

“Trans-lation (-portation)”⁵²

The Reception of Elfriede Jelinek’s Theatre Texts in Europe

Peter Clar

UNIVERSITÄT WIEN/UNIWERSYTET GDASKI

Christian Schenkermayr

UNIVERSITÄT WIEN

I. Preface

Before analysing the reception of Jelinek’s theatre texts in Europe and the Anglo-American world one has to define keywords like ‘Europe’ and ‘reception’. First of all it must be stated that this analysis is based on the research results we presented in *Theatrale Grenzgänge: Jelineks Theatertexte in Europa* [Theatrical Border Crossings: Jelinek’s Theatre Texts in Europe]. Although some years have passed since our book was published, the ways of the reception have not really changed. In contrast to our book, in this chapter we will set aside any focus on single countries, works or topics and rather try to summarise and analyse the international reception of Jelinek’s work in general.⁵³

Using the term ‘reception’ is not that easy, simply because there are divergent approaches to different kinds of reception that sometimes lead to different results. We will show, for example, that the significance of certain texts differs between the academic reception and the reception in the mass media. However, neither of these areas will be the main-focus of our analysis. Instead, in this chapter we will concentrate on the reception through translations and performances of Jelinek’s work. The decision to focus on translations and performances is a pragmatic one since these forms of reception are much better documented. On the other hand, we will show that it is not easy to look at translations and performances separately. There will still be enough points to discuss with regard to these matters:

Which theatre texts are most frequently translated and/or performed? Who are the translators? Which publishing houses publish which texts? In which theatres are Jelinek’s text staged? Are there texts that were translated but not published and what are the reasons for this?

Another keyword that must be defined is ‘Europe’. Referring to our book we draw a line between ‘European’ and ‘non-European’ translations not because of national borders but because of the language. Translations published in the USA or in Hispanic America are normally not translated for a second time into British English or European Spanish but of course can be bought

in European Countries. Consequently, those translations are, in the broadest sense, part of the ‘European’ reception as are, for example, English translations published in Germany, Austria (e.g. some essays), Israel (*Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen*, translated by Roger Downey) etc. However, we consider national borders as decisive for defining whether a particular performance belongs to the European reception. The crucial point is the disposability of a text. A book published in the USA can easily be read by a reader in Great Britain, whereas it is much harder for an average American theatregoer to attend a theatre text performed in London.

Finally, we want to point out the ongoing general lack of reception research with regard to Elfriede Jelinek’s oeuvre. There are some very interesting approaches—mostly as parts of diploma theses or dissertations (Höfle)—and there are also some articles in academic anthologies. There are however still only a few monographs about this topic. For this reason, the book *Elfriede Jelinek: Die internationale Rezeption*, edited by Daniela Bartens and Paul Pechmann, though published in 1997, continues to be an important resource in this area of research. In this book a series of scholars focus on the reception in Italy, Spain, France, the Netherlands and Flanders, Great Britain and the USA. In addition, the volume offers articles by Martin Chalmers, who translated Jelinek into English, by the Austrian composer Olga Neuwirth and by the Austrian writer Marlene Streeruwitz, all representing the artistic reception. The book also includes some interviews and an essay written by Jelinek. Beyond that, we cannot point out enough, there is enough research work left to focus on in the future; to name only one: there is still no wider study on Jelinek’s influence on other artists. It is to hope that the gap will be narrowed step by step.

II. The Translation of Elfriede Jelinek’s theatre texts⁵⁴

1. Chronology

The reception of Elfriede Jelinek’s work usually starts with either *Die Klavierspielerin* or *Lust*. Often these novels are the first works by Elfriede Jelinek that have been translated; for example *Die Klavierspielerin* in France (Reinberger, 100), Greece and Albania or *Lust* in Italy (Reitani, 52), Denmark and Estonia, furthermore *Die Klavierspielerin* is sometimes even the only existing translation, like in Bangladesh or the Georgian Republic (Janke, *Werk*, 492f.). Even if there are other texts of her translated before *Die Klavierspielerin* or *Lust*, the public often only becomes aware of Elfriede Jelinek for the first time by being confronted with these two novels. Becoming aware of Elfriede Jelinek, the author, has to be taken literally here, since very often it is rather the author who is in the focus of the media, not her work.

Certainly, the academic reception of Jelinek’s work sometimes starts earlier. Jacqueline Vansant observes that the first dissertation in the USA was written in 1979. But still, she goes on, Elfriede Jelinek’s work “[wurde] in den siebziger Jahren und Anfang der achtziger Jahre kaum zur Kenntnis genommen” [was hardly noticed in the seventies and early eighties] (Vansant, 198).⁵⁵

It is Elfriede Jelinek’s prose that tends to be translated first—with very few exceptions, for example Finland, where Clara S. (though never published) was the first translation, and not taking

into account that in some countries short-prose (Russia) or radio plays (Sweden) were the first texts published (Janke, *Werk*, 503, 511, 535).

