoosh also argues that a key element of the genre of parody is recognition of self-criticism.²¹ By adopting the genre of what is being parodied, the work, in this case a drama, is opening itself up to further criticism. August von Kotzebue, the incredibly prolific German dramatist and writer in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, opened his own work up to criticism and parody by parodying the archetypical *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*, but he also opened the door for further innovation and literary creation.

²¹Hannoosh 114-5.

According to Hannoosh, “in making the parodied work the basic material for itself, parody, in Formalist terms, actually regenerates a tradition whose procedures have become mechanized, and thus contributes to the ongoing history of literature.” This in turn allows for a work to provide an example of how a genre might change and evolve into something new.²²

Menschenhaß und Reue as a Parody of bürgerliche Trauerspiele

According to Hannoosh’s theories of reflexivity, Kotzebue’s 1788 work *Menschenhaß und Reue* could be considered a parody of *bürgerliche Trauerspiele* for several reasons. First, Kotzebue parodies the ideas of *Empfindsamkeit* and *Mitleid* used extensively in *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*. The author of a *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* uses sometimes over-the-top emotions in circumstances that an audience member can identify with in an effort to stir the audience’s emotions and evoke sympathy for the characters, particularly Eulalia. Second, Kotzebue deviates at the end of his work from the traditional ending of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*. Little ambiguity is allowed, and like the classical Greek tragedies, the ending is expected to remain the same throughout the genre. For the *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*, what was done wrong is corrected or absolved. Third, Kotzebue parodies the moral absolutism of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*. The genre provides a clear moral pedagogy to the audience, instructing them on what activities are and are not acceptable in the late 18th and early 19th-century bourgeois society. All of these reasons to consider *Menschenhaß und Reue* a parody will be discussed at length in the course of this chapter.

²² Ibid. 116.

George Williamson writes in his article “What Killed August Von Kotzebue? The Temptations of Virtue and the Political Theology of German Nationalism, 1789-1819” that Kotzebue utilized *Empfindsamkeit* to try and “win maximum sympathy by portraying [the characters] in the grip of powerful emotions.”²³ This was a common goal of the writers of *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*. The more emotionally appealing a character was, the more the audience could identify with the situation that the individual was in, stirring sympathy in the audience for the character. This in turn would reflect on the humanity of the audience.

However, as Williamson also notes, the emotions of Kotzebue’s characters do not lead them to being overwhelmed or destroyed, as can typically happen in the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*.²⁴ Emotional and moral follies lead to the death of Sara Sampson and Emilia Galotti, two of Lessing’s most famous female characters in his *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*. The two are seduced by young men while still unmarried, and as a result, they become outcasts from their families. Emilia Galotti never did fulfill her desires and had her father kill her before she could. Sara Sampson, on the other hand, did fall victim to her desire for a relationship that was not permitted and strayed outside of the contemporary morality, much as did Eulalia in *Menschenhaß und Reue*.

Eulalia Meinau, the heroine of Kotzebue’s work, found herself in a similar position to Sara Sampson and Emilia Galotti. She, too, was seduced and began a relationship that was not socially permitted. Unlike the other two women, Eulalia was already married at the time of her seduction, and, at first, the result of her emotional and

²³ Williamson 896.

²⁴ Williamson 896.

moral weakness was her exile from her family and the society that she knew. However, Kotzebue did not allow Eulalia's emotions to lead to her death in order to provide moral justice and reckoning, as was the case with Lessing's heroines.

Kotzebue's use of *Mitleid* and *Empfindsamkeit* contributes to the idea that his work is a parody of *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*. He uses extreme emotions to attain sympathy for the characters as do other authors of *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*. One such example in Kotzebue's work where *Mitleid* is used is the scene in which Eulalia sees the young son of the countess, named Wilhelm. This is the only scene where the son is present, and the reaction from Eulalia is full of emotion. The actor is instructed through Kotzebue's stage directions: "Sie kauert sich zu ihm nieder und tiefe Melancholie überschattet ihr Gesicht." When the child is taken off the stage, the description of Eulalia is as follows: "steht an der Seite, hat ihren Strickstrumpf hervorgezogen und wischt sich dann und wann eine Träne aus den Augen."²⁵

Eulalia's full reaction is presented in the seventh scene, when she is left alone on stage. During this scene she laments the loss of her children, acknowledging to the audience that she is the reason they are separated, and that she carries an enormous burden of guilt. At this point in the play, the audience or reader has no knowledge of her transgression. The audience only knows that there is something she feels guilty for, and that, whatever it is, has made her an unnatural mother.²⁶

This appeal to the sentimentality of the audience is the type of emotional outpouring that Williamson is talking about when comparing *Menschenhaß und Reue*

²⁵ Kotzebue 69-70.

²⁶ Ibid. 72.

with contemporary works.²⁷ However, these emotions do not, in the end, cause the downfall of Eulalia, and here the audience experiences an alternate ending for the archetypical *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*.

As could be expected from a *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*, the audience member/reader believes that there is a tragic end awaiting Eulalia and her family. A tragic end would follow in step with the earlier plays of Lessing and Schiller. Instead, Kotzebue redeems Eulalia, and there is a happy ending, although a terribly ambivalent one. Eulalia is forgiven by her husband as their children come on stage in a very sentimental scene moments before the curtain drops. The family is happily reunited, no one has died to regain honor, but the ultimate fate of the family is now in question, leaving the characters in a situation that is not neatly tied up. The lack of the important tragic end drastically alters the archetype of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*. This drastic altering fits with the code changing that Hannoosh describes when defining parody.

The changing of the tragic ending to that of a happy, almost comical ending is not the only thing working as a parody in this ending. Eulalia's salvation from her sin and situation comes from Baron Meinau, Eulalia's estranged husband, and not from God. Her penance and charity improve her situation with Meinau, but in the end it is their children that finally sway his opinion.

This is contrary to the endings in many *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*. Emilia Galotti is killed by her father (because she won't commit suicide and sin again), and Sara Sampson dies due to the poison she receives from the jealous Marwood. In both cases, the characters have recognized their moral transgressions on their own. Eulalia

²⁷ Williamson 896.

recognizes her transgressions as well, and has done three years of penance for her transgression. Unlike Emilia and Sara, however, she does not have to die in order to be redeemed. She is redeemed while still alive, except by her husband and not God.

The moral issue at hand is one of particular import to this work. By changing the traditional tragic end, Kotzebue leaves the finality of moral lessons in an ambiguous state. Emilia and Sara both died in Lessing's works; their sins were unforgivable except from God. There is a clear moral lesson in both of their deaths: do not stray from familial duty or Christian morals.

This moral ambiguity received praise as a message of tolerance from some critics, but mostly it was viewed negatively by many of the critics and writers of the day.²⁸ A major moral concern of these critics was the suspension of "rules of civil society simply for the sake of the happy ending. The rules of tragic drama demanded that these women die for their transgressions."²⁹

The stage at this time was, to many, an area of moral instruction for the rising middle class. It provided the audience with the "rules of civil society," and to break from the institutionalization of the formulaic *bürgerliche Trauerspiel* meant to earn the scorn of some of the most influential critics and writers, as happened with Kotzebue.

Schiller is a good example of such a critic and writer. Although Kotzebue held Schiller in very high esteem, Schiller never seemed to reciprocate his feelings.³⁰ One must also recall that Schiller wrote and gave his lecture "Was kann ein gut stehende Schaubühne eigentlich wirken" five years prior to Kotzebue's success with *Menschenhaß*

²⁸ Ibid. 896-897.

²⁹ Ibid. 898.

³⁰ For more on Schiller and Kotzebue, see Stock 59-66.

und Reue. Schiller did visit the production of the work in Weimar in 1789 with Wilhelm von Humboldt, and he later wrote in “Xenion:” “Menschenhaß? Nein, davon verspürt’ ich beim heutigen Stücke keine Regung: jedoch Reue, die hab ich gefühlt.”³¹

Schiller was one who found Kotzebue’s writing distasteful precisely because of the lack of moral clarity and instruction. Williamson provides a succinct summary of Schiller’s thoughts towards theater and tragedy in particular:

Although sometimes portrayed as an advocate of Sturm and Drang individuality, Schiller saw the theater as a ‘moral institution,’ a ‘guide through bourgeois life,’ and ‘a school of practical wisdom.’ While money might blind justice in real life, Schiller wrote, the theater should take up sword and scales and summon vice before “a terrible tribunal.”³²

The forgiveness of Eulalia by Meinau and the happy ending of *Menschenhaß und Reue* does not “summon vice before ‘a terrible tribunal,’” but rather lets vice be forgiven, something that Schiller would have found to be in bad artistic taste.

Furthermore, Schiller thought the essential task of the theater was to provide the public with moral judgments.³³ When Sara Sampson dies at the end of Lessing’s work, it is clear that Sara’s immoral relationship with her lover Mellefont led Marwood, a former lover and mother of Mellefont’s child, to poison her. Judgment is passed on the young woman and her actions, and she is punished accordingly. Kotzebue’s ending, on the other hand, makes clear that Eulalia is forgiven by Meinau, but it definitely leaves the audience wondering if exceptions can be made to the rules of civil society, precisely what authors of the *bürgerliche Trauerspiele* did not want to happen. If someone spends three years in

³¹ Stock 61; also quoted in English in Williamson 899.

³² Williamson 898.

³³ Ibid. 898.

the service of others and doing good deeds, should one forgive them or should the individual remain on the fringes or entirely outside of society?

Schiller was not the only critic that Kotzebue irritated with this work. August Wilhelm Schlegel, who would continue to be critical of Kotzebue, agreed with Schink's opinion of the piece.³⁴ Krause writes in his work:

Dem Glauben an die Interdependenzen zwischen dem Verlust der individuellen Moral und der Zerstörung der allgemeine Sittengesetz fielen Kotzebues Dramen zum Opfer...So wurden etwa 1791 in München die Aufführung, der Druck und der Verkauf aller Stücke Kotzebues untersagt, ein Verbot, das unabhängig von Inhalt und Tendenz der Dramen für alle Produkte der Kotzebueschen Muse – also auch für die noch ungeschriebenen – gültig war.³⁵

It was clear that many people did not find Kotzebue's work agreeable to the moral standards of his time. It is possible the moral ambiguities in his dramas were created to be provocative to his audiences.