As Christian Schenkermayr and I have observed elsewhere, a broader reception of theatre texts, leading to an increase of translations and performances, started in Europe, Southern America and the Anglo-American world around the year 2001 (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 26, 61f.). Before 2001 only about 50 translations had been published, whereas nowadays one could count more than 200. There are certainly reasons for this increased interest. At the Cannes International Film Festival in 2001 Michael Haneke's film adaptation of *Die Klavierspielerin* won the Grand Prize of the Festival and was nominated for the Golden Palm. In addition, the two main actors Isabelle Huppert and Benoît Magimel were awarded as best female and male actors respectively. The film became an international success and was widely discussed, especially for its explicit acts of (auto-)aggression (see Bastian, "Introduction" in this volume). Jelinek gained even more international publicity and attention after winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2004. In countries in which (nearly) no translations existed until then, the reception mostly took off—as usual—with *Die Klavierspielerin*, now famous as a film and as a novel written by a Nobel Prize winner. In countries where Jelinek's work had already been translated frequently before the Nobel Prize, her rising popularity was reflected in an increasing number of translations of both novels and plays, and in an increase of performances of her theatre texts. Other countries, where her texts were hardly ever published before 2004, can again be divided in two groups. In Western, Northern, Middle and Southern Europe the first translations were, as usual, novels. But in some countries of the former Eastern Bloc, such as Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, more theatre texts than novels were translated,⁵⁶ and in Russia, Slovakia or Poland both genres were translated in similar numbers.

The reasons why, after 2004, Jelinek's theatre texts seem to have attracted considerably more interest than her novels appear to be rather obvious, though there is no research on this particular topic. First of all, after the publication of Jelinek's novel *Gier* in 2000, she has only written one other novel, *Neid*, published only on the internet. During the same period she has written 38 plays and 12 "Zusatztexte" [add-on texts] that often deal with current political topics such as the war on Iraq (*Bambiland* and *Babel*), the Global Financial Crisis (*Die Kontrakte des Kaufmanns*) or human trafficking (*Über Tiere*). Furthermore, her theatre texts are usually much shorter than her novels. On the one hand, the topics of her plays are thus often particularly interesting for an international audience and, on the other hand, they are 'easier' (but not at all easy) to translate. This is especially true for her very short *Prinzessinnendramen* [Princess Dramas]. Another big problem for the reception outside Europe seems to be Jelinek's theatre aesthetics, or the so called 'postmodern' and 'deconstructive' style of her plays (see Bandhauer in this volume). Even in some European and other Western countries such as the USA Jelinek's aesthetics seems to be a barrier for the reception of her plays.

2. Which texts are translated and why?

Within Europe and the Anglo-American world, which constitute the main-focus of this chapter, the following trend can be noticed with respect to the translation of Jelinek's theatre texts. The

most frequently translated play is the first play ever written by Elfriede Jelinek, *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte oder Stützen der Gesellschaften* (1979), the third most frequently translated play is her second play *Clara S.* (1982). Also more than ten times translated are *Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen* (1987) and *er nicht als er* (1998). The latter work is, compared to most of Jelinek's other plays, a very short one and consists of only 36 pages. The same holds true for the rather short *Prinzessinnendramen*⁵⁷ that have been translated very frequently. Only *Der Tod und das Mädchen V (Die Wand)* has been translated less than 10 times (9), while *Der Tod und das Mädchen I (Schneewittchen)* has been translated almost 20 times to date.

The tendencies of this data show three clear trends:

- The earliest plays (published in the late 1970s and in the early/mid 1980s) have been translated more frequently than more recent ones.
- Plays dealing with international topics have been translated more frequently than plays that either use (an artificial) Austrian dialect or deal with so-called 'Austrian topics'.
- Shorter plays have been translated more frequently than longer plays.

There are manifold reasons why older plays have been translated more frequently than newer ones. First of all, Jelinek's early plays show some components commonly belonging to a more traditional theatrical structure than her more recent theatre texts. In *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte oder Stützen der Gesellschaften*, *Clara S.* and *Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen* Jelinek still uses theatre elements such as scenes, *dramatis personae* and stage directions—even though all these elements are already slightly undone (see Bandhauer in this volume). These texts are therefore easier to stage and probably easier to translate as well. Moreover, these early plays by Jelinek are not that long and all three deal with feminist topics. Their political implications are hence accessible—at least in the Western world—and, until today, touching on important issues.

These international aspects are missing in *Burgtheater*. For this reason, though published in 1984, this text turns out to be an exception to the trend according to which Jelinek's earlier texts are translated more often. The highly controversial text, that has led to intensive discussions in Austria, was translated only once, in 2006, for a guest performance from the Styrian theatre group *Am Bahnhof* in the Netherlands. The translation remains unpublished. The entire play was written in an artificial Austrian dialect and is therefore nearly untranslatable. In addition, the plot was (and still is) apparently not interesting enough for recipients outside Austria. At the centre of the action is a family of Austrian actors who built their career before, during and after the Third Reich, and stand symbolically for both the opportunism of many Austrians and the continuity of former power structures even after World War II in Austria. The case is similar to *Präsident Abendwind*, where the Austrian dialect prevented any broader reception through the absence, for a long time, of translations. The play, published in 1986, has been translated only three times, most probably because it deals with another 'Austrian topic': the controversy that developed during the presidential election campaign around the eventually elected candidate Kurt Waldheim, a former SS officer. The second reason why it has not been translated more often is possibly revealed in the process of the Polish translation: it is an intercultural one. The translator seems not to have

understood that both title and dialect made reference to Nestroy's play *Häuptling Abendwind* oder *Das gräuliche Festmahl* (1862) which served as a backdrop for Jelinek's work. Therefore, the translator created a kind of slang by mixing up Polish with English words (Majkiewicz/Ziemska, "Dramen", 317f.) and this severe misunderstanding changed the whole character of the text.

The brief analysis of the translation history of both plays shows that Austrian dialect and 'Austrian topics'—as focused on in another series of plays such as *Stecken, Stab und Stangl*, *In den Alpen* and *Das Werk*⁵⁸—often are an obstacle for any greater translation activity. In addition, it points to a certain difference emerging between the number of translations, on the one hand, and the academic reception of some of Jelinek's works, on the other.

Whereas the texts with a strong emphasis on feminist topics are translated very often and, as will be shown below, frequently performed—which leads to a rather widespread reception in the media—, translations or performances of texts dealing with 'Austrian topics' are generally not that frequent and therefore only marginally treated in the media. Referring to the academic discourse, however, the situation is different, since scholarly articles and books refer with comparable frequency to texts belonging to either of the groups dealing with 'feminism' or 'Austrian topics' (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 227–229).

3. The translators

Literary scholars are also responsible for most of the translations of Jelinek's work into other languages. Nearly 50% of all translators of her theatre texts are individuals who work as literary scholars, either at universities or in similar institutions; not even a third are professional translators. Outside Europe the gap is even wider. Equally, there are many literary authors and theatre makers responsible for translating Jelinek's work, with the number of theatre makers increasing during the last years. This can be explained by the fact that very often an intended performance of a new theatre text by Jelinek gives rise to a translation of this play in the first place—though sometimes it takes years until the translation is published as a book. Many of the texts translated for the stage and rendered into a performance have even never been published as a book or in a magazine (see below). In case they have been published, an interesting question is to ask what kind of publishing house typically publishes Jelinek's texts (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 37–42).

4. The publishing houses

As mentioned above, the first translations of Jelinek's texts are, in most countries/languages, made of *Die Klavierspielerin* or *Lust*. Especially the latter work has often been published within erotic book series and therefore very often become a 'bestseller'. From the layout to the blurb, marketing strategies for the book have often been developed to sell 'erotic literature' by a woman writer. This has frequently led to wrong expectations and left many readers disappointed, since Elfriede Jelinek does not write 'erotic' nor 'pornographic' literature at all. To the contrary, she uses explicit and very rude sexual scenes in order to describe the power structures of society. As a

consequence, the public opinion towards Jelinek has often been rather negative. So, on the one hand, one has to admit that these publishing houses have achieved to spread Elfriede Jelinek's name and, thus, turned her into an internationally known writer. On the other hand, however, they are equally responsible for the often very biased reception that pigeonholes the author Elfriede Jelinek as 'scandalous' and/or 'pornographic'.

The publishing houses that publish Jelinek's theatre texts can roughly be classified into three groups:

- Publishing houses specialised in theatre texts and, partly, as well in scholarly literature on theatre. For example: L'Arche (France), Ubulibri (Italy), Croatian Centre of ITI Unesco (Croatia).
- Publishing houses specialised in translations. For example: Jacqueline Chambon (France), Hermagoras (an Austrian publishing house which publishes many of its books in Slovenian).
- Major publishing houses whose thematic range of books is very wide. For example: Einaudi (Italy), Van Genneep (Netherlands), Riva (Bulgaria), Ediciones Destino (Spain).

Some of the publishing houses only carry one or two of the Austrian author's texts (e.g. the Italian publishing house Castelvechi only published *Das Lebewohl*), some of them have published only theatre texts and others went for publishing both novels and theatre texts (e.g. Van Genneep). Hence, it is possible to observe that all these publishing houses differ in various points. Yet, what they have in common is the international standing of about all their literary authors, scholars, philosophers etc. In addition, all of the above publishers, be they politically more left-winged or conservative, are highly esteemed, with some of them even capable of changing the reception of Elfriede Jelinek's work in a positive way (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 43–58).

5. Translations and academic reception of Elfriede Jelinek in the Anglo-American world

In 1997, Allyson Fiddler published an article dealing with the reception of Elfriede Jelinek in Great Britain. At the end she states that there may be a "gewisse[r] kulturelle[r] blinde[r] Fleck" [a certain kind of cultural blind spot] (Fiddler, "Rezeption", 180) that prevails in many publishing houses with respect to literature which is originally not written in English. In the same vein, the reactions in the British and US-American media after Jelinek was awarded the Nobel Prize showed a certain ignorance towards literature from non-English-speaking countries (Janke, *Literaturnobelpreis*, 55–59, 125–127). In stark contrast to this trend and much to the contrary of what one would expect in this situation, both the number of translations and the scholarly engagement with Jelinek's work in English-speaking countries is rather strong compared to other linguistic realms. This is especially the case for Great Britain and the USA. Still, it is striking that the number of performances of her theatre texts do not follow this trend and continue to be rather sparse, both before and after 2004.