Kotzebue's work provides follows many of the rules of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*. However, he does not cause the death of his heroine, offering instead a structural alternative to the plays of Lessing and others. This change in the fixed code of the genre is why his work can be viewed as parody, and therefore criticism, of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*. Kotzebue could have written his own criticisms in journals or newspapers, but he did so through parody instead. Parody is different from other types of criticism because it allows one to adopt a particular genre and alter the various parts that one may not agree with. By working within the genre, the discrepancies are more visible than if they were described in a lengthy journal article. By writing his criticism as a

³⁴ Stock 115-116; see also Krause 298-299.

³⁵ Krause 301.

parody, Kotzebue was able to air his criticisms in way that allowed greater access to his ideas and work, as well as providing concrete examples of how his ideas varied with those of other critics at the time, particularly when it involves the moral absolutism present in *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*.

According to Hannoosh's characteristics of parody, Kotzebue successfully parodied the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*. He adopted many of the same techniques used by other dramatists who had contributed to the genre for his own *Menschenhaß und Reue*. Many of his critics consigned themselves to criticisms in journals and newspapers, but others decided that they would continue the story, lending more credence to the idea that Kotzebue's work is a parody because it invites critics to engage the text. The first to do so was the Austrian writer Friedrich Julius Wilhelm Ziegler. He decided to continue the popular work of Kotzebue's and give it the critical treatment he felt it deserved.³⁶

³⁶ Stock 120-121; Williamson 897.

Chapter 2: Friedrich Wilhelm Ziegler's Parody of Kotzebue

In 1791, Friedrich Wilhelm Ziegler wrote his parody of August von Kotzebue's *Menschenhaß und Reue*. One can consider Ziegler's *Eulalia Meinau, oder die Folgen der Wiedervereinigung* a parody of Kotzebue's work for two reasons. First, Ziegler uses his work to establish his criticism of Kotzebue's work, which we have defined as a parody of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*. As a parody, *Menschenhaß und Reue* is definable by its ability to be parodied, and it in effect is a parody of itself because of the use of the codification that the author wishes to criticize through the use of parody. This self-reflexivity, as Hannoosh refers to it as, establishes a parody as inherently being open to being parodied.³⁷

Second, the direct adoption of subject material from one work for use in another work helps establish the second work as a parody. Hannoosh writes that "the text offers itself most easily as a potential parodied work by allying itself directly with the work that it parodies."³⁸ Instead of altering structural aspects of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* as Kotzebue did, such as the ambiguous ending, Ziegler found himself altering the content of Kotzebue's work. Ziegler's work is a continuation of Kotzebue's drama. By adopting the characters of Eulalia, the Baron Meinau, the general, who is Eulalia's seducer and the Baron's old friend, and others, Ziegler crafted a parody by linking his drama with that of Kotzebue's *Menschenhaß und Reue*.

³⁷ Hannoosh 114.

³⁸ Hannoosh 117.

The main criticism of Ziegler's parody *Eulalia Meinau* is the moral ambiguity found in the ending of *Menschenhaß und Reue*, when the unfaithful Eulalia is forgiven by her estranged husband at the very last possible moment. Kotzebue parodied several aspects of the *bürgerliche Trauerspiele* as well, namely the use of *Mitleid* and *Empfindsamkeit*, and the tragic ending and the moral judgment passed by the genre on its feminine characters. Ziegler utilizes *Mitleid* and *Empfindsamkeit* as Kotzebue did, using the audience's emotions to create sympathy for the dysfunctional family. Unlike Kotzebue, he does not hesitate to end the drama with a tragic end and clearer sense of moral boundaries.

The end of Ziegler's drama finds the family in a similar position to the beginning of *Menschenhaß und Reue*. The family is once again separated because of crossing moral boundaries. The Baron Meinau kills the general, Eulalia's seducer, in a duel, and must escape in order to help protect his family. Not only does the Baron flee to America, but Eulalia tries to commit suicide with one of the dueling pistols. The pistol does not fire, and she thanks God for saving her. In her last line of the drama, she exclaims to Amalia, "Ich will leben, um dir ganz Mutter zu seyn."³⁹ All of the individuals that have crossed the moral boundaries have suffered some punishment: death, exile or separation, which takes place after the attempted suicide.