As in many other languages, the first English translations of Jelinek's work were made from

her novels; the first one, *Die Klavierspielerin*, was published under the title of *The Piano Teacher* in 1988 in New York by Weidenfeld & Nicholson, and only one year later, *Serpent's Tail* published the same translation by Joachim Neugröschel in London. Preceding the point in time of the first translations,⁵⁹ the academic reception began in the late 1970s and early 1980s but rose enormously by the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s, as both Allyson Fiddler and Jacqueline Vansant state (Vansant, 198). Both scholars refer to the year 1986 as the date of the first academic article published in Great Britain and in the USA respectively. Both examples also show how difficult it is to pigeonhole articles in English language as 'American' or 'British'. The example given by Jacqueline Vansant is Tobe Levin's article "Introducing Elfriede Jelinek: Double Agent of Feminist Aesthetics". At the time, the US-American scholar Levin lived and worked in Germany, and her article was published in the British magazine *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vansant, 196). Allyson Fiddler's example is the article *Elfriede Jelinek: Social Oppression and Feminist Focus* by British scholar Juliet Wigmore which was published in Ireland (Fiddler, "Rezeption", 161).

Taking into account the focus of these and other articles one can conclude, that in the beginning of the academic reception it was Jelinek's novels that were in the centre of interest, not only in scholarly papers and articles but also in dissertations and monographs. The first US dissertation, Tobe Joyce Levin's *Political Ideology and Aesthetics in Neo-Feminist German Fiction: Verena Stefan, Elfriede Jelinek, Margot Schroeder* (partly) on Elfriede Jelinek was written in 1979, and the first dissertation published as a book was Jacqueline Vansant's *Feminism and Austrian Women Writers in the Second Republic from 1986* (published in 1988 as *Against the Horizon: Feminist and Postwar Austrian Women Writers* (Vansant, 198f.)). Allyson Fiddler wrote the first British dissertation, which was completed in 1990 and published as *Rewriting Reality: An Introduction to Elfriede Jelinek* in 1994. This dissertation is an exception insofar as, until the late 1990s, dissertations written in English normally did not deal exclusively with Elfriede Jelinek's work—a fact that has not changed substantially even until today. Very often, of course, Elfriede Jelinek's work has been analysed in a feminist context, comparing her to other German women writers, while, since the 1990s, more and more articles and monographs/dissertations have focussed on Jelinek's theatre texts.

In summary, one can state that in the Anglo-American world the academic reception is enormously important. On the one hand, this tendency can be observed by looking at the university curricula, as Allyson Fiddler highlights (Fiddler, "Curriculum", 69–71). On the other hand, this importance is also reflected in the translations of Jelinek's theatre texts. Very often translators of her texts are academics (more than a third has been translated by Allyson Fiddler and Gitta Honegger, who are academics, as are Helga Schreckenberger and Jacqueline Vansant who together translated *Präsident Abendwind*), and the publishing houses dealing with Jelinek's oeuvre often are specialised in scholarly literature such as Oxford University Press (which published the first translation of *Clara S.*), University of Michigan Press (*Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen*) and Johns Hopkins University Press (*Totenauberg*).

What applies to dissertations and monographs, namely that they hardly ever deal exclusively with Elfriede Jelinek's work, applies equally to the publication of her literary texts in English translation. The latter translations are usually published in anthologies. Was geschah nachdem

Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte oder Stützen der Gesellschaften was published in 1994 in Annie Castledine's *Plays by Women* (Methuen), Clara S. in Alan Barr's *Modern Women Playwrights of Europe*; *President Evening Breeze* was published in *New Anthology of Contemporary Austrian Folk Plays* edited by Richard Lawson, Totenauberg in Carl Weber's *Drama Contemporary: Germany. Plays by Botho Strauss [sic], George Tabori, Georg Seidel, Klaus Pohl, Tankred Dorst, Elfriede Jelinek, Heiner Müller and Raststätte oder Sie machens alle* was published together with Gregory Motton's play *Cat and Mouse (Sheep)*. Only the second translation of *er nicht als er* was published in a single volume (Janke, *Werk*, 518).

As I have pointed out above, the reception through translations and scholarly literature respectively does not automatically lead to the performance of these texts. This is why the second part of this chapter will focus on the reception of Jelinek's plays on the stages of European theatres.

III. Stagings and performances⁶⁰

1. Texts—periods—venues—forms of performances

When analysing the reception of Elfriede Jelinek's theatre texts in Europe systematically, based on the stagings and performances of her plays, several questions become relevant. They have been mentioned above in the context of the translations and concern the target languages and country-specific trends in translation, chronology, reasons and developments in the reception of Jelinek's work, mechanisms of dissemination as well as preferred texts and topics. Some further specific questions must be added with regard to the forms of performances and stagings, the theatres in which the performances have taken place, and the media engagement with the respective performances. In the context of staging forms, the specific traditions of drama as well as their positioning in theatre and literary studies in each country have to be taken into account too (Kargl, "Theater", 47–50; Majkiewicz/Ziemska, "Dramen", 305–320). Inge Arteel for example explicitly places the Dutch stagings of Elfriede Jelinek's theatre texts in a postdramatic context, while Rita Svandrlik notes that postdramatic theories are playing a minor role for the stagings of Jelinek's theatre texts in Italy (Arteel [et al.], 134f.). Due to the linguistic and cultural diversity all across Europe, tendencies in dramatic transformations of Jelinek's theatre texts outside the German speaking countries only can be addressed generally here.

Outside German-speaking Europe the most frequently performed theatre texts by Elfriede Jelinek are the *Prinzessinnendramen* (*Der Tod und das Mädchen I–V* in different combinations) and the play *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte oder Stützen der Gesellschaften* (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 115–119). A general predominance of stagings of (seemingly) dialogically designed texts (like *Nora*), or monologues in which the position of the speaker can be associated to well-known persons or traceable figures (like in Jelinek's monologue *Jackie* in which the author establishes significant analogies to Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis), can be observed. Far less performed are texts without any attributions of 'figures' or instances of

speech as seen in *Bambiland*, *Wolken. Heim.* or *Das Schweigen*. Even lower is the number of stagings of plays that deal predominantly with specific ‘Austrian’ topics, such as *Burgtheater*, *Präsident Abendwind* and *Stecken, Stab und Stangl*, and/or contain Austrian dialect forms. An exception is Jelinek’s Haider-monologue *Das Lebewohl* that has been performed in several countries outside the German language area.⁶¹

A cross-national comparison of the chronology of stagings shows many analogies with trends that have already been stated above with regard to translation. In the 1980s only very few guest performances or scenic readings (in France and Italy) took place,⁶² while the number of performances increased rapidly after 2000 and reached another peak after the award of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2004 (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 61–62, 114f.). These analogies are little surprising, since, on the one hand, texts have to be translated before they can be performed on stage, and, on the other hand, it is important to highlight that many translated texts have not been realised on stage until today. This is the case with the English translations of *Clara S.*, *Präsident Abendwind*, *Totenauberg* and *er nicht als er*, or the Spanish translations of *er nicht als er* and *Babel*. A look at the trends in those countries where at least five performances of Jelinek’s theatre texts have taken place, will allow a more differentiated perspective on the reception of her work.

Not in all European countries did the reception of Jelinek’s theatre texts start with the award of the Nobel Prize. France, for instance, is not only the country with the highest number of performances of Jelinek’s theatre texts outside the German language area, but also the place where the non-German-speaking reception began (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 390–393). Elisabeth Kargl’s finding of a “nicht oder nur sehr zögernd erfolgende[n] Rezeption” [non-existent or only very hesitant reception] (Kargl, “Theater”, 49) does not compare the French reception of Jelinek’s theatre texts to the reception of her texts in other European countries, but refers to a (compared to her theatre works) much more extensive reception of Jelinek’s novels in France and a comparative analysis of the performance practice in France with regard to other German-speaking writers, such as Heiner Müller or Werner Schwab (47–50). Above all, the stagings of *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte* oder *Stützen der Gesellschaften* at the Théâtre National de la Colline (premiere: 5/1/1994) and *Jackie* at the Théâtre du Rond Point (premiere: 19/9/2006) (Reinberger, 103f.; Kargl/Quintin, 275–303) in Paris met a greater response.

Further foci of staging and performance activities can be found in Italy, Poland, the Czech Republic and Sweden (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 393–401).⁶³ A comparison of all stagings before and after 2004 illustrates a series of different effects the award of the Nobel Prize has had in each of the countries. On the one hand, the award led to first stagings in countries in which Jelinek’s plays had not been performed until 2004. On the other hand, it caused a significant increase of stagings in countries where theatre productions of Jelinek’s texts had already taken place before 2004. In Italy, for example, several play readings of *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte* oder *Stützen der Gesellschaften*⁶⁴ took place in the 1980s and 1990s. They were held before the first ‘real’ staging of a theatre text by Jelinek, Werner Waas’s scenic interpretation of Jelinek’s monologue *Das Lebewohl* at the Teatro Rialto Occupato Sant’Ambrogio, that took place on 12 May 2001. However, no broader media coverage of the stagings in Italy did happen before the Nobel Prize was awarded to Jelinek in 2004.⁶⁵ A very

sharp increase in stagings after the Nobel Prize award can be observed in Poland (especially in 2007) and the Czech Republic (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 80–86, 90–94, 396f., 400f.). In Sweden, on the contrary, the stagings of Jelinek’s theatre texts—starting with Melanie Mederlind’s staging of *Das Lebewohl* at Malmö Dramatiska Teater in 2002 until Yngve Dahlbergs staging of *Die Schutzbefohlenen* at Folkteatern Göteborg in 2016—show a certain continuity and have been a subject of interest for the media from the beginning, while being mostly reviewed in a positive way (86–90). There are two stagings that have been especially commended in the media: *Bambiland*, which opened on 25 May 2004 at Teater Tribunalen in Stockholm (stage direction: Richard Turpin), and *Der Tod und das Mädchen I–V*, opening on 10 September 2004 at Teater Galeasen, also in Stockholm (stage direction: Rickard Günther). Both plays were first performed in Sweden within the last five months before the Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Elfriede Jelinek by the Swedish Academy.