Ziegler establishes his moral boundaries not only by having the individuals suffer some form of punishment. All of them admit to crossing the boundaries, and all of them in the fourth act, as all of the action climaxes. The general, after being mortally wounded in the duel with the Baron, asks him for forgiveness, indicating that he acknowledges his

³⁹ F.W. Ziegler, *Eulalia Meinau*, (Wien, 1791) 114.

guilt in the seduction of Eulalia and the problems that have plagued the family as a result.⁴⁰ Immediately following the death of the general, the Baron acknowledges his guilt in murdering his former friend, exclaiming when being urged to flee to America, “Ich habe gemordet, mein Blut hält mich.”⁴¹ It can be understood that he wishes to stay and take responsibility for his actions, but when reminded to think about his son, he no longer hesitates. Eulalia, acknowledging her own part in the entire affair, picks up the general’s discarded pistol and tries to shoot herself. The pistol goes off as the general’s Adjutant tries to wrestle it away from Eulalia, and she realizes then that she has been allowed to live by God’s grace.⁴²

In the beginning of Ziegler’s work, the Meinau family is back together, but it is hardly a happy family. Frithjof Stock summarizes the work quite well:

Das Stück stellt dar, wie auch im Laufe der Jahre die Wunde nicht verheilt, die Eulalia mit ihrem Fehltritt dem Ehe und Familienglück zugefügt hat: Meinau kann bestenfalls verziehen, nicht jedoch vergessen; Eulalia grämt sich unter der drückenden Last ihres Schuldgefühls; die Kinder leiden unter der düsteren Stimmung im Elternhaus. Der totgeglaubte Verführer taucht wieder auf, und Meinau duelliert sich mit ihm. Obwohl der Verführer fällt, verläßt Meinau seine Gattin und geht mit seinem Freund von der Horst nach Amerika. Eulalia, die ein Selbstmordversuch mißlingt, beschließt, wenigstens eine gute Mutter zu werden, nachdem sie schon keine gute Frau gewesen sei.⁴³

The main issue still at hand for Ziegler is the issue of morality and how the family is affected by the unresolved guilt of Eulalia’s infidelity. Eulalia’s infidelity caused the family to be broken apart once, prior to *Menschenhaß und Reue*, and now it has caused a second break by forcing the Baron away after killing Eulalia’s

⁴⁰ Ziegler 111.

⁴¹ Ziegler 112.

⁴² Ziegler 114.

⁴³ Stock 120.

former partner in the adultery. All of the problems the family has faced are directly related to her infidelity.

The ending Ziegler writes for Eulalia does have some redeeming quality to it, suggesting that he agrees with Kotzebue in allowing her to live. In *Menschenhaß und Reue*, Eulalia cries after the countess introduces her to her son Wilhelm. Eulalia says, “Ach! Sie wußte nicht, daß sie mir einen glühenden Dolch durchs Herz stieß.” She goes on to say her children have been “verlassen von ihrer unnatürlichen Mutter.”⁴⁴ She is very much in distress about having been a bad mother to her children. Kotzebue does validate her as a mother at the end of *Menschenhaß und Reue* by having her son address her as “Mutter” and “liebe Mutter,” but there is no comment on her part that shows any recognition of restoration to a natural mother or a mother free of guilt for an unnatural sin.⁴⁵

In *Eulalia Meinau*, Eulalia’s last line of the drama is “Ich will leben, um dir ganz Mutter zu sein.”⁴⁶ Eulalia is again a mother. She has been restored from the unnatural mother that she describes herself as when she sees the son of the Count in *Menschenhaß und Reue*. She now has the desire to live to carry out her traditional familial duty as a mother, although without the father-figure present, as he has fled to America.

The reemergence of Eulalia’s seducer, her husband’s former friend, plays a role in establishing moral boundaries and consequences for crossing the boundaries. The general was presumed dead in *Menschenhaß und Reue*, but

⁴⁴ Kotzebue 72.

⁴⁵ Kotzebue 126.

⁴⁶ Ziegler 114.

Ziegler brings him back as if he had never died for the plot of *Eulalia Meinau*. He is guilty of the same adulterous acts as Eulalia is, and in the end, his death provides some absolution for Eulalia, although it also causes more struggles because of the need for the Baron to flee after killing the general.

Baron Meinau fatally wounds the general in the duel, and he quickly refers to the general as Eulalia's "Opfer."⁴⁷ The general is dead, instead of Eulalia, and Meinau is also now guilty of a crime, the punishment for which would most likely be death. He readily admits now that he has murdered someone and Horst, his friend, convinces him rather quickly to follow him to America, leaving Eulalia to take care of herself and Amalia.

The death of the general is an interesting twist to the idea of the sinner having to die at the end of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*. While he was also guilty of dishonoring Meinau, and guilt must be punished, it is his death as the "Opfer" that allows the renewed Eulalia to come to be. Meinau does forgive the general immediately after having shot him and just prior to the general's death. With his death, he receives justice for his moral transgression against the Baron. Ziegler also hints at the general seeking divine forgiveness as well. With his dying breath, the general looks upward while saying "Vater-," suggesting a prayer.⁴⁸

Eulalia does not feel relieved of her guilt, and in fact, feels as if there is nothing left to live for now that her husband has left her. Horst and Amalia try to

⁴⁷ Ziegler 111.