The situation in Great Britain constitutes a special case because of the fact that many of Jelinek’s theatre texts are published in English (in addition to several research projects on her writing in Literary and Performance Studies that have led to a number of English-language publications) (Fiddler, “Burgtheater”, 227–242; “Sport”, 111–130; Jürs-Munby, “Seicht sein”, 86–100), but only five of them have ever been performed on British stages until now. However, Tinch Minter’s English translation of *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte oder Stützen der Gesellschaften* [What happened after Nora left her Husband, Pillars of Society] has been presented in a number of different play readings and stagings.⁶⁶ The first full-size performance in Great Britain was the staging of *Raststätte oder Sie machens alle* [Services or They All Do It] (stage direction: Annie Siddons; translation: Nick Grindell), that was performed in the context of the Biennale-Festival on 31 January 1996 at the Gate Theatre in London. This production was also reviewed in well-respected British newspapers (Fiddler, “Rezeption”, 174). With only one exception of a staged reading of *Nora* at the Arcola Theatre in 2006, between 1997 and 2007 no representations of Jelinek’s theatre texts took place in Great Britain. An extraordinary event was the British debut performance of Jelinek’s *Ein Sportstück* (Sports Play), translated by Penny Black, at the Nuffield Theatre in Lancaster in the staging of *Vanda Butkovic* (11/7/2012; coinciding with the Olympic Games in 2012 in London). On the same day the conference *Jelinek in the Arena. Sport, Cultural Understanding and Translation to Page and Stage* about Jelinek’s critical analysis of the mass-phenomenon ‘sport’, including questions of translation and cultural understanding started at Lancaster University (Fiddler/Jürs-Munby, “Introduction”, 1). In addition, there have been another two performances of Jelinek’s plays in the UK during the last three years; the first British staging of *Bambiland* took place at the Arnott Theatre in Glasgow (premiere: 9/2/2017, direction: Peter Lorenz) and Aya Theatre Company presented a play reading of *Rechnitz* (*Der Würgeengel*) at the Austrian Cultural Forum in London in May 2014.

Concerning the impact of the stagings and the intensity of their reception, the question about the category of theatres where the performances took place, is also of interest. While in France, Sweden and the Czech Republic theatre texts were performed at representative national theatres or metropolitan theatres as well as at smaller experimental stages, the stagings in Italy were mainly presented in smaller theatres (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 78). For a longer time also the stagings in the Netherlands were predominately shown at smaller experimental stages (*Krankheit*

oder *Moderne Frauen* at Theater aan de Haven in Den Haag, premiere: 13/9/1991; er nicht als er at the Literair Theater Branoul in Den Haag, premiere: 17/11/2000; *Das Lebewohl* at Frascati Theater Amsterdam, premiere: 24/4/2003); the trend reversal of the recent years was caused by the first Dutch performance of Jelinek's *Über Tiere* at Het Nationale Toneel in Den Haag, which opened on 15 April 2010 (direction: Susanne Kennedy) and some guest performances of German-speaking productions at the Stadsschouwburg in Amsterdam.⁶⁷ In Norway most of the performances of Jelinek's theatre texts—the staging of *Ulrike Maria Stuart* (premiere: 28/9/2007; direction: Melanie Mederlind) and the special event *Jelinek—Et scenisk portrett av nobelprisvinner Elfriede Jelinek* at the Samtidsfestival on 27 August 2005⁶⁸—took place at the national theatre in Oslo. Exceptions are Jonas Corell Petersen's staging of *Die Kontrakte des Kaufmanns* at Rogaland Theater Stavanger (premiere: 8/11/2011) and Hilde Brinchmann's staging of the *Prinzessinnendramen* at Trøndelag Teater (premiere: 29/8/2012).

The scope of the reception is also influenced by the location of the respective theatres. The relevant question here is whether the stagings are performed in or outside the major cities in each country. Particularly evident are the regional differences with regard to the impact of the stagings of Jelinek's plays in France. Stagings in Paris or in the direct neighbourhood of Paris (Reinberger, "Rezeption", 103f.; Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 69–71) enjoyed a much more comprehensive reception compared with other productions in theatres in the provinces. With regard to this matter, trends in each European country are very different. While the major part of the Czech stagings took place in theatres in Prague (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 400f.), in Poland and Italy no 'reception-centres' can be recognised, since Jelinek's plays have been performed on many stages in several different regions of the two countries (393f., 396f.). In most cases the initiative for the stagings came from the theatres themselves.

Above all, it makes sense to differentiate between the variable forms of performances—real stagings, staged readings and guest performances (in most cases, of German-speaking productions)—since, depending on the particular form, a differently sized circle of recipients can be reached. Full-size performances, for example, usually have greater media coverage. The questions, whether the productions were performed for a longer time or whether they were performed only once (at a theatre festival for example), whether the productions were resumed at other stages or went on tour, are also relevant.

Most of the stagings in Italy (*Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte* oder *Stützen der Gesellschaften*, *Das Lebewohl*, *Erlkönigin*, *Jackie*, *Wolken.Heim.*, *Ein Sportstück*, *Winterreise*, *Faustin* and *out and Die Schutzbefohlenen*) (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 393f.; Janke, *Werk*, 767) have been performed in the context of theatre festivals at least once. The comparatively large number of restagings in different Italian theatres also needs to be noticed (393f.). In Sweden, Melanie Mederlind and Franka Gebert's staging of Jelinek's play *In den Alpen*, which opened on 2 February 2006 in the Stockholm-based Riksteatern, went on tour and was performed in 23 different Swedish theatres since (the last performance was on 25 April 2006) (398).

Furthermore it is necessary to distinguish between the stagings of Jelinek's theatre texts and the dramatisations of her prose. A striking number of dramatisations were performed in France between 1994 and 2005; for example, one version of Jelinek's novel *Die Ausgesperrten*, another

of *Oh Wildnis*, *oh Schutz vor ihr*, and a theatre adaptation of the short prose text *Begierde & Fahrerlaubnis*. However, an extensive media coverage can only be found in the context of Joël Jouanneau's scenic adaptation of Jelinek's novel *Die Liebhaberinnen*, represented for the first time at Théâtre Le Poche in Geneva (premiere: 14/3/2001) and subsequently restaged in 2003 at Théâtre Ouvert in Paris) (Kargl, "Traduire", 39; Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 66). Additionally, a television film on the process of staging this work was produced and first broadcast on 21 September 2005 by the German-French cultural TV-channel ARTE. Also in Poland it was a dramatisation of *Die Liebhaberinnen* that leveraged Jelinek's theatre texts on the Polish stages (Majkiewicz/Ziemska, "Dramen", 309–315).

2. Selected aspects of the media reception

The main parameters by which the media reception of Jelinek's theatre texts has been analysed in scholarly literature so far, are: a) the type and/or adjustment to the particular medium, b) the extent of the media coverage, and c) the aesthetic, political and moral lines of argument of the reviewers (Arteel, 139–141; Bartens, 28–34; Górny, 15). As Jelinek's theatre texts provide a wide scope for individual aesthetic approaches of theatre directors and their scenic interpretations, it is first of all important to ask about the general focus of the media perception. To which extent are the texts themselves addressed in the reports and reviews, and to which extent are the performances the only reference point of the media reception? Concerning this tension between text and performance reception, the question of the general accessibility of the texts in the local language is important. Even in the German-speaking part of Europe the number of text reviews is much smaller than the number of reviews written about the stagings. In contrast to the stagings of Jelinek's work in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, the media reception of her texts outside the German language area has been hindered by the fact that at the time of many debut performances no print version of the respective theatre texts was available. Often the translations were made directly for the stagings and were therefore present only in the form of unpublished stage-scripts. In many cases, this led to an extensive marginalisation of the texts in the media coverage (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 121–129). But even if a commonly available text version exists, this does not automatically implicate that the reviewer is familiar with the text or includes it in the reports or reviews. This was for instance the case in the media reception of Maria Inversi's staging of *Wolken.Heim*. in Italy. Although the Italian translation of the play by Luigi Reitani had already been published 15 years ago, the reports and reviews were dealing first and foremost with the festival, in the context of which the representation took place, or with Renata Caruzzi's Elfriede Jelinek interview (*Una conversazione con Elfriede Jelinek*) (Lomb; M.S.; "Nuvole.Casa"; Canziani). The examination of *Wolken.Heim*. focussed on general topics that were brought up in the text. Maria Inversi's work as director of the text was often only mentioned in form of (partially verbatim copied) citations from the written staging concept) (Tummino).

However, there are also counter-examples to this tendency, like several reviews about Emilia Sadowska's dramatisation of Jelinek's novel *Die Liebhaberinnen* at Teatr Polski w Poznaniu. These reviews discuss the aesthetic method of the stage director as well as several other questions regarding the extent to which Sadowska's staging is an adequate scenic transformation of the

novel, asking how far Jelinek's aesthetic method is transportable in a scenic form (Kireczu; Makiewicz; Kamierska).

One of the main differences between the reception outside the German-speaking part of Europe and the reception in Austria is a more relaxed and less polarizing approach to Jelinek's work outside Austria. For, in spite of the frequent use of the phrase 'Skandalautorin' ['scandal author'] in reports and reviews, including many irritations with regard to her literary or theatrical aesthetics (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 153–166), there were no important scandals or scandalisations outside the German language area in Europe that are comparable to the media reactions to the debut performance of Jelinek's play *Burgtheater* in the Austrian press. On the one hand, this difference is due to the wide absence of reviews about the stagings in non-German tabloids or the gutter press (Arteel, 140), and, on the other hand, it is due to the fact that Jelinek's criticism against Austria encounters arguably less opposition outside Jelinek's native country (qtd. inter alia Bartens, 45). Nevertheless, Jelinek's confrontation with Austria—besides the topics of 'marxism', 'feminism' and 'sexuality'—is mentioned very often. The stagings of Jelinek's monologue *Das Lebewohl* in Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden are of special interest in this context. The critical analysis of the right-wing demagogue Jörg Haider in the text is not only noticed as a specific Austrian phenomenon; it is, moreover, related to present right-wing tendencies in the respective countries (Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 241–257).