⁴⁸ Ziegler 111.

persuade Eulalia otherwise, reminding her that she has children and is a mother.⁴⁹

Eulalia links her marriage to motherhood, saying “Ich war sein redliches Weib, ich kann keine wahre Mutter seyn!”⁵⁰ She tries to shoot herself with the General’s discarded pistol, and only after the shot goes off and misses her does she realize that she has been restored and does indeed have something left to live for, and that her position as a mother is not synonymous with being a wife.⁵¹

Kotzebue’s Response to Ziegler

Ziegler is arguably the most important writer to parody Kotzebue because Ziegler’s work pushed Kotzebue to write his own sequel to *Menschenhaß und Reue* in 1791, titled *Die edle Lüge*.⁵² At the beginning of his play, *Die edle Lüge*, or *The Noble Lie* as the 1997 translation to English by Maria Geisweiler is called, Kotzebue writes:

The following short drama owes its birth to the continuation of my play of *Misanthropy and Repentance*, by Mr. Ziegler. I have the highest respect for the rising genius of that young author; but believe that the greater part of the sorrows, which he sheds so plentifully on my poor married pair, proceeds solely from not having given them a place of residence, far from the scorn of mankind, far from their refinements and their scandal. Mr. Ziegler had certainly a right to continue my play, but not to raise people again from the dead, whom I had purposely killed, and by that means destroy the important circumstance which, in the forgiveness of Meinau, should never be lost sight of.⁵³

As we can tell from his preface, Kotzebue did not have a problem with Ziegler taking on the project of parodying his work. Ziegler is praised here for exposing a flaw in

⁴⁹ Ziegler 113.

⁵⁰ Ziegler 113.

⁵¹ Ziegler 114.

⁵² For more on other writers who parodied *Menschenhaß und Reue*, see Stock 120-123.

⁵³ Maria Geisweiler and August von Kotzebue, *The Noble Lie*, (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1997) 7; A translation is being consulted due to unavailability of the original text.

Kotzebue's moral judgment at the end of the first work, namely that Kotzebue did not remove the family out of the sight of the society that casts moral judgment on them.

In *The Noble Lie*, Kotzebue remedies this problem of removal from society. The family lives on the small island of Meinau in the middle of Lake Constance, and is almost entirely self-sufficient there. When something is needed, such as a new plow, Meinau says that he and Franz (in the translation he is known as Frank) will study the image of the thing or the design and then proceed to build it on their own, not venturing away from the island to buy anything more than absolutely necessary.⁵⁴

Despite what on the surface seems to be a happy existence, there still remains some guilt for Eulalia. She still is caught in an emotional state over how she had once behaved. In the third scene, she says, "Away, recollection, away! Let not my cheeks for this day bear the marks of a conscience dissatisfied with itself. This is the birth-day of my beloved husband! All nature smiles around me ---the present moments are so delightful, I can almost forget the past."⁵⁵ She aims to make her husband's birthday the happiest that she possibly can, even inviting Horst to celebrate and eventually live with the family on the island. All of the supposed joy she is experiencing and bringing to her husband is still unable to remove her feelings of guilt.

The Baron von Meinau is troubled by his wife's feelings, and an opportunity arises for him to try and prove that he is a sinner as well, and he tells his wife's servant to tell Eulalia that he has slept with her and made her pregnant.⁵⁶ However, his plan is

⁵⁴ Ibid. 25.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 15.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 32-34.

discovered when the servant's true lover, another servant named Conrad, will not allow his future wife to be dishonored by being involved in the ruse, saying "does the girl imagine I would marry her, if there remained a [Christian] soul on earth that could believe (*angrily and contemptuously*) I would serve her for a screen? Fie!---Conrad is poor, but poverty and honor often lodge under the same roof."⁵⁷

This is a similar idea to that of Ziegler's ending, where the Baron Meinau is placed on an equal level with Eulalia as a sinner. By trying to be an imperfect person, he hopes it will set Eulalia at ease. After hearing of the lie, Eulalia says, "Ha! this Noble Lie! this voluntary humiliation to make me think he also has sinned: because he knows how much lighter the poor sinner carries his burthen, when his neighbour carries one also---O yes! it is generous, noble!"⁵⁸ However, it is not through the absolution of Eulalia's sins that this takes place, as there is no real resolution for Eulalia and her guilt at the end of *Die edle Lüge*. At the end of the work Eulalia thanks Meinau for his attempts to make her feel happy by placing his honor on the line, but she says she can never be truly happy.

I am as happy as I ought to be; and when on my death-bed, my husband and my children will bear me witness, that I have never forgotten my duty, since that unhappy hour.---Then, perhaps, a merciful judge will strike out from the record of my life, the day in which I became a guilty being: till then, dearest Meinau, let us be as happy as before; and, when you perceive a little cloud on my brow, look another way, and appear not as if you noticed it.⁵⁹

Only with her death and God's ultimate forgiveness will she be happy. Until then though, she remains mostly happy, but she will still be haunted by her infidelity.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 39-40.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 41.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 42-43.