IV. Conclusion

Although the reception of Jelinek's texts outside the German speaking countries in Europe is very heterogeneous, one can still find some common tendencies. It has to be stated that in nearly every country the reception of Jelinek's texts either began with the Nobel Prize or increased strongly after 2004. In countries, in which Jelinek's texts were often published as books and/or staged before the Nobel Prize, her texts continued to be well received after the award. In countries in which the reception of Jelinek's texts rose strongly after 2004 the frequency of new stagings and/or translations usually fell to the level before the Nobel Prize quite quickly. For nearly all linguistic spheres, individual initiatives and/or initiatives of single institutions, such as theatres and publishers, have been of great importance for the reception of Jelinek's work. With regard to the existing research of the Austrian author's reception, especially in non-German-speaking countries, it is important to emphasise that there is still much work to be done,⁶⁹ including in particular the academic reception of Jelinek's work and her work's influence (or the absence of it) on other writers or artists.

- 52 The title refers to the eponymous text by Elfriede Jelinek, “Trans-lation (-portation)”.
- 53 Due to the focus of this volume, the chapter mainly analyses the European reception of Jelinek’s work until 2011 when *Princess Dramas* was staged in Melbourne. Yet given Jelinek’s exceptional productivity particularly in matters of theatre since 2011, and the still scarce literature in English on this topic, the authors have decided to include more recent data wherever this seemed appropriate.
- 54 The author of section II. is Peter Clar.
- 55 All subsequent translations are ours unless noted otherwise.
- 56 This statement needs to be seen against the fact that Elfriede Jelinek wrote much more plays than novels.
- 57 The *Prinzessinnendramen* written between 1999 and 2003 are between 16 and 38 pages ‘long’.
- 58 *Stecken, Stab und Stangl* deals with the racially motivated murderers of four Roma in Austria in 1995 and the reaction of the leader of the extreme right-winged party FPÖ. *In den Alpen* deals with a cablecar accident in the Austrian Alps in which 155 people died. And *Das Werk* focuses on the engineering of a hydropower plant in the Alps using forced labourer during World War II.
- 59 1990 *Die Ausgesperrten*; 1992 *Lust*; 1994 *Die Liebhaberinnen* and the first theatre text *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte oder Stützen der Gesellschaften*.
- 60 The author of section III. is Christian Schenkermayr.
- 61 Stagings of the monologue outside the German-speaking part of Europe have taken place in Italy (12/5/2001: Teatro Rialto Occupato Sant’Ambrogio in Rome, direction: Werner Waas), Sweden (25/10/2002: Malmö Dramatiska Teater, direction: Melanie Mederlind), the Netherlands (24/4/2003: Frascati Theater Amsterdam, direction: Esgo Heil) (see Janke, *Werk*, 132) and France (22/8/2015: Théâtre de Poche, Hédé-Bazouges, direction: Vincent Collet). A play reading was held in France (17/11/2001: Théâtre National Populaire de Villeurbanne) (see Clar/Schenkermayr, *Grenzgänge*, 391).
- 62 15/7/1983: Guest performance of Ulrike Ottinger’s staging of Jelinek’s *Clara S.* at the Festival d’Avignon in a French-Italian version (translated by Hugo Lima); 5/5/1987: Play reading of *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte oder Stützen der Gesellschaften* at Teatro Abeliano in Bari (the title of Giuseppe Farese’s Italian translation is: *Cosa accadde dopo che Nora ebbe lasciato suo marito, ovvero I pilastri delle società*) (Janke, *Werk*, 97).
- 63 Until now, no stagings have been detected in Ireland, Bosnia and Turkey.
- 64 5/5/1987: Teatro Abeliano, Bari; 30/3/1998: Austrian Cultural Forum, Rome; December 1999: Teatro della Villa di Roma.
- 65 In conjunction with the reception of Elfriede Jelinek’s theatre texts in Italy shall be referred to the studies of Lia Secci (see Secci, *Il teatro di Elfriede Jelinek in Italia*; “Das Theater Elfriede Jelineks in Italien”).
- 66 22/6/1992: Goethe Institut London (play reading); 17/10/1996: Guildhall School Theatre, London, direction: Annie Castledine; 18/2/2006: Arcola Theatre, London (play reading); 24/3/2009: Contact Theatre, Manchester, direction: Emma Sharples (Janke, *Werk*, 97f.).
- 67 Nicolas Stemann’s staging of *Babel* (Akademietheater Wien, 2005) was performed in the context of the Holland Festival at Stadsschouwburg in Amsterdam (premiere: 10/6/2007). On 9 June 2010 Jossi Wieler

visited with his staging of Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel) (Münchner Kammerspiele, 2008) also at the Stadsschouwburg in Amsterdam.

68 In the course of this evening, short fragments of the following theatre texts were performed: Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte oder Stützen der Gesellschaften, Ein Sportstück, In den Alpen, Der Tod und das Mädchen IV, Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen, er nicht als er, Bambiland and Babel.

69 Amongst Jelinek's more recent texts for theatre we would like to point particularly to Winterreise and Die Schutzbefohlenen. Both plays were produced at a considerable number of non German-speaking theatres in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Denmark, Italy, Sweden and France between 2013 and 2016. For the particular focus of this chapter (see above, footnote 53) we were not able to further discuss them here.



“Jackie” (Reynolds) ©2011 André Bastian