Ziegler and Kotzebue in Moral Dialogue

Ziegler's work and Kotzebue's two dramas contain similar subject matter and create a dialogue with one another. Kotzebue's *Menschenhaß und Reue* establishes the context surrounding Eulalia Meinau and the state of her marriage and family life. It informs the audience of Eulalia's infidelity and consequential estrangement from her husband, children and peers. Ziegler's *Eulalia Meinau, oder die Folgen der Wiedervereinigung* continues where Kotzebue ended his work, pointing out the possible danger in allowing the family to continue to live as a part of a society whose moral boundaries they lived in violation of. In the third work, Kotzebue's *Die edle Lüge*, Kotzebue addresses Ziegler's contribution to his earlier work and deals with Eulalia's guilt in a context outside of social norms, where only natural feelings and obligations exist.

By treating Eulalia's life differently in each work, the dialogue between the two authors addresses moral boundaries expected to be present in drama at the end of the late 18th and the beginning of the early 19th-century. Two major moral issues are present through all three dramas and are treated differently by Ziegler and Kotzebue. The first, more obvious moral dialogue centers on infidelity. Eulalia's infidelity is certainly the major example of infidelity, but there is also the case of Baron Meinau's feigned infidelity in *Die edle Lüge*. It is Eulalia's infidelity that ties all three works together by following the negative, but not altogether tragic, impact of her adulterous acts on her life and happiness.

The second moral issue addressed is forgiveness. It is tied strongly to infidelity because it is infidelity that must be forgiven by other characters and society as a whole.

It is one of the largest contrasts between the ending of *Menschenhaß und Reue* and other *bürgerliche Trauerspiele* because of its employment at the ending of that work. While forgiveness may exist at the end of other *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*, it is only after some mortal and tragic incident has occurred, from which the dying individual can not recover, such as happens in the ending of *Miß Sara Sampson*, where Sir William regrets forgiving his daughter so late and having driven her from him to where she encounters Marwood.⁶⁰

Throughout *Menschenhaß und Reue* and up to the moments immediately preceding the curtain falling and the play ending, there is talk of forgiveness by several characters, but there is no real sense that it will actually happen. After seeing the Baron again in the fourth scene of the fifth act, Eulalia says, “Ich kann nie wieder seine Gemahlin werden, selbst wenn er großmütig genug wäre, mir verzeihen zu wollen.”⁶¹ Even if the Baron does forgive her, Eulalia says that she can never again be with him, which negates any possible forgiveness. The negative social implications of forgiving her are supported by the Baron’s words in the seventh scene of the fifth act:

Und wenn ich es alles glaube- denn ich gestehe dir, ich glaube es gern- so doch kann sie nie wieder die Meinige werden. *Bitter*. Ha! Ha! Ha! Das wäre ein Schmaus für die geschminkten Weiber und all’ das fade Hofvolk, wenn ich so wieder mitten unter sie träte, mit meinem verlaufenen Weibe am Arm. Wie sie höhnlacheln, sich in die Ohren wispern, mit Fingern auf mich zeigen würdern. O das wäre ein Schauspiel, um des Teufels zu werden!⁶²

Later, in the ninth scene of the fifth act, Eulalia and the Baron Meinau are speaking of parting ways, hoping to see one another in heaven, Meinau expresses his desire to be with

⁶⁰ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Miß Sara Sampson: Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen*, (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993) 88-89.

⁶¹ Kotzebue 116.

⁶² *Ibid.* 120.

Eulalia again. “Dort herrschen keine Vorurteile; dann bist bu wieder mein!” Meinau says as they look at each other sadly, indicating that prejudices rule in mortal existence, and any forgiveness would on his part would do nothing, but in heaven they could exist together.⁶³

Baron Meinau’s original act of forgiveness comes through the sentimental moment that ends *Menschenhaß und Reue*. When the children are introduced at the very end of the ninth scene of the fifth act, they help to bring about reconciliation between their parents. All they say is “Lieber Vater” and “Liebe Mutter”, but in so doing they are able to reestablish the family unit that had ceased to exist and which both parents wanted to recreate.⁶⁴ The Baron’s following forgiveness of Eulalia cements the reestablishment of the family unit, despite the social implications that are certain to follow as a result of Meinau allowing his wife back into the family.

Kotzebue later credited Ziegler for pointing out a flaw in his ending of *Menschenhaß und Reue* by addressing it in *Eulalia Meinau*. In the forward to *Die edle Lüge*, Kotzebue addresses Ziegler’s placing the family back into society, which Kotzebue never removed them from.⁶⁵ By letting the pair into a social setting and by not having removed them from the moral boundaries and expectations of their peers would set them up to face continuing scandal, as is evidenced by Baron Meinau’s own words.⁶⁶ If her were to forgive her and bring her back, the family would almost certainly face more troubles. Kotzebue acknowledges this flaw and sets his drama *Die edle Lüge* on the

⁶³ Ibid. 125-126.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 126.

⁶⁵ Geisweiler 7.

⁶⁶ Kotzebue 120.

secluded island of Meinau, where only the family and servants live. They exist away from the expectations of others, and they are free to do as they, so long as it means they stay away from society and its moral expectations. By forgiving his wife, the Baron has made the family outcasts from society.

Kotzebue's isolation of the family, while confirming that the family had violated a moral code, also allowed the family to exist in a place free of the social norms that ostracized Eulalia in the first place. On the island of Meinau, the Baron and Eulalia are judged only by one another. This allows a natural morality to take place, one free of social inhibitors, boundaries and expectations. Although the pair is free from moral boundaries created by society, Eulalia still feels guilty about her infidelity. This guilt leads one to believe that adultery is a part of a natural morality, and while guilt may be lasting, there is nothing unnatural about forgiveness of the act. Even when Meinau has Eulalia's servant lie about the Baron being adulterous, Eulalia forgives him for putting the plan in motion and trying to make her believe that he has broken moral boundaries that the couple has set in their place outside of social norms.

The moral dialogue between Kotzebue and Ziegler has less to do with infidelity and more to do with the role of forgiveness in society. Infidelity is indeed responsible for all of the troubles the couple faces in the three works, but it is forgiveness that creates the ultimate moral quandary. If the couple had remained apart at the end of the first work, there would be very little moral ambiguity and there would be little to distinguish *Menschenhaß und Reue* from other *bürgerliche Trauerspiele*. The tragic female character would have remained heartbroken and left to spend the rest of her life doing penance for her infidelity. With the introduction of forgiveness, the moral boundaries

normally upheld in *bürgerliche Trauerspiele* are cast aside, leaving the audience in a moral gray area.

Chapter 3: Continuing Guilt

From the very beginning of Kotzebue's *Menschenhaß und Reue* to the very end of *Die edle Lüge*, Eulalia is left with her unresolved guilt. As George Williamson states, Eulalia "is still suffering from pangs of guilt despite the forgiveness of her husband."⁶⁷ Frithjof Stock also points out that Eulalia's conscience does not allow her to be happy.⁶⁸ While she remains unhappy and plagued by her guilt, the question remains: did Kotzebue change his stance towards Eulalia's moral transgressions, or, as George Williamson phrases it, did Kotzebue feel "compelled to correct the impression that he let his heroine off too easily?"⁶⁹

In *Menschenhaß und Reue*, Eulalia is continually plagued by her guilt. She performs good deeds in the area around where she is a servant and is generally well thought of. Major Horst, the Baron's old friend and brother of the countess, who finds himself by chance in the town with both Eulalia and Meinau, believes that he is in love with her before becoming aware of who she is. Even then, he tries to help the couple get back together. Despite inspiring kindness and happiness in others, she herself is never truly happy, and she is painfully reminded of her adulterous past when anything similar to what she had is presented before her. Her scene when the countess presents her young

⁶⁷ Williamson 897.

⁶⁸ Stock 122.

⁶⁹ Williamson 897.

son Wilhelm makes Eulalia melancholic.⁷⁰ At the end of the drama, she is still plagued by guilt, and does not feel that she has done enough penance for her infidelity.⁷¹

By the time the curtain falls, the audience does not know what state of mind Kotzebue has left Eulalia in. She has indeed been forgiven, but there is no further dialogue, and therefore no indication of how she feels as a result of her forgiveness and the restoration of her family. There is little to indicate how Eulalia felt except for her previous statements, which indicated that she should not even hope for forgiveness.⁷² She is certainly still alive, and she is possibly happy about being reunited with her husband and especially her children. It is difficult to surmise that Eulalia's feelings of guilt have all suddenly disappeared.

Kotzebue uses Friedrich Wilhelm Ziegler's work as a prompt to continue the story of Eulalia Meinau. In *Die edle Lüge*, Kotzebue presents a Eulalia Meinau full of guilt. She talks constantly in asides of how she feels, and the Baron recognizes that she is not happy.⁷³ Otherwise, there would be no noble lie from which the drama could take its name. The short drama takes place on the Baron's birthday. Eulalia goes to great lengths to make the birthday a happy one for her husband. The audience learns later how happy Eulalia makes Meinau now, as well as how much she cares for him and the family on a daily basis.

From the same discussion with the Baron, Horst and the audience learn of her feelings of sadness and guilt. Meinau tells his friend:

⁷⁰ Kotzebue 69-72.

⁷¹ Ibid. 122-126.

⁷² Ibid. 122.

⁷³ Geisweiler 28.

Eulalia is not quite so happy as myself:---that she sometimes wanders in a melancholy mood:---and that her eyes bear the traces of past griefs. This to me is the more painful, as I am acquainted with the cause, and dare not share it with her---never dare even ask, ‘What is the matter with you, dearest Eulalia?’---and know of no remedy, no means of ending this never-failing repentance.⁷⁴

The combination of the Baron’s observations, as well as Eulalia’s own monologues and asides inform the audience that she is not free of the guilt that plagued her in

Menschenhaß und Reue.

The work continues when the Baron is told a servant girl, introduced early in the play as Rose, is pregnant and wishes to be married to her lover, Conrad, one of the Baron’s servants. In an effort to make Eulalia happy, the Baron concocts a plan to make Eulalia happy. He instructs Rose to tell Eulalia that she is pregnant with the Baron’s child. This is supposed to put him on even moral ground with Eulalia. She, however, is told by Conrad, who cannot be a part of such a dishonorable falsehood, that Rose is pregnant with his child. The play ends on an enjoyable note. Horst announces he will stay on the island with Eulalia and the Baron. Horst also says, “You are perfectly happy, dear Meinau; and you too, Eulalia. That friend who loves you as his brother and sister, sees it with transports of pleasure,”⁷⁵ which leads one to believe that, despite the problems the two have had, they lead a happy life and are happy in one another’s company.

Kotzebue ends this work similarly to *Menschenhaß und Reue*, with Eulalia’s last words pertaining to her guilt, and her inability to escape it, so it is difficult to tell if much has changed from the time of *Menschenhaß und Reue* to the time of *Die edle Lüge*. She was plagued by guilt until the very end of the first work, despite the forgiveness and surprise happy ending. At the very end of that work it is difficult to say if Eulalia felt less

⁷⁴ Ibid. 28.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 43.

guilty with Meinau's forgiveness or not because of the lack of dialogue following Meinau's decision to forgive her. The end of *Die edle Lüge* is similar, allowing Eulalia a chance to state her feelings, followed by some announcement to lighten the mood before the curtain falls, in this case, Horst announcing his desire to stay on the island.

The proclamation by Horst mentioned above supports the idea that the couple is indeed in a better place than where they would be shunned for their relationship, and where Eulalia's death would remain the only way for her to find peace. Kotzebue avoids this final moral judgment, so one can be led to believe that he did not change his mind about how he left the state of things with the Meinau family, except that they needed to be more removed from bourgeois society, which he alludes to in his preface to *The Noble Lie*.

Ziegler's work obviously did affect how Kotzebue decided to end the work, but I do not agree with Williamson that Kotzebue felt he let Eulalia off without punishment enough. First, there is no indication that Eulalia felt guilt-free following Meinau's forgiveness. Second, Eulalia's continued feelings of guilt, despite forgiveness and removal from social boundaries that would reinforce her guilt, show that she will never be free of guilt for her infidelity. This is not enough evidence to prove that Kotzebue punished her more in the second work. If anything, it provided Kotzebue a venue to develop his characters and clarify a position that forgiveness does not necessarily mean that a person is entirely cleared of any emotion related to crossing moral boundaries.

Conclusion

Parody is inherently critical of a parodied text and it is self-reflexive at the same time. By examining the work of Kotzebue as a parody of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*, one can see that his variations on the formulaic, code-based genre were an attempt to move beyond the death scenes and the straightforward moral judgments generated in some of the works of Lessing and Schiller.

Critics, however, felt that Kotzebue needed to stick with the formula, and parodied his work as well, something that Kotzebue willingly accepted. Kotzebue was able to present something more identifiable for the audience than that of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*, something closer to what happened in the public's everyday life, which he accomplished by pushing moral ambiguity onto the stage with *Menschenhaß und Reue*.

Furthermore, in the case of Ziegler, he engaged his critics in a dramatic dialogue on morality, a dialogue embodied in the literary life of Eulalia Meinau. This allowed the public to view the exchange taking place between the two authors in a form that enjoyed large public audiences. The exchanges were not in the pages of Schiller's "Xenion" or any other publication, but instead were in front of the public for them to see and decide themselves.

Schiller's ideas concerning the theater were put forward in his address "Was kann eine gute stehende Schaubühne eigentlich wirken?" in 1784, in which he described the theater as a pedagogical tool for moral instruction. In order for this to happen, clear actions and consequences need to be presented to the audience. Kotzebue's works not

only do not fit the criteria of clear actions and consequences, but rather it makes the case against clear-cut moral instruction. Certainly Eulalia suffers and does penance as a consequence of her infidelity. The consequences are certainly clear in that case. It is the longevity of consequences called into question by Kotzebue by his forgiveness of Eulalia that divides the two writers.

It is possible to see that Kotzebue's works may be of more worth to literary critics than we have thought over the past years. The lack of scholarship surrounding Kotzebue's writing may have left many important things about the prolific writer unexamined. The sheer amount of his writings can be daunting to critics, but they should not be overlooked for the same reason.

As seen in this project, Kotzebue was just as capable at stirring the debate on morality as many other prolific and well-known writers of the 18th and 19th century. He enjoyed enough popularity, or infamy, as a writer that he earned the scorn of numerous critics, as well as the brothers Schlegel, Schiller, and on occasion, Goethe. It is difficult to believe that a writer with over 230 plays and a reputation such as Kotzebue's would not be examined more closely by scholars.

There is also concern that Kotzebue's politics have made him a less desirable figure to study than others, particularly those that may have been more in favor of a German nation in the 19th century. His opposition to the *Burschenschaften* and his ties to the nobility may have unduly prejudiced literary critics against his work. As George Williamson points out, Karl Sand, Kotzebue's assassin, was made into a martyr and Kotzebue was seen as a villain against nationalism.⁷⁶ It would be interesting to see if

⁷⁶ Williamson 891.

there are any other popular and prolific authors considered to be *Trivialliteratur* that had similar political views as Kotzebue.

It is my hope that in the future more will be made available about Kotzebue's writing. He is already known for the historical role that he played with the Karlsbad Decrees. It would be incredibly interesting to see him a renewed celebrity because of his writings and interactions with other major figures during his life.

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